The Spectacle of Censorship: Interwar Obscenity and Modern Literary Form

A Dissertation Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

The University of Knoxville, Tennessee

Matthew Joseph Pilkington

December 2021

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without help and support from many wonderful individuals.

I would like to thank the members of my dissertation committee for their constant support throughout the composition of this dissertation. I owe a significant debt to my dissertation chair, Urmila Seshagiri. Through countless drafts, she helped me to find my voice and stay the course I set out on. Whether I needed someone to affirm my choices, hold me accountable to my decisions, or offer a firm suggestion, she was my staunchest supporter and biggest source of inspiration. Left to my own devices, this project would never have been completed on time and would have strayed from my original vision. I am also grateful for the feedback provided by Stan Garner, Rachel Golden, and Lisi Schoenbach. Each of them offered valuable insight into the scope and direction of my project, and their efforts have resulted in my producing a stronger dissertation.

None of this would have been possible without the love and support of my wife, Chelsea, who made the move halfway across the country with me so I could pursue my passion, and bore the brunt of raising our daughter, Vesper, while I spent countless nights working on finishing this project. Her support made the entire process easier than it would have otherwise been, and she kept me from experiencing the loneliness of pursuing my doctorate thousands of miles from home.

ABSTRACT

My dissertation investigates modernism's development as it relates to the censorship of early-20th century artistic expression. It was the public outcry and backlash to this censorship, I argue, that encouraged the experimentation and formation of modernist style. Rapid globalization in the years following World War I led to increased exposure to international news and widespread mobilization of art and culture, and as art became increasingly cosmopolitan, its impact on society grew significantly and thus the threat of works deemed obscene increased accordingly. The years after World War I saw the development of what I deem the "censorship industry," or the symbiotic relationship that developed between censors and artists seeking to leverage their public clashes for celebrity and increased exposure. While these were largely transnational concerns in a period of growing cosmopolitanism, this study focuses on Anglo-American fiction and drama. By investigating the 1921 trial of James Joyce's *Ulysses* and 1928 suppression of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, I show how high-profile censorship action led to a critical reassessment of the relationship between artists and their work.

Tracing the influence of these events forward to Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* (1928) and Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour* (1934), I argue that their development, critical success, and minor suppression represent the natural progression of modern style and form from *Ulysses* and *The Well of Loneliness*, respectively. Emboldened by the increased visibility afforded works that underwent suppression, artists moved away from self-censorship or deferred publication and were encouraged to stick to their creative vision. Although a largely antagonistic relationship, both censors and artists benefitted significantly from their confrontations and made good use of the publicity their high-profile clashes garnered to elevate the careers of actors on both sides of the aisle. Without a firm understanding of the struggles

faced by artists in this period it is difficult to fully grasp the reactionary landscape that fostered such creative innovation and led to the foundation of many formal techniques still used in contemporary literature.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction **1**

Chapter 1: *Ulysses's* Obscene Revision **25**

Chapter 2: *The Well of Loneliness* and the Lesbian Novels of 1928 ..... **59**

Chapter 3: *Strange Interlude* and *The Children's Hour* "Banned in Boston" **111**

Conclusion **151**

Works Cited **157**

Vita **166**

Introduction

In 1920, Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap received a letter from a subscriber to their magazine, *The Little Review*, condemning their decision to publish "the most damnable slush and filth that ever polluted paper in print" (Anderson 212). The offending subject was the "Nausicaa" episode of James Joyce's forthcoming novel, *Ulysses.* Infamous for its depiction of Leopold Bloom masturbating on a beach, "Nausicaa" drew the ire of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice. At the novel's obscenity trial in New York City in 1921, the offending passages were considered so indecent that they could not be read aloud for fear of offending Anderson and Heap[1]—the very publishers of "Nausicaa"—since one judge was certain they "didn't know the significance of what [they were] publishing" (221). *The Little Review* was unsuccessful in its defense, and Joyce was effectively banned from publishing *Ulysses* in the United States until the decision was overturned in 1933.[2] Had the prosecution known how their attack on "Nausicaa" would shape the final version of *Ulysses* and the trajectory of experimental modernism more generally, they may have reconsidered their very public approach to its suppression.

Anderson, Heap, and Ezra Pound—Joyce's most ardent supporter—had routinely modified the serial installments of *Ulysses* published in *The Little Review* to curb its obscenity. However, once the novel had been legally designated as "obscene," Joyce saw little need to mitigate public outcry: he not only restored his original text, but he heightened the obscenity of the novel's final chapters. Even at its most supposedly obscene, Bloom's masturbation in

[1] The fact that Anderson and Heap were women played a role in this objection as well.
[2] In addition to Anderson's own autobiography, these trials have been covered extensively in recent scholarship with Joseph Hassett's *The Ulysses Trials: Beauty and Truth Meet the* Law (2016) and Adrian Hardiman's *Joyce in Court*: *James Joyce and the Law* (2017). For the 1933 verdict, see *United States v. One Book Called "Ulysses",* 5 F. Supp. 182 (S.D.N.Y. 1933)

"Nausicaa" was still largely a veiled description of how "Mr Bloom with careful hand recomposed his wet shirt" (303). In the months surrounding the trial of "Nausicaa," Joyce was busy writing "Circe," the novel's most sexually explicit and experimental episode. Bloom's covert masturbation was tame compared with "Circe"'s hallucinatory, theatrical spectacles, such as Bloom being dominated by Bello—a brothel keeper—who "*squats with a grunt on Bloom's upturned face* [. . .] *uncorks himself behind: then, contorting his features, farts stoutly*" before he eventually "*bares his arm and plunges it elbowdeep in Bloom's vulva"* (Joyce, *Ulysses* 435-440). When the novel was eventually published in Paris in 1922, it contained masturbation, BDSM, same-sex relationships, infidelity, and pages of scatological humor. Emboldened rather than chastened by the obscenity ruling, Joyce proved that challenges to censorship could serve as productive sites of literary experimentation. And if the goal of suppression was to shield the public from this filth, then the censor's efforts failed: once *Ulysses* was designated as a legally obscene work, demand for the book in the United States and England surged (Birming 229).

The journey of *Ulysses* from serial publication in 1918 to complete novel in 1922 represents a significant process in the development the formal and thematic conventions of modernism.[3] A post-War novel critical of nationalism, written by an exile during a period of increased globalization, and suppressed in the United States at the height of literary censorship's power, *Ulysses* represents a reevaluation of modern literature's possibilities. Joyce's novel set the stage for a generation of writers determined to maintain creative control over their work, and although it was originally banned from publication in the United States, it set the precedent that censorship could be a blessing for a work of literature rather than its death knell. "Joyce's

[3] A firsthand account of *Ulysses* publication struggles is documented extensively in *Letters of James Joyce: Volumes II and III* (1966), edited by Richard Ellmann, and through extensive biographical history in the Kevin Birming's *The Most Dangerous Book* (2014).

publication history is a history of censorship" (1), declares Katherine Mullin in *James Joyce, Sexuality and Social Purity*; and my dissertation establishes that this cycle of creation and suppression is also a history of Anglo-American modernism.

"The Spectacle of Censorship: Interwar Obscenity and Modern Literary Form" argues that the suppression of Joyce's novel was a foundational moment in an artistic resistance that spanned the decades between the World Wars and influenced the trajectory of experimental modernism. In his exhaustive study of the complicated publication history of *Ulysses, The Most Dangerous Book,* Kevin Birming claims that "[t]he battles over *Ulysses* didn't end literary censorship," and while I suggest that these battles sparked widespread opposition to literary censorship, I want to be clear that I agree with Birming on this point. However, I disagree with his subsequent claim that these struggles "didn't usher in an era of [. . .] pervasive avant-garde aesthetics" (15). My dissertation shows how it was precisely Joyce's struggles with suppression that encouraged many of his experimental techniques, gave *Ulysses* its mythic status, and emboldened a generation of authors to push the boundaries of aesthetic decency.

Few locations or decades had more widespread, frequent censorship activity than England and the United States during the 1920s and '30s. The years after World War I saw the development of what I deem the "censorship industry," or a symbiotic relationship between censors and artists seeking to leverage their public clashes for celebrity and increased exposure. With rapid globalization came increased exposure to international news and widespread mobilization of art and culture. As art became increasingly cosmopolitan, the threat of works deemed obscene were of international concern. While primarily centered on British modernism, Celia Marshik's argument that censorship "was a necessary evil, dreaded, feared, obeyed, and parried in ways that shaped some of the most canonical works of the early twentieth century"

(13) is a transnational argument. As my dissertation shows, where these works were written had little to do with where they were suppressed, and where they were suppressed had little to do with their impact on the shape of modern literature.

This growth of international exchange led to widespread circulation of the novel across borders and heightened concerns over obscene fiction. As a result, the novel—as Paul K. St. Amour argues in his book *The Copywrights*—began to think "exhaustively about its identity as property and commodity" (17). More precisely, it was the growing ease of international publication which led to an uptick in literary suppression. The genre serves as a location for artists to think about the larger project of "replications and breaches of literary formal convention" and how this experimentation could be used to rethink social norms. Thus, when Mullin suggests that responses to this heightened climate of censorship traditionally led to "an eruption of reactive protest" (8), I argue that, more than mere "reactive protest," the reality was that authors' responses were calculated and developed through careful observation of their opponents. In a constantly evolving play between aesthetics and morality, writers learned from the actions of censors and adapted their techniques to gain newfound artistic freedoms. Just as censors of the era relied heavily on keeping their actions hidden from public view—preferring to strike deals with officials or leverage threats of expensive litigation against publishers and booksellers—modern writers adopted techniques meant to obfuscate meaning like the stream-of-consciousness, free indirect discourse, and non-linear temporality. Driven by the need to mask content and themes in their work, writers relied on many of the techniques that have become synonymous with experimental modernism.

Between World War I and World War II, censorship in England and the United States occurred through opaque systems with little regulation or oversight; privately funded purity

leagues and government organizations often deployed different levers of power to suppress literature. Among these groups were the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, Boston's Watch and Ward Society, and numerous government offices from British Parliament to the United States Post Office. These conditions led many writers to self-censor or work closely with editors to decode unclear decency standards and ensure that their fiction would avoid suppression. And while it is true, as Rachel Potter observes in *Obscene Modernism,* that "[b]ecause it was difficult to locate one single source or agency of prohibition, writers bemoaned the invisibility and ubiquity of the censor" (Potter 40), I argue that the censor's obscurity unwittingly offered a model for writers to create their own methods of literary deception. As a result, artists in the interwar period learned to navigate the landscape of censorship while restructuring the censorship industry into something that was intelligible if not transparent.

One of the primary difficulties in discussing obscenity censorship concerns the frequent shifts in definition. For the purposes of my dissertation, I rely on the dominant definition of the period as established in *Regina v. Hicklin* (1868). Known as the Hicklin test, it broadly claimed that any work could be deemed obscene if it tended "to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences" (Gillers 218). The Hicklin test left much room for interpretation, and as a result, obscenity was often defined on a case-by-case basis. This definition was the dominant application from 1868 until *Roth v. United States* (1957) narrowed the definition to a work whose "dominant theme taken as a whole appeals to the prurient interest" (*Roth v. United States*). However, for the sake of my dissertation, I narrow my discussion of obscenity to two concepts: obscene content and obscene theme. When I speak of obscene content, I refer to explicit depictions of sex acts, crude language, or private bodily functions such as Leopold Bloom's defecation and masturbation or Molly Bloom's use of the

word “cunt” in James Joyce’s *Ulysses.* In thinking of obscene theme, I refer to works that largely eschewed obscene content but explored taboo subjects or advocated for controversial social change such as the exploration of lesbian subculture found in Radclyffe Hall’s *The Well of Loneliness*. While all the works explored in this dissertation contain obscene themes, not all of them contain obscene content.

In any discussion of modernism and obscenity censorship, it is crucial to consider the cultural climate of production and how the lived experiences of authors impacted the evolution of their art. Following Sean Latham’s claim in *The Art of Scandal* that readers are too often encouraged to view a work of fiction as removed from the life of the author, and that such readings tend “to obscure, abandon, or simply mischaracterize a wide array of the most innovative writing from the early twentieth century that openly conceals fact within fiction in order mischievously to muddle the distinction between them” (7), I believe that understanding the conditions of production heightens understanding of the role that censorship played in influencing experimental modernism. Building on Adam Parkes’s statement that “[t]he intersection of aesthetic questions with the moral and political concerns informing legal discourse was a salient feature of censorship trials in the early twentieth century” (5), I argue that many of the formal techniques that have come to define experimental modernism were tools used by artists to explore obscenity while avoiding suppression in a period of widespread censorship activity. In shifting the boundaries of literary expression, artists fostered a symbiotic relationship with censors who continually reshaped the tactics of obscenity censorship.

The 1921 suppression of *Ulysses* was the catalyst for Joyce’s creation of some of the most obscene material in his novel and set a precedent for artists to fight back against obscenity censorship while leading to a reevaluation of censorship tactics. By the 1928, censors had begun

diverting their efforts from the putatively highbrow and began targeting middlebrow fiction with more regularity.[4] This is not to suggest that censors completely abandoned their attacks on highbrow art in the wake of *Ulysses's* suppression. D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) was one of the most prominently censored works of modernism, and it contained similarly explicit sexual themes as *Ulysses.* However, the approach to its suppression differed significantly from the tactics used against *Ulysses* or Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, which was also published in 1928.[5] For D.H. Lawrence, the main issue facing the publication of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* lay in finding a publisher willing to publish the work without demanding significant edits. Lawrence's struggles were proof that highbrow fiction was still a target of obscenity censors, but the fact that the suppression of his novel was not taken up in court until 1959 shows how fewer highbrow novels actually went to trial on charges of obscenity during the '30s. Unlike Lawrence, Radclyffe Hall was able to find a publisher for her semi-autobiographical novel of same-sex love, *The Well of Loneliness.* A decidedly middlebrow novel, it was immediately brought to trial on charges of obscenity.

[4] Much has been made about the tension between the highbrow and middlebrow labels in this period. For a contemporary view of this issue, there is Virginia Woolf's essay Middlebrow. from the posthumously published *The Death of the Moth, and Other Essays* (1943) in which she argues that "[t]he middlebrow is the man, or woman, of middlebred intelligence who ambles and saunters now on this side of the hedge, now on that, in pursuit of no single object, neither art itself nor life itself, but both mixed indistinguishably, and rather nastily, with money, fame, power, or prestige. The middlebrow curries favour with both sides equally." For a counterpoint, there is Russel Lynes's chapter entitled "Highbrow, Lowbrow, Middlebrow" from *The Tastemakers* (1954). More recently, this issue has been explored in Tom Perrin's *The Aesthetics of Middlebrow Fiction* (2015), the 2016 collection *Middlebrow and Gender* edited by Christoph Ehland and Cornelia Wächter, and Diana Holmes's *Middlebrow Matters* (2018).

[5] While the exclusion of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* from any discussion censored novels in 1928 may seem like an oversight, I have omitted it from my discussion for several reasons. First, my dissertation is primarily concerned with the public exchange of ideas that occurred because of widespread media coverage of censored texts that went to trial like Joyce's *Ulysses* and Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*. Secondly, the suppression *of Lady Chatterley's Lover* in 1928 was largely the result of an unwillingness on the part of publishers to commit to the work in an uncensored form, and the famous trial that overturned this suppression was not carried out until 1959. For more on the trials of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, see the *The Trial of Lady Chatterley* (1961), edited by C.H. Rolph.

Although highbrow art was viewed as the product of the cultural elite, it had significantly lower circulation than works considered middlebrow. In the wake of the *Ulysses* trial, however, it became clear that targeting highbrow literature for suppression came with serious drawbacks. Prominent members of the cultural elite came to its defense, and the clamor for media coverage of highbrow scandal resulted in more demand for the novel than if it had been published unopposed. The suppression of major works was a necessary process for censors since it established the legal precedent needed to continue their purity campaigns, but these actions often led to the canonization of their targets. In the wake of the *Ulysses* trial, censors were careful about what novels they sought to suppress. 'Highbrow' fiction was often too risky since these works were less common but more vehemently defended by influential supporters. The middlebrow became a major site of literary censorship since suppression of these mass published works was less likely to draw the attention of the public or to find the financial support needed to defend against excessive litigation. Thus, when Hall published *The Well of Loneliness* in 1928, it became an immediate target for suppression for both its themes and cultural status.

I place *The Well of Loneliness* in context with four novels published between 1927 and 1928: Djuna Barnes's *Ladies Almanack*, Elizabeth Bowen's *The Hotel*, Compton Mackenzie's *Extraordinary Women,* and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*. Just as *The Well* was suppressed for its frank depictions of lesbian love, each of these novels deals with same-sex relationships. However, these contemporaneous works were not censored despite being published within a year of Hall's novel. Among the factors that allowed these texts to go unsuppressed, I argue, was a conscious effort on the part of the authors to avoid igniting the anger of censors by obfuscating themes or couching controversial material in parody and pastiche. It was Hall's frankness and the ease with which censors could speak to the obscene matter in her novel that made it a target of

suppression. The easier it was to understand the material in an obscene novel, the greater the threat it presented to the public.

The modernist novel of the 20th century was greatly concerned with an individual subject's interiority, and although novels had long been viewed as possible objects of corruption, their consumption was largely a private affair. Unlike the theatrical work which is always a communal experience and is therefore more immediate in provoking dialogue about its themes and content, the novel offered a more measured, subjective, and individualized experience. However, Joyce and Hall both released their novels in an era of rapid globalization during which an evolving media landscape facilitated the international spread of ideas. The suppression of "Nausicaa" in *The Little Review* in 1921 quickly became international news. An Irish author—living in exile in continental Europe—was having his writing suppressed in the United States. The media frenzy over a decidedly cosmopolitan story's struggles brought new attention to the censorship industry and the possibilities of the novel. Once discussions of *Ulysses's* obscene content began publicly circulating, the novel could no longer hide behind its interiority. The public act of suppressing a private, monologic novel of interiority turned its consumption into a dialogic, communal experience. Suppression of novels during the interwar years facilitated new possibilities for authors to exploit these growing communities of readers through clever manipulation of the censorship industry.

The actions of the censorship industry blurred the lines between the public and private consumption of media, and any discussion of modern censorship divided along genre lines ignores how censorship transcended generic classifications. While I owe a debt to Sean Latham's

The Art of Scandal for its complex examination of the roman à clef[6] and the comprehensive exploration of theatrical censorship undertaken in John H. Houchin's *Censorship of the American Theatre in the Twentieth Century,* my dissertation is located at the intersection of these genre studies. In his book *Filthy Materials,* Chris Forster argues that the history of modern obscenity cannot be understood without first understanding "the intersection of the history of media technology and the history of literature" (2). Although my dissertation acknowledges the growth of media technology and the rise of cinema, it primarily examines the shifting preoccupation of censors with genre. I argue that American theatrical productions provoked a growing censorship industry's desire to police dialogic, communal obscenity. Just as the novel thrives on suppression to increase publicity and open dialogues around obscenity, stage productions are predicated on the communal act of experiencing narratives. As more authors and editors began strenuously defending their works against obscenity charges, litigation against novels became harder to justify. Although theatrical censorship has a history dating back to the Middle Ages, changes in the power structures of the censorship industry led to a reinvigorated focus on suppressing dramatic productions in the 1920s and '30s. The suppression of the stage productions became a far more effective and successful means of policing morality since shutting down a production was often simpler than censoring a novel.

I call attention to Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* (1928) and Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour* (1934) as the history of these works reveal how dramatically attitudes towards obscenity shifted throughout the '20s and '30s. Both plays were successful Broadway productions and toured the United States extensively; O'Neill won a Pulitzer, and Hellman's

[6] The roman à clef, or novel with a key, emerged in the 17th century as a largely satirical form meant to interrogate the real world through fiction and remains one of the most popular genres of semi-autobiographical writing. For more on the genre, see Chapter 2: "True Fictions and False Histories: The Secret Rise of the Roman à Clef" from Sean Latham's *The Art of Scandal* (2009)

play inspired two Hollywood adaptations.[7] Their success is significant because these plays share several similarities to the censored novels by Joyce and Hall. Just as *Ulysses* is a sprawling, obscene novel of interiority, *Strange Interlude* is a nine-act play—notorious for its obscene discussions of sex and infidelity—whose five-hour production included a dinner intermission (Miller 121). Like Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, Hellman's *The Children's Hour* explores the harmful impact of gossip and the social repercussions of same-sex relationships. Nonetheless, productions of O'Neill and Hellman's plays experienced suppression on a much smaller scale than either Joyce or Hall. By the time *Strange Interlude* and *The Children's Hour* were published, public attitudes towards each work's unique obscenities had changed significantly. By the time, O'Neill wrote his play exploring sexual promiscuity through theatrical thought asides, *Ulysses* had already garnered major acclaim for its chaotic, obscene stream-of-consciousness. Similarly, years after Hall fought for acceptance in *The Well of Loneliness,* Hellman found success writing about the taboo of same-sex relationships.

The censorship industry fostered a radical reassessment of what was possible in literature. This era was monumental in the refinement of some of the most well-known experimental techniques of modernism: the stream-of-consciousness, free-indirect discourse, and non-linear temporality, among others. Without a firm understanding of the pervasive climate of obscenity censorship in the '20s and '30s, it is difficult to fully grasp the impact this period had on the development of experimental modernism. Interrogating how these concerns crossed generic

[7] *The Children's Hour* is particularly notable for its connection to the Hays Code. The first film adaptation of Hellman's work, *These Three* (1936) had the lesbian plot removed because of the Motion Picture Production Code's widespread application. It was not until the 1961 adaptation starring Audrey Hepburn, that this plot was restored. Interestingly, the Hays code saw significant application in the film industry starting in 1934, the same year that Hellman released *The Children's Hour*. As film historian Thomas Doherty notes in his book, *Hollywood's Censor: Joseph I. Breen and the Production Code Administration*, when the Hays code was first coming into frequent use "the chosen medium for censorship was paper not celluloid" (81). Film censorship would become a major avenue of obscenity censorship beginning in the '30s and not slowing until around 1968, but it arose from the same literary censorship that was prominent in the '20s and '30s by focusing on narratives over the post-production product.

boundaries shows how the application of obscenity censorship was also tacit acknowledgment of the instructive, transformational power of modern narratives that was not beholden to any individual genre. The history of the censorship industry is the history of Anglo-American modernism.

Chapter one establishes the foundation of my argument about the influence of interwar censorship on literary modernism. I read the publication history of James Joyce's *Ulysses* to illustrate the productive potential of censorship and how it encouraged Joyce to press against the boundary of social decency and publish a work of uncompromising obscenity. Scholarship on *Ulysses* has long been as concerned with the circumstances surrounding the text's composition as with the final product.[8] Due to its notoriously laborious publication struggles and nearly decade long composition, the impact of *Ulysses* cannot be understood without examining the extent of these challenges. Using the extensive collection of Joyce's *Ulysses* manuscripts compiled through *The James Joyce Archives* by distinguished Joyce scholar Michael Groden, I trace the amplification of obscene material in the "Circe" episode to argue that accusations of obscenity—and the subsequent suppression of the novel's "Nausicaa" episode—led to Joyce's reinvigorated commitment to his original vision and the publication of a more obscene and stylistically unique novel. Compiled by Joyce's biographer, Richard Ellmann[9], Joyce's comprehensive collection of letters provide additional insight into this period of creative evolution, and when read alongside the extensive revisions to his manuscripts, shows an author concerned with restoring a text that was censored—by friends and publishers—against his will.

[8] Michael Groden's Ulysses *in Progress* (1977) is perhaps the most famous example. More recently, Eric Bulson's Ulysses *in Numbers* (2020) undertakes a similar study with the help of digital humanities.
[9] See *Letters of James Joyce vol. 1-3* (1966).

Although *Ulysses* has a storied history and an impressive archive of publication materials, the scope of what is left to say about *Ulysses* composition is still significant. Since the publication of these archives in the late '70s, copious essays, chapters, and monographs have emerged to help illuminate the complex, multifaceted history of *Ulysses*. These examinations range from shorter works—such as Paul St. Amour's chapter on Joyce and the intersection between publication and copyright law[10]—to more exhaustive works like Kevin Birming's *The Most Dangerous Book,* which traces the history of *Ulysses* from Joyce's years living in Dublin through its eventual publication in the U.S. in 1933. One thread that has emerged in nearly all these examinations of *Ulysses's* publication is that of its relationship to literary censorship.

The history of this suppression and its connection to censorship and modern obscenity remains the subject of much scholarship on *Ulysses*. Chapters on the novel appear in numerous influential texts on modernism and censorship, from Adam Parkes' *Modernism and the Theater of Censorship* (1996) where Parkes suggests that *Ulysses* "[invites] readers to scrutinize the reproductive discourse underpinning [. . .] obscenity law" (69), to Celia Marshik's *British Modernism and Censorship* (2006), which argues that Joyce's text "encouraged his readers to examine the basis of purity movements, to question the distinctions and judgments upon which they relied" (149). My research intersects with several of these scholarly threads. While I owe a debt to the work of those scholars of censorship such as Marshik and Parkes, I expand on the question of how censorship impacted the publication of *Ulysses* by undertaking a more exhaustive mapping of censorships influence on Joyce's text through extensive manuscript and biographical work more akin to that of Michael Groden. By examining Joyce's letters and the "Circe" manuscripts I show that from 1920-1922—while dealing with the censorship of

[10] From St. Amour's *The Copywrights* (2003).

"Nausicaa," drafting "Circe," editing the rest of the text, and securing a publisher for *Ulysses*—Joyce remained predominantly concerned with restoring the obscenity of his text as a direct challenge to censors and critics.

"Circe" serves as the lynchpin to reading censorship's impact on *Ulysses*. By mapping numerous revisions to the most obscene passages of "Circe" onto the letters of Joyce and the events surrounding *The Little Review's* trial of "Nausicaa," I show how Joyce wove his concerns over the prolonged, painful publication of *Ulysses* into the fabric of the text itself and how these changes impacted the style and form of the novel. The scale and focus of the changes to "Circe" configure the episode into a meta-commentary on the events surrounding the turbulent serialization and prosecution of *Ulysses*. In composing the episode as he does, Joyce makes the argument that his text's obscenity is not the perverse, corrupting influence that critics and censors had argued it was. By parodying the trials and tribulations of *Ulysses's* real-world struggles, Joyce encourages his audience to reevaluate the corrupting influence of obscene literature.

Joyce's battle with the censorship industry led to public acknowledgment of the methods used to control which art was deemed suitable for public consumption. In the wake of the "Nausicaa" trial, it became apparent that public opinion was diverging significantly from the will of the censor. In the years that followed, modern artists and the censors both adapted to face these challenges in different ways. Artists of the period—recognizing the significant publicity generated by controversy—were emboldened to adhere to their original creative visions and push the boundaries of acceptability. In attempting to censor obscene art, authorities were indirectly responsible for a critical reassessment of the modern project because artists began to recognize that "the struggle against stylistic complacency was also a struggle against a set of normative

values that, taken together, constitute 'decency'" (Rabaté 131), and it became quickly apparent that the buying public had very different ideas of decency than the censors. Joyce's overwhelming popularity—despite the suppression of his novel in the United States and Britain—forced censors to shift the focus of their challenges from obscene content to obscene theme and reconsider the wisdom of challenging highbrow modernism.

Chapter two focuses on the trial of Radclyffe Hall's 1928 novel, *The Well of Loneliness* and four other novels published within a year of Hall's work: Djuna Barnes's *Ladies Almanack*, Elizabeth Bowen's *The Hotel*, Compton Mackenzie's *Extraordinary Women,* and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*. As I establish in my first chapter, the aftermath of the suppression of *Ulysses* encouraged censors to avoid direct confrontation with objectionable scenes and focus more directly on objectionable themes. By 1928, although scenes of defecation and masturbation were certainly obscene, their depictions failed to shock or scandalize as they had before *Ulysses's* very public, internationally covered trial. In the wake of these events, censors began a subtle shift from targeting a work for explicitly obscene content and instead emphasizing objectionable themes. While obscene matter was still a concern, the *methods* of exploring taboo material and the thematic *intention* of a work more frequently came under attack by censors.

While *Ulysses* was notorious precisely for how it wove lowbrow humor about sex and excrement into a highbrow, experimental novel, Radclyffe Hall's novel was more concerned with illustrating the plight of marginalized individuals and advocating for systemic changes to the public perception of lesbians. In the wake of World War I, concerns over the societal role of women were a major focus for the British government and lesbianism posed a potentially greater

threat to the status quo than male homosexuality.[11] Looking at how authorities rendered lesbians invisible by refusing to acknowledge their existence in legislation, I make the case that Hall's greatest transgression was not the obscene content of her novel—which is rather tame in its discussions of sexuality—but her sincere desire to increase visibility for society's inverts[12]. Here is where the connection between Hall and the other lesbian novels of 1928 becomes apparent: the works of Barnes, Bowen, Mackenzie, and Woolf each deal with similar themes of queer sexuality but none of their works were deemed obscene enough to warrant suppression. Whereas *The Well of Loneliness* makes overt pleas for lesbian visibility and acceptance, the other novels from that year either obscure their sexual explorations or hide behind a defense of parody and farce. Thus, the directness of her theme and the expanded reach of the middlebrow novel put a target on Hall's back that these other authors avoided.

The Well of Loneliness was deemed obscene not for explicit depictions of sex, but for daring to suggest that lesbian love was as valuable as heterosexual love. When the heroine Stephen Gordon—confronting her mother's condemnation—claims that "[a]s my father loved, I loved. As a man loves a woman, that was how I loved – protectively, like my father. I wanted to give all I had in me to give. It made me feel terribly strong . . . and gentle. It was good, good, *good*" (Hall 183), Hall positions her novel as a counterpoint to the conservative bigotry of the era. In the aftermath of World War I, texts that challenged rigidly patriarchal, heterosexual social roles were deemed a significant threat and Hall's openness made her novel that much harder for censors to ignore.

[11] A shift in the status of women following World War I and the rise of the suffrage movement were significant concerns of the British government. For a comprehensive study of lesbianism in this period see Deborah Cohler's excellent book *Citizen, Invert, Queer: Lesbianism and War in Early Twentieth-Century Britain* (2010).
[12] In the parlance of the time, "invert" was the term most often used to describe homosexuals.

The Well's subject matter was not unique to Hall's novel at the time of its publication. Shortly before, Elizabeth Bowen had released her first novel, *The Hotel,* which follows Sydney Crosby, a "queer" individual who "had curious ties" with an older woman she meets on holiday (53). Unlike Hall's novel, however, Bowen veils this queer connection by keeping discussions of Sydney and the elder Mrs. Kerr's relationship in the realm of gossip and never explicitly identifying their involvement as romantic. Similarly, when Virginia Woolf published her fictional biography of Vita Sackville-West—*Orlando*—that same year, she relied on obfuscation and satire to explore the life and experiences of the titular Orlando. The protagonist begins life as a man before experiencing a change of sex that, "though it altered their future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity" (Woolf 138). In the novel, Woolf explores the fluid nature of sexuality but veils its sincerity by directing the narrative through an unreliable narrator's second-hand accounts of Orlando's life. This same year, Compton Mackenzie released his novel *Extraordinary Women* in which the lives of many prominent lesbian women are parodied. Setting his novel on the fictional island of Sirene whose "reputation as a decomposer of character was classic" (25), Mackenzie explores the themes of Hall's novel while softening their impact through pastiche and parody.

Unlike the previous novels, which hide behind satire, gossip, and unreliable narration, Djuna Barnes's *Ladies Almanack* took a far more open approach to discussing lesbianism. The novel went so far as to suggest that lesbians came from all walks of life, a claim that would have been deeply controversial at a time when lesbian was still a term largely relegated to academic discourse. When Barnes argues that the lesbian comes "[u]p from the Cellar, down from the Bed of Matrimony, under sleep and over come. Past watching Eye and seeking Hand and well over Hedge [. . .] Some in Nightgowns and some in Fashion, some hot with Home work and some

cool with Decisions. Indeed some of all sorts" (53), she contradicts Britain's widespread vow of silence on the subject and challenges conservative views of the era. However, the combination of experimental form and private publication meant that Barnes's reach was significantly limited. The threat of *Ladies Almanack* was diminished when compared with a highly publicized and widely circulated novel like *The Well of Loneliness*.

