
Kristianne Kalata Vaccaro

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TRANSATLANTIC ACTS:
NATION, SELF-NARRATION, AND CELEBRITY
IN VICTORIAN AND MODERNIST WOMEN’S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

A Dissertation
Submitted to the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By
Kristianne Kalata Vaccaro

December 2008
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NATION, SELF-NARRATION, AND CELEBRITY
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By

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ABSTRACT

TRANSATLANTIC ACTS:
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By
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This dissertation examines select Victorian and Modernist women writers’ autobiographical narratives with attention to how the presence of transatlantic travel—bodily and textual, between Europe and America—links private processes of self-narration to public critiques of nation-specific systems, customs, and traditions. Exploring how these writers’ audience-aware narratives reflect a kind of dual (body/text) performance at home and/or abroad, this project complicates traditional notions of women’s autobiography as private and apolitical. I argue that autobiographical texts by Harriet Martineau, Fanny Kemble, Gertrude Stein, and Sylvia Townsend Warner manipulate their authors’ celebrity status and relish the presence of their transatlantic
public, shrewdly engaging hybrid, genre-specific narrative strategies aimed at British and/or American audiences, both literary and popular. Specifically, Martineau’s *Retrospect of Western Travel* (1838) conflates masculine and feminine voices, drawing from genres of memoir, travelogue, fiction, and folklore alike in audience-aware ways that subversively challenge narratives of New World history in-the-making. Kemble’s *Journal of a Residence on a Plantation in 1838-1839* (1863), by contrast, adopts an intimate epistolary form and relies on a framework of performance to revise the reigning narrative of antebellum American slavery, depicting it as a scripted system in which she must negotiate her role as white slave mistress with her desire to validate slave women’s stories. Stein’s *Everybody’s Autobiography* (1937) combines autobiographical subgenres of the travel narrative, memoir, and diary in ways that enact a revaluing of readerly perspective and complicate boundaries between past and present, American and European. Lastly, Warner’s *Scenes of Childhood* (1936-73) engages genres of journalism and the short story, imaginatively filtering self-experience through domestic objects to critique nation-specific, daily customs. Together, these narratives bridge the gap between “high” and “low” culture in ways that encourage their wide-ranging transatlantic readership not only to think critically about the workings of native and foreign sociopolitical systems, but also to consider how these systems complicate the self-narration of nation-specific histories and identities.
DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my grandmother, Antonietta Ranucci, whose animated tales of her October, 1936 transatlantic voyage from Italy to Ellis Island form some of my earliest memories and will inspire me always.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The idea for this project originated in a final essay I wrote for Dr. Linda Kinnahan’s Modernist Women Writers course at Duquesne University in the spring of 2004. I am sincerely appreciative of Dr. Kinnahan’s thoughtful, encouraging feedback on that essay, which I went on to publish in *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* (24.2), and which helped me conceive not only the framework for but also the value of this dissertation. I am deeply indebted to Duquesne’s McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts, whose Dissertation Fellowship for 2007-2008 helped me make great strides toward the completion of this project. I am grateful to my committee, Dr. Laura Callanan, Dr. Kinnahan, and Dr. Laura Engel, for their pointed, heartening, and unfailingly helpful feedback throughout all stages of this project and of life as a graduate student. My director, Dr. Callanan, deserves special thanks for her wise advice and her seemingly tireless, incredibly timely, and insightfully constructive criticism of this work.

I would like to thank *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* for their permission to publish portions of my abovementioned article on Sylvia Townsend Warner as Chapter Four of this dissertation. I thank my parents, Don and Sara Kalata, my brother, Michael, all the Vaccaros and Zinnos, and the Duquesne graduate student community—especially Amanda, Amy, and Rita—for their kindness and encouragement as I trekked the long road to the Ph.D. To Heather Shippen Cianciola I am inexpressibly grateful for eight years of friendship, shared intellectual and personal growth, and phone conversations that contributed immensely to my sanity. Finally, I thank my husband, Damian, whose steadfast patience, unquestioning support, and quirky sense of humor kept me smiling even in the murkiest moments of the dissertation experience.
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ABBREVIATIONS

Due to the lengthy titles of some of the works featured here, I use the following abbreviations to denote primary texts after their first mentioning in any given section of this study:


EA   Gertrude Stein, *Everybody’s Autobiography* (1937)


GHA  Gertrude Stein, *The Geographical History of America or the Relation of Human Nature to the Human Mind* (1936)

IPE  Harriet Martineau, *Illustrations of Political Economy* (1832-34)

JRGJP  Fanny Kemble, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838-1839* (1863)


NUSSP  Fanny Kemble, Introduction to *Notes Upon Some of Shakespeare’s Plays* (1882)

RWT  Harriet Martineau, *Retrospect of Western Travel* (1838)

SIA  Harriet Martineau, *Society in America* (1837)


TB  Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons* (1914)
Introduction

Performing the Self, Narrating the Nation

Autobiographies...may reveal as much about the author's assumed audience as they do about him or her, and this is a further reason why they need to be read as cultural documents, not just as personal ones. ~Robert F. Sayre, *American Lives: An Anthology of Autobiographical Writing* (1994)

Victorian and Modernist women writers’ autobiographical narratives chart a broad historical period fraught with developments in industrialism, feminism, and war, all juxtaposed against a newly postcolonial relationship between Britain and America. In the aftermath of the American Civil War and World War I, politically-charged transatlantic dialogues between Britain, Continental Europe, and the United States functioned as a context and, in some cases, an impetus for Victorian and Modernist women’s autobiographical narratives, resulting in narratives concerned not only with questions of women’s self-writing, but also with problems of defining Americanness and Britishness in historically-specific moments. Informed by the birth of the historical imagination in the nineteenth century, which, according Hayden White, brought about the need for a narrativization of history (22, 37), Victorian and Modernist women’s autobiographical narratives provide a lens through which to view the complex intersections among theories of narrative, feminism, and self-writing.

In particular, Harriet Martineau’s *Retrospect of Western Travel* (1838); Fanny Kemble’s *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838-1839* (1863);
Gertrude Stein’s *Everybody’s Autobiography* (1937); and Sylvia Townsend Warner’s *Scenes of Childhood* (1936-73; 1981) demonstrate precisely how the autobiographical vision is complicated by the presence of the transatlantic element: self-representation becomes an exploration of the relationship between literary form and historical change and, as such, is complicated by the performative movement of women’s bodies—physical and textual—across the Atlantic, to and from “foreign” cultures in America, Britain, and the Continent. Such travel inevitably locates the woman autobiographer in a multivalent position of “other” since, when at home or abroad during the nineteenth and early-to-mid-twentieth centuries, she is subject to cultural limitations placed upon her by factors of gender, race, and class, all of which contribute to the way in which she performs Americanness (in the case of Stein) or Britishness (in cases of Martineau, Kemble, and Warner).

These performances of nation, bound up as they are with performances of self, are further complicated by the additional performance of the text the woman writer publishes, often transatlantically, which manipulates autobiographical forms in order to critique the very foundations of the culture she (or her text, in Warner’s case) has visited. The act of traveling through native and foreign societies, both of which cast her as the “other,” sets the stage on which the autobiographer becomes a kind of cultural performer, narratively reenacting culturally specific—and, in a larger sense, nationally specific—events, traditions, and customs while relying on the authority of her eyewitness account to gain access to public discourse. With keen awareness of and rhetorical direction toward the transatlantic public eye, her self-narrative reenactment negotiates the fine line between truth and fiction in ways that subversively challenge the political and cultural
“realities” of a given nation. My project explores how the nexus of transatlanticism, textual and bodily performance, and narrative self-construction at work in the aforementioned texts by Martineau, Kemble, Stein, and Warner links processes of self-revelation to the cultural critique of issues of nation, custom, and tradition. While the bulk of the project is devoted to studying the significance of the specific narrative strategies and cultural critiques enacted by each writer’s dual (body/text) performance, I argue that, collectively, their texts exhibit a marked audience-awareness that encourages readers on both sides of the Atlantic to question the naturalness of both native and “foreign” social and political systems—systems ranging from the literary (generic conventions, modes of reading and writing) to the socio-political (antebellum American government and racial codes, Edwardian monarchy, British colonialism)—and to consider the ways in which these systems problematize the construction of self in a given cultural context.

I. Rethinking the Divide between the Victorian and the Modern

Before delving into the specific cultural contexts of the literature surveyed in this study, I would first like to discuss why I chose to pair two Victorian writers with two Modern ones. Despite the chronological breadth that spans the cultural periods we have come to call “Victorianism” and “Modernism,” not to mention the one-hundred year time span that separates the texts treated in the first and last chapters of this dissertation, critical discussion over the past twenty-five or so years—a period that overlaps with

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1 As Margaret McFadden explains, the terms modern, modernism, and modernist “are not synonymous, [yet] they are often used interchangeably, the differences most apparent in what discipline is talking—sociology, political science, literary criticism, art, music, philosophy, or history. ‘Modernism’ is usually applied to one or another artistic or literary movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Europe and the United States, while ‘modernist’ means having the characteristics of modernism. ‘Modernity’ often refers to an historical era, and ‘the modern’ has become a catch-all term that may refer to all of the above. There is also the term ‘modernization,’ usually a reference to a process of industrialization and (Western) development” (xiii).
developments in feminist narratological studies in the mid-to-late 1980s and anticipates the onset of feminist autobiographical criticism in the mid-to-late 1990s—has encouraged a rethinking of the divide between Victorian and Modernist cultural periods. Beginning with George Levine’s *The Realistic Imagination* (1981) and including texts such as Carol Christ’s *Victorian and Modern Poetics* (1984) and Peter Allan Dale’s *In Pursuit of a Scientific Culture* (1989), select literary criticism of the 1980s and 1990s suggested the fruitfulness, in Levine’s terms, of “obliterat[ing] the wall between modernism and Victorianism that modernists had constructed” (142). More recently, in her afterword to *Woman’s Experience of Modernity, 1875-1945* (2003), Rita Felski agrees with Levine’s argument, positing that we ought “to question rather than endorse the temporal schema that caused modernists to define their own endeavor in the language of rupture, crisis, and new beginnings” because “the dividing line between the Victorians and the moderns,” she argues, “is no longer so clear-cut” (293). Taking up Felski’s call, this study seeks to question the division between the Victorian and the Modern, drawing comparisons not only among the autobiographical narrative strategies of each period, but also among the presences of Victorian and Modern women writers’ bodies in native and foreign cultures.

In so linking the content and forms of Victorian and Modern texts, my dissertation foregrounds two important modes of cultural progress that characterize historical periods of Victorianism and Modernism alike: namely, technological and industrial developments in travel; and social and commercial developments in mass market culture. According to Ana Parejo Vadillo, mass transportation facilities not only rendered the Victorian middle-class woman passenger “an icon of modernity,” but also increased “the presence and

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2 For a description of these texts and their specific contributions to Victorian and Modernist literary studies, see Levine, “Victorian Studies,” in *Redrawing the Boundaries*, eds. Greenblatt and Gunn, pp. 142-43.
visibility of women in the metropolis” (205-06).³ Specifically, the period of the 1830s and 40s—during which time both Martineau and Kemble made transatlantic voyages from Britain to America and back—saw developments in the steam engine that not only eased transatlantic travel but also affected locomotive transportation (Smith 21). Such developments are reflected in Martineau’s references to steamboat travel (1.13-34; 2.5-25) and Kemble’s reflections on travel by rail (14-23)—specifically, her observation that, upon reaching North Carolina during her journey south to Georgia, she had to transfer to a stagecoach because, she notes, “we had traveled as far upon the railroad as it was yet completed” (22). The nineteenth century saw the completion and thriving of the railroad industry and, with the dawning of the twentieth century, there arrived “a succession of new forms of transportation,” as Sidonie Smith puts it (Moving 21). The result of this succession, Smith documents, was that by World War I, “the bicycle, the airplane, and the automobile … further increased the safety, the comfort, the reach, the speed, and the availability of transportation. With these new technologies came a reorientation to time and to space” (21). Such reorientations are clear in the autobiographical narratives of Stein and Warner, published in the 1930s interwar period and onward,⁴ both of which address the shifting perceptions of reality brought about by the experience of air travel (Stein 126-27, 135, 196-98, 229-30, 236, 324); and the sheer speed of automobile transport (Warner 157; Stein 202-04, 269, 289, 294-95).

³ The “metropolis” Vadillo refers to here is that of late-Victorian London. In sum, she argues that urban mass transport, in increasing the presence and visibility of women in the metropolis, functions as “a vehicle of late Victorian women’s political and poetic transgression” (205-06). She supports her argument primarily via a reading of Amy Levy’s poem, “Ballad of an Omnibus.”

⁴ Though I use the decades of the 1830s and 1930s to compare, systematically, the Victorian and Modern texts covered in this dissertation, it is important to acknowledge that Warner’s Scenes of Childhood, addressed in Chapter 4 of my project, appear serially in The New Yorker from 1936-73.
In addition to the shifts in perception brought about by progress in modes of transportation, the Victorians and Moderns alike (in both Britain and America) experienced drastic developments in mass market culture—particularly, in the presence, accessibility, and circulation of printed materials. As Ann Ardis acknowledges, the transition from the Victorian to the Modern period was characterized by a range of “sociological phenomena” to which women on both sides of the Atlantic necessarily responded, phenomena including “the rise of commodity culture … visual innovations in the mass-market newspaper industry” and “middle-class women’s entrance into both the labor force and the public sphere” (5). For Martineau and Kemble, as for most Victorians of the 1830s, the accession of Victoria brought about what James Ryan has called “an unprecedented expansion in the circulation and readership of books, newspapers, magazines, and printed ephemera of all kinds,” made possible by rapid developments in “technologies of printing, publishing and engraving” (215). Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the sheer growth in literacy, industry, and commerce—accompanied by the rapid expansion of the middle classes—“fuelled demand for printed material with which to inform, educate, entertain and advertise to both specialist and mass audiences” (215).

This demand for writers to reach both “specialist and mass” readership underpins a major goal of my project: that is, to study the ways in which the texts of Martineau, Kemble, Stein, and Warner manipulate autobiographical forms in hybrid ways that function to attract the attention of nation-specific audiences spanning the scholarly elite and the popular masses. In other words, I am interested in how these women writers negotiate the gap in what has been called “the Great Divide” between “high” and “low”
culture from the mid-nineteenth century onward (Huyssen vii). Though for Martineau and Kemble, the 1830s saw only the beginnings of a clear distinction between “literary” and “popular” culture in Britain and America (Easley 178), for Stein and Warner, the 1930s saw a much more complicated divide between “serious” and “comic,” “heavy” and “light.” Theorized most notably by Andreas Huyssen and revised and/or problematized by critics such as Kevin J.H. Dettmar, Stephen Watt, and Robert Scholes, to name a few, the period “after the Great Divide,” in Huyssen’s terms, witnessed a “resilient” opposition between the “high art” of modernism and the “mass culture” of modernity (vii-viii). What happened as a result of the Divide, Huyssen suggests, is that commercial, mass culture was for a period figured not only as “negative, as the homogeneously sinister background on which the achievements of modernism can shine in their glory” (ix), but also as feminine (x; 55). The problem with these divisive, masculine/feminine, high/low binary oppositions is how easily, as Scholes warns us, they “slide … into absolute notions of Good and Bad” (Scholes 3). Moreover, Scholes adds, by their very nature, binary oppositions “often function to suppress or exclude a middle term … that might mediate between their extremes,” thus “forcing many admirable works into the lower half of an invidious distinction” (xi-xii).

The works featured in my project—works that, I suggest, succeed in mediating between extreme categories of high and low—are no exception to this rule: for, as much feminist autobiography criticism of the past fifteen or so years has suggested, autobiography is by nature “difficult to define as a distinct genre,” since it lies “on the

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5 My capitalization of the term “Great Divide” here follows the practice of both Huyssen and Scholes.

6 For further discussion of Huyssen’s theory—and Scholes and others’ response to it, see Chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation.
borderline between fact and fiction, the personal and the social, the popular and the academic, the everyday and the literary” (Coleman 2; Cosslett 1; Marcus, “Theories” 13-14). As a result of this borderline generic location, Martineau’s RWT has been denigrated for being too “personal” and not serious or theoretical enough (Roberts 51; Frawley 16); Kemble’s JRGP has been labeled a biased book of “little effect” (Furnas 397; Wright 164); Stein’s EA has been called “the least ‘stylish’” of her works and deemed “predictably…a failure” (Brinnin 354; Krukowski viii); and Warner’s SOC has been described as “comic” and “charming,” yet “lack[ing] in profundity” (Baldwin 78).

In the face of such glaring critical dismissals, I seek to revalue these autobiographical texts for what I consider to be their shrewd and effective bridging of the gap in the high/low, popular/literary divide; moreover, I argue that the key way in which the texts achieve this bridging is through their authors’ transatlantic celebrity. As Leo Braudy has argued:

In great part the history of fame is the history of the changing ways by which individuals have sought to bring themselves to the attention of others and, not incidentally, have thereby gained power over them. But few self-assertions, especially those staged in public, are ever wholly original. From the beginning fame has required publicity. Alexander the Great ostentatiously imitated Achilles among other gods and heroes; Julius Caesar mourned that he had not done as much as Alexander, and the Wichita murderer said that he was moved by the same force that moved Jack the Ripper. (4)

By locating Martineau, Kemble, Stein, and Warner in the celebrity circle shared by this motley group of famous and/or notorious men, I wish to emphasize a shared element that defines their celebrity—namely, the notion that, in Braudy’s terms, fame requires publicity. And, more importantly, celebrities, in processes of “bring[ing] themselves to the attention of others,” inevitably “gain power over them” (4). It is this power over
audiences, and, perhaps more importantly, celebrities’ awareness of it, in which I am precisely interested.

According to Rebecca Jenkins, the term “celebrity” was first recorded in print in 1829—the year of Kemble’s stage debut as a Shakespearean stage actress. The word was used by Irish feminist Lady Sydney Morgan, in reference to the peculiar status of famous British personalities; Kemble, Jenkins asserts, “was one of the very first cross-Atlantic examples of the breed” (1). Though it may have been coined in print in 1829, by the 1930s—the time of Stein’s travels from Paris to America and Warner’s opening Scenes aimed at American readers—the concept of celebrity and, with it, the workings of mass consumer culture, had become infinitely more complicated and exponentially more manufactured. Barbara Will explains:

By the time of [Stein’s] lecture tour in 1934-35, a new force field was beginning to affect American modes of production and cultural representation, as well as habits of consumption. According to popular culture critic Joshua Gamson, during the 1930s advertising or public relations, the development of film technology, and the rise of modern American consumer culture “had entered a period of industrialization”; the result was the development of an engine of publicity such as the world had never known before.” The Hollywood film industry and its stable of “stars” were at the white-hot center of this engine, not only generating enormous domestic revenues but also creating one of the most important “industries of desire” in the twentieth century. Celebrities became the most potent commodities to emerge out of this system, transcending individual film texts and representing for audiences an alluring and elusive mix of glamour, wealth and frivolity: the qualities that most fed the fantasies of Depression-era audiences. Hollywood further perfected celebrity appeal in the 1930s by “de-divinising” stars, presenting them as “people like you and me—embodiments of typical ways of behavior. (153)

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7 For more information on developing notions of celebrity in 18th-century European culture, see Laura Engel’s forthcoming book, Fashioning Celebrity, and also Claire Brock’s recent study, The Feminization of Fame 1750-1830 (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

This presentation of “stars” as everyday people aligns with one of the key narrative properties of women’s autobiographical writing: namely, its focus on the everyday (Cosslett 1). Furthermore, Will’s points set the stage for what I deem the very important narrative self-constructions of celebrity offered by Martineau, Kemble, Stein, and Warner—for, at the time she published the autobiographical text I examine here, each woman writer had recently risen to a kind of stardom that was both popular and literary: Martineau for her journalistic *Illustrations of Political Economy*; Kemble, for her Shakespearean stage acting; Stein, for her lucid *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*; and Warner, for her book-of-the-month bestseller *Lolly Willowes*. In addition to their well-established public fame, both Kemble and Stein were affiliated with the theatre—Kemble, as a critically-acclaimed actress; and Stein, as an avant-garde playwright. Likewise, both Martineau and Warner’s careers were immersed (at least, for a time) in genres of popular journalism. These types of theatrical and journalistic work—when considered alongside each writer’s transatlantic celebrity—suggest that Martineau, Kemble, Stein, and Warner were undeniably aware of their wide-reaching public. As a result, their self-narratives are written with an eye toward reaching the literary elite as well as the middle class, popular masses. As she (or her text, in the case of Warner) travels to America, the woman writer becomes a kind of spectacle gazed upon by audiences of fans; and her resulting autobiographical narrative of travel crafts self-constructions of celebrity in ways that build authority for native and foreign audiences.

**II. Transatlanticism and Travel Writing**

In its focus on the native and the foreign, this project introduces transatlanticism into the existing scholarship on woman’s autobiographical narratives, and it draws from
that scholarship to make clear the importance of transatlantic travel and identity to women’s autobiography studies: the transatlantic element complicates narrative self-construction by foregrounding issues of nation-specific audience-awareness and reception, and by linking those issues to problems of narrative authority and the self-representation of women’s physical and textual bodies in “other” cultures. With this rationale in mind, my project engages the transatlantic on two levels, both of which contribute directly to an understanding of the writer and her text’s cultural performance: First, of course, of the four women writers whose texts I will analyze, three are British (Martineau, Kemble, Warner), while one is American (Stein). Second, the composition and publication histories of these writers’ texts consist of narratives composed in America to be read primarily by British audiences (Kemble, Martineau); narratives composed in France to be read primarily by American audiences (Stein); and narratives composed in Britain to be read exclusively by American audiences (Warner).

Significantly, these two levels of transatlanticism—the writers’ native nationhood and the not uncomplicated nationhood (if I might call it that) of her respective text—parallel my definition of performativity for this project: the woman writer’s nationhood affects her physical, bodily performance while travelling, just as her geographic location and audience-awareness affect her narrative’s textual performance and autobiographical self-construction. The presence of this transatlantic thread throughout my project not only helps unpack these writers’ vexed self-constructions of physical and textual bodies

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9 It bears mentioning here that the theoretical context I will use to approach these texts—a context grounded in feminist autobiographical and narrative theories—is itself transatlantic. The approaches taken by (mostly American) scholars such as Sidonie Smith, Julia Watson, Leigh Gilmore, Shari Benstock, Susan Lanser, and Robyn Warhol engage theories ranging from French philosophy, structuralism, poststructuralism, and feminism to American feminism and gender theory. My project follows suit, as I call upon both Roland Barthes and Judith Butler in discussing the performativity of self-narratives that are both British and American in origin.
in both native and “other” cultures, but also illuminates the ways that movement (bodily and textual) affects the autobiographical act. Whether it involves the physical travel of the woman writer or the textual travel of her work(s) from nation to nation via publication, the pervasiveness of movement in these narratives suggests that identities, like cultural “realities,” are always in flux. Such intercultural movement generates a situation in which narrative self-construction is as concerned with questions of national history as it is with those of personal history.

Accordingly, the link between national and self histories—and national and self identities—figures prominently, though differently, in the works of all four authors and suggests the integral role that nation plays in the self-narration of individual and collective identities. As Kristi Siegel has argued, “although travel writers, to some degree, construct their own persona, the process of travel constructs them in return” (7); “whether travel writers record the collision of their identity with a new culture or not,” she continues, “travel necessarily brings about change. Travelers might lose their sense of identity altogether or, conversely, find their sense of self sharpened by the journey” (7). To be sure, the voluntary act of dislocating from one’s native culture sets the stage for an autobiographical performance that destabilizes traditional ways of knowing and defining personal and national identity: In Martineau’s case, this performance creates an intertextual dialogue about the impossibility of historical objectivity; for Kemble, it offers an opportunity to re-narrate the American slave system; for Stein, it creates an occasion for theorizing “Americanness”; and for Warner, it poses an opportunity to explore the Americanization of Britain.
In so linking the autobiographical to the transatlantic, my project explores the relationship between women’s autobiography and travel writing (“travel”, in this case, implying textual and/or bodily movement), a relationship whose critical history is highly conflicted. For instance, in her study of the link between travel writing and European expansion, Mary Louise Pratt describes the autobiographical narrative as the central “canonical” and “authoritative” form available to women and points out that women writers used this form to construct a picture of self as protagonist of both travels and life (171). Conversely, Sara Mills, in assessing the problems surrounding the analysis of women’s travel writing, argues that readers “cannot simply assume that these [travel] texts can be read as autobiographies” because they “are not expressions of individual subjects in the context of an alien country, but rather are the site of various discourses which play on the text” (39). What is needed to read them, Mills maintains, is “a theoretical framework” that can distinguish between the “overdetermined” selves within and outside the text and can “enable us to describe the way that the self within the text is structured from a range of discursive factors or pressures which are not within the control of the writer” (35). Indeed, Mills makes a good point here, one that is (ironically) echoed in the feminist autobiographical work of critics like Benstock and Gilmore, both of whom assert that autobiography is a fictional representation of a self mediated by discourse (Benstock, “Authorizing” 11, 16; Gilmore ix, 3, 16). According to Barbara Korte, travel writing involves a similar fictional reconstruction, as “the actual experience of a journey is reconstructed, and therefore fictionalized, in the moment of being told”

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10 Mills relies heavily on Foucault’s work—particularly, on his “What is an author?”—in seeking to provide this framework.
and “the delay between [travel] experience and narration” is not always made clear to readers (11).

The abovementioned work of Pratt, Benstock, Gilmore, and Korte suggests that Mills’s call for a “theoretical framework” through which to approach women’s travelogues might best be answered by a combination of feminist autobiographical and narrative theories—a combination I employ in this project. Feminist autobiography theory offers a means of unpacking problems of textual self-representation, while narrative theory provides a way to explore the vexed narrative plotting of self-experience and travel; accordingly, my dissertation offers a fresh perspective on the ways in which the transatlantic woman writer negotiates formal properties of prose narrative autobiography and, ultimately, experiments with genre in ways that critique nation-specific social and political systems, customs and traditions.

In its theoretical focus on narrative form and genre, my project clearly differs from the bulk of travel writing criticism—which, to date, has tended largely to emphasize how women travelers have traditionally been and are still perceived as anomalies. As Susan Bassnett has observed, “one consistent line through discussions of women travelers is the notion that they were somehow exceptional” (228). Consider the following scholarly titles, all monograph studies of [mostly 18th-19th-century] women’s travel writing: Jane Robinson, Wayward Women: A Guide to Women Travellers (1990); Mary Russell, The Blessings of a Good Thick Skirt: Women Travellers and their World (1986); and Dea Birkett, Spinsters Abroad: Victorian Lady Explorers (1989). Such titles, says Bassnett, reveal that although the feminist revival of the early 1970s stimulated critical interest in women travelers, scholars who attempted to praise travelling women’s efforts
and achievements succeeded, paradoxically, in suggesting that women travelers were “slightly eccentric” and introducing “a comic note that can easily be interpreted as mocking” (226). As a result of this mockery, Bassnett continues,

Women travelers are therefore categorized as doubly different: they differ from other, more orthodox, socially conformist women, and from male travelers who use the journey as a means of discovering more about their own masculinity. The underlying impression gained from these volumes [of above-titled studies] is that the woman traveler was somehow in flight from something, seeking to escape from the constraints of her family or her society. (226)

According to Siegel, who concurs with Bassnett, such mocking titles surprisingly find counterparts in studies and collections even of contemporary women’s travel writing, thus proving that “unescorted travel by women is still considered risky and less common” (4, my ital.). Siegel cites the following contemporary titles as examples: Diana Hume George, *The Lonely Other: A Woman Watching America* (1996); Susan Fox Rogers, *Solo: On Her Own Adventure* (1996); Lisa Alpine, et al., *Wild Writing Women: Stories of World Travel* (2002); and Katherine Govier, *Without a Guide: Contemporary Women’s Travel Adventures* (1994). The stubborn resonance of the concept of the anomalous woman traveler in these titles has much to do with the cultural constraints still faced by women travelers. Penelope Lawrence explains:

Travel literature … explores not only potential freedoms but also cultural constraints; it provides a kind of imaginative resistance to its own plot. In flights of the imagination, as well as on the road, home is, of course, never totally left behind. . . That is why travel literature explores a tension between the thrilling possibilities of the unknown and the weight of the familiar, between a desire for escape and a sense that one can never be outside a binding cultural network. (Lawrence 19)

This “binding” network in which women travel writers find themselves is itself part of the mass market, ever-changing public sphere (discussed in Part I of this Introduction) in
which Victorian and Modern women writers composed and published their autobiographical narratives. Thus, for travel writers and autobiographers alike, self-narrative must “negotiate the arena of publication”—an arena in which it is simultaneously “free” and “bound”—because [self-narrative] “always describes both a state of a particular text and a relationship between that text and the literary public sphere” (Treadwell 107, ix, my ital.).

The relationship between women’s travel writing and the public sphere is a complicated one, since, as a kind of autobiography, travel narrative occupies a liminal genre status and flirts with intermediary qualities of high and low, popular and literary culture. As Casey Blanton has pointed out, from Marco Polo onward, “travelers’ tales about distant places and exotic cultures have proven to be remarkably popular reading” (2). Yet, Lawrence notes, “one of the interests of travel literature lies precisely in the flexibility of its cultural images and hybrid forms” (21)—a flexibility that, I argue, enables travel writing to accommodate subjects traditionally considered “serious” and “light.” Historically, as Bassnett documents, women’s epistolary travel accounts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries “gradually gave way to books targeted at a specific readership” and so “lines became blurred between the autobiographical, the anecdotal, and the ethnographic” (225, 239).

My dissertation seeks to build upon the work of Bassnett and others in order to assert that it is the autobiographical properties of women’s travel writing, manifest in complex processes by which the “I” narrativizes mobile experience, that enable it to transcend boundaries of both gender and genre.11 Lawrence summarizes:

11 As Siegel asserts, factors of gender and genre are essential to studies of women’s travel writing because of the way it draws from “feminine” genres such as the sentimental and because of the way that
In making the reading and writing of culture their central concern, travel narratives allow for a demystification of both cultural and literary conventions for representing the self and the other. Transferred to a new semiotic network, the traveler is a sign to be deciphered and a reader and writer of signs. One could say that the semiotic stakes are raised by travel and travel writings, for the transfer of meaning across cultural and often national boundaries means that what might be regarded as a “natural” construction of subjectivity and objectivity in a domestic setting is now staged in the mode of self-conscious confrontation and interrogations of cultural convention. (26)

Lawrence’s notion here of “staging,” as it suggests the strategies by which the woman writer positions herself in other cultures and in the text of her narrative, resonates with my definition of performativity for this project (as stated in Part I of this Introduction), a definition that bears further examination.

III. Autobiography and the Performing Body/Text

The concept of autobiography as performative is not new. In 1995, Sidonie Smith theorized the ways that “autobiographical storytelling” functions as “performativity” (110). Building on Judith Butler’s work in Gender Trouble (1990), Smith asserted that “the autobiographical subject finds him/herself on multiple stages simultaneously, called to heterogeneous recitations of identity. These multiple calls never align perfectly.

“nonfictional travel writing entails a considerable amount of [fictional] construction and performance” (6). Furthermore, Siegel suggests, if scholars are to argue that women’s travel and its writing differ fundamentally from men’s, sufficient attention must be devoted to the “level of [textual] production” and to “determinants such as race, class, location, historical circumstance, and power” (1, 9). Both Bassnett and Lawrence also speculate on the nature of the differences between men’s and women’s travel writing: Bassnett plainly asks, “do women’s travel accounts differ from those written by men in any fundamental way, and is there a way in which travel writing is inherently gendered?” (227). She notes that fem scholars such as Jane Robinson (Wayward Women, 1990) and Sara Mills, Discourses of Difference, 1993) have answered this question differently yet have both “emphasise[d] the wealth of detail in women’s travel accounts, along w/ a tendency to write about relationships” (227). Both Mills & Robinson, says Bassnett, contrast these trends w/ the more public discourse of male travelers (227). As for Lawrence—who determinedly resists “sweeping statements about generic differences” between travel writing by men and that by women—she suggests that, in general, “women writers of travel have tended to mistrust the rhetoric of mastery, conquest, and quest that has funded a good deal of male fictional and nonfictional travel. . . [and in doing so ultimately] emphasiz[e] the way gender infects the mistrust of quests and destinations” (Lawrence 20). This skepticism, Lawrence continues, enables the trope of travel to provide “a particularly fertile imaginative field for narrative representations of women’s historical and personal agency” (20).
Rather, they create spaces or gaps, ruptures, [and] unstable boundaries” (110). Smith’s discussion of autobiographical identity in terms of its “unstable boundaries” correlates with notions of the instability and hybridity of autobiographical forms theorized by Laura Marcus and others (*Auto/biographical*, 7-8; “Theories” 13-14). More recently, in their 2004 collection, *Autobiography and Identity: Women, Theatre, and Performance*, Maggie B. Gale and Viv Gardner have added to Smith’s concept of performative autobiography, observing that

> it is telling that in both historical and literary studies the notion of performance and performativity is often used as a framing device in the process of foregrounding the mechanisms of autobiography, autobiographical analysis and identity formation. It is, however, only in recent years that the analysis of autobiography and the autobiographical self, especially in the context of performance, has produced publications which deal more specifically with theatre and the boundaries between gender, theatre and autobiographical form. (1)

Though only two of my project’s chapters (Kemble and Stein) deal overtly with the subject of theatre, in general, my dissertation uses the concept of performativity as a means through which to study the theoretical workings of seemingly “staged” (to return to Lawrence’s term), nation-specific audience-aware narrative strategies. The specific way in which performativity functions—and its relation to notions of celebrity, cultural authority, theatricality, dramatics, and the scenic—differs from chapter to chapter and is based largely on a combination of factors. Primarily, I use each text’s socio-historical context—supplemented by author biography—to read and interpret audience-aware narrative strategies (i.e., I view Kemble’s theatrical background as inextricably related to her perception of master/slave roles, just as I deem Stein’s interests in playwriting as central to her audience-aware meditation on national identity). In sum, my interest in performance has much to do with the ways that generic choice and narrative hybridity are
aimed at nation-specific audiences; i.e., my use of the notion of performance is linked to my project’s grounding in narrative theory.

Before explaining precisely how my combination of performance and narrative theories offers a fresh approach to readings of women’s autobiographical narratives, it is necessary first to map out the field of criticism that addresses women’s autobiographical texts originating on both sides of the Atlantic. Because much feminist autobiography theory arose from theoretical developments in American literary feminism over the past twenty or so years, the bulk of critical attention to women’s autobiographical narratives has been devoted to texts written by American women writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries\(^\text{12}\)—the latter of which often engage textually with the very theories used to critically approach them. Estelle Jelinek set the stage for the neglect of British women writers’ autobiographical narratives when, in 1986, she published *The Tradition of Women’s Autobiography from Antiquity to the Present*, two-thirds of which is devoted to American texts and only one-third to British ones. To date, the work of leading scholars in the field (such as Sidonie Smith, for instance) tends to focus more on American women’s narratives than on those by British women. Consider, for instance, Jennifer Bernhardt Steadman’s new book, *Traveling Economies: American Women’s Travel Writing* (Ohio State UP, 2007), which smartly recovers the work of marginal nineteenth-century black and white American women travel writers. To my knowledge, no similar book exists that treats British women travelers.

\(^{12}\) It is worth noting, too, that significant scholarship on eighteenth-century British women’s autobiographical narratives exists (much of which was initiated by Felicity Nussbaum), having risen out of poststructural feminist thought. Such scholarship serves my project well in providing a reference point for charting the developments in British women’s self-writing forms as they transformed from primarily spiritual and conversion narratives into scandalous memoirs, confessionals, domestic memoirs, and, ultimately, political treatises that prioritize cultural critique over self-revelation.
Thus, while moderate scholarly treatment of nineteenth- and twentieth-century British women’s autobiography (travel and non-travel narratives) does exist, its primary focus lies on the seminal *Autobiographies* of Martineau, Margaret Oliphant, and Virginia Woolf, or on the narratives of British women traveling to colonial states. Moreover, a text such as Linda Peterson’s *Traditions of Victorian Women’s Autobiography: The Poetics and Politics of Life Writing* (1999), though it offers a series of helpful, insightful readings (including assessments of both Martineau’s and Oliphant’s autobiographies), does not address woman’s travelogue as an important kind of Victorian autobiography. Those studies that do address Victorian and/or Modern women’s travelogues (see Frawley, Harper, Mills, and Pratt) often do so through the lens of colonial or postcolonial theory, which is quite useful but nonetheless distinctly different from the way my project grounds its analysis in feminist autobiography and narrative theories.

According to Peterson, a primary characteristic of Victorian women’s life-writing—one that, I argue, aligns it with Modernist women’s life-writing—is its interest in revising women’s conventionally static subjectivity so as to posit the possibility of a multiplicity of selves (42).¹³ This revised subjectivity, argues Peterson, relates directly to the onset of modernity and historical change that gradually “opened up [for Victorian women] the possibility of complex identities and multifaceted self-representations” that could no longer be narrated through established forms such as the spiritual / conversion narrative or the confessional memoir (42). Valerie Sanders agrees, noting that Victorian women autobiographers “often prefer to refract a splintered self-image through several

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¹³ Predating the narratives surveyed in this study, the self-narratives of eighteenth-century women were concerned with constructing for the first time a public, female gendered subjectivity that was static, as stasis symbolized consistent moral character (Nussbaum, “Politics” 152, Spacks 315).
media at once: the quoted letter or diary, the autobiographical narrative, and the novel, in which they may play a transvestite role. In this way, they appear to dilute the egotistical impact of their writing, taking, wherever possible, the most indirect paths towards themselves” (Sanders, Private 166-67). This process of “splintering,” in my view, bears strong resemblance to the fractured, unstable “I” that, according to Shari Benstock, is “nowhere more apparent” than in women’s writing of the modernist period (“Authorizing” 21). Describing how the advent of modernism unsettles the subject that “had heretofore stood at the center of narrative discourse,” Benstock explains how, working within the symbolic system of language that both constructs and is constructed by them, modern women writers of autobiography experience “a questioning of the Symbolic law” and finally face “the need to reconceptualize form itself” (19-21). It follows that in the twentieth century, the works of modern women writers like Stein and Warner underscore the complications of self-narrating processes by unsettling traditional notions of how a self/subject is represented textually and culturally.

Indeed, the self-narratives of Martineau, Kemble, Stein, and Warner experiment with textual strategies—particularly, with narrative hybridity—in ways that render them valuable, in Marcus’s terms, to discussions of “such topics as subject/object, self and identity, private and public, fact and fiction” (L. Marcus, “Theories” 13). According to Marcus, properties of generic hybridity warrant that autobiography in general—and the texts treated here in particular, I would argue—play[s] a central role in discussions of a perceived crisis of nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century culture, marked by such notions as alienation, reification, the decline of community and the rise of mass society. Autobiography appears in part as a microcosmic version of many of these concerns, serving to articulate them, and, for some critics, to offer at least a partial solution. (13-14)
Such cultural concerns are articulated in the content and form of the texts studied here and figure centrally in these texts’ hybrid manipulations of the following autobiographical subgenres: journal, travel narrative, folklore, sentimental novel, letter, diary, memoir, short story, and journalistic editorial.

My attention to these cross-genre properties suggests how my project helps fill several gaps in current studies of women’s autobiographical narratives: first, it offers much-needed attention to the critically understudied autobiographical works by nineteenth- and twentieth-century-British women writers. In so doing, the project satisfies a need in feminist autobiography scholarship—a need identified by Smith and Watson some ten years ago that has still not sufficiently been met—for a narratological approach to autobiography that examines “the telling of a life” as “a semiotic encoding and a transaction between writer and readers,” with attention to “the textual features that distinguish autobiography from the novel or other forms of nonfiction” (38). In addition to this need for attention to textual features of self-narrative, Smith and Watson point out that “the relationship of national identity formation and autobiographical narrative deserves sustained examination” (38). “Readings of women’s autobiographical texts,” they argue, “need to attend to the complex ways in which narrators engage myths of national identity and represent themselves as national and/or unnational subjects” (38).

By juxtaposing the transatlantic self-narrative of the now-canonical American writer, Stein (whose *AABT* may indeed be the most critically lauded work in studies of women’s autobiographical writing), against the understudied autobiographies of marginal

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14 According to Anna Linzie, whose recent book, *The True Story of Alice B. Toklas: A Study of Three Autobiographies* (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 2006) devotes much-needed attention to Toklas’s life and work, *AABT* “has been analyzed extensively in literary critical debates ever since it was published” and has
nineteenth- and twentieth-century British women writers, my dissertation probes the complicated relationships between narrative self-construction and national identity in ways that help fill multiple gaps in contemporary studies of women’s autobiography.

Moreover, though Smith and Watson argue that in the field of feminist autobiography studies, “issues of performativity [e.g., current critical interest in voice and/or body] now obscure issues of narratology” (38), I maintain conversely that issues of performativity clarify—or, at least, help unpack—autobiographical narrative strategies by illuminating the ways that a self’s voice and body (physical and textual) are textually constructed and rhetorically directed toward nation-specific audiences. According to Barthes, narrative is not mimetic; its function is not to represent but to constitute an enigmatic spectacle (124). Hayden White agrees and adds that, in the process of narrativizing history, a process engaged by all four women writers I am examining, form produces meaning. That is, because any given set of real events can be emplotted in a number of ways and can be told as a number of different stories, it is the choice of story type and its imposition on events that endow them with meaning in a way that is distinctly performative (W. Booth 136, White 44).

Alongside the concept of performativity is the narrative issue of plot, an issue which—ever-related to autobiography’s use of hybrid subgenres and its negotiation of truth and fiction—further illuminates the need for a critical approach that foregrounds the intersection between feminist autobiography and narrative theories and points to the usefulness of both in unpacking transatlantic narratives. Plot is particularly important to my project for the ways it functions to elucidate the narrative choices made by these

subsequently been “canonized as perhaps the most significant woman-authored autobiography of the twentieth century” (1-2).
Victorian and Modern women writers who, in processes of textualizing specific historical moments, find history to be complicated by the fluctuating boundaries between self and nation, movement and stasis. According to Peter Brooks, Enlightenment and Romantic thought stirred in Western societies an extraordinary need for plots—whether in fiction, social science, or philosophy—because history (and thus historical explanation) was gradually replacing theology as the key discourse through which to discuss any thought about human society (5-6). Brooks’s statement is in concert with White’s argument that the nineteenth century is the “classic age of historical narrative” because, White suggests, “the distinction between real and imaginary events that is basic to modern discussions of both history and fiction presupposes a notion of reality in which ‘the true’ is identified with ‘the real’ only insofar as it can be shown to possess the character of narrativity” (6).

A central element of this character is, of course, plot itself, which encompasses the design and intention of narrative and thus instills in audiences a desire for the end (Brooks 9-10, 104).

These narrative elements of design and desire are key to reading the works of Kemble, Martineau, Stein, and Warner because they help illuminate the ways in which transatlantic autobiographical texts negotiate the professed truth-telling properties of the “I” voice with what Patricia Meyer Spacks calls an ironic “authentication by fiction” (78). In processes of self-storying, she explains, women often declare the self’s reality and significance by heightening its experience via fiction, thus rendering the plot of the autobiographical narrative akin to that of a novel. Thus, drawing upon the aforementioned theoretical perspectives of Barthes, Brooks, and White (to name a few), and juxtaposing those perspectives against the feminist narratological works of critics
including Spacks, Lanser, Molly Hite, and Alison Booth, my study of how these women writers craft their narratives’ plots against nation-specific backdrops and toward nation-specific audiences yields a better understanding of the ways in which rhetorical properties function textually to enact cultural critiques.

To explore how such critiques work on the level of narrative, my project largely adopts the approach of close readings, beginning with Martineau. In Chapter 1, I look at Martineau’s Martineau’s *RWT* (1838)—a book whose anecdotal style is regularly contrasted with the masculine, scientific language of its author’s earlier text, *Society in America* (1837). I argue that *RWT* conflates masculine and feminine voices, drawing from genres of memoir, travelogue, fiction, and folklore alike in audience-aware ways that subversively challenge the “realities” of antebellum American culture and politics, effectively questioning New World history in-the-making. As I see it, the text’s innovative narrative strategies—including shifts in content and genre, and narrative constructions of Martineau as celebrity—perform cultural authority at the same time they collapse boundaries between “high” and “popular” culture, fact and fiction, masculine and feminine, self and nation. In sum, I argue that it is through the collaboration of these innovative narrative strategies that *RWT* fosters a transatlantic dialogue that not only shapes public knowledge by revising self- and national histories, but also defines and values public and private knowledge as elastic: capable of being molded through narrative structures.

In Chapter 2, I read Kemble’s *JRGP* (1863) with attention to the ways in which it unsettles traditional conceptions of American slavery by narrating marginal slave women’s stories. Specifically, I investigate the relationship among Kemble’s theatre
background, her narrative’s overt self-consciousness, and her repeatedly expressed desire to achieve truth-telling. I look at the ways in which she uses a framework of performance to narrate the realities of antebellum slavery—e.g., by depicting master/slave roles as culturally scripted—and I seek to reconcile this performative framework with her generic choice of the intimate, though unsent, letter. In conclusion, I suggest that *JRGP*—in its attempt to balance Kemble’s discomfort as spectator of slaves’ culturally-prescribed performances with her identity as player of the white supremacy role—validates slave women’s stories and, subsequently, challenges the reigning cultural narrative of antebellum American slavery.

Chapter 3 examines Stein’s *EA* (1937) in the context of the author’s 1930s interest in playwriting, with attention to the ways in which the text’s foregrounding of narrative movement becomes a vehicle for an audience-aware exploration of the personal and national identities of selves-in-transit. Studying how Stein’s theories of playwriting and narration intersect with trends in modernist autobiography of the thirties, I focus on how the text’s coalescing of autobiographical subgenres of the travel narrative, memoir, and diary—juxtaposed against Stein & Toklas’s travel through geographical space—not only informs Stein’s ongoing constructions of self-as-celebrity, but also invites an ongoing dialogue with the reader over issues of national identity. In sum, I argue that, in the wake of transatlantic celebrity brought about by the commercial success of her *AABB* (1932), Stein’s *EA* exhibits a motion-filled, hybrid form that enacts a re-valuing of readerly perspective that is absent from much of her earlier work.

Finally, in Chapter 4, I look at Warner’s *SOC* in order to unpack the innovative ways in which it capitalizes on the form of American journalism to critique the
foundations of her native British culture. In particular, I investigate how Warner uses the “scenic” narrative method as a performative means of invoking and vividly representing memories tailored for a specifically American audience. With attention to the ways in which Warner establishes narrative authority by negotiating “high” and “low” culture, I explore the significance of SOC’s engagement with genres of journalism, the short story, feminist autobiography—and also with Steinian grammatical theory. I read select stories of SOC with attention to how they imaginatively filter self-experience through domestic objects to critique daily customs in ways that complicate national identity. In sum, I argue that SOC’s use of performative, “scenic” narrative methods—and its engagement with feminist and masculinist modernist techniques—fosters the creation of a hybridized autobiographical form that complicates categories of genre, gender, and nation and exemplifies the dialogue in high modernism between the “popular” and the “literary.”

In sum, these chapters, drawing as they do upon theories of narrative, travel writing, and feminist autobiography, seek to answer to the following three broad questions:

1. How is each text constructed for nation-specific audiences? i.e., what socio-political historical issues and literary conventions inform its composition and publication? How does audience-awareness inform processes of composition and publication?

2. How is self (on levels of body and text) constructed for in-text and out-of-text audiences? i.e., what factors influence self-representation? Do self and self-narrating processes become spectacle(s)? Are there narrative asides to readers? And who are the readers?
3. How is [indigenous and/or Other] culture constructed for readers, and how is this cultural representation balanced with self-representation?

What nation-specific systems, customs, and traditions are depicted and/or critiqued through the narrative, and how so?

In beginning to offer answers to these questions, I hope to show how the texts featured here offer useful contributions to our cultural understanding of (in Martineau’s terms) “what is exclusively American” or European in varying historical moments.
Chapter 1

Self-Narrating “what is exclusively American”: Celebrity and Hybridity in Martineau’s *Retrospect of Western Travel* (1838)

It’s all fiction, aesthetic bliss. And now that I’ve written it down, I can recall it as fond memory of truth.