As a roman à clef, Hall's novel was an extension of its author's life, and its pleas resonate with the society in which they were written. Hall drew heavily from her own life when writing her novel, and her correspondence at the time of writing show that she knew that in writing her novel she was fully aware of her role as an advocate for a marginalized community.[13] Hall was a wealthy and moderately successful writer and "[a]s a member of the culture of Sapphic celebrity in the 1920s, Hall repeatedly references not only herself in her fiction but her partner and her social circles in Paris and London as well. The deliberate play with autobiographical reference in her writing constitutes it as partly a personal archive" (Dellamora 6). It was the inclusion of these real-life parallels that so concerned censors. By refusing to disguise the fact that her novel was drawn from personal experience, Hall played directly into the fear that her novel might serve as an introduction to female homosexuality and corrupt young women into becoming inverts. As a writer of middlebrow fiction, Hall may not have had the same cultural cachet as Virgina Woolf or Djuna Barnes, but her novels did reach a significant audience of readers.[14]

---

[13] Two biographies, Richard Dellamora's *Radclyffe Hall: A Life in Writing* (2011) and Lovat Dickson's *Radclyffe Hall at the Well of Loneliness* (1975), provide a useful overview of Hall's compositional process and expectations for the novel. Additionally, although *Your John: The Love Letters of Radclyffe Hall* (1997) collects only her letters from 1934-1942, they offer valuable insight into Hall's relationships and illuminate how her personal life influenced her writing.

[14] A highbrow novel often came with a significantly inflated price to reflect its status. This meant that middlebrow fiction tended to have a wider reach because of its relatively lower cost. Although Hall's novel was expensive at the time of publication, it was lower than many other novels of the period. For example, Compton Mackenzie's *Extraordinary Women* was nearly twice as expensive as *The Well of Loneliness* at time of publication (Cohler 184-187).

In addition to the emphasis on objectionable theme over obscene content, the attention of censors moved away from the highbrow in the 1920s and '30s. The aftermath of *Ulysses's* trial led to a large-scale reassessment of censorship industry and encouraged censors to think more critically about the works they chose to challenge publicly. While most censorship still took place before publication and was therefore largely invisible, it was important for censors to establish precedent for their concerns through legislative action to increase their leverage and hold writers and publishers in check. For a long time, middlebrow literature had gone largely unchallenged through legislative action. Most middlebrow works went to press with little interference from censors already overwhelmed with policing high and lowbrow art. Hanna Roche has suggested in her book *The Outside Thing* that during this period "lesbian writers effectively 'had their way' with the middlebrow, the normative, and the conventional. Lesbian writers did not submit or surrender to the heterosexual romance plot. Instead, they *turned* it to their advantage" (20) since taboo subject matter could often be discussed in middlebrow fiction without raising concern and the buying public desired this material. However, when Hall published *The Well of Loneliness*, it was the rare work of middlebrow fiction that managed to see reviews in small regional newspapers and national literary journals alike, and this set it apart from traditional middlebrow fiction.

In writing a novel of advocacy, Hall found more success than she had anticipated, and "in telling of her own battle she had seen herself as a champion of her oppressed sisters and brothers. She did not think of the book in terms of its possible commercial success. In fact she thought it might be a disappointment to her publisher" (Dickson 140). Thus, when the novel received international critical attention, it was reviewed in publications of all stripes. While the novel was largely seen as moderately entertaining but not particularly unique, very few commented on the

sexuality of the novel. Thus, it was significant when James Douglas—a critic at the *Sunday Express*—wrote a review in which he famously claimed that "I would rather give a healthy boy or a healthy girl a phial of prussic acid than this novel. Poison kills the body, but moral poison kills the soul" (38). It was this review that brought the attention of Hall's novel into the crosshairs of censors. James Douglas went out of his way to publicize what he saw as an unacceptable novel of moral corruption and to make every effort to have the work banned from publication. Without this publicity, other reviews suggest that Hall's novel would likely have passed as a minor footnote in the history of modernism but instead it took its place alongside James Joyce's *Ulysses* as one of the most famously censored novels of the 20th century.[15]

Chapter three examines the influence of *Ulysses* and *The Well of Loneliness* on the shape of both the censorship industry and the trajectory of experimental modernism. In this chapter, I argue that without the international scandals associated with these novels—and the impact they had on reshaping public opinion of what was obscene—modernism and the censorship industry may have gone in a very different direction. These famous censorship trials also inaugurated a cultural reevaluation of what was permissible in art and, consequently, a movement away from the novel as the central target of the censorship industry.[16] To make this point, I examine the success and minor suppression of Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* and Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour,* American plays published during a period of significant upheaval in the censorship industry that illuminate the final years of censorship's stranglehold on artistic expression. These plays, I argue, represent the natural progression of modernism from *Ulysses* and *The Well of Loneliness*, respectively. Without Joyce's obscene pseudo-drama in "Circe" or

[15] Chapter 4 of Laura Doan and Jay Prosser's fantastic, edited collection *Palatable Poisons* (2001) provides extensive excerpts from early reviews of *The Well of Loneliness*.
[16] Policing obscene novels continued, of course; D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) and Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* (1934) were two of the most heavily suppressed novels at the time of their publication.

Molly Bloom's stream-of-consciousness musing in "Penelope," *Strange Interlude* would not have been as formally experimental or radically obscene. Likewise, without the sincere exploration of female homosexuality in *The Well of Loneliness*, Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour* would have had a harder time finding an audience as eager for more explorations on the theme.

Tracing the production history of *Strange Interlude* and *The Children's Hour* shows how fractured the consensus on censorship action was becoming. Although the Watch and Ward Society sprung up from the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice[17], attitudes in New York had changed significantly while the atmosphere of censorship in Boston continued to struggle against public opinion. Although published and performed several years apart, both O'Neill and Hellman's plays were considered major critical successes. Each had significant Broadway production runs, toured extensively, sold well in published form, and received significant critical and popular acclaim. However, the Board of Censors in Boston still banned their production when producers attempted to bring tours there. This opposition to works of art deemed acceptable by numerous publications, regional governments, and censorship boards throughout the country were Boston's attempt to continue fighting against the tide of public opinion. In observing the excess censorship activity in Boston in the late '30s, it becomes clear that the censorship industry was on the decline as World War II approached. Public opinion was no longer on the side of the censors and works that were deemed obscene at the turn of the century were no longer seeing significant opposition at anything more than the regional level.

Like *Ulysses* before it, *Strange Interlude* was heavily concerned with sex and the disruption of the private/public divide. O'Neill's largest work, *Strange Interlude* often resembles

[17] Originating in 1873, and founded by the infamous Anthony Comstock, the group was one of the premier organizations determined to police public morality.

a novel or closet drama instead of a traditional stage play. Where the influence of *Ulysses* is most obvious is in O'Neill's extensive thought asides which greatly resemble the novelistic stream-of-consciousness and an atypical narrative choice for stage productions. From early in the text, the character of Marsden articulates the play's goal of exposing "what beastly incidents our memories insist on cherishing! . . . the ugly and disgusting" (O'Neill 25). Infidelity, deception, and sexual promiscuity are just a few concerns of the play, and the thought asides provide insight into how frequently taboo subjects occupy the minds of the public.

Where *Strange Interlude* drew heavily on the content and themes of Joyce's landmark novel, Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour* was obscene for similar reasons that Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* was seen as a threat to the status quo. Set in an all-girls boarding school, Hellman's play explores contemporary anxiety over lesbianism. Exploring the dangerous mobility of lies driven by gossip, the play interrogates what it would mean for children to witness two women engaged in a sexual relationship. The events are depicted in the play as too obscene to be spoken aloud with the word "lesbian" never being uttered. The most explicit acknowledgment of the purported acts come from the perpetrator of the lie, Mary, who merely informs her confidant that "we hear things [. . .] Funny things [. . .] I'd tell you, but I got to whisper it" (Hellman 39). The actual charges of homosexuality against the headmistresses, Martha and Karen, are never directly named. However, the consequences of this accusation are shown in detail as the accused women lose their school, are ostracized from their community, and Martha commits suicide. These works each developed from a particular thread of the censorship industry pioneered by the works of Joyce and Hall. O'Neill and Hellman owe much of their success to *Ulysses*, *The Well of Loneliness*, and the shift in public opinion that accompanied their suppression.

Through these works I interrogate how, during the late ’20s and throughout the ’30s, the censorship industry experienced significant international resistance from authors and publishers even as the city of Boston, Massachusetts remained a major locus of suppression. The city had a very active vice society, The Watch and Ward Society, whose actions resulted in significant censorship activity during these decades. However, as the period came to a close, the society began losing ground against increasingly vocal and litigious opposition. As the society began to lose its luster, city officials—primarily the Board of Censors—sought to police the publication and presentation of obscene art while the public was reassessing what should be deemed obscene. This period was one in which the divide between censor and public was stretched to the breaking point and the censorship industry began to crumble.

Although *Ulysses* and *The Well of Loneliness* were successfully suppressed in the years prior to these events, both works went on to sell very well wherever they were published. In the case of *Ulysses*, this censorship led to the creation of a flourishing black market for the novel. With the increased visibility and popular success afforded these novels by their censorship struggles, it became apparent that in publicly challenging prominent novels there was significant risk of creating the exact conditions censors sought to suppress. The perception of the novel in this period began to shift and the private act of reading was no longer viewed as the threat it once was. In his book *Literary Obscenity*, Erik Bachman suggests that in the end “the final refutation of criminal book obscenity ended up having to do more with the futility of believing that obscene books could actually instigate obscene actions than it did with the difficulty of legislators and judges in accounting for the experience of obscenity itself” (58). It is primarily the conditions highlighted in this claim that reinvigorated the suppression of theater during the late ’20s. Whereas it became harder to justify the suppression of novels because of their private

consumption, the act of attending a theatrical performance was an inherently communal one, and as such, "censors have traditionally viewed theater as a volatile, unstable entity [. . .] they worry that actors and audiences are porous and that the fiction of the stage might be acted out as a reality in non-theatrical space and time" (Houchin 2). However, the nature of theatrical production meant that censorship found itself becoming increasingly regionalized and the act of national suppression was far less frequent.

"The Spectacle of Censorship: Interwar Obscenity and Modern Literary Form" brings attention to the significance of the censorship industry on the development of experimental modernism. Although theirs was largely an antagonistic relationship, both censors and artists benefited significantly from their confrontations and made good use of the publicity their high-profile clashes garnered to elevate their careers. The chronological examination of censorship starting with *Ulysses*, *The Well of Loneliness* in its aftermath, and subsequently *Strange Interlude* and *The Children's Hour* illustrates this development through high-profile obscenity cases. Without a firm understanding of the struggles faced by artists in this period it is difficult to fully grasp the reactionary landscape that fostered such creative innovation and encouraged modernism's enduring, influential formal techniques.

Chapter 1: *Ulysses's* Obscene Revision

Of all the episodes in *Ulysses* constructed between the suppression of "Lestrygonians" in May 1919 and the publication of the novel in 1922, "Circe" bears the brunt of James Joyce's obscene force. Initially drafted during the years that "Nausicaa" was under heavy public scrutiny, "Circe" was shaped by both the public response to obscenity in his novel's early episodes and by the lingering resentment over those who had edited his work against his wishes. By placing this episode in a brothel and focusing on sexually charged interactions between Leopold Bloom, Stephen, and the prostitutes of Nighttown, Joyce took the subtler obscenity of his earlier episodes and laid it bare for his reader. Using the conceit of Bloom's vivid imagination to reshape reality, Joyce played with the boundaries of decency in ways that his other episodes resisted, and by forming the episode as a pseudo-drama, he demands the reader view this episode as a spectacle meant to illicit a response from the "audience."

While "Circe" was not the only episode to receive significant edits and revision during its composition, its proximity to *The Little Review*'s suppression of "Nausicaa" and its position as the final adventure[18] of *Ulysses* make it an important reference point for viewing the impacts of obscenity censorship. "Circe" is a perfect vertical slice of Joyce's novel and composition process as it contains the most obscene material in the novel and reimagines and enhances the vulgarity of events from earlier in the text. The episode is the first in which Joyce had complete freedom to write the episode and see it published as he had originally intended it. It is no coincidence that shortly after his work was deemed unpublishable in a serialized format Joyce created his most stylistically experimental and contextually obscene episode. Without the threat

[18] Joyce structures *Ulysses* in three acts: the first three episodes make up the Telemachia, the middle twelve are the Odyssey, and the last three are the Nostos. "Circe" is the final part of the Odyssey.

of censorship and the hindering hand of his editors on earlier episodes, "Circe" could not have been written as it was. "Circe"'s influence on the final text led to the creation of one of modernism's most successful, obscene, and formally innovative novels and built a foundation upon which many writers of the period could innovate.[19]

Years before "Nausicaa" was deemed obscene in U.S. court and more than a decade before Judge John M. Woolsey would overrule the United States' obscenity charges against *Ulysses*[20]—allowing for the publication of Joyce's novel in the United States—those close to Joyce had foreseen significant concern regarding the novel's prospective publishing rights. In early 1918, soon after Joyce completed work on the first chapter of *Ulysses,* "Telemachus," Ezra Pound began efforts to find a publication willing to accept Joyce's newest work for serialization. Pound contacted Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap, publishers of a small American literary magazine known as *The Little Review.* While this was merely a matter of convenience at the time—Pound was heavily involved with *The Little Review* at this point in its history[21]—these efforts would have significant repercussions on the development and publication of *Ulysses*. In her autobiography, Anderson recalled that "James Joyce's '*Ulysses*' began in *The Little Review* in March, 1918. We ran it month after month for three years and four times the issues containing it were burned by order of the United States Post Office, because of alleged obscenity" (175). From its earliest printing, *Ulysses* was opposed by critics and censors in the United States.[22] It

[19] Chapter 3 provides a detailed account of the stylistic influence of *Ulysses* on Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* (1928).
[20] Woolsey famously ruled that in *Ulysses* he could "not detect anywhere the leer of the sensualist." See *United States v. One Book Called "Ulysses"*, 5 F. Supp. 182. Southern District of New York, 1933.
[21] For a firsthand account of Pound's relationship with *The Little Review,* see *Pound/the Little Review* (1988), a collection of his correspondence with Margaret Anderson.
[22] Notably, the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice was one of the major players in seeing Joyce's novel banned in the United States. In my third chapter, their counterpart in Boston—The Watch and Ward Society—would become the cornerstone of the "Banned in Boston" era.

was this opposition that would eventually lead *The Little Review* to stand trial on charges of obscenity and result in *Ulysses* no longer being serialized.

Although Joyce had yet to begin writing his more obscene episodes, the work was already considered by Pound to be a target for suppression. Recalling the events surrounding *The Little Review's* decision to publish *Ulysses*, Anderson recounts that "[i]n February [1918] Ezra [Pound] sent us the first chapter of a manuscript he recommended highly, saying he had no idea if we would care to print it as it would probably involve us in difficulties with the censors" (174). The "Telemachus" episode referenced in Anderson's autobiography was one of the tamer episodes of Joyce's novel, most notable for the inclusion of a bit of blasphemy, misogyny, and a morning swim. The fact that concerns over the publication of these early episodes were already being raised makes it clear why later depictions of defecation and public masturbation saw *The Little Review* facing suppression. Knowing from the outset that the work risked suppression if published in its current form, Pound understood that Anderson and Heap would be taking a significant risk if they agreed to publish the work. Having already experienced suppression and seizure at the hands of United States Post Office for the publication of Wyndham Lewis's "Cattleman's Springtime" in 1917, Anderson and Heap were no novices to the dangers of publishing obscene work (Baggett 176). Regardless of the threat of censorship or the personal and professional damage publishing the work might cause, Anderson recalls that upon reading the draft—and considering the quality and significance of the work[23]—she informed Pound that "[w]e'll print it if it's the last effort of our lives" (Anderson 174-5). While this effort was not the last of their lives, it did signal the beginning of a protracted battle that nearly sank *The Little Review* and hindered Joyce's ability to publish his work in the United States until 1933.

[23] Anderson believed that Joyce's novel was "the most beautiful thing [*The Little Review* would] ever have" (175).

Joyce was no novice when it came to the censorship of his work. Well before the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice would target *The Little Review* for their publication of "Nausicaa" in April 1920, Joyce had experienced censorship at the hands of his friend and editor, Ezra Pound. Although Pound had been a firm advocate for the text as early as December 1917, going so far as to express to Joyce a belief that "I suppose we'll be damn well suppressed if we print the text as it stands. BUT it is damn wellworth it. I see no reason why the nations should sit in darkness merely because Anthony Comstock was horrified at the sight of his grandparents in copulation, and there after ran wode in a loin cloth" (Pound, *Selected Letters of Ezra Pound* 129). Pound's tune changed in 1918 when he read the "Calypso" episode.

After composing "Calypso," Joyce sent a draft to Pound, and upon reading the draft, Pound wrote to Joyce informing him that he believed the work was being done a disservice by focusing on a depiction of defecation in the final pages. Writing to Joyce in March 1918, Pound informed Joyce that he firmly believed:

> ["Calypso"] Has excellent things in it; but you overdo the matter. Leave the stool to Geo. Robey. He has been doing "down where the asparagus grows", for some time. I think certain things simply bad writing, in this section. Bad because you waste the violence. You use a stronger word than you need, and this is bad art, just as any needless superlative is bad art. The contrast between Blooms [insert: interior] poetry and his outward surroundings is excellent, but it will come up without such detailed treatment of the dropping feces [. . .] In the thing as it stands you will lose effectiveness. The excrements will prevent people from noticing the quality of things contrasted. (Pound, *Pound/Joyce* 131)

To address his concerns, Pound edited the draft of "Calypso," writing to John Quinn—one of Joyce's frequent patrons and collector of Joyce's manuscripts—that he had "deleted about twenty lines" (Pound, *Selected Letters of Ezra Pound* 147) to minimize its focus on defecation before passing it along to *The Little Review* for publication. Following the publication of "Calypso," Joyce continued working on his novel and sending drafts to Pound, who would make small edits—to avoid the ire of U.S. censors—before sending the manuscripts to *The Little Review* for publication.

Pound found himself pulled between his role as Joyce's editor and his passion for the work being produced. Although he continually challenged Joyce to make edits to his manuscript and tone down objectionable content, he could not help but advocate for Joyce's work and often felt that there was a great deal of genius in *Ulysses*. Pound often expressed his frustration about this complex relationship in his letters to John Quinn. In April 1919, shortly after reading "Scylla and Charybdis," Pound wrote to Quinn about his frustration in knowing that the United States Post Office was likely to seize and suppress what he believed was "Joyce's best & most intellectual chapter," and he went so far as to accuse the United States of having an aversion to "any real food for the intellect" (176). Despite feeling strongly that the work was deserving of praise and Joyce's strongest episode so far, Pound could not entirely remove himself from the role of critic and editor. He felt that Joyce risked too much in trying to antagonize with his prose and suggested that Joyce make cuts to the episode to avoid further issues with the press. Pound told Quinn that he believed that this "[m]atter does Joyce no good.—i.e., he has gone rather far in one or two other places" and because of this, Pound was forced to resume his role as editor and "[try] to restrain him" (176), knowing full well that if Joyce refused to make the proposed edits to the episode, it would surely be suppressed by the United States Post Office just as

"Lestrygonians" had been. Although Pound would eventually recuse himself from the role of Joyce's editor and no longer openly involve himself in the work's publication, he continued to have a hidden hand in shaping the later serialized episodes as they appeared in *The Little Review*.

By the time the final section of "Nausicaa" was published in the July-August 1920 edition of *The Little Review*, Pound was no longer working closely with Joyce on his manuscript, but he found himself on the periphery of the upcoming litigation against *The Little Review* because of his proximity to the magazine and his relationship to Margaret Anderson, Jane Heap, and their lawyer, John Quinn. In speaking with Quinn shortly after the seizure of the issue, Pound informed Quinn that "I myself made one or two deletions in the offending chapter of Joyce" even though he had merely been "[reading] through most of it simply as a spectator, being neither author nor editor and having no right to interfere." Regardless, Pound made significant edits to "Nausicaa" to obscure Bloom's public masturbation, and after its seizure by the United States Post Office he informed Quinn that "I can remember Mr Bloom does not *so* obviously and to the reader's knowledge go off in his pants at the sight of "Nausika's" leg as in the original version—at least I think I modified or spaced it out" (198). This interference was common for Joyce during the years he spent writing *Ulysses*, and his frustration over continual cuts and edits to his work plays out in the novel's episodes and letters written to friends and colleagues at this time.

When Joyce began writing "Nausicaa," he was fed up with the various demands placed on him to edit his work. Pound explained to Quinn that, even though he found great merit in "Nausicaa," his cuts were necessary to see the work published. However, by this point, Pound was aware of the toll that his edits were taking on Joyce, and he went so far as to admit that when he informed Joyce of the necessary change to the episode, he "did not, naturally, say I had made

it," and as a result he "received a thoroughly insulting and abusive letter" (198) from Joyce who did not wish to see the edits made to his work. Nonetheless, even with Joyce vehemently disagreeing with the changes made to the episode, Pound passed his modified version of the manuscript along to *The Little Review*, and that was the version that was ultimately published and suppressed. The changes made to "Nausicaa" were minor when taken individually. Most of the changes consisted of removing a single word, like when "Bloom 'recomposed his wet shirt,' [. . .] Pound had cut the word *wet,"* or he might have removed an objectionable phrase like when *"*[a] few pages later, the manuscript read, 'O sweety. All your little white up I saw. Dirty girl. Made me do love sticky.' Pound crossed out 'up I saw. Dirty girl.' And, prudently, 'love sticky' so that *The Little Review's* version was more discreet though less coherent" (Birming 197). Taken individually, these changes do not fundamentally alter the narrative of "Nausicaa," but when placed in the larger context of years of small edits to Joyce's work, they began to nag at Joyce.

While edits were regularly made to avoid suppression by the United States Post Office, several episodes had been involved in small-scale suppression during their serialization. Issues of *The Little Review* containing "Lestrygonians," "Scylla and Charybdis," and "Cyclops" had already been seized and suppressed well before the 1920 seizure of the "Nausicaa" issue and the construction of "Circe." Joyce believed that these edits were unnecessary and compromised the integrity of his work. Even before the issue of *The Little Review* containing "Lestrygonians" was seized by the United States Post Office in January 1919, Harriet Shaw Weaver wrote to Joyce's former publisher B.W. Huebsch that "[a]s regards *Ulysses* [Joyce] asks me to say that the fourth episode as published in the June issue of *The Little Review* is not the complete text and that the excised paragraphs must be reinstated and the altered ones restored before publication by you. In

the third episode, published in the March issue, a few sentences had also been excised and these should be restored too" (Ellmann v2.419). Well before the suppression of "Nausicaa," Joyce was preoccupied with ensuring his text would be "put back when the book is published" since edits made by Pound and others had resulted in "ruining [his] text" (452).

Thus, when "Nausicaa" was published, and Pound's minor edits continued to find their way into the published versions of his text, Joyce was convinced that the text would first be restored if it were to be published as a complete manuscript. Years of dealing with minor revisions to his creative vision had led Joyce to a point of creative obstinacy, and he began making changes to the original text that emphasized the obscenity in passages once edited or cut. As the most publicly objectionable episode, "Nausicaa" was certain to receive edits by Joyce between the serialization and final manuscript. While Pound had done his best to tone down the obscenity in the episode to allow it to be published without fear of suppression, in editing the episode following its serial publication "Joyce decided to make the tableau a bit more explicit. He restored 'love sticky' and the wetness to Bloom's shirt, of course, and he added a new insert as Gerty leans back: 'His hands and face were working and a tremour went over her.'" (Birming 198). Embellishments like these would become commonplace as Joyce continued to edit his novel. As suppression of his work continued, the number of obscene passages increased. However, Joyce would not make most of these changes until after he completed work on "Circe," the episode that caused him the greatest struggles and went through the most revisions. The majority of changes Joyce made to increase the obscenity of his novel were added only after the suppression of his work was made known to him and after the campaign against "Nausicaa" had begun in earnest.

Often, Joyce would be the last to know of the suppression of his work or the edits made by Pound or Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap at *The Little Review.* Due to the transient nature of Joyce's living conditions[24], it was difficult for Joyce to receive copies of *The Little Review* as he relied on Pound and others to send copies of the journal to wherever he might be living at the time. In letters written by Joyce during this period, he was often a month or two behind the news that issues of *The Little Review* had been suppressed by the time he had learned of their fate. In November 1920—several months after "Nausicaa"'s suppression and after Pound had written to Quinn about edits made to the episode—Joyce wrote a letter to Pound explaining that:

> I knew nothing of the affair till yesterday when Mr Thayer of the *Dial* wrote to me offering two cents a word or more in exceptional case and saying that he was sorry about the *Little Review*. This explained nothing and I had heard nothing from Miss Anderson, Miss Heap or Mr Rodker [. . .] The last number of the L.R. I saw was the July-August number with the close of the *Nausikaa* episode. Has no number appeared since then or has *The Oxen of the Sun* episode been published wholly or in part? Is the *Little Review* closed? (Ellmann v3.27-8)

Despite the continual suppression of his work—including the undermining of his creative vision by editors and close friends—Joyce continued to construct *Ulysses* in his original vision. Joyce made few comments in his letters about the suppression and censorship of his novel while composing his manuscript. Typically, he merely alluded to the suppression in passing to those he was communicating with before moving on to more pressing concerns (often related to his

[24] During the publication of *Ulysses*, Joyce relied heavily on the generosity of wealthy benefactors and odd jobs. As a result, he moved frequently while living in Trieste, Zurich, and Paris (Birming 3)

finances or deteriorating health)[25]. Nonetheless, as the novel neared completion and Joyce began searching for a publisher willing to release the work in its unedited form, the reality of censorship's impact on Joyce's composition of *Ulysses* became clearer.

Joyce felt that his work was wrongfully treated by those close to him, but he knew that circumstances would get worse before they got better. Joyce continued to work on drafting "Circe" while the suppression of "Nausicaa" went on largely without his input. Despite evidence suggesting that his work would continue being suppressed if significant changes were not made, Joyce refused to compromise on the extremity of the obscenity in his text. In September 1920—just a few months before completing his manuscript of "Circe"—Joyce wrote his friend Alessandro Francini Bruni, noting, "I have already written the *Circe* episode some six times. I think it is the strongest thing I have written in spite of my expulsion in circumstances known to the goddess who protects me" (Joyce, *Selected Letters of James Joyce* 269-70). "Circe," which was initially meant to be completed during a three month stay in Paris beginning July 1920, continued to expand in scope and intensity throughout the months that Joyce waited out the suppression of "Nausicaa" in *The Little Review*. As late as December 1920, Joyce was writing to Pound to note that "the Circe episode [was] nearing completion," but this occurred months before work on edits to the typescripts and page proofs would conclude. Despite the possibility of being unable to secure a contract for the work and knowing that this put himself and his family in great financial peril, Joyce refused to allow the same edits that were once made to "Calypso" and "Nausicaa" to be made to "Circe."

[25] In a letter to Ezra Pound, dated 12 December 1920, Joyce surrounds a brief discussion of *The Little Review*'s suppression of 'Nausicaa' by discussing his "bad fits of neuralgia," concerns over the state of his living conditions, and a financial gift from a benefactor (Ellman v3.32-33).

As the most formally unique and contextually explicit episode of his novel, "Circe" gave Joyce a great deal of agony during its composition. Even in the earliest episodes of *Ulysses*, Joyce made significant formal and stylistic choices that ran counter to traditions of literary style. Many of these changes were small formal tweaks like his reliance on dashes over quotation marks to denote dialogue or frequent perspective shifts in narration and temporality. However, he also took significant liberties with the grammatical structure of the text, such as his erratic mashing together of words to describe his "snotgreen," "scrotumtightening" sea in "Telemachus," or by creating new structures of language like in the closing moments of "Oxen of the Sun," where he brings together "a frightful jumble of Pidgin English, nigger English, Cockney, Irish, Bowery slang and broken doggerel" (252). These choices create a multifaceted and richly layered text that demands significant attention on the part of the reader, but they do not so dramatically alter the style of the novel as to make it unrecognizable as such. The text is still structured in traditional chapters (or episodes), the dialogue is demarcated from narration and internal monologue using dashes, while the perspectives may shift there is always a narrator tracking events for the reader, and the form of the text still relies on paragraph breaks and proper punctuation to structure the flow of events.

However, with the knowledge that *Ulysses* would no longer receive serialization if "Nausicaa" were deemed obscene in the United States courts, and with the possible publication of subsequent episodes on hold until that ruling was confirmed, Joyce had an opportunity to construct an episode free from the constraints of trying to please publishers and censors. Thus, "Circe" both serves as the final episode of *Ulysses's* Odyssey and reconfigures the rules of the text to allow the episodes of the Nostos—particularly "Ithaca" and "Penelope"—to continue pushing the boundaries of what is possible in literature. While the catechism of "Ithaca" and

Molly's stream-of-consciousness in "Penelope" are, in many ways, as stylistically unique as "Circe," the connections between "Circe" and the real-world publication and censorship struggles of *Ulysses* deepen the impact of Joyce's structural choices in ways that later episodes lack.

"Circe" is structured as a loose retelling of the events from the preceding episodes. The episode's primary function provides Joyce the opportunity to revisit significant moments from the greater whole of *Ulysses* from outside the confines of serial publication and the threat of suppression. While the order of events is not cleanly mapped onto the structure of "Circe," many scenes from earlier in the day are revisited and past actions are confronted directly by Leopold Bloom or Stephen Dedalus. Thus, the episode—structured as a pseudo-drama—consists of a series of confrontations presented on a fictional stage. The surreal nature of "Circe" allows confrontations that would have been impossible earlier in the text to play out in full for the reader. By allowing everyone and everything that Bloom and Stephen had encountered during the day to have a voice and defend themselves, Joyce creates a space where Bloom and Stephen must account for themselves and attempt to reconcile with the events of June 16th.

While not a perfect recreation, the episode begins in similar fashion to the whole of *Ulysses* with an ancillary character leading into the perspective of Stephen Dedalus, and while the similarities continue with Stephen's use of Latin, recalling Buck Mulligan's first words in "Telemachus,"[26] the events of "Circe" quickly shift to the perspective of Bloom as he seeks sustenance before finding himself visiting a local Dublin porkbutcher. Just as Bloom orders a pork kidney in the early pages of "Calypso," he now finds himself eschewing kosher dining again as he orders "a lukewarm pig's crubeen" and "a cold sheep's trotter," and just as he feeds a

[26] "*Introibo ad altare Dei"* (Joyce, *Ulysses* 3)

portion of the pork kidney to his cat in "Telemachus," he offers a portion of his meal to a hungry retriever before entering the brothel in Nighttown (Joyce, *Ulysses* 354). From the first moments of the episode, Joyce shades the events of the evening in experiences from earlier in the day and suggests that the episode will shed new light on previous events. In this way, "Circe" is set-up as a critical reflection of the novel up to this point and provides new and valuable insight into the lives of its characters.

Among the other events revisited by Bloom in the opening pages of "Circe" are his encounter with Sweny and the purchase of lemon soap and perfume for Molly, his encounter with Gerty from "Nausicaa," and his former love interest, Mrs. Breen. These confrontations each involve Bloom reconciling with an aspect of his afternoon and being asked to "[a]ccount for yourself this very sminute or woe betide you!" (362). While taken individually, these moments are brief and amount to very little of the central plot of "Circe," but they recall the major function of the episode: forcing a reconciliation of the text through a public account of the novel. With the opportunity to write this episode knowing it would not appear in print until the entire text was published, Joyce was able to take risks that would have otherwise resulted in difficulty for those responsible for editing and publishing his work.

By structuring the episode as a pseudo-drama and dramatically shifting the perspective of the episode from a structured, novelistic narrative into a drama full of named speakers and stage directions, Joyce removed many of the structural and formal impediments that would have obscured obscenity. Unlike the earlier episodes where the use of free indirect discourse might muddle the thoughts and actions of individuals—making it difficult for the reader to easily identify the perspective in each moment—"Circe" makes this deception impossible by marking the thoughts and speech of every actor in the performance. When Joyce is accused by Gerty of

his actions on the beach earlier that day, much of the subtext from "Nausicaa" is stripped away and the repulsion and threat of Bloom's actions are called to account. Continually, Bloom is made to stand public trial for his actions throughout the novel, and the formal techniques of earlier episodes that helped to minimize the impact and obscenity of his actions are stripped away.

Throughout the various trials and confrontations in "Circe," Joyce makes the case that what is on trial is not merely the characters of *Ulysses,* but the artistic merits of the novel. This is illustrated best through the trial of Leopold Bloom in which he is accused by an angry mob of being "as bad as Parnell was" (402), and attempts are made to have him lynched as a false messiah. Amid the trial, Bloom appeals to the Daughters of Erin to "[w]eep not for me," and in response they "kneel down and pray" (406). However, it is not God to whom they pray, but to Joyce and *Ulysses* as they entreat the events of the day:

> Kidney of Bloom, pray for us
>
> Flower of the Bath, pray for us
>
> Mentor of Menton, pray for us
>
> Canvasser for the Freeman, pray for us
>
> Charitable Mason, pray for us
>
> Wandering Soap, pray for us
>
> Sweets of Sin, pray for us
>
> Music without Words, pray for us
>
> Reprover of the Citizen, pray for us
>
> Friend of all Frillies, pray for us
>
> Midwife Most Merciful, pray for us

Potato Preservative against Plague and Pestilence, pray for us. (407)

Here the narrative places Bloom (as surrogate for Joyce and *Ulysses*) center stage and demands the audience reconcile the praise and adoration for him with the accusations by censors and critics who would deem his influence "a disgrace to christian men" (401). By recounting the events of the novel up to "Circe" and demanding the actor of those events be placed on trial for his actions, Joyce reinforces the role of "Circe" as a meta-commentary on the trials and tribulations of *Ulysses*' publication. Here, the narrative structure functions both to clear away any obfuscation surrounding the actions and events of the day using the call and response of accusation and account, and to reinsert Joyce's authorial control over the interpretation and justification of the novel's merits (via the Bloom surrogate).

These formal and stylistic attacks on Joyce's detractors would remain the focus of Joyce's composition while revising "Circe" and permeate edits of nearly every episode in the novel. However, it is "Circe" that serves as the omphalos of the text from which the recreation and restoration of *Ulysses's* obscene force would emanate. While "Circe" was re-written several times over the course of 1920-1921, Joyce's letters reinforce the active approach he took in opposing the censorship of his work. Often, Joyce found himself at odds with not only his publisher but his closest friends and benefactors. He made very little effort to please the people doing the most to help him get his book published and often alienated those close to him to the benefit of his novel.

On several occasions, Joyce was encouraged by Ezra Pound and John Quinn to stop serializing *Ulysses* and focus on securing a commitment from a publisher to have the manuscript released in a private edition. As early as November of 1920—shortly before the trial of Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap—Pound wrote to Quinn that he had "suggested to Joyce last summer

that he remove the rest of *Ulysses* from L.R. and let Dial pay him for as much as they thought wd. Pass the post office. Only he rose on his elevated horse and refused" (Pound, *Selected Letters of Ezra Pound* 202). With "Circe" nearing completion and the reality of serialization coming to an end with the suppression of "Nausicaa," Joyce was emboldened to ignore any further suggestions from those who once had a significant hand in "ruining [his] text" (Elmman v2.452). Over the next year, Joyce sabotaged these proceedings by insisting on financial compensation above what any publisher would be willing to accept. Frustration over Joyce's stubbornness plays out in letters between Quinn and Pound during this period, with Quinn insisting that Joyce was asking for unrealistic royalties and advances on a work that, due to the nature of its very public suppression, would be untouchable by most publishers (Birming 185). Regardless of the danger of suppression, Joyce refused to compromise on his demands for compensation or edit the obscenity of his novel to be more palatable to the public and help secure a deal.

Joyce's obstinacy was a contributing factor in several publishers backing out of proposed deals. In April of 1921, the same month Sylvia Beach agreed to publish *Ulysses* in Paris, two months after *Ulysses* was banned from being serialized in the United States, and as the threat of suppression for publishing Joyce's novel was at its peak, Joyce was made an offer to publish his novel with Boni & Liveright. However, upon receiving the manuscript, "Quinn nixed a deal with Horace Liveright to publish *Ulysses* upon reading a manuscript copy of 'Circe'" believing that "[a]nyone who published it—publicly, privately, in an aeroplane at fifteen thousand feet—would be convicted" (201). Unwilling to compromise on his creative vision, Joyce continued to see his novel's possible publication delayed and any potential financial return compromised.

For Joyce, any delay in his ability to leverage his novel for financial gain was a significant sacrifice. As a struggling author with very little financial stability and a family to look after, Joyce was continually in need of financial help from friends and benefactors (Stewart 58). Thus, when Joyce refused to concede any changes to his manuscript to secure a publishing agreement, he was essentially forfeiting financial stability. With the ruling against *The Little Review* deeming Joyce's work obscene, the opportunity to copyright his work in the United States was foreclosed. Unless Joyce was willing to make changes to the work to prevent its classification as an obscene, censored text, he would be unable to attain publication and copyright protection. This was a significant concern since "at the time *Ulysses* was published, the newly refined and extensive U.S. copyright code interlocked with obscenity laws to compound the power of state censorship, effectively punishing the writers of transgressive books by denying their work any status as intellectual property, and thus any chance of making legal profits in the U.S." (St. Amour 161) Even if Joyce were able to find someone willing to take on his work for publication—if he continued to insist on the work being published in its unedited format—he risked losing control over the book's financial returns if the published text were deemed obscene by United States authorities. Having already seen his work seized by the United States Post Office on several occasions (Anderson 175)—even with edits made by Pound, Anderson, and Heap—Joyce would have known the serious risk in demanding that his work be published in its complete, unedited form.

In September of 1920, several months before he would complete the final manuscript of "Circe," Joyce wrote to his friend Carlo Linati that his novel's obscenity and its depiction of the human condition was to be lauded. His tongue-in-cheek claim that his novel was a great unifier

exemplifies Joyce's belief that regardless of how obscene his work may appear, its merits were unimpeachable, noting:

> My intention is not only to render the myth *sub specie temporis nostri* but also to allow each adventure (that is, every hour, every organ, every art being interconnected and interrelated in the somatic scheme of the whole) to condition and even to create its own technique. Each adventure is so to speak one person although it is composed of persons—as Aquinas relates of the heavenly hosts. No English printer wanted to print a word of it. In America the review was suppressed four times. Now, as I hear, a great movement is being prepared against the publication on behalf of puritans, English imperialists, Irish republicans and Catholics—what an alliance! Golly, I deserve the Nobel peace prize. (Joyce, *Selected Letters of James Joyce* 271)

This belief in his work's power to unite the world—even if it meant against his work—is borne out in the numerous edits to "Circe." Joyce made these changes between June 1920—one month before the suppression of "Nausicaa"—and February 1921, just as Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap went to trial. Most edits made in the latter half of "Circe"'s publication tended to deal with issues of sexuality. Joyce placed increasing emphasis on references to earlier episodes like the voyeurism of "Nausicaa" and the defecation of "Calypso." Alongside these changes came an increased focus on genitalia.

Even after completing the final draft of "Circe" in late-1920, his unwillingness to compromise on the obscenity of the episode led directly to several issues with its typesetting. While Joyce was no stranger to issues with typists—he was a notoriously demanding editor of his own work—"Circe," more than any other episode of *Ulysses,* experienced several significant delays due to issues with typesetting. In April of 1921, his work having already been deemed

obscene and thus unpublishable in *The Little Review*, and Joyce having gone through numerous typists, he finally found someone willing to set the manuscript to print (Birming 199-200). Unfortunately, a few months later, he received a letter informing him that most of his "Circe" manuscript had been destroyed. Ironically, the events of this destruction were caused by the same commitment to obscenity that had continually delayed and endangered *Ulysses's* publication. Recounting the events to Harriet Shaw Weaver, Joyce recalled that "[l]ast night at 6 o'clock Mrs Harrison, to whom the final scenes of *Circe* had been passed on for typing after the accident to Dr Livisier, called on me in a state of great agitation and told me that her husband, employed in the British Embassy here, had found the MS, read it and then torn it up and burned it" (Ellmann V3.40). At this point, Joyce had completed the initial manuscript of "Circe," but much of the work remained incomplete. Joyce was notorious for demanding several proofs of each episode, making copious edits, and having the episodes re-set several times. With a large chunk of his manuscript burnt and irretrievable, the episode's completion was further delayed and much of the work would need to be redone.

Unfortunately for Joyce, the extent of the damage was greater than a few pages of typeset manuscript. Upon hearing the news, Joyce insisted that his typist return with whatever was not yet destroyed, but "Joyce discovered that the husband had burned several pages of material from both his wife's typescript *and* the original manuscript" (Birming 201), which was made more significant by the fact that he had just sent his only other manuscript copy to John Quinn in New York. The timing of this event could not have been worse; just as Joyce needed his manuscript for "Circe" the most, it was arriving in New York to cause Quinn a great deal of frustration in his dealings with Boni & Liveright. The relationship between Quinn and Joyce by this point was strained from Joyce's refusal to tone down the novel and accept contract terms that would get the

work published. While Joyce was never one to let tensions between him and others get in the way of his work, his obstinance had begun to wear on Quinn, who was by this point less willing to go out of his way to help Joyce. Nonetheless, shortly after sending the manuscript to Quinn, Joyce would write him on April 19th informing him of his need to have several pages from the end of the manuscript returned to him as quickly as possible, noting that "[w]hat I am concerned with is that there is now a lacuna of several pages in the typescript, which has already gone to the printer, and I must write it in. Unfortunately, I had sent you the MS a few days before (the MS burnt was a copy of my MS made by Miss Beach). I need about six or seven pages back again for a day or so" (Ellmann V3.41). While Joyce would eventually receive those pages, these events would further delay the already significantly slow publication of *Ulysses*.

For the remainder of 1921, Joyce would continue making substantial edits to the various typescripts, placards, and proofs of *Ulysses*. By September of that year, Joyce had written several letters outlining the significance of his edits and revisions to the novel. On September 3rd, he wrote his friend Robert McAlmon and informed him that the novel looked nothing like it had when the manuscript was first completed or as it had appeared during serialization. Joyce explained that work on the novel was progressing well and that he had "now written in a great lot of balderdash all over the damn book and the first half is practically as it will appear. I shall give Molly another 2000 word spin, correct a few more episodes and write all over them and then begin to put the spectral penultimate *Ithaca* into shape" (48) With the novel nearing completion, Joyce was still hard at work revising earlier episodes to restore cut passages and add new connections. So much work went into the revision of the initial manuscript that he wrote to Valery Larbaud on September 24th to inform him that "[y]ou will scarcely recognize parts of *Ulysses* I have worked so much on them" (49). Revisions to the manuscript would continue until

days before the novel went to press. Addressing every revision made to Joyce's text from the manuscript through eventual publication is beyond the scope of this project, but by focusing on changes made to "Circe," I illuminate the lingering influence that censorship and suppression had on the composition of *Ulysses* and the shape of modernism.

In particular, "Circe" saw the scenes between Bloom and Bella/o, the brothel matron, receive incremental edits which expanded the explicit sexuality of their encounter. In one of the earliest encounters between Bloom and Bello, as Bello begins to abuse Bloom, the initial typescript—from the same draft that saw several pages burned by Mrs. Harrison's husband—describes the scene of abuse as follows: "[a]sk for that every ten minutes. Beg. Pray for it as you never prayed before. (he thrusts out a figged fist and foul cigar) Here, kiss that. Both. Kiss" (Joyce, 1977b 286). While certainly a violent scene, it lacked any truly objectionable obscenity and was not explicitly sexual in nature. In the remainder of the typescripts still available, this scene remains largely the same. However, by the time Joyce received the first placards for "Circe" in December 1921, he began tweaking the scene significantly. While the passage begins largely the same way, Joyce added significantly to the end of the section so that after the final "[k]iss," the section reads "(he throws a leg astride and, squeezing with horseman's knees, calls in a hard voice) Gee up! A cockhorse to Banbury. I'll ride him for the Eclipse stakes. (he horserides cockhorse, leaping in the, in the saddle). The lady eyes a pace a pace and the coachman goes a trot a trot, and the gentleman goes a gallop a gallop a gallop a gallop" (Joyce, 1978b 159-161). These edits give the passage a distinctly sexual undercurrent with Bello physically mounting Bloom and taking his domineering to new heights, but Joyce was still unsatisfied with the explicit nature of the passage and upon receiving the page proofs, he chose to increase the obscenity yet again.

When Bello mounts Bloom and attempts to "ride him for the Eclipse stakes," these early drafts are relatively tame in their acknowledgment of the sexual nature of this mounting, but as Joyce continued to tinker with the sexually explicit language of "Circe," he embellished the obscenity of the scene by amending Bello's riding of Bloom to include a moment where "he bends sideways and squeezes his mount's testicles roughly, shouting) Ho! Off we pop! I'll nurse you in proper fashion!" Here Joyce turns to the dramatic conceit of stage direction to strip away the obscurity of the initial passage once again. While the events of the scene may have been envisioned as a sexual mounting, without the addition of the parenthetical emphasizing the attention to the "mount's testicles," the obscenity of the scene is left muted. Here, the function of the stage direction—a device unique to drama—allows Joyce to reinvigorate the scene with additional obscene energy and increases the episode's focus on genitalia. The increased attention to Bloom's anatomy in this scene was amended in the manuscript after receiving the first round of page proofs (Joyce, 1978a 229), and it was written well after Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap had lost their obscenity trial and ended any hope of the work being published serially.

Most of Joyce's content additions from this period are concerned with increasing the obscenity of "Circe." This obscenity frequently takes the form of emphasis on the body: particularly the genitalia and various bodily functions. Of these additions, several refer directly to the scenes which came under fire by censors in America. Purity leagues, like the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, and censorship committees of this period were concerned with the societal impact that obscene literature would have on women and children. Opponents of obscene literature—from Anthony Comstock to John S. Sumner—believed that obscene literature had a corrupting influence on the readers of these texts and that censoring and banning

them from publication was a means of protecting society from corrupting influence.[27] Joyce, aware of these rationales and embroiled in his own fight to see *Ulysses* published intact and without any significant cuts, inserted several direct challenges to these concerns in "Circe" and often couched them within references to prior episodes that were deemed obscene. Following the sexually explicit mounting of Bloom at the hands of Bello, Bloom is made to dress in women's clothing and account for himself, and Bello demands to hear a list of Bloom's prior sins. In this moment, the personification of The Sins of the Past run through Bloom's history (Joyce, *Ulysses* 438). It is apparent early on that Joyce intended this passage to not only recall the events of the day but to reference events outside the text as well. While not included in the initial paragraph, Joyce did append in the marginalia a reference to events not unlike those that closed out "Calypso" and resulted in the first significant censorship against Joyce at the hands of Ezra Pound.

With his continued emphasis on writing the wrongs of those who Joyce believed had "ruined [his] text," Joyce includes a meta-commentary on events from the early drafting of "Calypso." The initial passage by The Sins of the Past makes references to Bloom as a willing cuckold, with a predilection towards defecation, and a man known to think obscene thoughts about the women of Dublin (438). Each of these sins recalls various events from his day, from his eyeing of the "young white heifer" and her "moving hams" in "Ithaca" to Molly's sexual encounter with Blazes Boylan while Bloom observes Gerty on the beach in "Nausicaa" (48, 312). However, in the margins of the original typescripts, Joyce made a small correction to the draft of his amanuenses and inserted a more direct reference to the end of Ithaca when he writes: "[b]y word and deed he frankly encouraged a nocturnal strumpet to deposit fecal and other

[27] An exhaustive look at these figures and their crusade against obscene literature can be found in Edward de Grazia's *Girls Lean Back Everywhere: The Law of Obscenity and the Assault on Genius* (1993).

matter in an unsanitary outhouse attached to empty premises" (Joyce, 1977b 293). In refiguring the scene of Bloom defecating in his outhouse at the end of "Calypso" into a scene of Bloom encouraging another to "deposit fecal and other matter" in a similar fashion, Joyce revisits the very act that saw "Calypso" raise concerns from Pound while simultaneously commenting on the belief in literature's ability to influence readers to imitation of the actions found in his text. Here Joyce turns the spotlight onto his critics and parodies their concerns over *Ulysses's* obscenity while doubling down on the obscene imagery and placing it in the context of that which was feared most in his writing. By choosing to append a scene so clearly referential to his earlier episode, Joyce was making good on his decision to recover his original text from those who made edits he did not agree with. Further, by focusing on defecation as the central theme in this passage, Joyce recovers some of his autonomy from Pound's early, unwanted edits.

However, Joyce's critique of his critic's sensibilities does not end with this reference to "Calypso." A few lines later, Joyce revisits the issue and provides a brief study in what he believes the public wishes to hear in a good story. Unsatisfied with the initial recounting of The Sins of the Past, the early typescripts have Bello asking Bloom "[s]ay. What was the most revolting piece of obscenity in all your career of crime? Puke it out," and as Bello makes his initial request, "([m]ute inhuman faces throng forward, leering, vanishing, gibbering, Booloohoom. Poldy, Kock, Bootlaces, a penny. Cassidy's hag, blind stripling, Larry Rhinoceros, the girl, the woman, the whore, the other, the…)" (Joyce, 1977a 103). Here, Joyce brings up a laundry list of thoughts and experiences Bloom encountered during the day, with each one demanding to be recounted by Bloom, who is unable to do so. When Bloom refuses, Bello demands "(peremptorily) Answer. Repugnant wretch! I insist upon it" (103). The suggestion here is that Bello feels that The Sins of the Past have failed to provide the material that she really

wishes to hear. However, by the time Joyce received the first placards of "Circe," the scene had been modified slightly. Bello's initial request to "[p]uke it out" is amended to demand that he "[g]o the whole hog" and "[b]e candid for once," suggesting that the stories told by The Sins of the Past were too tame to be deemed obscene and that she wished to hear something more scandalous.

Joyce's meta-commentary in this moment is a poignant reproach of his critics, but Joyce would not simply leave it there. While, initially, Bello simply demands an answer after Bloom waffles in response, the placards see Bello's response greatly expanded to include asking Bloom to "[t]ell me something to amuse me, quick, quick, quick! Where? How? What time? With how many?" (Joyce, 1978b 162) but leaves the request for what that might be up to Bloom. Here, the demand is for more detail to be added to the narratives Bloom has recounted so far. The events of the day as told by Bloom leave Bello unsatisfied. This scene suggests that the events as they have been depicted in *Ulysses* leave too much to the imagination to truly satisfy or scandalize the reader. Too many details being left out—and the obscure nature of the events depicted—lead to an unsatisfying narrative too obscure to be obscene. This critique recalls claims made by several defendants of *Ulysses* during the trial of "Nausicaa" in February 1921. At the time of this trial, "Quinn had argued that Joyce's story was not aphrodisiac because it was either incomprehensible, amusing, or tiresome, according to the reader" (Reid 449). This defense, that "Nausicaa" was too obscure or amusing to be an obscene threat was one of Quinn's primary defenses for the work, and in this passage in "Circe," Joyce attempts these same defenses. By having Bello request significantly more detail from Bloom on his "most revolting piece of obscenity," Joyce suggests that Bloom's actions as stated have been too obscure to be "aphrodisiac" and that they are merely scenes meant to amuse.

In later drafts of the episode, Joyce further addresses Quinn's argument that, not only can a text be too obscure to be obscene, but also that by attempting merely to amuse and entertain, a work is also capable of avoiding accusations of obscenity. When Joyce received the page proofs of "Circe," he decided to further clarify what might constitute an amusing story, by having Bello suggest Bloom tell her something akin to "smut or a bloody good ghoststory or a line of poetry" (Joyce, 1978a 232). Here smut is placed in the same context as more commonly accepted forms of popular fiction and literature. By assigning smut this status, Joyce downplays its corrupting influence and accusations of obscenity. While a relatively minor edit within the episode, it reiterates Joyce's desire to turn his text back on the critics and censors who accused his work of obscenity, and to suggest that *Ulysses* is not a work meant to offend but a text designed to highlight the realities of life and to amuse his readership. Ultimately, Bloom refuses to recount his "most revolting piece of obscenity" as that is not Joyce's goal. In having Bloom refuse Bello's request, Joyce implies that if a scene has made it onto the pages of *Ulysses*, any accusations of obscenity demand a critical reassessment; there are far more obscene passages and events in the life of Bloom than those depicted in Joyce's novel.

Most of the revisions made throughout "Circe" seem minor when taken individually, but viewed collectively and from a distance, they equate to a significant revision of the sexually explicit and referential material in the episode. Before entering the brothel, Bloom encounters a vision of Gerty at the exact moment he is propositioned by The Bawd working the entrance to the brothel. In the same moment that Bloom is enticed to enter a brothel and encouraged to pay for the pleasure of a prostitute, he sees a specter "(*[l]eering, Gerty MacDowell limps forward. She draws from behind, ogling, and shows coyly her bloodied clout.)"* (Joyce, *Ulysses* 361). Here Joyce chooses to recall the events of "Nausicaa" and juxtapose Bloom's actions from that

previous episode with propositioning a prostitute in Nighttown. Gerty sends an accusation at Bloom that "[y]ou did that. I hate You" but Bloom refuses to acknowledge his previous actions by questioning the specter: "I? When? You're dreaming. I never saw you" (361). Bloom's resistance to Gerty's accusations does not last long, however; as The Bawd attempts to dismiss Gerty, Bloom imagines her condoning his actions: "*(she paws his sleeve, slobbering)* Dirty married man! I love you for doing that to me" (361). Although this scene is merely a figment of Bloom's imagination, Joyce allows him to rationalize and accept his actions as harmless. Once again, Joyce positions "Circe" as an episode meant to simultaneously reinforce and defend the obscenity of his text.

While certainly complicated by the knowledge that these encounters are the imaginings of Bloom, and not genuine encounters with Gerty, these scenes still illuminate the internal justifications that Bloom uses to defend his actions, and by utilizing the dramatic form to clearly demarcate Gerty's speech and thought from that of Bloom, the events of "Nausicaa" are illuminated in ways that the original passage obscured. In the earlier episode, the narration eventually shifts from the perspective of Gerty to Bloom, but in the passage where Bloom commits his public masturbation, the perspective is deliberately obscured to prevent the reader from knowing how much Gerty sees of Bloom's actions. As the children watch the fireworks display over the water and Bloom masturbates to the image of Gerty's stockings, the text blends the perspectives of Gerty and Bloom so that all the reader is told is that "she [Gerty] let him and she saw that he saw," and that "she wasn't ashamed and he wasn't either" (300), but it is never clear exactly which perspective is reporting these thoughts. This is further complicated by the fact that the paragraph preceding these events is told from Gerty's perspective while the scene immediately following picks up from Bloom's. Thus, Bloom's uncertainty in "Circe" as to

whether Gerty hates him or loves him for doing what he did would seem to contradict the certainty of Gerty's approval and their shared lack of shame in "Nausicaa," thus suggesting that the events of "Nausicaa" were not the thoughts of Bloom but the approval of Gerty.

By beginning "Circe" with a tense encounter between Bloom and Gerty, Joyce revisits a significant passage that had been edited for serialization and rationalizes the creative decisions made in depicting Bloom's masturbation. Much of the tension surrounding "Nausicaa" was the effect that depicting Gerty as a willing participant in Bloom's masturbation would have on young women who might read Joyce's book. At the time of its publication in *The Little Review*, Anderson received a letter from a concerned reader regarding this exact sentiment. The offended reader wrote to Anderson to express her disappointment in *The Little Review's* decision to publish "Nausicaa," and to inform Anderson that she felt "[t]here are no words I know to describe, even vaguely, how disgusted I am; not with the mire of his effusion but with all those whose minds are so putrid that they dare allow such muck and sewage of the human mind to besmirch the world by repeating it—and in print, through which medium it may reach young minds" (Anderson 212-3). This concern was leveled at a version of "Nausicaa" that was edited to obscure the obscene actions of Bloom, and yet it managed to raise significant ire from readers and censors during the period. Nonetheless, Joyce chose to reinstate the cuts made by Pound, restore the text's obscenity, and begin "Circe" by rationalizing these actions as harmless. This tension between accusation and acceptance is a common thread throughout "Circe."

Bloom continually encounters his past actions and is placed on trial by the visions he sees in Nighttown. In each instance, Bloom must account for his actions and defend them against accusations of obscenity. With its numerous references to "Nausicaa" and "Calypso," and the continual revisions added by Joyce to increase the sexually explicit nature of the text, "Circe"

serves as a mock-trial against the actions of Bloom and the writing of Joyce. It is a meta-parody of the same trials being undertaken in the United States against *The Little Review* and plays out within the pages of the very text being challenged.

The opening scene is not the last time Gerty appears in "Circe;" the episode continually returns to Bloom's voyeurism of Gerty McDowell. However, unlike the previous scene where Joyce relies on lascivious actions to represent the obscene threat that Bloom posed to Gerty, Joyce chooses instead to rely on another dramatic conceit to convey the obscene threat of his novel: costuming. By shifting the attention from the words and actions of Bloom to the threat of clothing and the visual medium, Joyce adds another layer of obscenity to the events of "Nausicaa" and calls up an entirely new set of censorial concerns surrounding the effect of scandalous attire. During Bloom's interactions with Bello, shortly after being made subordinate to Bello's dominatrix, Bloom is put to auction for the pleasure of Bello's wealthy clients. In dressing Bloom up in corset, skirt, and stockings, Bloom becomes a stand-in for Gerty. While he is on display, Bello highlights the similarities between Bloom and Gerty, playing up the elements of Bloom's current persona that most exemplify the events from "Nausicaa" and echoing the trials against *The Little Review*.

This section received significant edits throughout the composition of the manuscript. While small in scope, two changes stand out in this scene. In early typescripts, Bello describes Bloom dressed in a "scanty skirt, riding up at the knee to show a peep of white pantalette," recalling the fireworks scene of Nausicaa and Gerty's exposing of her pantalettes to Bloom, and pointing back to the vision of Gerty "[showing] coyly her bloody clout" at the beginning of the episode (Joyce, 1977b 297-8). However, the language of the original passage failed to evoke the danger and obscenity of this display. Upon receiving the first typescript, Joyce tweaked the scene

and began to increase the threat of Bloom's attire by changing Bloom's "scanty skirt" to a "scanty, daringly short skirt." While a very minor textual edit, the interpretive value in applying the word "daringly" to Bloom's attire creates a meta-acknowledgment of "Nausicaa"'s perceived obscene threat to readers. Joyce acknowledges that in writing a scene where a young woman exposes her undergarments to an older gentleman he understood the risk of suppression was a possibility, but still chose to proceed with the scene.

In this passage's original context, there is little that connects Bloom's attire with the outrage of the vice societies and cultural censors who challenged Joyce's previous episodes and threatened the livelihood of *The Little Review*. Originally, Joyce chose to end this passage with a plea for all his viewers to "[b]ring all your powers of fascination to bear on them" (Joyce, 1978b 298), and he encouraged the engagement with Bloom's taboo exposure. The scene is viewed as one of titillation designed for public consumption, and the "daring" nature of Bloom's attire is depicted as a minor threat. Nonetheless, Joyce was unsatisfied with this original version of the passage and would make several significant edits in later drafts of his manuscript.

In subsequent revisions of this passage, Joyce emphasized the connection between this scene and the trial of "Nausicaa" by inserting references to organizations like the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice—the institution responsible for the obscenity claims against Joyce and several other significant publications of the 20th century. When Joyce received the final page proofs for "Circe," he added an additional directive to the end of Bello's speech—an encouragement to Bloom to "[p]ander to their vices" (Joyce, 1978a 234). Here, the invocation of the term "vice" is a loaded addition. Juxtaposed alongside Bloom on display, dressed in women's clothing and referencing Gerty's exposure in "Nausicaa," this final line recalls the very organization responsible for his earlier publication struggles. Taken outside of the production

context of *Ulysses*, the line is a minor addition unlikely to draw attention with the term "vice" merely referring to the acts depicted. However, in the context of the broader revision process and placing it in the context of Joyce's publication struggles, the term "vice" is a loaded addition. Here Joyce reasserts his desire to keep his work unedited and uncensored, to see it published in its original context, and he encourages his censors to take in these displays of vice with no concern for the consequences.

This scene remained in this form for several future typesetting and revisions, but as the book neared completion, Joyce rewrote the final line to read "[p]ander to their Gomorrahan vices" (254). This inclusion of a reference to the biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah helped to illuminate the often-religious connection between censors and their concerns over obscenity and its effect on societies. Organizations like the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice—originally founded in connection with the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)—sought to prevent the creation of modern Sodoms and Gomorrahs by policing those works that they deemed capable of encouraging and influencing an engagement with "Gomorrahan vices" that would lead to the moral and spiritual decay of society.

Scenes of this nature are repeated throughout "Circe," and each time Joyce revisits a scene or action previously deemed obscene and worthy of suppression, he refigures the events to try them from a different angle. At times, Joyce even reimagines these scenes by combining language and imagery from multiple suppressed or edited passages from *Ulysses.* In recalling his "Halcyon Days," Bloom remembers a time where he observed a neighbor, Lotty Clarke, "at her night toilette through illclosed curtains with poor papa's operaglasses" (Joyce, *Ulysses* 448), and although this is merely another example of Bloom's voyeuristic tendencies, where it recalls his actions in "Nausicaa" is in the secrecy and actions of Bloom as he observes. The passage is

riddled with references to masturbation, voyeurism, and scatological imagery. Bloom recalls how as a teenager "[a] little then sufficed" to get him off. It could be something as simple as "a jolting car" or "the mingling odours of the ladies' cloakroom and lavatory," and later, The Yews and The Nymph accuse Bloom of "[profaning] our silent shade [. . .] in the open air" as well as "[their] virgin sward" (447-8). Once again, Joyce chooses to mingle sexual pleasure, voyeurism, and defecation with the spectacle of public indulgence in ways that recall events of both "Nausicaa" and to a lesser degree, "Calypso." However, as in other sections of "Circe," Bloom becomes defensive of his actions and argues that they have no power to hurt others. He argues that since no one had seen him committing the act, it was insignificant. For Bloom, it was "[s]imply satisfying a need" and "[b]esides, who saw?" (448). Like the events of "Nausicaa," he defends his actions as perfectly natural and of no harm to anyone, but those around him view the scene differently and accuse him of obscenity.

Nonetheless, although Joyce was able to produce "Circe" in its original vision, his issues with censorship and copyright law would not come to an end with the publication of his novel. Joyce's decision to restore and expand upon the obscenity in *Ulysses* continued to impact the novel's trajectory even after he secured a publisher. Although Sylvia Beach would eventually come to Joyce's aid to see the novel published in Paris—doing so at great personal expense and out of a desire to see Joyce's novel published in its intended form—the significant number of changes and restorations to the original obscene passages would lead to significant resistance in the U.S.—among other countries—to the novel's distribution. While Paris was far more accepting of works that other countries deemed obscene, its market was significantly smaller than those of the United States and England, two countries that refused to allow *Ulysses* to be published.

The result of *The People of the State of New York v. Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap* still loomed over Joyce's novel in the United States. Although his book would be released in Paris in its unedited form, Joyce was unable to publish the work in the United States because sections of the novel had already been deemed legally obscene. Despite all of this, demand for Joyce's book once it was published was immense, and its status as a banned object lent the work significant critical and public acclaim that helped the work reach a much larger audience than it might otherwise have had had its publication not been so fraught. As late as 1942, the subject of *Ulysses's* obscenity was still a popular topic among critics. In an interview for *Le Figaro*, Andre Gide argued that "[w]ithout the obscenity of his *Ulysses*, Joyce couldn't have reckoned on more than a hundred readers" (123). This was a recurring theme in the immediate aftermath of the novel's publication, and due to the novel's ban in the United States, Joyce was often left with very little recourse to protect his own work from piracy or to recoup any potential profits from his novel in the U.S. The ban of his work from official channels meant that the black market for his work was in high demand:

> The novel's contraband status, coupled with the ongoing demand sustained by its international reputation, put it regularly in the warehouses of bookleggers, the catalogues of pornographers, and the suitcases of smugglers. Such dodgy company, in turn, seemed to ratify the book's obscenity anew. To rescue *Ulysses* from obscenity would mean rescuing it from contraband public domain where the censor had cast it and restoring it to the state-created, state-approved grace of literary property. (St. Amour 168)

It was not until 1933, when Judge John M. Woolsey declared that "in '*Ulysses*,' in spite of its unusual frankness, I do not detect anywhere the leer of the sensualist. I hold, therefore, that it is

not pornographic" that Joyce was finally able to publish his work in the United States and secure copyright protection for it (*United States v. One Book Called "Ulysses")*.

The 1933 ruling represented a radical reassessment of obscenity made possible by the original opposition to its serial publication and Joyce's own efforts in revising his novel into the obscene tour-de-force it became. By the time the original ruling was overturned, Radclyffe Hall had already undergone her own public and equally influential trial in England over her 1928 novel, *The Well of Loneliness*, and was helping to reshape the censorship industry into a more transparent system by bringing even greater attention not only to the plight of the highbrow author, but to the struggles of less acclaimed, middlebrow authors as well. Similarly, in the United States, Eugene O'Neill's play, *Strange Interlude*—which drew heavy influence from Joyce's *Ulysses*, adapting the Joycean stream-of-consciousness into the dramatic thought aside—was winning awards, touring the country, and facing similar opposition from a Boston Board of Censors determined to return the censorship industry to its pre-*Ulysses* heyday.

Chapter 2: *The Well of Loneliness* and the Lesbian Novels of 1928

Released after James Joyce's *Ulysses* was published and several years before charges of obscenity against Joyce's novel would be overturned in the U.S., Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* is another landmark text in the history of modern obscenity censorship. Unlike the experimental *Ulysses, The Well of Loneliness* is a realist roman à clef following the life of Stephen Gordon as she searches for belonging for lesbians in a society that fought hard to keep female homosexuality invisible. The novel is significant not only for its highly publicized censorship trial but also for centering on lesbian sexuality during a time when sociological and scientific vocabularies to describe lesbianism were still in their infancy. *The Well of Loneliness* is one of several novels written and published between the end of 1927 through 1928 that dealt directly or indirectly with the lived experience of lesbians in England. Of the novels I examine in this chapter, four were written by women: Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, Elizabeth Bowen's *The Hotel*, Djuna Barnes' *Ladies Almanack*, and Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*. The fifth, Compton Mackenzie's *Extraordinary Women*, caricatures several prominent female modernists and attempted to capitalize on the controversy surrounding *The Well of Loneliness*.