Introduction

Harriet Martineau’s *Society in America* (published in 1837 in London and New York) and her *Retrospect of Western Travel* (published in 1838 in London and New York) engage distinctly different stylistic approaches to narrate what Mieke Bal would call the same “fabula” (9): Martineau’s two-year trip to America, spanning August 1834 through August 1836. As biographer Deborah Logan asserts, readers on both sides of the Atlantic—even those who rejected Martineau’s social politics—“anticipated with great interest the publication of [these two] American travel books,” whose firsthand critiques of American economic and social practice stimulated audience response ranging from inspiration to downright anger (*Hour* 89). Martineau firmly declares nation-specific audience-awareness for both travel books in her preface to *RWT*: “It has been represented to me that, as my published-book [SIA] concerns the Americans at least as much as the

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15 According to Bal, a “fabula” is “a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors” in “real” (not textual) time in the physical universe. The events, actors, time and location of the fabula are then organized into a story (9).
English, there is room for another which shall supply to the English what the Americans do not want—a picture of the aspect of the country, and of its men and manners” (iii).\textsuperscript{16} The author also uses prefatory matter to distinguish between her books’ narrative aims: \textit{SIA}, she explains, is a sociological, ethnographic comparison of “the existing state of society in America with the principles on which it is professedly founded, thus testing Institutions, Morals, and Manners by an indisputable, instead of an arbitrary standard” (\textit{Society} viii);\textsuperscript{17} \textit{RWT}, conversely, was written only after she had been “strongly solicited” by publishers and the general public “to communicate more of [her] personal narrative, and of the lighter characteristics of men, and incidents of travel, than it suited [her] purpose to give in the other work” (\textit{RWT} iii, \textit{Autobiography} 2.101).\textsuperscript{18}

While critics spanning disciplines of sociology, history, politics and literature have consistently praised \textit{SIA} for its rigorous inquiry, sharp objectivity, and rational methodology (Frawley, “Harriet” 14-16; Logan, \textit{Writings} 24-25), \textit{RWT} is nearly always dismissed as the “less theoretical,” “more personal” rendering of Martineau’s trip (Roberts 51). For instance, Maria Frawley has argued that \textit{Retrospect} was written “only to satisfy the less serious-minded reading public” (“Harriet” 16). Logan agrees, stating

\textsuperscript{16} In her \textit{Autobiography}, Martineau admits that she was “infected” with “the American method of dissertation or preaching” and was “also full of Carlylism” when writing \textit{Society in America} (1.103). Such a combination, she continues, resulted in a book that, “though carefully true in its facts, had a strong leaning towards the American fashion of theorizing; and it was far more useful on the other side of the Atlantic than on this” (1.104). Although Martineau does not define the loaded phrase “American fashion of theorizing,” she returns to general questions of identifying and defining Americanness repeatedly in \textit{RWT}. For my analysis of Martineau’s commentary on “what is exclusively American” (\textit{RWT} 2.195), see Part 4 of this chapter.

\textsuperscript{17} The “indisputable … standard” to which Martineau refers here is America’s Constitution and, in particular, the principles spelled out in the Declaration of Independence. As I will discuss later in this chapter, Martineau’s analysis in \textit{SIA} of the gaps between American’s founding principles and its social realities (Roberts 27-29) is further developed in \textit{RWT}.

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{RWT}’s narrative purpose is corroborated by Martineau in a letter written to the Reverend William Ware on 14 July, 1837: “Every body has been asking me to write another book on America, containing more personal narrative, sketches of scenery, eminent persons &c” (Sanders, \textit{Letters} 46).
that *SIA* was “better suited to an American audience” whereas *RWT* was well-suited to British readers “interested more in entertainment than in analyses” (*Hour* 79).

Though Frawley’s and Logan’s comments suggest that *RWT* foregrounds entertainment to the near-exclusion of analysis, I argue the opposite: I find that the narrative merging of entertainment with analyses in *RWT* makes the text accessible to audiences on both sides of the divide between “high-culture” (intellectual) and middle class (popular) readership that was only beginning to develop in Victorian culture (Easley, *First-Person* 178). In so dismissing *RWT* as insignificant, I maintain, Frawley and others overlook the ways in which the text’s seemingly “lighter” qualities (*RWT* vi) may be revalued for the way they complicate categories of genre and gender. Indeed, *RWT* is “lighter” than its predecessor in two significant ways: it measures only half the size of the three-volume *SIA*, and it lacks the heavy-handed “rhetoric of science”—to borrow Frawley’s phrase (“Harriet” 16)—that characterizes the first text. In the place of such masculine, scientific language, however, we find in *RWT* a “lighter,” albeit more complicated form—one that conflates masculine and feminine voices and draws from genres of memoir, travelogue, fiction, and folklore alike, exhibiting a keen sense of audience-awareness to meet its goal of shaping transatlantic public knowledge about life in antebellum America.

It is no coincidence that Martineau’s audience-aware, cross-genre experimentation in *RWT* occurs in the late 1830s, the decade that marks the author’s rise to fame as an important voice in public discourse. The onset of transatlantic celebrity

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19 Alexis Easley’s very useful book, *First-Person Anonymous: Women Writers and Victorian Print Media, 1830-70*, addresses the complex issue of narrative authority in the works of women writing anonymously for the Victorian periodical press. Though her work focuses on journalism and so makes no mention of *RWT*, Easley’s discussion of Martineau as transitional figure in Victorian culture is quite useful to my argument here. See Part IV of this chapter for more information.
Martineau experiences in the mid-30s, following her highly successful publication of *Illustrations of Political Economy* in 1832-34, occurs in tandem with the author’s interest in shaping public knowledge. In the case of the travel books, of course, this knowledge concerns life in America, for, as Martineau writes in her 1837 preface to *SIA*, “Communicat[ing] what I have observed in my travels [is essential if] men . . . [are to] arrive at a knowledge of each other” (vii). By the time she writes *RWT* the following year, admittedly focusing it on “personal narrative,” her work has clearly established a firm link between self-writing and public knowledge.

This important link between self-writing and public knowledge is forged, I argue, through Martineau’s engagement with notions of performance on levels of body and text. Specifically, the act of traveling to a society in which she is by nature the “other” sets the stage on which the autobiographer becomes a kind of cultural performer, narratively reenacting American events and traditions while relying on the authority of her well-established fame and her eyewitness account to gain access to public discourse. With keen awareness of and rhetorical direction toward the transatlantic public eye, Martineau’s self-narrative reenactment negotiates the fine line between truth and fiction in ways that subversively challenge the “realities” of antebellum American culture and politics, effectively questioning New World history in-the-making. Subsequently, we see in *RWT* Martineau’s recurring narration of herself as arbitrator of public knowledge (1.145, 2.69), an identity that informs much of her autobiographical canon—including the posthumously published *Autobiography* (1877), which, as Valerie Pichanick explains, is written “not in the spirit of self-exploration but rather of public explanation” (285).
It is this presence of “public explanation”—precisely, Martineau’s constant awareness of and narrative tailoring to her public—in which I am primarily interested. Although the *Autobiography* and the majority of Martineau’s social and political commentaries have been cogently explored by scholars including Logan and Deirdre David, the existing scholarship on the American travel writings in general and on *RWT* in particular lacks an investigation of the way fame functions at the level of narrative to aid the author in influencing public knowledge—for, as David has pointed out, Martineau is “first, last, and always a writer” (‘George’ 88, 93). Accordingly, this chapter reads select passages of *RWT* as a means of exploring relationships among issues of celebrity, narrative strategy, and public discourse: Part I provides a brief summary of Martineau’s rise to fame and situates *RWT* in literary history and genre, emphasizing how the text complicates relationships between categories of Romanticism and Victorianism, autobiography, travelogue, and the novel. Parts II, III, and IV unpack the layers of bodily and textual performance in *RWT*, focusing on ways in which the text’s hybrid narrative strategies—namely, fictional style (discussed in Part II); shifts in content, form, and voice (Part III); and use of folklore and intertextuality (Part IV)—perform cultural authority at the same time they collapse boundaries between “high” and “popular” culture, fact and fiction, masculine and feminine, self and nation. In sum, I argue that it is through the collaboration of these innovative narrative strategies that *RWT* fosters a transatlantic dialogue that not only shapes public knowledge by revising self- and national histories, but also defines and values public and private knowledge as elastic: capable of being molded through narrative structures.
I. Narrative “correctness” and “the liberty of fiction”:

Locating RWT in Literary History and Genre

Before we can understand the workings of celebrity on the level of narrative, we must first examine Martineau’s rise to fame in the transitional decade of the 1830s. Critics have long hailed Martineau for her accomplishments as “popularizer and prophet” (David, “‘George” 90; Logan, Hour 9), as that multidisciplinary mistress of the Victorian Age whose copious written achievements spanning fields of journalism, sociology, history, science, religion, philosophy, and literature have recently caused critics to credit her with “feminis[ing] the function of sage—that peculiarly Victorian public figure normally associated with long beards,” “irascible temperament” (Sanders, “Harriet” 333), 20 and, I would add, nonfiction prose literary genre. 21 Yet, the sage figure fashioned by Martineau is one whose primary concern lies in the communicative capabilities of her prose. After all, her early success with the IPE series had taught her the importance of accessible narrative style: amidst the reigning public discursive voices of J.S. Mill, Thomas Carlyle, and John Ruskin, she created a series of twenty-four short tales designed, as Valerie Sanders puts it, to “teach the basics of economic theory through practical, fictional application to different kinds of community” (332). As a result, the work was extremely well-received by an audience ranging in class status from members of Parliament to factory workers. Whereas Mill’s Principles of Political Economy (1848) sold only three thousand copies within four years of its initial publication, Martineau’s

20 Sanders borrows the concept of Martineau as “feminised sage” from a paper delivered by Nicholas Shrimpton at the James Martineau Centenary conference in 2000.

21 In so associating the Victorian sage figure primarily with nonfiction prose, I am in no way trying to minimize the importance of an imaginative text such as Carlyle’s Sartor Resartus; rather, I am merely suggesting that the bulk of “sage” output falls into the nonfiction prose genre: Consider Mill’s Principles of Political Economy (1848); On Liberty (1859); and The Subjection of Women (1869), and Carlyle’s “Signs of the Times” (1829) and Past and Present (1843).
*IPE* sold ten thousand copies each month in 1834 (Salerno 37), rendering her work for the decade outsold only by that of Dickens (Orazem 21).\(^2\) It was clear that she had succeeded where others had not in reaching both intellectuals and middle-class voters.

In spite of her unquestionable success, however, many critics have argued that Martineau’s popularity—that is, her ability to make “complex ideas accessible and theoretical ideas simple and concrete” (Salerno 37)—is as valuable to her career as it is problematic. Fame is valuable in that it lends Martineau the financial means and public exposure required to explore the great controversies of her era across a variety of generic forms (Sanders, “Harriet” 334); but it is problematic, as David points out, in that it casts her in a supporting role to the leading male actors of Victorian discourse—such as Mill, Carlyle, and Ruskin—who are most often credited with creating or discovering the social theories to which Martineau devotes much of her writings (*Intellectual* 28). Across the critical history of Martineau’s work, scholars repeatedly praise her ability to popularize the reigning social and political theories of her day at the same time that they lament her overall lack of originality (Salerno 37-38; Peterson, “Authorship” 337).

Such critical discussion of Martineau’s originality—or the lack thereof—resonates with the author’s own repeated interest in the issue throughout her career. In particular, Martineau exhibits a keen interest in the question of originality in her critically understudied, yet significant chapter of *RWT* titled “Originals,” which falls near the end of the text’s second volume, and which I discuss at greater length in Part IV of this chapter. In sum, the “Originals” chapter seeks to distinguish between “original” New and

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\(^2\) In the *Autobiography*, Martineau describes a conversation she had with J.S. Mill about the success of her *IPE*. She addresses the reader: “By the way, [Mr. James Mill] made the frankest possible acknowledgement of his mistake in saying . . . that political economy could not be conveyed in fiction, and that the public would not receive it in any but the didactic form” (2.1). This comment testifies to Martineau’s pronounced awareness of the relationship between politics, fiction, and public reception.
Old World literary traditions while exploring the link between self- and (trans)national histories.\(^{23}\) Certainly, in \textit{RWT}, narrative deliberation on originals functions as a vehicle for Martineau’s critique of American tradition, and not as an endorsement of her own original creative power; for, as she later explains in her self-written obituary, published in the \textit{London Daily News} on 29 June 1876, “Her original power was nothing more than was due to earnestness and intellectual clearance within a certain range. With small imaginative and suggestive powers, and therefore nothing approaching genius, she could clearly see what she did see, and give clear expression to what she had to say” (qtd. in \textit{Autobiography} xvii). In an effort to redeem the author from this minimizing, self-dismissal of genius, Linda Peterson has convincingly argued that Martineau’s lack of originality is actually quite innovative in that it redefines authorship “away from Romantic conceptions of originality, genius, and inspiration and towards a new Victorian understanding of authorship as engagement with . . . ‘the market’” (“Authorship” 337).\(^{24}\)

While I acknowledge Peterson’s claim that Martineau’s authorship moves away from the concept of Romantic genius and toward that of Victorian market-awareness, I would suggest that Martineau’s location in literary history merits further examination. Specifically, I am interested in how the author’s early nineteenth-century birth date and relatively long life (1802-1876) complicate her status as Victorian writer by locating her in a liminal space on the continuum of Enlightenment thought, Romanticism, and Victorianism. For instance, though she was not reared exclusively in any particular

\(^{23}\) I do not mean to suggest that Martineau’s \textit{RWT} communicates an entire self-history (as her \textit{Autobiography} does); rather, I mean that the text explores the relationship between British self-experience and American (Other) culture and politics in a specific historical moment, which, in this case, is 1834-35. I discuss the ways these self- and (trans)national-histories are crafted and interweaved in Parts II-IV of this chapter.

\(^{24}\) Peterson’s argument focuses almost exclusively on Martineau’s serial publications of the 1820s and so does not acknowledge the treatment of originals in \textit{RWT}. 
school of thought, Martineau was well-acquainted with the theories of Locke, Rousseau, and Bentham by age sixteen and later drew from these theories, consistently interweaving them with personal experience, in writing her fictional and autobiographical texts, including *RW* (Pichanick 11-14). While her social philosophy has been described as “difficult to categorize because her ideas changed considerably over time” (Salerno 37), her career-long zeal for order and progress characterizes much of the form and content of her work and thus locates it in the tradition of Enlightenment thought (2). At the same time, however, Martineau’s work is immersed in Romanticism: the 1832-34 serial publication of her seminal *IPE*, which makes her an “overnight sensation” (Sanders, “Harriet” 332), spans the very years representing the transition between Romantic and Victorian literary periods. Following *IPE*, accordingly, Martineau’s work of the late 1830s clearly reflects this transition, highlighting some of the key issues characterizing the literary styles of both ages.

In both *SIA* and *RW*, for example, we clearly see a mingling of Romantic and Victorian content and form. In terms of content, Martineau’s *SIA* endorses a Shelleyan link between legislation and literature (*SIA* 3.205-06), just as her *RW* participates in Wordsworthian meditations on Romantic questions of nature and the imagination (1.22-23, 1.28-29, 1.93-96). Yet, both travel texts address Victorian social and political issues—including the widening gap between upper and lower classes, woman’s place in the domestic realm, differences between city and country life, and the presence of slavery in antebellum America (*SIA*, 3.28-53, 1.260-71, 3.105-50, 2.312-50; *RW* 1.139-42, 1.205-40, 2.159, 2.192). In terms of form, Martineau finds in the popular genre of travelogue a fluid space for working out tensions not only between New and Old World
traditions, but also between Romantic and Victorian values: thus, her narrative style in *RWT* periodically exhibits the introspective turn that characterizes so much of Romantic literature (1.96-99) at the same time that it adopts a market-aware engagement with genres of domestic fiction and utilitarian, nonfiction essay, each of which becomes important to Victorians in the late 1830s and onward (1.143-52, 2.128-43). This coexistence of Romantic and Victorian styles demonstrates a marked tension between subjective and objective “I”-narration that raises the following important genre-related question: how does the autobiographical travel text balance self-construction with cultural observation?

The answer to this question, which drives much of my textual analyses in this chapter, lies in Martineau’s awareness of the relationship between her celebrity status, narrative form, and the rapidly growing mass reading public of the mid-nineteenth century. That is, Martineau’s construction of self-as-celebrity in *RWT* builds narrative authority just as the text’s cross-generic form ensures the wide-ranging reception of its cultural commentary. This audience-reception factor is crucial because, as James Treadwell points out in his recent book, *Autobiographical Writing and British Literature, 1783-1834* (2005), autobiography of the 1830s must “negotiate the arena of publication” because it “always describes both a state of a particular text and a relationship between that text and the literary public sphere” (107, ix, my ital.). Treadwell’s framework provides a useful means for assessing *RWT*, since the “state” of the text is grounded in a combination of what Martineau calls “personal narrative” [self-construction] and “incidents of travel” [cultural observation], both of which are directed primarily toward a nation-specific British audience (Martineau, *RWT* iii). Moreover, the text is published
during a time in which the sheer growth of the mass reading public renders the arena of reception—or, in Treadwell’s terms, the relationship between text and “literary public sphere”—a rather complicated concept. James Ryan best describes the British cultural moment in which *RWT* was published:

Major changes were well underway in the technologies of printing, publishing and engraving when Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837. These both fuelled and responded to an unprecedented expansion in the circulation and readership of books, newspapers, magazines and printed ephemera of all kinds. The expanding middle classes and urban dwellers had a new thirst for printed images and texts that reflected their interests and achievements . . . . As the century progressed, the growth of literacy, improvements in education, the increased provision of public libraries and museums, the expansion of science and growth of industry and commerce all fuelled demand for printed material with which to inform, educate, entertain and advertise to both specialist and mass audiences. (215)

These developments in British literary culture hold a transatlantic parallel in the “American Renaissance,” described by Anne C. Rose as a period of literary “flowering” and “exuberant creativity” during which antebellum Americans relished in the production and consumption of both fictional and nonfictional texts (xv, 87). As technology advanced, Rose explains, America’s capitalist culture saw an “exchange of unprecedented quantities of words” via textual publication and circulation among country people, workers, gentry, and reformers alike (87-89). Martineau capitalizes on this transatlantic cultural moment in *RWT*, manipulating both fictional and nonfictional strategies to infuse her travelogue with a combination of narrative styles that succeed in attracting elite and middle class, intellectual and popular readership.

We can more accurately assess Martineau’s success in the travelogue genre by briefly comparing and contrasting her *RWT* to works of other Victorian travel writers—namely, Frances Trollope and Charles Dickens. In 1834, while completing the final tale
in her Series (of *IPE*), Martineau was asked by a friend, Lord Henley, whether or not she planned on traveling in the near future. According to her *Autobiography*, Martineau answered that she had “not thought much about it,” but that she most likely would travel and “supposed it would be the usual route, to Switzerland and Italy” (1.270). Lord Henley begged that she not go over “that beaten track” and that she instead consider traveling to America. It was this conversation, writes Martineau, that “determined me to cross the Atlantic” (1.270). The author’s dialogue with Henley reflects the sentiments of British writers of the mid-1830s who had, as Logan and others have argued, become “jaded by the conventional European tour” and thus were turning their attention, “curiosity, and fascination” increasingly toward America’s New World democracy (Logan, *Writings* 3). Martineau was one such writer, as were Trollope and Dickens, both of whom published accounts of their mid-century American travels. Martineau’s account, however, differs from the others in several ways: First of all, it is plural, in that it is narrated initially in *SIA*, next in *RWT*, and finally (in abbreviated form) in the *Autobiography*. Secondly, as Caroline Roberts has pointed out, Martineau’s writing is the work of a traveler, not a tourist; that is, her work lacks the superficiality of the tourist-ridden work of Dickens and Trollope, both of whom, Roberts explains, provided “descriptions of American social life that only skimmed the surface” of society (50).

Such superficiality is evident not only in Trollope’s and Dickens’s descriptions of American citizens’ morals and manners but also in their texts’ apparently singular,

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25 Another important travel text of this age is Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America* (1835-40). For an in-depth sociological comparison of de Tocqueville’s and Martineau’s work, see Hill (59-74).

26 Dickens’s travel book *American Notes* might be called plural, too, since it was used as a sourcebook for his novel *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-44). While it is beyond the scope of this project, a comparative analysis of Dickens’s *American Notes* and *Martin Chuzzlewit* to Martineau’s *Society and Retrospect* would certainly yield useful information about the relationship between fiction and nonfiction in Victorian transatlantic travel writing.
overarching goal of criticizing American customs and institutions. Trollope’s *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832), for instance, focuses on day-to-day cultural characteristics in order to convince British readers of the negative social implications of American democracy and to reinforce the positive results of British government. Accordingly, she hopes that by providing “many interesting details on the influence which the political system of the country has produced on the principles, tastes, and manners, of its domestic life,” her text will “encourage her countrymen to hold fast by a constitution that ensures all the blessings which flow from established habits and solid principles” (v-vi). Similarly, Dickens’s *American Notes* (1842) seeks to convince American society of the dangerous flaws at its core and thus is prefaced with the following dedication: “I dedicate this book to those friends of mine in America, who, giving me a welcome I must ever gratefully and proudly remember left my judgment free; and who, loving their country, can bear the truth when it is told good humouredly, and in a kind spirit” (17). Martineau’s travel writings differ from both Trollope’s and Dickens’s in that their main goal is not to criticize American culture but to observe it and to interpret the “impressions” of observation (*RWT* 1.276) in a way that fosters the growth of transatlantic communication and cultural knowledge.

Martineau’s interest in communicating her “impressions” to wide-ranging audiences required that she use literary genres that would facilitate her narrative’s accessibility and underscore its usefulness to readers. After all, as Alexis Easley sums up, the doctrines of Carlyle, Thackeray, and other Victorian critical giants dictated that the author in post-Romantic literary culture was to be useful in order to counter what Victorians perceived as the “decadence” and “volatility” of the Romantic sensibility
(First-Person 9). Of course, the autobiographical form was a dangerous one in which to attempt usefulness, because its precarious balance between self-exploration and observation had gradually earned it the title of most egotistical literary genre of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Sanders, Private 10; Treadwell 64-68). Yet, the kind of cultural-observation-centered autobiography offered by travel writing is generally far less ego-laden and thus far more valuable, as Mary Schriber explains, by sheer merit of its lessons in history and in the progress of foreign nations (xxiv). Accordingly, throughout the nineteenth century, the travel account remained an “enormously popular genre” for which there existed a “healthy” transatlantic market (Schriber xxiv; Logan, Writings 3).

For Martineau, success in this market is informed by the triangular relationship among genres of travel writing, women’s autobiography, and fiction, a relationship whose conflicted critical history is manifest in the prose narrative literary tradition of the nineteenth century. In her study of the link between travel writing and European expansion, Mary Louise Pratt describes the autobiographical narrative as the central “canonical” and “authoritative” form available to women and points out that women writers historically used this form to construct a picture of self as protagonist of both travels and life (171). According to Kristi Siegel, travel writing is autobiography in compression: much like a memoir, a travel narrative represents a particular kind of autobiography that “typically records the experiences of a limited period of time and thus has a more intense focus” (7). Certainly, both travel writing and autobiography—in their claims to the “truth” of personal experience or eyewitness testimony—are genres traditionally associated with authenticity. Yet, Siegel and Karen Lawrence suggest that
travel narratives provide a lens for exploring the fine line between truth and fiction in self-writing (Siegel 6; Lawrence 23); and this suggestion clearly aligns their work with the feminist theories of Shari Benstock and Leigh Gilmore, both of which define autobiography as a fictional representation of a self mediated by discourse (Benstock, “Authorizing” 11, 16; Gilmore ix, 3, 16).

In the case of Martineau’s RWT, this relationship between narrative truth and fiction—specifically, domestic novel technique and also the folkloric practice of cultural storytelling—is directly related to audience reception. For, as Lawrence argues, “it is often the successful use of fictional techniques [in travel writing] that establishes ethnographic credibility” (23). Moreover, Siegel and Barbara Korte suggest, nonfictional travel writing necessarily involves “a considerable amount of construction and performance” (Siegel 6), as “the actual experience of a journey is reconstructed, and therefore fictionalized, in the moment of being told” and “the delay between [travel] experience and narration” is not always made clear to readers (Korte 11). Indeed, by the nineteenth century, the nebulous origins of many autobiographical texts had located the genre firmly in the margins of literary study (Treadwell 6-7). In the case of Martineau’s RWT, however, textual origins are laid out clearly for the reader, if only in the narrative’s final pages. At the end of volume two, the author justifies her decision to write RWT post-travels, in memoir form:

The profit of travel is realized at home in the solitude of the study. . . . While busy among strangers, one is carried away by sympathy and by prejudice from the point whence foreign society can be viewed with anything like impartiality; one cannot but hear the mutual criminations of parties; one cannot but be perplexed by the mutual misrepresentations of fellow-criticisms; one cannot but sympathize largely with all in turn, since there is a large mixture of truth in all views about which people are strongly persuaded. It is only after sitting down alone at home that the
traveler can separate the universal truth from the partial error with which he has sympathized, and can make some approximation towards assurance as to what he has learned and what he believes. (2.233-34)

Martineau’s interest here in the impossibility of impartial perception and in the relationship between representation and “the large mixture of truth” present in the key arguments of public discourse resonates with statements made in her Autobiography regarding the “author spectacles” through which she observed her American travels. She writes, “no traveler seeing things through author spectacles, can see them as they are; and it was not till I looked over my journal on my return that I decided to write ‘Society in America’” (Autobiography 2.3).

Such statements regarding truth in representation not only add to current intellectual debates over the value self-writing, but also clearly suggest an important link between human perception and the narration of private and public knowledge. Namely, when traveling—and, in Martineau’s case, keeping a “very ample journal” and maintaining a “perpetually increasing” correspondence (2.7)—one’s views are naturally prejudiced. Upon returning home, says Martineau, truth and error can be separated through the writing process, which involves self-reflection on observations recorded in private journals, diaries, etc. This self-reflection is, however, keenly audience-aware in a way that real-time journals are not. Accordingly, as the Personal Narratives Group has pointed out, in processes of distinguishing truth from error, “the ‘fundamental truths’ embedded and reflected in women’s experiences” and “revealed in their life stories are not a truth or the truth;” rather, truth “is a decidedly plural concept meant to encompass the multiplicity of ways in which a woman’s life story reveals and reflects important features of her conscious experience and social landscape, creating from both her
essential reality” (14). It makes sense then, that the “essential reality” of Martineau’s American travels is characterized not only by multiple narratives but also by hybridized narrative forms.

In Martineau’s historical moment, it was fiction, not nonfiction that served as the primary generic vehicle through which women writers knew and defined personal and national identities and experiences. With the social problem novel enabling the rise of the woman of letters around mid-nineteenth-century (Easley, First-Person 182), it was generally the women novelists of the nineteenth century (Eliot, the Brontes, etc.) and not the women nonfiction writers whose voices achieved narrative authority and public success (David, “George” 89). Consequently, the relationship between women’s travel writing, autobiography, and the novel in the nineteenth century fosters a hybrid form on which Martineau can capitalize: in the midst of the skyrocketing celebrity brought about by her IPE in the mid 1830s, she shrewdly manipulates the narrative space of masculine public discourse—a space mastered and proliferated by such nonfiction prose authorities as Mill and Carlyle—and infuses that space not only with calculated observation but also with sporadic bouts of sentimental, anecdotal fiction and folklore. It is this particular generic combination, the merging of masculine with feminine, public with private, and fiction with nonfiction, that best attracts, informs, and even entertains her mid-nineteenth century mass reading audience.

Before delving into a textual analysis of RWT, it is helpful to look briefly at the significant biographical events surrounding Martineau’s traveling and writing of the American tour, since these events reveal the author’s marked focus on questions of genre—particularly, on fiction (novel) and nonfiction (useful knowledge). Late in the
**summer of 1834, Martineau finished the manuscript for the “last number” in her Series of *IPE* and found herself “with one day left for packing and preparation [for the American voyage]” (Martineau, *Autobiography* 1.265). According to the *Autobiography*, Martineau was mulling over the “unprecedented” success of her fictional treatises when leaving for America, simply because her earnings had enabled her to “refresh [her]self by travel” (1.267-68). More important than these earnings, however, was the authority she had gained via fiction: “I got a hearing,—which was the thing I wanted. The barrier was down, and the course clear; and the money was a small matter in comparison” (1.267).  

Indeed, the barrier had come down, and the 1834 reading public clearly recognized Martineau’s voice as a valuable one. So three years later, when she published *SIA*—a book characterized by its utilitarian “rhetoric of science” (Frawley, “Harriet” 16)—its sales ranked “far beyond that of any other book” in its 1837 season, during which time Martineau found herself “set . . . quite on a pinnacle” (Sanders, *Letters* 46). Following *SIA*’s high-volume sales, Martineau’s publishers, Saunders & Otley, begged her to write a second text, which of course became *RWT* (46).

It was during the writing process of this second American book that Martineau’s thoughts began to fluctuate between the values of truth and fiction in literary studies and public discourse. In August 1837, for instance, during country outings and dinner parties hosted by the Ker family in Hertfordshire, Martineau regularly shared the company of

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27 Though she earned enough money through her writings to support both herself and her mother (by 1855, she had earned roughly ten thousand pounds altogether), Martineau’s earnings on both *IPE* and the American travel books were largely compromised by the lack of international copyright law, which would have secured for the author “the proceeds of the sale of [her] works in foreign countries” (Martineau, *Autobiography* 1.268; 2.100).
several members of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. Having completed the first volume of \textit{RWT}, she “relished the literary conversations at dinner” between herself and Charles Knight, printer for the Society (Arbuckle, “Feminine” 455). Following this period of utilitarian exchange, Martineau finished writing \textit{RWT} on 1 December 1837. That day, she wrote the following entry in her diary: “I care little about this book of mine. I have not done it carelessly. I believe it is true: but it will find no place in my mind and life; and I am glad it is done. Shall I despise myself hereafter for my expectations from my novel?” (qtd. in \textit{Autobiography} 2.107). Typically Martineau in its negative, casual dismissal of completed work, this autobiographical passage reveals that the author was plotting her novel \textit{Deerbrook} (published in 1838, the same year as \textit{RWT}) at the very same time that she was writing the final pages of \textit{RWT}. By 1838, Martineau had great expectations for the novel, she explains, for the following reason:

\begin{quote}
For many years now my writing had been almost entirely about fact:—facts of society and of individuals: and the constraint of the effort to be always correct, and to bear without solicitude the questioning of my correctness, had become burdensome. I felt myself in danger of losing nerve, and dreading criticism on the one hand, and of growing rigid and narrow about accuracy on the other. I longed inexpressibly for the liberty of fiction, while occasionally doubting whether I had the power to use that freedom as I could have done ten years before. (\textit{Autobiography} 2.108)
\end{quote}

This passage raises several issues that are important to my analysis of \textit{RWT}. First, it further illustrates my point that, by the time she wrote and published \textit{RWT} in 1837-38, Martineau’s thoughts were turning away from utilitarian, nonfiction discourse and toward “the liberty of fiction.” Second, the passage reveals that, in spite of her growing interest

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnote{28 Bellenden Ker, Martineau’s host, was a founding member of the Society (Arbuckle 455). According to Richard Altick, the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge aimed to make cheap, “useful” books readily available to the working class; however, its ultimate achievement was merely to publicize the idea of cheap, enlightening literature and, perhaps, as Carlyle complained, to contribute to the ‘Confusion of Useful Knowledge’ (see Altick, \textit{The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800-1900}. U of Chicago P, 1957. 269-71).}
\end{footnotesize}
in fiction, the author is still very clearly concerned with issues of narrative “correctness.” Accordingly, some eighteen years after publishing the American travel books, she uses her *Autobiography* to clarify their accuracy, testifying that, “by some lucky inspiration of prudence, I kept a lock-up copy of my American books, in which the name of every authority for every statement is noted in the margin” (2.8).  

This somewhat anxious pledge for correctness followed Martineau throughout her career and was most visible in the rigorous writing schedule she kept, a schedule that involved fifty-four years of composing from “strict outlines,” maintaining “firm schedules” (Peterson, “Masculine” 183), and “performing” virtually uninterrupted writing “almost every day from seven thirty in the morning until two in the afternoon” (David, “George” 93).

II. Authenticating the “fair anecdotal specimen”:

**Bodily and Textual Performance in RWT**

Martineau’s rigorous writing schedule underscores the ways in which both her body and text function on the level of ritual. For, as William Stowe has argued, processes of physical travel are like processes of writing in that both exemplify a kind of ritual behavior that, Stowe explains, is “conventionally structured,” bears cultural meaning” and “generates for its participants an experience considered more meaningful than the daily round of activities” (19-20). Travel, Stowe continues, is “if anything more convention-bound than either reading or writing, because it is a public and a physical act,

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29 Martineau also uses the *Autobiography* to disclose how her hired traveling companion, Ms. Louisa Jeffrey (Hill 65), not only “managed the business of travel” but also “was for ever on the watch to supply my want of ears,– and, I may add, my defects of memory” (*Autobiography* 2.5). If was with Jeffrey’s help that Martineau’s travel notebooks achieved accuracy in spite of their author’s partial deafness. Unfortunately, to the best of Hill’s knowledge, Martineau’s notebooks most likely have not survived: “she may have destroyed her notes to protect her informants,” he reasons, since she assured them that their identities would remain private. Because she asked correspondents to destroy her letters that they had retained, Hill continues, “it is consistent to assume that Martineau may have intentionally destroyed her field notes” (Hill 66).
governed by material possibilities and standards of outward behavior” (16). Drawing from sociologists Steven Lukes and Thorstein Veblen, Stowe establishes that ritual activity is “culturally prescribed” and thus represents a performative “acting out” of some cultural meaning (20).

In *RWT*, the “culturally prescribed” ritual activities of travel and writing are “acted out” in the text’s depiction of Americans’ responses to Martineau’s body and text; specifically, through its narrative construction of both self and writing as transatlantic spectacle, *RWT* performs for readers the important cultural meaning of authorial credibility. It is this credibility that makes possible Martineau’s escalation to the position of what Frawley calls “cultural spokesperson” (*Wider* 27), a connoisseur of both British and American society and politics. Furthermore, it is credibility that links Martineau’s body and text to the public gaze, as is evident in the following excerpt, extracted from a letter to Fanny Wedgwood in February of 1838: Martineau writes, “My book [*RWT*] thrives marvellously; . . . . This will bring me literary success—ie, staring and money, which I really think I don’t care for, for many minutes together” (*Arbuckle, Letters* 11). Though she makes this private admission of the discomfort brought about by “staring and money,” her public self-narrative, *RWT* (public in the sense that it is written with a keen sense of nation-specific audience-awareness), repeatedly engages the self-as-spectacle trope. In this way, *RWT* uses its author’s transatlantic cultural icon status as a vehicle for building narrative authority.

In the book’s opening pages, for instance, Martineau immediately delves into the narrative construction of self and text as spectacle, repeatedly describing how her literary success draws attention to herself and to the physical act of writing. When narrating her
mid-August, 1834, voyage to America, she describes how “the American passengers, all by this time good friends of mine” eagerly showed her “paragraphs in the [American] newspapers” delivered by an oncoming ship. These paragraphs of American journalism, Martineau explains, exhorted readers “not to chew tobacco or praise themselves in my presence, under penalty of being reported of in London for these national foibles” (*RWT* 1.34). Accompanying the passengers’ awe-struck approaches to Martineau is their determination to watch her write. Martineau explains:

> For some time I was baffled in my purpose of writing by the observation of persons who seemed not only entirely ignorant of the process of composition, but very anxious to learn it. Not only did the children from the steerage spy from behind chests and casks, and peep over my shoulder, but the inquirer about the whale [i.e., anonymous whale-watcher always on deck] was wont to place himself directly in front of me, with his arms akimbo, and his eyes fixed on the point of my pen. Somebody gave him a hint at last, and I was left in peace.

This passage, which strongly resembles the scene in Fanny Kemble’s *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838-1839* wherein the author describes how slaves watch her write (215-16), is important for two reasons: it depicts Martineau participating in the ritual that is writing and, in doing so, it reinforces her awareness of the wide range of spectators (ranging from “ignorant” persons to children) that compose her audience. Although Treadwell argues that such performative qualities of self-writing

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30 It is worth noting that the ship on which Martineau travels is a “packet-ship” whose primary purpose is to transport goods, passengers and, most importantly, mail (*RWT* 1.21); thus, even Martineau’s voyage itself has a clear association with text, since it makes possible the transatlantic dissemination of both public and private knowledge.

31 In general, Martineau was not a fan of American journalism, as is evident in the following quote: “Every man of feeling and taste recoils from wading through such a slough of rancour, folly, and falsehood as the American newspapers present” (*RWT* 1.40). The “national foibles” passage cited above is a clear invocation of Trollope’s *Domestic Manners*, which found much fault with American customs.

32 According to the *Autobiography* (2.6), the text Martineau is composing onboard the ship to America is *How to Observe Morals and Manners*, a fitting prelude to her travel journaling and eventual books, *SIA* and *RWT*. 
impede its documentary function (91), this is not at all the case in Martineau’s *RWT*.
Rather, it is the text’s performative qualities that create opportunities for building a kind of narrative authority that is market-aware and so experiments with literary conventions to meet the desires of popular and intellectual readership.

Such experiments abound in the two volumes of *RWT*, wherein depictions of Martineau’s rapidly developing transatlantic celebrity status often coincide with narrative turns to fiction. For instance, when narrating her travels through Southern cities, Martineau offers what she calls an “anecdotal specimen” (2.79, 2.82) that testifies to her fame in America by establishing her authority as fiction-writer and abolitionist. As she makes her way through Charleston intellectual circles, she recalls that “there was no little watchfulness . . . about my proceedings with regard to the negroes. I had not been in the city twenty-four hours before we were amused with ridiculous reports of my championship on behalf of the blacks; and, long after I had left the place, reported speeches of mine were in circulation” (1.226). To provide a clear “specimen” of the intercourse having occurred between herself and “every man, woman, or child” she met, Martineau offers the following novelistic dialogue between herself and an anonymous Charleston gentleman:

The first time I met an eminent Southern gentleman, a defender of slavery, he said to me (within the half hour), “I wish you would stay a year in this city. I wish you would stay ten years, and then you would change your opinions.”
“What opinions?”
“Your opinions on slavery.”
“What do you know of my opinions on slavery?”
“Oh, we know them well enough: we have all read ‘Demerara.’” (1.226)

In overtly presenting the political subject of slavery, this anecdotal passage clearly differs from the formerly cited “national foibles” example, wherein concerned American
passengers surround Martineau on shipboard to assure her of their non-tobacco-chewing, non-bragging ways. While the “national foibles” passage clearly illustrates how Martineau’s celebrity affects the American consciousness on the level of cultural habits, the above slavery passage demonstrates how her reputation has functioned politically—via the publication of abolitionist texts such as “Demerara”—to create “safe” and “unsafe” sides of the Atlantic (RWT 2.163). Here Martineau again performs audience-awareness, making clear to British readers that Americans—even Southern Americans who abhor her abolitionist stance—know and respect her as an authority figure whose “opinions,” fictional and otherwise, are well worth reading.

The weighty presence of such fictionalized passages in RWT suggests that, just as authority is narratively performed via celebrity, authenticity is textually performed via fiction. That is, the sporadic incorporation of anecdotal passages throughout RWT reinforces Peterson’s point that Martineau recognized the “power of fiction” as a mode of “professional writing” through which authors could “best have an effect on . . . readers” (“Authorship” 347). The author first discovered this effect upon successfully publishing her overtly didactic IPE (347); by the time she wrote RWT, however, her writing style had become less didactic and more reflective of a blending of historical fiction and domestic realism (Sanders, Reason xiv). Accordingly, we find in RWT a narrative that is markedly well-rounded in its constructions of the author-traveler as knowledgeable about America’s racial politics and its social circles. Note, for instance, the humorous-yet-political effect of the following novelistic passage, extracted from the

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33 Specifically, Peterson’s argument traces the influence of Sir Walter Scott on Martineau’s work of the 1820s and early 30s, focusing on Martineau’s essays, “The Characteristics of the Genius of Scott” and “The Achievement of the Genius of Scott,” both of which, Peterson suggests, inform Martineau’s didactic fiction style in IPE (345-47).
“Villages” chapter, in which Martineau travels throughout New England and speaks with its natives about “traditions of the horrors of the Indian wars” (2.79). According to Martineau, this “anecdote,” which links Native American spiritual conversion to domestic objects of fruit and cider, “is no unfair specimen of the way in which missionaries and their religion are primarily regarded by the savages to whom they are sent” (2.82). She narrates:

Mr. K., a missionary among a tribe of northern Indians, was wont to set some simple refreshment—fruit and cider—before his converts when they came from a distance to see him. An old man, who had no pretensions to being a Christian, desired much to be admitted to the refreshments, and proposed to some of his converted friends to accompany them on their next visit to the missionary. They told him he must be a Christian first. What was that? He must know all about the Bible. When the time came, he declared himself prepared, and undertook the journey with them. When arrived, he seated himself opposite the missionary, wrapped in his blanket, and looking exceedingly serious. In answer to an inquiry from the missionary, he rolled up his eyes, and solemnly uttered the following words, with a pause between each:

“Adam—Eve—Cain—Noah—Jeremiah—Beelzebub—Solomon—”
“What do you mean?” asked the missionary.
“Solomon—Beelzebub—Noah—”
“Stop, stop. What do you mean?”
“I mean—cider.”

This is one way in which an unintelligible religion is received by savages. (2.82)

Martineau’s critique of American methods of proselytizing Indians, a practice she describes as ongoing in the rustic, still-settling meadows surrounding Mount Holyoke and the territories bordering Lake Michigan (2.80-83), is textually located alongside frequent commentaries on the events occurring in America’s more cosmopolitan locales. In her “Cincinnati” chapter, for example, Martineau devotes the majority of paragraphs to the description of yet “another party,” cataloguing for readers the conversation of “the company” sitting “round the drawing-room” (2.50). Here she creates social caricatures of
individuals ranging from “the learned lawyer who talked . . . with a strong sense about everything but politics” to “the sentimental young widow, who instantly began talking to me of her dear Mr.—, and who would return to the subject as often as I led away from it” (2.50). In so narrating her participation in social circles, Martineau provides a glimpse into aristocratic parlor life that is not unlike that presented in Austen’s novels, of which Martineau was an ardent fan (David, Intellectual 77).34

By locating its narrator in the center of these parlor-room dialogues, RWT engages with the form and content of the Austenian fashion/society novel and domestic fiction at the same time that it critiques these genres—for, as the following novelistic passage suggests, Martineau was not interested in rewriting Trollope’s Domestic Manners of the Americans. When in “a large American city,” Martineau is approached by a publisher who asks if she has written a book about America; she responds that she has not and “did not know that [she] ever should have” (2.198). His response, “given with a patronizing air of suggestion, was, ‘Why, surely, madam, you need not be at a loss about that. You must have got incident plenty by this time; and then you can Trollopize a bit, and so make a readable book’” (2.198).35 Since Anthony Trollope was a young, unpublished lad at the time of Martineau’s American tour, the publisher’s advice to “Trollopize”

34 In Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy, David discusses in detail her own and other critics’ comparisons of Martineau to Austen. Such a comparison is important, David argues, because “Martineau implicitly models herself on Austen”—particularly by invoking the language of Pride and Prejudice in one of the opening chapters of Deerbrook (76-77). David concludes that “the complexities of Austen’s narrative skill remained beyond [Martineau’s] understanding or ability” and, furthermore, that “Austen’s precisely balanced prose was equally beyond her faculty” (77). While David and others have faulted Martineau’s novel-writing on technical grounds, Laura Callanan has offered a useful reading of The Hour and the Man that revalues the novel for its commentary on the complexities of Victorian race relations. See Callanan, “Race and the Politics of Interpretative Disruption in Harriet Martineau’s The Hour and the Man (1841)” in Women’s Writing 9.3 (2002): 413-31.

35 This incident is renarrated in similar language in the Autobiography, wherein the heretofore anonymous publisher is revealed by Martineau to be “Mr. Harper, the head of the redoubtable piratical publishing house in New York” (2.93-94).
necessarily refers to Mrs. Trollope’s (Anthony’s mother’s) book, widely known for its exaggeratedly critical treatment of the minutiae of daily American domestic life (Peck x-xii). In the context of *RWT*, we can define the term “Trollopize” in two ways: First, it contrasts Trollope’s extended critique of domestics with Martineau’s more well-rounded inquiry into domestics, politics, and (as I discuss in Part IV of this chapter) literary culture. Second, it contrasts Trollope’s carelessly exaggerated narrative with Martineau’s “desirableness,” while “writing [her] journal,” for “recording things precisely” (*RWT* 1.71)—a desire which, as I have argued, manifests itself in *RWT*’s performance of authenticity via fiction. Thus, what the patronizing publisher considers the “embellish[ment] of “incident” (2.198) is for Martineau the *authentication* of incident and, as such, participates in what Patricia Meyer Spacks calls “authentication by fiction”—which occurs when, in processes of self-storying, women declare the self’s reality and significance by heightening its experience via fiction and rendering the plot of the autobiographical narrative akin to that of a novel (*Imagining* 78). It is through this act of authentication that *RWT* uses celebrity and audience-awareness not only to build upon its author’s transatlantic status as fiction writer (of “Demerara” and other *Illustrations*, for instance), but also to establish her authority as a political figure.

The complicated narrative tension in *RWT* between fictional performance and political authority can be further unpacked through the autobiographical and narrative theories of Sidonie Smith and Mikhail Bakhtin, both of which make persuasive

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36 In his introduction to the 1901 edition of *Domestic Manners*, Harry Thurston Peck explains that “it has almost always been taken for granted that Mrs. Trollope’s deliberate purpose in writing her book was to vilify and caricature everything American” (xii). He continues, “Whatever she saw she judged, as most women do, from her own standing-point. If a thing was ugly in her eyes, it ought to be ugly to all eyes—and if ugly, it must be bad. What though people have plenty to eat and clothes to wear, if they put their feet upon the tables and do not reverence their betters? The Americans were to her rough, uncouth, and vulgar—and she told them so” (x).
arguments for the hybridity of their respective narrative forms. In theorizing women’s autobiography, Smith makes the compelling argument that, “whatever the occasion, the autobiographical speaker becomes a performative subject” (“Performativity” 108). An autobiographer’s audience, Smith explains, expects a certain kind of performativity with which it is comfortable; however, the development of audience-awareness in self-writing results in the subject’s “find[ing] him/herself on multiple stages simultaneously, called to heterogeneous recitations of identity . . . that never align perfectly” (110). Smith’s argument for heterogeneous narration in autobiography is not unlike Bakhtin’s idea of speech diversity in the novel. According to Bakhtin, the novel is “a supergenre that constantly experiments with new shapes in order to display the variety and immediacy of speech diversity;” it is a “consciously structured hybrid of language” that favors dialogue over monologue (qtd. in Holquist xxix). These theories are useful to a textual analysis of RWT in that they provide a way of examining the relationship between performance, audience-awareness, and hybrid narrative strategies.

III. “Mr. Madison’s…silk gown” and his “talk…of slavery”:

Hybrid Content and Form in RWT

If we read RWT through the lens of Smith’s notion of heterogeneous, audience-aware recitations of identity and Bakhtin’s theory of hybrid, dialogic language, we find that the narrative’s recurring practice of “authentication by fiction” is supplemented by substantial rhetorical shifts in content and form. In terms of chapter order, for instance, the lighthearted “Hot and Cold Weather” chapter, which offers casual, practical tips to British readers on gardening, breakfasting, and bathing in American climate (2.169-86), is immediately followed by the heavily philosophical “Originals” chapter, wherein
Martineau participates in the Romantic quandary over originary creative power in pondering the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson in particular and New and Old World literary tradition in general (2.186-220). Within chapters, self-narrated content often shifts from domestic to political, occasionally going so far as to merge subjects of fashion and slavery. For instance, when visiting the eighty-three-year old former president, “Mr. [James] Madison,” Martineau is as interested in his dress as she is in his opinions on slavery and, so, within a three-paragraph passage, spanning only two pages, she writes:

[Mr. Madison] was in his chair, with a pillow behind him, when I first saw him; his little person wrapped in a black silk gown; a warm gray and white cap upon his head, which his lady took care should always sit becomingly; and gray worsted gloves, his hands having been rheumatic. . . . Except that the face was smaller, and, of course, older, the likeness to the common engraving of him was perfect. He seemed not to have lost any teeth, and the form of the face was therefore preserved, without any striking marks of age. It was an uncommonly pleasant countenance. . . . He talked more on the subject of slavery than on any other, acknowledging, without limitation or hesitation, all the evils with which it has ever been charged. He told me that the black population in Virginia increases far faster than the white; and that the licentiousness only stops short of the destruction of the race; every slave girl being expected to be a mother by the time she is fifteen. He assumed from this, I could not make out why, that the negroes must go somewhere, and pointed out how the free states discourage the settlement of black; how Canada disagrees with them; how Hayti shuts them out; so that Africa is their only refuge. (1.190-91)

While this passage’s content contributes to its narrator’s “heterogeneous … identity” (Smith, “Performativity” 110) by constructing her as a kind of hybrid fashion-critic / political-interviewer, its form implies that the intended audience for RWT is neither gender- nor class-specific. Martineau’s language here, abruptly shifting as it does shifts from fashion to politics, clearly summarizes the main issues surrounding slavery in 1835 Virginia in a style likely to be both accessible and attractive to audiences including men and women, laypeople and intellectuals. In so doing, this passage exemplifies the way
RWT foregrounds and repeatedly acts out the important relationship among the content, form, and reception of self-narrative.