All of these novels concern themselves with lesbianism, but only Hall's novel was targeted by censors and deemed too obscene for publication. The other novels I discuss here, each of which equals or outstrips the supposed obscenity of *The Well of Loneliness*, escaped the ire of censors (in the case of Mackenzie, despite a sincere desire to get suppressed). Apart from Bowen's *The Hotel,* each is a roman à clef that critiques some element of contemporary European salons or aristocratic society by interrogating the public discourse of lesbianism during the interwar period. How is it that of five novels published in a 12-month span—all grappling with the diverse taboos of lesbian identity—only one came under suppression? The lesbian

novels of 1928 show that the landscape of literary censorship was shifting significantly since the public trial of *Ulysses*, and *The Well of Loneliness* was an attempt by conservative, heterosexual men like James Douglas, William Joynson-Hicks, and Sir Chartres Biron[28] to maintain control of a system of suppression that the court of public opinion had already dismissed. The four uncensored novels each approach the issue of lesbianism through indirect methods or by utilizing obfuscating literary techniques that Radclyffe Hall's novel avoided, and through these methods, they managed to distance their novels from Hall's in the eyes of censors.

Throughout this chapter I utilize the term "lesbian" instead of "queer" or "sapphic." The interwar period in Britain marked a significant moment in the formulation of language describing female homosexuality, and lesbian is the most fitting word to describe the female characters in the novels of 1928. As Hannah Roche recognizes in her book *The Outside Thing*, "*lesbian* is in contemporary use, its distinction from romantic friendship is clear, and it has long provided women-loving-women not simply with means of self-knowledge and self-identification but with strength, solidarity, and a sense of community" (Roche 4).[29] While Hall herself utilized the contemporary term "invert" in her novel, the trial of *The Well of Loneliness* helped crystalize the term "lesbian" within the contemporary lexicon of 20th-century England, and the novel's focus on the longing for community and cultural acceptance resonates strongly with Roche's use of the term.

While Hall herself never utilizes "lesbian" in her novel, Havelock Ellis, the pioneering sexologist and author of *The Well of Loneliness's* Foreword, had begun using the term in his

[28] James Douglas (1867-1940) was a critic and outspoken proponent of censorship. William Joynson-Hicks (1865-1932) was the British Home Secretary during the suppression of *The Well* and an outspoken critic of the work. Sir Chartres Biron (1863-1940) was the barrister who presided over the trial.
[29] Roche's *The Outside Thing* (2019) is a comprehensive study of the lives and loves of Gertrude Stein, Radclyffe Hall, and Djuna Barnes, and I model my favoring of the term "lesbian" over "sapphic" or "queer" off the work she has done.

books around the turn of the century. In 1896, years before lesbian would enter popular parlance, Ellis "published the first German edition of *Sexual Inversion*, which referred to a note from a friend stating that 'lesbianism in Paris is extremely prevalent, indeed, one might almost say normal'" (17). However, the inclusion of the word "lesbian" in a scientific book of sexology did not correspond to heightened public awareness of the term. The works of Havelock Ellis and other sexologists remained largely the purview of academics and scholars, and as such the public had little exposure to the use of these terms. During this period, "[p]ractitioners in the fields of medicine and law were especially cognizant of the presence of women variously known by terms such as 'Sapphist,' 'female sexual invert,' 'masculine woman,' 'homogenic,' the 'intermediate sex,' or 'homosexual'—though rarely as 'lesbian'" (Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism* xiii), and much of this had to do with the fact that lesbianism was not given the same visibility as male homosexuality because it was not outlawed in the same way. With so many descriptors and no legally defined terminology, lesbianism was largely unknown to the public and was primarily reserved for academics and those who frequented highbrow social circles.

In addition to the shifting vocabulary of female homosexuality, the period in which the authors of this study wrote their novels saw significant change in how the world viewed women. England in the interwar period saw "women's new status as political subjects (partial suffrage in 1918 and full suffrage in 1928) [become] one marker of women's entry into modernity" (xviii), and this increasing political power and status was viewed as a threat to men like Douglas and Joynson-Hicks. Just as women saw their status in society affirmed with the passage of suffrage, attacks on female homosexuality would become a popular method of undermining the suffrage movement. While women were fighting in England for suffrage at the turn of the century and deep into the interwar period, the English government fought against the movement through

attempts to outlaw female homosexuality as it previously had done for male homosexuality. However, those attempts failed largely because of the lack of visibility for this subset of the population, and although there was a "gradual awareness in medical and legal circles of sexual activity between women," these realizations had not made their way into the public and these legal challenges ultimately ended in failure (xviii).

This lack of public discourse was cited as reason to the reject attempts to criminalize female homosexuality. Naming the act was seen as a means of educating the public and giving legitimacy to female homosexuality. [30] The government feared that in speaking openly of lesbianism, they would be exposing the public to indecent acts and encouraging the behavior. In *Citizen, Invert, Queer*, Deborah Cohler notes that in 1921—amid the fight for full suffrage— an attempt was made to pass an amendment to the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act that would "add female homosexual acts to the 1885 Labouchere Amendment, which had criminalized male homosexuality" (143), but was ultimately rejected. The reason for this rejection was the fact that "[w]omen's sexual activities were viewed as predicated on knowledge, not desire; a deliberate suppression of information about women's possible homosexual activities was deemed a more effective damper than their criminalization" (143). This desire to keep acknowledgment of lesbians out of legislation to slow the spread of public knowledge led directly to the creation of the lesbian novels of 1928. *The Well of Loneliness* was so significant a threat to public decency precisely because it presented the public with a frank examination of female homosexuality in a period where the British government was working its hardest to keep "female homosexual" out of the public lexicon.

[30] For more on the threat of naming, see Chapter 1: "The Incitement to Discourse" from Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1* (1978)

The events of 1928, and specifically the public trial of *The Well of Loneliness*, had a significant impact on the discourse of female homosexuality. The changes that took place in these years were so significant that "[t]he events of late 1928, which culminated in the media circulation of a visible embodiment of a specimen invert, have so permeated our own cultural consciousness that it has become extremely difficult for us to reconstruct a cultural era prior to the moment" (Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism* xv). Without the public and controversial trial of Hall's novel, lesbianism may have continued as fringe terminology exclusive to academics and sexologists. Although the term "lesbian" was largely unknown to the public, the reality was that "[r]epresentations of female homosexuality in British public culture qualitatively changed during the war. In the prewar period, although female same-sex erotic relationships flourished, British culture lacked any coherent narrative of female homosexual identity" (Cohler 112). Therefore, as many scholars point out, the overwhelming influence that Hall had on shaping public perception surrounding the "invert" and elevating lesbianism into the modern British lexicon.

If it is true that *The Well of Loneliness* is largely responsible for bringing the reality of modern lesbianism into public discourse, what about the novel caused it to end up in the cultural zeitgeist of interwar England? The critical consensus is that Hall's novel was a landmark text in lesbianism because of its public censorship, but the reasons for that censorship and what it meant for literary modernism remain contentious. In *Obscene Modernism*, Rachel Potter suggests that *The Well* is part of a larger movement in modernism that explored obscenity as a means of protesting literary censorship and notes that it was due to the heavy criticism of Douglas and Joynson-Hicks that the work is so significant (Potter 132). Cohler argues that the real project of *The Well* was to "[excavate] origins of female sexuality itself" while simultaneously lampooning the "universal heterosexual British subject" (154). While each of these readings helps to

illuminate the multifaceted impact of *The Well* on interwar modernism, such interpretations tend to feed the narrative that *The Well* was the defining lesbian novel of literary modernism precisely because of its controversial subject matter.[31] However, it has also been noted that, "[m]ost reviewers were generally united in their sympathetic attitudes towards lesbianism and, even when critical of the tendentiousness of Hall's project, dealt with its subject matter as simply another aspect of the novel, such as characterization or narrative form" (Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism* 5). While the seizure of *The Well of Loneliness* dramatically increased the novel's visibility, it is important to note that the novel was not nearly as scandalous as history has led the public to believe.

In fact, the extensive publication in 1928 of lesbian novels suggests that James Douglas may have sought to leverage public controversy for private gain when he wrote the oft-repeated argument that "I would rather give a healthy boy or a healthy girl a phial of prussic acid than this novel. Poison kills the body, but moral poison kills the soul" (Douglas 38). Arguments made against *The Well* could be applied to any of the novels discussed in this chapter. The fact that Douglas chose to single out Hall and ignore Barnes, Bowen, Mackenzie, and Woolf may have had more to do with the positive public reception for *The Well of Loneliness* than for its particularly scandalous content. Douglas would go on to argue that "the adroitness and cleverness of the book intensifies its moral danger" (38), but it was not the only cause for concern. By writing a sharp, well-written, and, most importantly, well-received novel about the

[31] Shari Benstock's *Women of the Left Bank* locates Radclyffe Hall and Natalie Barney as two women on different sides of this argument. Whereas Hall was a writer who saw "lesbian existence as fraught with pain and suffering" and adhered to a largely scientific model of lesbianism, Natalie Barney's salon "[operated] as a support group for lesbian women" and she "objected to modes of lesbian behavior that seemed to confirm the scientific theories then prevalent" (11, 59)

reality of lesbianism, and by advocating for broad social acceptance and visibility of lesbians in British society, Hall was introducing this "abnormal" behavior as a threat to the nation.

While most reviews for *The Well* were either favorable or indifferent, few took issue with the portrayals of lesbianism within its pages. However, Douglas—a well-known critic and member of numerous purity leagues—was the first to blast the book as one that would corrupt its readers, much as he argued against *Ulysses* when it was first published (Bradshaw 97-98). While his review of *The Well* was full of quick soundbites like the above "prussic acid" quote, Douglas's reasoning for wishing to see the novel seized and destroyed are laid out clearly in the relatively short review. As with many critics of *Ulysses*, Douglas's first attack on *The Well* centers on the pervasive influence it might have on readers. He believed that because of the widespread public consumption of the novel, "[i]ts theme is utterly inadmissible in the novel, because the novel is read by people of all ages, by young women and young men as well as by older women and older men. Therefore, many things that are discussed in scientific textbooks cannot decently be discussed in a work of fiction offered to the general reader" (Douglas 37). In his mind, what separates the "inadmissible" themes of *The Well* from more readily accepted works of art is that its language and the discussions conducted in its pages contain material of the scientific nature that is not fit for the public. While framed differently here than for a novel like *Ulysses*, the tenor of his opposition is similar: the power of the novel is in representation, and when what is being represented runs counter to "the Christian doctrine of free-will" (38), it must be suppressed. To drive the point home, Douglas explains that he is "well aware that sexual inversion and perversion are horrors which exist among us today. They flaunt themselves in public places with increasing effrontery and more insolently provocative bravado" (37). He argues that, in combatting the negative influence of Hall's novel, he is providing a civic service

by stamping out "horrors which exist among us today" and curbing the possible transmission of these "blasphemous" ideas about sexual inversion.

While these reasons alone were sufficient excuses for Douglas and others to bring prosecution against *The Well*, Douglas tips his hand several paragraphs later when he notes that "[p]erhaps it is a blessing in disguise or a curse in disguise that this novel forces upon our society a disagreeable task which it has hitherto shirked, the task of cleansing itself from the leprosy of these lepers, and making the air clean and wholesome once more" (37). For Douglas, the work of raising public outcry is the first step in stamping out what he viewed to be a societal ill. It is not enough that a work of fiction be seized and burned or barred from publication, but the act must be a public battle waged to restore the natural order. By rising above the generally favorable response to *The Well* as the voice of Christianity, Douglas views himself as the one to prevent society from facing a "disagreeable task which it has hitherto shirked," and putting the world back in its proper, Christian order.

Douglas elevates this *The Well of Loneliness* to the same lofty heights as a war threatening British society. By likening the act of censorship to purging a sickness from society, Douglas ensures his reader that the only way to prevent the societal decay of England is to learn from those nations who lack their same moral superiority. While the war against obscenity and perversion, as Douglas notes, "has been lost in France and Germany," he argues that it is not too late, that "it has not yet been lost in England" (37). The language of battle is not insignificant here; Douglas was tapping into a significant perceived threat to British nationalism and Cohler's "universal heterosexual British subject," given that the years following World War I saw "divorce rates increased alarmingly, and the family unit could ill afford further attrition by the diversion of female sexual desire from its proper objects, men, toward other women" (Parkes

148). Douglas's language and his role as agent provocateur in the literary war against *The Well of Loneliness* all served to elevate and broadly publicize his crusade as a moral defense of British nationalism and England's Christian soul. If this was his motive, why did *The Well of Loneliness* stand out as the likeliest target of his ire in a year when lesbian fiction was being published regularly in England?

While Douglas was the key opponent to *The Well of Loneliness,* many famous writers and critics came to the book's defense, and "most editors condemned the *Express'*s handling of Douglas's rhetoric of outrage, identified it as 'stunt journalism,' and exposed the hyperbole for what it was: flat and empty" (Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism* 20). In fact, many supporters of the novel attached their names directly and publicly to the defense of Hall's novel, and even those that did not find the book particularly well-written—such as Virginia Woolf—argued for its relative harmlessness or the merits of the novel's subject matter and volunteered to speak at her trial in defense of literary freedom (29). Unfortunately, although public opinion of *The Well* was largely positive, the presiding magistrate, Sir Henry Chartres Biron, ultimately sided with Douglas against the novel, reiterating and expanding upon many of the same arguments Douglas had made in his review.

One of the key arguments about the threat presented by *The Well of Loneliness* was the broad appeal of the book due to the quality of the writing. The book appealed to publications that typically wouldn't have touched the novel since it managed "a crossing over of discrete literary boundaries, or put more pugnaciously, a transgressing of lines drawn in what Virginia Woolf described as the 'Battle of the Brows'" (Doan & Prosser 9). While Hall was largely viewed as a middlebrow writer—her earlier works had sold well and been critically lauded, but they were not taken seriously by highbrow publications and authors—*The Well of Loneliness* ended up being

reviewed by publications that tended towards both lowbrow and highbrow art. This led Biron to claim that the quality of Hall's novel was such that, "[i]t is quite obvious to anybody of intelligence that the better an obscene book is written the greater the public to whom the book is likely to appeal. The more palatable the poison the more insidious" (Biron 40). It was the fact that Hall's writing appealed to publications as popular as the *Morning Post* and as respected as the *Times Literary Supplement* that *The Well of Loneliness* was such a threat to society and should be banned. However, history suggests that if it were not for the extensive publicity given the novel in the wake of Douglas's review, Hall's novel would likely have wallowed away in obscurity since today it "is the only one of her eight published works to remain continually in print" (Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism* 12). However, because of its suppression, *The Well of Loneliness* has stayed relevant while the remaining novels explored in this chapter—apart from *Orlando*—did not, despite dealing with similar subject matter.

If we accept the possibility that much of *The Well's* mass appeal was due to the outrage of Douglas and the ensuing trial, what else could have deemed it a threat to British society? Here Biron elaborates on the corrupting influence and perversion alluded to by Douglas. The fact that Hall's novel "is not the tragedy of people fighting against horrible instincts and being made unable to resist them" that made the writing objectionable, because a lack of agency would have deemed the novel suitably non-threatening. Douglas believed that it was Hall's sincerity that was the objectionable stance, since "the tragedy as presented here is that people who indulge in these vices are not tolerated by decent people [. . .] in the view presented in this book, are people who ought to be tolerated and recognized, and their practices tolerated and recognized, in decent society" (Biron 42). Hall's suggestion that inverts should receive the same respect and tolerance as the "universal heterosexual British subject" was the real concern. Biron believed that it was a

combination of its mass appeal and sincere tone that rendered the book untenable, and resulted in Biron's ruling: "[t]his being the tenor of this book, I have no hesitation whatever in saying that it is an obscene libel, that it would tend to corrupt those in whose hands it should fall, and that the publication of this book is an offence against public decency, an obscene libel, and I shall order it to be destroyed" (49).

In the end, *The Well of Loneliness*' greatest fault was that it took itself too seriously, that it advocated for the acknowledgment of lesbianism, and that it was written too well. In looking closely at Bowen's *The Hotel,* Barnes's *Ladies Almanack,* Mackenzie's *Extraordinary Women,* and Woolf's *Orlando,* I will show that while each of these novels may hide their lesbianism through omission, obscurity, or satire, each is at least the equal to Hall's in "adroitness and cleverness" and also advocates for sincere visibility of lesbianism. Each of these novels contains enough objectionable content to meet Douglas's criteria for censorship. The methods used by these authors to avoid suppression build on the foundation laid by *Ulysses,* and they illustrate the shifting dynamics of the censorship industry as it began to focus more on middlebrow fiction and obscene theme over explicit content.

As the only censored text in this chapter, it is appropriate that Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* would serve as the thematic center of the lesbian novels of 1928. By largely adhering to Victorian realism, Hall's novel explores a similar sexual narrative to *The Hotel,* but it does away with the subtlety and subtext of Bowen's prose. By writing in the late-Victorian genre of the roman à clef, a genre famous for "[masquerading] variously as both a novel and a history," *The Well* "deeply troubles our most basic assumptions about the aesthetics of fiction and the ethics of reading" (Latham 9) in the same fashion as the novels by Mackenzie, Woolf, and Barnes. As a decidedly "middle-brow" work of fiction, *The Well* appealed to readers and

publications across various social and economic boundaries. Hall drew from the same readers of popular fiction who might have read the works of Compton Mackenzie and found her novel reviewed by critics as prominent as Leonard Woolf. Where Hall differentiates herself from her contemporaries is in the earnestness of her prose. More than any of the other novels examined in this chapter, Hall is concerned with attempts to define—and advocate for the acceptance of—lesbianism. Unlike the vacations and temporary salons of Barnes, Bowen, Mackenzie, and Woolf, Hall's novel is centered around ideas of lineage, legacy, and a longing for sociability.

As a prominent roman à clef of Radclyffe Hall's history, it is fitting that the novel begins not with her protagonist, Stephen, but "not very far from Upton-on-Severn – between it, in fact, and the Malvern Hills" in a place described "like certain lovely women who, now old, belong to a bygone generation" (Hall 5). Morton Hall as personified in the text serves as the first entity the reader meets, and all the events that follow are intimately tied with the legacy of this great estate. The text begins by establishing its quintessential Britishness. Everything that comes after is intimately tied to this rich, aristocratic British history. Before Stephen Gordon is even born, the expectation placed upon her is to be the great son of Sir Philip Gordon and to carry on the family line. Sir Philip and Anna Gordon are so convinced that they will have a son that they begin referring to the child by the name Stephen and the pronoun "him." This expectation is built up so strongly that when Anna finally gives birth to a daughter, she finds herself unable to accept the child. Even the first feelings ascribed to Anna Gordon towards her child are those of grief at the disappointment that Stephen was not born a male child (7). *The Well of Loneliness* portrays Stephen's birth as an unforeseen consequence to be reconciled with and not a joyous occasion to be celebrated. Hall quickly establishes the importance of lineage before subverting the narrative expectation of a male heir through the birth of Stephen Gordon. The remainder of the text

explores the ramifications these unasked-for expectations have on Stephen as she grapples with her sexuality and the demands of her social position. Although utilizing the Victorian genres of realism and roman à clef, Hall subverts genre expectations by replacing the traditional literary heir of the "universal heterosexual British subject" with a female invert.

In the early sections of the novel, Hall illustrates the complex relationship between Stephen's sexuality and the social expectations placed on her through the contrasts with Anna Gordon, who is viewed as "the archetype of the very perfect woman" (5). The choice of descriptors used to illustrate Stephen throughout the novel are complex and varied, often channeled through the various characters who are thinking of or speaking about her. While Stephen is often referred to as "she/her" by the narrator of the text, Anna's expectations and her desire for a son have left her incapable of loving Stephen as she would a boy. Long before Stephen begins putting on shows in the guise of Nelson or taking up the "manly" art of fencing, Anna refers to Stephen as a "thing" and complains that the act of child rearing was "forcing her to love it" (9). Much of the anxiety Anna feels towards her daughter centers on similarities Stephen shares with her father, Sir Philip. Even at a young age, Stephen greatly resembled her father, had a rather masculine frame that made her stand out, and evoked feelings of resentment in Anna. As the narrator describes it, "[i]t would seem to Anna that she must be going mad, for this likeness to her husband would strike her as an outrage – as though the poor, innocent seven-year-old Stephen were in some way a caricature of Sir Philip; a blemished, unworthy, maimed reproduction" (9). Stephen's status as an invert and her image as a skewed depiction of Sir Philip—a prototypical heterosexual, English gentlemen—serves as the main tension for much of the novel. Since so much of Stephen's personality is tied up in the tradition of the male heir, her actual status as a 'sexual invert' is viewed as an affront by many characters in the novel.

When the narrator uses gendered language to describe Stephen, these depictions often reflect the internal feelings of Stephen toward herself and not those of the family and acquaintances that struggle with their understanding of Stephen's sexuality. From an early age, Stephen finds herself drawn to clothing and activities coded as masculine, and the narrator's descriptions reflect Stephen's own internal relationship with masculinity. In reference to Stephen's position in the household, she is described as "cock of the roost," a gendered descriptor meant to challenge the dehumanizing "thingness" of Anna Gordon's descriptions (8). The masculine associations of Stephen Gordon are one of the key sources of tension throughout *The Well of Loneliness,* and Stephen is continually forced to reconcile her "abnormal" qualities with the expectations society places on her as the daughter of a prominent family.

Stephen's reality is firmly rooted in attempts to find acceptance at home, and to remain anchored to her family's land and the respect and social status that accompanies it. The novel acknowledges the mental toll that such expectations have on her when the narrator explains that, as the only child of Anna and Sir Philip Gordon—and as a daughter incapable of continuing the family line—Stephen was forced to seek acceptance from within instead of without. When talking of her circumstances, the narrator explains that "[i]t is doubtful if any only child is to be envied, for the only child is bound to become introspective; having no one of its own ilk in whom to confide, it is apt to confide in itself" (8). While the wording here is generic enough on first glance, the inclusion of the phrase "having no one of its own ilk in whom to confide" takes on greater significance as Stephen continually fails to build deep, meaningful connections with those close to her. Even Sir Philip, who seeks to better understand his daughter through research and careful observation, finds himself struggling to connect with Stephen or to feel completely comfortable discussing issues with her. While he makes sincere efforts to understand Stephen's

sexuality by reading works on "deviant" sexuality, like those of German lawyer Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, an early advocate of gay rights, the lessons appear difficult for him to accept. When reading,

> Sir Philip's eyes would grow puzzled; then groping for a pencil he would make little notes all along the immaculate margins. Sometimes he would jump up and pace the room quickly, pausing now and again to stare at a picture – the portrait of Stephen painted with her mother [. . .] He would notice [. . .] that indefinable quality in Stephen that made her look wrong in the clothes she was wearing, as though she and they had no right to each other. (19-20)

Sir Philip finds that he lacks the vocabulary to understand Stephen's sexuality; the literature of the period had yet to truly acknowledge the existence of female homosexuality, so the language to describe what Sir Philip senses fails him.

This failure of language leads to a lack of communication and connection between Stephen and her loved ones, and this lack directly shapes Stephen's perceptions of love and companionship. In observing the relationship between Anna and Sir Philip, Stephen struggles with comprehension. Unable to discuss her desires and feelings with others, and having only known the experience of love through her desire for the house maid Collins, Stephen tries her hardest to comprehend what it means to love someone by observing others. Unfortunately, Stephen is unable to separate her feelings of desire from her longing for home and her perceptions of social acceptance, and as she watches the love between her parents, she acknowledges that:

> All she would know was that seeing her parents together in this mood, would fill her with longings for something that she wanted yet could not define – a something that would

> make her as happy as they were. And this something would always be mixed up with Morton, with grave, stately rooms like her father's study, with wide views from windows that let in much sunshine, and the scents of a spacious garden. Her mind would go groping about for a reason, and would find no reason – unless it were Collins but Collins would refuse to fit into these pictures; even love must admit that she did not belong there any more than the brushes and buckets and slopcloths belonged in that dignified study. (29)

Even at a young age, Stephen recognizes that her passion for Collins is deemed "unnatural." While she acknowledges that the love between Anna and Sir Philip is not the form that her love will ever take, she also recognizes that there is a social contract she needs to be able to operate within if she hopes to find acceptance and 'rightness' in her life and love. These thoughts remain internalized as Stephen has no avenue available to her for discussion of her thoughts and concerns regarding love. Instead, Stephen continues to turn further inward and seek acceptance from herself.

Shortly after Collins leaves Morton, Stephen experiences the first heartbreak of her young life, and as Anna and Sir Philip clash over the "proper" way to raise a daughter, Stephen continues to focus on inward acceptance through honing her body. Just as things are beginning to feel like they are slipping away from Stephen, she takes up weightlifting and fencing to better connect with her body and mind. Where before she only knew confusion and heartbreak over the loss of Collins and lack of control over her own emotions, Stephen realizes that through working on oneself, "life was full of new interest [. . .] an interest that centered entirely in her body. She discovered her body for a thing to be cherished, a thing of real value since its strength could rejoice her; and young though she was she cared for her body with great diligence" (50). Hall

redirects Stephen's disappointments and frustrations over her inability to connect emotionally with those around her and focuses them on self-care. And although Stephen admits that "she hated her own isolation" (67), for a time Stephen can keep much of her focus on herself and ignore the criticisms of acquaintances.

The introduction of Martin Hallam serves as one of the first significant ruptures in Stephen Gordon's life, and illustrates the immense pain experienced by Stephen due to her inability to experience an emotional or sexual connection with another individual. While Martin only appears in the novel for a few sections in the middle and the end, he serves as a significant source of upheaval. Originally, the two strike up a quick friendship over a shared love of nature and riding. Martin Hallam is described as "[a] queer, sensitive fellow" and "a man to be lonely," language to this point purely associated with Stephen and her "queerness" (83). While the two experience genuine feelings of camaraderie with one another, and Stephen grows to love Martin as a close friend and her first true confidant, Martin begins experiencing the social pressure of his class and realizes that his relationship with Stephen cannot continue to be a mere friendship. Even the narrator acknowledges that their close relationship is witnessed by those around them, and the gossip that the two would eventually marry leads others to think that "[a]fter all the girl was just like other girls—they almost ceased to resent her" (86). It is not until Stephen enters into a relationship with a man of some social standing that Stephen's society accepts her. Although Stephen had long come to accept herself and, for a brief time, forget about her "abnormal" nature, Martin's presence is the only thing that allows her to find that same acceptance from others. When Martin proposes to Stephen, and she rejects him outright, she finds herself ravaged by inner turmoil.

Viewed as a friend and equal by Martin Hallam, Stephen was able—for a time—to forget her isolation, and she was able to share experiences with Martin that were unknown to her previously. Being accepted by Martin allowed her to live out many of her childhood fantasies of being a man and be as competent as anyone else when it came to the masculine pursuits of fencing, hunting, and riding. Ultimately, it is the realization that Martin had viewed Stephen as an object of desire and a wife to be won that hurts her the most. As she thinks about what led up to the proposal and her rejection, she recalls how "[s]he had wanted Martin to treat her as a man, had expected it of him" (90). For once, she was able to live out her childhood fantasies of being "someone like Nelson," and by proposing to her, Martin had shattered that possibility before it could be fully realized.

With Martin gone, Stephen is struck by the deep need to "try to explain very calmly what it was she had felt, the intensity of it. She would try to make him understand her suspicion that this feeling of hers was a thing fundamental, much more than merely not being in love; much, much more than not wanting to marry Martin" (90). Here Stephen finally gives voice to the reality of her situation. Prior to Martin's proposal, Stephen often suppresses or ignores thoughts about her sexuality, but following these events, the novel shines a brighter spotlight on the complex atmosphere that Stephen is forced to navigate as she seeks acceptance and understanding from family, friends, and lovers over the course of the next several decades.

Soon after her relationship with Martin implodes, Stephen meets the American Angela Crosby and begins an affair with her. After months of seeing Angela, Stephen, realizing that her relationships are always temporary, admits that she wants Angela to leave her husband. Stephen confesses that she is "ready to give up even Morton" since the reality, as she sees it, is that to "live quite openly together [. . .] is what we owe to ourselves and our love" (133). This is one of

the novel's earliest recognitions of queer sexuality as a right to be expressed openly. Stephen is finally able to be honest with herself about her desires, and to admit that she is willing to start a new life with Angela away from the Morton she loves if it means finding acceptance. Unfortunately, Stephen's honest plea for love and equality is rejected by Angela, who insists that "[she has] always been faithful to Ralph [. . .] beyond a few rather schoolgirlish kisses," and blames Stephen for misinterpreting their relationship. Angela goes so far as to ask Stephen "[c]an I help it if you're – what you obviously are?" (133). The language of the period fails Stephen as Angela can only vaguely refer to Stephen's sexuality as something there is no good name or definition for, but the implication is clear: Stephen is abnormal, and her love is a threat to Angela's status quo.

Once again, Stephen must deal with the dehumanizing language of erasure as Angela rebukes her honest request as an impossibility. If Angela were to accept Stephen as her lover and acknowledge their relationship publicly, her times dictate that she would face ridicule and hardship she is not willing to endure. Angela goes so far as to marginalize Stephen's humanity when she explains that her refusal of Stephen is deeply tied to her social position, noting that "[i]f you're willing to give up your home I'm not willing to sacrifice mine" before turning the screw yet again. Angela suggests that Stephen's humanity is somehow lesser because of her sexual orientation by explaining that "Ralph's not much of a man but he's better than nothing" (133). Because of Stephen's position outside the heteronormative space, her love is trivialized, and her ability to provide is deemed inadequate. Stephen realizes as this refusal is happening that "[t]hen would come the most poignant suffering of all, the deepest, the final humiliation. Protection – she could never offer protection to the creature she loved: 'Could you marry me, Stephen?' She could neither protect nor defend nor honour by loving; her hands were completely

empty" (137). Stephen's love is perceived as insufficient because of the taboos associated with it and the legal bodies that would seek to prevent it from receiving equal treatment under the law. Stephen's position as a queer woman precludes her from marrying Angela, and without the institution of marriage, Angela suggests that such a love will always be viewed as inadequate and insecure. For Angela, queer sexuality is a temporary distraction, an illicit affair that must always end in a return to "normalcy," but Stephen ultimately pushes back against such a stance.

Despite Angela's rejection, the affair continues until the re-introduction of Stephen's childhood bully, Roger Antrim. Once Stephen's dreams for her relationship with Angela are fully articulated, Angela pulls away and engages in a second affair with Roger. When Stephen finds out about the affair she is devastated, and in a final attempt to hold on to Angela, she writes her a passionate love letter, confessing her feelings in full. Ralph Crosby finds the letter, Angela denies everything contained inside, and Ralph confronts Anna Gordon with the truth about Angela and Stephen's relationship. Confronted directly with the reality of Stephen's lesbian sexuality, Anna is repulsed, and she channels the same arguments used by purity leagues to critique and censor the novels of many "obscene" authors when she argues that "[i]t is you who are unnatural, not I. And this thing that you are is a sin against creation [. . .] In that letter you say things that may only be said between man and woman, and coming from you they are vile and filthy words of corruption – against nature, against God who created nature" (182). Anna Gordon represents not merely the mother of Stephen, but an entire culture and the religious institutions that had long persecuted and belittled queer communities.

Finally forced to defend herself against accusations of being "unnatural," Stephen outlines for her mother the truth about her lesbian sexuality: "[a]s my father loved, I loved. As a man loves a woman, that was how I loved – protectively, like my father. I wanted to give all I

had in me to give. It made me feel terribly strong [. . .] and gentle. It was good, good, *good*" (183). Stephen invokes her own mother's experiences to defend and argue her position, acknowledging that nothing Stephen feels is abnormal, wrong, or outside the realm of what heteronormative couples experience. Faced with her mother's anger and disgust, Stephen can finally articulate the reality that she has struggled with since childhood, exclaiming:

> I don't know what I am; no one's ever told me that I'm different and yet I know that I'm different – that's why, I suppose, you've felt as you have done. And for that I forgive you, though whatever it is, it was you and my father who made this body – but what I will never forgive is your daring to try and make me ashamed of my love. I'm not ashamed of it, there's no shame in me. (183)

In this moment of major upheaval, Stephen confronts her mother's bigotry directly and argues for the virtue and value in all forms of sexuality. She refuses to be told that her feelings are lesser than those of "normal" individuals. But this confrontation fractures the already tentative relationship between Anna and Stephen, ultimately resulting in the first major uprooting of Stephen's life as she is forced to abandon Morton Hall and move away to Paris.

Once removed from the history and prejudices of Morton Hall and the society surrounding that ancient place, Stephen becomes a successful author living in Paris and writing her experiences. Hall shifts the narrative away from the strictly Victorian trappings of the Morton Hall narrative, and *The Well of Loneliness* explores the cultural impact of the bohemian salon. Removed from the confines of lineage and the oppressive expectations of Victorian ideals, Stephen finds herself grappling more directly with her sexuality. Now in Paris with only her former teacher, Puddles, to keep her company, Stephen realizes the truth and hypocrisy of the

"normal" people who refused to accept her, and she acknowledges that the weight of everything is pulling her down:

> Yes, it was trying to get her under, this world with its mighty self-satisfaction, with its smug rules of conduct, all made to be broken by those who strutted and preened themselves on being what they considered normal. They trod on the necks of those thousands of others who, for God knew what reason, were not made as they were; they prided themselves on their indignation, on what they proclaimed as their righteous judgments. They sinned grossly; even vilely at times, like lustful beasts – but yet they were normal! And the vilest of them could point a finger of scorn at her, and be loudly applauded. (231)

Removed from the isolated atmosphere of Morton, Stephen quickly learns that the prejudices espoused back in England were not unique to her upbringing, but systemic issues permeating the whole of society. Even in Paris, a city popularly viewed as more accepting of sex and obscenity, Stephen recognizes that the social infrastructure in place is leveraged against queer individuals. She clearly articulates the hypocrisy of those deemed "normal" by society and recognizes that the prejudice against queerness comes from a place of unfounded bigotry. While Stephen argues for a reality where one's actions speak for their 'rightness,' she recognizes that the reality of the world is one where 'rightness' is determined by playing a role.

This tension between demanding her queerness be accepted and recognizing the reality of a world controlled by prejudice overshadows much of Stephen's time in Paris, and she finds herself constantly wavering between optimism and defeat. Shortly after returning from driving ambulances in the war, Stephen begins living with a fellow ambulance driver named Mary, and the two of them begin a romantic relationship. In its newness, Stephen is struck by a fierce

optimism and swells with pride. She finally feels that it is possible to live a normal life in the face of such heavy opposition and argues that "[t]here was many another exactly like her in this very city, in every city; and they did not all live out crucified lives, denying their bodies, stultifying their brains, becoming the victims of their own frustrations. On the contrary, they lived natural lives – lives that to them were perfectly natural" (272). Here, Stephen channels the language of Anna Gordon and her ilk to reclaim the normalcy of her sexuality and to argue for its "rightness," but although she still recognizes that "[t]he world would condemn," she also feels that such condemnation is meaningless and petty, that those like her "would rejoice; glorious outcasts, unashamed, triumphant!" (272). Unfortunately, although Stephen can finally begin making a home with Mary in Paris, and slowly recovers that which she lost when she was exiled from Morton, the optimism fails to stick.

Much of Stephen's optimism comes from her living in proximity with Mary, but in the beginning, their relationship resembles that of Stephen and Martin. When Stephen and Mary finally share their first kiss, Stephen is immediately wracked with doubt over the wisdom of her actions. As soon as intimacy enters the equation, Stephen is reminded of her past at Morton and begins dwelling on the prejudices and betrayals she experienced at the hands of Anna, Angela, and others from her childhood. Unable to express her feelings to Mary, Stephen turns to introspection. She thinks to herself that if she and Mary begin a serious relationship, she must be open and honest with Mary and explain that, "the world will abhor you, will persecute you, will call you unclean," and she recognizes that even though "[w]e may harm no living creature by our love; we may grow more perfect in understanding and in charity because of our loving; but all this will not save you from the scourge of a world that will turn away its eyes from your noblest actions, finding only corruption and vileness in you" (273). Unfortunately, the fear of losing

Mary as she lost Angela and Morton prevents her from having this conversation with Mary. Instead, Stephen throws herself even more fully into her work and the isolation that comes with it.

Despite all her time in Paris, she is unable to shake her longing for Morton and the history that accompanies it. Paris never feels like the home that Stephen desires, and it is the realization that she cannot have both her love and a home to belong in that breaks Stephen down. Although Paris represents the possibility of a modern future where lesbians can find acceptance, Hall continually reminds the reader that the oppressive history of Victorian England still looms large. After months of living in Paris, Stephen must temporarily return to Morton to keep up appearances for Anna. With Stephen away from Paris, the reader is given a glimpse into the mind of Mary as she articulates the sad reality of her love with Stephen. Without Stephen around, Mary realizes that "[q]uite suddenly Paris had lost its charm for her. After all, what was it? Just a big, foreign city – a city that belonged to a stranger people who cared nothing for Stephen and nothing for Mary. They were exiles. She turned the word over in her mind – exiles; it sounded unwanted, lonely" (304). Life in Paris with Stephen still feels nothing but temporary. Paris is not a home, and it is not where Mary or Stephen longs to live out the remainder of their lives. The conflict between queer sexuality and home is thrown into stark contrast. Like in Woolf, Barnes, Bowen, and Mackenzie, Stephen's sexuality is most fully expressed in transient spaces; her life in Paris is the only place where she can truly put down roots with Mary, but it is never enough as Mary recognizes that they are viewed as exiles.

The constant desire to return to Morton sits heavy on Stephen's mind, and Mary recognizes that all Stephen can do is struggle with the tension between her shifting present and grounded history. Mary thinks about Stephen's expulsion from Morton and fears asking her

about it, "[b]ut why had Stephen become an exile? Why had she exiled herself from Morton? Strange that she, Mary, had never asked her – had never wanted to until this moment [. . .] Morton, that was Stephen's real home, and in that real home there was no place for Mary" (304). By briefly shifting the focus to Mary, Hall illuminates the intense isolation that Stephen has imposed upon herself while dwelling on her situation. Mary is more in-tune with the struggles that Stephen experiences than the readers is initially led to believe, and suddenly the dangers of Stephen's isolation come into focus. Unable to discuss her fears and concerns with Mary, Stephen has slowly pushed away the one individual who understands her situation and wishes to help ease the turmoil that Stephen feels over the loss of Morton and the persecution of her sexuality. Here Hall emphasizes the importance of shared experiences and movements built on cooperation and community.

Unfortunately, Stephen cannot fully embrace the community of others like her; she is continually pulled back to the Victorian ideals of her upbringing and cannot see a way forward for her and Mary without acceptance from society. This tension is made worse with the return of Martin Hallam to Stephen's life. Towards the end of the novel, he arrives in Paris, falls in love with Mary, and challenges Stephen's suitability as her lover. In the end, Stephen relinquishes Mary to Martin Hallam. As Stephen's hands remain empty of gifts, "Martin appeared to Stephen as a creature endowed with incalculable bounty, having in his hands all those priceless gifts which she, love's mendicant, could never offer" (392). Without the ability to marry, as a sexual invert and not the "universal heterosexual British subject," Stephen believes that she is incapable of ever finding acceptance for her and Mary. Blinded by the Victorian ideals, Stephen sabotages her own happiness and is left alone in Paris. In the wake of losing the woman Stephen loves to Martin, she is instilled with a new anger and sense of desperation.

In the closing moments of the text, Hall writes a scathing critique of the Victorian ideals that have held down her protagonist. Alone and with nowhere to turn but towards God, Stephen speaks for a future generation of inverts who refuse to remain silent. The final call of the novel critiques the modern British state with its desire to keep all knowledge of female homosexuality suppressed:

> And now there was only one voice, one demand; her own voice into which those millions had entered. A voice like the awful, deep rolling of thunder; a demand like the gathering together of great waters. A terrifying voice that made her ears throb, that made her brain throb, that shook her very entrails, until she must stagger and all but fall beneath this appalling burden of sound that strangled her in its will to be uttered. 'God,' she gasped, 'we believe; we have told You we believe [. . .] We have not denied You; then rise up and defend us. Acknowledge us, O God, before the whole world. Give us also the right to our existence! (399)

The Well of Loneliness ends not with Stephen Gordon accepting her fate as an outcast, but with a rallying cry for a generation of dispossessed and persecuted women to rise and demand acceptance. While the plea is couched in the language of a prayer, in the context of 1920s England there is no mistaking this ending as a clear critique of the conditions that would have sought—as recently as 1921—to deem Stephen's love criminal. James Douglas would have known the context for such a demand, and it is unsurprising that he would see such a sincere plea as a threat to his heteronormative, Christian ideal. This open reproach of English society sets Hall's novel apart from the rest of the novels explored in this chapter. While all of them share similarities to *The Well*, each of the forthcoming novels takes careful steps to obscure their obscenity or mask their sincerity to avoid suppression.

Released several months before *The Well of Loneliness*, Elizabeth Bowen's *The Hotel* is her least well-known novel. Not long after the release of the novel, Bowen found significant success with the 1929 release of her novel about the Irish War of Independence, *The Last September*, and as a result, *The Hotel* often goes overlooked as an early work of significance when placed alongside her long and storied career. A minor work of realism, *The Hotel* takes few formal risks in its straightforward examination of English society set on the Italian Riviera. Unlike the roman à clef favored by Hall, Bowen's work avoids the trap of autobiography, and her themes hide firmly behind a veil of fiction. However, the novel is undeniably concerned with the public perception of queer individuals, and by placing a heavy emphasis on the illusion of propriety and pervasive impact of gossip, it explores the complicated relationship between discussions of sexuality and 20th century English society.

While *The Hotel* is the least sexually explicit of the novels I explore in this chapter, it deserves a place alongside the rest of these novels because of its attempts to grapple with the public disdain and lack of understanding for lesbians in this period. The novel serves as a commentary on the contemporary state of obscenity censorship by focusing on gossips from the upper echelons of British society and highlighting the taboo of publicly discussing lesbianism that persisted in this period. Although Bowen keeps the suggestion of lesbian sexuality largely implied, gossiped about, and unrealized, its specter never leaves the protagonist, Sydney Warren, as she struggles with questions over her future. Most of the queer undertones in the novel center around Mrs. Kerr, a widowed socialite and figure of admiration at the titular hotel.

Early in the novel, many of the women staying at the hotel find themselves drawn to Mrs. Kerr and desire to be known as an acquaintance of the lady. When Miss Pym notices Mrs. Kerr returning from a walk one morning, she is immediately consumed with a desire to abandon her

plans and fantasizes about joining Mrs. Kerr so that through their proximity "their two names—her own and Mrs. Kerr's—might not henceforward begin to be coupled. She had a queer little thrill and held open the swing-door with gratitude, almost with reverence" (Bowen 10). While an inconsequential scene in the larger context of the novel's plot, it is the first of many references in which "coupling" and "queerness" are placed in proximity with one another. Shortly after this scene, the reader learns that Sydney and Mrs. Kerr are exceptionally close, and that Sydney has become more known at the hotel for her aloofness and proximity to Mrs. Kerr than for anything else.

This idea of queer coupling is reinforced throughout *The Hotel* both implicitly and explicitly. From early on, the reader is informed that Sydney finds the idea of men and women being expected to marry one another to be "odder than ever" in the interwar period (30). It is this tension that dictates the bulk of Sydney's decisions throughout the novel as she attempts to reconcile her belief that marriage between a man and a woman in the interwar period is odd with the societal expectation that she ultimately settles down and begin a family. Sydney is continually torn between trying to hold together her deteriorating relationship with Mrs. Kerr and being pressured into marrying a young clergyman named Milton.

While much of the novel is told through the perspective of an omniscient narrator, it is often focalized through the perspective of Sydney, Milton, or Mrs. Kerr's son Ronald. At times, however, the reader is given insight into how the other members of the hotel view Sydney. She is viewed by Veronica as someone constantly lost in thought, keeping themselves remote from others, a "queer" individual who "had curious ties" (53). It is not until later that the reader learns that these ideas are shared by many of the other women at the hotel, including the parlor wives who sit around and gossip all day. They admit that the "aspect of Mrs. Kerr which most

profoundly intrigued them" happened to be "her friendship with Sydney" (87), but it is a subject they do not feel comfortable discussing in esteemed company. Their hesitation illustrates how broaching the subject of Sydney and Mrs. Kerr's relationship could be viewed as untoward, but when Tessa, Sydney's cousin, broaches the subject herself in what the narrator notes is "lacking in that appreciation of their delicacy" (87), the reader learns that these women find the relationship to be unutterable.

By situating the discussion of Sydney and Mrs. Kerr's relationship in the language of parlor gossip, Bowen emphasizes the taboo inherent in public discussions of lesbianism. The focus on coded language and linguistic evasion mirrors the public's unfamiliarity with the vocabulary of lesbian sexuality. When Tessa suggests that "Sydney is very affectionate" with Mrs. Kerr, another of the women agrees that she seems "very much . . . absorbed," the ellipses a telling marker of their discomfort. Immediately, another of the women pipes up that she had "known *other* cases," and that, "[o]ne didn't feel *those others* were quite healthy" (88). Ultimately, the rest of the women agree that young women like Sydney would be better spending their time with men their age and not older women. Here the reader sees the first overt, albeit linguistically neutered, conversation about Sydney's sexuality and her relationship to Mrs. Kerr. This gossip plays a crucial role in Bowen's transmission of taboo discussions. By placing criticism of Sydney's relationship with Mrs. Kerr behind the largely private and socially exclusive doors of the parlor, Bowen allows the discussion of taboo sexuality to occur in a space distinctly separated from public discourse. Gossip is the vessel of transmission as well a veil against scrutiny and criticism from the outside.

Fittingly, the novel does not dwell on these taboo thoughts for long. No sooner has this conversation taken place than James Milton is asking for Sydney's hand in marriage. Bowen

shifts away from private discussions of Sydney's taboo relationship to public displays of her complex relationship with Milton. When Milton asks Sydney to marry him for the first time, she refuses his offer out of shock and mild disgust, noting that she was "feeling she had been asked something so preposterous that the answer was a matter for her common sense alone and that further enquiries need not be instituted" (141). For a time that suffices for the narrative. Sydney continues to live as she had since arriving at the hotel and maintains proximity to Mrs. Kerr for at least a few more weeks. Unfortunately, Sydney notices a change in Mrs. Kerr shortly after Milton's proposal, and realizes that Mrs. Kerr is harboring the hope that Sydney might marry, and this understanding devastates her.

At lunch one day, after explaining to Sydney that she thinks Sydney has the wrong idea about their relationship, Mrs. Kerr explains that, "I'm afraid we've gone wrong through your not quite understanding. You see I'm so fond of you, but—" and Mrs. Kerr is unable to complete the thought even at Sydney's insistence. In publicly broaching the subject of her relationship to Mrs. Kerr, Sydney breaks taboo, and Mrs. Kerr is forced to rebuke Sydney directly to avoid tarnishing her reputation. This interaction shatters Sydney; suddenly everything Sydney felt she knew about how to live is upended, and she spirals:

> She could not command the few words, the few movements which should take her away from Mrs. Kerr; or imagine where, having escaped, she would find a mood, room, place, even country to offer her sanctuary. Her home environment, apart from which the crisis of to-day, of these last weeks, had produced itself, was seen very clearly at this distance away from it but presented an impenetrable façade with no ingress. She could see her life very plainly but there seemed no way back into it, the whole thing might have been painted with a clever enough but not convincing appearance of reality. (198)

Denied the relationship she believed she was building with Mrs. Kerr, Sydney finds herself misplaced in her own body and unable to locate anywhere to belong. With this avenue to happiness and acceptance closed to her, Sydney finds herself turning to Milton and the promise of marriage to "offer her sanctuary," and she accepts Milton's proposal, but learns quickly that denying her reality will not lead her to happiness.

As the novel approaches its conclusion with Sydney engaged to Milton and her relationship with Mrs. Kerr in shambles, the sheer claustrophobia of her future weighs heavily on Sydney, and she is forced to reflect on how little agency she has in her own life. On a trip up the coast with Tessa, Mrs. Kerr, and Milton, their car gets stuck behind an overturned transport, and Sydney experiences the reality of her future if she accepts what society deems "normal." She finds herself realizing how she is "inanimate and objective as a young girl in a story told by a man, incapable of a thought or a feeling that was not attributed to her, without a personality of her own outside their three projections upon her: Milton's fiancée, Tessa's young cousin, Mrs. Kerr's protegee, lately her friend" (262). No longer living the life she originally shared with Mrs. Kerr and being driven by society to accept marriage as her proper place, Sydney pleads with herself that the carriage plunge over the cliff into the river, but in a final act of defiance she thinks "'[w]e musn't go over too quickly,' [. . .] 'there must be time to say something.' Under the rug her hand found out Mrs. Kerr's sleeve and rested there ever so lightly. She racked her brain for all there would be to say, then relinquished the effort. At all events there would be a moment to look at each other, just to look at each other that would be best" (264). At the end of her journey, mere days before she leaves the hotel, Sydney wishes only to die while looking upon Mrs. Kerr and realizes the futility of talking about the unspeakable.

Having realized the claustrophobic and disingenuous future in store for her, Sydney tells Milton that she cannot marry him. She breaks off the engagement and admits that, "we have been asleep here," and things would never work between the two of them because this is not Sydney's reality. Sydney decides to cut herself free from those things weighing her down, returns all the books she borrowed from Mrs. Kerr, and returns to England. As she leaves, the narrator lingers on the scene in Mrs. Kerr's room, where Ronald suggests to his mother that, "'[w]ell, at any rate [. . .] Sydney is fond of you.'" Mrs. Kerr is unable to respond with more than a weak acknowledgment that, "I suppose she is," and in that moment, Ronald realizes that Mrs. Kerr has denied herself something fundamental to her being. The reader is left with a version of Mrs. Kerr's truth shown through the eyes of her son as:

> He stopped again and blinked his eyes, as though he had suddenly seen everything as so complicated that he could only believe in some defect in his vision. Mrs. Kerr gently stirred on the sofa, the loud ticking of the travelling clock at her elbow became suddenly audible. Ronald looking round the room caught sight of his own photograph—'Ronald'—and thought how odd it was that Mrs. Kerr sitting on the sofa beside him should have a son and how much odder it was that Ronald should have a mother. He found himself arguing very loudly, wisely, and dogmatically and was reminded of the only two occasions when he had been drunk. 'You're not fair to yourself,' he kept repeating. 'You're not, Mother, you're not really. You *ought* to be fair . . .' (280)

The final moment of Mrs. Kerr's story ends with sadness and anger, as "his mother had turned away from him in contempt; her eyes were fixed on the door as though under their long, strange, relentless compulsion it must open again to deliver up Sydney." She issues her son a final command to "[m]ake her come back" (284), but Sydney doesn't return, and the reader is left

without closure. In these final moments, Bowen again returns to the unutterability of Sydney and Mrs. Kerr's relationship; to speak the truth is to break taboo and encourage the behavior that the House of Lords deemed unutterable in 1921 with their rejection of the amendment to the Criminal Law.

While the focus on lesbianism is far more implicit and less overt than that found in Radclyffe Hall's cry to "[g]ive us also our right to existence," the depths of Sydney's love for Mrs. Kerr and feeling of having no "place [. . .] to offer her sanctuary" (Hall 399) are as significant as those found in *The Well.* Although *The Hotel* resists the same explicit explorations into lesbianism, it still demands to be taken seriously as a work of art which explores the pitfalls of trying to love outside the bounds of societal norms. Here the myth of the "universal heterosexual British subject" is dismantled by Sydney's rejection of Milton and her desire for Mrs. Kerr, but unlike *The Well*, the reader is left with enough uncertainty about Sydney that *The Hotel* would have made a poor subject for Douglas's ire. For Bowen, to talk about lesbianism is to speak in codes and obscure visibility through the realm of gossip. To break the taboo of naming the act would be improper for polite, public society. The same cannot be said for Virginia Woolf's *Orlando.*

Whereas Elizabeth Bowen would not gain significant popularity until 1929's *The Last September*, Virginia Woolf was internationally renowned by 1928. She had published extensively both non-fiction and fiction and ran the famous Hogarth Press with her husband Leonard Woolf. A member of the famous literary Bloomsbury Group, Woolf was a writer of significant celebrity and influence, and her works sold well internationally and were reviewed

favorably.[32] So, when she finally published *Orlando* in 1928, it was no surprise that the novel was well-received and profitable. Published only a few months after *The Well of Loneliness*, the novel explored similar themes of queer sexuality, but did so in a way that deflected the same kind of scrutiny that Hall experienced. The novel oscillated delicately between serious and comedic while fictionalizing the life of Vita Sackville-West, such that "[t]he difficulty of answering and even framing this question ['What is lesbianism?']" preoccupies the text (Parkes 162). As a complex combination of satire, fictional biography, and roman à clef, Woolf obscures discussions of lesbianism by deflecting scrutiny of the subject matter and calling into question the reliability of the facts presented in the novel. She relegates these examinations to implicit discussions more akin to *The Hotel* than the more explicit critiques found in the novels of Barnes, Mackenzie, and Hall.

Questions of sexuality play a significant role in the narrative of *Orlando.* The novel begins with a portrait of the protagonist stripped down to their gender: "[h]e—for there could be no doubt of his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it" (Woolf 13). Like several other novels in this chapter, fashion and gender are closely linked, but in a way that obfuscates sexuality. The reader learns that fashion and gender share a common link and that appearances are not to be entirely trusted. The only reason the reader truly knows that Orlando is a "he" is because the narrator tells them it is so. As a biography that flouts the traditions of the genre, *Orlando* continually undermines the authority of the narrator and demands the reader reflect on how certain they are that "there could be no doubt of his sex."

[32] For more on the Bloomsbury Group, see any number of books written on the group from Woolf's nephew, Quentin Bell's *Bloomsbury* (1986) to the more recent collection, *The Handbook to the Bloomsbury Group* (2018), edited by Derek Ryan and Stephen Ross.

The narrator of *Orlando* explains that there is a great deal of room for interpretation in Orlando's history. As a biographer, the narrator admits that, "[o]ur simple duty is to state the facts as far as they are known, and so let the reader make of them what he may" (65). While this is a seemingly obvious and innocuous comment, as there has yet to be any reason to doubt the narrator's presentation of the facts of Orlando's life, once Orlando leaves England, the reader learns just how imperfect this narrative coherence is. After Orlando arrives in Constantinople, the narrator explains that "[i]t is with fragments such as these that we must do our best to make up a picture of Orlando's life and character at this time. There exist, even to this day, rumours, legends, anecdotes of a floating and unauthenticated kind about Orlando's life in Constantinople" (124). As Melanie Micir argues in *Passion Projects*, "[Woolf] used *Orlando* to criticize what she saw as the usual structure, methodology, and general assumptions of [the] typical Victorian biographies," and this deconstruction of genre extends beyond the structure of biography to the content as well. Here the biographer is a flawed authority on the subject, and their narration must be accepted as naturally unreliable since large portions of Orlando's life are shrouded in mystery.

Such uncertainty opens the door to speculation on the part of the reader and destabilized perceptions of Orlando just as Orlando's sexuality is destabilized through the plot. The reader learns that "Orlando's taste was broad; he was no lover of garden flowers only; the wild and the weeds even had always a fascination for him" (28), and while there is nothing explicitly sexual in this scene, it is clear as the narrative progresses that such broad taste extends to Orlando's sexuality as well as his more mundane interests. When Orlando arrives in Constantinople, just as the reader is told not to entirely trust the narration, the reader learns that Orlando is still identified as "he." However, shortly after marrying for the first time, Orlando enters a deep sleep

for a full week and upon waking "[h]e stretched himself. He rose. He stood upright in complete nakedness before us, and while the trumpets pealed Truth! Truth! We have no choice left but confess—he was a woman" (137). Interestingly, this metamorphosis from man to woman takes place outside of the stable confines of the narrator's facts. It takes place in the land of "rumours, legend, anecdotes," and must be called into question.

As with *The Well of Loneliness's* Stephen Gordon and *Ladies Almanack's* Evangeline Musset, the reader learns quickly that appearance and sexuality are not directly linked to one another. While Orlando is now female by sex, "in every other respect Orlando remained precisely as he had been. The change of sex, though it altered their future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity" (138). This is the point in the narrative where Woolf plays with the borders of lesbian sexuality and critiques the social norms that condemn women to adhere to strict expectations. Through the experience of living their early years as a biological male, Orlando is given access to facts about sex and gender that are outside the purview of the public.

On returning home to England, Orlando realizes that their notions about women were wrong. Orlando acknowledges that while society has always told them otherwise, "women are not [. . .] obedient, chaste, scented, and exquisitely apparelled by nature," but that such qualities are the result of social grooming and not innate qualities, for "[t]hey can only attain these graces [. . .] by the most tedious discipline" (156-7). By acknowledging the fundamental disconnect between cultural expectations of gender and the varied reality of gender experiences, Woolf destabilizes the sexuality of Orlando. To drive the point home, Woolf briefly shifts the focus away from broad biography to an explicit discussion of Orlando's sexuality.

Woolf emphasizes the spectrum of sexual experience by noting that "as all Orlando's loves had been women, now, through the culpable laggardry of the human frame to adapt itself to

convention, though she herself was a woman, it was still a woman she loved; and if the consciousness of being the same sex had any effect at all, it was to quicken and deepen those feelings which she had had as a man" (161). Woolf engages with the familiar argument that convention and assigned gender do not always correlate to an individual's sexuality[33]; women can be in love with other women and there is nothing inherently conscious in those decisions. In fact, later in the text, Woolf's narrator directly addresses those who would suggest that lesbians cannot actually exist when they ask the reader to "let us, who enjoy the immunity of all biographers and historians from any sex whatever, pass it over, and merely state that Orlando professed great enjoyment in the society of her own sex, and leave it to the gentlemen to prove, as they are very fond of doing, that this is impossible" (220). This moment is one where the novel draws the reader's attention to the 1921 attempt to amend the Labouchere Amendment, in which the British Parliament struck down an action meant to criminalize lesbianism out of fear of what naming the act might do (Cohler 143). The biographer's demand to "leave it to the gentlemen" begins to "masquerade variously as both a novel and a history," as Latham argues the genre is prone to do. The suggestion is that there is a vocal population (men) who disbelieve the reality of female homosexuality, but the narrator asks the reader to let the facts speak for themselves and suggests that Orlando has indeed experienced real homosexual love. This critique serves as tongue-in-cheek acknowledgment of the English parliament's failed attempts to criminalize female homosexuality in 1921.

Although *Orlando* is at times explicit with its acknowledgment and endorsement of lesbianism as a valid and natural sexuality, the novel does ease off the message by

[33] The chapters "Outraging the Decencies of Nature? Uniformed Female Bodies" and "Passing Fashions: Reading Female Masculinities in the 1920s" from Laura Doan's *Fashioning Sapphism* provide extensive studies on the intersection of gender and fashion with regards to early lesbian subcultures.

acknowledging that lesbianism is not going to usurp heterosexuality as the dominant sexuality. She begins by arguing for Orlando's bisexuality when the narrator notes, "nor can there be any doubt that she reaped a twofold harvest by this device; the pleasures of life were increased and its experiences multiplied. From the probity of breeches she turned to the seductiveness of petticoats and enjoyed the love of both sexes equally" (221). Orlando's bisexuality and proclivity for lesbian relationships is undercut further when, as Orlando gets older, they begin to "feel herself poisoned through and through, and was forced at length to consider the most desperate of remedies, which was to yield completely and submissively to the spirit of the age, and take a husband. That this was much against her natural temperament, has been sufficiently made plain" (243). Ultimately, Orlando takes a husband, and it is clear to see that such a decision could suggest—as Sir Chartres Biron stated—that a book is safe from claims of obscenity if its tragedy ends with the invert realizing their perversion and trying to remedy it. Woolf, however, complicates this marriage by pairing Orlando with a husband who has undergone the same sexual metamorphosis as the protagonist, so that even within this marriage, sexuality and gender remain fluid constructions. While the marriage appears traditional from the outside, scrutiny of the events that led to this coupling complicate the matter significantly.

Woolf has one final trick to play at the end of the novel, and it is this last argument that most clearly advocates for the acceptance of lesbian sexuality in a way that differs little from the pleas of Barnes or Hall. As *Orlando*'s story concludes, the reader is reminded to take the events with a comfortable degree of skepticism; the Orlando that is presented to the reader is but one version of Orlando's actual narrative. Woolf presents the individual as not a straightforward, singular entity, but a multitude. Although this version of Orlando's story ends with marriage, humanity is not so simple; individuals have multiple versions of themselves, and:

> these selves of which we are built up, one on top of another [. . .] have attachments elsewhere, sympathies, little constitutions and rights of their own, call them what you will (and for many of these things there is no name) [. . .] for everybody can multiply from his own experience the different terms which his different selves have made with him—and some are too wildly ridiculous to be mentioned in print at all. (308-9)

Not only is this true, but one cannot trust a biography since "a biography is considered complete if it merely accounts for six or seven selves, whereas a person may well have as many thousand" (309). Woolf ends the narrative with a dose of skepticism by asking the reader to consider that all versions of Orlando are true selves. The "he" who sleeps with a queen and marries a woman in Constantinople is just as valid and real as the "she" that loves other women on a level that a man never could. The ending of this version of Orlando is simultaneously the beginning of the next life, and this act of reading forward is crucial to understanding the truth of *Orlando,* which must be seen "as a text that emphatically, even angrily, refuses to know the endings of women's lives in advance" (Micir 113). While not explicitly stated, Woolf argues for the same acceptance that Stephen Gordon demands at the close of *The Well of Loneliness,* and yet censors villainized Stephen Gordon and demanded the pages of her story be burned while accepting the thousand selves of Orlando without comment.

Of all the novels in this list, Barnes's *Ladies Almanack* may appear the most out of place. Published privately by Barnes and friends, it did not have the same reach as the other novels discussed in this chapter. Nonetheless, it was controversial enough that its first distributor chose not to follow through, and it ultimately landed itself in the home of so many banned and reviled books: Paris (Lanser). In addition, Barnes was already no stranger to censorship, having released her first novel, *Ryder,* in a heavily censored form the same year. As a novel, *Ladies Almanack* is

far more explicit in its portrayal of lesbianism than many of the other texts in this study, allthough the parallels with these other texts are at times quite striking.

Ladies Almanack shares many similarities with *The Well of Loneliness,* not the least of which is the protagonist Evangeline Musset, who "had been developed in the Womb of her most gentle Mother to be a Boy" but is ultimately born a woman. Unlike Stephen, this twist of fate does not impede Evangeline in any way; "when therefore, she came forth an Inch or so less than this, she paid no Heed to the Error, but donning a Vest of a superb Blister and Tooling, a Belcher for a tipper and a pair of hip-boots with a scarlet channel" (Barnes 7). *Ladies Almanack* and *The Well of Loneliness* both begin with the birth of a child "destined" to be a man who turns out to be a woman. Similarly, each of these figures adopts the fashion and mannerisms typically associated with masculinity. Where Barnes differentiates herself from Hall is her reliance on genre. Like many of the texts in this chapter, *Ladies Almanack* is a roman à clef that parodies the bohemian salons and lesbian artists of the interwar period. However, it is also a modern adaptation of the classical almanac that "lacks the more practical advice characteristic of the medieval and early modern almanacs from which it borrows its form and style" (Starck 239). As an almanac, the events depicted in *Ladies Almanack* must be viewed as a record of future events, and in this way, the sincerity of Barnes' depictions of lesbianism would be greater than even Hall's pleas. By writing in such an archaic style, Barnes obscures the prescience of her exploration of lesbianism through complex, outdated language and a specialized genre. *Ladies Almanack* places itself beyond the bounds of public consumption and works hard to alienate readers through highbrow experimentation. Nonetheless, Barnes' novel is as frank an exploration of lesbianism as Hall's *The Well of Loneliness,* and it positions itself as a significantly greater threat to public knowledge.

Unlike *The Well,* which sees Stephen Gordon grappling with her sexuality for much of her life, Evangeline is headstrong and unwilling to take criticism from those who question her masculine qualities. She critiques her own father for being ashamed of her attitude, noting that, "'[t]hou, good Governor, was expecting a Son when you lay atop of your Choosing, why then be so mortal wounded when you perceive that you have your Wish? Am I not doing after your very Desire, and is it not the more commendable, seeing that I do it without the Tools for the Trade, and yet nothing complain?'" (Barnes 8). Evangeline's argument is that there is nothing less masculine about her simply because of her sex; she is as capable of being a son as any male heir. How she chooses to live her life is no less valid because it does not adhere to strict social norms. Evangeline embodies the qualities Hall ascribes to Stephen, but with all the doubt and lack of confidence stripped away. Barnes offers the same critique of the "universal heterosexual British subject" as Hall, but with a stronger bite.