RWT’s performance of this autobiographical relationship—one that, according to Treadwell, functions as a “contract of literary sympathy” (155-58)—is consistently made visible for readers in passages treating the slavery issue. Martineau’s ethical pull at the reader does not elicit sympathy to the degree that Kemble’s does, as I will discuss in the next chapter; nonetheless, when narrating eyewitness experiences of slavery-in-action, RWT’s tone fluctuates chopply from professional to personal. Such choppiness performs “the debate between passion and reason” that Sanders deems central to Martineau’s fiction in particular and to nineteenth-century domestic fiction in general (Reason xiv).

In RWT, the passion/reason dichotomy abounds in Martineau’s narrative habit of repeatedly interrupting her determined efforts at truth in observation—efforts that similarly concern Kemble—with abrupt tonal shifts (1.140-42). These shifts establish a familiar relationship with readers, only to use that familiarity as a medium for her abolitionist platform (1.213, 1.239). Notice, for instance, the shift from formal to conversational language via the introduction of the familiar “you” in the following passage, one that parodies the domestic routine of American plantation life:

Our stationary rural life in the South was various and pleasant enough; all shaded with the presence of slavery, but without any other drawback.

37 For detailed introductions and analyses of Martineau’s multi-generic comments on slavery, see Deborah Logan, ed., Writings on Slavery and the Civil War (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois U P, 2002).

38 In her 1986 book, Reason Over Passion: Harriet Martineau and the Victorian Novel, Sanders discusses Martineau’s “innovatory, transitional importance in the development of the English novel” (xiii). Focusing on select tales of Illustrations, Deerbrook, and The Hour and the Man, Sanders crafts her argument around Louis Cazamian’s 1903 statement that the social-problem novel had existed before 1830 (in the work of William Godwin and Thomas Holcroft) and that the political economists—including Martineau—revitalized its form. Accordingly, Sanders argues that Martineau influences Victorian literary traditions via “experiments in fiction” (xii-xiv).
There is something in the make-shift, irregular mode of life which exists where there are slaves, that is amusing when the cause is forgotten.

The waking in the morning is accomplished by two or three black women staring at you from the bedposts. Then it is five minutes’ work to get them out of the room. Perhaps, before you are half dressed, you are summoned to breakfast. You look at your watch, and listen whether it has stopped, for it seems not to be seven o’clock yet. You hasten, however, and find your hostess making the coffee. . . . After breakfast a farmer in homespun—blue trousers and an orange-brown coat, or all over gray—comes to speak with your host. A drunken white has shot one of his negroes, and he fears no punishment can be obtained, because there were no witnesses of the deed but blacks. (1.214-18)

This passage is important for several reasons. First, its abrupt linguistic shift from past to present tense conveys a sense of immediacy to readers that is dialogic (in Bakhtin’s terms) and sentimental (or passionate, in Sanders’s terms) in that it asks for a reader response that is distinctly sympathetic. Second, the passage’s shift in tone from analytical to personal (between the first and second paragraphs) is indicative not only of the text’s participation in a novelistic tradition that is as domestic as it is political, but also of the ways that rational, analytical narrative modes alone cannot sufficiently—or accurately—represent an irrational cultural system such as slavery. In its depiction of slavery as a scripted spectacle, this passage evidences the important concept that any text seeking to narrativize a mode of life that is, in Martineau’s words, “makeshift” and “irregular,” must itself be makeshift and irregular in tone and form.

RWT’s fusion of analytical and familiar styles occurs not only in passages depicting the spectacle of slavery, but also in frequent reminders of Martineau’s celebrity status across disciplines of literature, economics, and politics; in doing so, I argue, the travelogue negotiates a careful balance between cultural observation and self-construction. Alternating with passages in which she draws “you,” the reader, into her web of anecdotal cultural specimens, Martineau again fluctuates between professional
and sentimental tones in repeatedly reminding British readers of the American public’s reception of—and awe toward—her presence: In narrating the Charleston visit, she writes, “I believe there was scarcely a morning of our stay when some pretty present [ranging from hyacinths, to marmalade, to a feather fan, to indigenous literary productions] did not arrive before I rose” (1.226). When narrating her time in Washington, she interrupts character sketches of “General [Andrew] Jackson,” “Mr. [Daniel] Webster,” and Chief Justice Marshall with a note of how she was repeatedly “plagued” by natives’ “requests for autographs” (1.154). Finally, when narrating her experience at the Harvard Commencement ceremony of 1835, during which she sits among “almost every eminent person in the state, for official rank or scientific and literary accomplishment,” she recalls, “I was presented with flowers as usual, and was favoured with some delightful introductions” (2.103).

These examples (and copious others) collectively point toward the ways that Martineau textually fashions a kind of celebrity that is neither fully masculine nor fully feminine, since it is as closely associated with multiple Great White Men as it is with “pretty presents” and “flowers.” Such passages not only testify to Martineau’s merging of domestic and professional, personal and political, but also plainly reveal why she was fondly referred to by contemporaries as “the little deaf woman from Norwich” (qtd. in Logan, Writings xi) at the same time she was labeled a woman “of stupendous egotism” (qtd. in Sanders, Private 8). Despite the difficulties brought about by her “manysidedness” (Sanders, “Harriet” 335), however, Martineau’s narrative collapsing in RWT of the well-established and somewhat oppositional categories of masculine and feminine, personal and political reveals an engagement with narrative as a tool of resistance: RWT’s
depiction of self as celebrity resists gender, just as the narrative’s form and content resist definitive categorization in genre or even literary age.

The presence of this resistance on levels of content and form, I argue, underscores the complicated ways in which *RWT* uses narrative hybridity to endorse the fluidity of both private and public knowledge—specifically, the knowledge of self- and national-histories. In making this statement, I wish to link my argument in Part I of this chapter—concerning *RWT*’s liminal location in literary history—to the book’s treatment of history as a fluid concept that is contained by and made changeable through the space of narrative. My reading of *RWT* ‘s engagement with history is informed by the work of Hayden White and Peter Brooks, both of whom have argued that the narrative tradition of the nineteenth century conceived of history as a kind of knowledge that is “inherently narrative,” understandable “only by way of sequence, in a temporal unfolding” (Brooks xii). If, as White suggests, “‘realism’ in the nineteenth-century novel and ‘objectivity’ in the nineteenth-century historiography developed side by side” (37), then we can assume that the nineteenth-century reading public gleaned history lessons—whether or not these lessons were actively sought—from narrative structures spanning fictional, nonfictional, travel narrative, and novel genres alike. The main problem with this, Martineau laments, is that nineteenth-century readers generally experienced a lack of “good books.”

As she complained in a letter to Wedgwood in December 1839, “the [London] Literary Society buys only one copy of each new book, and it is weeks, or more likely months, before we can get any. The circulating libraries have nothing but bad novels, and the book-societies

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39 Books and authors now considered “good” (i.e., canonical) by the academy were consistently deemed lousy by Martineau, who, Sanders explains, “was awed by no one” (*Letters* xiii). Specifically, Martineau is known for having referred to J.S. Mill as an “enormously overrated man” with a “womanish temperament” and to the Brontes as “that awful family” (qtd. in Sanders, *Letters* xiii).
are in the hands of evangelical folk, who admit only religious biographies &c. I must see if I cannot open some channel. . .” (Arbuckle, *Letters* 24). And open a channel she did.

Through hybrid narrative experimentation in *RWT* in particular, and generic diversity of her canon in general, Martineau successfully “opens [a] channel” that reaches audiences of multiple classes and nations and spans the course of her nearly fifty-year-long career (1820-69), a career that parallels major historical developments in modernity. As discussed in earlier parts of this chapter, narrative experimentation in *RWT* collapses boundaries between genres in a way that meets diverse needs of the mass nineteenth-century reading audience. Such generic collapsing validates Peterson’s argument that, in the Victorian Age, a primary characteristic of women’s life-writing is a resistance to established literary forms, since those forms could not fully express what Peterson calls “the possibility of complex identities and multifaceted self-representations” created for women by the onset of modernity (*Traditions* 42). Indeed, the onset of modernity—accompanied as it was by the rise of the British Empire—complicated established definitions of Old World cultural traditions by introducing New World comparison. In 1830s antebellum America, specifically, the need to create a national literature and a distinctly American arts, as Rose points out, is impeded by Americans’ inattention to the influence of Enlightenment rationalism and imitation of British models in effort for artistic acceptance (92). It makes sense, then, that Martineau’s *RWT* engages hybrid forms not only to explore its author’s personal interactions with American culture, but also to investigate how the country’s political history and traditions—literary and otherwise—distinguish it from its Mother Country.

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Accordingly, the final section of this chapter will discuss how narrative strategies of hybridity function alongside those of cultural storytelling and intertextuality not only to collapse established cultural categories, but also to suggest the ways in which narrative offers potential for revising private and public knowledge.

IV. “Such stories…ought not to be forgotten”:

History, Tradition, and the Revision of Public and Private Knowledge

Embracing narrative as a space for fostering transatlantic communication and cultural change, *RWT* performs an investigation and critique of American histories and traditions by invoking layered narrative forms—specifically, by incorporating folkloric cultural stories and intertextual references. Such layering techniques create a fluid, moving text that resonates with Peterson’s statement that self-discovery and narration in the mid-to-late nineteenth century required making sense of one’s world in the ever-shifting context of modernity (*Traditions* 42). Moreover, in *RWT*, the travel factor clearly complicates self-discovery by introducing physical mobility, which infuses the text with complicated narrative tensions. Lawrence summarizes the implicit tensions of travel writing:

> Travel literature (by men & women) explores not only potential freedoms but also cultural constraints; it provides a kind of imaginative resistance to its own plot. In flights of the imagination, as well as on the road, home is, of course, never totally left behind . . . . That is why travel literature explores a tension between the thrilling possibilities of the unknown and the weight of the familiar, between a desire for escape and a sense that one can never be outside a binding cultural network. (19)

Martineau’s British perception of America’s “binding cultural network” is present in both *SIA* and *RWT* but is depicted quite differently from one text to the next.\(^{41}\) *SIA*’s

\(^{41}\) Much like Martineau’s, Gertrude Stein’s perception of these “binding cultural networks” abounds in her discussions of American travels in *Everybody’s Autobiography*. For more information—and further in-
methodological goal of comparing American institutions to their founding principles (SIA viii)—a goal that involves regular consultation of formative government documents such as the Constitution and Declaration of Independence—results in the textual representation of America as a culture bound by its founding systems of democracy. Conversely, RWT’s goal of providing “a picture. . . appended. . . to an inquiry into the theory and practice of society [i.e., SIA]” (RWT iii), results in a hybrid narrative exploration of American “cultural networks” through “anecdotal specimens,” folkloric stories, and intertextuality.

With an eye toward the ways that stories “bind” communities together, linking processes of self-defining to nation-defining, RWT presents to readers a concept of history that is rooted in storytelling and is nonlinear, plural and, thus, changeable. This concept is initially evident in the text’s structure: although RWT begins on or around 8 August 1834, the narrative does not always proceed in linear fashion but instead alternates between topical, geographical, and chronological organization (1.138, 2.57, 2.117, 2.128, 2.220). While Martineau obviously predates second-wave feminism, her narrative’s organization can be read through the lens of Julia Kristeva’s concept of “women’s time.” As RWT adopts an associative mode of self- and nation-narration, cyclically telling and retelling stories related to particular geographic locales, it undertakes what Kristeva would call “a veritable exploration of the dynamic of signs”—in this case, the signs are the tales of America’s oral tradition—and thus rejects as an depth comparisons of Martineau and Stein—see the end of this section and also Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

42 This organization is in direct contrast to that of Society in America, which is neatly organized in topical fashion (e.g., Politics, Parties, Government, Morals, Economy, etc.) for the purpose of clarity in analysis. It is also the opposite of the Autobiography, which embraces linearity in its organization into “Periods” of life—e.g., Period 1 covers the author’s experience from her earliest memory through age eight; Period 2, through age seventeen, etc., etc.
overarching organizing principle “the…limitations imposed by this [masculine, linear] history’s time” (864-65). Instead, in depicting 1834-35 antebellum America, the text draws from an amalgam of cultural stories which, grounded in the performative genre of oral tradition, are thus both timeless and plural, existing as they do in multiple versions.

Moreover, the plurality of cultural storying in RWT is complicated by the multiple versions of its author’s self-storying, for Martineau’s autobiographical narrative of her American tour is grounded in the spaces of travel journals and memory. As she mentions in RWT, first impressions are more valuable when recalled against the backdrop of matured opinions (1.76). Accordingly, her 1837 writing of RWT relies on the 1834-35 travel journals, whose concept of American history is rooted largely in oral tradition, and whose contents Martineau had already consulted once, in 1836, to write SIA. This cyclical revision, drawing as it does from spaces of memory and self-narrative alike, evidences the importance of the “dynamic of signs” (Kristeva 865)—in this case, the fluidity of stories—in both self- and national histories. In RWT, the presence of revision endorses a concept of history that is less concerned with events occurring in a specific place and time than it is with the capability of “fair anecdotal specimens,” passed on from generation to generation, to evidence an ongoing cultural condition.

As is the case in RWT’s formal shifts in tone, the plurality of history via stories is often present in passages narrating and renarrating the cultural condition of slavery. “The traveler in America,” Martineau explains, “hears on every hand of the fondness of slaves for slavery. . . . he is met with anecdotes of slaves who have been offered their freedom, and prefer remaining in bondage” (RWT 1.242); yet, she continues, the “stories” surrounding the cultural myth of the happy slave “are as various as the characters and
fortunes of the heroes of them” (1.243). Using the language of fiction to emphasize this variety, Martineau narrates these “stories” and their “characters” in a way that underscores the multi-sidedness of American slavery. For example, she incorporates the triumphant tale of female slave Elizabeth Freeman—known as Mum Bett—a tale originating partly from “anecdotes….related in a Lyceum lecture delivered at Stockbridge in 1831” and partly from a conversation between Martineau and the Sedgwicks (1.246). As the story goes, Mum Bett suffered injury as a young slave in Massachusetts when, attempting to protect her sister, she was struck on the arm by the lady of the mansion with a heated kitchen shovel. Furious at such harsh treatment, Mum Bett left the house and refused to return. Martineau explains:

[Mum Bett] called on Mr. Sedgwick, and asked him if she could not claim her liberty under the law. He inquired what could put such an idea into her head. She replied that the “Bill o’ Rights” said that all were born free and equal, and that, as she was not a dumb beast, she was certainly one of the nation. When afterward asked how she learned the doctrine and facts on which she proceeded, she replied, “by keeping’ still and mindin’ things.” It was a favourite doctrine of hers, that people might learn by keeping still and minding things. But what did she mean, she was asked, by keeping still and minding things? Why, for instance, when she was waiting at table, she heard gentlemen talking over the Bill of Rights and the new constitutions of Massachusetts; and in all they said she never heard but that all people were born free and equal, and she thought long about it, and resolved she would try whether she did not come in among them. (1.246)

Mum Bett’s narrative ends on a happy note, for, as Martineau explains, Bett’s case was tried and her freedom was granted by Massachusetts courts (1.246-7).

43 While Martineau was well-received by writer Catharine Maria Sedgwick and her family while in America (initially due to their shared Unitarian principles), Martineau’s references to the Sedgwick family in the above-cited passage are primarily to Catharine’s father, Supreme Court Judge Theodore Sedgwick, who died in 1812, some 35 years before Martineau’s trip to America. For further information on the relationship between Martineau and the Sedgwicks, see Bertha-Monica Stearns, “Miss Sedgwick Observes Harriet Martineau” in New England Quarterly 7. 3 (1934), 533-541.
This story of Bett’s victory, however, is juxtaposed in *RWT* against far murkier and darker slave tales and, as such, endorses the pedagogical value of oral tradition by suggesting its potential for complicating one-sided versions of history. Through her ritual habit of “listen[ing] to the stories told by ladies to each other in their morning calls” (1.271), Martineau comes to define fugitive slave stories as “the finest harvest-field of romance perhaps in the world,” located in “the frontier between the United States and Canada” (1.251). According to the author, “the student of human nature could not do better than take up his abode there, and hear what fugitives and their friends have to tell” (1.251). Subsequently, after discussing the oral tradition of fugitive slave stories, she incorporates into two chapters (disparately titled “Restless Slaves” and “New Orleans”) a catalogue of countless slave stories, most of which are infused with fictional dialogue. There is the story related by A., the white trader, of a most valuable slave—“a gigantic mulatto” fettered by “an iron band round his waist and round each wrist… [both] connected by chains.” With A.’s help, the mulatto resourcefully frees himself from his chains and takes to the “the river…about a mile off” (1.253). Then there is the story of the legendary French Creole, Madam Lalaurie, whose violently cruel behaviors toward her “little negro girl” and other slaves help unveil the common misperception of slaveholders’ universal kindnesses (1.264-66).

Martineau confesses to having heard the story of Madame Lalaurie multiple times and in multiple versions (1.267). The plurality of Lalaurie’s story leads her to make the following statement about the link between slavery and the art of American storytelling:

“I heard so many anecdotes—somewhat of the character of the following—that I began to suspect that one use of slaves is to furnish topics for the amusement of their owners.”
Sam was sadly apt to get drunk, and had been often reproved by his master on that account. One day his master found him intoxicated, and cried out, “What, drunk again, Sam? I scolded you for being drunk last night, and here you are drunk again.” “No, massa, same drunk, massa; same drunk.” (1.271)

This passage’s exploitative use of the happy slave as an object of comedic material raises an important question about the issue of authority in cultural storytelling: if, as I have previously argued, the cultural stories of American oral tradition directly inform that country’s history, then who, precisely, bears the authoritative position of storyteller? According to the above passage, slaves do not—for, in most cases, they are mere “topics” of entertainment. Moreover, Martineau later explains, slavery itself is an institution constructed upon the principle of “imperial tyrants’” monopolizing imaginative power (2.17). As I argued in Part II of this chapter, however, Martineau does bear storytelling authority by merit of her transatlantic market success and general recognition as credible cultural spokesperson. Consequently, she uses her cultural authority in these passages to narrate multiple versions of American slavery, a task that Kemble undertakes in the years following Martineau’s return to England.

Martineau’s use of cultural stories to narrate multiple versions of American political history is not unlike her incorporation of intertextuality in the form of allusion to assess the development of New World literary tradition, an assessment that makes clear her narrative’s liminal location between Old and New World styles. As previously argued, Martineau’s narration of America across realms of domestics and politics is neither fully Romantic nor Victorian, feminine nor masculine. Furthermore, RWT’s

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44 Mum Bett’s story complicates Martineau’s point here, since Bett actively seeks and achieves justice, thus freeing herself from the “imaginative tyrant” who had enslaved and abused her. Yet, Bett’s story is made a public examplar of early American civil rights activism only through the voice of her attorney, Theodore Sedgwick, who argued the case in Massachusetts courts. Thus, as in all slave tales, narrative authority in Bett’s story is problematic.
recurring practice of narrative allusion suggests that the text is neither British nor American. Though her body performs Britishness—since her hard-earned celebrity and authority identify her as a British Victorian woman writer who “knew almost everyone of importance in the nineteenth century” (Sanders, Letters ix)—Martineau’s text consistently performs categorical resistance. It is far less identifiable by nation, seemingly suspended somewhere in the midst of its own transatlanticism.

Consider, for instance, how the following allusive passages in RWT cultivate a mingling of British and American literary traditions. In narrating her travels through Niagara (1.96-98), Martineau crafts “self-definition by recollection” (Hunter 189-90) via her ability to find in physical nature a Wordsworthian imaginative response to the world. Likewise, in social-criticism-grounded chapters such as “Signs of the Times in Massachusetts,” she mimics the powerful masculine voice of Carlyle, faulting the city of Boston for its “ignorance and unconcern” about “what was being done and suffered by other divisions of its members” (2.159).

Alongside these explicit allusions to nineteenth-century British masculinity, however, we find in RWT’s hybrid styles and layered narratives an implicit anticipation of modernist American women’s literary tradition: the sentimental tones Martineau employs in passages narrating eye-witness experience and cultural stories (discussed in Parts II and III of this chapter) point toward the anecdotal, folkloric, porch-talk sessions of Zora Neale Hurston’s Mules and Men (1935). Similarly, Martineau’s narrative strategy of surrounding and, sometimes, even displacing the self with as many accomplished males as possible—including political

\[45\text{In spite of her known friendship with Jane Carlyle, Martineau repeatedly offers scathing critiques of Thomas Carlyle, in one instance by describing “some weeping philosophers of the present day” who “are fond of complaining of the mercenary spirit of the age” but “overlook the lot of the helpless” (2.128).}\]
bigwigs like Henry Clay and Daniel Webster (1.173, 1.190)—anticipates Gertrude Stein’s narrative habit in the *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1932) of repeatedly locating herself in the company of white male intellectuals.

This connection between Martineau’s *RWT* and Stein’s *AABT* bears further consideration: whereas Stein blatantly adopts the voice of Alice Toklas to narrate her own self-history, Martineau inserts public and private texts of myriad male politicians and literary figures in a way that suggests the multiplicity of New World cultural history. In their shared interest in defining Americanness, then, both Stein and Martineau experiment with a kind of vocal displacement that complicates the typically monovocal narration of autobiography. In Martineau’s case, this displacement appears in often-lengthy passages representing intertextual dialogues that are often transatlantic in nature. In addition to adopting Carlylean tones (2.159), for instance, Martineau expresses interest in transatlantic patterns of influence among James Madison, Thomas Malthus, and William Godwin (1.193-94); and, most importantly, she narratively relinquishes her voice to documents including Thomas Jefferson’s last letters to Madison (1.198, 1.204), “Mr. Webster’s” closing argument in an 1830 murder trial (1.168-71) and, finally, Emerson’s pivotal lecture, “The American Scholar” (2.204-10).

Although Martineau’s narrative practice of intertextuality among her own self-narrative and those of Jefferson, Webster, and Emerson may seem at first to complicate the authority of her voice, it ultimately expands her work’s range not only in terms of audience reception but also in terms of subject matter (Easley, *First-Person* 8). This range is further broadened by the text’s participation in British masculine traditions of Wordsworth and Carlyle and its anticipation of American feminist traditions of Hurston.
and Stein. For, much like the work of Stein and Sylvia Townsend Warner, the ambiguous gender and tone of Martineau’s narrative strategies locates RWT in a liminal position between high and popular print culture.\textsuperscript{46} This position, according to Easley, “complicates notions of feminine writing and identity” and expands the possibilities for Victorian women writers, enabling them to “redefine themselves within and against the narrative and social conventions of their age” (\textit{First-Person} 184, “Authorship”).\textsuperscript{47}

For Martineau, processes of redefining the self are linked to those of defining America, since she admittedly seeks to define “what is exclusively American” (\textit{RWT} 2.195) while perceiving America through the lens of her Britishness. Though it ultimately explores potential answer(s) to this question via the text of Emerson’s “American Scholar” lecture, Martineau’s analysis of the New World in \textit{RWT} first studies the nation’s politicians, and then—much like Warner’s \textit{Scenes of Childhood} will later—reads its décor in order to create a national portrait. For example, Martineau seeks out those political figures who are “well known in England” (1.230), and then is regularly horrified by American (mis)perceptions of British monarchy.\textsuperscript{48} She recognizes how “the busts and prints” in Madison’s home “gave an English air to the dwelling, otherwise wholly Virginian” (1.195), just as she notices how Harvard University has comfortable

\textsuperscript{46} In her epilogue to \textit{First-Person Anonymous}, Easley offers the following dark, yet telling metaphor regarding Martineau’s post-mortem diagnosis: “The attempt to investigate the ‘real’ life of Martineau was also an attempt to singularize her identity—to finally know her and to mobilize her image in the service of two causes: the formation of the British feminist movement and the project of establishing the high-culture literary canon. By the end of the century, her image was marginalized and subsumed by both” (178).

\textsuperscript{47} Though Easley makes this argument in reference to Martineau and other Victorian women writers’ unsigned periodical articles, I find that it provides a useful way of approaching \textit{RWT}’s narrative styles.

\textsuperscript{48} Specifically, when in a hotel near Syracuse, New York, Martineau “found a Sabbath-school history of Lady Jane Grey,” which, she explains, was “compiled obviously for the purpose of prejudicing the reader’s mind against the Catholics. Among other wise things in it there was an explanation that the heroine was called ‘Lady’ because she was related to the king; and people are sometimes called so in England. A clear idea to give the American youth of our English peerage!” (1.86).

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furniture “of the English kind” (2.97). Despite these and other British-filtered readings of New World politicians and décor, Martineau closes her two-volume *RWT* with an extended deliberation over the definition of Americanness, a deliberation that originates in her promise to a friend from home who, Martineau explains, “desired me to bring her something, she did not care what, that should be exclusively American; something which could not be procurable anywhere else” (2.195).49 Though she mulls over the potentially “exclusive” Americanness of paintings in a Cincinnati museum (2.47-48) and of the gracefulness of American children (2.52), Martineau finds that “what is exclusively American” is essentially invisible and intangible—though it can, in fact, be at least partially gleaned from Emerson’s “American Scholar” essay in particular and his person in general.

Located in the lengthy and philosophical “Originals” chapter near the end of *RWT*’s second volume, Emerson’s essay, which describes the formative influences upon and subsequent duties of the mid-nineteenth-century American scholar, acts as a springboard for Martineau’s discussion of the problematic relationship between the “original” American imagination and the restraints of Old World imitation. Prior to her narrative incorporation of Emerson’s lecture, she writes:

> In England we have confessors to tastes and pursuits, and martyrs to passions and vices, which arise out of a highly artificial state of society. In England we have a smaller proportion of grave, innocent, professional buffoons; but in America there are few or no fashionable ingrained profligates, few or no misers. . . . Many English persons have made up their minds that there is very little originality in America, except in regions where such men as David Crockett grow up. . . . It is certain that there is an intense curiosity in Americans about English oddities; and . . .

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49 Unfortunately, as this passage continues, it takes on an atypical, Trollopian negativity. Accordingly, the first “exclusively American” thing that Martineau “longed to pack . . . up, and direct [to her friend]…per next packet from New-York” is a “drab,” “dogmatic,” negro-hating, tobacco-chewing New York judge (2.195).
it is also true that the fickleness and impressibleness of the Americans (particularly of the New-Englanders) about systems of science, philosophy, and morals, exceed anything ever seen or heard of in the sober old country; but all this can prove only that the nation and its large divisions are not original in character, and not that individuals of that character are wanting. (2.186-88)\(^{50}\)

This passage is important to Martineau’s deliberation over “originals” for several reasons. First, in stating that the grounds of English society are “highly artificial,” it suggests that American imitators—literary and otherwise—are in fact mimicking British artifice, not British originality. Second, it implies that, while issues of national “character” contribute to and are, at times, even inseparable from the character of individual citizens, national trends, alone, do not determine individual identities. Thus, despite America’s general lack of originality during the time she wrote *RWT* in 1837-38, Martineau continues, there remains a chance that “the restraints of imitation will be burst through” by innovative individuals (2.189).

In terms of American narrative tradition, this breakthrough is certain because, as Barthes has argued, the “origin” of a given narrative lies in “the need to vary and transcend the first form given man, namely repetition” (124). When the narrative system “vanquishes repetition,” says Barthes, it can embrace “the model of the process of becoming” (124).\(^{51}\) In *RWT*, we see this “process of becoming” alive in Martineau’s analyses of the works and person of “remarkable” Emerson, a man who “is a scholar without being narrow, bookish, and prone to occupy himself only with other men’s thoughts” (*RWT* 2.204). Emerson, she maintains, is an example of “what the highest

\(^{50}\) It is worth noting here that Martineau never claimed to be original; in fact, as previously mentioned, her self-written obituary suggests that she believed herself to be the exact opposite.

\(^{51}\) Along similar theoretical lines, Judith Butler has argued not for the “vanquishing” of repetition in narrative structures but for the subversive practice of repetition with a difference—that is, for a kind of repetition that might create spaces for questioning conventional cultural practices (in Butler’s case, practices of gender identity). See Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 41-44.
grace of domestic manners may be” and is a man who remains “apart from the passions of all controversies” while staying “ever present with their principles, declaring himself and taking his stand, while appearing to be incapable of contempt of persons” (2.204-05). By suggesting that these qualities rank Emerson in the first “class of originals” (2.210), Martineau crafts a definition of American originality that is less about politics or literature than it is about personal character.

Martineau’s intertextual dialogue with Emerson provides me with a point of entry into the ongoing debate among Martineau scholars over whether or not the author’s participation in masculine discourse renders her voice empowered or weakened by complicity (Roberts 14-15; Logan, Hour 34; David, “George” 89-92). While I agree to some extent with David’s assertion that Martineau does, at times, adopt the position of “auxiliary” to male public discourse (Intellectual 31), I nonetheless argue that, in the case of RWT, the author’s practice of dialoguing with texts and voices of Great White Men is validated as a productive narrative strategy for two reasons: first, it broadens the subject matter of her text, provoking thoughtful questions on subjects of national originality, imitation, and influence in literary history. Second, it is balanced by Martineau’s frequent narrative practice of intertextually referencing her own texts—a practice that constitutes yet another textual performance of narrative authority. Though countless critics have discussed the implications of the author’s complicity with patriarchal discourses, none has examined how her practice of self-referencing in RWT problematizes that complicity.

Throughout RWT’s two volumes, readers encounter some sixteen references to Martineau’s SIA via a combination of footnotes and parenthetical forms. This practice,
when considered alongside Martineau’s recurring “authentication by fiction,” destabilizes traditional ways of knowing and defining national and personal identity, insofar as it suggests the multiplicity of knowledge and the definitions that compose it. If, as Brooks and White have argued, history is “real” only insofar as it can be narrated (Brooks 5-6; White 44), then Martineau’s decision to complicate her narrative by introducing gaps and, essentially, by requiring readers to seek out multiple versions of the same “story”—as she was forced to do with the previously discussed cultural story of Madame Lalaurie—points toward her embracing the fluidity and, perhaps, even the elasticity of knowledge.

The kinds of knowledge at stake in Martineau’s intertextual self-dialogue range from the exclusively domestic to the controversially political—both of which encompass key issues the author deems crucial to her role as public discursive authority. Consider the following passage from *RWT*, depicting travel through New York in October of 1834:

> We left Syracuse at Dawn; and this was the morning when, finding ourselves too hungry to proceed...we were treated to that abundant breakfast, so characteristically served, which I have described in my other book.* No one likes to breakfast twice over in description any more than in reality; and I therefore say nothing about [it] here. (1.86) [*footnote to SIA 3.87]*

While this reference to a tasty breakfast may at first seem insignificant, its discussion of the gap between narrative “description” and “reality,” and its valuing Americans’ daily domestic routine, underscores Martineau’s interest in the relationships between text, experience, writer, and reader.

In addition to this domestic example, *RWT* contains fifteen references to *SIA* that, though disparate in subject matter, often function to illustrate the ways that Martineau’s political concerns are inseparable from her moral ones. For instance, when describing the
horrors of her visit to the Auburn prison in New York, Martineau refers readers to chapter four of *SIA*, wherein she convincingly discusses why the system of solitary confinement witnessed at a Philadelphia penitentiary is the best that has yet been adopted (1.123) and why her British readers deserve to learn the falseness of the “high reputation” Auburn holds “among us” (1.123). If the reader turns to chapter four of *SIA*, as instructed, she/he finds a heated political commentary upon the American justice system, a commentary introduced by an anecdotal explanation of the origins of Martineau’s transatlantic travels. She writes:

> The idea of traveling in America was first suggested to me by a philanthropist’s saying to me, “Whatever else may be true about the Americans, it is certain that they have got at principles of justice and mercy in the treatment of the least happy classes of society which we may be glad to learn from them. I wish you would go and see what they are.” I did so; and the results of my investigation have not been reserved for this short chapter, but are spread over the whole of my book. (*SIA* 3.179-80)

This reference accomplishes several tasks: it attests to the traditional goal of travel writing—to learn of and then narratively disclose the “truth” of foreign cultures. In doing so, the reference reinforces the ethical value of travel narrative in processes of complicating “all that is said in England” about American institutions, customs, and daily life (*RWT* 1.140). Yet, in the act of crafting multiple versions of “whatever . . . may be true about the Americans” and, in this case, in the process of deciding whether or not the country’s system of institutionalized punishment is indeed founded on its democratic principles, Martineau’s intertextual dialogue seems to build authorial credibility at the same time that it clouds the accuracy of the subject being narrated. In other words, by nature of their reference to her critically acclaimed initial travel book, Martineau’s recurring footnotes constantly remind readers of her authoritative voice. Yet, at the same

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52 The presence of such anecdotal passages in *SIA* is minimal compared to that of *RWT*. 

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time, in their reliance on layered narratives for “truth,” the footnotes ultimately weave a narrative—or series of narratives—whose meaning is fluid.

Martineau’s engagement with intertextual dialogue and other innovative narrative techniques illustrates the important ways that narratives of self-representation, when grounded in physical movement and juxtaposed against foreign backgrounds, become an exploration of the relationship between literary form and historical change. The transatlantic historical change at stake during the years of *RWT*’s composition and publication involves such pivotal issues as the formation of American literary tradition, the development of the feminist movement in Britain and America, and the beginnings of the distinction between “high” and “popular” literary culture in Britain and America (Easley, *First-Person* 178), to name a few, all of which collectively enact a dialogue with Martineau’s interpretive framework as British female traveler in America. The result of this dialogue is made visible in *RWT* via the author’s experience with an amalgam of self- and cultural stories, stories that stay with readers because they are grounded in a combination of the lasting, yet collapsible categories of oral tradition, fiction, nonfiction, passion, and reason.

It is *RWT*’s resistance to limited grouping by such categories that made the text valuable to nineteenth-century male and female, British and American readers of fiction, nonfiction, domestics, and politics. More importantly, it is this resistance that makes the text useful to contemporary discussions of British and American literary traditions, as it provides a means for understanding the ways in which nineteenth-century transatlantic narratives both underscore and complicate important links between Old and New World culture. In Martineau’s case, experimentation with multiple generic forms is made
visible in the way she reads and rereads America through the reading, rereading, and revising of her personal experience there. This experimentation then culminates in 1855, when she introduces yet another (even more truncated) version of the American travels in her *Autobiography* (1.264-70; 2.1-11, 90-110).\(^53\) Such revisions—in their negotiation of boundaries between writer and reader, fiction and nonfiction, nation and self—succeed in making valuable contributions to public knowledge that shape transatlantic discourses of literature, domesticity, and politics alike and, in the process, encourage readers to examine more closely the relationship between narrative and reality.

\[^{53}\text{In its emphasis on the importance of Martineau’s revisionary tactics, my argument differs from those of many scholars who fault Martineau for her reluctance to revise any work once completed. Pichanick summarizes: “The haste with which Martineau arrived at her conclusions and rushed them into print backed her into many an untenable corner, marred her composition, and flawed her judgment. Once having made up her mind on a subject she refused to listen to countervailing arguments, and she yielded her position only when the decision to do so was her own. In conversation she would sometimes put down her ear trumpet when the discussion began to move in an unwelcome direction” (241).}\]^{
Chapter 2

“These disgusting stories…are the life itself here”: Transatlantic Politics and Performativity in Fanny Kemble’s *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838-1839* (1863)

*You always have in your writing the resistance outside of you and inside of you, a shadow upon you, and the thing which you must express.*

--Gertrude Stein, "How Writing is Written" (1935)

**Introduction**

When residing on her husband’s plantation in the American South, Fanny Kemble regularly reflected on her surroundings, especially, on the ever-present slaves who become such an intimate part of her life: “The same scene,” she wrote, “was acted over and over again . . . a crowd clustered around the house door, to whom I and my babies were produced, and with every individual of whom we had to shake hands some half a dozen times. They brought us up presents…” (*JRGP* 90). Kemble’s description of this “scene,” in words laden with performative rhetoric, typifies the narrative tone of her *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838-1839*, wherein the actress-author’s theatre background—specifically, her familiarity with relationships among audiences and performers, spectators and spectacles—is the primary medium through which narrated experience is filtered. The journal consists of some thirty-one personal letters addressed to Kemble’s American friend, Elizabeth Dwight Sedgwick.
Collectively, these letters chronicle the abolitionist Kemble’s visit to her husband’s southern plantations, located on islands off the coast of Georgia, during the months of December through April, 1838-39. Despite her recurring narrative designation of “my dear Elizabeth” as the intended reader of her autobiographical “scene(s)” (J.A. Scott xlii; Kemble, JRGP 93), Kemble never sends the letters to Elizabeth. She instead collects and publishes them as a single volume some twenty-three years after initially writing them.

Published in London in May of 1863 and released in New York two months later, Kemble’s JRGP critiques slavery in the antebellum American South while conveying its author’s discomfort over her involuntary complicity in it, via marriage to American slaveholder Pierce Butler. In so doing, the journal offers what critics have called a valuable and intentional “contribution to antislavery propaganda” that “stands out among such works” (Venet 89). Kemble’s intentions in composing the journal have been variously debated by critics (Blainey 157, Wright 72).

According to Wendy Hamand Kemble, whom biographer John A. Scott describes as “a woman of antislavery sympathies with an unquestioning faith in the virtues and superiority of a free labor system” (xxiii), claims to have been unaware that Butler was, at the time of their marriage, co-heir to a plantation that “boasted upwards of seven hundred slaves and was one of the most productive” in Georgia (Kemble, Records of Later xvii). When the plantation’s overseer resigned in December of 1838, Butler and Kemble, accompanied by their two young daughters and a nurse, left Philadelphia and traveled south to visit the Butler estates located on an archipelago just off the coast of Georgia. At the journey’s outset, Kemble began writing (against Butler’s wishes—he was reluctant to bring her along in the first place) letters to her friend Harriet St. Leger and also to Elizabeth—the latter of which became JRGP.

Much critical debate exists over particulars of composition and publication processes—i.e., how Kemble wrote the journal and when she knew she would want to publish it. Dana Nelson argues that although Kemble’s JRGP is “most immediately a journal,” the author “clearly aimed it for a larger audience from the start,” circulating it “through a close circle of friends and perform[ing] parts of it in private readings” (xxiv). Constance Wright, by contrast, argues that the journal was not initially composed in letter form but that Kemble wrote in her sitting room each evening, “making entries in her Journal” that “later would be transformed into the letters to Elizabeth” (72). Venet claims that Kemble “intended the journal for publication from the outset,” citing as evidence the author’s comparison of her narrative to that of Monk Lewis (85). Ann Blainey agrees, adding that Kemble wrote her letters with the intention of fashioning them into a journal—the publication of which, Blainey argues, “only Pierce could decide” (157).

According to Scott, if Kemble’s letters “were not literally written to Elizabeth, they were written for her” (xlii); he also proposes that the letters were not “genuine journal entries.” Rather, the entries’ “lack [of] internal unity” suggests that they “are a collection of random items written down over course of several

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Venet and others, Kemble’s decision to publish is firmly rooted in transatlantic politics of the 1860s: during a visit to her native England in June of 1862, Venet explains, Kemble found that Anglo-American relations were “at a low point;” she was horrified by “the anti-Northern tone of the British press” and the abundance of “Southern sympathizers” surrounding her (89). Anxious to turn British sympathies away from the American South, she aimed her 1863 journal primarily at British readers and initially planned to publish it only in London (Blainey 275-76). Soon persuaded to publish the New York edition, however, she was surprised to find that the book immediately gained a wider reading in America than it had in England and was particularly popular—as might be expected—in the Northern states (Blainey 276).

JRGP’s valuable contributions to antislavery propaganda in particular and to 1860s transatlantic politics in general can be better understood, I argue, when we attend to its complex presentation of performers and audiences, existing on multiple levels, both outside and inside the text. Within the ever-growing body of Kemble scholarship, a broad range of biographers and JRGP critics alike have quite usefully scrutinized (and, sometimes, even dramatized) Kemble’s persona as they analyze her cultural identity as actress, writer, and celebrity (Driver xiv). Very few scholars, however, have

days,” since Kemble “wrote in haste, never knowing when she would be interrupted, nor when she would be able to resume” (Scott xlii).

56 Our knowledge of JRGP’s popularity is based solely on contemporary reviews, for, as Scott laments, we have no extant sales records or other evidence of circulation statistics. According to Scott, “Harper and Brothers [Kemble’s New York publisher] have no sales records. Longman and Company’s [London publisher] files whatever they contained, were destroyed by enemy action in the second World War” (li).

57 The following is an example of how many of the now-dated Kemble biographies engage in what Martineau called “literary lionism,”—i.e., the dramatization of an author’s public character to the near-exclusion of a discussion of her works: “Life endowed [Kemble] richly, but it was also cruel to her. . . . Something about her escapes definition. No label places her; no characterization satisfies. An indefinable quality constitutes her supreme charm. She was forever changing and still forever constant, like a handsome piece of changeable silk; first one color, then another, but always the clean thing” (Driver xiv).
investigated the complicated ways in which this public persona functions on the level of private, epistolary narrative in *JRGP* to perform a political effect on readers. It is my goal in this chapter to use theories of narrative and performance to study how the journal’s form and style—specifically, its self-narration of experience through metaphors of actor/spectator interaction—suggests an important relationship between audience-aware self-writing strategies and Kemble’s theatre background.\(^{58}\)

I will draw from a broad range of theorists in making my points; however, my framework remains largely indebted to Joseph Roach’s idea that “the concept of performance” implicitly critiques “the culturally coded meaning of the word *theater*” (46). He explains:

Derived from the Greek word for seeing and sight, *theater*, like *theory*, is a limiting term for a certain kind of spectatorial participation in a certain kind of event. *Performance*, by contrast, though it frequently makes reference to theatricality as the most fecund metaphor for the social dimensions of cultural production, embraces a much wider range of human behaviors. Such behaviors may include what Michel de Certeau calls “the practice of everyday life,” in which the role of spectator expands into that of participant. De Certeau’s “practice” has itself enlarged into an open-ended category marked “performative.” As the Editor’s Note to a recent [1992] issue of *PMLA* (“Special Topic: Performance”) observes: “What once was an event has become a critical category, now applied to everything from a play to a war to a meal. The performative … is a cultural act, a critical perspective, a political intervention.” (46)\(^{59}\)

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In the face of such melodramatic biographical sketches, Kemble critics recently welcomed the long-awaited publication of Deirdre David’s biography, *Fanny Kemble: A Performed Life* (U of Pennsylvania P, 2007).

\(^{58}\) Much critical attention has been paid to the political implications of the journal’s reception—implications which, in the words of Robert Rushmore and Scott, exist variously in transatlantic cultural “legend[s]” (Rushmore 203) and “veritable mythologies” (Scott 1-li). As Rebecca Jenkins summarizes in her recent (2005) biography, “since Fanny Kemble’s death in 1893 some dozen biographers have been inspired to write about her” and, I would add, an ever-increasing number of critics have been attracted to her *JRGP*. Yet, says Jenkins, “again and again, the melodrama of her life has obscured the person who lived it” (2). See Jenkins, *Fanny Kemble: A Reluctant Celebrity* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2005) for more information.

Roach’s definitions of and distinction between theater and performance are useful to me for several reasons. First, his argument that “theatricality” is a limiting term for the wide “range of human behaviors” encompassed by cultural performance can be read alongside Kemble’s own conflicted theories regarding the limits of the theatrical, which I discuss in Part I of this chapter. Second, Roach’s fusing of de Certeau’s and John Kronik’s (PMLA editor) ideas in a way that locates the performative in “everyday life,” establishing it as “a critical category” with the potential for “political intervention,” provides me with a means for understanding the complicated functions of the performative in Kemble’s personal, yet political, journal.

Of additional importance to my argument is de Certeau’s concept that the role of spectator expands into that of participant, since, in Kemble’s JRGP, I find symbiotic performer-audience relationships working on the following narrative levels: In the world outside the text—or, in Gerard Genette’s terms, the “extradiegetic level” (228)—Kemble’s identity as public performer attracts readers to her journal, and the journal itself performs for audiences including Elizabeth Sedgwick, British readers, and American readers. Within the world of the text—on what Genette calls the intradiegetic level (228)—we see audiences ranging from Kemble, who uncomfortably watches slaves perform a wide range of culturally prescribed roles, to the slaves themselves, who repeatedly and intently watch Kemble perform daily tasks, including journal-writing.60

60 In his structuralist-inspired pivotal study, Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method (1980), Genette “fills the need for a systematic theory of narrative” (Culler, forward to Genette, p. 7). Specifically, he proposes a technical vocabulary through which critics can analyze narrative characteristics of order, duration, frequency, mood, and voice. Though I find his terms “extradiegetic” and “intradiegetic” useful to my analysis of Kemble’s work, I agree with Susan Lanser that these terms—and, indeed, Genette’s taxonomy of narratorial modes in general—need to be supplemented with a richer description of the contexts of discourse production. For instance, Lanser suggests the importance of investigating whether a given story was designed as public or as private discourse—an investigation that I find crucial to a reading of Kemble’s work. To read Kemble’s JRGP without attention to such contexts of “discourse production” is to do the
The journal’s cyclical narration of this symbiotic relationship between performer and spectator is, I suggest, linked to Kemble’s writing process: as she experiences the reality of daily life on her husband’s plantation and, ultimately, assumes roles of listener to and transcriber of countless slave women’s horrifying stories, Kemble’s apprehension toward her marginalized position endows her narrative voice with an acute self-consciousness. This self-conscious voice, I argue, communicates the narrative’s authenticity at the same time that it reveals the author’s struggle to define herself as oppositional to the system in which she is trapped.  

Accordingly, my analysis of JRGP in this chapter springs from my assertion that Kemble is as self-conscious about the complicated cultural roles that she performs in America—including those of British white female intellectual, abolitionist, slaveowner’s wife, and spectator of slavery—as she is about the potential for her private text to perform authentic cultural “truths” (i.e., to represent faithfully the realities of slavery, as she sees it) for its public audiences. In order to explore more carefully the narrative workings of these levels of performance, I divide the chapter into four sections. Part I situates the text in literary history and genre, probing relationships between Kemble’s transatlantic cultural status—particularly, her identity as celebrated actress and journal-writer—and her generic choice of the letter. Parts II, III, and IV explore the significance of performer/spectator interaction in JRGP’s form and content: Part II studies how Kemble’s subject-position on the Butler plantations affects her narrative’s authority and text a disservice. For more information, see Lancer, “Toward a Feminist Narratology,” pp. 674-93 in Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism, eds. Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1997.

61 Though the oppressive system examined in this paper is that of slavery, Kemble also finds herself trapped in the system (or institution) of marriage. While her simultaneous entrapment within both of these systems creates her precarious position, her JRGP focuses almost exclusively on an analysis of slavery.
authenticity, as manifest in vocal strategies of self-consciousness and sarcasm. Part III attends to the complicated ways in which cultural role-playing can be both authentic and artificial, as is clear in Kemble’s important, yet not unproblematic, adoption of the slave woman’s voice. Finally, Part IV examines the private and public, intra- and extradietgetic effects of the journal’s layered, cross-genre self-narratives, including those of Kemble and her slaves. In sum, I argue that the JRGP—in its attempt to balance Kemble’s discomfort as spectator of slaves’ culturally-prescribed performances with her identity as player of the white supremacy role—validates slave women’s stories and, subsequently, challenges the reigning cultural narrative of antebellum American slavery. In so doing, I maintain, Kemble’s private text functions as a public and political performance that is, in her own terms, both dramatic and theatrical—not only in its intradietgetic presentation of performers and spectators of social codes, but also in its extradietgetic performance for transatlantic audiences.

I. “You can imagine better than I can tell you . . . ”:

Locating JRGP in Literary History and Genre

Before we can understand the levels of narrative performance at work in Kemble’s journal, we must first understand how her cultural identity as nineteenth-century actress informs her autobiographical narrative. According to Gail Marshall, whose work on Victorian actresses draws from the feminist autobiographical criticism of Sidonie Smith, actresses have greater access to the autobiographical “act” than non-

62 I wish to qualify here that it is my contention that these effects are accomplished in spite of the narrative breakdowns that occur late in the journal (including, for instance, Kemble’s narrative turn to list-making and her difficulties in relating slave women’s horrific stories)—as I discuss in Parts III & IV of this chapter.

63 Kemble’s distinction between the dramatic and the theatrical is central to my reading of her JRGP; see Part I of this chapter for my initial discussion of Kemble’s definitions of these terms.
actresses since, in their professional lives, they can already “command an audience” and have already secured “a place in the public arena” (173). Because the actress-autobiographer’s body has already secured its public audience, her voice already has a place in public discourse and her autobiographical text can thus be received more easily than that of the non-actress. Furthermore, as Maggie Gale and Viv Gardner suggest, actresses’ command over their public has created a means through which they—as “one of the first groups of professional women”—have used, and continue to use, autobiography and performance as both a means of expression and ‘control’ of their public selves, of both the ‘face and the mask’” (3).