Nonetheless, there is plenty of room in *Ladies Almanack* for dissenting opinions, as the character of Patience Scalpel illustrates. In the month of January, Scalpel attempts to play the voice of tradition and struggles to understand why women would seek the company of one another, since, "'[i]n my time [. . .] Women came to enough trouble by lying abed with the Father of their Children," and because of this she wonders, "[w]hat then in this good Year of our Lord has paired them like to like, with never a Beard between them, layer for layer, were one to unpack them to the very Ticking?" (12). The most significant opposition mustered against the reality of lesbianism is the lack of understanding. Without a stable point of reference for understanding female homosexuality, Scalpel returns to what she knows best, which is the myth that women are destined for childbirth. She argues that it is necessary that there "[a]re good Mothers to supply them with Luxuries in the next Generation; for they themselves will have no

Shes, unless some Her puts them forth! Well I'm not the Woman for it! They well have to pluck where they may. My Daughters shall go amarrying!" (12). In placing this opposition to lesbianism in January, Barnes uses the genre of the almanac to mirror the shifting dialogue surrounding lesbianism in modern England. If the goal of the almanac is, as the novel's subtitle suggests, "showing their Signs and their Tides; their Moons and their Changes; the Seasons as it is with them; their Eclipses and Equinoxes; as well as a full Record of diurnal and nocturnal Distempers," then it stands to reason that what is deemed proper and normal in January will have evolved significantly by December.

By March, Barnes has turned the argument of tradition on its head and advocates for ideas more radical than even Radclyffe Hall's. At the center of *The Well of Loneliness* is Stephen Gordon's belief that her major flaw is an inability to marry another woman. Without the protection that marriage provides, Stephen believes that lesbian relationships are doomed to fail against traditional heterosexual relationships. However, Barnes advocates for a different approach. Barnes brings England to task for refusing to recognize same-sex marriage. She claims that:

> 'Just because woman falls, in this Age, to Woman, does that mean that we are not to recognize Morals? What has England done to legalize these Passions? Nothing! Should she not be brought to Task, that never once through her gloomy Weather have two dear Doves been seen approaching in their bridal laces, to pace, in stately Splendor up the Altar Aisle, there to be United in Similarity, under mutual Vows of Loving, Honouring, and Obeying, while the One and the Other fumble in that nicer Temerity, for equal gold Bands that shall make of one a Wife, and the other a Bride? (17-18)

For Barnes, there is a clear solution to the inability for a woman to provide another woman with the same protections a husband could. The answer is to legalize marriage between women. This would resolve the complaints that so many have levied against lesbians: if love outside of matrimony is a sin, then remove the sin by allowing the matrimony.

Such an idea would have been viewed as exceptionally radical at the time—female homosexuals were not even explicitly recognized in governments let alone worthy of the same rights as heterosexual couples—but it does not stop Barnes from proposing it. Nonetheless, she clarifies the importance of such a system of universal acceptance of lesbian sexuality. In order to make clear that such a system would not be an attack on tradition, her characters argue the Christian idea that "'[c]reation has ever been too Marvellous for us to doubt of it now," but acknowledges that just because "the Medieval way is still thought good enough" there should be nothing "to prevent some modern Girl from rising from the Couch of a Girl as modern, with something new in her Mind? To stick to the old Tradition is Credulity, and Credulity has been worn to a Thread" (22). Simply having new ideas about love does not invalidate the old ways. It is possible to have marriage between a man and a woman, to be in favor of the institutions that have existed since Medieval times, but also to accept that something new can flourish alongside it.

Barnes argues that there is nothing unnatural or obscene in lesbianism and it is an inevitability of progress. As humans evolve and ideas about sexuality grow, it is inevitable that individuals would recognize there is no right way to navigate human sexuality. Barnes asks the reader, "'[h]ow am I to help it if I go astray [. . .] when every Law of Love and Desire was long ago as mixed as a Contortion of Traffic? I do not know a blind Alley from a Boulevard, nor a Cross-Road to what it may be running to, and Sign-Posts never serve for anything but unsettling

my Mind!'" (37). Nothing about human sexuality is straightforward, and it is not the fault of the individual if they love in ways that others do not. The *Almanack* proposes the same arguments set forth by Hall and challenged by the likes of Douglas. The tragedy of the *Ladies Almanack* is still that lesbianism is not accepted, but with the help of the almanac, Barnes shows that as the months progress, the dialogue shifts.

By August, Barnes goes so far as to argue that there is nothing abnormal at all in female homosexuality; lesbianism is a fact and not a theory. When questioned by the reader, "from where, say you, come such Women?" Barnes suggests that they come from all walks of life. They come "[u]p from the Cellar, down from the Bed of Matrimony, under sleep and over come. Past watching Eye and seeking Hand and well over Hedge [. . .] Some in Nightgowns and some in Fashion, some hot with Home work and some cool with Decisions. Indeed some of all sorts" (53). Here female homosexuality is not an issue of class or creed, but a state as normal as the "universal heterosexual British subject," and as valid. The *Ladies Almanack* makes the same arguments as *The Well of Loneliness,* and in many ways they are more direct and written with far more "adroitness" than Hall manages.

Although he fits less neatly alongside the novels of Barnes or Woolf, Compton Mackenzie may be the closest parallel to Radclyffe Hall on the list of writers presented in this chapter. While his output was far greater than Hall's in his lifetime, spanning plays, novels, and movies, he is another writer who falls outside the current modern canon. Largely a middlebrow writer, Mackenzie published nineteen novels before *Extraordinary Women*. Like Barnes, his ode to lesbianism would not receive nearly the same critical or cultural attention as *The Well of Loneliness,* a fact that appears to have annoyed him; since "Mackenzie was wistful at the Home Secretary's uninterest in his book [. . .] He had planned to conduct his own defense" (Souhami

237). Although it was viewed by many as a satire in the same vein as *Orlando,* and therefore seen as less of a threat than a more sincere book like *The Well of Loneliness* or *Ladies Almanack,* it contains some of the clearest depictions of lesbianism in these novels. However, Mackenzie undercuts these explicit defenses of lesbianism with contradictory or confrontational statements by his narrator. Mackenzie viewed himself as a prominent satirist and saw his novel as a comic portrait of contemporary lesbians, and so "[w]hile *Extraordinary Women* includes lesbian scenes more risque than anything in *The Well of Loneliness*, Mackenzie insists on a 'sense of the ridiculous,' which may have saved him from censure; its indecencies were decently clothed, in Robert Lynd's words, by 'a defence of laughter'" (Parkes 149). Such a defense is thin at best, and when juxtaposed with the ruling against Hall's novel, it becomes increasingly difficult to defend Mackenzie's novel as a simple farce.

Released only weeks apart, *The Well of Loneliness* and *Extraordinary Women* cannot avoid comparison. While Compton Mackenzie was a well-known author of the era, publishing numerous novels, romances, and an extensive collection of histories and biographies during his lifetime, his works have largely fallen out of fashion with contemporary readers. Perhaps best known for his comic novels, Mackenzie wrote *Extraordinary Women* as a satire on many of the other authors found in this chapter, and he rushed the work to publication in an effort to capitalize on the threat of censorship facing *The Well of Loneliness*.[34] Both texts grapple with the visible reality of lesbians in ways that were unheard of during the period, and each is a roman à clef centered on lesbian lives of the 1920s. Unlike the rest of the novels explored in this study, however, Mackenzie is the only one to use the term "lesbian" in his novel. If one accepts Cohler's argument that the threat of knowledge was more sinister than leaving the question of

[34] Mackenzie himself provides the most comprehensive, if biased, overview of his art and influence in his ten-volume autobiography, *My Life and Times* (1963-1971).

lesbianism well-enough alone, then Mackenzie's text was a more significant threat to public opinion than Hall's. The text itself is more explicitly committed to exploring lesbian relationships than all the other novels in this chapter, but as a farce and critique of 1920s salons and lesbian relationships, it masquerades as critical of the events explored in its pages.

The novel opens with a traditional heterosexual courting between the young Lulu de Randan and her Italian crush, Carmine. However, it is not long before the narrative takes a dramatic turn when, to send her daughter Lulu away from the influence of Carmine, Madame de Randan (believed to be a caricature of Radclyffe Hall) decides it best that Lulu should spend the summer on the island of Sirene. The narrator quickly questions the decision by noting that, "[t]he amount of maternal wisdom one would have attributed to Madame de Randan's choice of a place of exile for her daughter might have depended on one's point of view about Sirene. Its reputation as a decomposer of character was classic" (C. Mackenzie 25). It is not long before the reader learns that the narrator is referring to the island's proclivity for attracting sexual inverts not unlike Hall's Stephen Gordon. Mackenzie positions knowledge of—and experience with—lesbianism as the true threat, and by inserting a third-person narrator as a stand-in for the "universal heterosexual British subject," he paradoxically interrogates this threat while allowing it the space it needs to develop.

As with many of the texts in this chapter, Mackenzie places his narrative within the backdrop of the interwar period and quickly acknowledges that sexuality has changed because of World War I. He explains rather matter-of-factly that, "'[w]hen the war is over you will find that women will be entirely different from what you have known. It is very much in the air, I can assure you, this change" (39). However, Mackenzie is the least willing to commit to simple portraits of lesbianism and sexual deviance when placed alongside his contemporaries. While he

recognizes that women are changing in the wake of the war, the residents of Sirene and the narrator of the novel continually question and remain skeptical of the long-term viability of such a change. When first confronted with Rosalba—the object of affection and desire for nearly every woman in the novel—the residents of Sirene are taken aback and confused to the point that, "[t]hey merely stared at her because they thought it odd that such a pretty young woman should be trying to dress and behave as much like a handsome young man as she could." However, Mackenzie immediately explains the reality of the situation, that "Rosalba was a portent" (41) of what female sexuality might look like going forward.

Shortly after Rosalba's arrival to Sirene, she begins a relationship with Lulu, proving the truth of the narrator's warning about Madame de Randan's decision to send Lulu to the island, but Lulu is not scandalized or put-off by her situation. The narration acknowledges that "Lulu had enough worldly wisdom, which she had picked up like rich scraps of cake from her mothers tea-tables, to apprehend to what in the eyes of the world she was committing herself by a surrender to Rosalba's magic" (64). The threat of lesbianism is undercut by the insistence that such relationships are not mere whims of fancy brought on by a change in atmosphere following a war; the reader is informed that it was much the style of the time and quite natural so much so that "Lulu's infatuation with Rosalba had been warmly encouraged by her mother. She felt it had struck as hard at the whole male sex as it had at one presumptuous youth" (91). Unfortunately, once Mackenzie's narrative firmly establishes the fact of lesbianism it slowly pushes back against this inevitability.

The narrator's attacks begin rather petty and mild, claiming that one of the true problems with lesbianism is that "when women fall in love with each other the passion always seems to begin at the point when normal lovers know in their hearts it will soon come to an end" (102).

For Mackenzie's narrator, lesbian relationships are always on the cusp of ending as they do not have the strength to last like 'traditional' heterosexual relationships do. Here Mackenzie's narrator plays the role of the conservative, heterosexual male; he is the pseudo-James Douglas intent on challenging and policing lesbianism. The narrator routinely stands in as the voice of dissent observing the lives of the women of Sirene, but the women themselves continually strike back and remind the reader that their sexuality is not mere whim.

Although they utilize the language of the "abnormal" sex, the lesbians of Sirene view this classification as a note of pride and not something to be taken lightly. Early in the novel, Rosalba gets into a fight with Cléo and argues, "I am quite as abnormal as you are." To which Cléo retorts, "'[y]ou are not. You are not. You are as normal as a *petite bourgeoise*,' [. . .] 'You would be much happier to find a man to protect you.'" There is a significant point of pride in these women of being viewed as abnormal, and although Mackenzie tries to undercut their pride by playing into the notion that its real source is the contrarian view "'I hate men. How dare you say that I don't'" (122-3), there is still a strong sense of sincerity in their protestations. The narrator acknowledges this fact when he notes, "[i]f they talked so loudly about their temperaments it must cause a scandal" (123), but the fact of the matter is, these women continue to talk loudly and openly of their sexuality regardless of the scandal it may cause. Time and again, the narrator's attempts to undermine the lesbians of Sirene is confronted and broken down loudly and sincerely.

Contrary to the narrator's belief that heterosexual love is more stable, Rosalba's spurned lover, Rory, argues that heterosexual love is the love that is most prone to failure. She argues that "this is why I have always hated the idea of love between men and women [. . .] That love always is unequal and it always must be. No man knows what a woman really feels, and no

woman knows what a man really feels even at the moment of their supreme intimacy" (167). For Rory, female homosexuality allows access to intimacy that is always impossible to members of the opposite sex, and Rory drives this point home when she states that:

> I maintain that my love for Rosalba is something beyond ordinary love [. . .] I don't mean my particular love for Rosalba. I mean the kind of love one woman can give another [. . .] It is because I believe my love is something beyond ordinary love, being creation not procreation [. . .] I regard myself as the evidence of progress, not as a freak. I maintain that in the future all love will be homosexual. (167)

Mackenzie's primary English character makes the strongest endorsement of female homosexuality in the novel, and it is delivered in a moment of sincere vulnerability as she is forced to account for herself. Mackenzie allows this claim the space it deserves to be taken seriously. Unlike other instances in the text where such proclamations are quickly undercut by a crude joke or an intervention by the narrator, this comes during a serious and extended conversation between Rory and Mrs. Sarbecoff, one of the older and more experienced women on Sirene.

This is not to suggest that Mackenzie's narrator completely abandons his attacks on female homosexuality, as he later argues quite vehemently that in any lesbian relationship, "[t]here is often, to be sure, an assumption of masculinity by one or other or sometimes both, but it rarely survives such a searching test as courtship. Inevitably they both have to take turns playing the maiden loth. They both have to struggle to escape" (248-9). Comments like these often follow a significant argument between women and ignore the more successful relationships and experiences on the island. The novel continually revisits the refrain that lesbianism is doomed to failure, has no real staying power, and that "a veil had been lifted from the

debauchery of ancient Rome [. . .] But they comforted themselves by saying that after all it was the kind of thing which might happen on Sirene, but which could not possibly happen anywhere else" (262-3). Such protestations are nearly always given by the narrator or the "normal" inhabitants of Sirene, and they do not reflect the reality of the narrative. The same women whose lives play out for the reader on Sirene continually leave the island and are noted to maintain their relationships and form new bonds on the mainland.

The strongest refutation of the idea that these relationships "could not possibly happen anywhere else" comes in the final moments of the novel when Rory accepts the loss of Rosalba. Cleared of the cloud that was Rosalba, Rory realizes, "[a] cup of tea [. . .] That was what she wanted. It was because she had wanted a cup of tea that she had first met Rosalba in Paris. And now Rosalba was gone, but she still wanted a cup of tea. There was no escaping it. She *was* longing for a cup of tea as ardently as thousands and thousands of ordinary women at home in England" (391). Sometimes a cup of tea is not just a cup of tea but the inciting incident in an awakening of one's sexuality and proof that such feelings are genuine and common. Rory acknowledges that even as an English subject and a lesbian, she is not unlike the "thousands of ordinary women at home in England." Her love is as natural and valid as their own and although she has experienced the loss of Rosalba as a significant blow, it has not deterred who she really is. This moment for Rory is her acknowledgment that she does indeed have a right to her existence.

In the wake of the 1920 persecution of *Ulysses*, public perception about what could be published shifted. The novels of 1928 paint a picture of a culture more comfortable exploring taboo subjects in literature, and the public response supported this claim. *Orlando, Extraordinary Women,* and, to a lesser extent, *Ladies Almanack* all sold well for their respective audiences and

were reviewed favorable by the press. By the time Hall had written *The Well of Loneliness* in 1928, a book dealing explicitly with sexual subject matter no longer shocked the reading public as it once had. As records of reviews and public discussions of the novel show, James Douglas' persecution of Hall's novel was no longer a publicly supported stance. The institution of literary censorship was beginning to weaken, and by the 1930s, prosecuting and protesting art once deemed obscene would become increasingly rare. While *The Well of Loneliness* may have been the last major suppression campaign of the interwar period, it was not the last attempt by literary censors to police the publication and production of sexually explicit or obscene fiction. Even as the case against *The Well* was winding down in England, well into the 1930s, purity leagues abroad in the United States would continue to leverage their influence in last ditch efforts to safeguard the heteronormative, Christian ideals they preached.

However, the international publicity from the trials of *Ulysses* in 1921 and *The Well of Loneliness* in 1928—coupled with financial success of both works—led to a desire for more works of fiction willing to push against purity leagues and government censors. The censorship industry was tipping in the writers' favor, and censors began to recognize that public opinion was no longer on their side. Even by 1928, censors were moving away from the novel as their primary target for censorship and anticipating the change in public opinion about its strength as a corrupting influence on society. In the months before Hall would defend *The Well* against censorship in England, Eugene O'Neill was adapting several techniques used by Joyce in *Ulysses* for his nine-act play, *Strange Interlude,* which would be met with widespread critical and popular acclaim when it debuted on Broadway in January 1928. And in the years following Hall's internationally famous trial, Lillian Hellman would build upon the foundation set by Hall and the lesbian novels of 1928 for her wildly successful play, *The Children's Hour*. Both plays

would fall victim to the “Banned in Boston” movement and illuminate the growing divide between censors and public opinion about what constituted obscene art. Their success, coupled with the obvious debt they owed the efforts of Joyce and Hall, would lead to the weakening of the censorship industry and an era of more creative, obscene, and internationally acclaimed art bolstered with the tools needed to fight back against suppression.

Chapter 3: *Strange Interlude* and *The Children's Hour* "Banned in Boston"

Boston in the 1920s and '30s offers a fascinating vertical slice of obscenity censorship's evolution during the interwar period. During these years, there were significant and rapid changes in how censors policed obscene art, and Boston was the site of major milestones for both censors and artists in their battle to leverage the censorship industry for personal gain. Officials and purity leagues in the city manipulated the apparatus of censorship to dictate what art was deemed worthy of consumption, and they justified their actions as protecting citizens from the horrors of obscenity and the corruption that would come from consuming filth. At the same time, artists reframed the actions of censors as attempts to trample the citizen's right to freedom of expression and painted the censors as power-hungry dictators. During these decades, both sides experienced significant victories and defeats. Their trials and tribulations help illuminate the symbiotic relationship between artists and censors that developed during the interwar period.

Well into the 1930s, obscenity censorship was a tool leveraged by artists and purity leagues to further their careers and drum up support for their visions of what constituted socially acceptable art. While the censorship of Joyce's *Ulysses* was certainly a boon for the popularity of his work, Joyce was already an established name in literary circles, and his work was always likely to find an audience once it was complete and published. The 1928 trial of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness,* however, was proof that even works by lesser-known artists could find an audience and benefit financially from the increased exposure that censorship brought. This realization led to a systemic shift in the relationship between artists and censors during the interwar years. Where censorship organizations had long made efforts to openly oppose works that they deemed harmful to public consumption, and authors often resorted to self-censorship in

attempts to avoid the wrath of censoring bodies, the impact of censorship on *Ulysses* and *The Well of Loneliness* suggested new methods of leveraging controversy to boost an artist's critical and financial success.

In this chapter, I examine the impact that the trials of *Ulysses* and *The Well of Loneliness* had on the shape of modern art and the creation of the censorship industry The increasing globalization of media meant that these heavily publicized censorship trials became international phenomena practically overnight. The outsized media scrutiny of *Ulysses* and *The Well of Loneliness* led to the heightened literary and popular visibility of these texts and helped cement both works in the modern literary canon. Further, these public trials influenced the shifting implementation of obscenity censorship in the years following the censure of these novels. Censors worked for years policing obscene art from behind the scenes through threat of expensive legislation against small scale booksellers and publishers, and the international coverage of Joyce and Hall's trials led to a critical reappraisal of the author's power in the censorship industry and encouraged more widespread opposition to the suppression tactics favored by governments and purity leagues.

To fully appreciate the legacy of these famously censored texts, I trace the formal and thematic elements that made these texts obscene forward to the works of two prominent American dramatists: Eugene O'Neill and Lillian Hellman. As Joyce and Hall have been enshrined in modernist literary canon in large part because of their censorship trials, O'Neill and Hellman both made names for themselves as prolific American playwrights who pushed the boundaries of theatre and enjoyed critical and popular acclaim throughout their careers. However, neither O'Neill nor Hellman was a stranger to controversy. Although the scale of censorship attempts against these playwrights was relatively narrow, their experiences illustrate

the lasting formal and thematic impact that the *Ulysses* and *The Well of Loneliness* trials had on modern literature. The complex reception and production histories of O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* and Hellman's *The Children's Hour* reveal how artistic censorship changed in the wake of Joyce and Hall's trials.

While most censorship never made it to trial,[35] the cases against *Ulysses* and *The Well of Loneliness* emboldened a generation of authors to pursue their creative visions without fear of damages due to censorship. It became apparent in the late 1920s and '30s that censorship could have a positive impact on the publicity and popularity of a work of art. Censorship, for many, was no longer something to be avoided but a controversy to be courted and leveraged for personal gain. These rules applied to both censors and artists who engaged in a play of censorship that originated with Joyce's efforts to publish *Ulysses* in its uncensored—and obscenely amplified—form and was strengthened by Radclyffe Hall's public—and strongly defended—ban on *The Well of Loneliness* in 1928. Nowhere was this game between censors and artists more prominent than in the city of Boston, Massachusetts.

By the 1920s, Boston was the most infamous city practicing obscenity censorship on a large scale. Staunch supporters of Anthony Comstock, the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, and the Comstock Law of 1873, Boston's art scene was firmly in the grasp of the Watch and Ward Society (Miller 4). The Watch and Ward was an upper-class organization of private citizens who believed it their duty to protect the residents of Boston from obscene art by ensuring that works peddling in obscenity never made it to publication or were shut down before they could spread their corrupting influence (10). By the mid-1920s, the organization was responsible

[35] For example, in the city of Boston, censorship operated on the assumption of a "gentleman's agreement" which was a "cozy, behind-the-scenes arrangement by which the Watch and Ward [a major purity league] and the Boston Booksellers Committee determined what books could be sold in the city's bookstores" (Miller 98).

for most of the unofficial policing of obscenity in Boston and held considerable sway over the city's publishing industry. It was nearly impossible to get a book onto shelves in a Boston bookstore until it had been deemed fit for sale by the Watch and Ward. The phrase "Banned in Boston" became synonymous with the Watch and Ward and was seen within the arts community as both a threat and an opportunity.

Most efforts by the Watch and Ward avoided public scrutiny because they tended not to take legal action against publications that they deemed obscene. The Watch and Ward operated through a system of threats and the funding of raids against those who did not adhere to their decency guidelines. Because of their significant resources and close working relationship with the Boston police, the Watch and Ward was able to leverage their outsized influence on smaller entities in private; as Lewis states, "[t]he recorded court cases in this period are a poor indication of the pressure that was exerted on book dealers, who in most instances paid their fines without pursuing the matter further, or were intimidated without being brought into court" (Lewis 98). To avoid fines or the threat of closure, Boston booksellers worked closely with the Watch and Ward society to ensure that books they deemed unfit for public consumption never made it onto store shelves.

Unsurprisingly and following the publicity and success of James Joyce's *Ulysses* in the wake of the 1921 trial against *The Little Review*—purity leagues saw the value of avoiding arbitration whenever possible. Obscenity censorship had begun operating as a double-edged sword. If a publication or individual should challenge the purity leagues and government censors, then these organizations risked amplifying the very content they deemed objectionable. With the growth and globalization of the publishing industry following World War I, that threat was significantly greater than it had been in previous decades. Nevertheless, by the end of the

1920s, the Watch and Ward Society had managed to circumvent this issue by creating a system of mutual agreement between themselves and Boston booksellers which resulted in no danger of arbitration and the Society largely getting its way.

This relationship began to change in 1926, five years after *Ulysses* was banned from publication in the United States, when journalist H.L. Mencken publicly challenged the Watch and Ward Society and disrupted the organization's control over Boston's literary scene. As one of the founders of the literary magazine *The American Mercury*, Mencken was all too familiar with the influence of the Watch and Ward on the publication of obscene materials and was determined to force the organization to defend its practices in court. Upset with the organization's secretive practices, Mencken believed that the best way to challenge the organization was to do so publicly and aggressively. By exposing their tendency towards behind-the-scenes manipulation and intimidation, Mencken believed he could undermine the Watch and Ward and force them to publicize their actions in the future (Miller 88). His plan took place in early 1926, when, "[a]fter consulting with his lawyers and *Mercury* publisher Alfred A. Knopf, Mencken decided to challenge [J. Frank] Chase [secretary of the Watch and Ward Society] directly" by bringing to Boston an issue of the *American Mercury* that contained the article "Hatrack"—a piece of writing on prostitution that had already been deemed obscene by the Watch and Ward—and "[selling] a copy of the issue [. . .] publicly, [to] force to order his arrest" (90). Mencken, with the support of those close to him, decided that the best way to take on an organization as powerful as the Watch and Ward was to force them to defend their practices in public. Newsstands in Boston refused to carry the "Hatrack" issue, and the absence of *American Mercury*'s April issue—while it was widely available throughout the country—made it clear that forces in the city were conspiring to limit access to "Hatrack." The result of Mencken's

provocation was that Chase rose to the occasion, and Mencken was ordered to face a judge on obscenity charges, but he was ultimately acquitted of any wrongdoing (91).

Mencken's challenge dealt a blow to the Watch and Ward, but one that did not ultimately stop them from pursuing their attack against the *Mercury*. While Mencken was absolved, Chase used the distraction of the trial to lobby Washington to ban the issue from the mails and was successful in this attempt. Thus, the confrontation ended in a stalemate (92). While Mencken had been successful in defeating the Watch and Ward on their home turf, and managed to rouse public fervor in support of his cause throughout Boston, Chase countered with the tools that the society was most known for: behind-the-scenes deal-making with powerful distributors. Without the threat of any real harm to the society's operations, Chase was able to pursue avenues of censorship that Mencken had little ability to stop, and the Watch and Ward's years of successful suppression had emboldened Chase into believing that he would ultimately win the war against savvy individuals like Mencken. What the society did not account for was that their tactics would not work against individuals willing to place money and time behind their defense.

Throughout its history, the Watch and Ward Society had leveraged their significant financial backing to crush poorer defendants into complying with their organization's whims, but emboldened by his success against Chase in Boston, Mencken refused to back down without a fight even if it meant significant financial investments and lengthy court battles. Thus, "[o]n April 14, his lawyers prevailed upon a federal judge to issue an injunction restraining the Watch and Ward Society from interfering with the distribution of the *Mercury."* In addition, "Mencken's lawyers filed a suit for $50,000 against Chase, the Watch and Ward Society, and some news agencies, charging them with interfering with Mencken's magazine" (93). With the threat of significant financial damages looming over the society, Mencken was able to turn the

tactics employed by the Watch and Ward against them and demand a level of transparency from the organization that had heretofore been missing. These legal blows against the society were so significant that by the end of 1926, they had "seemed prepared to concede a number of points. One of these was to end the "gentlemen's agreement" banning books and magazines. The Watch and Ward lawyers suggested that such matters be dealt with only in open court from now on" (95). Mencken had learned how to deal with purity leagues from studying their tactics, and instead of sitting back and allowing these organizations to leverage their superior finances and back-door dealings with prominent distributors against his magazine, he took the fight to them and made them account for their actions on the record.

In defeating the Watch and Ward Society at their own game and effectively putting an end to the gentleman's agreement, Mencken drew more attention to the censorship industry These increased optics led to both sides attempting to reestablish control over the narrative of the censor's role in society. With the Watch and Ward's influence weakened by Mencken, opportunities arose for others to fill the vacuum left behind. In the wake of these events, the city of Boston retooled their censorship apparatus to regain the ground surrendered by the Watch and Ward. Instead of a single civilian organization bankrolled by wealthy individuals, censorship in Boston began to resemble a many-headed hydra with each head attempting to interfere with the actions of the others, and in matters of censorship, "there was now near-anarchy, with the Suffolk County district attorney, the Boston police commissioner, and the Watch and Ward all playing a role in the suppression of books, with the Roman Catholic Church cheering from the sidelines" (98). While the number of censoring bodies exploded during this period, artists were similarly emboldened to pursue their artistic vision without fear of the censor and fight back against these organizations when push came to shove.

Because most books that were barred from publication were refused shipment through the post or banned from being stocked by booksellers, many authors practiced deliberate self-censorship to ensure that their works would be published. It took the actions of someone like Mencken to finally shift the conversation. Heretofore, authors were unlikely to be involved in their own obscenity trials, and publishers would often acquiesce to censoring bodies to avoid long-term negative suppression of a work. However, by the late ’20s, public outrage over the censoring of works like *Ulysses* and *The Well of Loneliness*—and the successful resistance by editors like Mencken—encouraged more authors to champion their works even when they knew the content within would likely be actionable. In the immediate aftermath of Mencken’s actions, Upton Sinclair boldly challenged action against his novel *Oil!* by trying to get it publicly censored, defending it himself, and drawing publicity to the work through the channels of obscenity censorship. With Mencken’s success against the Watch and Ward, it would be a while before censors were bold enough to publicly challenge works by influential or prominent authors, and he was ultimately unsuccessful (106). Even though Mencken’s opposition resulted in a period of reflection for the Watch and Ward, it had a significant impact on the city of Boston and the shape of obscenity censorship throughout the ensuing decade.

With the Watch and Ward no longer serving as the primary censor in Boston, various agencies and organizations began vying for their part in protecting citizens from obscene influence. Between the end of Mencken’s battle with the Watch and Ward in 1926 and the beginning of 1927, “some seventy books had been banned in Boston within less than a year’s time, mostly, although not entirely, works of fiction” (110). Although Mencken’s struggles appeared to do little to slow the rate of censorship in Boston, they did manage to increase public awareness of the issue and foster outrage. Whereas when the Watch and Ward was suppressing

works from the shadows, and publishers and booksellers tended to keep quiet and comply with the society's wishes, this new era led to identifiable resistance, such as "the publishers of *Atlantic Monthly* and Little, Brown, and Company—two of the leading Boston publishing companies—[criticizing] the suppression of twelve popular novels as 'high-handed, erratic, and ill-advised'" (104). Recognizing that the rules of obscenity censorship had changed, and public opinion could be levied against censors and drum up publicity for works of art, authors and publishers began making a point of dragging out actions taken against their works.

As a result of this increasing scrutiny on the Boston censorship industry censors realized their methods needed to change as opposition increased and artists got smarter about leveraging censorship in their favor. This is particularly noteworthy in the '20s and '30s as the media landscape began to shift and action against novels lost support in an era of increased public scrutiny. It became harder to justify the act of policing what an individual did with their private time when it became clear to the public that organizations like the Watch and Ward had been secretly manipulating their access to art for decades. The result was a shift in censorship from the novel—an inherently private form of entertainment—to the stage:

> To make the publication of a book a crime required recognizing that reading was not simply a private activity without social consequences. To justify a legal response, the reading and circulation of books must have an intrinsically *public* dimension. The censorship of the stage, by contrast, was both less controversial and longer lasting than the censorship of printed books, because its publicity is more self-evident. (*Filthy Material* 19)

The resulting shift meant that groups like the Watch and Ward—who once held absolute sway in policing the obscene art in their communities—began losing ground, and censors found it much

harder to hide their actions from public scrutiny. This was particularly pronounced in Boston, where "the law [gave] the Board of Censors—made up of the mayor, the police commissioner, and the chief justice of the municipal court—ultimate authority in such matters" (Miller 139), and this made any action taken against a stage production an inherently public and political one.

Thus, when Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* and Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour* enjoyed successful production runs in New York, receive widespread critical and popular acclaim, and had the text of their plays published with little censorial opposition, actions taken by Boston's Board of Censors to halt productions from being staged in the city did not go unnoticed. Opposition to these productions would have been minor footnotes in the history of obscenity censorship had they represented plays by lesser playwrights. Although Boston's attempts to ban the production of these plays are footnotes in their history, the proximity of these texts to the fraught and constantly evolving censorship struggles of the interwar period make them important subjects for consideration in any discussion of modernism and censorship. While neither work is considered the greatest or the bestselling play by either playwright, they are culturally significant in how they illustrate the shifting attitudes of censorship in the interwar period.

To fully grasp the impact of *Strange Interlude*, I return briefly to *Ulysses* here to provide a useful framework for understanding the shifting landscape of obscenity censorship. Without the foundation developed by Joyce, Boston's ban on Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* would have been a relatively insignificant footnote in the history of the censorship industry Instead, it illustrates how far the conversation surrounding obscene art had progressed in the seven years after the trials of *The Little Review* and exposes how public perception of what was obscene evolved as more artists began tackling the thematic and formal elements championed in *Ulysses*.