In general, Kemble’s journals, as Elizabeth Fox-Genovese has argued, “focus only peripherally on self-representation” (xi); yet, in the case of the JRGP, we see Kemble offering herself up “for public scrutiny,” commanding public attention to her politically astute cultural observations (xi). Marshall’s and Gale and Gardner’s points are quite useful for the ways they broadly link public acceptance of the actress-autobiographer’s body to that of her text; these points are complicated, however, by the work of several Kemble critics that examines potential problems of dramatization in the actress’s autobiography. By “potential problems,” I mean that an autobiographer’s dramatizing experienced events could compromise the truth-value of her narrative—*if* readers perceive dramatic styles as contributing to exaggerated, unfaithful representations of reality. Such reader perceptions would directly conflict with Kemble’s self-proclaimed narrative purpose of providing “a faithful journal, I promise you” (JRGP 88). Nonetheless, as Una Pope-Hennessy’s 1929

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study of the works of Kemble, Martineau, and Frances Trollope notes, “all readers of Fanny Kemble’s diaries know” that “she was apt to dramatize conversations and experiences” (171). Eleanor Ransome agrees, similarly acknowledging that Kemble was “sometimes inclined to dramatize and elaborate”; however, Ransome adds, “when writing for herself or her friends, Fanny was an acute observer and lively reporter of the passing scene” (xiii).

Despite the decided negativity of both Pope-Hennessy and Ransome’s comments, Kemble herself would likely be pleased at their assessments of her autobiographical writings’ “drama;” for, as she argues in the introduction to her critically acclaimed Notes Upon Some of Shakespeare’s Plays (1882), that which is dramatic is most “real” (3). Upset by the common conflation of the terms “dramatic” and “theatrical,” Kemble offers readers the following definitions:

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\text{Things dramatic and things theatrical are often confounded together in the minds of English people, who, being for the most part neither the one nor the other, speak and write of them as if they were identical, instead of, as they are, so dissimilar that they are nearly opposite. That which is dramatic in human nature is the passionate, emotional, humorous element, the simplest portion of our composition, after our mere instincts, to which it is closely allied, and this has no relation whatever, beyond its momentary excitement and gratification, to that which imitates it, and is its theatrical reproduction; the dramatic is the real, of which the theatrical is the false. . . . [T]he dramatic temperament...produces sincerity and vehemence of emotion and expression, but is entirely without the consciousness which is never absent from the theatrical element. (NUSSP 3-4)}
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As Mary Jean Corbett summarizes, Kemble associates the dramatic with “the individual and solitary” and the theatrical with “public spectacle and the rules of performance” (113). Her keen distinction between the dramatic and the theatrical—specifically, her creation of a kind of dramatic/theatrical binary and alignment of it with binaries of real/false,
private/public—provides a means through which we can better understand her JRGP’s near-obsession with authenticity, as characterized by Kemble’s defending the faithfulness of her narrative and debunking the naturalness of the social codes depicted within it.

Kemble’s binary model (and the idea of authenticity along with it) is complicated, however, by her additional argument that “a good actor” must possess a combination of dramatic and theatrical qualities: “the combination of the power of representing passion and emotion with that of imagining or conceiving it—that is, of the theatrical talent with the dramatic temperament—is essential to make a good actor; their combination in the highest possible degree alone makes a great one” (NUSSP 5). Here Kemble revalues the theatrical, advocating the necessary presence of its powers of representation alongside those of the dramatic, creationary imagination. In Kemble’s vexed attitudes, I find that theatricality—in its associations with falseness and a lack of creationary power (Kemble, NUSSP 3-5)—is indeed, as Roach says, a useful “metaphor for the social dimensions of cultural production” (46). At the same time, however, I argue that theatricality is—by virtue of its audience-aware “consciousness” (Kemble, NUSSP 4)—the sole factor that renders dramatic, authentic performances received by public audiences.65 In this way, as we will see in JRGP (which is itself an actor, of the textual kind), categories of dramatic

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65 The association between theatricality and authenticity that I see working in JRGP has been cogently discussed by several scholars: Laura Engel, in the epilogue to her forthcoming book, Fashioning Celebrity; Judith Pascoe, in Romantic Theatricality: Gender, Poetry, and Spectatorship (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1997); Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait, in their collection, Theatricality (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003); and Lynn Voskuil, in Acting Naturally: Victorian Theatricality and Authenticity (Charlottesville, VA: U of Virginia P, 2004). Voskuil’s book, which draws from Romantic and Victorian drama criticism on practices ranging from “natural acting” to sensation theatre, argues that “in nineteenth-century England … theatricality and authenticity often functioned dynamically together to construct the symbolic typologies by which the English knew themselves as individuals, as a public, and as a nation” (2). Although it does not mention Kemble, Voskuil’s work is quite useful in its dismantling of postmodern and poststructuralist notions of the theatrical and authentic as oppositional (4-5, 17).
and theatrical, along with corresponding binaries of real/false, public/private, must be held in tension.\textsuperscript{66}

In Kemble’s own life, this tension is most prevalent: it was her transatlantic audience reception as a young actress and, later in life, as a dramatic reader of Shakespearean plays,\textsuperscript{67} which confirmed that her private journal (and anything she had written, for that matter) “was likely to be read with interest” (G. Marshall 241-42). Despite Kemble’s wavering affinities for the stage—she called it “the very lowest of the arts” (Clinton 58), yet recognized its capacity for financing her ongoing “pursuit” of a literary vocation (23)—the success of her stage career is indisputable.\textsuperscript{68} Niece of the celebrated actress, Mrs. Sarah Siddons, and daughter of Charles Kemble, “owner-actor-manager” of The Theatre Royal Covent Garden, Kemble was the youngest of a family of actors who were “renowned for three generations in Great Britain” (Wister 3). In 1829, aged nineteen, she made her debut at Covent Garden playing Shakespeare’s Juliet; from that point onward, she “became the idol of the theater going public” in England and Scotland as “society opened its doors to her” (J.A. Scott xiv). According to Catherine Clinton, Kemble’s “meteoric rise as a stage star” meant that “anything [she] wrote, said, or did”—including her choice of hairstyle and her “offhand remarks”—was “of interest to

\textsuperscript{66} This need for binaries to be held in tension clearly echoes William Blake’s seminal line, “Without contraries is no progression” in \textit{The Marriage of Heaven and Hell}.

\textsuperscript{67} Beginning in Boston in January, 1849, Kemble toured America and England, performing readings of Shakespeare’s plays (Wister 207-09). According to Wister, Kemble earned $8,000 in a single month of that same winter; moreover, “her fame as a reader was unrivalled in [both countries] for two decades” (209).

\textsuperscript{68} In addition to desiring to fund her own literary career, Kemble writes in her \textit{Records of a Girlhood}, “My going on the stage was absolutely an act of duty and conformity to the will of my parents, strengthened by my own conviction that I was bound to help them by every means in my power. The theatrical profession, however, was utterly distasteful to me . . . nor did custom ever render the aversion less” (qtd. in Clinton 191). Kemble’s feeling “bound” to help her parents has much to do with the notoriously debt-ridden Charles Kemble’s mismanagement of the Theatre at Drury Lane, Covent Garden (J.A. Scott xiv).
the public and therefore to the press” (7). In her *Records of a Girlhood* (1879), Kemble herself describes the “radical [life] change” brought about by these first three weeks of celebrity: “From an insignificant school-girl, I had suddenly become an object of general public interest. I was a little lion in society, and the town talk of the day. Approbation, admiration, adulation, were showered upon me; every condition of my life had been altered, as by the wand of a fairy” (226).

Like Martineau before her and Gertrude Stein after her, Kemble became immersed in the world of cultural “lionism”—that is, the tendency of society to admire a writer’s public personality more than her work (Easley 43); like Martineau and Stein, too, Kemble’s “lionism” was transatlantic. From 1832 to 1834, in response to a family financial crisis, she and her father earned money by gracing the American stage, performing for delighted audiences in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Boston, and New York. Despite her initial apprehension over working a two-year tour in what she called “that dreadful America,” Kemble soon found herself perceived by Americans as no less than a heroine, a “divine manifestation” (J.A. Scott xv-xviii) whose following was—and still is, according to biographer Dorothy Marshall—greater in “her adopted country” of America than in her native England (1). It was during this American tour that Fanny met and married Pierce Mease Butler of Philadelphia, “one of a crowd of admirers” who had seen her perform in Philadelphia in October, 1832 (J.A. Scott xviii). For him she abandoned her theatrical career, her native land, and her father (xvi).

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69 As I discuss in the Introduction to this dissertation, according to Jenkins, the word “celebrity” was first recorded in print in 1829—the year of Kemble’s stage debut. It was used by Irish feminist Lady Sydney Morgan, in reference to the peculiar status of famous British personalities (1). Kemble, Jenkins asserts, “was one of the very first cross-Atlantic examples of the breed” (1).  

70 Scott points out that leaving the stage was not a difficult decision for Kemble, since she “found the theatrical profession itself highly repugnant” (xiii-xvi).
What the young actress did not abandon, however, was her desire for a literary career and, particularly, her penchant for journaling—a penchant that earned her a spot in transatlantic literary traditions of women’s autobiography. In spite of her husband’s unyielding disapproval of what Elizabeth Reitz Mullenix calls “his wife’s public display, both upon the boards and upon the bookshelves” (29), Kemble went on to write and publish in the genres of essay, poetry, drama, and novel, though the bulk of her work can be categorized as autobiography. Her volumes of autobiographical writings appeared over a period of more than forty years and have been noted to exceed a million words (Ransome xiii).71 Despite the great versatility of her canon, as Kemble’s great-granddaughter, Fanny Kemble Wister, wisely asserts, “only the journals have stood the test of time. It is as an autobiographer that she achieves lasting stature” (1). Much of Kemble’s autobiographical writings, including JRGP, are comprised of private journals that pose a direct contradiction to the author’s very public life. Alison Booth explains: “Kemble’s singular life seems always at least double, having been selectively reenacted in the letters and journals she wrote serially in the wake of events and then later (often much later) condensed and annotated for publication.”72 Few women’s lives have been so public, so published, before the rise of a twentieth-century style of stardom” (227). Indeed, Kemble’s stardom anticipates the kind of commercial celebrity that Stein and Sylvia Townsend Warner will experience in the decades following her death. Because of her popularity, Kemble’s audience awaited her every publication, the forms of which—

71 Kemble’s sizable, twelve-volume canon of published journals and reminiscences includes the following texts: Journal of Frances Anne Kemble (2 vols., 1835); A Year of Consolation (2 vols.; 1847); JRGP (1863); “Old Woman’s Gossip” (serial publication in Atlantic Monthly, 1875-77); Records of a Girlhood (3 vols.; 1878); Records of Later Life (3 vols.; 1882); and Further Records (1882).

according to Gale and Gardner—are as “influenced by [the writer’s] social, economic and historical positions, of which the theatre event and theatre history are a part” (3), as they are by the current historical moment’s “general tendencies” in autobiographical writing (3).

As is the case with Martineau’s RWT, the historical moment in which Kemble initially composes her journal is the 1830s, that transitional decade we now use to “divide” the nineteenth century into literary periods of Romanticism and Victorianism. We can better assess Kemble’s dual cultural status as Romantic and Victorian writer by turning to her self-written testimony regarding literary aspirations. The following passage was extracted from a letter written by Kemble to lifelong friend Harriet St. Leger in February, 1828, the year preceding Kemble’s Covent Garden debut. In the passage, we see that Kemble’s decision to trade her theatrical life for a domestic one (as Mrs. Pierce Butler) was certainly not premeditated and, in fact, directly contradicts her aspirations for independence and a literary career. She writes:

You know that independence of mind and body seems to me the great desideratum of life; I am not patient of restraint or submission to authority, and my heart and head are engrossed with the idea of exercising and developing the literary talent which I think I possess. This is meat, drink and sleep to me . . . and, moreover, I hope, my means of fame (the prize for which I pray) . . . . I do not think I am fit to marry, to make an obedient wife or affectionate mother; my imagination is paramount with me, and would disqualify me, I think, for the everyday, matter-of-fact cares and duties of the mistress of a household and the head of a family. I think I should be unhappy and the cause of unhappiness to others if I were to marry. (qtd. in Clinton 22-23)

This quotation bears significance to my analysis of Kemble’s JRGP in several ways. First, as mentioned repeatedly in the journal itself (JRGP 60, 69, 139), the quote attests to Kemble’s ongoing quest for independence—a quest she found stifled by both the
theatrical and the married, domestic life. Second, in identifying “literary talent” and “imagination” as “paramount” in her life—and as, she hoped, a “means of fame”—and suggesting the conflict between such talent and woman’s “duties” of “household” and “family,” the quote effectively foreshadows the content and structure of JRGP: unlike most nineteenth-century women’s autobiographies, which tend to filter life experience through domestic roles of wife, lover, mother, or caretaker, Kemble’s journal makes relatively little narrative mention of her two young daughters or her troubled marriage. Instead, it foregrounds a critique of antebellum American slavery—a critique that relies upon imaginative powers to establish narrative authenticity.

When narrating scenes too traumatic for words, for instance, Kemble asks her reader to engage the creationary powers of the Romantic imagination, writing to Elizabeth, “you can imagine better than I can tell you…” (136). Thus, the reader’s comprehension of the narrative requires imaginative engagement, just as the writer’s crafting of it calls for a combination of dramatic, emotional narration and imaginative recreation of real events. Kemble’s engagement with the imagination in the journal can be read through Patricia Myer Spacks’s theory regarding the relationship between

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73 Consider Mary Robinson’s Memoirs (1895) and Margaret Oliphant’s Autobiography (1899), for instance, both of which discuss professional life through the lens of motherhood.

74 The journal’s focus on slavery to the near-exclusion of personal discussions of Kemble’s failing marriage suggests the author’s vexed feelings toward her role as wife—specifically, her conflicting ethical duties as protector of spousal privilege (of private information shared between her and Pierce) and truth-teller of slave women’s stories.

75 Kemble’s implicit admission here that narrative breaks down in the face of her growing anxiousness is cogently examined by Laura Callanan in the introduction to her recent book, Deciphering Race, the central argument of which I incorporate in the final section of this chapter. In addition to Callanan’s discussion of Kemble’s anxious confrontation of the racial Other, Cathy Caruth’s work on trauma is quite useful—particularly, her collection of essays entitled Trauma: Explorations in Memory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995) and her book Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1996).
imagination and memory in autobiography. Spacks argues that imagination “testifies” to a self’s identity and experience in the same way that memory does; “to read an autobiography,” she asserts, “is to encounter a self as an imaginative being” (Imagined 19). Kemble’s oft-declared affinity for engaging the Romantic imagination (Clinton 22-23) has caused Scott and other critics to classify her as a “woman of literary, rather than dramatic, tastes and ambitions” (xvi); I argue, however, that she is both of these and that it is the combination of the literary and dramatic in her JRGP that makes it successful.

Moreover, I find that Kemble’s JRGP (much like Martineau’s RWT) functions to collapse rather than solidify the division between “general tendencies” (Gale and Gardner 3) of Romantic and Victorian literary styles. At the same time that it engages the Romantic imagination, the journal emphasizes practices of looking, observing, and

76 Despite her engagement with imaginative prose, Kemble was acutely aware of the dangers of “imaginative exaggeration” (JRGP 170) yet was quick to endorse the reality of fiction, as I discuss in Part IV of this chapter.

77 Scott links Kemble’s style to second generation Romantic poets Byron, Shelley, and Keats (xvi). I would argue, however, that Kemble’s concept of the “dramatic”—namely, the “passionate, emotional . . . simplest portion of our [human] composition” (Kemble, NUSSP 3)—aligns her work far more closely with that of Mary Robinson (1758-1800) than with any of the male Romantic poets. Kemble’s autobiographical texts have been criticized for their dramatization of life events just as Robinson’s early verses were, according to one contemporary critic, “rendered disgusting by affectation and meretricious ornament” (qtd. in Wu, Duncan, ed. and introd. Romantic Women Poets: An Anthology. Oxford: Blackwell, 1997, p. 181). Nonetheless, we need only consider Robinson’s theatrical background and her later poems “The Negro Girl” (from Lyrical Ballads, publ. 1800) and “The Progress of Liberty” (from Poetical Works, publ. 1806) to see that hers and Kemble’s works both employ dramatic styles in ways that underscore a heightened sense of social and political (particularly, racial) awareness. The similarities in contemporary criticisms of these two actresses’ literary works are also striking. Regarding her posthumously published volume, Poetical Works (1806), reviewers said that “Mrs. Robinson had a brilliant imagination, and a considerable command of language, but she was deficient in taste” (qtd. in Wu 181). Similarly, of Kemble’s first Journal (which chronicled her experiences during her first American tour, 1832-34), reviewers lamented its “want of tact, judgment, and good sense” (Jenkins 417). In so comparing Kemble to Robinson, I am by no means trying to argue for her success as a poet. Although she did publish three volumes of poetry in her lifetime (in 1844, 1859, and 1883), Robert Browning is said to have described Kemble’s verse as “mournfully mediocre…to go as near flattery as I can” (qtd. in Ransome xii). On the other hand, biographer J.C. Furnas has likened Kemble’s autobiographical prose to the poetry of Emily Dickinson (428-29).
recording (often with a keen sense of doubt or skepticism) that correspond to the Victorian age’s rapid growth in scientific knowledge (Cooper and Atterbury 143). As in *Retrospect*, we find in the journal passages incorporating styles characteristic of both periods—including Robinsonian impassioned racial-awareness, Wordsworthian introspective turns and lyric passages on nature, and Carlylean public social and political critique. In a voice that is both private and public, self-conscious and authoritative, Kemble offers scathing critiques not only of slavery but also of general American custom and habit. Regarding the issue of cleanliness (an issue tied to Victorian developments in health and hygiene), for example, Kemble has much to say about America’s “foulness of atmosphere” (*JRGP* 13). During her initial train ride south from Philadelphia, she repeatedly defines America as a “pestilential waste” (14, 18) and comments disdainfully on the “most disgustingly dirty appearance[s]” of its citizens and their abodes (20).

Kemble’s often-pompous narration of America locates her journal in the tradition of British Victorian travel writing, which merits a closer look at the role of nation in her narrative. The issue of Britishness clearly informs intradiegetic audience reception of the author’s physical body (via her white skin, as I will discuss at the beginning of Part III) and extradiegetic audience reception of her textual body. In terms of Kemble’s national alliances, Ransome points out that she spent half her life in America (ix). England “always remained home to her,” Driver qualifies, even if Kemble resided “for more than forty years in the United States” (xiv). Because of this extended American residence, it

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78 Like Martineau, Kemble’s life spans literary periods of Romanticism and Victorianism, with Kemble’s encompassing nearly the entire nineteenth century (Driver xiv). As Ransome observes, Kemble was “born in 1809, only four years after the Battle of Trafalgar and when Napoleon’s armies still ranged undefeated over the continent of Europe” and she died “within five years of Queen Victoria’s jubilee in 1897” (ix).

79 Consider travelogues of Martineau, (Fanny) Trollope, and Dickens, all of which I discussed in Chapter 1.
makes sense that, just as Kemble was received by Queen Victoria at court in 1842, she had met with similar treatment in 1833 from President Andrew Jackson who, according to Driver, “welcomed her to the White House and then crowded with his fellow politicians into the tiny Washington theater to attend her impersonation of Mrs. Haller” (xiv). Biographer Constance Wright goes so far as to call America “the land of [Kemble’s] adoption” (vii). Yet, Wright also says that “Fanny’s attitude toward her adopted land was as ambivalent as that of the self-exiled Henry James . . . [she] never heard the United States praised without expressing certain reservations; she never heard it abused without voicing her admiration and her faith in its future” (Wright 5). Even in the face of this ambivalence, Kemble’s work has attracted more scholarly interest in America than in her native England. As biographer Marshall (herself a Brit) lamented in 1977, “hitherto [Kemble’s] main biographers have been American while she herself remained impenitently English” (D. Marshall 2).

The candidness of Kemble’s “impenitent” Englishness is cultivated by the personal letter genre in which she narrates her travel experience. In Kemble’s historical moment, as Valerie Sanders has noted, “the letter-form was especially attractive to women travel-writers, with its assurance that the recipient was a friend, real or invented, the initial audience, at least, carefully circumscribed” (12). Describing Kemble’s JRGP

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80 Mrs. Haller was heroine of the play, The Stranger, August von Kotzebue's dark tale of marriage (Jenkins 370).

81 Several critics have followed the intriguing friendship between Kemble and Henry James: See, for instance, Tamara Follini’s “The Friendship of Fanny Kemble and Henry James” in Cambridge Quarterly 19.3 (1990), 230-42. See also James’s own lengthy tribute essay, “Frances Anne Kemble,” in his Essays in London and Elsewhere, New York: Harper Brothers, 1893, pp. 81-120.

82 Accordingly, Marshall’s nation-specific biographical agenda in her monograph, Fanny Kemble (1977), is to “look at [Kemble’s life] from the English angle and against her English background” (2). To date, there still seems to be more critical attention devoted to Kemble on this [American] side of the Atlantic.
as a set of “specially fabricated letters that were never posted,” Sanders suggests that such letters function to “give the author the illusion that she is addressing someone, other than the impersonal public” (13). She continues:

The letters, in such cases, do not form a genuine correspondence between two people, but a one-sided narrative, regularly broken off, and written in response to an imagined request for information about the writer’s life. Urged to tell all, the writer can hardly refuse: her story is then retold as an act of kindness to an implied friend, rather than from an unwomanly desire for attention and admiration. . . . Like the diary form, the letter evades formal patterning. The writer can use it to discuss anything or nothing as the mood takes her; she can interrupt herself or be interrupted without necessarily damaging the coherence of what she has written. Again, the recipient is known and trusted; the form as nearly as possible reproducing the conditions of a confidential talk between friends. Both altruistic and self-indulgent, the letter form may be used to solace others or provide an outlet . . . (13)

Sanders’s argument here contributes to my analysis of Kemble’s journal in several ways: first, her suggestion that the letter-writer’s feeling of urgency to “tell all” to a “known and trusted” confidante validates the emotional (or, in Kemble’s words, “dramatic”) tone of Kemble’s narrative voice. It also characterizes her text as an “outlet” of both self- and cultural-revelation, one that conveys authenticity through gestures of intimacy and immediacy. Moreover, the idea that the letter “evades formal patterning” reveals how, as both Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Marcus have pointed out, the form of autobiography in general, and of personal letters in particular, is both unstable and hybrid (L. Marcus, Auto/biographical 7-8), “imitat[ing] traditional and emergent generic codes” (Nussbaum, “Politics” 165)—which, as I discuss in Part IV of this chapter, we see the JRGP doing with codes of didactic and sentimental fiction, social critique, and slave narrative. It is through this unstable hybridity (as we saw in Martineau’s RWT) that autobiography “affect[s] to escape preexisting categories, to tell the ‘truth’ of experience” (Nussbaum,
And it is in the letter genre’s capacity for truth-telling and soliciting the reader/confidante’s belief that we can begin to study the complex relationship between the personal-letter-made-public and Kemble’s narrative authority.

Of particular importance to my textual analysis in this chapter are the ambiguities surrounding Kemble’s choice of the letter genre, a choice that is itself a kind of performance. According to Hayden White, the meaning-production of narrative discourse’s representation of historical events is decidedly performative: because any given set of real events can be emplotted in a number of ways, White argues, it is “the choice of the story type and its imposition upon the events that endow them with meaning” (44). Since Kemble’s letters are never shared with their declared recipient, why, then, does Kemble choose this intimately personal form to compose an anti-slavery treatise, and how does this generic choice affect her narrative authority? Several critics have offered compelling answers to this question. According to Clara Juncker,

Kemble’s letters. . . occupy a feminine space between private and public; between fact and fiction. They negotiate a perfect, if precarious, balance between exposure and concealment and at the same time, like their author, situate themselves in a sphere of liminality. . . [which] falls like Kemble’s rural Georgia outside the dominant culture’s boundaries. . . where anything might happen. Liminality, in other words, suggests structural transcendence and opens up vistas of emotional, social, and historical alterity. (135)

The liminality of Kemble’s text, then, enables it to transcend boundaries not only of genre but also of private and public, personal and political, in ways that an ordinary diary—or a conventional anti-slavery treatise—cannot, and in ways that afford it the potential to serve as a public intervention in a moment of socio-historical crisis.

Juncker’s point regarding the liminality of author and text corresponds to Susan Lanser’s suggestion that the narrator of any given text is located in a liminal position between
narrative voice and the world being narrated and that, because of this liminality, “the authority of a given voice or text is produced from a conjunction of social and rhetorical properties” (Lanser 4-6). Indeed, the authority of Kemble’s journal stems precisely from this combination of the social—its author’s transatlantic, highly public reputation—and the rhetorical—its genre-specific professed intimacy and truth. Through the letter genre, Kemble fosters a kind of personal, familiar relationship with the reader that conventional nineteenth-century public discourses could not.

Kemble’s generic choice of the private letter suggests that she may have sought to free herself from what Shirley Foster and Sara Mills call the public “discursive constraints” of travel writing. This gesture is largely unsuccessful because, as Foster and Mills maintain, all writing is informed by the dominant cultural discourses of its day (5). Drawing upon Michel Foucault’s work, Foster and Mills assert that travel writing “is produced in interaction with discursive constraints” that include “the range of ‘rules’ and systems of representation and meaning within which writers negotiate in order to write what they wish” (5). Thus, Foster and Mills argue, “even the way that [a travel writer] perceives a landscape, despite the fact that it feels as if it is a simple unmediated process of looking, is already mediated through discourses of aesthetics and imperialism,” discourses which determine the viewer’s emotional response to the land’s features and inform her/his distinction between landscape and wasteland (5).

83 In *Fictions of Authority: Women Writers and Narrative Voice* (1992) Lanser builds on the work of Gerard Genette to theorize a system of “three narrative modes”—authorial, personal, and communal—each of which, she suggests, “represents not only a set of technical distinctions but also a particular kind of narrative consciousness” (15). Lanser does not address Kemble specifically, but her model provides a means of understanding the ways in which the journal’s self-consciousness and its performativity relate directly to its author’s conflicted social situation.
These hegemonic “discursive constraints” of British imperialism and aesthetics clearly inform Kemble’s perception and narration of plantation life on Butler and St. Simon’s Islands. Specifically, the contradiction between the ideally “unmediated process[es] of looking” (5) and discursively mediated processes of perception and narration appears in JRGP in several problematic ways. As she begins narrating her explorations of Butler Island, for instance, Kemble writes to Elizabeth that her journal shall be “furnished by my observations on the novel appearance of external nature, and the moral and physical condition of Mr. [Butler’s] people” (53). Within these narrative “furnish[ings],” Kemble laments that the slaves’ lack of freedom reduces them to “ignorant” individuals with no concept of “self-respect” (61-64) and regrets that so many Southern planters have “pet blacks sleeping like puppy dogs in their bedchamber” (61). Yet, amidst her frustration—not to mention her biting sarcasm—we find comments that participate in relegating negroes to cultural stereotypes: she describes how the “laziness,” “filthiness,” “inconceivable stupidity, and unconquerable good humor” of slaves in Charleston “are enough to drive one stark-staring mad” (41).\(^{84}\) Similarly, regarding the aesthetics of slaves’ appearance, Kemble on more than one occasion refers to their “wooly heads” and “white grinders” (40, 69), describes them as “savages” (46, 67, 292), and comments that “little as grown Negroes are admirable for their personal beauty (in my opinion, at least), the black babies of a year or two old are very pretty” (77). In spite of Kemble’s ardent abolitionism, such comments not only articulate sentiments of white racial superiority and aristocratic snobbery but also locate the JRGP within the tradition

\(^{84}\) Such comments on Kemble’s part reiterate Diane Roberts’s point that Kemble (and travel writer Fanny Trollope, too, for that matter) “analysed colour prejudice as a class problem yet [was] still committed to a set of genteel values and standards that tended to exclude blacks” (17). See Roberts, The Myth of Aunt Jemima: Representations of Race and Region (London: Routledge, 1994) for further information.
of British imperialist travel narrative—for, as Kemble states explicitly, her journal is not unlike the one that “Monk [Matthew] Lewis wrote during his visit to his West India plantations” (*JRGP* 53). Because of the way her journal draws upon dominant discourses of race, class, and gender, Kemble’s role as British imperialist bears further examination.

II. “Assuredly I am prejudiced against slavery, for I am an Englishwoman”:

Negotiating Authority and Authenticity through Bodily and Textual Performance

In her study of the colonial Englishwoman’s vexed subject-position, Jenny Sharpe contends that the Victorian Englishwoman “is not the source of female agency nor the passive repository of the domestic ideal but exists at the intersection of the two as a precarious and unstable subjectivity” (11). Sharpe explains the problematic “double-positioning” of the Englishwoman abolitionist, arguing that “contradictions to white femininity are more evident in a colonial context where the middle-class English woman, oscillating between a dominant position of race and a subordinate one of gender, has restricted access to colonial authority” (11-12) and, accordingly, often “makes the analogy between [her] own subordinate place in the antislavery movement and that of the slaves on whose behalf [she] speaks” (40). Sharpe’s work here on double-positioning corresponds with that of Helen Buss, whose discussion of the “doubled discourse” of American women’s autobiography is useful to a reading of Kemble’s journal. According to Buss, an autobiographical subject can be “dominated” and “contestatory” at the same time. What happens in this process of adopting conflicted subject-positions, explains

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85 Lewis’s *Journal of a West Indian Proprietor* (1834) chronicles its author’s visit to inherited Jamaican plantations, during which he explores the living and working conditions of his slaves.

86 Although Kemble’s journal reflects a woman’s journey into the technically “postcolonial” territory of the United States, its focus on man-made systems of oppression reads much like that of a colonial text.
Buss, is that the possibilities for a consciously constructed selfhood multiply, creating an identity “capable of holding oppositions in a dynamic tension” (105-6). For Kemble, these oppositions include not only binaries of dramatic / theatrical, authentic / artificial, public / private, but also those of agency and helplessness, sympathy and scornfulness. The presence of such oppositions in the content and form of the journal communicates Kemble’s ongoing struggle to negotiate her complicated cultural and political allegiances—allegiances that render her as bonded with the British as she is with the slave (Paquet 653).

The conflicted allegiances brought about by her “double-position” of dominant race and subordinate gender (Sharpe 11-12) appear in the journal in the form of tonal shifts between self-consciousness and sarcasm; together, these tones illuminate how Kemble and the slaves share roles of spectator and performer, and they communicate Kemble’s discomfort in both of these roles. This symbiotic relationship between Kemble and her public—a relationship that involves curiosity and speculation on parts of spectator and performer—is most evident in the following passage, during which Kemble narrates the moment of her arrival on Butler Island, the site of her husband’s main plantation. Notice how Kemble is rendered both spectator and spectacle—that is, she gazes at the slaves as much as they gaze at her. It is in her negotiation of these overlapping roles that we first find her narrative voice exhibiting self-consciousness. She writes:

On our landing from the boat, the crowd thronged about us like a swarm of bees; we were seized, pulled, pushed, carried, dragged, and all but lifted in the air by the clamorous multitude. I was afraid my children would be smothered. Fortunately Mr. O—, the overseer, . . . came to our assistance. . . . [The Negroes] seized our clothes, kissed them—then our hands, and almost wrung them off. One tall, gaunt Negress flew to us, parting the
throng on either side, and embraced us in her arms. I believe I was almost frightened; and it was not until we were safely housed . . . that we indulged in a fit of laughing, quite as full, on my part, of nervousness as of amusement.

Later in the day I attempted to take some exercise, and thought I had escaped observation; but, before I had proceeded a quarter of a mile, I was again enveloped in a cloud of these dingy dependents, who gathered round me, clamoring welcome, staring at me, stroking my velvet pelisse, and exhibiting at once the wildest delight and the most savage curiosity. I was obliged to relinquish my proposed walk, and return home. Nor was the door of the room where I sat, and which was purposely left open, one moment free from crowds of eager faces, watching every movement of myself and the children, until evening caused our audience to disperse. This zeal in behalf of an utter stranger, merely because she stood to them in the relation of a mistress, caused me not a little speculation. (50)

The “clamoring welcome” and unquestioning “zeal” that Kemble is startled to find in her slave “audience,” accompanied by the array of emotions she experiences as a result of being so closely watched, reveal her discomfort in the role of slave mistress, a discomfort that escalates throughout the narrative. Moreover, in narrating her interaction with slaves, we clearly see Kemble holding opposites in tension: she contrasts her “savage” dependents’ “ding[iness]” with her own sophistication, as communicated by the Negroes’ stroking her lavish “velvet pelisse;” and she acknowledges being as amused at the scene as she is nervous and filled with “not a little speculation” over its complexities. In narrating the tension between these oppositional forces, Kemble consistently relies on her framework of the stage as a means of perception: in this case, she paints a picture of herself as a celebrity who is “all but lifted in the air by the clamorous multitude” of her admiring public at the same time that she is jarred by the awareness that her fans’

87 A pelisse is a wide-collared, fur-trimmed cloak.
attention is grounded in their acknowledgement of her position—her “relation” to them as “mistress”—and their culturally-dictated performance of worship.\(^8\)

Kemble’s uneasiness over this opening performance of her “dingy dependents” (50) resurfaces early in the journal in recurring expressions of frustration, confinement, and helplessness. In the opening weeks of her visit to Butler Island, she expresses Wordsworthian delight in “the beauty of the shrubbery” and “the profusion of birds here” (Kemble, *JRG*P 56-58) at the same time that she repeatedly laments to Elizabeth how her nature walks “are rather circumscribed . . . necessarily” and how she feels that she “must do something to prevent [her] blood from stagnating” (56, 72). Similarly, her attempts to help the slaves—which range from trying to warm and clean their lodgings (68) to trying to prevent husbands and wives from separation by slave trade (137-38)—often leave her feeling “useless” and sighing “over the futility of [her] own exertions” (69, 110). Even when the slaves respond deferentially to her efforts by calling her “Missis”—thus role-playing for her their cultural status of docile, reverent subordinates—she reprimands them and reflects, “though I was the wife of the man who pretends to own them, I was, in truth, no more their mistress than they were mine” (60).

Kemble’s feelings of powerlessness here reflect her complex relationship with the slaves, a relationship whose sizable textual presence merits further investigation. From the moment she arrives on Butler Island (as previously discussed), it is clear that the very physical feature rendering Kemble superior to her “dingy dependents” (50)—her white skin—is one that fosters a collapsing of performer/spectator roles: Kemble performs her whiteness anxiously, and her performance elicits from ever-present slave spectators their

\(^{8}\) The slaves’ treatment of Kemble in this passage (particularly, in its second paragraph, wherein she describes them approaching her when she is alone and in Pierce’s company)—also communicates their desire to build alliances with her so as to better their positions.
own performances of respect and, sometimes, even exaggerated adoration. According to Kemble, slaves’ responses to her skin are directly related to their perception of her as mistress. Consider, for instance, Kemble’s apprehension (related, as always, through condescending tones of British superiority) over the relationship between her skin and her role as slave mistress in the following passage, wherein she describes her first meeting with Rose, the midwife on Butler Island:

Mr. [Butler] opened my room door, ushering in a dirty, fat, good-humored looking old Negress, saying: “The midwife, Rose, wants to make your acquaintance.”

“Oh massa!” shrieked out the old creature, in a paroxysm of admiration, “where you get this lilly alabaster baby!”

For a moment I looked round to see if she was speaking of my baby; but no, my dear, this superlative apostrophe was elicited by the fairness of my skin: so much for degrees of comparison. Now I suppose that if I chose to walk arm in arm with the dingiest mulatto through the streets of Philadelphia, nobody could possibly tell by my complexion that I was not his sister, so that the mere quality of mistress must have had a most miraculous effect upon my skin in the eyes of poor Rose. (66)

In depicting Rose’s “paroxysm of admiration” over her perception of Kemble’s “alabaster” skin, and then comparing this so-called alabaster skin to that of “the dingiest mulatto,” this passage clearly emphasizes the power that Kemble’s cultural position holds over slaves’ views of her. The irony here is that Kemble’s requirement (via her identity as Mrs. Pierce Butler) to role-play the position of “the mere quality of mistress” factors into her ongoing uneasiness in her own skin, as she repeatedly witnesses situations that she is powerless to remedy. As a result of this powerlessness, and the liminality produced by her double-positioning, however, she is able to identify with her husband’s slaves in a way that he cannot.

Accordingly, the journal often illuminates Kemble’s sympathy for slaves’ situations by narrating the similar positions in which they (Kemble and slaves) function,
positions which represent bodily performances of the hierarchical master/servant order. For instance, when she and her husband attend the funeral of “a very valuable slave called Shadrach” who had died from “peripneumonia,” she reports how, during the final prayer, “all the people knelt down in the sand, as I did also. Mr. [Butler] alone remained standing in the presence of the dead man and of the living God to whom his slaves were now appealing. I cannot tell you how profoundly the whole ceremony, if such it could be called, affected me” (145-47). In describing how “affected” this tragic situation renders her senses, Kemble calls upon the dramatic faculty she deems so authentic (NUSSP 12) at the same time that she seeks physically, via narration of her shared bodily position (kneeling) with slaves, to level the playing field—so to speak—between herself and her “dependents” (50). Butler’s behavior in this passage, by contrast, exhibits what Roach calls “Anglo-American self-definition” via bodily performance featuring the denigration of the Other (54). In its emphasis on bodily positioning, then, Kemble’s narration of Butler’s refusal to kneel—i.e., his insistence in participating in the funeral ritual above, rather than alongside his slaves—not only reveals her criticism of the master/servant order, but also suggests that she perceives that order as entirely unnatural.89

Kemble’s self-consciousness over her inability to change the master/servant order in such situations infuses the journal with frequent depictions of her as helpless audience for slave “spectacle[s],” spectacles which are narrated in language that both defends and distrusts its own accuracy. On some twelve occasions throughout the narrative (19, 24, 49, 67, 69, 70, 84, 87, 100, 113, 304, 338), Kemble tells Elizabeth that her day-to-day

89 This funeral scene ties into the important issue of Christianity in the JRGP. Throughout her plantation residence, Kemble petitions Pierce to permit slaves with avenues for organized worship, and she even worships with them herself—but, as this scene illustrates, she is often plagued by her husband’s unchristian behavior and the ways in which slavery is itself entirely at odds with the foundational principles of Christianity.
experience consists of viewing mostly traumatizing plantation “spectacles”—including a slave mother’s body, whose back, “what with childbearing and hard field labor . . . was almost broken in two” (67), and the Butler Island slave infirmary, wherein the “poor wretches lay prostrate on the floor, without bed, mattress, or pillow, buried in tattered and filthy blankets, which, huddled round them as they lay strewed about, left hardly space to move upon the floor” (70). Kemble’s anxiety over serving as helpless audience for such spectacles is communicated narratively via cycles of professed truthfulness followed by an uneasy questioning of that truthfulness. She insists early in the journal, “Now, E[izabeth], I have no intention of telling you a onesided story, or concealing from you what are cited as the advantages which these poor people possess” (62-63), only to refer to the journal near its closing as “a. . . most miserably. . . imperfect account” (341). She promises Elizabeth, “I always give you an exact report of any conversation I may have with any of the people” (274); yet, in describing the horrific infirmary conditions, she questions, “but how shall I describe to you the spectacle which was presented to me on entering?” (131).

Moreover, when describing the sight of Molly, “who, it seems is subject to those fits” that the local physician “attribute[s] to nervous disorder, bought on by frequent childbearing” (76), Kemble interrupts her own narration to question its accuracy:

This woman [Molly] is young, I suppose at the outside not thirty, and her sister [Chloe] informed me that she had had ten children—ten children, E[izabeth]! Fits and hard labor in the field, unpaid labor, labor exacted with stripes—how do you fancy that? I wonder if my mere narration can make your blood boil as the facts did mine? (76)

In its attempt to process the harsh reality of Molly’s experience via self-narrative, this passage engages what Kemble would call “passionate, emotional” overtones and thus
exhibits the very kind of “dramatic” discourse that Kemble deemed most “real” in humanity (Kemble, *NUSSP* 3). In spite of these passionate gestures toward the real, however, this passage, in its distinction between “mere narration” and “the facts,” reiterates Kemble’s ongoing concern with the gaps between representation and reality. The gaps she is concerned with in this case are those existing among Molly’s experience, Kemble’s understanding of it, and the journal’s narrative depiction of it. Such gaps, according to Smith, are evidence of the ways that “autobiographical storytelling” functions as “performativity” (‘Performativity’ 110). Building on Judith Butler’s work in *Gender Trouble* (1990), Smith asserts that “the autobiographical subject finds him/herself on multiple stages simultaneously, called to heterogeneous recitations of identity. These multiple calls never align perfectly. Rather, they create spaces or gaps, ruptures, [and] unstable boundaries” (110). Smith’s discussion of identity here correlates with Marcus’s and Nussbaum’s ideas regarding unstable, hybrid autobiographical forms. According to Nussbaum, it is through such unstable forms that autobiography “escape[s] … categories” and “tell[s] the ‘truth’ of experience” (“Politics” 165). Thus, we see that autobiographical gaps—despite Kemble’s frequent worry over them—can be valued as productive spaces in processes of narrative truth-telling.

In the case of *JRG P*, such truth-telling requires narrative engagement with “doubled discourse” (Buss 105-06), since this discourse best reflects Kemble’s vexed cultural position as an influential performer who is also an immobilized spectator. In this way, Kemble’s *JRG P* differs substantially from Martineau’s *RWT*. Whereas both authors find themselves on “multiple stages” (writing as they do to audiences spanning boundaries of class, race, gender, and continent), the roles they play, and thus, the
identities their narratives relate, are quite different: Martineau’s *RWT* (as I argued in Chapter 1) performs authority via self-narration of celebrity and enacts authenticity via hybrid narrative form. Kemble’s *JRGP*, by contrast, performs authority via vocal experimentation—e.g., self-conscious, sarcastic tones and, ultimately, the assumption of the black voice; and it enacts authenticity, ironically, via dramatics—specifically, via the self-narration of daily plantation life as an act composed of players and audiences. This act—in its liminal location between the dramatic/real and the theatrical/false (to return to Kemble’s dichotomy)—creates in Kemble’s narrative a pronounced tension between her recurring anxiety over autobiographical “gaps” (Smith, “Performativity” 110) and the potential for those gaps to yield narrative truth-telling of her own and her slaves’ identities.

In narrating her role as spectator of a variety of slave acts, for instance, Kemble’s apprehensive voice is often peppered with sarcasm, which results in a kind of dark, yet comic, relief that heightens her critique of the slave system’s artifice—reflecting her upper-middle class status at the same time that it hints at her powerlessness in the system. During her stay at a Charleston hotel, en route to Georgia, Kemble narrates words exchanged between herself and “a tiresome worthy old gentleman” excited to be in the company of “Mr. and Mrs. Butler:”

[He asked me], among other things, when he had ascertained that I had never before been to the South: “How I liked the appearance of ‘our blackies’ (the Negroes)?—no want of cheerfulness, no despondency, or misery in their appearance, eh, madam?” As I thought this was rather begging the question, I did not trouble the gentleman with my impressions. He was a Scotchman, and his adoption of “our blackies” was, by his own account, rather recent, to be so perfectly satisfactory; at least, so it seems to me, who have some small prejudices in favor of freedom and justice yet to overcome before I can enter into all the merits
of this beneficent system, so productive of cheerfulness and contentment in those whom it condemns to perpetual degradation. (46)

Kemble’s dry sarcasm here—particularly, her labeling slavery a “beneficent system” that produces “cheerfulness and contentment”—clearly indicates her critique of the happy slave narrative, a critique that occurs repeatedly throughout the journal (70, 99, 131).

Specifically, Kemble’s ongoing efforts to revise the problematic happy slave narrative occur in narrative emphases on Butler’s and his estate management’s routinely neglectful treatment of slaves. For instance, she discusses the carelessness of the estate overseer, Mr. O—, and its former manager, Mr. K[ing]—who, she explains, wishes to buy one of Butler’s slaves named Joe. Kemble knows that, should the sale succeed, Joe would be forced to relocate to Alabama, leaving behind his wife, Psyche, and their children. Notice how the parenthetical sarcasm of the following passage, which illustrates Kemble’s concern for Joe’s impending sale, distinguishes her sympathy from the overseer’s and manager’s rashness:

I could hardly sit still for the nervous distress which every thought of these poor people filled me with. As [Mr. O—] sat down . . . , I said to him: “Have you seen Joe this afternoon, Mr. O—?” (I give you our conversation as it took place.)

“Yes, ma’am; he is a great deal happier than he was this morning.”

“Why, how is that?” asked I, eagerly.

“Oh, he is not going to Alabama. Mr. K[ing] heard that he had kicked up a fuss about it” (being in despair at being torn from one’s wife and children is called *kicking up a fuss*; this is a sample of overseer appreciation of human feelings), “and said that if the fellow wasn’t willing to go with him, he did not wish to be bothered with any niggers down there who were to be troublesome, so he might stay behind.”

“And does Psyche know this?”

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90 According to Scott, this passage “was not included in the original edition of JRGP but instead is part of a collection of letters Kemble wrote to Harriet St. Leger once she arrived on Butler Island” (12). Scott includes Kemble’s letters to St. Leger in his edition of JRGP because, he explains, “they give a vivid picture of the journey from Philadelphia to Georgia in late December 1838; and because they effectively fill the gap that would otherwise exist between the first chapter of JRGP and the succeeding ones. These letters were originally published in Kemble’s *Records of Later Life* I.170-218” (12).
“Yes, ma’am, I suppose so.” (138)

This sarcastic critique of slaves’ happiness, and of their general welfare, extends into a critique of Kemble’s own circumstances—again, in a way that reveals her engagement with the hegemonic discourse of aesthetics (Foster and Mills 5). In describing her and Mr. Butler’s house on Butler Island, for example, she communicates her abhorrence of its “décor” in the following passage, narrated with an air of British snobbery:

Of our three apartments, one is our sitting, eating, and living room, and is sixteen feet by fifteen. The walls are plastered indeed, but neither painted nor papered; it is divided from our bedroom (a similarly elegant and comfortable chamber) by a dingy wooden partition covered all over with hooks, pegs, and nails, to which hats, caps, keys, etc., etc., are suspended in graceful irregularity. The doors open by wooden latches, raised by means of small bits of packthread—I imagine, the same primitive order of fastening celebrated in the touching chronicle of Red Riding Hood; how they shut I will not attempt to describe as the shutting of a door is a process of extremely rare occurrence throughout the whole Southern country. . . . Such being our abode, I think you will allow there is little danger of my being dazzled by the luxurious splendors of a Southern slave residence. (64)

This passage is important for the way it sets the stage for the ongoing domestic violence to slave women that Kemble unearths and narrates during her stay on both Butler and St. Simon’s Islands. First, in its reference to “Red Riding Hood,” the passage conjures up images of the ravishing of unsuspecting females; and second, in its lamenting the lack of privacy—due to the rare “shutting of a door” in the South—it reflects Kemble’s general dismissal of American civility at the same time that it fashions her as sympathetic to the slave women’s plight. Because of her home’s always-open doors, Kemble is—like the slaves surrounding her—ceaselessly subject to the public gaze; yet, as long as she resides on her husband’s Georgian plantations, her “public” consists mainly of the black slave men and women of whom she is mistress.
It is in Kemble’s view of herself and her slave public as sharing spectator and performer roles—and, more generally, in her reliance on the framework of the stage as a primary medium of perception and reflection—that we see a distinct disconnection between her journal’s narrative voices and strategies and those of Martineau’s *RTW*. For, as Pope-Hennessy has pointed out, Martineau “thought there was something incurably vulgar about [the Kemble] passion” (178); and likewise, Kemble detested the practices of anti-passionate, scientific, business-like narration found in much of Martineau’s autobiographical canon. On more than one occasion in her *JRGP* (54, 65, 116), Kemble entreats her reader to acknowledge yet “another of Miss Martineau’s mistakes” (65) in travel writing, most of which are rooted in Martineau’s devotion to “fact hunting”:

Is it not rather curious that Miss Martineau should have mentioned the erection of a steam mill for threshing rice somewhere in the vicinity of Charleston as a singular novelty …? Now on this estate alone there are three threshing mills …. I therefore am at a loss to understand what made her hail the erection of the one at Charleston as likely to produce such immediate and happy results. By-the-by—of the misstatements, or rather mistakes, for they are such, in her books, with regard to certain facts—her only disadvantage in acquiring information was not by any means that natural infirmity [partial deafness] on which the periodical press, both here and in England, has commented with so much brutality. She had the misfortune to possess, too, that unsuspecting reliance upon the truth of others … and, what is more … she was purposely misled by the persons to whom she addressed her inquiries, who did not scruple to disgrace themselves by imposing in the grossest manner upon her credulity and anxiety to obtain information. It is a knowledge of this very shameful proceeding which has made me most especially anxious to avoid *fact hunting*. I might fill my letters to you with accounts received from others, but, as I am aware of the risk which I run in so doing, I shall furnish you with no details but those which come under my own immediate observation. (*JRGP* 54)

This passage shows that although both Kemble and “Miss Martineau” share goals of accuracy and authenticity in crafting their American self-narratives, they pursue that goal far differently. Martineau’s Enlightenment background predisposes her to the
investigative tradition of “fact hunting” just as Kemble’s theatrical upbringing propels her toward the practice of dramatizing. Thus, the ever-confident Martineau incorporates “fair anecdotal specimens” into her RWT in a way that reflects her perception of the factuality of cultural stories communicated to her by a number of Americans (RWT 2.79, 2.82). The increasingly self-conscious Kemble, on the other hand, prefaces her narration of conversations amongst herself, her slaves, and plantation owners with defensive, parenthetical asides to the reader, such as “(I give you our conversation as it took place)” and “(I give you our exact dialogue)” (JRGP 138, 249).91

In sum, in the case of JRGP, the “exact” and the “real” are necessarily rooted in personal eyewitness experience—experience that Kemble sets in opposition to impersonal fact-hunting—and are related to narrative authenticity by way of bodily and textual performance. The journal is concerned with bodily performances of the real on multiple intradiegetic levels, including, for instance, the reality of white woman’s experience in a colonial system; and the reality of slave women’s experiences, as related to Kemble. Similarly, the journal invokes textual performances of authenticity on multiple extradiegetic levels, including Kemble’s narration of her own and the slaves’ experiences; her manipulation of the letter form to foster a carefully circumscribed, deliberately personal relationship with a supposedly singular American reader (her friend Elizabeth); and her use of that personal relationship to pull ethically at plural transatlantic audiences and to contribute to public discussions over antebellum American slavery.