The subject matter and stylistic techniques of *Strange Interlude* and *The Children's Hour* overlapped significantly with *Ulysses* and *The Well of Loneliness*. By the time of their publication and the first productions in New York, public opinion of the obscenity had shifted significantly. While policing the novel was becoming less of a concern due to the difficulty of justifying suppression against art consumed in private, the shifting media landscape of the early 20th century meant that the theater still held the corrupting power that the novel had begun to lose. The communal act of viewing a stage production, by its very nature, facilitated the exposure and corruption of the viewing public to objectionable and obscene acts. Acting meant that not only was exposure a concern, but the very process of viewing objectional material was an instructional act and a natural byproduct of the medium. Although Boston was a noticeable outlier of censorship activity by the late '20s, the histories of the Watch and Ward Society and the city's Board of Governors represent a focal point in the study of censorship history. Their struggles show that even as international opinion on obscenity was changing, the borders in the war between artist and the censor were merely shifting.

Ulysses was attacked by censors in the United States in 1921 and after a lengthy trial the book was deemed unpublishable stateside. The offending material centered around frank depictions of what were deemed private matters. The image of a man defecating in an outhouse or masturbating in public were enough to ensure that Joyce's novel would cease to see its episodes published in *The Little Review*, and when the full novel was completed in 1922, it could not be published stateside because of the offending episodes. However, by 1928 the novel had established itself as one of the foremost works of literary modernism and was viewed favorably by critics and writers across the globe. As a result, many of the stylistic and formal innovations

that Joyce developed or perfected when writing his novel were emulated in several significant works of the period.

As established in my previous chapter, *Ulysses* grew significantly after facing censorship. Joyce spent the last year writing his novel by heavily revising early episodes and drafting the more experimental and obscene sections. It was not until legal action was taken against *The Little Review* for their publication of "Nausicaa" that he completed work on "Circe" and began drafting "Penelope." These episodes are both the most stylistically unique episodes in the novel and contain the bulk of its obscene, sexual content. "Circe," written in the style of a closet drama—complete with excessive stage directions—was a fantastical examination of Dublin's red-light district and a fevered look into the mind of a man adventuring through a lifetime of sexual fantasies ranging from BDSM to cuckoldry. Nearly anywhere you look in the episode is a scene more graphic and franker than any depiction found in the "Hatrack" article that Boston's Watch and Ward Society had taken exception to in 1926.

As for "Penelope," Joyce structured the episode after the chaotic, near incomprehensible stream-of-consciousness of an individual's nighttime musings. Here, Joyce traces the life and current events of Molly Bloom through obscene depictions of her affair with Blazes Boylan, charming reminiscences of her first meeting with Leopold Bloom, and the onset of her period. Nothing is shielded in the episode, Molly's language is honest, clear, and intentionally obscene. Joyce is careful to depict the inner workings of the individual's conscious and subconscious thought by laying bare how individuals experience their world. The influence of *Ulysses*—primarily the "Circe" and "Penelope" episodes—are present in the form and dramatic thought asides of Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude*.

As a work of drama, *Strange Interlude* stands out both amongst O'Neill's works and as a piece of theatrical art. Written throughout the 1920s, *Strange Interlude* is as significant a piece of literature as it is a theatrical stage production. It ran on Broadway for over a year before being toured around the country for three seasons, and as for the publication of the print version, "[t]he play's first printing of 20,000 copies sold rapidly, and the play held its place on the national best-seller list for many months, eventually earning O'Neill his third Pulitzer Prize" (Wolff 219). The work was so popular that it would eventually be optioned for a film adaptation. Among O'Neill's productions, *Strange Interlude* stands out as one of his most successful and formally unique, but it receives much less attention than plays like *The Iceman Cometh* or *A Long Day's Journey Into Night.*

Structurally, O'Neill's play was heavily influenced by the form of the novel—*Ulysses's* influence is particularly noticeable—and attempted to stage interiority in formal ways that had long eluded theatrical productions. Like many modernists that preceded him, O'Neill found himself drawn to using the stream-of-consciousness for representing the internal thoughts of his characters. Whereas the conscious and subconscious thoughts of characters in a drama had often found their way into stage directions or delivered via soliloquy, O'Neill iterated on this device by having his characters speak their internal thoughts aloud despite sharing the stage with other characters. Several pages of script might be written exclusively as internalized thought with minutes passing on stage before characters return to the normal flow of conversation.

This dramatic stream-of-consciousness allowed O'Neill to stage a play with an unprecedented level of insight into the actions of its characters while preventing them from hiding their motivations. As a result, the play was significantly longer than other works of the period, and it merged the disparate genres of drama and the novel more successfully than when

Ulysses attempted the same trick with "Circe." Both works merged these genres in ways that had heretofore been untested, and each leaned more on the strengths of their primary genre while drawing on the strengths of the subservient form. For O'Neill, this meant illustrating how access to the inner lives of his characters illuminate the contradictions between public and private personas.

These open and honest portraits of internalized ugliness were a massive success, and the play received rave reviews from critics and fans of the production. By making the complicated relationship between internal and external self the center of his work, O'Neill affirms, and gives voice to, the contradictions in his audience as well. The production of *Strange Interlude* was a mirror reflecting the reality of the world to the audience and helped them confront their own contradictions. It is not hard to see how this narrative style might draw ire from censors concerned with works deemed corrupting influences. If *Strange Interlude* was bold enough to claim that the public and private personas of individuals are often at odds with one another, and that most individuals are internally willing to transgress societal norms, then such a play must naturally be prevented from being staged for an easily influenced public.

When the play finally left New York and began touring the country, producers inevitably decided to make a stop in Boston. Although the play experienced immense success in New York, Boston officials decided it was their job to take a stance against what they deemed a work of excessive obscenity. In Boston, the act of banning a production was a relatively simple one since, "[a]ccording to law, if a play was considered not fit for public consumption, it could be stopped after being viewed by the mayor, the police superintendent, and the chief justice of the Municipal Court" (Miller 117). All it required was one of these individuals to raise alarm and the production would be halted until such time as the governing body viewed the production and

deemed it appropriate or shut it down. Unfortunately, for many playhouses in this period, it was enough that the threat of action existed to halt productions. Once an objection was raised, the theater responsible for staging the show would cave and bar the production out of fear of financial peril. In the case of *Strange Interlude,* even though the play was a mere two weeks from debuting, tickets had already been sold, and the permits had been approved, Mayor Nichols's last-minute objection was enough to halt the showing in Boston due to "the mere threat of revoking the license of any theater which housed the play" (Ernst 32). Although the producers of the show sought to appease the mayor with changes to the production, and vowed to make sure it would be staged, once the threat against the staging theater was made it was nearly impossible to get the decision overturned. The only option, in this case, was to move the play just outside of Boston's city limits.

Although the play would not be produced in Boston, the production still managed to go ahead at a theater just outside the city limits. Ultimately, Mayor Nichols's decision had little impact on *Strange Interlude's* success or influence, but the decision itself was culturally significant for what it said about the state of obscenity censorship in this period. For the censors of Boston, it was enough to show that they still sought to "protect" their citizens from the corrupting influence of obscene art. However, what makes this most fascinating is that the version of *Strange Interlude* that was touring was less obscene than the printed version of the play. This highlights the almost arbitrary way in which censorship law was applied to works of art in this period. By targeting *Strange Interlude* for suppression, the city of Boston knew that they were inviting public scrutiny of their actions. The decision was not taken lightly by most—and the success and rave reviews for *Strange Interlude* in New York meant that any action against this tour was bound to draw the ire of fans and critics—but would guarantee publicity for

the city of Boston and their censorship industry Compounding matters and showing just how much the game of censorship had changed, "[t]he Watch and Ward Society had actually approved the printed version as 'not actionable,' and the text could be purchased in Boston bookstores" (Miller 121). Only a few years prior, the Watch and Ward Society's word would have been taken as gospel, and *Strange Interlude* would have been deemed unactionable.

So, if *Strange Interlude*, as a piece of written drama was deemed "not actionable" and widely available for purchase in the city of Boston, what made Mayor Nichols and the Boston authorities target the production? The ability to justify the censorship of novels had become significantly harder once society began demanding more accountability for who could control what citizens read or experienced in private. However, theaters provided a public, communal space for artistic instruction, and if the content of a production were obscene, then it was the job of the censor to shut it down before it could negatively instruct an impressionable audience. This instructive function of theater is acknowledged in the stage directions of O'Neill's play. The setting of Act One as described by O'Neill lends itself well to an anthropological study of his human subjects. Although he is describing the setting of the play, the scene reflects the experience of the audience goer seeking an escape from reality: "*[t]he atmosphere of the room is that of a cosy, cultured retreat, sedulously built as a sanctuary where, secure with the culture of the past at his back, a fugitive from reality can view the present safely from a distance, as a superior with condescending disdain, pity, and even amusement"* (O'Neill 3). Here, the viewer is given permission to exert their "condescending disdain, pity, and even amusement" on the characters on stage and encouraged to view the play that follows as a cultural study of human nature. This encouragement is emphasized not only in the stage directions and the act of

playgoing but through the formal techniques used by O'Neill to strip his subjects of their interior privacy.

Strange Interlude places as much or more emphasis on the internal stream-of-consciousness of its characters as it does on dialogic exchange. While allowing the audience access to the inner monologue of characters is not a new theatrical technique, O'Neill's method of staging these exchanges was radical for its time. Whereas a typical play may have a character—isolated from the rest of the cast—speak their thoughts in monologue, the asides in *Strange Interlude* are at times indistinguishable from normal dialogue and only denoted as such in the print text by heavy use of ellipses. On stage, these distinctions are lost and the lines between internal and external thought are blurred in such a way that the characters cannot be separated into two distinct personalities. Their true selves are a blend of carefully constructed external dialogue and more chaotic, naked internal monologues.

In writing his play this way, O'Neill provides more open illustrations of the complex realities of human consciousness: the private and public become blurred, and it is possible for the less savory, more obscene humanity to show through the cracks in otherwise carefully crafted interactions. It opens a new way of interacting with characters in which "[t]he audience is privy to the perceptions and intuitions, the misapprehensions and modifications, that go into the construction of the narrative of the self and the world" (Mandl, "'Thinking Aloud'" 29). *Strange Interlude* upsets the boundaries of polite society by staging the more honest internal thoughts of its characters while illustrating the prevalence of dishonesty between individuals. It is easy to see how, for officials concerned with policing the boundaries of society and ensuring its citizens were protected from obscenity, a technique that assigns the same status to private thoughts as public discourse might produce objectionable content not meant for public consumption. This

concern was compounded by O'Neill's choice of content and the emphasis placed on private thought and private action. The use of this technique is best illustrated in the character of Marsden who, "[i]n a characterization shaped with some daring, O'Neill suggests a gender indeterminacy, as well as a sexual anxiety, that influences everything that follows" (Mandl, "Gender as Design" 123). The very first use of O'Neill's thought aside is filled with obscenity, sexual tension, and admission of unsavory activities.

At the beginning of Act 2, Charles Marsden—a surrogate uncle to Nina Leeds—is seen standing alone in the study thinking about what Nina has been up to in the year since he last saw her, but his thoughts quickly devolve into unsubstantiated accusations and admissions of sexual taboo when he thinks about how, "I suppose every single damned inmate has fallen in love with her! . . . her eyes seemed cynical . . . sick with men . . . as though I'd looked into the eyes of a prostitute . . . not that I ever have . . . except that once . . . the dollar house" (O'Neill 25). Tellingly, this monologue is the audience's first introduction to O'Neill's thought asides, and it centers on the kind of taboo thoughts best kept from polite society. It is also notable that the character who introduces the audience to this novelistic technique is himself a novelist chronicling the events of the play and serving as audience surrogate.

O'Neill acknowledges the function of these asides through the ramblings of Marsden, who notes that the inner workings of the mind are such that the things we attach significance to are the less savory aspects of our lives, the things we cannot talk about in public, exclaiming: "[t]he devil! . . . what beastly incidents our memories insist on cherishing! . . . the ugly and disgusting . . . the beautiful things we have to keep diaries to remember" (25). Marsden draws the audience's attention to the contradictions inherent in polite interactions: the things we think and feel are often not the things we say and do. *Strange Interlude* suggests that this is the case

with all individuals. While Marsden may serve as the foci through which the audience views the events of the play and is given summaries of the events that unfold between acts, his internal struggles are not unique and are, in fact, the reality of all the characters in the play. The shame and anger that Marsden feels when his mind turns towards taboo is a natural feeling. Every character recognizes this obscene nature in themselves, but they are too aware of the rules of polite society to ever draw attention to it.

By staging the private, internalized thoughts of his characters directly alongside the more polite, public discourse of the narrative, O'Neill dissolves the boundaries between the two forms of discourse. There is no hierarchy between internal and external discourse, and his characters cannot be understood through one side of this dynamic. This blending of technique is what makes *Strange Interlude* so unique. It bridges the novel and drama in ways that Joyce had attempted—but was less successful in accomplishing—with *Ulysses*. Whereas the dramatic elements of *Ulysses* could never be staged, the novelistic elements of *Strange Interlude* work equally well on stage or in print. Just as the censorship industry was moving away from the banning of novels because of their inherently private consumption and the difficulty in policing their distribution without significant opposition, O'Neill created a work of obscene fiction that works equally well as a play or a novel and that stages the private material of the novel while amplifying its instructive power.

The novelistic quality of O'Neill's play has been the subject of much scholarship on the work, and while the formal similarities are striking, it is worth noting that form only serves to provide a convenient structure for the exploration of *Strange Interlude's* truly unique and novel techniques: "*Strange Interlude* is like a novel not because of its length, its digressive, episodic plot, or the mere use of extensive thought asides; but because it dramatizes the direct and indirect

clash of various discourses—inside his characters as well as between them" (Eisen 41). The success of this "clash of various discourses" is amplified by the staging of the play. The inclusion of an audience of spectators viewing the complex interplay of internal and external dialogues gives the characters no room to hide. Their inner selves are put on display and called to account just as *Ulysses* stages the sexual taboos of Leopold Bloom through the court trials of "Circe." In both works, audiences are asked to witness and affirm the inseparable link between the public and private selves of the characters.

This breakdown of the public/private divide is at the center of the play's narrative technique, and it is the clearest illustration of how O'Neill challenged the prevailing narrative of the censorship industry The fear of negative instruction and the depictions of taboo subjects were the central concerns of purity leagues and censorship bodies, and theater was starting to see renewed scrutiny for how successfully it married the informative potential of the novel with the instructive potential of live example. So, when O'Neill wrote a play that privileged the private self to the same degree as the public persona, it naturally threatened the conventional order of the period, and what made his play so successful was that "[r]ather than creating an exclusive, revealing intimacy with one character, the asides compete incessantly with one another as well as frequently restating the audible text. Consequently, the audience is repeatedly distanced from and pulled into the clamor of the characters' rival, private contortions" (Wolff 227). While it is true that the audience is at times distanced from the characters via this technique, being "pulled into the clamor" is the end point of this narrative approach. The audience is pulled into the dialogue between characters through the slow layering of perspectives and coupling of individual thought. O'Neill "undertakes the daunting task of representing a sense of subjective continuity in the face of the inevitable alterations that are the consequence of ongoing experience" (Mandl, "'Thinking

Aloud'" 28) by illustrating the natural progress of thought into action. The action of the play builds to the point where individuals begin to intuit the inner workings of their companions, and thanks to their privileged insight into the private, inner thoughts of the characters, the audience sees the connections long before the characters do.

The play makes a point of showing how relationships evolve through deeper understandings of an individual's inner thoughts and feelings. The more the characters come to know one another, the more comfortable they are vocalizing their internal thoughts, and the more skilled they become at intuiting the feelings of their companions. This is best illustrated by the evolving relationship between Nina Leeds and Edmund Darrell. The earliest introduction of Darrell paints him as someone who knows a great deal about Nina's past sexual exploits but whose relationship is mostly professional. When Nina marries Sam Evans, it is largely due to Darrell's influence and insistence. However, the early asides point to Nina and Darrell's mutual attraction, but this desire is viewed as impossible to act upon at present and largely remains unstated publicly for the early acts. When Nina and Darrell eventually hatch their plan to get Nina pregnant with Darrell's child, to please Sam and give Nina the child she is convinced she cannot have with her husband, their only means of approaching the conversation out loud is to disguise their dialogue as an exchange between imaginary characters.

Knowing that their internally expressed desires for one another are taboo and that their plan is a betrayal of Sam, the two adopt public personas when discussing their thoughts. Nina takes on the role of "Sam's wife" and explains the rules of the situation and her fear over this trespass by stating that "[t]his will have to be hidden from Sam so he can never know! Oh, Doctor, Sam's wife is afraid!" (O'Neill 86). By adopting the third person "Sam's wife," Nina can express her ideas plainly to Darrell without taking ownership of the claims. Darrell, taking a cue

from Nina, replies that the fears of "Sam's wife" are "[n]onsense!" and notes that "[t]his is no time for timidity! Happiness hates the timid! So does Science! Certainly Sam's wife must conceal her action! To let Sam know would be insanely cruel of her" (86). The conversation never returns to a public acknowledgment of Nina and Darrell's desires, and it remains distanced through the adoption of the "Sam's wife" and "[d]octor" monikers. In the wake of this exchange, Nina and Sam act upon the proposed scenario and conceive a child.

This exchange brings the two together and removes some of the boundaries they previously observed when interacting. In a later scene, the two appear much better attuned to each other's thoughts. Nina, having conceived her son, wishes to acknowledge her love for Darrell and leave Sam, but she knows this is an impossible proposition for Darrell. She wonders to herself, "[w]hy doesn't he take me in his arms?" and the anger she feels at this lack of reciprocity offers her insight into his true feelings that "oh, I feel he doesn't love me now! . . . he's so bitter!" (96). As if in response to Nina's exclamation that Darrell is "so bitter," the narrative shifts to his internal thoughts where he admits that "[s]ometimes I almost hate her! . . . if it wasn't for her I'd have kept my peace of mind . . . no good for anything lately, damn it!" (96). The audience, already knowing much of this information from previous exchanges between Nina and Darrell, now witness the characters internal thoughts become recognizable to one another. Nina anticipates Darrell's bitterness over their indiscretion, and Darrell affirms it as if in direct response to Nina's unspoken concerns.

Their relationship continues to grow until they can speak openly about their past and express the ridiculousness of their unwillingness to be open with their feelings. Talking of Sam, Darrell goes so far as to claim that "I've nothing against Sam. I've always been his best friend. He owes his happiness to me" (170). This statement absolves him of any shame over his past

actions. When Nina responds that "[t]here are so many curious reasons we dare not think about for thinking things!" Darrell admonishes Nina for her preoccupation with thought over action and notes that after everything they have been through "[t]hinking doesn't matter a damn! Life is something in one cell that doesn't need to think" (170), a claim that Nina affirms. By the end of the play, they no longer rely on the thought aside to illuminate the truth of their relationship. Having reached the point where one knows the thoughts of the other, the two speak openly of their faded love as Darrell asks Nina to marry him, assuring her he knows she will refuse him, and Nina obliges. There is no ill will, no need for explanation between the two, each can say exactly what is on the others mind with no corrections offered (196).

It is not merely O'Neill's frank discussions of infidelity, prostitution, abortion, and blasphemy that stoked the ire of censors but the presentation of these ideas that drew condemnation. As Joyce angered censors for publicizing the private actions of the individual—from defecation to masturbation—O'Neill's adoption of the thought aside and the provocative merging of private inner thought with public action is where the true obscene force of *Strange Interlude* exists. In drawing the audience's attention to the complex, obscene, and contradictory thoughts of his characters, O'Neill makes the case that all individuals hide a certain darkness or duality. The play implies that this duality is natural and that it is only in acknowledging, accepting, and acting upon our basest desires that we truly come to embody ourselves. Happiness eludes Nina, Darrell, and Marsden until the very end of their narratives at the point where each begins to recognize the mistakes of the past: mistakes centered on thoughts unspoken and acts left undone.

Just as *Strange Interlude's* controversy had less to do with what was said than how it was said, Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour* was banned in Boston for its implications. Whereas

Strange Interlude was a natural progression of formal and thematic elements first developed in *Ulysses, The Children's Hour*—which debuted six years after O'Neill's play—followed the model established by the lesbian fiction of 1928. As *Ulysses* became the scapegoat of obscenity censorship at the beginning of the 1920s and saw its influence bloom in the years following its suppression, Radclyffe Hall's notorious *The Well of Loneliness* was the late-20s model. No longer were censors so concerned with frank depictions of the individual psyche. Joyce had established the premise that the internal workings of the mind are often obscene, frank, but of little harm to those an individual interacts with. By the late 1920s, censors had found a new target for their ire: works they deemed perverse for the explicit nature of their obscene interpersonal relationships. While lesbianism was far from obscure in the private lives of individuals by the 1920s, discussions of the subject were typically relegated to private spaces and often associated with the salons of modern artists in Paris and London. As I established in my chapter on the lesbian novels of 1928, censors and prominent politicians made it a point to limit public exposure to lesbian sexuality through a widespread vow of silence. By refusing to acknowledge female homosexuality as a crime similar to male homosexuality, British parliament established the precedent for how all discussions of lesbianism should be handled: to protect the public, refuse to name or acknowledge the act.

Thus, when Elizabeth Bowen's *The Hotel*, Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, Compton Mackenzie's *Extraordinary Women*, Djuna Barnes's *Ladies Almanack*, and Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* were all published within a year of one another, critics and censors of obscene art recognized an opportunity. They chose to refocus their crusade by shifting the conversation to *The Well of Loneliness* and drawing attention to the public threat created by a novel that dared to frankly acknowledge the existence of lesbianism. However, while censors may have hoped that

targeting a relatively minor author of middlebrow fiction would have avoided raising the ire of the public while setting a precedent for what could be deemed obscene, they could never have anticipated the level of public and professional backlash that ensued over the course of the 1928 trial against Radclyffe Hall. By the end of this episode in history, *The Well of Loneliness* was banned in England but flourished internationally and established Hall as a prominent member of the modern canon. This level of exposure meant that, just as *Ulysses* had paved the way for a work like O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* to find widespread critical and commercial acclaim, *The Well of Loneliness*—and the other lesbian novels of 1928—lay the foundation for Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour* and its long-running production, film, and literary success.

The genesis of Lillian Hellman's play comes out of a real-world trial centered on a Scottish boarding school,[36] and the play "created a sensation in the theatre and literary worlds [. . .] because it broached subjects such as homosexuality, intentional malice, the destructive capacity of a lie, and the potential for evil in children at a time when the nation was enamoured with Shirley Temple, the quintessential "perfect" little girl" (Tunc 34). From this perspective, Hellman's play was designed so that it could not help but stage present-day issues. It was intrinsically tied to discussions of modern identity and the proliferation of gossip in an era of expanded access to international news. Although largely a fictionalized retelling of events, the play mirrored how, just as in the real-world trial, "two women's reputations were ruined due to hearsay, gossip, and rumours, without any substantial proof, corroborative evidence or reliable eyewitnesses" (Tunc 36). As these themes caused controversy when they were published in Hall's novel several years earlier, Hellman's play would be attacked primarily based on the theme of female homosexuality. Despite a lack of sexually obscene content, *The Children's*

[36] See *Miss Marianne Woods and Miss Jane Pirie Against Dame Helen Cumming Gordon* (1975) for more on the trial.

Hour came under attack by critics who thought that the material was inappropriate for the stage largely due to its subtle implications.

Like Hall before her, Hellman's play never once uses the word "lesbian" when talking about the central concern of the plot. The obscene material in Hellman's play are the things that are deemed unspeakable, and it is the gossip that springs up around these omissions that threaten polite society. The precedent for this type of obscenity censorship dealt with the trial of Radclyffe Hall and the ban on *The Well of Loneliness*. Unlike Joyce's defecation and masturbation, what angered censors about *The Well* was its theme, and the willingness to talk about taboo material as though it were part of the natural order. Thus, when Hall's novel went to trial, the critics of the work chose a new approach:

> the prosecution sought to inject a new principle into the obscenity law. Up to that time only offensive words and expressions had been held criminal; no theme, as such, had been proscribed. Now an attempt was being made to suppress a book simply because it dealt with a questionable subject. An adverse adjudication meant that it would be impossible to discuss a grave social problem in print. (Ernst 7)

This shift in focus set the stage for an entirely new approach to the censorship industry. No longer did author's need to use crude language or describe obscene acts to be censored. If a work merely included themes associated with illegal acts or immoral individuals, it could be deemed obscene and suppressed. If censors could make the case that thematic elements of a work were as grave a threat as overtly obscene material, they would expand their reach and be able to target works of a much wider variety. When they were successful in getting *The Well* banned over its subject matter, they set the stage for Boston's mayor to challenge the production of Hellman's *The Children's Hour* on the same grounds.

As with O'Neill's *Strange Interlude*, Hellman's play was one of the most successful theatrical productions of its time and built a strong following based off its successful Broadway run. So, when the play finally left Broadway and began touring the country, it was the perfect opportunity for Boston's Board of Censors to flex their muscle and stir up controversy by banning the production from the city. Not much had changed since *Strange Interlude* moved its production outside the city to circumvent the Board of Censors, and in similar fashion, "Lillian Hellman's play *The Children's* Hour, [was] scheduled to open at Boston's Shubert Theater on January 6, 1936." The mayor at the time, Mansfield, was concerned by what he had been told about the play, and he sent his agent, Censor McNary, to go view the New York production. McNary returned with the verdict that "[t]he homosexual aspect of the theme would bring it to the attention of the board of censors automatically" (Miller 144). With Censor McNary's judgment on the play, it was all but banned from being produced in Boston. If the Board of Censors felt a play might pose a moral threat to the public, it could have the work barred from production and the theater's license revoked with little effort. Mere weeks before the play was set to debut in Boston, "[m]ayor Mansfield informed the play's producers that he had read the play and that, as a member of the board of censors, he was 'unalterably opposed' to it" (144). Although the producers of the play would challenge the ruling, attempt to have the work altered until acceptable, and do whatever Mayor Mansfield deemed needed doing to get the play produced, they would ultimately be unsuccessful.

As with *Strange Interlude's* ban several years earlier, there was little that the producers of *The Children's Hour* could do to appease the city censors. The power they wielded was such that they needed little justification for the ban. They could merely rely on the orders of the Board of Censors to have the license for the production shut down. Although the history of *The Children's*

Hour in Boston was such that it merely echoed the events of *Strange Interlude*, the fallout from the play's ban set the stage for another significant shift in the censorship industry—and continue to erode the stranglehold that the Board of Censors had on the production of art in this period—just as Mencken's challenged had weakened the Watch and Ward Society. However, to understand why *The Children's Hour* being banned in Boston was such a significant cultural event—even if it was only a minor speedbump in the overall success of Hellman's play—it must first be understood how the play's thematic blend of education and female homosexuality rendered it a possible locus of corruption.

As established earlier in this chapter, the most insidious threat of works like *The Well of Loneliness* or *The Children's Hour* was thought to be their instructive potential. If a play gestured towards taboo material in a manner that attempted to normalize it, there was a significant risk the work would come under assault by Boston's Board of Censors. By nature of its setting—an all-girls academy—*The Children's Hour* places instruction and influence at the center of its plot. Hellman wastes little time establishing a hierarchy of influence in her play, and she supports the idea that her protagonists wield significant influence over impressionable minds. The introduction of Karen, one of the two main protagonists, identifies her commanding presence; she is described as someone who "*[w]ith her entrance [encourages] an immediate change in the manner of the girls: they are fond of her and they respect her"* (Hellman 10). Unlike the presence of the elder Mrs. Lily Mortar, who struggles to gain the attention or respect of the girls, Karen is an authority from the outset. She is someone to be trusted and looked up to, and her position as one of the founders of the Wright-Dobie School for girls makes her one of the primary influences on these young children. On the surface, Karen's introduction does little to

draw attention to the central controversy of the play or the objectionable material that Boston's Board of Censors would cite for having the play barred from production.

However, the establishment of Karen as role model for these young women becomes the lynchpin for all the controversial material that follows. It is the introduction of a young girl named Mary that illuminates the threat posed by the play. Just as Angela Crosby's lie, and the ensuing gossip, send Stephen Gordon into exile in *The Well of Loneliness*, Mary's lie and the gossip that follows lead to the destruction of Karen and Martha's lives. Mary is the one child at the academy who has a disdain for the teachers, and she leverages her distaste and influence over the other schoolgirls to sow discord. When she is first introduced. She is late to class and to avoid punishment, she fabricates the reason for her tardiness. Seeing through Mary's deception, Karen reprimands her, and she admits that she sees Mary's presence at the academy as a disruption to the quality of instruction. She suggests that the rest of the girls seemed happy and to like being around the instructors "until you came here a year ago," and she shows concern for Mary, explaining to Mary that, "I don't think you're very happy here, and I'd like to find out why. (*Looks at MARY, waits for an answer, gets none, shakes her head*) Why, for example, do you find it necessary to lie to us so often?" (11). The play establishes the competition between Mary and the instructors from the first act. Both parties exert an outsized influence on the other characters in the narrative, and it is here where the central tension of the play develops. Mary, knowing that she can leverage her intelligence and position against the instructors, uses subtle manipulation to sow discord through gossip.

Even before the inciting incident, Karen opens up to Martha about her concerns regarding Mary. Unlike the other children, Mary is more mature and viewed as someone of similar status to the instructors of the academy. Karen admits that "[i]t's funny. We always talk about the child as

if she were a grown woman" (14). Mary's privileged position in the minds of her instructors sets her apart from the girls attending the academy and establishes her as a threat to order. Martha is the first to acknowledge the role that Mary will assume for the remainder of the play as the locus of gossip and the creator of the obscene narrative that will tear the school apart and result in the death of Martha. Unlike Karen, Martha does not see the humor in Mary's privileged position, protesting that "[i]t's not so funny. There's something the matter with the kid. That's been true ever since the first day she came. She causes trouble here; she's bad for the other girls. I don't know what it is—it's a feeling I've got that it's wrong somewhere" (14). Just as Karen is acknowledged as a unifying authority figure for the young women of the academy, Mary is cast as her foil: a disruptive influence seeking to challenge the status quo and disrupt Karen's influence over these girls. To Martha, this is an unacceptable position for a young woman like Mary. As the authorities of the Wight-Dobie School, Martha and Karen are meant to be the ones instructing the girls and helping them grow into respectable, educated adults. The significance in these early scenes is how they illuminate the presence of competing ideologies. As the play will ultimately establish, when the truth of a situation becomes muddled by a clash of authorities, the fallout can be devastating, swift, and often based on nothing more than a feeling. Just as Mayor Mansfield was "unalterably opposed" to the production of *The Children's Hour* without having viewed a production of the play himself, the demise of Martha, Karen, and their Wight-Dobie School is based on "unalterable" convictions from individuals unwilling to see the whole picture.

Shortly after Mary is reprimanded, she learns of a conversation that shapes the lie she will tell to disrupt the lives of Karen and Martha. Martha, while engaged in a heated argument with her aunt Mrs. Mortar—about Karen's fiancé—is accused of being "jealous of him," and what is worse, Mrs. Mortar believes that "[y]ou're fonder of Karen, and I know that. And it's

unnatural, just as unnatural as it can be" (19-20). Like *The Well* before it, the terms "lesbian" or "homosexual" are never uttered in the play, but here as in *The Well*, unnatural serves as a convenient placeholder for a taboo term that must not be uttered in polite company. The meaning is not lost on Martha, and realizing how near to the students they are while having this conversation she reprimands Mrs. Mortar, noting that "it's really bad having you around children [. . .] I don't like them hearing the things you say. Oh, I'll 'do something about it,' but the truth is that this is their home, and things shouldn't be said in it that they can't hear" (21). Although the subject of the insult, Martha's first thought is how such language will impact the impressionable girls she is responsible for bringing up. The play takes a firm stance on the issue: discussions of "unnatural" relationships are not meant for the ears of children. Unfortunately for Martha, some of the children are nearby while this conversation is taking place, and they share this information with Mary, who quickly realizes the strength that such information can offer her. Looking for a way to get back at Karen and Martha for the events of the afternoon, Mary devises a plan to spread an elaborate story about their "unnatural" relationship.

Mary runs away from the school soon after these events and visits her grandmother, Mrs. Tilford, to get her lie to the most powerful person she can think of. Complaining that she does not like the school and feels that her instructors are treating here poorly, Mary subtly steers the conversation towards a reinterpretation of the fight between Martha and Mrs. Mortar. Mary's first approach is to convince her grandmother that something strange is happening at the school, but she avoids taking the lie too far, too quickly, and she instead starts with a truth by telling her grandmother that "[t]hey have secrets or something, and they're afraid I'll find out and tell you," but when Mrs. Tilford assures her that, "[t]here's not necessarily anything wrong with people

having secrets" (37), Mary realizes that in order to achieve her desired outcome she will need to craft a lie around the more insidious comments made by Mrs. Mortar.