Kemble’s concern over audience reception of her narrative’s authenticity resonates with her lifelong commentary on the actor’s plight—a commentary that, as

91 In sum, Kemble’s Romantic emphases on self and experience in JRGP (and in her autobiographical canon in general) run counter to Martineau’s Enlightenment predisposition toward textual data and scholarly apparatus.
discussed briefly in Part I of this chapter, exhibits vexed attitudes toward categories of
dramatic and (especially) theatrical. According to her first journal, *Journal of a
Residence in America* (1835), Kemble’s biggest fault with the acting profession—i.e., the
theatrical—is that it “originates nothing; it lacks, therefore, the grand faculty which all
other arts possess—creation. An actor is at the best but the filler up of the outline
designed by another,—the expounder, as it were, of things which another has set down”
(qtd. in Clinton 58). Though of course, Kemble’s theory here refers specifically to the
tradition of stage-acting, it is clear, in her later introduction to *NUSSP*, that she finds it
applicable to humanity and general daily life (3-5). Thus, the idea that actors are mere
performers of the scripts created by another is analogous to the way that oppressed
peoples—which, in *JRGP*, include African-American slaves and white woman—
experience a lack of creationary power over their own identities and thus are forced to
perform, i.e., to behave and speak in accordance to, cultural dictates.

Yet, ironically, it is in Kemble’s steadfast resistance to her culturally-dictated role
of slave mistress\(^\text{92}\)—and the complex double-positioning it entails—that we find her
praising the theatrical profession for its liberating qualities. When narrating her attempts
to prevent the members of a slave family from being sold to separate plantations, for
instance, she compares the futility of her present situation to the agency of her past
profession.

> Then the great power and privilege I had foregone of earning money by
> my own labor occurred to me, and I think, for the first time in my life, my
> past profession assumed an aspect that arrested my thoughts most

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\(^{92}\) By stating that the role of slave mistress is “culturally-dictated,” I do not mean to dismiss the fact that
Kemble *chose* to marry Butler and thus, in some sense, *chose* to become mistress of his slaves (though
critics do, for the most part, agree that Kemble knew nothing of Butler’s plantations at the time of
marriage). Rather, I mean to refer to Sharpe’s notion of the colonial Englishwoman’s double-positioning,
discussed earlier in this chapter.
seriously. For the last four years of my life that preceded my marriage I literally coined money, and never until this moment, I think, did I reflect on the great means of good, to myself and others, that I so gladly agreed to give up forever for a maintenance by the unpaid labor of slaves—people toiling not only unpaid, but under the bitter conditions the bare contemplation of which was then wringing my heart. (JRGP 139)

In its description of acting not only as a means for “coining money” but also for providing “great . . . good, to myself and others,” this passage articulates Kemble’s lifelong passion for the dramatic and the theatrical, despite her insistence on elevating the former as genuine and denigrating the latter as artificial. Moreover, as Blake Allmendinger has pointed out, the passage also indicates Kemble’s realization that she has relinquished the role of “obedient daughter in the theater” only to assume one of “submissive wife in the home” (509), wife who is complicit by marriage in the slaveholding system she so thoroughly detests. She is, however, unwilling to remain submissive without a fight—a fight that, for her, is public, textual, and not a little “theatrical” in its prose, which is both audience-aware and emotional (dramatic). Indeed, Kemble’s double-position may initially complicate her textual authority—since she is complicit in slaveholding, yet proclaims dramatically at the start of the journal, “Assuredly I am going [to Georgia] prejudiced against slavery, for I am an Englishwoman, in whom the absence of such a prejudice would be disgraceful” (11).

However, her cultural position—specifically, her roles as slave master’s wife and celebrity actress—ultimately provides the content (firsthand experience of slavery) and method (framework of performance) she needs to compose and publish a politically-charged eyewitness account of the slave system’s realities.

The complicated ways in which Kemble’s narration of these realities are affected by her acting career and her overall public reputation raise the important question, what is
the relationship between celebrity and credibility? That is, how does Kemble’s stage-actor-fame affect her credibility as cultural spokesperson in JRGP? As previously discussed, the actress’s voice has already secured “a place in the public arena” (G. Marshall 173), which makes audiences more likely to seek out and receive her journal’s message. Whether or not audiences “buy” the credibility of that message is another story—for, as Maria Frawley has argued, “the institution through which Victorian women travel writers established credibility as cultural spokespersons was the publishing industry” (Wider 27). Unlike Martineau before her, Kemble’s celebrity is not rooted in the successful publication of treatises in political economy.\(^93\) Kemble may have shared the company of British and American greats ranging from Queen Victoria to Daniel Boone, Daniel Webster, and Henry Clay (Dudden 35), but her presence amongst these celebrities most often consisted of her performing for them as they gazed at her, a gaze that Kemble herself described as enacting “violence . . . to womanly dignity and decorum” (Clinton 30-31).\(^94\) Having descended from a dynastic theatrical family, Kemble the actress warranted the same kind of aristocratic treatment received by her aunt Siddons; such treatment, however, was tempered by a host of sociopolitical factors facing

\(^{93}\) As discussed in my first chapter, Martineau’s IPE outsold those of masculine literary and political celebrities of the 1830s, including Thomas Carlyle and J.S. Mill (see Orazem, p. 21). It is also important to note here that, by the time Kemble published her JRGP, she had already published several volumes each of memoirs, plays, and poems—none of which met with critical acclaim. In fact, her first journal, The Journal of Frances Anne Kemble (publ. 1835; it was retitled Journal of a Residence in America in its second edition) sold very well but was parodied and perceived in New York (according to Catherine Sedgwick) as “scandalous” “nonsense” that “shows a want of tact, judgment, and good sense” (qtd. in Jenkins 417).

\(^{94}\) Dudden explains how Kemble “had to be a heroine to mixed audiences, since women characteristically attended the theatre in the company of men, and men still constituted the largest part of the theatre audience” (31). Much interesting work has been done on Kemble’s thoughts regarding what she called “public personal exhibition” of acting (Clinton 30)—particularly, critics have examined her feminization of the acting profession and her complication of public images of traditional Victorian womanhood. For more information, see Corbett, Dudden, and especially Davis, whose Actresses as Working Women: Their Social Identity in Victorian Culture expounds upon what she terms “the complicated social existence of [Victorian] actresses” (xi).
actresses of Kemble’s time. As Tracy Davis has argued, factors including “the growing ‘surplus’ of women needing employment, the expansion of the theatrical industry, changing attitudes to the theatre, and the gentrification of the upper ranks of the profession” meant that “the advantages of middle-class respectability” attributed to the Victorian stage “were actually enjoyed by very few performers—and even fewer women” (xiii). Corbett agrees, noting that, while some actresses “believed themselves to be and had been treated as ladies,” others were regarded by audiences “as servant[s] rather than as equal[s],” were “neither respected nor respectable,” and participated in work that was “not valued by their audience” (115).

This notion of the “value” of Kemble’s work—both onstage and off—is crucial to a reading of the JRGP’s importance as an audience-aware autobiographical narrative. In terms of her onstage work, we know that Chief Justice Marshall was “reduced to tears” and John Quincy Adams was “at a loss to express the depth of his admiration” for Kemble’s performance (Dudden 35-6). Such emotional responses certainly testify to the actress’s immense talent and, perhaps, even to audience perceptions of her onstage work as valued; but audiences’ perceiving Kemble as a talented actress is far different from their perceiving her as a credible political analyst. Indeed, Kemble was widely accustomed to and even held power over public theatre audiences consisting of men and women. Similarly, despite her decision to direct her political self-narrative toward a singular, private, female audience, we see her infuse that narrative with a keen awareness of broad readership. In its self-narration of Kemble as allied with white, aristocratic, supremacy as she is with the black slaves subject to that supremacy, for instance, the journal speaks to a readership that crosses boundaries of race and class. In order to better
understand the journal’s vexed, audience-aware narration—and, more importantly, the ways in which this narration acts upon readers—we need to take a closer look at a few of the many textual passages depicting the cycles of cultural performance that Kemble perceives as formative to her eyewitness experience of slavery.

III. The daunting task of telling “a still more dismal story”:

Cultural Role-Playing and the Polyvocal Narration of Oppressive Systems

Kemble’s self-narration of slavery as composed of largely unnatural cultural performances forges a significant link between her analysis of life on the Butler plantations and her worldview of “humanity” as possessing qualities of the “dramatic” (real) and the “theatrical” (false) (NUSSP 3-4). Her awareness of the artifice of slavery’s complicated social codes is evident not only in those scenes depicting her being watched by slave audiences or—conversely—sitting as audience for what she calls “sovereign white men” (JRG 82), but also in scenes that describe her response to slave performances. Notice the range of emotional responses in the following passage, wherein Kemble describes her sighting of slaves performing “Jim Crow”:

Oh, my dear E[lizabeth], I have seen Jim Crow—the veritable James: all the contortions, and springs, and flings, and kicks, and capers you have been beguiled into accepting as indicative of him are spurious, faint, feeble, impotent—in a word, pale Northern reproductions of that ineffable black conception. It is impossible for words to describe the things these people did with their bodies, and, above all, with their faces, the whites of their eyes, and the whites of their teeth. The languishing elegance of some—the painstaking laboriousness of others—above all, the feats of a certain enthusiastic banjo player, who seemed to me to thump his instrument with every part of his body at once, at last so utterly overcame any attempt at decorous gravity on my part that I was obliged to secede; and, considering what the atmosphere was that we inhaled during the
exhibition, it is only wonderful to me that we were not made ill by the
double effort not to laugh, and, if possible, not to breathe. (131)

This passage is important for two major reasons: it crystallizes Kemble’s argument that
the dramatic and theatrical should be held in tension; and it shows Kemble perceiving this
tension in her surroundings and using it to gauge the appropriateness of her response as
spectator. Her reflection on slaves’ performing the Jim Crow here reveals her sense of its
genuineness, since it makes “pale Northern reproductions” seem “spurious, faint, feeble,
impotent.” Nonetheless, because she sees the slaves’ performance through the lens of
white, Northern imitation—which is, of course, the lens through which the mere words
“Jim Crow” function as a racial epithet—she is bewildered at the prospect of processing
its authenticity.

Here Roach’s theory of cultural surrogation is extremely helpful: like “theatrical
doubling,” explains Roach, surrogation operates in several modes, one of which involves
“one actor play[ing] more than one role” and thus wearing “two (or more) masks” (54).
Roach illustrates this mode of surrogation through the example of black minstrelsy, i.e.,
those “Northern reproductions” with which Kemble is most familiar. “In the doubling
accomplished by blackfaced minstrelsy,” Roach theorizes, “one actor wears two distinct
masks—the mask of blackness on the surface and the mask of whiteness underneath,
which the printed programs for minstrel shows ostentatiously feature in portraits of the
performers out of makeup, acting white” (54). The result of this layered masking, he
continues, is that “the doubled African American remains ventriloquized” (54). What
happens in the above scene is that the theatricality of slaves’ Jim Crow performance is

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95 Kemble’s discussion here of what she “inhale[d]” and of how difficult it was “not to breathe” most likely
reflects the stench she so often complained of during her stay in the South—that resulting from the slaves’
lack of hygiene (JRGP 61, 70).
defamiliarized for Kemble through its absence of ventriloquism and presence of authenticity. Thus, it is in this scene that we most clearly see a revaluing of the theatrical, audience-aware performance for its ability to call attention to the dramatic and authentic.

In processes of narrating such cultural performances as the Jim Crow, Kemble’s self-conscious, sarcastic tones are intermittently consumed by her important, yet not unproblematic, role as (in Roach’s terms) “surrogate” for black slave culture. For, despite her admitted difficulties in processing the authenticity of “the veritable James,” Kemble’s curiosity about slaves’ daily realities gradually leads her to assume the voices of female slaves in order to tell their stories. Here, we find that Kemble’s narration of eyewitness experience gives way to surrogation, a process which—defined specifically by Roach as “the theatrical principle of substitution of one persona for another” (53)—involves her assumption of slaves’ voices in order to “affirm the rites of collective memory” that constitute their storytelling. In so engaging these voices, Kemble’s narrative performs slave experience for its transatlantic audience, thus presenting an “opposition to the official voice of history” that has the potential, in Roach’s terms, to “silently resist the dominant public transcript” of slavery in the late 1830s Georgia Sea Islands (58-59).

The problem with the text’s surrogate performance, as Roach’s theory would suggest, is that the “surrogated original”—in this case, the black woman’s voice and, with

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96 It is important to note here that, although Kemble’s narrative shares with Martineau’s an emphasis on cultural storytelling, Kemble does not find stories via fact-hunting (as does Martineau). For Kemble, there is no active pursuit for information (in fact, there is often an active escape from information/reality—in the forms of Kemble’s long walks, horseback riding in the country, etc., etc.). In Kemble’s case, the facts come to her in the forms of female slaves, begging to be heard.

97 For my purposes in this chapter, Kemble’s “surrogation” of slave women’s stories is, at first (on the intradiegetic level), merely transcription: she listens to and records their stories. Once *JRGP* is published, this transcription is transformed into surrogation, since Kemble’s voice then represents those of slaves in the public sphere.
it, her story—disappears into white speech and thus is essentially ventriloquized (54).

However, as opposed to the process of black minstrelsy described above, Kemble’s surrogation has a different goal—for, she admits, “with shame and grief of heart I say it, by [the slaves’] unpaid labor I live—their nakedness clothes me, and their heavy toil maintains me in luxurious idleness. Surely the least I can do is to hear these, my most injured benefactors” (108). Kemble’s intention to give her “most injured benefactors” a hearing—and ultimately, to transcribe their stories for public reading—reveals the vexed nature of her role as surrogate. On one hand, her narrating slave women’s stories for them necessarily silences their voices; yet, on the other, this silencing occurs not with the goal of performative mockery (as in black-faced minstrelsy), but with the objective of validating these women’s experiences.

Indeed, as Booth has pointed out, Kemble’s autobiography often exhibits “contradictory projections of persona,” wherein the author “writes as though, in spite of her command of Queen’s English, her voice will be heard as . . . a slave’s dialect” (A. Booth 229). Such contradictions are visible in Kemble’s narrative discussion of the gaps between white words and black speech. Notice how, in the following narrative exchange between Kemble and “Old House Molly”—a St. Simon’s Island slave woman who is a "wonderfully intelligent, active, energetic creature, though considerably over seventy years old” (251)—Kemble parenthetically inserts “Queen’s English” (A. Booth 229) to clarify Molly’s words, which are then further clarified by Scott’s editorial notes. Kemble writes: “[Molly] was talking to me about her former master, Major [Butler—Pierce’s father], and what she was pleased to call the *revelation* war (i.e., revolution war), during which that gentleman . . . was a major in the British army; but having married a great
Carolina heiress, and become proprietor of these plantations, sided with the country of his adoption . . .” (251). At this point in Scott’s edition of the narrative, readers are directed toward a footnote, which helpfully explains that “Molly was probably confusing the revolutionary War with the War of 1812; it was during the latter struggle that the British occupied St. Simons Island and took away with them three hundred slaves, some of which, no doubt, were Major Butler’s” (251). Toward the end of her summary of Molly’s story, Kemble briefly but directly quotes—or, as Roach would say, ventriloquizes—the old woman as saying, “‘De British,’ said Molly, ‘make old massa run about bery much in de great revelation war’” (251).

This mixing of direct and indirect discourse—with the latter largely prevailing over the former—constitutes the template for Kemble’s surrogation of black women’s stories. That is, despite her emphases on exactness throughout the journal (138, 249, 274), she communicates slaves’ stories not in their exact words but in her own—via summary and paraphrase, peppered with occasional direct quotes for authenticity. The chief contradiction of Kemble’s storytelling technique lies in her vexed response to Molly’s method: at once praising and criticizing Molly for the “grotesque lingo” of her “interest[ing]” account, which, Kemble snobbishly admits, “once or twice nearly sent me into convulsions of laughing,” Kemble elicits from an embarrassed Molly an apology “with great gravity for her mispronunciation” and a modest suggestion “that white words were impossible to the organs of speech of black folks” (251). This apology, Kemble laments, is grounded in Molly’s steadfast belief in the white supremacist theory of blacks’ “incorrigible baseness”; subsequently, Kemble convinces “the worthy old Negress that want of training, and not any absolute original impotence, was the reason
why she disfigured the *white words*, for which she had such a profound respect” (252).98

The irony here is that, despite Kemble’s sarcastic treatment of the naïve Molly’s “profound respect” for white words, she, too, values those words; for, as Fox-Genovese has argued, “from first to last, England affords the standards by which [Kemble] judges everything American. From first to last England figures as the sign of everything she values” (xvi). Accordingly, when her autobiography shifts from singular to plural—when its task of narrating Kemble’s plantation experience broadens to include the collective experience of slave women—black words are minimized and the white, female, voice of Empire, a voice that is simultaneously condescending and sympathetic, reigns supreme.

Thus, as the journal progresses, we find in slaves’ recurring visits to Kemble yet another ongoing scene of performer-audience interaction, one in which performer and audience merge in the dramatic tones of Kemble’s white voice. Kemble describes the nature of her “busy” schedule as listener to—and thus, audience for—the countless slave women’s stories, which she summarizes succinctly for Elizabeth. She writes, “I really never was so busy in all my life as I am here. . . . No time, no place, affords me a respite from my innumerable petitioners; and whether I be asleep or awake, reading, eating, or walking—in the kitchen, my bedroom, or the parlor—they flock in with urgent entreaties and pitiful stories . . .” (108). Kemble’s first encounter with a slave’s story is that of Joe’s wife, the “dingy mulatto” named Psyche (discussed in Part II of this chapter),

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98 Forever sitting in judgment on American culture, Kemble here inserts into her narrative an extended comparative analysis of the aesthetics of American dialects. She concludes that “slavish speech . . . is distinctly perceptible in the utterances of all Southerners, particularly of the women. . . . The Yankee twang of the regular down-Easter is not more easily detected by any ear . . . than the thick Negro speech of the Southerners: neither is lovely or melodious; but, though the Puritan snuffle is the harsher of the two, the slave *slobber* of the language is the more ignoble, in spite of the softer voices of the pretty Southern women who utter it” (252).
whose petitions to Kemble “form an admirable illustration for my observation of all the
miseries of which this accursed system of slavery is the cause” (132-33). She explains: “I
felt the weight of an unimagined guilt upon my conscience; and yet, God knows, this
feeling of self-condemnation is very gratuitous on my part, since when I married Mr.
[Butler] I knew nothing of these dreadful possessions of his, and even if I had I should
have been much puzzled to have formed any idea of the state of things in which I now
find myself plunged” (138). Thus, it is Psyche’s story—specifically, its relation of the
female slave’s frustration over the prospective sale of her husband and children—that
first overwhelms Kemble with guilt, not only regarding her inability to help Psyche, but
also concerning her ignorance of slavery at large.

Psyche’s story is the first of many slave women’s stories that begins to alert
Kemble to the many layers of subordinate narratives lying beneath the white man’s
“master narrative” of slavery. According to Robert Fulford’s definition, a “master
narrative” always “speaks with the confidence of unalterable and unassailable truth” and
serves as a “dwelling place” wherein “a culture, its possibilities, and the identities of its
individuals are defined” (31-32). What this master narrative does is establish the
conventionally unquestioned “truth” of the slave system and its workings, a truth that, as
Foucault has observed, is “produced” and is “a thing of this world,” “a type of discourse
which [a society] accepts and makes function as true” (131-32). According to Kemble,
this culturally-produced truth renders the slavery narrative a tragic “dwelling place”
(Fulford 32) for those it marginalizes, as their identities are forged for them by an
oppressive system that grossly distorts their humanity. Indeed, Fulford warns that the
master narrative “is often wrong in significant ways;” namely, it tends to “distort facts” and “leave out crucial elements” (31-33).

In Kemble’s journal, such distortions and omissions are clearly evident in the unwillingness of her husband to listen to her retellings of the slave women’s tragic stories. Instead of listening, Kemble explains, Mr. Butler is “annoyed at the number of pitiful and horrible stories of misery and oppression. . . which have come to my knowledge since I have been here” and, furthermore, he hopes that “their expression may be silenced” by his “angry exclamations of: ‘Why do you listen to such stuff?’ or ‘Why do you believe such trash? Don’t you know the niggers are all d—d liars?’” (Kemble, JRGP 210).99 Butler’s words here express what Roach calls the “public performance of forgetting,” a kind of utterance historically enacted by the white colonizer who, when reminded of his venture, vainly recalls only positive emotion and affection between cultures (51-52). Additionally, Butler’s anger with Kemble reveals his apprehension over the effects of her performative speech act: as J.L. Austin has theorized, in some cases, “to say something is to do something” (147). In Kemble’s case, her verbal reports to Butler of slave women’s “pitiful and horrible stories” (JRG 210) accomplish the action of bringing these stories into existence, an action which, in turn, attracts countless slaves to Kemble for her powers of validation. Thus, in anxiously reporting Butler’s refusal to acknowledge the existence of alternative narratives, Kemble makes clear her desire to validate them—albeit through the process of surrogation—at the same time that she

99 Butler’s resistance to slave women’s stories engages interestingly with Nussbaum’s point regarding the consequences of the historically-located subject’s “entering into a culture’s language and symbol system.” Once the subject [for the purposes of this comparison, the slave woman] is in this “system,” Nussbaum explains, her “subjectivity” is “placed in contradiction among dominant ideologies while those ideologies simultaneously work to produce and hold in place a unified subject. In order to preserve the existing subject positions, individual subjects are discouraged from attending to the ways in which the discourses are incongruent” (“Politics” 162).
underscores the constructedness of the system of slavery itself. As the journal textually performs the dreadful stories of slave women who confide in Kemble and repeats Butler’s insistence that these narratives do not exist, it effectively complicates and problematizes the reigning “version” of slaveholding practices in the antebellum Georgia Sea Islands.

Kemble unearths a significant problem in slavery’s master narrative, for instance, by summarizing what she considers the otherwise ignored physical maltreatment—including the sexual abuse—of female slaves on her husband’s plantation. She is visited within the period of a single day by “Charlotte and Judy . . . . Edie, Louisa, and Diana,” during which time she learns how, at the mercy of one of the plantation’s slave drivers, Louisa and other ill or pregnant slave women whose poor health prevents them from finishing their field work are punished by being

fastened up by their wrists to a beam or a branch of a tree, their feet barely touching the ground, so as to allow them no purchase for resistance or evasion of the lash, their clothes turned over their heads, and their backs scored with a leather thong, either by the driver himself, or . . any of the men he may choose to summon. . . it might be father, brother, husband, or lover, if the overseer so ordered it. (214-15)

Following Louisa’s horrifying story are those of “Sally, Auber, and Judy,” the last of whom “went mad” after her husband left her for another woman; “while out of her mind.” Kemble reports, “[Judy] escaped into the jungle, and contrived to secrete herself there for some time, but was finally tracked and caught, and brought back and punished by being made to sit, day after day, for hours in the stocks—a severe punishment for a man, but for a woman perfectly barbarous” (238). Judy’s gruesome tale is followed by that of Die, a woman who “had had sixteen children, fourteen of whom were dead” (240)
and then by those of Scylla and Sophy, both of whom had borne children of white men—Scylla, the overseer’s; and Sophy, a slave driver’s (269).

According to Clinton, Kemble’s thorough, yet emotional reporting of such horrifying stories renders her journal “the first eyewitness testimony by a white woman, a plantation mistress, to condemn slavery as a system of institutionalized concubinage” that “not only allowed but did nothing to punish white sexual predators” (15). Indeed, the system allows such horrific acts to go on merely by denying their existence, as is evident in Butler’s refusal to acknowledge the unsettling reality of the slave women’s experience (Kemble, *JRGP* 210). The presence of such denied narratives in the journal corresponds to what Molly Hite calls “the perspectival notion of story,” which, she explains, implies that “the coherence of one line of narration rests on the suppression of any number of ‘other sides,’ alternative versions that might give the same sequence of events an entirely different set of emphases and values” (4).100 As Kemble gradually becomes aware of the unsettling “emphases and values” of the slave women’s narratives—and of the systematic denial that has heretofore kept them hidden—her recounting of the stories becomes more and more anxious. She tells Elizabeth, “I make no comment on these terrible stories, my dear friend . . . I do not wish to add to, or perhaps I ought to say take away from, the effect of such narrations by amplifying the simple horror and misery of their bare details” (*JRGP* 238-39).

Kemble’s mounting anxiousness over the accurate transcription of slave women’s stories (as required by her surrogation process) culminates two-thirds of the way through

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100 Hite connects suppressed narratives to the emergence of feminist narratives, arguing that “the notion that stories inevitably both obscure and encode other stories has been axiomatic to our understanding of narrative since at least the eighteenth century. When construed as repressed or suppressed stories of *the other*, these stories become the enabling conditions for the writing and reading of feminist narrative” (4).
the journal in her narrative act of compiling a concise list, which she refers to as “a sort of daybook where I put down very succinctly the number of people who visit me, their petitions and ailments, and also such special particulars concerning them as seem to me worth recording” (229). Indeed, the passage for March 2, 1839, consists of a list of nine entries containing the key issues surrounding the respective tales of Fanny, Nanny, Leah, Sophy, Sally, Charlotte, Sarah, Sukey, and Molly, each of whom had visited with and confided in Kemble on that particular day. In composing the list, Kemble focuses on the women’s marriages, abuses, and childrearing and/or miscarriages, because, she tells Elizabeth, “I think the number [of children] they bear as compared with the number they rear a fair gauge of the effect of the system on their own health and that of their offspring” (231). Kemble’s use of the list form to relate the slaves’ complaints achieves a sort of “narrative disjunction” which, according to Juncker, “consciously exploit[s] the accepted and/or expected explosion of narrative linearity for [Kemble’s] own purposes of argumentation” (132). Indeed, Kemble’s incorporation of the list builds authority by way of its likeness to the objective, scientific forms of much of the public, mostly masculine nonfiction prose of her day—including, for instance, Martineau’s neatly categorized *Autobiography* (1877) and the list-laden texts of both Ruskin (*Modern Painters*, 1843-60; *The Stones of Venice*, 1851-53) and Carlyle (*Shooting Niagara, and After?*, 1867). Yet, on the other hand, Kemble’s authoritative interruption of her journal’s linearity—via a two-page list of the system’s measurable effects—also testifies to her growing difficulties in engaging the dramatic (emotional) in her narration of traumatic plantation events.

For instance, of the list’s nine evidentiary stories, only a select few are narrated (at least partially) in the black speech of the teller—a narrative gesture which, I argue,
reveals Kemble’s increasingly strained efforts to authenticate the list’s (and the journal’s) contents. One of those few is the story of Sophy, who tells Kemble of her wretched experience at “Five Pound,” a nearby swamp where women who have just borne children (and who, thus, cannot labor long in the fields) are sent to “recovery” (269-70).

Kemble summarizes:

Sophy went on to say that Isaac was her son by driver Morris, who had forced her while she was in her miserable exile at Five Pound. Almost beyond my patience with this string of detestable details, I exclaimed—foolishly enough, heaven knows: “Ah! but don’t you know—did nobody ever tell or teach any of you that it is a sin to live with men who are not your husbands?”

Alas! E[liabeth], what could the poor creature answer but what she did, seizing me at the same time vehemently by the wrist: “Oh yes, missis, we know—we know all about dat well enough; but we do anything to get our poor flesh some rest from de whip; when he made me follow him into de bush, what use me tell him no? he have strength to make me.”

I have written down the woman’s words; I wish I could write down the voice and look of abject misery with which they were spoken. (270).

In this passage’s final words, we see Kemble’s regretful realization that her surrogated version of Sophy’s story is not original and, thus, not entirely authentic. Kemble’s wish to transcribe Sophy’s “voice” and “look” for Elizabeth once again confirms the significance of performer/spectator relationships—and does so in a way that endorses Kemble’s idea of combining “dramatic temperament” with “theatrical talent” at the same time that it complicates her equation of the theatrical with the false (NUSSP 3, 5). That is, Kemble is dissatisfied with her surrogate narration of Sophy’s story because of its undramatic qualities—e.g., its inability to relate to Elizabeth, in a genuine way, the full range of Sophy’s emotion. Through this dissatisfaction, Kemble tacitly suggests that the reader’s understanding of Sophy’s story, and the story’s authenticity in general, would be heightened by her witnessing Sophy’s vocal and bodily sensations—as she would in a
live, *theatrical* performance. Kemble’s endorsement here of the value of both dramatics and theatrics, as it informs her journal’s extradiegetic performance, bears further investigation.

**IV. “They seem. . . absorbed in contemplating me”:**

**Tensions between Private and Public, Dramatic and Theatrical**

Juxtaposed against Kemble’s narration of Sophy’s story is the following tormented reflection, which, again, exposes Kemble’s interest in the relationship between narrative and reality, and also reveals how her text engages qualities of the dramatic *and* the theatrical: “Now, E[izabeth], if I make you sick with these disgusting stories, I cannot help it; they are the life itself here” (269). This observation—in its equation of “stories” with “life itself”—is striking for the way it contradicts Kemble’s concerns with her inability to represent Sophy’s “voice” and “look” (270) and, much earlier in the journal, with the gap between “mere narration” and “the facts” (76). Whereas the bulk of Kemble’s narration in the journal self-consciously laments the gap between narrative and reality (a gap which, as I discussed earlier, can be productive in processes of narrative truth-telling), its final chapters collapse the gap between “stories” and “life,” representation and reality, in a way that provocatively equates narrative and reality and, by extension, suggests that the theatrical is dramatic.

Kemble’s equation of “stories” with “life itself” can be read through White’s theory that “the very distinction between real and imaginary events that is basic to modern discussions of both history and fiction presupposes a notion of reality in which ‘the true’ is identified with ‘the real’ only insofar as it can be shown to possess the
character of narrativity” (6).\textsuperscript{101} Moreover, White clarifies, “the historically real, the past real, is that to which I can be referred only by way of an artifact that is textual in nature” (209). If we value Kemble’s journal as a textual artifact—albeit, one mediated by the generic expectations of the letter and the “discursive constraints” of her superior race/inferior gender double-positioning (Foster and Mills 5; Sharpe 11-12)—we see that her “narrativization” of reality (White 4) is keenly aware of its effects on audiences, particularly, of its potential to “make [the reader] sick” (Kemble, \textit{JRGP} 269). The journal’s capacity for eliciting such feelings from readers is largely due to the narration of its dire content through Kemble’s emotional, dramatic styles, which, by Kemble’s definition, function to heighten the authenticity of narrated events (\textit{NUSSP} 3). Because of the way these audience-aware styles shape narrative substance, the journal’s content is identified with the dramatic “\textit{act} of its delivery” to audiences—to borrow Roland Barthes’s terms (114, my ital.)—and, accordingly, the narrative “operates on a performative plane” (114), in what Kemble might call the realm of the theatrical.

Kemble’s awareness of this potential for authenticity in both dramatic and theatrical performances shapes the narrative of her \textit{JRGP} in several ways. Most literally, it is evident in Kemble’s recurring practice of reading slaves’ performances of “this accursed system” (\textit{JRGP} 132) through the lens of various Shakespearean plays, invoking characters including Othello (121), Iago (121), Oberon (226), Falstaff (287) and—most

\footnote{I acknowledge that Kemble’s narrative practice of list-making, discussed in Part III of this chapter, complicates White’s notion that “the true” can be identified with “the real” only insofar as it is narratable. In her list-making practice, Kemble blatantly interrupts the prose paragraphs of her subjective, linear narrative. Yet, as I have argued, the list-making strategy seems for Kemble a gesture toward objectivity—that is, her list seems to function as a succinct, effective way of recording the truth plantation horrors. Moreover, as White points out, real events do not offer themselves as stories (4) and, “in the historical narrative, it is the content alone that has truth value. All else is ornament” (41). Though it is beyond my purposes here, it would be interesting to read White’s discussion of “ornament” alongside Kemble’s concept of the dramatic.}
frequently—Caliban (216, 252, 302). In addition to these literal references, however, Kemble’s conflicted attitudes over the relationship between theatrics and authenticity characterize what I (and many other critics) deem one of the journal’s most important scenes. When reporting the particulars of her daily writing ritual—one that, like Martineau’s, elicits the attention of onlookers—Kemble describes how the composition of the journal itself takes on a performative nature:

Often in the evening, when my bairns are asleep, and M[argery, the Butlers’ nurse] upstairs keeping watch over them, and I sit writing this daily history for your edification, the door of the great barnlike room is opened stealthily, and one after another, men and women come trooping silently in, their naked feet falling all but inaudibly on the bare boards as they betake themselves to the hearth, where they squat down on their hams in a circle, the bright blaze from the huge pine logs, which is the only light of this half of the room, shining on their sooty limbs and faces, and making them look like a ring of ebony idols surrounding my domestic hearth. I have had as many as fourteen at a time squatting silently there for nearly half an hour, watching me writing at the other end of the room. The candles on my table give only light enough for my own occupation, the firelight illuminates the rest of the apartment; and you cannot imagine anything stranger than the effect of all these glassy whites of eyes and grinning white teeth turned toward me, and shining in the flickering light. I very often take no notice of them at all, and they seem perfectly absorbed in contemplating me. My evening dress probably excites their wonder and admiration no less than my rapid and continuous writing, for which they have sometimes expressed compassion, as if they thought it must be more laborious than hoeing; sometimes at the end of my day’s journal I look up and say suddenly: “Well, what do you want?” when each black figure springs up at once, as if moved by machinery; they all answer: “Me come say ha do (how d’ye do), missis”; and then they troop out as noiselessly as they entered, like a procession of sable dreams, and I go off in search, if possible, of whiter ones. (215-16)

102 Kemble’s comparing slaves to Caliban functions to reiterate her sense of British superiority. Accordingly, she uses the Caliban reference to characterize slaves’ speech (252) and to describe their simplicity (216). For an innovative and very useful reading of Kemble’s principle journals—one that connects Kemble’s collective self-writings with her actress role(s), as in the Tempest, for instance, and her conflicted attitude toward the theatre—see A. Booth, “From Miranda to Prospero” (details in Works Cited).

103 “Bairn” is the Middle English word for child.
Though this fascinating passage raises an abundance of significant issues, its pronounced meditation on performer-spectator relationships is most relevant to my current argument. Kemble writes at length of the “strange[ness] of her audience’s “effect” on her, yet in the very next sentence, claims that she, as performer, “takes no notice of them.” She refers to the slaves as “idols,” yet conveys their worship of her by describing their “wonder and admiration” at both her “evening dress” and her “rapid and continuous writing.” Finally, she relates how, immediately upon her request, they move “as if . . . by machinery,” thus performing their learned scripts of docile deference to the “privileged race” (82). As Booth’s compelling reading of this passage suggests, the scene is “a staged spectacle,” the entirety of which “affirms [Kemble’s] ascendancy in the reader’s eye” as much as in the slaves’ (242-43).

In its degrees of performance, this passage articulates the value of the text’s holding characteristics of the dramatic and the theatrical in tension. For, if we accept the idea that Kemble’s narrative is a “textual artifact” (White 209) that enacts effects on readers—and thus, is itself an actor, of the textual kind—then its performance requires a combination of the dramatic and the theatrical. Kemble’s journal is clearly theatrical—in its “representing passion and emotion” to intra- and extradiegetic audiences (slaves and transatlantic readers) and in its depiction of a range of actors playing the socially-constructed roles that keep the system of American slavery intact. At the same time, however, the journal is dramatic in its very act of creation; it “conceiv[es]” a narrative
that contests false versions of antebellum slavery (particularly, the happy slave narrative) and asks for audiences’ passionate responses in return.\textsuperscript{104}

In Kemble’s terms, because of its use of that “grand faculty . . . creation,” the journal’s contestatory narrative does not act merely as “the filler up of the outline designed by another” (qtd. in Clinton 58). Rather, it acts as a complicator of the reigning “outline”—or shall we say script—of slavery on the Butler plantations. In order for the narrative to perform its desired effects—i.e., to create an awareness of the “detestable [slave] system’s” realities (Kemble, \textit{JRGP} 295)—it needs audiences to read it. In this way, the journal resides in a liminal narrative space, wherein dramatic \textit{and} theatrical qualities are held in tension in order to communicate authenticity. By virtue of her generic choice of the letter and her role as confidante to slave women’s stories, Kemble endorses the private, “sincere,” singular exchange of “emotion and expression” that, according to her, characterizes the dramatic (\textit{NUSSP} 4). However, because her acts of receiving and narrating such emotion and expression are quite public—for, though she writes her (initially) private journal in her private chambers, she is surrounded by an ever-present audience (\textit{JRGP} 108)—the journal is transformed, via its public composition and later, its publication, into the kind of spectacle that Kemble associates with theatrics (Corbett 113).

The narrative’s engagement with the public on various (intra- and extradiegetic) levels is necessary because, as Carolyn Heilbrun taught us, “woman’s selfhood, the right

\textsuperscript{104} Were I to extend this discussion of the journal as textual actor, I would unpack more carefully the ways in which its methods of “acting” shift throughout—as manifest in Kemble’s fluctuating perceptions of narrative’s abilities to convey the reality of slaves’ experience.
to her own story, depends upon her ‘ability to act in the public domain’\textsuperscript{105} (17-18). As demonstrated in Part I of this chapter, Kemble possesses the ability to act in the public domain. Her slaves, by contrast, do not, not only because of the low social status assigned them by slavery, but also because the great majority of them is illiterate and is kept so by the system’s rules. Kemble complains more than once that “the penalties for teaching [slaves to read and write] are very severe—heavy fines, increasing in amount for the first and second offense, and imprisonment for the third” and, as Scott notes, punishment by death was not an impossibility (Kemble, \textit{JRG}P 193-94; J.A. Scott 314). Such punishments underscore the notion that the system is constructed in a way that keeps the oppressed from re-narrating (or re-writing) it—for, as Robin Silberglied asserts, narrative functions as a space in which to reproduce the cultural dominant (in this case, the master narrative of slavery) or to contest it; thus, political change “is ultimately dependent upon telling the story of our lives differently” (159, 174-75). Since they realize that the system will not let them achieve such a rewriting themselves, the slave women call upon Kemble to perform it for them, a call which, as discussed in Part III of this chapter, results in a cyclical process of narrative surrogation by transcription.

Kemble writes: “as [Venus] took her departure, the vacant space she left on the other side of my writing table was immediately filled by another black figure” with yet another story to tell (\textit{JRG}P 245). Mr. Butler, of course, does not hesitate to inform his wife that her transcriptive performance is “an element of danger to the ‘institution’” and, accordingly, he begins to punish those slaves whom he knows have confided in her (210-11).

In documenting Butler’s perception of slave women’s dismal stories as a “danger” to the institution (211), Kemble’s narrative participates in what Edward Said terms a “contrapuntal” understanding of the master narrative’s constructedness and of the existence “of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts” (51). In Said’s terms—which themselves engage the performative by suggesting the potential for discourse to “act”—Kemble’s narrative is composed of the author’s racially dominant discourse acting together with the slave women’s collective self-histories, whereas Butler’s dominant discourse clearly acts against them. By discussing the “togetherness” of Kemble’s and slave women’s discourses in the journal, I am by no means attempting to make the utopic statement that Kemble and the slave women work together to transform the hegemonic narrative of American slavery—since, as Booth emphasizes in her analysis of the journal, the idea of “interracial sisterhood” is “problematic in any case” (241). Rather, I mean to suggest that the space of autobiography, which is itself “a means of renegotiating identity” (Gale and Gardner 3), provides a medium through which Kemble challenges not only the culturally-prescribed boundaries of her own identity but also those of the slave women, as she surrogates their stories in a way that validates their existence.

106 I mean for my use of the term “master narrative” to concur with Said’s notion of “dominating discourse.” Said’s theories about “contrapuntal” understanding and the debilitating potential of dominating discourse resonate with the Personal Narrative Group’s idea that personal narratives of “nondominant social groups (women in general, racially or ethnically oppressed people, lower-class people, lesbians) are often particularly effective sources of counterhegemonic insight because they expose the viewpoint embedded in dominant ideology as particularist rather than universal, and because they reveal the reality of a life that defies or contradicts the rules” (7). For more info, see the introduction to Interpreting Women’s Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives, eds. Joy Webster Barbre, et al. (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989).

107 By using the word “act” here and associating it with the performative, I am arguing that both Butler’s and Kemble’s versions of plantation events (like all narrative discourses) should be considered in the context of performer/audience interaction, wherein the text—via levels of intra- and extradiegetic performances discussed in this chapter—acts upon readers spanning age, gender, nation, and race in an effort to produce desired effects.
Still, even as she tests the limits of her slave mistress role, recording the realities of her own and her confidantes’ experiences, we can trace a gradual shift in Kemble’s narration—a shift that is especially evident near the journal’s end. Her sarcastic wit is subsumed almost entirely by mounting anxiety over her helplessness; and, in Laura Callanan’s words, Kemble’s “faith in her ability to effect change on the plantation falters” (4). Sadly, Kemble’s awareness of the dire circumstances composing her slaves’ realities only reaffirms her marginalized position and assures her rather frustratingly that, as long as she remains in the system, she cannot enact change—because the system is constructed so as to suppress or oppress everything that challenges it. Kemble indicates her awareness of this suppression even early in the journal, declaring that “the circumstance of my being on the island could not, of course, be allowed to overthrow the whole system of discipline established to secure the labor and obedience of the slaves” (JRGP 160). It is after this admission that we see an alternation between Kemble’s expressions of “naïve belief” in her powers as slave mistress (Callanan 4) and, conversely, growing despair over her powerlessness.

Most troubling in this vocal alternation is Kemble’s narration of the monotony of her own and, by surrogation, her slave women’s traumatic experiences. Near the end of the journal, she beseeches Elizabeth to understand that her narration of daily life with “sick slaves” requires a reader who is “patient of sameness,” for, she continues, “mine is a story without beginning, middle, or end, it matters extremely little where I leave it off or where I take it up; . . . the days are like each other; and the . . . people, and, alas! their conditions, do not vary” (287). Kemble’s concern with the aesthetics of narrative form in this passage—much like her concern with the aesthetics of black slave bodies and speech,
and of her home on Butler Island (all discussed in Parts I & II of this chapter)—can be read through Callanan’s argument that “the narrative turn to the aesthetic in writings by white English individuals reveals instability in the cultural understanding of race at mid-[nineteenth] century” (4-5). Such “instability,” in Kemble’s case, culminates in her acknowledging the debilitating effects of slavery—via her surrogate narration of it—on the linear form of her narrative. Thus, if we consider Callanan’s point alongside White’s argument that, in processes of narrating historical events, form produces meaning (43), we see that Kemble’s concern with her narrative’s monotonies—i.e., its lacking a “beginning, middle, [and] end” (Journal 287)—communicates her difficulties not only in processing the experiences of what she repeatedly calls the “inferior,” “degraded” race (9, 10, 62, 191), but also in maintaining her problematical cultural position of that race’s superior ally.

In the face of such difficulties, nonetheless, Kemble relies upon her “paramount” imagination (Clinton 22-23), and her dramatic powers of creation, in her efforts to authenticate slave women’s stories. At the same time that she resorts to narrative list-making and exhibits concern over the faithfulness of her version of Sophy’s story (JRGP 229-31, 270), we see her journal performing genuineness via narrative gestures that engage readers’ emotions. Whereas her first narration of Psyche’s story characterizes the slave only as “a dingy mulatto” (133) and a “poor woman” (134), her subsequent reference to it—some 100+ pages later—transforms Psyche and other slaves into heroines: Psyche is named “the heroine of the rice Butler island story” (255), just as

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108 Specifically, Callanan asserts that such turns to the aesthetic—manifest in the narrative’s “blend of fictional and nonfictional elements” (3)—arise repeatedly in the journal’s final chapters, particularly, in passages relating Kemble’s nature excursions with her slave friend, Jack, and also in her strange, secondhand narration of a local shipwreck story (Callanan 1-4; Kemble, JRGP 226, 340).
Louisa is called the “heroine” of hers (215). Kemble’s idyllic narrative practice of heroizing these women engages with techniques of sentimental fiction—echoing, for instance, the characterization of Stowe’s slave heroines Eliza Harris and Cassy (Eliza’s mother, who is slave mistress to ruthless plantation owner Simon Legree) in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (publ. 1852).\(^\text{109}\)

Kemble’s narrative practice of echoing these slave heroines validates ongoing critical discussions of the ways in which *JRGP* compares to, and even seems a part of, nineteenth-century American women’s literary tradition. According to Blainey, Kemble’s “superb passages” in the journal are “deservedly part of America’s literary heritage and still to be found in anthologies” (276). More specifically, Dana Nelson notes that the 1863 publication date of Kemble’s journal firmly positions it “within a burgeoning field of abolitionist literature,”\(^\text{110}\) which was itself “situated within a larger field of didactic, or sentimental, fiction” that had a “huge impact” on nineteenth-century American culture (xxiv). Thus, Nelson maintains, Kemble’s journal “stands in the nineteenth-century American tradition of social critiques by women” including texts such as Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852); Lydia Maria Child’s *Hobomok* (1824), Rebecca Harding Davis’s *Life in the Iron Mills* (1861), Helen Hunt Jackson’s *A Century of Dishonor* (1881), and even Harriet Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) (Nelson xxiv-xxv). Like Nelson, Venet compares Kemble’s journal to Stowe’s *Uncle

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\(^\text{109}\) Kemble’s engagement with sentimental fiction here differs from Martineau’s in several important ways: first, it is not nearly as prevalent in Kemble’s journal as it is in Martineau’s *Retrospect,* and second, it does not serve quite the same function. Whereas Martineau regularly incorporates sentimental anecdotes for the sheer purpose of “authentication by fiction” (Spacks, *Imagined* 78), Kemble engages sentimental language and the figure of the heroine as an “escape” from reality and also as a “palette” (Callanan 4) through which she can authenticate the “collective memory” (Roach 58) of her plantation experience with slaves.

\(^\text{110}\) Nelson adds here that Lydia Maria Child recognized Kemble’s journal as abolitionist literature (xxiv).
Tom and Jacobs’s *Incidents*, ultimately ranking *JRGP* as superior in its authenticity as a cultural document: though “other writers had produced volumes based on personal experience with slavery,” Venet argues, “none had lived on one of the largest plantations in the South with a slave population which exceeded seven hundred men, women, and children. Nor did any previous chroniclers match Kemble’s descriptions in vividness and detail” (89).

Kemble’s narrative achievements in vividness, detail, and authenticity have as much to do with her incorporation of genre-specific techniques of didactic and sentimental fiction, social critique, and slave narrative, as they do with her propensity for the dramatic. After all, the characteristics of the sentimental—namely, affecting plots and florid, emotional language (Rose 86-88)—resonate with Kemble’s life experience: the plot of an abolitionist woman living on her slave-owning husband’s plantation is necessarily affecting, and Kemble’s theatre background predisposes her toward a narration of that plot through what she would call “dramatic,” emotional language. As a result, her narration elicits a psychological response from readers, deepening their involvement in the issues discussed. In terms of the journal’s relationship to Stowe’s controversial *Uncle Tom’s Cabin,* it is telling that, as an appendix to her 1863 edition of the *JRGP*, Kemble published a carefully written letter to the editor of the *London Times* testifying to the novel’s accuracy. In response to contemptuous criticisms over the book’s “exaggerated picture of the evils of slavery,” Kemble writes, “I can testify with

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111 The above-mentioned American women’s texts may indeed share with Kemble’s significant similarities in content and/or form; I would disagree, however, with Venet’s claim that the narratives of Jacobs and Kemble can be compared in terms of authenticity. These narratives may indeed share audience-aware strategies and goals of authenticity, but issues of race and class—as they inform voice and, especially, narrative authority—would need to be explored further to compare these two texts fairly.

112 Scott calls *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* “the most popular and most hated book of its day” (347).
the experience of an eyewitness” to the novel’s “truth and moderation as a representation of the slave system in the United States.” Stowe’s novel is, Kemble assures readers, “a very faithful representation of the existing facts” (JRGP 348-49).\textsuperscript{113} In Kemble’s defense of Stowe’s novel, we see a replication of the “faithfulness” defense she offers for readers throughout her JRGP—a defense that reveals a heightened interest (also evident in Martineau’s RWT) in the relationship between representation and reality.

Kemble’s concern with narratively representing the reality of slaves’ experience culminates in the year following her stay in Georgia. During her residence at Butler Place, just outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, she acknowledges her desire to “revise, correct,” and make a “fair copy” of her journal (Records of Later 203).\textsuperscript{114} In spite of this desire, and as I noted in this chapter’s Introduction, Kemble remains extremely ambivalent over the issue of publication. Consider her wavering attitudes in the following passage, extracted from a letter Kemble wrote to Harriet St. Leger on 26 October, 1840:

\begin{quote}
You ask me if I ever write any journal, or anything else now. The time that I passed in the South was so crowded with daily and hourly occupations that, though I kept a regular journal, it was hastily written,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{113} As Venet notes, “because of the unhappy events of Kemble’s life [divorce, custody battles, etc., to name a few], she was unable to allow her letter to be printed in 1852,” when it was first written. “Instead,” Venet explains, “[Kemble] waited until 1863, some four months after Stowe’s ‘Reply’ [to allegations of the book’s exaggerated narrative] had appeared in England, before she told her fellow Britons about her own experiences with slavery, including her views about \textit{Uncle Tom’s Cabin}” (82). Once again, Kemble’s concern with “facts” is different from Martineau’s in that, for Kemble, “facts” are equated with eyewitness experience and slave women’s practice of confiding in her. Kemble does not, like Martineau, engage in active pursuit of information (“fact-finding”).

\textsuperscript{114} Kemble’s desire for revision here runs counter to critical discussions of her as a writer who—much like Martineau—detested the idea of revising her work and so rarely bothered to do so (Wright 3). According to Pope-Hennessy, in the fall of 1834, Kemble was “considerably awed by [Martineau’s] reputation and manner” and “summoned up the courage to submit the proof-sheets of her book \textit{The Journal of Frances Anne Kemble} to the great authoress” (178). Martineau convinced a stubborn Kemble to suppress some thirty pages of print (178). Then, the following year, Martineau attended the christening of Kemble’s daughter, Sarah (“Sally”) Butler (178).
and received constant additional notes of things that occurred and that I wished to remember, inserted in a very irregular fashion in it. . . . I think I should like to carry this journal down to Georgia with me this winter;\textsuperscript{115} to revise, correct, and add whatever my second experience might furnish to the chronicle. It has been suggested to me that such an account of a Southern plantation might be worth publishing; but I think such a publication would be a breach of confidence, an advantage taken on my part of the situation of trust, which I held on the estate. As my condemnation of the whole system is unequivocal, and all my illustrations of its evils must be drawn from our own plantation, I do not think I have a right to exhibit the interior management and economy of that property to the world at large, as a sample of Southern slavery, especially as I did not go thither with any such purpose. This winter I think I shall mention my desire upon the subject before going to the South, and of course any such publication must then depend on the acquiescence of the owners of the estate. I am sure that no book of mine on the subject could be of as much use to the poor people on Butler’s Island as my residence among them; and I should, therefore, be very unwilling to do anything that was likely to interfere with that: although I have sometimes been haunted with the idea that it was an imperative duty, knowing what I know, and having seen what I have seen, to do all that lies in my power to show the dangers and evils of this frightful institution. And the testimony of a planter’s wife, whose experience has all been gathered from estates where the slaves are universally admitted to be well treated, should carry with it some authority. So I am occupying myself, from time to time, as my leisure allows, in making a fair copy of my Georgia Journal. (\textit{Records of Later} 203)

This passage clearly testifies not only to Kemble’s irresolute thoughts regarding publication—which she perceives as both “a breach of confidence” and “an imperative duty”—but also to her ongoing self-consciousness about her cultural authority. At the same time she believes she does not have “a right to exhibit” what she has seen, she suspects that her “testimony,” being that of a “planter’s wife … should carry with it some authority” (\textit{Records of Later} 203). Such textual authority is complicated, however, by the journal’s precarious “balance between exposure and concealment” (Juncker 135), a

\textsuperscript{115} Much to her dismay, Kemble never returned to the Georgia Sea Island plantations. Her father fell ill in December 1840 (two months after she wrote the above letter), and she, Pierce, and daughters sailed to England to comfort him during his recovery (Clinton xi).
balance that reveals the author’s desire to step out of the conventional subject-position of a Victorian woman trapped in a colonial system.

Once she begins the process of making a “fair copy” of her journal (Kemble, *Records of Later* 203), a process that gradually leads to her decision to publish in 1863, Kemble’s private, “collective memory” translates into the public performance that is her text. Kemble’s admission, after returning North, of being “haunted” by her knowledge of slaves’ realities (203)—knowledge that resides in private spaces of memory and epistolary narrative—concurs with Roach’s discussion of the potential for collective memory to “haunt” and “inhabit” a nation’s literature and, even, to “challenge history in the construction . . . of culture” (60-61). In the process of making her “fair copy,” then, Kemble relives not only her own memories, but also her memories of slaves’ memories—since, when narrating the “surrogated originals” that are the slave women’s stories, she tells us repeatedly that the stories represent not “complaints” but the memories of “things [long] past and gone” things at which Kemble “shudders” but that slaves seemingly consider “natural” and “matter of course” (266, 270). As Roach explains, the journal’s performance of this collective memory—collective in the sense that it consists of layers of Kemble’s and slave women’s memories—opens up [discursive] space for play (Roach 59).116 Within this space of play, as I have argued in this chapter, important binaries are held in tension—binaries including natural and artificial, dominated and contestatory, fact and fiction, public and private—in ways that complicate the reigning cultural narrative’s characterization of both Kemble and her slaves’ identities. And in this space of play, too,

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116 Roach’s article focuses specifically on the ways that collective memory manifests itself in the “participatory techniques of orature”—especially, in “people speaking in one another’s voices” (57). The cultural performances he analyzes to make his point range from funerals to parades; yet here I adapt his argument to discuss the performance of Kemble’s journal in the public sphere.
Kemble’s personal letters, once published, “entice readers by fictions of self-revelation” of the experience of this very public, much celebrated figure (Spacks, “Female” 232).

Like Martineau’s in RWT, Kemble’s self-revelation in JRGP cannot be separated from her cultural observation. The result of this, for Kemble, is that in 1863—during her transatlantic tours as a still-performing, ever-public reader of Shakespeare’s plays (Wister 209)—she publishes what Blainey calls her narrative “weapon” (275), much to Butler’s dismay.117 As mentioned briefly in my introduction to this chapter, the effects of the journal’s publication are debatable. Regarding its effects in America, Wright and Blainey agree that the book’s timely publication around the “great Northern victories” (Blainey 275) of “Grant and Meade, the assault on Fort Wagner, and the vicious race riots in New York” (Wright 171) created a favorable stir of reader response in the Northern states, one that is clearly evident in Harper’s calling the journal “the most powerful antislavery book yet written” (qtd. in Wright 171). Responses from Southern readers, not surprisingly, were quite different. According to J.C. Furnas, the South “attacked the Plantation journal savagely. It was branded, like Uncle Tom, as Yankee propaganda born in prejudice and reared in spite and so on. Indeed, as generations passed, Dixie treated Fanny as a person even more roughly than it did Mrs. Stowe” (397). Meanwhile, across the pond, the journal is described as having gone unnoticed by Britain’s influential review publications, thus possibly having “had little effect” on British attitudes toward the Confederacy (Wright 164). According to Blainey, even without the book’s help, “public sympathy in the British Isles was [already] turning toward the North” by the time

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117 By the end of the stay in Georgia, Kemble’s marriage to Butler was plagued by what Clinton refers to as “squabbles, spats, and trial separations,” and was thus slowly unraveling (Journals 4). In 1845, Kemble abandoned her husband’s home in Philadelphia for the last time and, in doing so, gave up legal rights to her children. An official divorce was not declared until September of 1849, during which time custody of both children, Sarah and Fan, was officially awarded to Pierce Butler (Clinton 4-5, Scott xlv).
of the journal’s publication. “But one cannot be sure,” Blainey continues, “that [Kemble’s] book had no effect, for it was powerful and penetrating, and in the English circles in which she moved, it may well have convinced wavering readers” (275).

Despite these debatable particulars of the book’s effects on transatlantic readers of its time and on the transatlantic politics of the Civil War, there is no doubt that Kemble’s JRGP offers modern-day audiences a model for reading the theatricality of social codes and also for recognizing the value of the tension between the dramatic and the theatrical—the authenticity of emotion in solitude, and the performance of it in public—in textual representations of these codes and in human experience, in general. It is through Kemble’s narrative habit of actively directing her audiences’ attention to complicated processes of textual and cultural performance that her presentation of alternative, resistant narratives underscores the omissions and ethical flaws of slavery’s master narrative—and of its overall systematic workings. In so highlighting these flaws, Kemble’s self-narration of American slavery, with its emphases on cultural role-playing and spectating, participates in a transatlantic dialogue about slavery in the American South in a way that raises important questions about relationships between the dominant and the marginalized, between cultural performance and collective memory. In the face of the white man’s denial—amidst his ongoing “public performance of forgetting” the realities of racially oppressed victims (Roach 51-52)—Kemble remembers. And her narrative reminds us.
Chapter 3

“I would not go to America until I was a real lion a real celebrity”: Narrative Movement and Transatlantic Fame in Stein’s *Everybody’s Autobiography* (1937)

*Anything is an autobiography but this was a conversation…*  
~Gertrude Stein, *Everybody’s Autobiography* (1937)

**Introduction**

While visiting America for a lecture tour in 1934-35, Gertrude Stein had suddenly achieved what biographer John Malcolm Brinnin calls “a celebrity of such proportions that her eminence on the American scene was for a time shared only by gangsters, baseball players and movie stars” (307-08). Stein’s transcontinental fame—which was as pronounced in Paris as it was in America (Hobhouse 163-68)—was largely due to the extreme success of her *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, published in 1933 in New York and London.\(^{118}\) Four years later, Stein published *Everybody’s Autobiography*, which is often discussed as “a kind of sequel” to the *Alice* book (Hoffman 120, Gygax 71). In general, critics have praised *AABT*, testifying to its popular and critical acclaim, just as they have panned *EA*, considering it somewhat of a flop (Bridgman 269, Hoffman 120, Krukowski viii). *AABT* is deemed “charm[ing]” (Brinnin 311), “as extraordinary…as the

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\(^{118}\) Following its initial 1933 publication, translated editions of *AABT* spread like wildfire across the Continent. As Diana Souhami summarizes, “Bernard Fay translated the book’s French edition, which was published by Gallimard in 1934, and Cesare Pavese translated the Italian edition in 1938” (192).
emperor without his clothes” (Hobhouse 161); it is “delightful,” full of “wisdom” and “distinction,” and is hailed as “one of the richest, wittiest, and irreverent [literary reminiscences] ever written”—“a model of its kind” that “stood up to any amount of rereading” (Souhami 190). **EA**, by contrast, is called “by almost any measure the least ‘stylish’…most journalistic and fact-bound” of all of Stein’s works (Brinnin 354); it is deemed “not as amusing or gossipy as the Alice B. Toklas *opus*” (Souhami 223) and, in the wake of **AABT**, was often considered “predictably…a failure” (Krukowski viii).

For these reasons, critics tend to discuss **EA** primarily in terms of Stein’s biography; i.e., they use the text to document the historical particulars of “what happened” in the aftermath of the composition and publishing of **AABT**.¹¹⁹ Scholars Janet Malcolm and Lisa Ruddick, for instance, have used **EA** as a means of documenting Stein’s relationship with her mother, who died when Stein was fourteen (Malcolm 118-19; Ruddick 184), just as James R. Mellow relies on **EA** to discuss Stein’s “break” with her brother Leo in 1912-13 (205). Admittedly, Stein’s organizing principle in **EA** does, on first glance, certainly encourage such biographical, “fact-bound” (to borrow Brinnin’s phrase) readings, since it includes chapters titled “What Happened After the Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas” (Chapter One) and “What Was the Effect Upon Me of the Autobiography” (Chapter Two), to name a few. These suggestively linear, factual titles, however, run counter to the nonlinear, geographically diverse contents of the book’s chapters—which cover topics as wide-ranging as the adolescent Stein’s reading

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¹¹⁹ While it is true that there remains relatively little critical interest in **EA**, I acknowledge that there are several important exceptions to critics’ panning and/or valuing **EA** solely as a biographical reference. Specifically, Hobhouse & Hoffman find aspects of the text redeeming, though they don’t spend much time discussing it. Kirk Curnutt and Barbara Will also offer smart analytical readings of **EA** that are quite useful to a reconsideration of its literary importance. These positive critical opinions factor into later sections of this chapter.
“Clarissa Harlowe” to her brother (EA 75), the adult Stein’s regular walks through Paris with her poodle, Basket (97-100), and Stein and Toklas’s first airplane ride in mid-1930s America (196-98).

This diversity in content is mirrored in the book’s hybrid autobiographical form, which Stein scholars and EA critics—in tending to value the book merely as a factual, biographical document—have largely ignored: EA fuses autobiographical genres of travel narrative, memoir, and diary in a way that foregrounds narrative movement through transatlantic space and nonlinear time, developing, along the way, a kind of dialogue with the reader over the author’s theories of identity. My springboard for this argument has much to do with basic differences between the forms of AABT and EA: As critics have long established, AABT is defined by its innovative use of narrative mimicry, whereby Stein manipulates Toklas’s voice to situate herself in the realm of modernist male genius (Bloom 82-84, AABT 183-84; 257). The lesser-studied EA, I argue, is characterized by a motion-filled, hybrid travel narrative form that, in shifting between multiple pasts and presents, American and Continental, invites “you,” the reader, to participate in the ongoing quandary over personal and national identity that characterizes Stein’s works of the mid-to-late 1930s.

It is no coincidence that EA’s audience-aware meditation on identity and the relationship between text and reader occurs in the 1930s, a decade in which Stein produced not only her bestselling AABT but was also engrossed in the world of theatre. Though she had written some sixty-five plays by the mid-1930s (B. A. Ryan 157-60), none of them was actually produced and performed on stage until 1934. It was during

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120 In her book, Women, Modernism, and Performance (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2004), Penny Farfan laments the current lack of critical attention not only to Stein’s plays but to modernist drama in
her American lecture tour in 1934-35—the primary subject of *EA*—that she and Alice regularly attended performances of Stein’s *Four Saints in Three Acts* (B. A. Ryan 166-67). The result of seeing her work performed for live audiences in venues such as the 44th Street Theatre in New York and the Sullivan Opera House in Chicago (166), I argue, is that Stein’s writings from the mid-30s onward—including texts such as *Narration* (1935) and *The Geographical History of America Or The Relation of Human Nature to the Human Mind* (1936)—adopt a pronounced interest in the problematical relationships among issues of audience, narrative, and identity.

While Stein’s career-long concern with issues of identity has been well documented by critics (Gygax 71-75, Hoffman 111, B. A. Ryan 12, 127-28), the ways in which this concern is informed by the author’s concurrent interests in theatre and narrative often go unnoticed. However, a bit of archival work reveals that Stein’s extant, handwritten manuscript of *FS*, as Ulla Dydo has meticulously documented, immediately precedes—on the very same page—the author’s draft of “Regular Regularly in Narrative” (183), thus suggesting Stein’s continuous, mental connection between genres of playwriting and narrative. Moreover, the author’s transatlantic correspondence from the late 30s—specifically, letters she wrote from 27 rue de Fleurus in Paris to her friend

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121 It is worth noting that, from 1935-38, Stein composed six more plays (B. A. Ryan 160). Also, I want to acknowledge that my point here that Stein’s later works adopt a marked sense of audience-awareness has been offered, in various ways, by scholars including Betsy Alayne Ryan (11) and Ulla Dydo, the latter of whom suggests that *AABT* was “the first book of what [Stein] came to call audience writing” (5). See the opening of Part IV of this chapter for the way in which my argument here differs from and, to some extent, disagrees with Dydo’s.
Thornton Wilder in Chicago\textsuperscript{122}—clearly exhibit a marked interest in the connectedness between theatre and narration. On 20 January, 1937, not long after having published “Narration” and in the beginning stages of working on \textit{EA}, Stein wrote to Wilder, “I am still going on trying simple narrative,\textsuperscript{123} once in a while not so bad, am interested in your play we will compare plays, I have two I would like to show you…” (Burns and Dydo 130). Four months later, after having completed the manuscript of \textit{EA}, she wrote another letter to Wilder, postmarked on 2 May 1937. Note the passage’s focus on Stein’s associative thinking among issues of plays, \textit{EA} (referenced below as “the Autobiography”), and narrative:

My dear Thornton,

….I think a lot about the stage all the time, I want to do a play or have them do one of my plays like a play,\textsuperscript{124} it would be lots of fun, I think a lot about you, Thornton… I wonder how you will like the Autobiography, I sometimes think I have at last done narrative…. I wish you would come [to Paris] I think you need it and it would be lots of fun all our love

Gtrde.  (Burns and Dydo 140)

Stein’s notion that in \textit{EA} she has “at last done narrative,” as it coincides here with her growing interest in “plays,” suggests that, by 1937, Stein’s accomplishing “narrative” in \textit{EA} had much to do with its audience-aware valuing of readerly perspective.

\textsuperscript{122} According to Brinnin, Wilder was “first in [Stein’s] affection” among her “new” American friends—those she met during her 1934-35 lecture tour (337). Stein met and befriended Wilder on 25 November 1934, during her first greatly successful lecture at the University of Chicago, where he was then teaching (Rice 342). Brinnin explains: “In Thornton Wilder Gertrude had found not only a close personal friend, but a man of letters more receptive to her work and more acute and articulate about its meanings than anyone she had ever met…. He was a disciple who could influence as well as be influenced, and Gertrude freely admitted that many of the solutions to her later writing problems were the result of conversations with him” (338).

\textsuperscript{123} Burns and Dydo suggest that Stein’s reference to “simple narrative” here refers to \textit{EA} (130).

\textsuperscript{124} What Stein means by this is that her \textit{FS} had appeared as an opera; her play, “Identity,” as a marionette show; and “A Wedding Bouquet,” as a ballet. As Bridgman explains, in 1937, “no one had yet had confidence in the sufficiency of Gertrude Stein’s words to carry a performance unassisted,” and the author regularly expressed hopes that “someone might produce one of her plays as a play” (285).
Thus, when considering *EA* in the context of Stein’s work in the mid-to-late 30s, the text’s foregrounding of narrative movement—via constant shifts in content and in form—becomes a vehicle for an audience-aware exploration of the personal and national identities of selves-in-transit. In order to study precisely how this works, my textual analyses in this chapter consist of four main parts: Part I provides a brief summary of Stein’s rise to fame in the mid-1930s and situates *EA* in literary history and genre, paying particular attention to the ways in which Stein’s theories of playwriting and narration intersect with trends in modernist autobiography of the thirties. Parts II and III explore the ways in which narrative movement in *EA*—specifically, the text’s intermixing of autobiographical subgenres of the travel narrative, memoir, and diary (Part II); and, likewise, its travel through narrative and geographical space (Part III)—not only informs Stein’s ongoing constructions of self-as-celebrity, but also invites an ongoing dialogue with the reader. Finally, Part IV discusses how Stein’s efforts at writing a pronoun-centered autobiography of “everybody” both complement and conflict with her interests in the relationship between the “I” of self-narrative and “you” the reader—a reader who, for Stein in *EA*, as in much of her work, is conceived as distinctly American (Benstock, *Women* 157). In sum, I argue that, in the wake of transatlantic celebrity brought about by the commercial success of *AABT*, *EA*’s motion-filled, hybrid form enacts a re-valuing of readerly perspective on issues of identity that draws upon Stein’s 1930s interests in theatre and narration and that is thus absent from much of her earlier work, including *AABT*.

I. “…I’d love you to put us on the Hollywood map…”:

Locating *EA* in Literary History and Genre
Before we can understand EA’s complicated yet lucid coalescence of Stein’s theories of theatre and narration, it is helpful to examine how her rise to fame in the 1930s compares to the celebrity achieved by both Martineau (discussed in Chapter 1 of this dissertation) and Kemble (covered in Chapter 2). Though the circumstances surrounding both Martineau and Kemble’s popularity fall almost exactly one-hundred years before Stein’s, the similarities among the three writers’ careers—and particularly, between Martineau and Stein’s—are striking. While Kemble earns popular and critical success in the theatre (see Chapter 2, Part I), Martineau secures a place in the cultural spotlight in 1834 by publishing her incredibly successful journalistic series *Illustrations of Political Economy* (see Chapter 1, Part I). Much like Martineau’s groundbreaking *IPE*, Stein’s *AABT* is first published serially—in the prestigious *Atlantic Monthly*, which biographer Janet Hobhouse calls “the most regal of literary magazines” (162), and which Stein herself considers quite an achievement, as she admits in EA: “As I had said I always wanted … to be printed in the Atlantic Monthly … and so I told Mr. Bradley [William Bradley, Stein’s literary agent in Paris] that I wanted him to try [it]” (47). Also like Martineau’s *IPE*, which sold ten thousand copies each month in 1834 (Salerno 37) and rendered Martineau’s work for the 1830s outsold only by that of Dickens (Orazem 21), Stein’s *AABT*, when published in book form in 1933 by Harcourt, Brace (Hobhouse 162), was eagerly bought by the scholarly and general public; for the first time in her career, Stein had secured a wide readership. As biographer Diana Souhami explains, “The first printing, of 5,400 copies, was sold out by 22 August 1933, nine days before publication. There were four reprints in the next two years. The Literary Guild sold it as a bookclub choice” (192).
Stein’s admission into the world of book clubs in 1933 mirrors Sylvia Townsend Warner’s inaugural place in the Book-of-the-Month-Club, as her *Lolly Willowes* (1926) was the club’s very first selection (Allen 22; see Chapter 4, Part I); moreover, it underscores the ways in which Stein’s *AABT* and *EA*—much like Martineau’s *IPE* and her *Retrospect of Western Travel*, as I argued in Chapter 1—negotiate the gap in what has been called “the Great Divide” between “high” and “low” culture from the mid-nineteenth century onward (Huyssen vii). Though for Martineau, the 1830s saw the beginnings of a clear distinction between “literary” and “popular” culture in Britain and America (Easley 178), for Stein, the 1930s saw a much more complicated divide between “serious” and “comic,” “heavy” and “light.” Theorized most notably by Andreas Huyssen and revised and/or problematized by critics such as Kevin J.H. Dettmar, Stephen Watt, and Robert Scholes, to name a few, the period “after the Great Divide,” in Huyssen’s terms, witnessed a “resilient” opposition between the “high art” of modernism and the “mass culture” of modernity (vii-viii). What happened as a result of the Divide, Huyssen suggests, is that commercial, mass culture was for a period figured not only as “negative, as the homogeneously sinister background on which the achievements of modernism can shine in their glory” (ix), but also as feminine (x; 55).\(^{126}\) The problem with these divisive, masculine/feminine, high/low binary oppositions is how

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125 My capitalization of the term “Great Divide” here follows the practice of both Huyssen and Scholes.

126 Although Huyssen says that the point of his book *After the Great Divide* (1986) is to challenge the divisive concept (ix) and show how “the high modernist dogma” has “become sterile” and prevents us from reaping the critical opportunities that lie buried in boundaries between “high” and “low” culture, his book succeeds more, I think, in reinscribing dichotomous approaches to modernist texts—so much so that, in a 2002 issue of *Modernism/Modernity*, he issued a clarification of his original argument: “Much valuable recent work on … Modernism has misconstrued my earlier definition of the Great Divide as a static binary of high Modernism vs. the market. My argument was rather that there had been, since the mid-nineteenth century in Europe, a powerful imaginary insisting on the divide while time and again violating that categorical separation in practice. After all, the insight that all cultural products are subject to the market was already advanced by Theodor Adorno, key theorist of the divide, in the late 1930s” (366-67). See Huyssen, “High/Low in an Expanded Field” in *Modernism/Modernity* 9 (2002): 363-74.
easily, as Scholes warns us, they “slide … into absolute notions of Good and Bad” (Scholes 3). Moreover, Scholes adds, by their very nature, binary oppositions “often function to suppress or exclude a middle term … that might mediate between their extremes,” thus “forcing many admirable works into the lower half of an invidious distinction” (xi-xii).127

For Stein, bridging the High/Low divide was a task that informed—and was likely informed by—her contradictory relationships to what Marianne DeKoven calls “the canonical centre of American literature” (17). In her 1988 catalogue of critical response to Stein, DeKoven summarizes Stein’s relation to canons by suggesting that the author lies “simultaneously inside and outside, at the centre and in the margin” (16).128 Indeed, Stein’s position “inside” the canon is historically documented in critical texts such as Cyril Connoly’s Enemies of Promise (1938), which lists her (fleetingly, with no close readings devoted to her works) as a writer important to modernism (Montefiore 54).129 Nonetheless, as Jessica G. Rabin explains, the paradox of Stein’s career is that, although “she wanted to have her works published … she spent years writing texts that most people did not understand” (8). Barbara Will agrees, noting that, “by the 1920s, Stein’s work had found support among a small band of ‘disciples’ (Carl Van Vechten’s term) but had suffered widespread rejection in the Anglo-American press and publishing establishment” (133). None of this negative criticism seems to have discouraged Stein, however; in fact, in response to Ellery Sedgwick’s (editor of the Atlantic) 1919

127 See Chapter 4, Parts I & IV, of this dissertation for a discussion of how the “high/low” dichotomy has functioned to devalue Sylvia Townsend Warner’s Scenes of Childhood.

128 This language of the “inside” and “outside” is central to much of Stein’s work of the 1930s and to EA in particular, as I discuss in Part III of this chapter.

129 As Janet Montefiore explains, only Woolf’s The Waves and texts written by male writers earned close readings in Connoly’s volume.
accusation that he could not find even “a handful…of careful readers” who deemed her work “a serious effort,” Stein responded: “My work is legitimate literature and I amuse and interest myself in words as an expression of feeling as Shakespeare or anyone else writing did. This is entirely in the spirit of all that is first class in American letters whether it’s newspapers, Walt Whitman or Henry James, or Poe” (qtd. in Will 133). As Will points out, Stein’s alignment here of her own writings with the critically-acclaimed Whitman, James, and Poe, on one hand, and with “newspapers,” on the other, suggests that, even as early as 1919, she viewed and valued her work, in Will’s terms, “as on par with that of the canonical writers, but as readable as newspapers: no special interpretive tools required” (135).

By the mid-1930s, issues of readability—and with them, awareness of an audience spanning both sides of the Divide—had become increasingly important to Stein, growing exponentially alongside her developing transatlantic celebrity. As Malcolm notes, “Stein wrote AABT in the fall of 1932 in a kind of paroxysm of desire for the fame and money that had so far eluded her. Since her youth, she had wanted ‘gloire’… but her experimental writings had not brought it” (8). Thus, following what Rabin calls “more than twenty years of immersion in avant-garde experimentalism” (23) Stein’s AABT—and, I would add, EA after it—represent the author’s “return to narrative” (23), a return that, in the case of EA, reflects her developing interests in a form of narration that is distinctly audience-aware. Shortly after AABT’s first installments were published in the Atlantic in 1933, scores of fan letters arrived at 27 rue d e Fleurus from across the ocean (Brinnin 309); Stein became “the talk of America…[and] Paris;” and she experienced, “for the first time, a full awareness of an audience” (Hobhouse 161-63, 168). According

130 Rabin cites Three Lives (1909) as Stein’s first foray into narrative (23).
to Hobhouse, “the effect” of Stein’s AABT on the general [American] public was “like thunder…The book was a sensational best-seller” (163) and, as Carl Van Vechten wrote to Stein, she was “on every tongue like Greta Garbo” (Burns 277).^{131}

This comparison of Stein to the likes of Garbo, which is well-documented by critics (Brinnin 360, Souhami 201), not only evidences the author’s ongoing negotiation of the Divide between avant-garde literary and mainstream popular cultures, but also foreshadows her growing interest in Hollywood in the mid-1930s. Repeatedly in EA, she references her excitement at being photographed with Mary Pickford upon her fall 1934 arrival in America (5-6) and describes the fruitful conversations she has with Charlie Chaplin over dinner in Beverly Hills (291). Likewise, while in the beginning stages of composing EA at her and Toklas’s country home in Bilignin, France, Stein writes the following letter to Wilder—postmarked 8 July 1936. Note how the letter reflects on the writing process of EA at the same time that it muses on the potential success that a Hollywood version of AABT might bring:

My dearest Thornton,

….I am pleased on the whole that you are giving up the U[iversity]. [of] C[hicago]. for a bit, and going to Hollywood,^{132} I wish we could be there together, it would be fun, listen Thornton, couldn’t they do the Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas at Hollywood, that might make a lovely film, I do not know what makes lovely films but that might and they could shoot the background here [Bilignin, near Belley, France] and in Paris and we could be taken in Hollywood including the puppies Basket and Pepe and we would have enough money to make a leisurely trip across the continent and the Mississippi valley taking on a college boy for

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^{131} Longtime friends and correspondents, Stein and Van Vechten met in Paris in June of 1913 (Burns 847) and remained close until Stein’s death in 1946. As Brinnin puts it, Van Vechten’s “concern for Gertrude became one of the happiest and most durable elements in her life. More than any other individual who … interested himself in her work and in her person, Van Vechten had both the will and the means to keep her name before the public” (191-92).

^{132} Here Stein refers to Wilder’s intermittent dabbles in screenwriting. As Burns and Dydo explain, “this was not the first time that Wilder, in need of money, had agreed to write for Hollywood”—though, sadly, most of his projects either “were shelved” or never materialized (105).
the more difficult driving and then we could have an installation in Washington Square and go to and fro for ever. Do you think there is anything in it, I am not just perfectly sure there isn’t, and I have done a new chapter bringing Picasso up to date and it’s pretty good. I’d love you to put us on the Hollywood map, but don’t think about it twice only perhaps there is something in it. All that about money was to clear my mind about that chapter, romanticism and money and I finally got it right, in a last one, which perhaps they will not buy beginning with it is funny about money.... And then it goes on I think I am getting it clear and then I have to do more.... I love to be a success, and I love to have all of them be a success along of me, I like that, oh how I do like that.... the weather [in France] is rotten but we love you oh how we love you all of us.

Gtrde. (Burns and Dydo 106-07)

This letter, in attesting to Stein’s concurrent desires to “go to and fro for ever”; to be “put…on the Hollywood map”; to “get [her EA chapters] clear”; and “to be a success,” illuminates the interconnectedness of the various forces at work in EA—namely, Stein’s interests in travel, celebrity, narrative clarity, and success.

Stein’s interest in bringing AABT to the big screen in the mid-1930s coincides with the incredible success of her opera, FS, on the stage. As critics have documented, the popularity of AABT stirred up interest in the avant-garde opera (Dydo 171, Souhami 199), which debuted in Hartford, Connecticut before moving to the 44th Street Theatre in New York City on 21 February 1934, some eight months before Stein & Toklas’s arrival (B. A. Ryan 166, Rice 339). The play, which Stein references frequently in EA (49, 133, 134, 135, 136)...

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133 As Burns and Dydo note, “At the end of the first chapter of EA, Stein devotes several pages to Picasso’s recent exhibition and his poetry” (107).

134 “It is funny about money” is a common refrain throughout EA (40, 42, 45-46, 86, 149-50).

135 In short, as Norman Weinstein summarizes, Stein’s “play,” FS, “became the text for an opera with music composed by Virgil Thomson.” The opera—withstanding its title—takes place in Spain and occurs “in dozens of acts,” including as characters some forty or so saints, alongside pigeons, magpies, and fish. As such, it not only represents Stein’s interest in using plays to “create an alternative, imaginative reality”; but it also reveals her habit of parodying the “conventional categories of acts and scenes” in what Weinstein calls “a conscious effort to seriously redefine drama” (115).

136 Also stirring up interest in the opera, Souhami explains, was Virgil Thomson’s decision (in collaboration with Van Vechten), to use an all-black cast (199). Weinstein further explains, “That the
101, 111, 115, 159, 201), was performed as an opera, and Stein’s contributing part was its libretto. Following its opening in Hartford, Van Vechten wrote to Stein that it was “a knockout and a wow” (Burns 295); upon its move to New York, he wrote again, this time, inscribing his note on the first page of the show’s program: “It was a wonderful night. *Your* name in electric lights over the theatre.” Cecil Beaton in tears, Jo Davidson saying, ‘this is the best thing I have ever seen in N.Y.’ Cheers. Everything you can imagine. Oh, I do wish you might have seen this!” (300). Concurring with Van Vechten’s complementary reviews, *FS* was hailed by the *New Republic* as “the most important event of the theatre season” (qtd. Souhami 201). Several months after its New York opening, in a letter dated 20 April, 1934, Van Vechten wrote to Stein, “On my way to the theatre the other evening the car passed Gimbel’s & I was amazed to see the sign over *all* their windows: ‘4 Suits in 2 Acts!’ So yesterday I went out to photograph this new phenomenon for you” (307). Thus, concurrent with public interest in the entire cast of the opera was Negro was a most unusual facet to a play with absolutely no connections with Negro life” (115). Though Thomson suggested that he chose the all-Negro cast “purely for beauty of voice, clarity of enunciation, and fine carriage” (qtd. in Weinstein 115), Weinstein suggests that “another reason [for Thomson’s choice] might have been the spectacle created by [the Negroes’] presence” (115). Weinstein is not the first critic to point out and/or question Stein (and her contemporaries’) problematic racism.

137 The author herself describes the American debut of *FS* in *EA* by writing, “Carl Van Vechten sent me photos with my name in electric lights on Broadway and that was very exciting” (115).
20s and 30s placed consumer value on modernist art—an issue that Stein addresses extensively in *EA* (40, 48, 67, 103, 132); it also speaks to the rapid developments in consumer culture in both Europe and America in the early-to-mid twentieth century, developments that serve as a backdrop for many modernist texts. In spite of the Wall Street Crash of 1929, the ensuing “Great Slump” (Montefiore 8), and the general “collapse” of industry in the 1930s (Chabot 208), the steady rise of “mass audience structures and competencies, coupled with the sheer proliferation and serial ubiquity of mass commodity culture” in the first decades of the twentieth century (Jaffe 13) meant that writers of the 30s, much like their predecessors who wrote in the 10s and 20s, found themselves an inevitable part of “an exchange system” to which, for the most part, they “were staunchly opposed” (Dettmar and Watt 6). The irony of this staunch opposition, as Aaron Jaffe and Dettmar and Watt have argued, is that many modernists regularly engaged in strategies of self-promotion, “working to create and expand a market for elite literary works” (Jaffe 3) in ways that refigured the notion of “marketing as embracing both material and intellectual—finally ideological—practices” (Dettmar and Watt 2). In the case of Stein’s *EA*, as I discuss in Part III of this chapter, self-advertising occurs largely through the author’s repeated self-referencing of her own previously published “elite” (to borrow Jaffe’s term) titles. Much like Martineau’s *RWT*, Stein’s *EA* shrewdly uses its lucid, accessible, “popular” narrative form to fashion an authoritative reputation for its author.

Also like Martineau’s, and Kemble’s, too, for that matter, Stein’s self-fashioning in *EA* coincides with her narration of transatlantic travel. Whereas British women writers Martineau and Kemble travel from England to America in the 1830s, the American Stein
travels from her “home town” of Paris to her native America in the 1930s—a period during which modernist strategies of self-fashioning and promotion occurred “with particular intensity” following the “increasing industrialization … of economy and way[s] of life” in early-twentieth-century Europe and America (Jaffe 3, Chabot 207-08). Critics have long documented that modernist literature—far more so than the Victorian texts discussed in the first two chapters of this dissertation—represents a transnational movement marked by what C. Barry Chabot calls “international character” (8) and informed by technologically-driven, transatlantic developments that drastically affected human perception of space and time. In particular, the ways in which international modernist figures like Stein perceived space and time were shaped by rapid advancements in modes of travel.

As a twentieth-century travel writer, Stein’s narration in *EA* is automatically subject to what Sidonie Smith calls “technologies of motion” (*Moving* 22). From the 1840s onward—the period immediately following Kemble’s southward travels to the Georgia Sea Islands, described in my last chapter—rapid developments in mobility occurred. Innovations including the American Transcontinental Railway, faster railway trains, and propeller-driven iron steamships crossing the Atlantic meant that, by the 1880s, the modern traveler was experiencing what Helen Carr calls “the ease of locomotion” (Carr 70-71). One important result of this “ease,” according to Smith, is that “the speed with which the locomotive, automobile, and airplane ply space encourages in travelers an imaginative and private sense of time through the complex blurring notions

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138 As Stein famously wrote in her essay “An American and France” (1936), "America is my country and Paris is my home town...” See Part III of this chapter for further discussion of Stein’s vexed notions of nationality.
of past, present, and future” (22). Agreeing with Betsy Alayne Ryan and quoting the work of Stephen Kern,\(^{139}\) Smith asserts that the new technologies of the twentieth century not only quickened the pace of existence, but also “transformed the memory of years past, the stuff of everybody’s identity, into something slow” (22). According to Smith, this slowing of memory—“the stuff of everybody’s identity”—creates what she calls a sense of “irregular personal time,” or, “a sense of time in conflict with the pace of modernity” (23).

For Stein, whose work of the mid-to-late-1930s is infinitely concerned with sorting through “the stuff of everybody’s identity,” this sense of “irregular” time—and, with it, what Smith calls “the complex blurring notions of past, present, and future” (22)—manifests itself narratively in EA in two important, related ways: first, in the text’s conflation of memoir and diary genres; and second, in its engagement with, and ultimate disruption of, Stein’s theatrical theory of syncopation. The author defines this term in the opening lines of her lecture entitled “Plays,” which she first delivered in New York on Tuesday, 30 October, 1934, at the height of her fame as the author of AABT, and almost exactly one week after having arrived in America for her tour (Rice 339).\(^{140}\) In this particular lecture, she explains an important part of what Ryan calls her “playwriting aesthetic.” Stein says:

I found out a fundamental thing about plays. The thing I found out about plays … was something that makes one think endlessly about plays. That something is this. The thing that is fundamental about plays is that the scene as depicted on the stage is more often than not one might say it is almost

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\(^{139}\) The following quote, incorporated by Smith, comes from Kern’s The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918 (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1983), p. 129.

\(^{140}\) According to Rice, “Plays” was delivered, on this occasion, to “an invited audience at the home of Mrs. John W. Alexander, 170 East 78th Street, New York,” at 9:00 p.m. (339).
always in syncopated time in relation to the emotion of anybody in the audience.

What that says is this.

Your sensation as one in the audience in relation to the play played before you your sensation I say your emotion concerning that play is always either behind or ahead of the play at which you are looking and to which you are listening. So your emotion as a member of the audience is never going on at the same time as the action of the play. (“Plays” 244)

Significantly, as Ryan points out, Stein did not look favorably upon syncopation and did not find it “anything of value, even though she noted that jazz had made of it a positive ‘thing in itself’” (44). What disturbed the author about the concept of syncopation was that it “described the inability of the static audience to merge at any point with a relentlessly moving reality on the stage” and, in doing so, resulted in a kind of “nervousness” that, for Stein, “was not a satisfying condition” (44). Thus, because she was critical of this concept of syncopation—which she defines, essentially, as the temporal gap between text and audience—the above passage is important to my argument in this chapter in several ways: first, its concept of “syncopation” aligns with the “irregular,” out-of-synch perception of time that Smith suggests characterizes twentieth-century women’s travel writing (23) and that, I argue, EA determinedly disrupts by hybridizing its travel narrative form via a combination of conventionally past (memoir) and present (diary) autobiographical subgenres. Second, the very nature of the above passage itself—because it falls into the lecture genre and, thus, was written for and delivered to a live audience—draws upon the very same kind of direct address to “you,” the audience, that EA regularly does in narrating Stein’s American travels in 1934-35. In this way, the passage depicts how, as Bonnie Kime Scott has pointed out, “Stein finds that having an audience alters the lecturer’s sense of her own words” (15).
The effect of an audience’s presence on Stein the lecturer and, I argue, Stein the writer, represents one of the remarkable qualities of modernist literature in general and of *EA* in particular: namely, its capacity for simultaneously exhibiting characteristics of audience-awareness (i.e., Stein’s direct address to “you,” the audience, in the above passage) and autobiographical introspection. In addition to its engagement with the market (as previously discussed), and “counter to what is traditionally expected from modernism,” as Scott argues, “aloof indecipherability is not much valued among” many modernist writers (15). Moreover, much of what writers of the thirties, in particular, wish to make decipherable to readers has to do with autobiography—specifically, with writers’ memories of both distant and recent pasts; for, as Virginia Woolf astutely observed in her 1940 essay, “The Leaning Tower,” “No other ten years can have produced so much autobiography as the ten years between 1930 and 1939” (177). Janet Montefiore, building on Woolf’s statement, has argued that “much of the writing of and about the 1930s is a self-conscious literature of personal memory” (2); in fact, says Montefiore, the thirties “inspired such a large and lively literature of retrospect that the ‘thirties memoir’, whether overt or fictionalized, now amounts to a distinctive subspecies of twentieth-century autobiography” (2). According to Benstock, for modern women writers like Stein—and, as I discuss in my next chapter, like Warner after her—the “self-conscious[ness]” of autobiographical writing arises in the instability of the “I” (“Authorizing” 21), an instability caused by the shortcomings of language as a medium.

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142 Here Montefiore draws upon Eric Hobsbawm’s argument in *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century* (publ. 1994) that literature of the 30s lies in an “Age of Catastrophe” (Hobsbawn’s term) that is “haunted by the memory of the First World War and the fear of the Second” (Montefiore 4).
that “both constructs and is constructed by [women writers].” The result, Benstock continues, is that modernist women writers face “the need to reconceptualize form itself” (19-21). Whereas Warner’s reconceptualization of the autobiographical form results in a series of fragmented narratives centered around seemingly random objects, Stein’s consists of the audience-aware merging of the generic conventions of the travel memoir and diary.

In order to understand the function of these hybrid autobiographical forms in *EA*, it is helpful first to establish some basic definitions. According to Margo Culley, the memoir, much like the novel, is often thought of as an “artistic whole” that “looks back from a fixed point in time which is the terminus of the retrospective.”

The diary, by contrast, is “always in process, always in some sense a fragment” and “represents a continuous present” (220)—a term that Stein herself coins in *The Making of Americans*. Thus, Culley continues, whereas the memoir writer “knows what happens next and directs the reader’s response at every point,” most diarists, on the other hand, produce texts that consist of “a series of surprises to writer and reader alike, one source of the immediacy of the genre” (221). Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, building on Nancy K. Miller’s work (see footnote below), further suggest that the memoir “hesitates to define boundaries between private and public, subject and object”; it records a private

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143 Hence, by using the term “travel memoir” to describe Stein’s *EA*, I mean to suggest that “the fixed…terminus” of the retrospective is Stein’s present of Bilignin, France, 1936, following the travels of her 1934-35 lecture tour. It is worth noting, too, that in this particular essay, Culley uses the terms “autobiography” and “memoir” interchangeably, which Smith and Watson have cautioned readers against: Building on the work of Lee Quinby (“Subject of Memoirs”) and Nancy K. Miller (*Bequest and Betrayal: Memoirs of a Parent’s Death*), Smith & Watson point out that traditional autobiographies “share with confessional discourse an assumed interiority and an ethical mandate to examine that interiority,” whereas “memoirs promote an ‘I’ or subjectivity” that “is externalized and…dialogical” (qtd. Smith and Watson, *Reading* 193).

144 According to Dydo, Stein’s “continuous present” was one of few theoretical terms she coined that “remained in her vocabulary and in that of her students.” Initially, Dydo explains, the term “concerns narrative but later becomes an aspect of description” (95).
subject “exhibited in the public space of the world” (qtd. in Smith and Watson, *Reading* 198). Whereas diaries can take on a private, “confessional mode” or an “assumed interiority,” as Smith and Watson point out, memoirs, on the other hand, tend to “historically situate the subject in a social environment, as either observer or participant” (*Reading* 193). Despite their differences, both the memoir and the diary are unquestionably audience-aware forms, for, as Culley emphasizes, “The importance of the audience, real or implied, conscious or unconscious, of what is usually thought of as a private genre cannot be overstated. The presence of a sense of audience, in this form of writing as in all others, has a crucial influence over what is said and how it is said” (218).

Thus, Stein’s “presence of a sense of audience” in *EA*, due largely to the transatlantic success of her *AABT* (Hobhouse 161-63), renders her private narrative form heavily invested in its public—a public that is, in this case, distinctly American.

Because the content of Stein’s hybrid memoir-diary is largely a travelogue, it is helpful to understand the ways in which a modernist travel narrative like Stein’s *EA* differs from the Victorian women’s travelogues analyzed in my previous chapters. In her discussion of twentieth century travel writing, Helen Carr observes that the vast majority of nineteenth-century travel narratives were produced by “missionaries, explorers, scientists, or Orientalists,” with the main goal of the “purveying of privileged knowledge” (75). Travel writing of the twentieth century, by contrast, is “a more subjective form, more memoir than manual”; during the period of 1880 to 1940, Carr

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145 I want to acknowledge here that categorizing *EA*’s form into various generic types is difficult, since, much like she wishes to avoid categorization into “high” or “low,” as Rabin points out, “Stein wants her work to escape the confines of genre, of categories like money-making and real, of periods like early and late or avant-garde or narrative” (122). The result is a hybridized, seemingly uncategorizable form like that of *EA*, as I argue in this chapter.
continues, “there was a move…from the detailed, realist text, often with an overtly
didactic or at any rate moral purpose, to a more impressionistic style with the interest
focused as much on the travellers’ responses or consciousness as their travels” (74).
Thus, she concludes, from the Victorian to the Modernist period, travel writing generally
becomes “less didactic,” “more subjective,” and, consequently, “more literary” (75).
Susan Bassnett concurs, adding that, although the I-narrator of twentieth-century travel
writing “still occupies a dominant position,” that position becomes less stable (in
Benstock’s terms) via what Bassnett finds to be an “increasing use of dialogue” that
narrow the gap between twentieth-century travel writing and fiction (235).

In *EA*, Stein establishes a kind of dialogic relationship with the reader in her
ongoing efforts at defining the term “genius”—efforts that, throughout Stein’s career,
repeatedly characterize her as arrogant (Bloom 82-85, Sillen 106). As I mentioned in
Chapter 1, the autobiographical form, in its precarious balance between self-exploration
and observation, gradually earned it the title of most egotistical literary genre (Bloom 83,
Sanders, *Private* 10; Treadwell 64-68); yet, the kind of cultural-observation-centered
autobiography offered by travel writing is generally far less ego-laden and thus far more
culturally valuable, as Mary Schriber explains, by sheer merit of its lessons in history and
in the progress of foreign nations (xxiv). This distinction can help account for the
relative “modesty” of the travel-focused *EA* when compared to the blatantly egotistical
*AABT*—a text which, as I discuss in Part II of this chapter, is autobiographical but is not a
tavelogue. Take, for example, Stein’s efforts in naming and defining Geniuses in the
*AABT* book versus *EA*: In the former, Stein repeatedly proclaims herself a genius and
depicts herself in the company of cultural giants such as Alfred Whitehead and Pablo

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Picasso (*AABT* 5, 14, 87), whereas in the latter, she tempers arrogant statements such as “slowly I was knowing that I was a genius” (*EA* 79) and “the earth is covered all over with people but geniuses are very few” (169) with the repeated question, “What is a genius, then” (87). This gesture toward defining the concept of genius, I argue, suggests a kind of dialogic interest in readerly perspective that characterizes *EA* and that is nearly absent from *AABT*, for, as Alice the narrator puts it, the ever-confident Stein believes [c. 1932-33] that if people “can bring themselves to read [her work] they will be interested” (*AABT* 52). This statement reflects Stein’s early “theory of the audience” that, as Wilder puts it, “the richest rewards for the reader come from those works in which the authors admitted no consideration of an audience into their creating mind” (qtd. in Van Vechten xxi). Such audience-shunning statements, when contrasted with *EA*’s concern for “you,” the reader, reveal how Stein’s interest in securing broad readerly attention increases from her early career to her later career, growing exponentially in the mid-30s following the publication of *AABT* and the performance of her *FS*.