Knowing that the true horror is in naming the "unnatural," Mary confides in her grandmother that "they've got funny ones" before elaborating that the real scandal is how Martha "was jealous of Miss Wright marrying Cousin Joe [. . .] But that's what she said, Grandma. She said it was unnatural for a girl to feel that way [. . .] She said there was something funny about it, and that Miss Dobie had always been like that, even when she was a little girl, and that it was unnatural—" (37). It is the repetition of this bogey word, "unnatural," that puts Mrs. Tilford on the defensive and subtly shifts the conversation in Mary's favor. Outraged that Mary would be exposed to such chatter, Mrs. Tilford admonishes her granddaughter to "[s]top using that silly word" (37). It is the threat of speaking language meant to be kept out of polite society that moves Mrs. Tilford to action. By acknowledging that she has learned about "unnatural" behaviors at school, Mary sows the seeds of suspicion in her grandmother. She then takes this opportunity to press the lie to its logical conclusion by naming the acts she claims to have witnessed. Mary concocts a narrative that involves an illicit relationship between Karen and Martha, one in which "[a]lmost always Miss Dobie comes in after we go to bed and stays a long time. I guess that's why they want to get rid of us—of me—because we hear things. That's why they're making us move our room [. . .] And we've seen things, too. Funny things [. . .] I'd tell you, but I got to whisper it" (39). The audience is never told directly what Mary says to Mrs. Tilford, but her response implies that the acts being mentioned are ones not meant for the mouths of children, and they cast Martha and Karen as transgressive threats that need to be dealt with. There need not be concrete evidence to support Mary's claims, it is enough for her language to paint a vivid enough picture to where "[i]t is the (untruthful) description of visible acts–a description never

heard by the audience since Mary whispers it into her grandmother's ear–that convinces Mrs. Tilford of the need to police the situation at the school" (Shedd 140). In the wake of this exchange, Mrs. Tilford steps into the role of censor and begins a campaign of action against the Wight-Dobie School and their headmistresses.

From her privileged seat in the community, Mrs. Tilford spreads Mary's lie to all the families with children at the academy and to Karen's fiancé, her son Joseph Cardin. The result is the immediate withdrawal of the children from Wight-Dobie and a smear campaign brought against Karen and Martha from which they are unable to recover. The fear of contagion, and the corrupting influence of Karen and Martha's relationship, serves as the catalyst for the girls' removal from the school. It has been noted that "[i]n the United States, homosexuality was now (and up until 1974) considered a pathology or "mental disorder" that could only be treated by physicians, specifically psychiatrists" (Tunc 37). Thus, Martha and Karen would have been seen as unfit to look after children and public opinion turning against them would not have been an uncommon reaction to such gossip. Mary's lie is a carefully crafted one that played on the growing anxieties during this period since "by World War I such relationships were becoming suspect, deviant, and 'unnatural'; by the 1930s, two women embracing could even suggest a 'lesbian relationship,'" and even worse, this attitude meant that "[h]omosocial environments such as all girls schools became, almost overnight, 'veritable hotbeds of lesbianism', which is one of the reasons why the adults in *The Children's Hour* probably believe Mary's fabricated accusations" (38). With such narratives surrounding female homosexuality, it is no wonder Mrs. Tilford would feel the need to act on Mary's story with haste. She felt that it was her duty, as someone with knowledge of this transgression, to inform the other families with children at

Wight-Dobie School to save their children from possible contagion. However, her meddling goes beyond just the school.

Among her assaults on the women, Mrs. Tilford insists that Cardin, "must not marry Karen [. . .] Because there's something wrong with [her]—something horrible [. . .] I have good reason for saying it" (Hellman 46). Here, "something horrible" illuminates the extent to which discussions of female homosexuality would have been deemed inappropriate for polite society and how corrupting even naming the act would be. At no point in the narrative is the subject ever directly addressed, the language is always veiled and evasive, but its strength is not lost in the obscurity. It is this act of acknowledgment, through omission and evasion, that so offended the Boston Board of Censors. If it were true that Karen and Martha were involved in an "unnatural relationship," then their privileged position as instructors of young women must be remedied, and although the play sees the downfall of Karen and Martha, it did not go far enough in its condemnation of these acts to be deemed appropriate for production. In fact, the play goes to great lengths to show just how horrible the actions of Mrs. Tilford are and to propose, as Stephen Gordon once did, that the "unnatural," the invert, or the lesbian, are just as natural and deserving of acceptance as anyone.

In the wake of these events, Martha and Karen confront Mrs. Tilford with accusations of meddling in their lives and peddling falsity. However, Mrs. Tilford, refusing to listen to reason and take the women at their word, doubles down on her obstinance, and she claims that her actions were for the good of society since:

> *You've* been playing with a lot of children's lives, and that's why I stopped you [. . .] I know how serious this is for you, how serious it is for all of us [. . .] I have done what I had to do. What they are may be possibly their own business. It becomes a great deal

> more than that when children are involved [. . .] This—this thing is your own. Go away with it. I don't understand it and I don't want any part of it. (48-9)

Mrs. Tilford's words reflect a deeper contemporary fear, and they show just how significant Mary's accusations are. In the refusal to name their transgression and the invocation of the children, Mrs. Tilford is parroting the fear of negative instruction and "[a]midst an atmosphere that understands children to be without sexual knowledge unless, as is the presumed case here, they are initiated into it firsthand, Mary's lie is immediately believed. The plausibility of this lie is enhanced by fears that, as Diana Fuss has chronicled, schools are breeding grounds for lesbian contagion" (Kahan 186). *The Children's Hour* draws on social anxiety over the changing landscape of gender roles and forces a confrontation between the reality of lesbianism and the conservative desire to protect the public from taboo information.

If Mrs. Tilford is the stand-in for the concerns of the censor, then Martha adopts the role of the author, editor, or producer tasked with protecting art from the meddling of the censor, and she tries whatever means necessary to achieve success. In standing up to Mrs. Tilford, Martha assures her that she better not "get the idea we'll let you whisper this lie: you made it and you'll come out with it. Shriek it to your town of Lancet. We'll *make* you shriek it—and we'll make you do it in a court room [. . .] Tomorrow, Mrs. Tilford, you will have a libel suit on your hands" (Hellman 50). Like Mencken with the Watch and Ward Society, Martha promises to force Mrs. Tilford to defend herself in court. By identifying the central concern of Mrs. Tilford—publicizing and naming the acts of which Martha and Karen are accused—Martha ensures that the threat of Mrs. Tilford does not go unknown to the public even if such publicity may reflect poorly on Martha and Karen should the verdict not come out in their favor. The act of

challenging these actions is a form of resistance, and it was often the only method the accused had of raising awareness of their persecution and drawing attention to these taboo subjects.

Unfortunately, Martha and Karen are unsuccessful in their libel suit, their school is shut down, and their reputation is tarnished to such a degree that they no longer feel safe leaving the house. Here, Hellman draws attention to the inherent risks associated with challenging the status quo and the sacrifice that the few must sometimes make to protect the rights of the many. Although they were unsuccessful, their act of defiance was significant. While it leads to the destruction of Karen and Cardin's engagement—since Karen realizes that the condemnation by the court of public opinion has poisoned Cardin's absolute certainty in Karen's innocence—it exposes the deeply entrenched bigotry, blind fanaticism, and injustice of the accusers.
It had become too hard for the couple to separate the scandal and the legal assumption of guilt from their relationship. Even as Cardin professed to understand the lie for what it was, he found himself slipping up and referring to the incident as "what you've done" because once the lie had been given weight in the court of public opinion "it spreads, corrupting even the everyday language between 'normals.' Karen and Joe can still be understood as set apart by their commentary on and anger at this process, however unable they are to escape it. But the certainty of 'normal' identity is questioned" (Cocks 369-370). Once that foundation of certainty becomes eroded, the ability for Cardin and Karen to live their lives, as before the incident, is foreclosed. Cardin is unable to overcome the constant nagging suspicion that Karen is guilty, and his doubt makes Karen unable to fully trust him.

Although the events of the narrative foreclose several possible futures for Karen and Martha, they also open the possibility for acknowledging the injustice of this prejudice. As Stephen Gordon did in *The Well*, Karen makes the argument that "this isn't a new sin they tell us

we've done. Other people aren't destroyed by it" (Hellman 70-71). While never explicitly mentioned, Karen acknowledges the reality of lesbianism and argues for the relative banality and innocence of such relationships. There is nothing threatening or insidious in these "unnatural relationships" that Martha and Karen have been accused of, and the truth is that narratives that suggest otherwise must be loudly and fiercely challenged. The issue of homosexual relationships is not that they exist, but that there are those who believe these relationships are unnatural. As Martha points out, the only way to prevent this narrative from dismantling one's life is to "believe in it [. . .] want it [. . .] [and choose] it" (70). This acknowledgment finally allows Martha to come to terms with her feelings for Karen. It takes the struggle of losing everything but Karen for her to understand that "I've loved you like a friend, the way thousands of women feel about other women" but even more than that, that:

> *I have loved you the way they said [. . .]* you're afraid of hearing it; I'm more afraid than you [. . .] I've been telling myself that since the night we heard the child say it; I've been praying I could convince myself of it. I can't, I can't any longer. It's there. I don't know how, I don't know why. But I did love you. I do love you. I resented your marriage; maybe because I wanted you; maybe I wanted you all along; maybe I couldn't call it by a name; maybe it's been there ever since I first knew you. (Hellman 70-71)

It is the realization of the injustices of social norms that convince Martha to finally speak the truth of her feelings. This is the closest the play comes to naming the act that Martha and Karen have been accused of, and although Martha's love is not reciprocated, this act is viewed as a transgressive one. Hellman draws attention to the terrible reality of those viewed as "unnatural" and the ways in which society creates exiles and martyrs through rejection and omission. Unable

to live with the weight of her realization and rejection by Karen, Martha commits suicide just before Mrs. Tilford arrives to take back her accusations and absolve the women of their crime.

In perhaps the strongest condemnation of "polite society," Karen rejects Mrs. Tilford's apology and acknowledges that acts of persecution and bigotry cannot be forgiven. Whereas *The Well of Loneliness* ends on a plea for universal acceptance of the invert, *The Children's Hour* takes it a step further by condemning the root cause of this hate:

> So you've come here to relieve your conscience? Well, I won't be your confessor. It's choking you, is it? [. . .] And you want to stop the choking, don't you? You've done a wrong and you have to right that wrong or you can't rest your head again. You want to be 'just,' don't you, and you wanted us to help you be just? You've come to the wrong place for help. You want to be a 'good,' woman again, don't you? [. . .] Oh, I know. You told us that night you had to do what you did. Now you 'have' to do this. A public apology and money paid, and you can sleep again and eat again. That done and there'll be peace for you. You're old, and the old are callous. Ten, fifteen years left for you. But what of me? It's a whole life for me. A whole God-damned life [. . .] And what of [Martha]? (76)

Karen rightly points out that for those who have died or been permanently harmed by the actions of people like Mrs. Tilford, there can be no happy ending. If the people who are directly affected by this bigotry are unable to find peace, why should those responsible for hateful attitudes be granted forgiveness once they recognize their errors? *The Children's Hour* ends with a scathing condemnation of groups like the Boston Board of Censors or the Watch and Ward Society who see their jobs as protecting society from things the deem "unnatural" or "immoral," and it encourages its audience to not let those that hold on to outdated beliefs off easily. Many people had to give their lives and reputations to make the progress necessary to change society's views.

When *The Children's Hour* debuted in New York, public perception of lesbianism had already changed significantly since Hall wrote *The Well of Loneliness,* and the glowing praise and success of Hellman's play was not all that unexpected. However, as the city of Boston proved, outdated opinions on acceptability were still finding support from fringe purity leagues and conservative politicians. While the banning of *The Children's Hour* in Boston was a minor footnote in the history of a play that would be successful enough to see numerous adaptations and revivals, it served as a significant flashpoint in the changing attitudes towards obscenity censorship in the interwar years. While not the only play to face opposition that year, Hellman's was the most famous, and when the following year resulted in "a loosening of the Massachusetts law on which the city of Boston's theatrical moral code was based" so that "no play could be banned without first having a public hearing [. . .] [and] the composition of the three-person Board of Censors would be changed to replace the chief justice of the municipal court with a member of the city's arts commission" (Miller 146), Hellman's play was largely to thank.

Without the contributions of challengers like H.L. Mencken or prolific writers like Eugene O'Neill and Lillian Hellman, the landscape of interwar censorship would have likely stagnated thanks to the efforts of purity leagues and censors in Boston, and the censorship industry may have continued to thrive. What makes this history of censorship so unique is that it serves as a perfect encapsulation of the evolution of censorship between the publication of *Ulysses* and the banning of *The Well of Loneliness.* It illustrates how the legacy of those canonical works built a foundation for success that *Strange Interlude* and *The Children's Hour* would capitalize on. The fervor for works of art that pushed the boundaries of public decency was on the rise in the wake of those highly publicized censorship trials, but it was the efforts of established, well-respected authors willing to push the boundaries of their craft and carry on the

legacy of those who fought against censorship that would ultimately reshape the landscape of the censorship industry and pave the way for works of obscene literature to begin receiving their due as valuable additions to the canon.

Conclusion

Although the 1930s mark a moment of significant reduction in literary censorship, this decade was not the end of the censorship industry. The ’60s are the moment where many of the conflicts explored in the previous chapters get resolved. While only briefly explored in the preceding chapters, I return to the stories of D.H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* and Henry Miller’s *Tropic of Cancer* to think about the significant accomplishments of modern authors in combating and reshaping the censorship industry. While the efforts of Joyce and Hall lead to more open discussions of taboo subjects and a weakening of censor’s strength, the suppression of obscene art would never completely disappear. Published in 1928 and 1934, respectively, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* and *Tropic of Cancer* were either heavily expurgated or outright banned from publication in many cities. Although neither book had a widely publicized trial at the time of the suppression, the status of their authors meant these events were widely documented. However, the major impact of Lawrence and Miller’s novels were in what the 1960 reversals of their suppression meant for obscenity censorship.

While neither book was published unexpurgated in England or the United States in the years immediately following their composition, both novels began to see widespread publication by the early ’60s and would serve as test cases to reshape obscenity censorship in the latter half of the 20th century. In 1959, Grove Press went to trial in the United States to have an unexpurgated edition *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* published. In July of that year, the Southern District of New York ruled that “if a work is found to be off literary stature [. . .] it is *a fortiori* within the protections of the First Amendment” (*Grove Press, Inc. v. Christenberry*). This ruling would help to reinforce the “literary merit” defense against suppression and provide authors and publishers with significantly more protection against obscenity censorship than they had

experienced in decades past. In the wake of this trial, Grove Press would also publish the first unexpurgated version of Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*. Upon its publication in 1961, it saw major resistance and underwent numerous national and regional trials until the issue was eventually elevated to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1964. In a 5-4 decision, *Tropic of Cancer* was deemed not obscene and further cemented the justification against banning books that could be deemed to viewed as having literary merit (*Grove Press, Inc. v. Gerstein*). Although it would take more than thirty years after John Quinn had argued the literary merits of *Ulysses* as a point against its suppression, the novels of prominent modernists would be enshrined in the history of censorship as key to establishing a legal definition of obscenity that took into account the literary merits of the work being challenged.

Modernism evolved in an era of rapid globalization and extreme antagonism. Modernisms interconnectedness with cultural globalization made the concerns of the censorship industry distinctly transnational. The history of obscenity censorship evolved in parallel with modernization out of a need to keep pace with rapidly expanding distribution networks and artistic innovations. The adoption of mass culture became a hallmark of modernism and the rapid growth of small presses, little magazines, and the rise of the little theater movement in the United States all contributed to the expanded access of art and culture. These advancements in publication technology meant that censorship organizations were stretched thin and forced to get creative with their suppressive action in order to stay competitive. As art and artists became more mobile, the systems seeking to control the rapid changes in social mores attempted desperately to keep pace.

With the aftermath of World War I leading to increased state sanctioned censorship, modern authors were forced to a publishing industry constrained by the pressures of vice

societies, vocal critics, and antagonistic governments determined to restore the moral compass of pre-War society. However, rapid globalization, a growth in expatriate communities, and shifting gender roles meant that society could never return to the way it was before World War I, and as a result, artists were determined to represent society as it was instead of how it used to be. This meant that previously taboo subjects and themes were being explored more frequently and with an eye towards transnational representation. Novels that reimagined the role of women took on greater significance in the era of suffrage and sexually explicit material seemed tame in the shadow modern warfare's horrors. The United States and England were two countries determined to combat the growing tide of artistic obscenity and each mounted complex suppression campaigns against modern literature, theater, and film. This complex relationship between artist and censor in the wake of World War I led to the development of the censorship industry, and the rise of cosmopolitanism meant that the battle between artists and censors was widely publicized and globally relevant.

This increased exposure introduced the public to new experiences that would have otherwise struggled to travel as well as they did in earlier eras. Thus, when *Ulysses* was suppressed in the United States over obscene depictions of defecation and public masturbation, an increasingly global media spread both the legislative action and the obscene material to an audience that would have otherwise been unaware of the situation. Similarly, when Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* was targeted for its frank discussion of female homosexuality, it led to a widespread acknowledgment of a common but uncommonly discussed form of "deviant" sexuality that brought lesbianism into the cultural consciousness in ways that the publication of her novel without suppression would have likely avoided. In the wake of these prominent censorship trials, the landscape of obscenity received significant reevaluation.

By the time *The Well of Loneliness* was defending the existence of inverts, Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* was amid a Pulitzer Prize-winning Broadway run and building on the legacy of experimental genre blending established in James Joyce's *Ulysses*. In the years that followed, Lillian Hellman would similarly build upon the legacy of Radclyffe Hall with her critically acclaimed *The Children's Hour*. Both plays owe significant debt to the struggles of Joyce and Hall as without their opposition to the suppression of their works, many of the themes and formal conventions explored in these earlier works would have been met with less critical acclaim. It took years of struggle from authors determined to reshape the critical and cultural landscape to enable future artists to experiment with their works without concerns over the threat of censorship. The widespread success and acclaim that followed the public suppression of these landmark novels encouraged many artists to pursue their original creative visions safe in the knowledge that suppression was not a death sentence and could in fact bolster the life of a work.

The progression of the censorship industry during the interwar years illustrates the symbiotic relationship that developed between censors and authors. As one group managed to amass significant influence over the state of modern art, the other learned from their oppositions tactics and took new approaches towards their craft. The pressure and opposition of the censor, led to the development of numerous conventions of modern fiction. Without the need to obfuscate obscene material or a desire to challenge their opposition, many artists would have continued to self-censor or postpone the publication of their works until such time as their material was deemed appropriate. The modern project hinged on the need for art that would challenge and reshape the state of artistic expression, and it was the knowledge that whenever artists modified their tactics that their opposition would do the same so that no matter how "active the fight for modification or repeal, too much faith shouldn't be pinned to either.

Nullification must go on. Its processes must be kept alive by showing up censorship for what it is, by publicizing the falsity of its premises, by dramatizing its hostility to our institutions, by exposing its blunders and futilities" (Ernst 258). Likewise, the constantly evolving formal and stylistic techniques used by artists in this period forced censors to reevaluate how they approached suppression of obscene material. When it was no longer useful to censor obscene content, the focus began a subtle shift towards censorship of obscene theme, and when the novel no longer proved a productive locus of opposition then critics began to target the stage. The censorship industry flourished because of this constant back and forth between artist and censor, and without both sides of the equation, the state of modern censorship or art would have looked very different.

The struggle of authors against oppressive censorship in this period that paved the way for contemporary views of obscenity censorship, less oppressive publication practices, and a culture more willing to produce art that reflects their original intentions without a need for self-censorship. Although censorship is still a concern, the scope of the issue saw a significant reduction thanks to the efforts of modernists who put their work and careers on the line so that, "while our own period seems substantially less burdened by the kind of censorship apparatus that plagued modernists, the texts of the early twentieth century can still prompt readers and audiences to question moral binaries and repressive actions intended to reinforce them" (Marshik 206). By reflecting on the struggles of artists in the interwar years, a new appreciation for the relative freedom granted to contemporary artists comes into stark contrast. Although the censorship industry of the '20s and '30s was an oppressive and restrictive period of artistic expression, the constant threat of suppression was the perfect climate for inspiring a widespread

and rapid change in artistic expression that would redefine the boundaries of what art could achieve.

Works Cited

Anderson, Margaret. *My Thirty Years' War.* Covici, Friede Inc., 1930.

Bachman, Erik M. *Literary Obscenities*. Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018.

Baggett, Holly. "The Trials of Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap." *A Living of Words: American Women in Print Culture,* edited by Susan Albertine. University of Tennessee Press, 1995, pp. 169-188.

Barnes, Djuna. *Ladies Almanack.* New York University Press, 1992.

Benstock, Shari. *Women of the Left Bank*. University of Texas Press, 1986.

Birming, Kevin. *The Most Dangerous Book.* Penguin, 2014.

Biron, Sir Chartres. *Judgment (1928). Palatable Poison: Critical Perspectives on* The Well of Loneliness, edited by Laura Doan and Jay Prosser, Columbia University Press, 2001, pp. 39-49.

Bowen, Elizabeth. *The Hotel.* The Dial Press, 1928.

Bulson, Eric. *Ulysses by Numbers*. Columbia University Press, 2020.

Cocks, Neil. "Uncanny Repetitions in Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour*." *Modern Drama,* vol. 59, no. 3, 2016, p. 363-379. *Project MUSE,* muse.jhu.edu/article/629592.

Cohler, Deborah. *Citizen, Invert, Queer: Lesbianism and War in Early Twentieth-Century Britain.* University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

De Grazia, Edward. *Girls Lean Back Everywhere: The Law of Obscenity and the Assault on Genius*. Random House, 1992.

Dellamora, Richard. *Radclyffe Hall: A Life in Writing.* University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.

Dickson, Lovat. *Radclyffe Hall at the Well of Loneliness*. Collins, 1975.

Doan, Laura. *Disturbing Practices: History, Sexuality, and Women's Experience of Modern War.* University of Chicago Press, 2013.

---. *Fashioning Sapphism: The Origins of a Modern English Lesbian Culture*. Columbia University Press, 2001.

Doan, Laura and Jay Prosser, editors. *Palatable Poison*. Columbia University Press, 2001.

Doherty, Thomas Patrick. *Hollywood's Censor Joseph I. Breen and the Production Code Administration.* Columbia University Press, 2007.

Douglas, James. "A Book That Must Be Suppressed." *Palatable Poison: Critical Perspectives on* The Well of Loneliness, edited by Laura Doan and Jay Prosser, Columbia University Press, 2001, pp. 36-38.

Ehland, Christoph and Cornelia Wächter, editors. *Middlebrow and Gender, 1890-1945.* Brill Rodopi, 2016.

Eisen, Kurt. "Novelization and the Drama of Consciousness in *Strange Interlude." The Eugene O'Neill Review,* vol. 14, no. 1/2, 1990, p. 39-46. *JSTOR,* https://www.jstor.org/stable/29784381.

Ernst, Morris and Alexander Lindey. *The Censor Marches On.* Doubleday, 1940.

Flynn, Catherine. "'Circe' and Surrealism: Joyce and the Avant-Garde." *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2011, pp. 121–38. *Gale Academic OneFile,* link.gale.com/apps/doc/A268652396/AONE?u=tel_a_utl&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=35a51de2.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuallity: Volume 1: An Introduction*. Vintage, 1990.

Forster, Chris. *Filthy Material: Modernism and the Media of Obscenity.* Oxford University Press, 2019.

Forster, E.M. *Maurice*. Penguin, 1972.

Gide, Andre. “Desperate Words Call for Desperate Little Remedies.” *A Claybook for James Joyce,* edited by Louis Gillet, Adelard-Schuman, 1958, pp. 123-130.

Gillers, Stephen. “A Tendency to Deprave and Corrupt: The Transformation of American Obscenity Law from Hicklin to *Ulysses* II.” *Washington University Law Review*, vol. 85, no. 2, 2007, pp. 215-296.

Groden, Michael. *Ulysses in Progress.* Princeton University Press, 1977.

Grove Press, Inc. v. Christenberry, 175 F. Supp. 488. Southern District of New York, 1959.

Grove Press v. Gerstein, 378 U.S. 577. U.S. Supreme Court, 1964.

Hall, Radclyffe. *The Well of Loneliness.* Wordsworth Classics, 2014.

---. *Your John: the Love Letters of Radclyffe Hall,* edited by Joanne Glasgow. New York University Press, 1997.

Hardiman, Adrian. *Joyce in Court: James Joyce and the Law*. Head of Zues, 2017.

Hassett, Joseph M. *The Ulysses Trials: Beauty and Truth Meet the Law*. Lilliput Press, 2016.

Hellman, Lillian. *Six Plays by Lillian Hellman.* Vintage, 1979.

Holmes, Diana. *Middlebrow Matters*. Liverpool University Press, 2018.

Houchin, John H. *Censorship of the American Theatre in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Hutchinson, Ben. “Modernism and the Erotics of Style.” *Modernist Eroticisms: European Literature After Sexology*, edited by Anna Katharina Schaffner and Shane Weller, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 213-231.

Jarcho, Julia. *Writing the Modern Stage: Theater Beyond Drama.* Cambridge UP, 2017.

Joyce, James. *James Joyce’s Letters to Sylvia Beach, 1921-1940,* edited by Melissa Banta and Oscar A. Silverman, Indiana University Press, 1987.

---. *Letters of James Joyce*, edited by Richard Ellmann, vol. 2 & 3, Viking Press, 1966.

---. *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, edited by Richard Ellmann. The Viking Press, 1975.

---. *Ulysses*. Random House, 1986.

---. *Ulysses 'Circe': A Facsimile of Page Proofs for Episode 15.* Prefaced and arranged by Michael Groden, Garland, 1978a.

---. *Ulysses 'Circe' & 'Eumaeus': A Facsimile of Placards for Episodes 15 & 16.* Prefaced and arranged by Michael Groden, Garland, 1978b.

---. *Ulysses 'Circe' & 'Eumaeus': A Facsimile of Manuscripts & Typescripts for Episodes 15 & 16 (Part II).* Prefaced and arranged by Michael Groden, Garland, 1977a.

---. *Ulysses 'Oxen of the Sun' & 'Circe': A Facsimile of Drafts, Manuscripts & Typescripts for Episodes 14 & 15 (Part I).* Prefaced and arranged by Michael Groden, Garland, 1977b.

Kahan, Benjamin. "The Walk-In Closet: Situational Homosexuality and Homosexual Panic in Hellman's *The Children's Hour." Criticism*, vol. 55, no.2, 2013, pp. 177-201. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/crt.2013.0017.

Kurnick, David. *Empty Houses: Theatrical Failure and the Novel.* Princeton University Press, 2012, pp. 153-191.

Lanser, Susan Sniader. "Introduction." *Ladies Almanack*, by Djuna Barnes. New York University Press, 1992.

Latham, Sean. *The Art of Scandal: Modernism, Libel Law, and the Roman à Clef*. Oxford UP, 2009.

Lawrence, D.H. *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Grove Press, 1959.

---. *Sex, Literature, and Censorship*, edited by Harry T. Moore, Viking Press, 1959.

Lewis, Felice Flanery. *Literature, Obscenity, & Law*. Southern Illinois University Press, 1976.

Lynes, Russell. *The Tastemakers.* Harper, 1954.

Lyon, Janet. "Sociability in the Metropole: Modernism's Bohemian Salons." *ELH,* vol. 76, no. 3, 2009, pp. 687-711. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/elh.0.0054.

Mackenzie, Compton. *Extraordinary Women.* The Hogarth Press, 1928.

MacKenzie, Scott, editor. *Film Manifestos and Global Cinema Cultures: A Critical Anthology*. University of California Press, 2014. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/utk/detail.action?docID=1650802.

---. *My Life and Times.* Chatto & Windus, 1963.

Mandl, Bette. "Gender as Design in Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude." The Eugene O'Neill Review*, vol. 19, no. 1/2, 1995, pp. 122-128. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/29784553.

---. "'Thinking Aloud' in Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude." The Eugene O'Neill Review*, vol. 26, 2004, pp. 24-30. *JSTOR*, https://www.jstor.org/stable/29784736.

Marshik, Celia. *British Modernism and Censorship*. Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Micir, Melanie. *The Passion Projects: Modernist Women, Intimate Archives, Unfinished Lives.* Princeton University Press, 2019.

Miller, Henry. *Tropic of Cancer.* Grove Press, 1961.

Miller, Neil. *Banned in Boston.* Beacon Press, 2010.

Mullin, Katherine. *James Joyce, Sexuality and Social Purity.* Cambridge, 2003.

O'Neill, Eugene. "Strange Interlude." *The Plays of Eugene O'Neill.* Random House, 1955, pp. 3-202.

Parkes, Adam. *Modernism and the Theater of Censorship.* Oxford University Press, 1996.

Perrin, Tom. *The Aesthetics of Middlebrow Fiction : Popular US Novels, Modernism, and Form, 1945-75* . First edition., Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Peters, Julie Stone. “Performing Obscene Modernism: Theatrical Censorship and the Making of Modern Drama.” *Modern Drama,* edited by Martin Puchner, vol. 3, Routledge, 2008, pp. 170-190.

Potter, Rachel. *Obscene Modernism.* Oxford University Press, 2013.

Pound, Ezra, et al. *Pound/Joyce; the Letters of Ezra Pound to James Joyce, with Pound’s Essays on Joyce.* New Directions, 1967.

---. *Pound/the Little Review: the Letters of Ezra Pound to Margaret Anderson: the Little Review Correspondence*. New Directions, 1988.

---. *Selected Letters of Ezra Pound to John Quinn,* edited by Timothy Materer. Duke University Press, 1991.

Rabate, Jean-Michel. “From the Erotic to the Obscene: Joyce’s *Ulysses*.” *Modernist Eroticisms: European Literature After Sexology,* edited by Anna Katharina Schaffner and Shane Weller, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 123-33.

Reid, B. L. *The Man from New York; John Quinn and His Friends*. Oxford University Press, 1968.

Roche, Hannah. *The Outside Thing: Modernist Lesbian Romance.* Columbia University Press, 2019.

Roth v. United States, 354 U.S. 476. U.S. Supreme Court, 1957.

Shedd, Sally. “‘There is no keyhole on my door’: Musings on Visibility and the Power of the ‘Unmarked’ in *The Children’s Hour.” Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism,* vol. 21, no. 2, 2007, pp. 139-142.

Sigel, Lisa Z. “Censorship in Inter-War Britain: Obscenity, Spectacle, and the Workings of the Liberal State.” *Journal of Social History*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2011, pp. 61–83. *Project MUSE*, muse.jhu.edu/article/456223.

Souhami, Diana. *The Trials of Radclyffe Hall.* Doubleday, 1999.

Spencer, Jenny S. “Sex, Lies, and Revisions: Historicizing Hellman’s *The Children’s Hour.*” *Modern Drama*, vol. 47, no. 1, 2004, pp. 44-65. *Project MUSE*, https://doi.org/10.1353/mdr.2004.0060.

St. Amour, Paul K. *The Copywrights.* Cornell University Press, 2003.

Starck, Lindsay. "Djuna Barnes's *Ladies Almanack* and the Politicization of Gossip." *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 65 no. 2, 2019, p. 239-263. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/mfs.2019.0012.

Stewart, Bruce. *James Joyce*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

Titus, Mary. “Murdering the Lesbian: Lillian Hellman’s *The Children’s Hour*.” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1991, pp. 215-232. *JSTOR*, https://www.jstor.org/stable/464015.

The Trial of Lady Chatterley, edited by C.H. Rolph. Penguin, 1961.

These Three. *Turner Classic Movies*, https://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/92794/these-three/#notes.

Tunc, Tanfer Emin. “Rumours, Gossip and Lies: Social Anxiety and the Evil Child in Lillian Hellman’s *The Children’s Hour*.” *Journal of Literary Studies*, vol. 28, no. 3, pp. 32-54. *Gale Academic OneFile*, link.gale.com/apps/doc/A302900270/AONE?u=tel_a_utl&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=2f90f6c7.

United States v. One Book Called "Ulysses", 5 F. Supp. 182. Southern District of New York, 1933.

Watt, Stephen. *Joyce, O'Casey, and the Irish Popular Theater.* Syracuse University Press, 1991.

Wolff, Tamsen. "'Eugenic O'Neill' and the Secrets of 'Strange Interlude.'" *Theatre Journal*, vol. 55, no. 2, 2003, pp. 215-234. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/tj.2003.0094.

Woods, Marianne, et al. *Miss Marianne Woods and Miss Jane Pirie Against Dame Helen Cumming Gordon.* Arno Press, 1975.

Woolf, Virginia. *The Death of the Moth, and Other Essays*. The Hogarth Press, 1943.

---. *Orlando*. Harcourt Brace & Company, 1928.

Vita

Matthew Joseph Pilkington earned his Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts in English Literature at the California State University, Fullerton, before attending the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, as a doctoral student. His research interests center on 20th century Anglo-American fiction and drama with an emphasis on modernism and censorship. After graduation, he will begin a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.