II. “It was tomorrow which was yesterday and it was exciting”:

**Disrupted Syncopation via Generic Hybridity in *EA***

Indeed, Stein’s increasing audience awareness in the thirties—when considered alongside generic definitions of twentieth-century travel writing, diary, and memoir—provides a means for understanding and re-valuing *EA* as a text whose form is *as*, if not *more*, complicated than the narrative ventriloquism of *AABT*: Stein’s fusing of travel memoir and diary genres in *EA* results in a motion-filled narrative characterized by a diary-like sense of daily, chronological fixedness in the present space and time of Bilignin, France, in 1936. This fixedness is repeatedly unsettled, however, by frequent,
disordered narrative returns to past spaces and times that, in Smith and Watson’s terms, “historically situate” (193) Stein the memoirist as observer of and participant in socio-cultural environments of interwar America and France. Such shifts in time and space are certainly present in both texts: *AABT*, in its frequent narrative returns to the year 1907, when Stein and Toklas met in Paris, chronicles events spanning Stein’s birth in 1874 through life with Toklas in post-war France in 1932. Despite its occasionally non-linear movements across time, however, *AABT*’s primary geographic setting (as previously mentioned) is static: the vast majority of its events take place in France since, as Stein reminds us, “all roads lead to Paris” (*AABT* 86). *EA*, by contrast, describes (among other things) Stein and Toklas’s trip to America in 1934-35, during the aftermath of the *Alice* book’s extreme popular and academic success. Adopting settings as various as Bilignin, France, Oakland, California, and Chicago—and filtering those settings through various past and present moments—*EA* adopts the generic conventions of the travel narrative at the same time that it complicates those conventions by infusing them with a mixing of memoir and diary styles, wherein Stein flashes back to her childhood in Baltimore (152, 157), East Oakland (156), and San Francisco (154-55).

Take the book’s first chapter, for instance, titled “What Happened After the Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas.” It begins with a flashback to autumn, 1932, wherein Stein wonders, “If there had not been a beautiful and unusually dry October at Bilignin in France in nineteen thirty two followed by an unusually dry and beautiful first two weeks of November would the Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas have been written. Possibly but probably not then” (9). Shortly after this flashback, Stein shifts abruptly to a very specific present by stating that “The other day this is March nineteen thirty-six my
brother in California….cabled advise send over pictures and drawings to America. And I wrote back and said no” (12). Following “this rather nice story,” as Stein calls it, comes yet another flashback, juxtaposed against the “now” of the narrating Stein’s present:

When I was young the most awful moment of my life was when I really realized that the stars are worlds and when I really realized that there were civilizations that had completely disappeared from this earth…. There are a great many things about that but that will come gradually in Everybody’s Autobiography. Now I am still out walking. I like walking. Yesterday when I went out walking I met some one, I used to say one of the things about Paris was that you never met any one you know when you were out walking. But now everything is changing and you that is I well now any one often meets them people you know or people who know you. (12)

This excerpt is significant for several reasons. First, it exemplifies the constant shifting between “now” and “then”—and, with it, the renarration of the past through the present and conflation of real time (“now,” “yesterday”) with narrated time (“that will come gradually in EA”)—that not only exhibits conventions of the diary genre but also reveals Stein’s rejection of the theatrical concept of syncopation: as Culley points out in her discussion of the diary genre, “the writer’s relationship to ‘real time’ and representation of ‘time passing’ in the text itself create formal tensions and ironies not found in texts generated from an illusion of a fixed point in time” (220). These “formal tensions” between the “real time” of Stein the narrator and the “time passing” in the world of the text, as understood by its audience, strikingly resemble Stein’s notion of theatrical syncopation, wherein the audience’s emotion is “never going on at the same time as the action of the play” (Stein, “Plays” 244). Stein’s conclusion that such syncopation in plays—i.e., the temporal gap between text and audience—creates a nervous, unsatisfactory theatergoing experience (B. A. Ryan 44) relates to her use of diary-like, present-tense verbs and pronouns in EA. Consider the phrases, “Now I am out walking”
and “now everything is changing” in the passage above, for instance. When juxtaposed against times of “Yesterday” and “When I was young” (see above), the “now” phrases act as gestures of immediacy, succeeding in narrowing the gap between text and audience, between narrating “I” and reader, if only intermittently and temporarily.

In addition to the way it uses the memoir-diary form to disrupt what I call a kind of “narrative syncopation,” the above passage articulates a distinct sense of audience-awareness that bears further examination. In particular, the passage’s last portion—in its suggestion that “now everything is changing and you that is I well now any one often meets … people who know you” (12)—clearly acknowledges the presence of “you,” the reader, and even goes so far as to suggest the interconnectedness between the “I” of self-narrative and the “you” of the audience. In this way, the passage illustrates how Stein’s hybrid memoir-diary, peppered with moments of dailiness and immediacy in its presentation of a subject (Stein herself) “exhibited in the public space” (Smith and Watson 198) of 1930s France and America, suggests a pronounced meditation on identity that is shared by life-writer and reader.

Moreover, in titling EA’s initial chapter (from which the above passage was excerpted) “What Happened,” Stein ties into the very language she uses throughout her career to theorize concepts of narration and playwriting. According to B. A. Ryan, Stein’s playwriting can be divided roughly into three periods: The first period, Ryan explains, spanned 1913-1921 and was spent trying to create “the essence of what happened” (47). As Stein explains in her Lectures in America, these initial plays sought to create the essence of a relationship between things, and to express this relationship “without telling what happened, in short, to make a play the essence of what happened”
Her second period of playwriting, which occupied the remainder of the 1920s and includes *FS*, represents what Ryan calls an “extension” of Stein’s “what happened” period that encompasses “her ultimate reaction against ‘syncopation’ in the theatre” (51). In this second period, Stein “was devoted to the landscape play,” which, by Ryan’s definition, “is spatially arranged, not vertically progressive, and depends, according to Stein, upon relationships, like a scene from nature” (53). Of her landscape play *FS*, Stein says:

> Anyway I did write Four Saints an Opera to be Sung and I think it did almost what I wanted, it made a landscape and the movement in it was like a movement in and out with which anybody looking on can keep in time. I also wanted it to have the movement of nuns very busy and in continuous movement but placed as a landscape has to be….

> Anyway the play as I see it is exciting and it moves but it also stays and that is as I said in the beginning might be what a play should do. (“Plays” 269)

Stein’s suggestion here that *FS* “did almost what I wanted” has much to do with its use of time: that is, the author admits to liking how “the movement in [the play]” was a kind of “continuous movement” with which “anybody looking on can keep in time.” Her affinity for this temporal union between play and audience (where audience = “anybody looking on”) mirrors her recurring need, in the travel memoir *EA*, for the immediacy of the diary genre. Additionally, her suggestion that “what a play should do” is to “move but … also stay” relates to her discussion of the problem of time in narration. As she states in Lecture I of “Narration,” first delivered Friday, 1 March, 1935 (Rice 347), “nothing does need to have a middle and ending and a beginning” (300). Concurrent with this interest in issues of narration is Stein’s third and final period of playwriting—the period during which (as discussed in Part I of this chapter) she composed and published both *AABT* and *EA* and also witnessed the first onstage performance of her work in 1934; this period has
appropriately been called her “‘narrative’ period” (B. A. Ryan 55). It was during this period, dating roughly from 1932 onward, that Stein “depended, for the first time upon some kind of story” and, perhaps more importantly, sought for her telling of that story to achieve the “smoothness,” “clarity,” and “immediacy of the present moment” (55-56).

Now to return to EA’s use of the “What Happened” phrase: by titling her first chapter “What Happened After the Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas,” Stein suggests to readers that the chapter’s pages are going to discuss—likely, in some kind of chronological, plotted fashion—biographical events of 1933 and afterward. Yet, in the midst of her “narrative” playwriting period of the thirties, and on the heels of her relational, landscape period of the twenties, the narrating Stein of EA seems as concerned with relationships—in this case, relationship between narrator and reader—as she is with autobiographical plotting. Since Stein asserts that narration should foreground the present, thus avoiding a demarcated “middle and ending and a beginning” (Stein, “Narration” 300), the diary form, with its “continuous present” (Culley 200) is the logical narrative choice for her; but it is a choice that, for readers, provides less directed plotting than a straightforward memoir would. As Culley explains, “the obvious difference in the ‘plots’ of diaries” and those of memoirs is that “the … writer of an autobiographical memoir knows what happens next and directs the reader’s response at every point,” whereas the diarist, by contrast, lacks foreknowledge about the “plot” of her life (221). In EA, Stein the diarist’s lack of foreknowledge endows the text’s diary-like passages with senses of immediacy and intimacy that, ultimately, invite the reader to share Stein’s present life experience.
Indeed, while Stein repeatedly uses *EA* to offer explanatory statements of “what was happening” (hence critics’ use of the book—as I mentioned in this chapter’s Introduction—to document biographical particulars), she almost always counters such descriptive statements with flashbacks, or flash forwards, and then returns to a firm grounding of the text in the “here” and “now.” Take, for instance, *EA*’s “Chapter Three: Preparations for Going to America,” wherein Stein initially sets the stage for “what was happening” after publishing *AABT*: “Now although I never do think anything is going to happen things were happening. Roosevelt was being elected, the opera was going to be given, the Autobiography was selling, everybody wanted to meet me, and I began lecturing. All this happened that winter the winter before the summer that I went to America” (103). While readers who know something of Stein’s biography can date this passage to early 1934, some fifty pages later (still in the same chapter), *EA* challenges readers’ perception of time, invoking a series of successive temporal shifts—via a mixing of memoir and diary genres—wherein Stein the narrator describes, in non-linear fashion, various events from childhood and adolescence. She begins by explaining how her father made money with his brother “in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, that is how we all happened to be born there…” (153), after which she mentions, “then my father was dead” (154) but then jumps back in time to clarify that, while alive, he “had worked out a complete system for the street railroads of San Francisco” and was “vice-president of a small part of the system of San Francisco street railroads” (154). Shortly after mentioning her father’s successful career, Stein relates, “And so we all left San Francisco, Simon died there still fat and fishing, and Mike has gone back there again now to bring up a little grandson and Leo is in Florence and I am in Bilignin” (155). She continues:

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146 Stein was the youngest of five surviving children of Daniel Stein and Amelia (“Milly”) Keyser; thus,
It was in Bilignin that I finally decided to go to America again after years of not having been.

So we were in Bilignin and I was quarreling with Mr. Bradley about lecturing. We were here and we had as a servant an Indo-Chinaman.

One thing I can always remember going back again to East Oakland is wearing gloves and books. Bertha was being put at another school and I went with her and while they were talking to her I was left in the superintendent’s room and there was a bookcase there. I was wearing gloves I was just beginning to wear them and I saw a book and I began reading, it was Jane Eyre and I had not read it and I held it tightly and I read it and then suddenly I saw that my thumb had made a black mark on the page I was holding. I can never touch a book with a glove on and I get very troubled when any one touches a book and they have a glove on. Dirty hands do not dirty a book as much as a glove can.

Knowing so many people is curious and yet everybody knows them. Again and again I have known practically nobody and again and again I have known a great many. Just now here in Bilignin we know a great many a great many more than we know in Paris. (156)

Once again, as in the previously quoted passage, we see EA determinedly disrupting narrative syncopation by infusing the past tense language of its travel memoir—characterized by phrases such as “It was in Bilignin that I … decided to go to America”; “we were in Bilignin”; and “I remember going back again to East Oakland”—with immediate, present-tense statements such as “We were here” and “Just now here in Bilignin.” Such narrative mixing functions to narrow the temporal gap between text and reader, bringing the narrating Stein’s “here” and “now” to the reader, even in the midst of her memoir’s flashbacks to childhood. Furthermore, this passage, in its concluding thoughts on “knowing so many people,” points toward the author’s bewilderment over living in the public eye, a bewilderment she faces extensively during the American lecture tour.

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Michael, Simon, and Leo are her older brothers, just as Bertha, also mentioned on this page, is her older sister (Stimpson and Chessman 827).
III. “I had become European” and was “beginning … [to] travel being a celebrity”:

Transatlantic Movement and National Identity in EA

Shortly after the above passage falls one of many sections of EA wherein the text’s hybridized, travel-memoir diary form coincides with its narrator’s constructions of self as celebrity—specifically, of self as American celebrity with European roots, both past and present. Note, for instance, how EA foregrounds Stein’s alliances with the likes of both Europe and America in the following passage, which spans a few paragraphs on a single page of text:

Steins were called Steins in the time of Napoleon before that any name was a name…. Identity always worries me and memory and eternity….In the bath this morning I was drumming on the side of the bathtub, I like moving around in the water in a bathtub, and I found myself drumming the Chopin funeral march and I might have stopped doing it but I went on because they used to play it on Golden Gate Avenue in San Francisco and I was worrying then about identity and memory and eternity, and I am not worrying now but there it is…. (119)

This passage is striking for several reasons: first, in the way it links Stein’s American family to Napoleonic France, it eerily echoes Warner’s assertion, in her short story “The Gorgeous West,” “I date from the Tudors” (52). Whereas the British Warner’s “Tudor” remark fashions a monarchical lineage that helps develop her authority as a British writer, Stein’s “Napoleon” comment, conversely, functions to complicate the way...

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147 It is important to note here the transnational character of the Stein family in general, and of Gertrude’s origins in particular. As Joan Retallack puts it: “…during Gertrude’s early years…the family moved almost constantly—from Pennsylvania to Austria to France to Baltimore to Oakland, California by the time she was six…. As a toddler in Vienna, Gertrude spoke German and English and later claimed [in AABT] that she frequently saw the Austrian emperor … in the park near their apartment. In Paris, where she lived from the ages of four to five, she boarded during the week at a school where she spoke French. When she was five, the family returned permanently to the United States, where Gertrude’s father forbade any further use of German or French to insure the purity of the children’s ‘American English.’ It was then, in English, that she learned to read” (Retallack, Selections: Gertrude Stein. Berkeley: U of California P, 2008, p. 16).

148 See Chapter 4, Part III of this dissertation for my reading of this line and others in “The Gorgeous West,” which is one of Warner’s SOC.
in which she views national identity. For, at the same time that she associates herself
with French military bigwig Napoleon Bonaparte (119), she nonetheless repeatedly
exhibits a marked interest in American general Ulysses S. Grant (242, 268, 278), whose
Civil War memoirs fascinate her. In so suggesting a pronounced link between concepts
of self- and national-histories, personal and national memoirs, *EA* serves as a narrative
vehicle through which Stein fashions for herself—and, as I discuss later in this chapter,
invites readers to share in conceptualizing—a hybrid national lineage that is at once
American and European.

This concept of hybrid nationhood is plainly evident in the ways in which, amidst
*EA*’s associating Stein with a kind of Continental, Napoleonic lineage, the narrative shifts
to a discussion of geographically-specific sites from the author’s American childhood—a
discussion that often coincides with the text’s mixing of diary and memoir genres and its
self-construction of Stein as celebrity. For instance, after describing her early life in East
Oakland, Stein adds that “Then we went to Baltimore…. Not now but then” (157); she
discusses adolescent years in Baltimore, interspersed with life in her present, 1936
Bilignin, and then mentions the years she spent in college at Radcliffe (159), which we
know to have occurred in 1898-1901 (Stimpson and Chessman 828). Immediately after
discussing Radcliffe, she remarks: “Well anyway when I wrote The Autobiography of
Alice B. Toklas for the first time I received really a quantity of fan letters and also for the
Four Saints. I was always reading something…” (159). Stein establishes that the onset
of celebrity—via her receipt of fan letters for her narrative (*ABT*) and her play (*FS*)—
came before “the summer before we went to America and we were not at all certain we
were going” (159). Instead of discussing why she and Toklas “were not at all certain,” or
how it was that they decided to go, she immediately switches to the present-tense “Well anyway I am reading and rereading the book I wrote after being in America, The Relation of Human Nature To The Human Mind and I would not have written it if I had not gone to America and that would have been a pity anybody can know that. So we did go to America…” (159-60). A few paragraphs later, Stein returns again to diary reflections on her recent past and present, mentioning that “The other evening Francis Picabia was here with his son,” followed by her description that “now I am sitting to a portrait painter, I sit and he sits and we do not talk together, I look out over the roofs and sit not very comfortably and he draws to get acquainted with my portrait. . . . I come back again from America and then a year or so later I am sitting again to a painter” (161).

These passages, in their merging of diary and memoir styles, reveal Stein the narrator’s efforts at narratively constructing herself as transatlantic celebrity not only in the past contexts of 1933-34 America and Paris (when fan letters arrived), but also her present moment of 1936 Bilignin, where she has agreed to sit for yet another portrait. Moreover, the above passage, in referencing one of Stein’s most densely theoretical texts of the late-30s, her GHA (1936), accomplishes the same kind of self-advertising—and with it, an establishing of transatlantic, European and American cultural authority—that Martineau achieves in her RWT. Whereas Martineau’s RWT repeatedly cross-references her book Society in America (see Chapter 1, Part IV, for examples), Stein’s EA regularly

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149 Picabia was a Dadaist / Surrealist painter whom Stein befriended while living at 27 rue de Fleurus in Paris.

150 Stein’s GHA (introd. William H. Gass, Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995) bears importance to my analysis in this chapter in several ways: first, it repeatedly links concepts of “identity and audience” verbally and visually on the text’s pages (105, 145); second, it issues definitional statements such as “an audience never does prove to you that you are you” (105) and “Now identity remembers and so it has an audience and as it has an audience it is history” (139); and third, I would argue that Stein’s direction of her definitions to “you,” the reader, in her GHA carry over into her reader-centered definitions in EA.
instructs readers to read not only her *GHA* (225, 281, 300, 309), but also her *AABT* (14, 16, 23, 41, 44, 47, 67, 91, 93, 159), since, she writes, “I told in Alice B. Toklas how [a particular event happened]” (32-33); and *The Making of Americans* (78, 94; 101-02, 137, 139, 142, 151, 238, 258, 274, 307), for, she says in *EA*, “in the Making of Americans I tell all about [it] (73) and “I do describe [things] well in The Making of Americans (238).

In addition to referencing these texts, *EA* mentions *Blood on the Dining Room Floor* (86-88), *As A Wife Has A Cow, A Love Story* (96), *Four in America* (94, 109-10, 243), *FS* (49, 101, 115, 159, 325), and *What Are Masterpieces And Why Are There So Few Of Them* (225, 267).

Because it juxtaposes references to her lucid bestseller, *AABT*, alongside her more obscure, difficult works (*GHA, The Making of Americans*), most of which were published and read transatlantically, Stein’s habit of textual self-referencing in *EA* is important for two reasons: first, it reflects the author’s ongoing efforts to develop a kind of cultural authority that not only bridges the High/Low divide but also transcends national boundaries; and second, it reveals her solid grounding in (and relishing of) modernist transatlantic celebrity culture while simultaneously suggesting her paradoxical wish to offset what she—and Martineau before her—refers to as “lionism.  By Martineau’s definition, “literary lionism” refers to the process by which society admires its writers’ public personalities more than their work, a process that, Alexis Easley explains, “not only placed [Victorian] women writers in the uncomfortable position of being public performers but also exposed their work and lives to the scrutiny of the general public that reserved its hardest treatment for female authors” (43). For Stein (as for Martineau—see

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Chapter 1, Part II), performing does not bring about discomfort—since, as EA documents repeatedly, the author quite enjoyed her time in the cultural spotlight: “It was very nice being a celebrity,” she writes in EA’s introduction, “a real celebrity who can decide who they want to meet and say so and they come or do not come as you want them. I never imagined that would happen to me to be a celebrity like that but it did and when it did I liked it” (2). This initial comment is followed by a slew of passages testifying to the pleasantries of fame, wherein Stein states her opinion that “naturally it is always more pleasant to be flattered than anything and admiration is the most pleasing flattery” (98), and claims that “After the Autobiography was printed .... Everybody invited me to meet somebody, and I went…. It was pleasant being a lion, and meeting the people who make it pleasant to you to be a lion” (93).

Stein’s language of lionism here, falling almost exactly one-hundred years after Martineau’s theorizing of the concept, concurs with Jaffe’s assertion that the “transnational culture of [modernist] celebrity” was characterized by a “fetish of biography” against which writers such as T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, James Joyce, and Wyndham Lewis “cast their reputations” (2). Stein, like her contemporaries, was bothered by the public’s obsession with personality—by her fans’ equation of “Gertrude

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152 Some of the “people” Stein meets during her trip are political bigwigs. Like Martineau, whose *RWT* narrates time spent with General [Andrew] Jackson, former President [James] Madison, and Daniel Webster (see Chapter 1 of this dissertation for more information), Stein, too, is invited to tea at the White House, where she talks politics with Mrs. Roosevelt and hobnobs with Washington officials (*EA* 241-42).

153 Though I’m not entirely certain at this point if Martineau coined the phrase “literary lionism,” a Google search for the phrase, which generates mostly Martineau-related hits, suggests that it may, in fact, be hers.

154 While I find Jaffe’s *Modernism and Culture of Celebrity* incredibly helpful, I do wish that he had incorporated more women writers into his study. Instead, he focuses on the writers he believes to have been the “most prominent” modernist celebrities—Eliot, Pound, Joyce, and Lewis.
Stein” with a kind of character, rather than with her literary works. Indeed, in Hobhouse’s words, the extraordinary success of *AABT* had molded Stein’s reputation as a “character” with whom the American public had fallen in love (163). Hobhouse’s language here suggests that, in perceiving Stein as a kind of fictional “character”—one whose *AABT* had established her reputation as a cultural authority over Paris, its web of expatriate writers (such as Hemingway), and its famous circuit of Continental artists (including Picasso, Matisse, etc.) (*AABT* 43-50, 63-68, 158-60, 212-16)—it is likely that, by the time of her 1934-35 lecture tour, the public of Stein’s native America paradoxically perceived her as a kind of European “Other.”

To be sure, the American masses’ attraction to Stein, considered alongside this perception of her as European “Other,” does not go unnoticed by the author. As she acknowledges in *EA*, in typical memoir-diary fashion, *AABT* had firmly established her “lion” status and, in so doing, she admits, the book had determined when she would consider leaving Europe to spend time in her native America: “I used to say that I would not go to America until I was a real lion a real celebrity at that time of course I did not really think I was going to be one. But now we were coming and I was going to be one” (173). The fact that Stein viewed her achievement of transatlantic celebrity as a kind of prerequisite for returning to her homeland suggests how strongly, in the wake of her early-1930s playwriting, she had begun to value the presence of her American

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155 Stein may have grown accustomed to readers’ lionizing her because, as Dydo explains, for much of the twenties, the author “could not count on an audience’s familiarity with her writing because little was in print. An audience was more likely to know about her as an eccentric writer who owned modern paintings than to have read her” (94). By the time of *EA*, in the wake of *AABT*, however, this was certainly not the case.

156 Interestingly, the “now” of this diary-like passage (“but now we were coming [to America]”) takes readers to the “now”—the present—of fall, 1934, rather than to the present moment of *EA*’s composition. In so doing, the passage falls in line with Stein’s theoretical goal of narratively representing a continuous present that spans multiple pasts.
audience. Yet, at the same time that she relishes prospects of lionism and entertains thoughts of self-as-American-spectacle, acknowledging how “exciting” it is to see “[her] name in electric lights on Broadway” [for the debut of FS] (115), Stein, like Martineau before her, laments in EA that her public is more interested in her character than in her work itself: “It always did bother me that the American public were more interested in me than in my work. And after all there is no sense in it because if it were not for my work they would not be interested in me so why should they not be more interested in my work than in me. That is one of the things one has to worry about in America … (51). As a result of these worries, and in what I deem an effort to counterbalance her lionism, EA seasons its narration of Stein’s celebrity-ridden American tour with habitual, self-referential gestures, encouraging readers to check out her other works—high and low, popular and literary. In so doing, I argue, EA seeks to accomplish what Jaffe terms a transformation of the modernist “authorial signature” away from a “fetish of biography” and toward the “publicizing” of modernist work (2-3).

In order to better understand Stein’s narrative publicizing, and her ongoing construction of self-as-celebrity, it is helpful to take a closer look at the physical, geographical context in which her mid-1930s stardom occurs—specifically, the context of the American lecture tour chronicled in EA—and the ways in which the text’s narration of it underscores the relationship among issues of celebrity, transatlantic travel, 

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157 Though a small number of the plays in Stein’s theatrical canon were occasionally performed in London and Paris, her works were primarily staged and performed in American cities. See B. A. Ryan, Appendix C: “Chronological List of Productions” (165-89) for specifics.

158 As Easley explains, Martineau viewed lionism as “especially hazardous” for female Victorian writers; she thought it could damage intellectual production by encouraging egotism and mediocrity over moral sympathy and literary excellence (Easley, First-Person 43). Martineau’s sentiments here are quite ironic, considering her own egotism (a character trait which provides yet another striking resemblance between her and Stein).
and national identity. To grasp how Stein perceived her American public as awestruck by her presence—a response which, she suggests, constitutes their “lionizing” of her—we need only look at Stein’s descriptions of her reception by friends, reporters, and photographers upon her arrival in New York on the S.S. Champlain ocean liner on Wednesday, 24 October, 1934 (Rice 339). Much like Martineau’s and Kemble’s descriptions of Americans’ starstruck behavior upon seeing them, Stein describes her highly publicized voyage to and arrival in New York—not without revealing her shock at technological advancements in travel since her last trip, for, as Souhami and others remind us, Stein had not travelled transatlantically in thirty years (201). Consider the following passages, excerpted from the beginning of EA’s “Chapter Four: America”:

And so we were on the Champlain. Being a celebrity we paid less than the full price of a small room and we had a very luxurious one. That was a very pleasant thing. People always had been nice to me because I am pleasing but now this was going to be a different thing. We were on the Champlain and we were coming….

Thirty years before being on a boat was being on a boat there were bunks and benches you slept in a bunk and you sat on a bench in the dining room or on a chair that was screwed down and now you slept in a bed and you sat in a chair at a small table just like any hotel…. We liked it….

Everybody talked to us and we talked to everybody…. So the Statue of Liberty began and Staten Island. I did not remember Staten Island, it did look awfully pretty it was so white and green, and then there was the silhouette of New York…. Then I went somewhere else on the boat, they were photographing me and then I was taken by the arm by some one else and they said I was broadcasting…. And then we were landing. There we were it was all easy….

And then we were in the hotel. That was exciting because by that time we were excited and we knew that it was all exciting which it was. Everybody arranged everything. We had four rooms, …. [and] everybody was coming and there were a great many of them there…. There were so many of them and it was no bother, they were friends and there were flowers and they were photographing and they were sitting down with us
and then two of the reporters came in to talk some more. That was pleasant it always is pleasant to talk some more. (173-77)

This passage is important for several reasons: First, it highlights the fame in which Stein found herself upon her arrival, when greeted by the “revolving lighted sign in Times Square” advertising that “Gertrude Stein has Returned to New York,” and when surrounded by “so many …friends,” “flowers,” photographers and reporters, the latter of whom created headlines such as “Gerty Gerty Stein Stein Is Back Home Home Back” and “Gertrude Stein, Stein Is Back, Back and It’s Still All Black, Black” (L. C. Miller 51). Second, even in the face of the American public’s welcoming her “home,” the above passage establishes Stein’s newcomer-like, foreigner’s perspective on an America she had not seen in thirty years. Once again, in language suggestive of a kind of hybridized national identity, Stein explains to readers that “America is where we had been born and had always been even though for thirty years we had not really touched it with our feet and hands and so it was as if we had come often but really it was not just the same” (175). Indeed, though she suggests that she “had always [philosophically] been” in America, she cannot deny that the country, by 1934, had sustained significant changes that rendered it “foreign” to her.

We can better understand the foreignness with which Stein perceives American landscape and custom by considering it in the context of Benstock’s and Jane Marcus’s arguments about women’s writing in exile. Benstock, in her discussion of female

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159 While Stein’s use of the first-person plural, “we” pronoun dominates this and many other passages in EA, Lynn C. Miller argues that both she and Toklas were quite worried, during their celebrated American tour, about “the way the public would respond to them as lesbians.” Accordingly, Miller explains, Toklas, “afraid of slander,….defined her role on this tour as that of Miss Toklas, secretary” (55).

160 One of the most often told anecdotes (covered by nearly all of the biographers, and mentioned by Stein herself in EA [177]), is that, upon stepping off the boat, a reporter (Stein says it was Jo Alsop), struck by the clarity of her spoken responses to interviewers’ barrage of questions, asked Stein, “Why don’t you write the way you talk?” She responded, “Why don’t you read the way I write?” (EA 177, Souhami 205).
expatriate writers, points out that Modernist women redefined the concept of “home” ("Expatriate" 27)\textsuperscript{161}; Marcus, in theorizing what she calls “the ethics of the woman writer’s elsewhereness,”\textsuperscript{162} explains that “elsewhere is not nowhere. It is a political place where the displaced are always seen and see themselves in relation to the ‘placed.’ Dis/placement and difference as categories of political and gender exile from writing speaking, and acting circulate around notions of fixed positions in a substantial Somewhere” (J. Marcus 270). Together, Benstock’s and Marcus’s points raise the following important questions about Stein’s narration of American travels in *EA*: Where is “home” for Stein? Where, in Marcus’s terms, is her “fixed position in a substantial Somewhere,” and what, correspondingly, does she consider “elsewhere”? The answer to these questions, I argue, lies not only in Stein’s rejection of the word “native”—for, she explains, “it is queer the use of that word, native always means people who belong somewhere else, because they had once belonged somewhere” (*EA* 23)—but also in *EA*’s repeatedly contradictory statements about Stein’s national alliances. Take, for instance, Stein’s matter-of-fact admission, “I had become European” (133).\textsuperscript{163} If we consider this

\textsuperscript{161} According to Benstock, “Gertrude Stein wrote that it wasn’t what France gave her that was so important but what it did not take away. It is significant that expatriate women writers did not eroticize Paris or maternalize France, nor did they necessarily genderize their conceptions of America…. That is, in general France did not serve…as nurturing mother, impassioned sister, a magic paradise or a dead, denied, and denying woman…. Paris did become ‘a home of art’ [Benstock borrows this term from Sandra Gilbert’s reading of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s poetry in the context of nineteenth-century Italy], but Modernist women redefined both components of this safeguarded space—both ‘home’ and ‘art’” (27).

\textsuperscript{162} It is important to note here that, for Marcus, the concept of “elsewhere” is both theoretical and geographical; i.e., her essay builds on the work of Luce Irigaray, Nancy K. Miller, and others who have suggested that the woman writer is “the quintessential stranger in the paradise of male letters” (271); yet, at the same time, the essay also addresses the implications of the geographical and/or cultural exile of women writers (and characters they create).

\textsuperscript{163} Interestingly, and related to my analysis of Warner’s focus on national customs in *SOC*, Stein suggests that she knew she had become European because she had developed a tendency to quarrel: “Americans do everything for you so how can you quarrel with them,” she explains. “I had become European and so quarreling was a natural thing” (*EA* 133).
statement alongside her comments, “After all I am American. Being there [in America] does not make me more there” (115); “I am a good American” (310); and her discussion of how, during the First World War, the French soldiers “were becoming Americanized” (128), which led to “the Americanization of everything” (132).\(^{164}\) we see Stein using \textit{EA} to narrate herself as a citizen of—and an authority over—American and European cultures. Moreover, we see how, paradoxically, her thirty-year European residence has forged for her an identity that is neither American nor European, but both.

As a result, we find in \textit{EA} Stein’s perceptions of 1930s America as both familiar and foreign. Such perceptions—especially those of the country’s foreignness—appear often in passages cataloguing the author’s cross-country travels, by car and plane, with Toklas throughout the five-month duration of their trip.\(^{165}\) According to Smith, “vehicles of motion are vehicles of perception and meaning, precisely because they affect the temporal, spatial, and interrelational dynamics of travel” (\textit{Moving} 22). B. A. Ryan agrees, clarifying further:

The airplane ride involved perception of a landscape from a distance, so that possibilities for interminglings and disappearances of lines and sections was the natural vision. Driving in a car within the landscape on a road naturally resulted in a vision of progress or development—travel through time—where points of the journey are perceived in order, according to the movement of the car. The airplane, on the other hand, freed the traveler to order the journey as he wished while hovering over the whole landscape. . . .

The differences between the two modes of travel, as Stein saw them, are primarily differences in time and space. For the automobile traveler, the trip is not complete until the car has progressed from point a to point b. . . . For the airplane traveler, the trip is complete, in a sense, at every moment, since the landscape exists as a piece at every moment: the

\(^{164}\) Again, we see an echo here to Warner’s \textit{SOC}, which discusses the Americanization of Britain in the early-to-mid twentieth century. See Chapter 4 of this dissertation for more information.

\(^{165}\) Stein and Toklas arrived in New York on Wednesday, 24 October, 1934, and left to return to France on Saturday, 4 May, 1935 (Rice 339, 351).
changes perceived from one moment to the next are so small relative to changes perceived from the car as to be non-existent, and may have as much to do with changes of consciousness as with changes in the landscape. For Stein, the difference between car and plane travel was no less than the difference between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: an experience of time had become an experience of space. (9)

Stein’s direct engagement in *EA* with this perceived coalescence of time and space appears in three ways—all of which, I argue, inform the author’s deliberations over identity: first, in the book’s extended philosophical deliberations on how “there is no limit to space and yet one is living in a limited space and inside oneself there is no sense of time but actually one is always living in time” (250); second, in its discussion of issues of movement versus stasis (189-90); and third, in its visceral descriptions of automobile road trips (202-04, 269, 289, 294-95) and airplane rides (126-27, 135, 196-98, 229-30, 236, 324) with Toklas.

We can begin to unpack these narrative deliberations on time and space by first considering Stein’s unquestionable preference (when given the choice between air and automobile travel) for flight, a preference which, I suggest, is due largely to the ways that flight not only offers a means of inspiration for her playwriting, but also resonates with her working definition of Americanness. In describing her first journey by air, when she “had never even seen an airplane near before not near enough to know how one got in,” she writes, “It was then in a kind of way that I really began to know what the ground looked like” (196-97). As she compares the lines on American maps to her view from the sky, Stein’s thoughts wander to plays: “I did want to write a play about the States the way I did about the Saints…. It is so strange that the lines are ruled lines on paper, I never can stop having pleasure in the way the ruled lines separate one state from another”
Ultimately, Stein’s “pleasure” in comparing the lined space of maps to her aerial view of American soil leads her to make the statement—in language characteristic of EA’s recurring, diary-like, continuous present—that flying is “a natural thing for us to be doing” (201). This perceived naturalness of flying, moreover, relates to the way in which Stein views “air” as an essential quality of Americanness. She explains:

… air is everywhere, everywhere in America there is no sky, there is air and that makes religion and wandering and architecture. When I used to try to explain America to Frenchmen … I used to tell them you see there is no sky over there there is only air …. I always explained everything in America by this thing… (209)

Because she associates “air” with the essence of Americanness, Stein’s narrative returns to air travel in EA suggest her philosophical desire to return—even while stating that she “had become European” (133)—to what she considers the core of America.

Whereas flying becomes a “natural thing” for Stein—a natural thing that brings about philosophic reflection on America, landscape, and plays—travel by car generates Stein’s comparisons between the pace of American and Continental lifestyles.

Specifically, at the same time that she describes “a very little boy’s” request for her autograph at a Dartmouth football game (203-04)—ever testifying to her widespread cultural popularity—she laments what she deems the ridiculously slow speed limits that she is subject to while driving in America:

I was fascinated with the way everybody did what they should. When I first began driving a car myself in Chicago and in California I was surprised at the slowness of the driving, in France you drive much faster, you are supposed not to have accidents but you drive as fast as you like and in America you drive very slowly forty-five miles an hour is slow, and when lights tell you to stop they all stop and they never pass each other

166 In addition to her reflections on plays here, Stein also links her aerial view of the American landscape to cubism: “These very straight lines,” she remarks, “made it right that I had always been with cubism and everything that followed after” (198).
going up a hill or around a curve and yet so many get hurt. It was a puzzle to me. . . .

In France you drive fifty-five or sixty miles an hour all the time, I am a very cautious driver from the standpoint of my French friends but I often do and why not, not very often does anybody get killed and in America everybody obeying the law and everybody driving slowly a great many get killed it was a puzzle to me…. That driving so slowly in America is something. (202)

This passage, in its emphases on the pace of movement and its reliance on a plethora of pronouns—“I,” “you,” “they,” “everybody,” etc.—places “you” the reader, in roles of driver in both France and America. In so doing, the passage collapses the geographic space of nation through language, drawing the reader into Stein’s foreign, yet familiar experience of her native American culture. By juxtaposing the foreign (Stein’s “surprised,” “puzzle[d]” response to American driving laws”) against the familiar (“you” interjections to her American readers), the passage exemplifies how EA fashions for its author a hybrid national identity that establishes allegiance to Europe and America at once, all the while inviting readers to share that allegiance.

Another example of such collapsing of geographic space occurs when, following her lecture tour stops in Philadelphia, Chicago, Cambridge, and Vassar (EA 187)—Stein takes readers through cities including New York, Fort Worth, Los Angeles, and Pasadena, at which point she excitedly describes driving a new Ford rental car to San Francisco:

…there they took charge of it and like everything else over there it was no bother. Over here life is much more occupying doing anything any day or in any way is very occupying… but over there nothing was a bother, that is what is called efficiency…. Over here you have no time to fill everything you do is such a bother…. Anyway here we were in California. Here we were in Pasadena…it was very pleasant and we were enjoying it. (289)
In its conflated use of pronouns “here” and “there”—somewhat like the “now” and “then” of examples discussed earlier in this chapter—this passage invites reader identification with multiple geographic places of Stein’s narrative, thus inviting the reader to feel as “at home” in present day France as he or she does in America. Presumably, the first “there” [“there they took charge of it”] refers to San Francisco and its modern day conveniences. Subsequently, “there” likely refers to America in 1935, while “here” refers to the narrating Stein’s present moment of Bilignin, France, 1936. It is the final statements, “here we were in California. Here we were in Pasadena” that fuse language of immediacy (“here”) with that of past travels in a way that comments on the fluid, malleable—and, most importantly—liminal national identities of selves in transit. Though it is clear that her road trip to Pasadena is past, Stein’s use of the pronoun “here” at the end of the passage functions to maintain EA’s cyclical return to the diary-like continuous present, a return that succeeds in disrupting narrative syncopation and, thus, in narrowing the gap (both temporal and spatial) between text and reader.

IV. “…it is not a reviewers book but it is a people’s book…”:

*EA and the Re-Valuing of Readerly Perspective*

In my view, it is Stein’s pronoun use in *EA*—specifically, her diary-like references to the “here” and “now,” and familiar interjections to “you,” the reader—that distinguishes this text from its predecessor, *AABT*. Though the author’s focus on nationality in *AABT* is undeniable, the narrative strategies used to discuss it differ drastically from those employed in *EA*. In *AABT*, for instance, Stein plays typographically with national adjectives, describing ventriloquistically, through Toklas’s voice, how “a frenchman should not stay unexpectedly to a meal particularly if he asked
the servant beforehand what there was for dinner” (7); “hungarian painters and writers …were always [at 27 rue de Fleurus]” (13); “germans [were] not too popular because … they tended to break things and Gertrude Stein has a weakness for breakable objects, she has a horror of people who collect only the unbreakable” (13); “I did not realize then how completely and entirely american was Gertrude Stein” (16); and “[Picasso] … would suddenly remember the spanish war and he became very spanish and very bitter and Spain and America in their persons could say very bitter things about each other’s country” (16). Considering these examples, it is clear that, in its strategic capitalization of proper nouns and (“Spain,” “America”) and de-capitalization of proper adjectives (“hungarian,” “german,” “american”), AABT succeeds in minimizing the importance of nation (by de-capitalizing nation-specific adjectives) at the same time that it foregrounds anecdotes of nation-specific behaviors and customs. The difference between AABT’s pronounced depiction of generalized, nation-specific behaviors and EA’s ongoing discussion of transatlantic nationhood, I argue, is that by 1937, the audience-aware Stein invites “you,” the reader to share in conceptualizing a national identity that is distinctly modern, transatlantic, and liminal. As a result, EA, as opposed to AABT, functions as an innovative self-narrative that, in Stein’s terms, “is not an autobiography but … [is] a conversation” (EA 3).

Stein’s conversational pronoun use in EA occupies the focus of some of the book’s meager critical attention. Through its frequent conflation of “here” and “there,” “now” and “then,” “we” and “they,” “you” and “I,” not to mention its recurring references to “everybody” and “anybody,” EA, like much of Stein’s other work, deliberately plays with the infinite potential of the pronoun. As she asserts in “Poetry and
Grammar”—which, like “Plays,” is a lecture she delivered during her American tour\textsuperscript{167}—pronouns “of course are not really the name of anything. They represent some one but they are not its or his name. In not being his or its or her name they already have a greater possibility of being something than if they were as a noun is the name of anything” (316). This capacity for “a greater possibility” or, in Juliana Spahr’s terms, “a lack of fixity” (38), is precisely what draws Stein to the pronoun. It is the possibilities of language—language, I would add, that is shared by writer \textit{and} reader—that offer Stein a means for crafting a concept of a national identity that lacks spatial (geographic) and temporal fixity. Furthermore, it is the possibilities of language that attract Stein to the concept of writing an autobiography that is not just about a single self, but, rather, is about “everybody” (39).

Interestingly, in her lecture “Plays,” Stein clarifies what she means by the pronoun “everybody”: “By everybody,” she writes, “I do of course include myself by always I do of course include myself” (260). If her term “everybody” “always” includes herself, then this means that in \textit{EA}, the pronouns “I,” “we” \textit{and} “everybody” all, in some way, represent Stein, the book’s first-person narrator. Thus, through \textit{EA}, she seeks to write a self-narrative that is at once hers and everybody’s, to be read by her and “anybody”—although I would argue that this concept of “anybody” is more selective than it seems, since, as I mentioned in my Introduction to this chapter, Stein’s “intended audience” throughout the bulk of her career consisted largely of Americans (Benstock, \textit{Women} 157). The irony here is that, while the generally accessible language of \textit{EA}—

\textsuperscript{167} According to Rice, “Poetry and Grammar” was first delivered during the American tour in New York on Tuesday, 6 November, 1934 (Rice 340).
that of *AABT* before it\(^{168}\)—solicited these works’ broad audiences and ensured their popular and critical success, Stein had stated throughout her earlier career, and also states in *EA* itself, that she prefers narrower, more circumscribed audiences (*EA* 187, 292). As a result, we find that, while Stein-the-narrator may initially seem in *EA* to represent and connect with the broad, largely generalized audience that is “everybody” and “anybody,” her generic choice of a hybridized narrative form—one that relies heavily on the intimate language of the diary—actually succeeds in de-generalizing and personalizing the concept of “everybody,” inviting both scholarly and non-academic readers to engage in an intimate, conversational reconsideration of the foundations of national identity.

Thus, despite reviewers’ traditional panning of (or disinterest in) *EA*, what we find in its pages is, in my view, a profound meditation on the boundaries between Europe and America; narrated self and reader; autobiographical introspection and audience-awareness; private and public; personal and national; literary and popular. When, by January of 1938, Stein had become aware that her newly published *EA* had “failed to sell particularly well,” she wrote to her publisher, Bennet Cerf, lamenting that “the reviewers did it harm” and stating that “…it is not a reviewers book but it is a people’s book” (qtd. Bridgman 269).\(^{169}\) Indeed, contemporary reviews of *EA* almost universally panned it—with one critic suggesting that he had “never read a book in [his] life that had more words and less in it than this one, unless it was another book by Gertrude Stein” (Rascoe 106); and another joking that “the mama of dada is going gaga” (Sillen 106). Despite these

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\(^{168}\) Although I agree with critics (like Donald Pizer, in his *American Expatriate Writing and the Paris Moment*) who view *AABT* as a “love letter” and/or teasing gesture toward Toklas (Pizer 30-31), I would take an argument like Pizer’s one step further and suggest that the envisioned reader of *AABT* was Toklas herself more than it was the broad, general public.

\(^{169}\) Though I could not get my hands on these letters, Bridgman credits the first excerpt (“the reviewers did it harm”) to a letter Stein wrote to Cerf in January, 1938; and the second (“it is a funny book”), to a letter dated 24 August 1938 (269).
scathing critical reviews, Stein testified that the people—her public—loved her book and that, more importantly, their delight in it brought her extreme satisfaction. As she wrote in a letter to Van Vechten on 4 February 1938, “you know … it is funny Everybody’s Autobiography has produced the most completely satisfying fan letters I have ever had…” (Burns 589-90).

Despite Stein’s complete satisfaction over readers’ reception of her work, and notwithstanding her admitted perception of herself as one of “everybody,” the author’s relationship with her public, and with “the market,” in general, was a vexed one. This vexed relationship emerges primarily in EA’s regular juxtaposition of carefree passages, wherein Stein testifies to the pleasantries of transatlantic fame and economic success, against meditative passage, wherein she invites “you,” the reader to ponder the effects of fame and success on personal (here opposed to national) identity. For example, shortly after excitedly cataloguing for readers the items that AABT’s successful publication had enabled her to buy—items including a Ford car, a new coat, and two collars for Basket, Stein and Toklas’s poodle (41)—Stein acknowledges that her entrance into the world of capital exchange brings with it an intense reflection on the relationship between what she terms the “inside” and “outside,” i.e., the self and the public surrounding that self. All the while narrating her delight in driving the Ford across America (48), Stein deliberates on the potential ways in which celebrity and economic success can affect one’s sense of self:

It is funny about money. And it is funny about identity. You are you because your little dog knows you, but when your public knows you and does not want to pay for you and when your public knows you and does want to pay for you, you are not the same you…. The thing is like this, it

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170 As Souhami documents, “in the first year of [AABT]’s publication Gertrude received $4,500 from Harcourt Brace, $1000 from the Atlantic Monthly and $3000 from the Literary Guild” (195).
is all the question of identity. It is all a question of the outside being outside and the inside being inside. As long as the outside does not put a value on you it remains outside but when it does put a value on you then it gets inside or rather if the outside puts a value on you then all your inside gets to be outside. I used to tell all the men who were being successful young how bad this was for them and then I who was no longer young was having it happen. (46-48)\textsuperscript{171}

This passage, through its engagement with what Kirk Curnutt calls “the inside/outside trope,”\textsuperscript{172} clearly exhibits, in Curnutt’s terms, “the ‘confusion’ that occurs when the outer self is mistaken for the inner ‘I’” (“Inside” 293). While critics of EA have tended to read this and other similar passages as evidence of the book’s “meditation on” or “manifesto of failure” (Krukowski viii), I find the opposite: the “confusion” Kurnutt sees in the above-quoted passage becomes far less muddling—and not at all debilitating—when we consider the passage alongside others I have cited in this chapter for their innovative, intimate pronoun use. In foregrounding the pronoun “you” and, in this case, almost entirely omitting the autobiographical “I” (introduced only in its final sentence), the above-quoted passage mirrors earlier-cited passages’ periodic collapsing of the “I” and the “you” (EA 12). In so doing, the above passage paradoxically performs—by virtue of its pronoun-centered linguistic structure—a conflation of the “outside” (“you”) and “inside” (“I”), reader and writer, public and private self. As a result, the passage’s apparent “confusion” does not depict the effects of the “outside” on the “inside” as devastating or limiting in any way; rather, it suggests that the relationship between the two realms—and, respectively, between the self of an autobiographical text (inside) and

\textsuperscript{171} Despite its lamentations on the new lifestyle that accompanies Stein’s great public success, this passage is ironically followed by her statement that “there is no pleasure like…the sudden splendid spending of money” (48) and more descriptions of the eight cylinder Ford, not to mention the additional servant Stein and Toklas hired in 1933 to take care of their country home (EA 48).

\textsuperscript{172} Curnutt dates Stein’s first use of this trope to The Making of Americans, written 1906-11, publ. 1925 (293).
its reader (outside)—offers a kind of limitless potential for refiguring issues of identity on both personal and national levels.

This limitless potential certainly does not nullify the fact that, as Stein admits, following the extreme success of her *AABT*, “everything changed inside me” (40)—a change that Hobhouse (and others) tend to interpret negatively and often describe as a serious case of writer’s block (Hobhouse 168). In *EA*’s “Chapter Three: Preparations for Going to America,” however, Stein writes that “everything that summer [the summer of 1934, following the publishing of *AABT*] was in confusion just as it is this summer [1936], only then the confusion was inside me and not outside me and now it is outside me and not inside me” (132, my ital.). Again, the presence of “confusion” generates possibility: Stein’s phrasing here, in its reliance on both the inside/outside trope and the coalescing of memoir and diary, “then” and “now” language, suggests that she is not intimidated by “confusion” or by the impending presence of the “outside.” Conversely, her phrasing suggests that she holds narrative control over the inside / inner ‘I,’ so much so that, in the face of what critics term a debilitating period of writer’s block (Hobhouse 168), she succeeds in relating—via narration—the “inside” / self to the “outside” public. Thus, despite her narrative habit in *EA* of occasionally voicing concerns over issues of narration and identity—stating that she was, for a time, “worried” about both (110, 66)—she ultimately finds that it is only “when nothing inside need[s] to be written” that identity is truly worrisome (66). In other words, it is only when the relationship between the inside and outside lies in a state of dormancy, and is not kept active by a symbiotic flow of ideas between writer and audience, that identity becomes problematic. As Stein puts it: “I am I because my little dog knows me. But was I I when I had no written word
inside me” (66). In this passage, as in others I’ve quoted throughout this chapter, we see Stein seeking the reader’s—the proverbial “everybody’s”—input. Also in this passage, with its reference to Stein’s favorite Mother Goose rhyme, “The Old Woman and the Pedlar,” we find what Hobhouse calls Stein’s insistence on “the relation of existence or identity to recognition by something outside”—whether that “something” is a dog or a human audience (170).

If, as Stein believed, a play is “something presented for the consideration of an audience” (Weinstein 114), then EA is itself something of a “play”—an autobiographical narrative “play” that probes the problems and possibilities of the personal and national identities of selves moving about in modernity. By invoking the hybridized travel memoir-diary form, Stein-the-narrator crafts in EA a transatlantic, continuous present that disrupts narrative syncopation between text and reader and collapses perceived differences between American native and European Other. In doing so, the text “at last… [achieves] narrative” for Stein (Burns and Dydo 140). Note how, in the following passage from EA, which re-narrates a conversation with Wilder, Stein explains how her narrative achievement in EA is different from—and better than—that of AABT:

... and I said [to Thornton] I had done things I had really written poetry and I had really written plays and I had really written thinking and I had really written sentences and paragraphs but I said I had not simply told anything and I wanted to do that thing must do it. I would simply say what was happening which is what is narration, and I must do it as I knew it was what I had to do. Yes said Thornton.

And now I almost think I have the first autobiography [AABT] was not that, it was a description and a creation of something that having happened was in a way happening not again but as it had been which is history which is newspaper which is illustration but is not a simple narrative of what is happening not as if it had happened not as if it is

173 The full text of this nursery rhyme is available online at http://www.fidella.com/trmg/TRMG3.html (accessed 4 August 2008).
happening but as if it is existing simply that thing. And now in this book 
[EA] I have done it if I have done it. (EA 312)

This passage, in offering a definition of narration that is “what is [or was] happening,”
resonates with Stein’s “what happened” period of playwriting—a period (as discussed in
Part II of this chapter) that occupied a large part of Stein’s career (roughly spanning
1913-30) and that includes not only her writing of FS, but also her rejection of the
concept of syncopation in the theatre (B. A. Ryan 47). In light of its link to her
playwriting, Stein’s theory of narration here, especially, in its emphatic desire to “simply
tell anything” and “simply say what was happening,” requires “the consideration of an
audience” (Stein, EA 312; Weinstein 114).

It follows that narration, as theorized by Stein in EA, ought to not only be
audience-aware and conversational, but should also remain alive in the continuously
“happening” present. Stein’s innovative narration in EA achieves this continuous present
via its merging of autobiographical subgenres and subsequent collapsing of space and
time. Thus, in the context of its author’s transatlantic celebrity, EA’s hybrid, audience-
aware, autobiographical narrative form becomes a vehicle through which Stein
reconceptualizes notions of personal and national identity, ultimately suggesting that
hybrid forms best narrate hybrid identities. As such, the text refigures notions of identity
as admittedly “confusing,” yet limitlessly fruitful processes shared between self and
reader, lying in constant flux between realms of “I” and “you,” and encouraging a
reconsideration of—and perhaps, an ultimate bridging between—wide-ranging binary
categories of text and audience, inside and outside, European and American, popular and
literary.
Chapter 4

“Too English for the English”: Nation, Memory, and Object in Warner’s *Scenes of Childhood* (1936-73)

And so…it began with *Tender Buttons* to constantly realize the thing anything so that I could recreate that thing…

-- Gertrude Stein, “Poetry and Grammar”

**Introduction**

Originally published as individual stories in *The New Yorker* between 1936 and 1973, *Scenes of Childhood* represents one of fourteen volumes of Sylvia Townsend Warner’s short stories, most of which remain critically neglected. Biographer Claire Harman characterizes Warner’s *SOC* as “an anecdotalised autobiography of Sylvia’s youth,” which is “stranger than fiction, and rather funnier” (*Sylvia* 248); indeed, Warner’s conflation of genres in *SOC* effectively challenges boundaries of fact and fiction, personal and political, popular and literary. Structured around episodic memories and seemingly random objects, *SOC* represents a type of experimental serialized autobiography that, in exploring and mimicking the fragmentation of time and space in memory and narrative, engages with modernist literary tradition—specifically, with

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174 “Siegfried on the Rhine” and “In Pimlico” appear for the first time in *SOC* (1981); all other stories were published originally in the *New Yorker*. As Brooke Allen explains in “Sylvia Townsend Warner’s ‘very cultured voice,’” *The New Criterion*, 19 (2001), the majority of Warner’s short story collections (and her other works as well) are out of print, rendering Warner “in danger of being forgotten” (25). Joanne Shattock agrees, stating in *The Oxford Guide to British Women Writers* (New York: Oxford U P, 1993) that “despite [Warner’s] output of short stories, few were anthologized or made their mark on the genre” (447-48).
Virginia Woolf’s concept of “scene making” and Gertrude Stein’s and others’ theories of the relationship between the word (the noun, in Stein’s case) and the thing. For, as Bill Brown puts it, “the question of things and their thinginess” is “a fundamentally modernist question” (12-13)—a question provocatively played out by writers including T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and William Carlos Williams, whose 1944 poem, “A Sort of A Song” famously proclaims “(No ideas / but in things)” (9-10). To be sure, Warner finds ideas in things: the vast majority of her twenty-eight “scenes” is constructed around an object—ranging from a chair, to buttons, a fire alarm, cheese, eggs, and a sailor’s cap—each of which, during the brief course of its vignette, is used by Warner to draw associations that comment on political issues of nation, custom, and tradition.

Warner’s ability to draw such complicated associations has much to do with the “scenic” form of her stories: because her nation-specific critiques of cultural and political customs and traditions are brought into focus for readers via carefully staged, object-centered, autobiographical short stories, Warner’s “scenic” narrative strategy takes on a performative quality that bears further examination. According to the Oxford concise dictionary of literary terms, “scene” is defined in the following ways: in the context of drama, it is “a subdivision of an act or of a play not divided into acts,” which “normally represents actions happening in one place at one time, and is marked off from the next scene by a curtain, a blackout, or a brief emptying of the stage” (199). Additionally, however, “in the study of narrative works,” a scene is

   a ‘dramatic’ method of narration that presents events at roughly the same pace as that at which they are supposed to be occurring, i.e. usually in detail and with substantial use of dialogue. In this sense the scenic

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175 By “others,” I mean Eliot and Pound. See Part I of this chapter for a more detailed discussion of how Warner’s treatment of “the thing” engages variously with their works.
narrative method is contrasted with ‘summary,’ in which the duration of the story’s events is compressed into a brief account. (Ballick 199)

For Warner, this “dramatic,” “scenic” method is performative in that it endows her autobiographical short stories with audience-aware strategies aimed at American readers. According to Harman, Warner expressed ambivalence at publishing a volume of The New Yorker stories in England, admitting in 1937 her concern that the stories could be seen as “too English for the English” (Biography 248). As Harman puts it, Warner was “uncertain how [her New Yorker stories] would transplant into native soil, if at all” (176). Nonetheless, in 1981, the executors of Warner’s estate—along with Viking press—published a collection of her SOC that allows readers in Britain and America to study the ways in which the author uses “the scenic narrative method” as a performative means of invoking and vividly representing memories tailored for a specifically American audience.¹⁷⁶

This scenic method appears often in the fictional and nonfictional works of several modernist women writers, including Warner, Willa Cather,¹⁷⁷ and Woolf. Of these, most important to my current argument is Woolf’s use and discussion of the scenic narrative method in her collected, posthumously published memoirs, Moments of Being (1976). Near the end of “A Sketch of the Past,” Woolf theorizes the value of an autobiographical process she titles “scene making.” After having narrated distant childhood memories of her childhood, she explains:

¹⁷⁶ Sadly, this Viking (only) edition of Scenes is now out of print.

¹⁷⁷ Multiple critics have addressed the focus on memory and/or remembrance in Cather’s fiction. My Ántonia, in particular, has been called “her most thorough as well as her most intricate representation of the processes and effects of memory, both personal and collective” (Lucenti 193). See Lisa Marie Lucenti, “Willa Cather’s My Ántonia: Haunting the Houses of Memory” in Twentieth Century Literature 46.2 (2000), pp. 193-213 and Terence Martin, “The Drama of Memory in My Ántonia” in PMLA 84.2 (1969), pp. 304 -11.
These scenes, by the way, are not altogether a literary device—a means of summing up and making a knot out of innumerable little threads. Innumerable threads there were; still, if I stopped to disentangle, I could collect a number. But whatever the reason may be, I find that scene making is my natural way of marking the past. A scene always comes to the top; arranged; representative. This confirms me in my instinctive notion—it is irrational; it will not stand argument—that we are sealed vessels afloat upon what it is convenient to call reality; at some moments, without a reason, without an effort, the sealing matter cracks; in floods reality; that is a scene—for they would not survive entire so many ruinous years unless they were made of something permanent; that is a proof of their “reality.” Is this liability of mine to scene receiving the origin of my writing impulse? These are questions about reality, about scenes and their connection with writing to which I have no answer, nor time to put the question carefully. (142)

The connections Woolf draws here between “scene receiving,” “scene making,” writing, and reality engage with principles of narrativizing memory—a kind of flashbulb, photographic memory—in ways that resonate with Warner’s deliberation upon the “thinginess” of autobiographical writing. For instance, if a “scene” is reality, as Woolf suggests in the above passage, what is the “something permanent” that composes it and constitutes “proof of [its] reality”? While Woolf is muddled by this question, for Warner, that “something” is an object—or, as in the case of $SOC$—a series of objects representative of past experience.

Warner discusses the importance of objects to memory and autobiography not only in $Scenes$ but also throughout her copious letters and diary entries. Consider, for example, the ways in which the following meditation on memory and self-narrative—extracted from a letter written by Warner to Alyse Gregory on 26 May 1953—enacts a kind of dialogue with Woolf regarding processes of narrativizing memory:178

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178 By suggesting that Warner’s letter “enacts a kind of dialogue” with Woolf’s memoir, I am not in any way suggesting that Warner and Woolf were aware of and consciously responding to one other’s self-writings. This would be largely impossible, since Woolf’s “Sketch”—though composed in 1939-40—was published posthumously in 1976 (see Jeanne Schulkind, introd. to “A Sketch of the Past” in Woolf 61-63).
Of all Pandora boxes, the worst is the box one keeps journals, letters, unfinished manuscripts in. I have mine, too, and merely to open them in search of some specific thing is enough to send me tossed and shipwrecked into that strange uncharitable sea of Time Past. Sometimes I cannot even recognize the woman who did these things, knew these extraordinary forgotten people, entertained these jejune great thoughts or these absurd ambitions. But one thing I have pulled out with reasonable certainty: the fact that no journal, no record of one’s days, conveys the extent of the garment on which these nosegays and sodality buttons and crape bands were worn. An old teapot, used daily, can tell me more of my past than anything I recorded of it. Continuity, Alyse, continuity... it is that which we cannot write down, it is that we cannot compass, record, or control. (Letters 140)

Warner’s reflections here articulate a clear interest not only in the role of the Thing in narrating life stories—as she expresses the utmost importance of “an old teapot,” of garments, and of buttons—but also in the incapacity of the space of either memory or narrative to contain continuous experience. As a result, we find in SOC a collection of discontinuous memories, juxtaposed against one another much like photographs in an album. Even the titles of Warner’s stories resemble photograph captions: titles such as “The Poodle, the Supernatural, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Tatos, and My Mother”; “My Father, My Mother, the Bentleys, the Poodle, Lord Kitchener, and the Mouse”; “Siegfried on the Rhine”; and “In Pimlico,” for instance, pointedly indicate to American readers the names of main characters and settings. Such photographic, “scenic” titles—by associating Warner with European royalty (via Lord Kitchener, who is in fact a cat) and with British and Continental locales—narratively perform Warner’s Otherness in American culture. They also, much like Woolf’s “scene making” and “receiving” in her “Sketch,” provoke important questions about relationships among issues of memory, narrative, and reality—questions central to the theory and practice of much autobiographical criticism.
The exploration in *SOC* of such vexed relationships reveals Warner’s critical sophistication at the same time that her anecdotal, fictional style challenges it; yet, Warner’s *Scenes* remains critically ignored, whereas Woolf’s *MOB* has attracted moderate scholarly attention.\(^\text{179}\) In spite of this critical discrepancy, both texts have similar goals. Though Woolf shows less of an interest than Warner in the thinginess of self-writing, Woolf’s memoir is—much like the stories of *SOC*—interested in the shortcomings of language as a symbolic system.\(^\text{180}\) As Shari Benstock explains, “the entire project [of Woolf’s *MOB*] is posed on the question of self and its relation to language and storytelling strategies” (“Authorizing” 22). Moreover, Sidonie Smith’s discussion of memory and subjectivity in *MOB* is useful to an analysis of Warner’s *SOC*. Smith explains, “the repertoire of memories specific to the individual are essential to subjectivity. As integuments of subjectivity, memories are so many umbilical cords connecting the narrator to the swirl of others surrounding her” (*Subjectivity* 97). For Warner, those “others” include parents, childhood friends and acquaintances, and objects.

In order to explore precisely how Warner’s object-centered, scenic narrative method performs childhood memories in ways that comment on nation-specific custom and tradition, my textual analyses in this chapter are structured into four sections: Part I situates *SOC* in the historical context of literary modernism, paying particular attention to

\(^\text{179}\) In comparison to some thirty or so scholarly articles treating Woolf’s *MOB*, the only piece of criticism I have found to address *Scenes* directly is Dean Baldwin’s “The Stories of Sylvia Townsend Warner,” (see Works Cited) *Crazy Horse*, No. 31 (1986), pp. 71-80, wherein Baldwin praises the text fleetingly in a single paragraph, describing it as “comic” and “fanciful,” Warner’s “most consistently delightful collection” (78). Baldwin continues: “Although she called the pieces gathered her ‘stories,’ they are barely fictionalized autobiography, and perhaps for this reason they have a special pungency, rich in period details and close observation of bygone manners and morals. It is not damning with faint praise to say that these are among the most charming stories of the decade, for behind the apparently frothy exterior of these reminiscences is a sharp intelligence and acute sensibility” (78). Baldwin concludes that “what this book lacks in profundity it more than makes up in joy and laughter” (78).

\(^\text{180}\) I contextualize Warner’s concerns with language later in this chapter—starting in Part I (pp. 14-20) and continuing throughout the textual analyses in Parts II and III of this chapter.
the significance of the text’s engagement with genres of journalism, the short story, feminist autobiography—and also with Steinian grammatical theory. Part II explores how *SOC* illustrates an important goal of modernist autobiography—namely, to establish narrative authority via negotiation of popular and literary culture, imagination and memory. Part III focuses on the ways that select stories of *SOC* imaginatively filter self-experience through domestic objects to critique daily customs in ways that complicate national identity. Finally, Part IV discusses how Warner’s *SOC* engages with central tenets of modernism in ways that seek to acknowledge yet revise masculine styles, with the ultimate goal of “making room” for women writers in the canon. In sum, I argue that *SOC*’s use of performative, “scenic” narrative methods—and its engagement with feminist and masculinist modernist techniques—fosters the creation of a hybridized autobiographical form that complicates categories of genre, gender, and nation and exemplifies the dialogue in high modernism between the “popular” and the “literary.”

1. “*The New Yorker* … that’s my only claim to being a bestseller”:

**Locating *SOC* in Literary History and Genre**

Warner’s life-writing process—particularly, its appeals to a specifically American audience—can best be examined by situating it in the historical context of her modernist practice. In other words, in order to understand the workings of form and content in *SOC*, we must first consider the ways in which its stories negotiate popular and literary culture, and how they engage generic codes of journalism, the short story, and autobiography as a means of probing complex relationships between word and thing, subject and object, and language and identity. Significantly, Warner’s exploration of these relationships via short story-writing for *The New Yorker* was preceded
chronologically by her success with the novel genre: in 1926, her fantasy novel, *Lolly Willowes*, was deemed “a surprise international bestseller” and was so well-received that it was the first choice of the newly launched Book-of-the-Month club in the United States (Lurie vii; Allen 22). Warner’s popular success across the ocean was thus established early in her career. Still, some 50 years later, she insisted in an interview that she had “never produced a bestseller;” she immediately qualified this statement, however, by declaring, “I sell very well to *The New Yorker*, that’s my only claim to being a bestseller. They were providential” (Interview 36).

The appearance of Warner’s bestselling stories in *The New Yorker* in the mid-1930s follows a surge of technological advancements in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, during which time inexpensive paper allowed for successful mass market publication; and the dawning of modern advertising through the mass market periodical brought about the genesis of commercial culture (Morrison 4). As Mark Morrison summarizes, early modernists in both Britain and America searched for ways to make “their voices and their art prominent in the vibrant and exciting new print venues of the public sphere that the commercial culture had helped to create and sustain” (10). One such venue appearing early in the twentieth century was the little magazine.¹⁸¹ Following little magazines’ advent and proliferation, *The New Yorker* made its debut in 1925 and instantly became one of the most “sophisticated, successful and prestigious” mid-century periodicals, characterized by “an elegant mixture of seductive advertisements, metropolitan tabletalk, political commentary, witty cartoons and finely written fiction” (Scofield 195). Even in the face of this sophisticated reputation, however, Warner’s

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¹⁸¹ Morrison’s *The Public Face of Modernism* (2001) looks specifically at the social and political significance of the English Review, Poetry and Drama, the Egoist, Blast, the Little Review, and the Masses, all of which share circulation dates of the first decades of the twentieth century.
steady engagement with mass culture through her *The New Yorker* stories more often than not resulted in critics’ dismissing her writing as too “popular” (Updike). According to Robert Caserio, for instance, Warner “is celebrated and popular among nonacademic readers” but has received “virtually no attention in American studies of modern fiction” (254).

Though I acknowledge Caserio’s and others’ points, I would suggest that critics consider how the autobiographical stories of *Scenes* use the popular in literary ways that are specifically modernist and, in doing so, destabilize oppositional distinctions between categories of popular and literary. Moreover, I would argue that Warner’s work in *Scenes* reveals what Michael Murphy calls a “mediat[ion] [of] the vagaries of high-modernist aesthetics to a popular audience” (63).\(^{182}\) Specifically, I find that Murphy’s discussion of how *Vanity Fair* issues of the 1910s and 20s sought “to appropriate both the spirit and general look of avant-garde journals”—employing “futurist, vorticist, Dadaist, and surrealist visual effects” on its covers (63)—parallels the ways in which *The New Yorker* issues featuring Warner’s *SOC* highlight her feminist critiques of futurism and other masculine modernist traditions and underscore her narration of self through domestic object.\(^{183}\) In sum, Warner’s journalistic, autobiographical, short stories exemplify what Morrison describes as the tendency for British and American modernists

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\(^{182}\) Murphy uses this phrase in relation to a 1919 issue of *Vanity Fair* which, he summarizes, speaks “with pained disapproval of the growing commodification of the artistic personality…in the age of mass culture” (62). The “clear social function” of *Vanity Fair* was “to keep its mass upper-middle-class readership up-to-date” and to “mediate the vagaries of high-modernist aesthetics to a popular audience” (63). Though Murphy’s essay (and the collection of which it is a part) makes no specific mention of *The New Yorker*, I find its analysis quite pertinent to my current discussion of the important relationship between high and “pop” culture in modernism.

\(^{183}\) It may be worthwhile to consider Warner’s recurring focus on the domestic in the context of the following demographic: In her helpful book, *The World Through A Monocle: The New Yorker at Midcentury*, Mary Corey notes that, by mid-century, *The New Yorker* “was thought by some to have actually become a women’s magazine,” since it had long had more women readers than men (151).
to use the new tools of early-twentieth-century mass culture to craft a “public role for their art and literature,” since “they felt that the mass market was the key to restoring the central cultural position of the aesthetic experiment” (7). Much like *Vanity Fair*, *The New Yorker*—which, at mid-century, was second in subscription only to *Time* and *Newsweek*—was enjoyed primarily by “upscale urban readers” (Corey 10) and thus stands as a good example of the modernist intersection of the intellectual with mass culture.  

Warner’s success in writing for the periodical not only illustrates modernists’ audience-awareness, but also testifies to their “fascinating interdependence with the mass market press” (Morrison 5).

Indeed, Warner’s nearly thirty-year position as short-story writer for *The New Yorker* immerses her work—her short stories, in particular—in contexts of popular culture and journalistic style. It was her short stories through which she earned a living and, perhaps more significantly, for which she became famous—much more so in the United States than in Britain (Allen 25, Beer 81). As Harman explains, “Nothing puzzled Sylvia more than the disparity between her fame at home [in Britain] and in America” (*Biography* 85). Harman’s biography devotes special attention to the role of *The New Yorker* stories in Warner’s development as a writer, suggesting that, following the publication of the first of 154 stories on 30 May 1936, Warner’s “being admitted to *The

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184 Corey describes the magazine’s audience at mid-century (we must remember that Warner’s stories were published from 1936-73) as “intelligent, well-educated, discriminating, well-informed, unprejudiced, public-spirited, metropolitan-minded, broad-visioned and quietly liberal” (10). She adds that, in 1949, the average subscriber age was “somewhere between 35 and 44. Most were married” and “had attended college” (11). In terms of geography, in 1925 (the magazine’s founding year), nearly all readers lived in New York City. Yet, “by the end of the forties, 10% of … readers resided in foreign countries, 13% lived on the West Coast, 11% in the South, and 15% in [the Midwest]. Twenty percent lived in small communities with populations of less than ten thousand” (12).

185 As Harman points out in the *Biography*, Warner’s long-term association with the *New Yorker* (and with her New York editor, William Maxwell) prompted her to refer fondly to the magazine as “my gentleman friend” (145).
New Yorker ‘club’ not only widened her following in America by providing her with “a market,” but also gave her “a motive to develop her talent as a short story writer” and “made her financially secure . . . for the rest of her life” (145; Maxwell 44). Glen Cavaliero agrees with Harman, suggesting that, regardless of their critical neglect, The New Yorker stories gave Warner “a world-wide reputation” and revealed what Cavaliero calls “an essential skill”: “she knew how to secure attention” (45).

In the autobiographical stories composing SOC, Warner’s attention-securing talents are grounded in her mastery of the short story—a genre that Irish writer Frank O’Connor branded “a national art form” of America (qtd. in Scofield 1). The short story as we now know it can be said to have originated in 1820s and 30s America in the pens of Washington Irving, Edgar Allan Poe, and Nathaniel Hawthorne—although, as Martin Scofield points out, it holds a multitude of European and Middle Eastern predecessors (2).186 Within this line of predecessors, most relevant to my current argument is the literary link—as suggested by Scofield—between Irving’s The Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent. (1819-20) and eighteenth-century British periodical culture. Scofield describes Irving’s Sketch-book, which contains “the founding…stories of American tradition, ‘Rip Van Winkle’ and ‘The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,’” as consisting of “a collection of essays and sketches about places and characters” (2). Such sketches, Scofield maintains, are not unlike those of the “genteel English tradition of Addison and Steele’s Spectator magazine (1711-12 and 1714), which mingled essayistic observations on contemporary society with tales and anecdotes” (2). Warner’s SOC exhibit a strikingly similar mixing of “essayistic observations”—in her case, on issues ranging

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186 Specifically, Scofield cites Germanic, Russian, British, Persian, and Italian roots for the modern American short story.
from domestic customs to literary movements to nation-specific politics—with personal
anecdotes dating to her childhood. In this way, her autobiographical stories capitalize
on an American form and American readership at the same time that they channel a kind
of genteel British lineage, generic and otherwise. Because her channeling of this
lineage often occurs for the purpose of critique, however, Warner’s work in *Scenes*
ultimately complicates her relationship to English traditions.

We can further examine Warner’s vexed allegiances to English and American
customs in *Scenes* by looking more closely at how the short story genre is itself informed
by transatlantic cultural movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It was not
so long before Ezra Pound articulated the modernists’ desire to “make it new” that
Americans sought to create a new, “independent” literary tradition (Scofield 6),
distinguishable from that of Britain. In the late 1830s, Poe suggested that the magazine,
and not the book, was the “appropriate illustration of American culture” (qtd. in Levy
11). According to Poe, “the whole energetic, busy spirit of the age tended wholly to the
Magazine literature—to the curt, the terse, the well-timed, and the readily diffused, in
preference of the old forms of the verbose, the ponderous and the inaccessible” (qtd. in
Levy 17). In the first decades of the twentieth century, Poe’s emphasis on “the curt”

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187 Interestingly, much like the works of Poe and Irving, Warner’s fiction often incorporates elements of the
fantastical (consider her early novel *Lolly Willowes* and her late short story volume *Kingdoms of Elfin*, for
instance). Her use of dark fantasy provides yet another link among her works and those of nineteenth-
century American short story writers. See note 24, p. 29 of this chapter for further information on Warner’s
blending of fantasy and realism in fiction.

188 As I will discuss later in this chapter, Warner crafts royal lineage when narrating her story “The
Gorgeous West” by stating, “I have lived for a long time. In one respect I date from the Tudors” (*Scenes*
52).

189 Poe’s disliking “the old forms of the verbose” —i.e., the novel—has much to do with the ways in which
nineteenth-century copyright laws impeded the commercial success of American novels: as Scofield
explains, “international copyright laws allowed publishers to pirate British work and print it cheaply,
putting original American novels at a disadvantage. This inequity was not finally removed until 1891” (6).
and “the terse” gradually morphed into what Scofield calls “a general tendency away from plotted stories and towards a more oblique and more fragmentary style” (107), as we see in Warner’s SOC.

Historically, these fragmented fictional styles reflect difficulties in narrating human experience following significant events such as the Great War of 1914-18 and the Wall Street Crash of 1929; culturally, the fragmentary styles hold counterparts in two significant movements: photography and Imagism. By 1900, photography had become “an established part of American culture and sensibility,” having developed formally alongside the short story (Scofield 110). Accordingly, American short story writers throughout the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries appreciated the photographic “aesthetic of revealing a world through the catching and framing of a transient moment” and the value of focusing “on a scene … to evoke a larger and more general condition” (110). This interest in the transient moment of scenes—along with the short story’s rejection of traditional, linear plots in favor of the adoption of an idea or an image as hero (Scofield 5)—coincides not only with T.S. Eliot’s concept of “an objective correlative,” but also with lessons in “terse” styles offered by Pound, Amy Lowell, and others leading the Imagist movement in poetry. In his 1919 essay “Hamlet and his Problems,” Eliot argues that

the only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an “objective correlative”; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked. (Sacred 100)

As a result, by the end of the century, American magazines were publishing more and more original fiction. In 1885, approximately 3,300 magazines in the United States had published short stories. By 1905, says Scofield, “this figure had risen to 10,800” (107).
The “set of objects” about which Eliot speaks here resonate strikingly with those used by Warner in her *SOC*. Despite this pronounced engagement with Eliot, however, there exists a marked rift between the Imagism of Warner and that theorized by Pound. As Pound famously writes in “A Few Don’ts”:

> An ‘Image’ is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time ….
> It is the presentation of such a ‘complex’ instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art.
> It is better to present one Image in a lifetime than to produce voluminous works. (509)

According to Pound, presentation of an Image requires “direct treatment of the ‘thing’ whether subjective or objective” and necessitates the use of “absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation” (508). Though Pound’s comments here are intended to define Imagism and establish it as a formative movement in twentieth-century poetry, we find in Warner’s prose *SOC* an engagement with Imagism via her presentation of Images of domestic “things”—albeit in a style not so “austere, direct,” and “free from emotional slither” as Pound might like (516).

These relationships among developments of Imagism, photography, and the short story help us understand Warner’s narrative combination of scenic and short story forms but do not explain her stories’ autobiographical element. Her use of the autobiographical genre is certainly complicated by the fact that she claims not to have written one: as Harman explains in her introduction to Warner’s diaries, “though Sylvia was a strict lover of truth, she also had her fanciful side, and when asked late in her life why she had

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190 Though the fact that she incorporates “a set of objects” to evoke emotion certainly resonates with Eliot’s theory, the particular way in which Warner uses objects differs strikingly from Eliot’s—as I discuss in Part IV of this chapter when contrasting Warner’s *SOC* with Eliot’s “Burnt Norton.”
refused to write an autobiography said, ‘Because I am too imaginative’” (vii). Despite this proclaimed ambivalence toward narrating the self, Warner was a prolific diary writer, faithfully making entries from 1927 to 1978. As Harman points out, Sylvia’s diary “runs in total to almost as many words as Woolf’s” and “surpasses most other published ones in the quality of the writing as well as its range” (viii-ix). At the same time, Harman continues, “while Woolf uses her journal predominantly to analyse her life, Warner is much more interested in description, and how to make sense, make something, of everyday things through observation” (viii, my ital.). Both in the diary and in the autobiographical stories of SOC, Warner is less interested in self-reflection and more interested in making sense of the many objects surrounding her.

Accordingly, as she reconstructs object-centered “scenes” from the distant past, Warner invokes fragments of memory in ways that underscore the gaps between self and discourse. According to Benstock, such gaps are characteristic of the autobiographical form, which includes “not only gaps in time and space or between the individual and the social, but also a widening divergence between the manner and matter of its discourse” (“Authorizing” 11). As a result of such gaps, Benstock posits, autobiography “reveals the impossibility of its own dream: what begins on the presumption of self-knowledge ends in the creation of a fiction that covers over the premises of its construction” (11).

Indeed, Warner’s “presumption of self-knowledge” is evident in her writing to William Maxwell on 18 July, 1957, “I can always appease my craving for the improbable . . . by recording with perfect truth my own childhood” (Letters 163).\footnote{Warner’s interest in the fine line between truth and fiction is also evident in her writing an (unautobiographical) short story entitled “Truth and Fiction.” See Michael Steinman, ed., \textit{The Element of Lavishness: Letters of Sylvia Townsend Warner and William Maxwell, 1938-1978} (Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 2001), p. 95, for Warner’s comments on this story.} Despite this goal of
recording truths of the past, however, Warner, as autobiographer, is ultimately faced with what Leigh Gilmore calls “the discursivity of ‘identity’”: namely, the notion that identity itself (within the autobiographical form) is “a network of representational practices in which the production of truth is everywhere on trial” (19). As a result, Gilmore explains, autobiography “provokes fantasies of the real”; and “this seeming real,” she emphasizes, “is in no small part, fantasy” (16).

This coalescence of reality and fantasy in autobiography—which, for Warner, is evidence of the incapacity of the space of memory or narrative to contain continuous experience (Letters 140)—manifests itself in the twenty-eight fragmented, discontinuous vignettes used in SOC to perform for American readers a semblance of Warner’s youth. According to Smith, fragmentation in life-writing functions as a narrative strategy that can lead to a kind of political empowerment, an occasion for “restaging subjectivity” and staging resistance (“Manifestos” 433-34). Echoing Warner’s sentiments regarding uncontrollable continuity (Letters 140), Smith argues that “the politics of fragmentation reveals the cultural constructedness of any coherent, stable, and universal subject” (433-34). In Warner’s case, these “politics” seem integral in locating her work in a specifically female modernist literary tradition; for, as Shari Benstock points out, the instability of the “I” is “nowhere more apparent” than in women’s writing of the modernist period (“Authorizing” 21). Describing how the advent of modernism unsettles the subject that “had heretofore stood at the center of narrative discourse,” Benstock explains how, working within the symbolic system of language that both constructs and is constructed by them, modernist women writers of autobiography experience “a questioning of the Symbolic law” and finally face “the need to reconceptualize form
itself” (19-21). In exploring this notion of reconceptualized life-writing, Benstock asks, “where does one place the ‘I’ of the autobiographical account? Where does the Subject locate itself?” (19). For Warner, “the Subject locate[s] itself” within (or narrates itself through) a series of fragmented narratives centered around seemingly random objects.

This self-narration through object in SOC reveals an engagement with a kind of Steinian modernism that is reminiscent of TB in its interest in both the domestic and the public. Such interests are plainly evident in Warner’s juxtaposing anecdotal-yet-political vignettes, such as “My Father, My Mother, the Butler, the Builder, the Poodle, and I” and “Fried Eggs Are Mediterranean,” against a heavily meditative literary treatise entitled “Interval for Metaphysics,” wherein Warner explains and, perhaps, theorizes the ways in which notions of “the Word” and “the Thing” are inextricably linked to processes of life-writing (SOC 38). In recreating a scene from youth during which she has “freshly learned to read,” Warner explains how

The Word, till then a denominating aspect of the Thing, has suddenly become detached from it and is perceived as a glittering entity, transparent and unseizable as a jellyfish, yet able to create an independent world that is both more recondite and more instantaneously convincing than the world one knew before . . . . But there are also occasions when the word, exploding on the surface of the thing, remains there, coruscating like a nova . . . . (38)

Here Warner’s text begins to engage with modernist principles of the Word and the Thing, an engagement that characterizes the “thinginess” of SOC and contextualizes Warner’s repeated use of objects as mediums through which to draw associations that deconstruct the rituals, customs, or traditions surrounding them. Significantly, these objects are almost always gender-neutral; that is, their conventional cultural uses and associations are not immediately gender-specific. When focusing on such objects,
perhaps, Warner seeks to dislocate the thing from its culturally symbolic counterpart—the word—in order to reconstruct a set of associations that she deems fit. Thus, throughout *SOC*, objects’ traditional uses are deconstructed so that new associations—ones that comment upon issues of nation, custom, and tradition—can be made: a chair is not for sitting; a bed, not for sleeping; buttons, not for buttoning; cheese, not for eating. Rather, the [“haunted”] chair represents colonized Ireland (16-23); the bed invokes southern India (p. 30); “buttons” reveal for Warner how “[Her] Mother Won the War” (125-31); and cheese represents the child Warner’s perception of a decorative mosaic (56-57).

Warner’s playful approach to objects throughout *Scenes* can be linked to Stein’s interest in recreating the thing in *TB*: Stein argues in her lecture “Poetry and Grammar” that, for her, “the problem of poetry . . . began with Tender Buttons to constantly realize the thing anything so that I could recreate that thing” (331). In theorizing the noun, Stein explains how, within “this exceeding struggle of knowing really knowing what a thing was really knowing it . . . . The name of a thing might be something in itself if it could come to be real enough but just as a name it was not enough something” (334). Finally, Stein concludes, “There could no longer be form to decide anything . . . real narrative must of necessity be told by any one having come to the realization that the noun must be replaced not by inner balance but by the thing in itself and that will

192 In addition to the object-centered link between *TB* and *SOC*, a connection may exist between Stein’s and Warner’s approaches to autobiography in general. In *The Gradual Making of the Making of Americans*, in Carl Van Vechten, ed., *Selected Writings of Gertrude Stein* (New York: Vintage, 1990), for instance, Stein reflects, “I was tremendously occupied with finding out what was inside myself to make me what I was” only to discover that “if everything is all inside in one then it takes longer to know it than when it is not so completely inside in one” (242, 253). Stein’s words here suggest that what lies outside the subject/self—i.e., the world of objects—is as essential to narrating that subject as is the subject itself. See Chapter 3 of this dissertation for more discussion on the relationship between outside and inside worlds.
eventually lead to everything” (336). For Warner, the “everything” that the “thing in itself” leads to is the narration of self.

In her book, *The Feminist Avant-Garde in American Poetry* (2003), Elisabeth Frost’s analysis of *TB* helps clarify the ways in which Warner’s *Scenes* engages with Steinian concepts. While Frost makes no mention of Warner, she discusses at length Stein’s “fascination with ordinary objects” and how Stein’s representation of these objects “in radical new forms can be seen as the basis of an avant-garde poetics devoted to realizing a new subjectivity through a newly conceived word” (3, 6). Most importantly, Frost delineates the ways in which Stein’s—and, I would argue, Warner’s—linguistic approach is distinctly different from the masculine approaches of F.T. Marinetti and Pound:

Both Marinetti and Pound theorized a sort of hypersymbolic—a sped-up, mechanized poetic communication that gave primacy to signification over the materiality of language . . . . The economy of Imagism . . . led to the more forceful vortex, which spun itself less through a poetic love of the word . . . than toward the efficient conveyance of the signified by means of verbal superposition. Both approaches sacrifice the materiality of the signifier. (11)

For Stein, Frost explains, such models do not work because they require a choice between the roles language plays—roles of signification and materiality—a choice that neither Stein nor Warner wants to make. For both writers, words, like objects, must be “at once signifying and utterly palpable” (Frost 11). Warner’s interest in the simultaneous materiality and signification of language is evident in her structuring the story “My Father, My Mother, the Butler, the Builder, the Poodle, and I” around a fire alarm in order to explore its distinctly (and mysteriously) “American” properties (*Scenes* 24-
In this way, Warner’s treatment of the thing—and of the self—in *Scenes* might be viewed as accomplishing what Frost argues *TB* does: namely, it “disassemble[s] existing systems of language . . . without sacrificing the pleasures and functionality of the symbolic” (Frost 18). In maintaining both the symbolic and the material capacities of language, the works of both Stein and Warner reveal a “liberated objective world” (18), a world in which Warner chooses to locate her subject, that is, herself. It makes sense, then, that Warner’s self-writing process—despite its prose narrative form—engages with a Steinian poetic strategy, the ultimate goal of which, as Frost suggests, is to “realize a new subjectivity” (6).

Warner’s exploration of subjectivity through objects and the language that represents them is articulated repeatedly in *Scenes* in a way that indicates her Steinian interest not only in the materiality of language but also in the desire to “really know the thing.” In “Interval for Metaphysics,” for instance, she reflects nostalgically upon the separate worlds of things and words:

> There was a world of things, in which everything had its name and place, and there was a world of words, in which everything came to life. Each was valid, and there was no call to choose between them, for both were mine . . . . Though the two worlds did not enforce a choice on me, I knew they were distinct, and even opposed; for otherwise, how should things, at the breath of a word, be loosened from their de-facto irrevocability and become subjects for speculation, comparison, doubt, and inquiry . . . ? (SOC 43-44)

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193 The single reference to a *SOC* story in Warner’s personal diaries is to “My Mother, My Father, the Butler, the Builder, the Poodle, and I” and, accordingly, serves to date it at the summer of 1950. Warner writes on 29 June, 1950: “The *New Yorker* sent proofs of the *Fire Alarm* and a check for $1031. The opening paragraph of the F.A. [was] written a year ago in dogged resolution to earn dollars . . . strange reading now . . . I did the F.A. proofs, as they want it quick” (*Diaries* 165). Within the very same paragraph of this diary entry, Warner reflects on Truman, MacArthur, and the United States’ involvement in the ongoing turmoil in Korea (165).
This passage demonstrates the multiple ways in which Warner, like Stein, uses the relationship between word and thing to articulate a type of feminist, modernist textual authority that suggests a destabilizing and restructuring of conventional patriarchal language. For example, Warner seeks to establish ownership of language by stating firmly that both worlds, those of things and of words, “were mine” (43). Like Stein, too, Warner acknowledges that there is indeed a difference between these two worlds of things and of words; but she suggests that this difference, reflective of language’s dual properties of signification and materiality, does not “enforce” her “to choose between them” (43-44). Like Stein’s in TB, then, Warner’s interest in SOC lies in the thinginess of words and in the ability of that thinginess to inspire reflection and speculation that the “de-facto irrevocability” of language often prevents (44).

Despite her interest in the reflection that results from unsettling the thing from the word, however, Warner seems to view this unsettling as temporary, since she concludes “Interval” by explaining how, “as if angered, the world of things reasserts itself . . . . The word sinks back into the thing, or at best betakes itself to the printed page. The period when one lived in two worlds at once is over” (44). Thus, whereas Warner acknowledges how the detachment of word from thing creates “an independent world that is both more recondite and more instantaneously convincing than the world one knew before” (38), for her, this world is a transient one. It is in memorializing this transient world through the performative scenes of her autobiographical form, in recalling it in order to explore it and make it endure, that Warner’s work accomplishes its merging of life-writing process with modernist practice.
Warner’s focus in life-writing on the relationship between word and thing serves to question what Benstock terms the overarching “Symbolic Law,” the patriarchal code of social and literary conventions through which (and in which) modernist women’s self-writing processes occur (“Authorizing” 19). Warner’s dissatisfaction with the Law’s innate masculinity and with its constraints to her project renders her work, like that of Stein, an occasion for the “restaging [of] subjectivity” and “staging of resistance” advocated by Smith (“Manifestos” 434). Indeed, Warner accomplishes this restaging of subjectivity in SOC by experimenting with an alternative autobiographical narrative form—namely, that of the serialized short story. In doing so, she resists more conventional forms—e.g., the linear narrative memoir—that would hinder her exploration of the subject/self through a series of objects and that would simply be of no use to her. Engaging in comical, creative re-imaginings of childhood, complete with vivid scenic descriptions and recreated dialogue between characters, Warner’s stories perform for American audiences distinct parallels among the relationships and the gaps between thing and word, self and discourse.

II. “My memory assures me . . . . But I do not think this was actually the case”: Warner’s Performative Tactics and Imaginative Autobiographies

We can better understand the relationships between self and discourse in Warner’s SOC by looking at the function of memory in her story titled “The Cheese.” In this story, Warner reminisces about her wanderings in an English churchyard that contained a windowless “structure like a somber summerhouse—a summerhouse designed to be used in very wet weather by people who because of the weather had given up all interest in an outer world” (56). Centered above the house’s “defensively
conceived door with iron hingebars crossing it, and iron studs set close between them”
was “the Cheese—a round plaque of mosaic embedded in the wall” (56). Warner
describes having been fascinated by “every detail” of “The Cheese,” which she
designates as “a half Stilton [blue cheese]”—her father’s favorite and thus a “venerated
part of our home life” (56-57). Near the story’s end, Warner reveals to readers that The
Cheese was in fact a skull, and the summerhouse a “Maw-soleum” (57). Though her
nurse had informed her of these facts, she remains charmed by The Cheese and
narrates—in a style resembling modernist collage—the ways in which it affected her
experience:

I knew every detail of it, and knew that when I saw it again every detail
would be reliably there. This was a great part of its charm for me. The
mosaic imperturbability absolved me from the human responsibility to be
responsive or grateful or polite. The Cheese remained in its being and I
remained in mine. But once, on a stormy autumnal afternoon, when a
shaft of sunlight broke through the clouds, I felt the Cheese and the sunset
and the falling leaves and the smell of the bonfire in the Rectory garden
and the wetness of my shoes in the churchyard grass as a single
perception, as though they were held together by some mysterious glue.
(57)

The simultaneous perceptions—of sunlight, “Cheese,” falling leaves, a bonfire, and damp
glass—described in this passage reinforce the ways in which Warner’s Scenes perform
distant memories for readers through the juxtaposition of instantaneous, photograph-like
images (and in this case, sensations). In the narrator Warner’s memory, this “illusion” of
The Cheese—with its “air of massiveness and dignity” (57)— coincides with her
narrative refrain that “children make up their own stories” (55-56). Like Fanny Kemble
before her, Warner is known to have described herself as an “imaginative” writer
(Clinton 22-23; Harman, Diaries vii); thus, her contention that “children make up their
own stories” seems an affirmation of creative self-storying. In the context of Scenes,
however, this idea of self-storying bears further examination, as it reveals an upsetting of
traditional binaries between imagination and memory, “literary” and “popular” modernist
culture.

Theorists of autobiography have long discussed the relationship between
imagination and memory. Smith describes memory as one of the necessary fictions of
autobiography (Poetics 45), writing that “memory is ultimately a story about, and thus a
discourse on, original experience, so that recovering the past is not a hypostasizing of
fixed grounds and absolute origins but, rather, an interpretation of earlier experience that
can never be divorced from the filterings of subsequent experience or articulated outside
the structures of language and storytelling” (Poetics 45). Smith’s discussion here of
memory as narrative—specifically, narrative of the past filtered through the present—
coinsides with the tension between past and present that characterizes much modernist
literature, including Warner’s SOC. Moreover, Smith’s assertion that memory is housed
by “structures of language and storytelling” concurs with Benstock’s and Gilmore’s
discussions (addressed in Part I of this chapter) of the “discursivity of identity” and the
tense relationship between modernist women writers and patriarchal language structures
(Gilmore 19, Benstock 19-21). Also relevant to these discussions is Tess Cosslett’s (et
al.) definition of memory as “intersubjective and dialogical, a function of personal
identifications and social commitments;” it is “a matter of public conventions and shared
ritual” (5). I find that Cosslett’s (et al.) description of the “dialogical” potential of
memory hearkens back to Woolf’s concepts of “scene making” and “scene receiving”
(142): “scene-receiving” refers to the passive process whereby (in Woolf’s words) “a
scene … comes to the top [of consciousness]; arranged; representative” (142). “Scene
making,” by contrast, bestows agency upon the scene receiver, implying a kind of dialogue between the receiver and the scene (memory) itself. It is through this active process of “scene-making”—i.e., narrativizing memory—that a narrator like Warner engages in performative and vibrantly imaginative audience-aware strategies, representing memories in ways that suggest their inherent link to past and present “public conventions and shared ritual” (Cosslett et al. 5).

Consider, for instance, the sustained focus on convention and ritual exhibited in Warner’s “The Young Sailor,” one of few stories in Scenes that is not constructed around a tangible object. Here Warner describes how, at age sixteen, “on a fine May morning” during her confirmation service at St. Paul’s Cathedral in London, one of her fellow candidates suddenly stands and boldly exits the church (SOC 93). Warner’s narration of this event is full of commentary on the conformity and convention that accompanies one’s confirmation into the Church of England. She loves, for instance, how the ceremony physically placed her mother (who experienced “much anxious consideration” over Warner’s decision to wear both a veil and her spectacles), her father, and “other confirmed members of the Church” “well to the back of the building, in, as it were, a sort of hallowed pit” (90-91). She recalls that

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194 Though Warner’s lifetime partnership with her lover, Valentine Ackland, was ongoing during the years in which she composed her New Yorker stories, “The Young Sailor” is one of few stories in Scenes in which Warner gestures towards sexuality—and even here, she does it only briefly. On two occasions, she mentions how the cathedral’s “central aisle” was used to “sexually differentiate” and “divide” the candidates (91, 93). She also recalls thinking that “it was hard for boys not to be granted veils,” since “one feels so ensconced in a veil” (91). Of Warner’s canon, her novels (specifically Summer Will Show) have received the most attention for their direct or indirect treatments of lesbian sexuality. The most definitive article to date (by “definitive,” I mean that it has been (re)printed in at least three critical anthologies and is very smart, in my opinion) on Warner and “lesbian fiction” is Terry Castle’s “Sylvia Townsend Warner and the Counterplot of Lesbian Fiction,” pp. 66-91 in The Apparitional Lesbian (NY: Columbia UP, 1993).
it was agreeable to think of them being kept in their place—a comfortable, respectable place, but not the operative one. My memory assures me that they were held back by some red ropes. But I do not think this was actually the case; the ropes were probably incorporeal. Anyhow, they could not get in among us; they were no part of the flock. (93)

This passage is important for the way it alludes to the dialogic properties of memory (“my memory assures me”) and reveals Warner’s reading of this particular memory as inextricable from the politics of church and state. As a confirmation candidate, Warner’s “place” is as part of “the flock,” as she repeatedly calls it (91-93); yet, at the outset of the story, she admits, “we [the Warners] were not a religious household” (90). Though her father saw to it that “the due preliminaries had been attended to” (90)—i.e., his daughter was familiar enough with authoritative texts such as “the Thirty-Nine Articles,” the Church Catechism, and the Book of Common Prayer (90-92)—she nonetheless explains that “any specifically pious thoughts I had [during the ceremony] were all of security, continuity, and conformity” (92).

By the story’s end, it becomes apparent to the reader that Warner uses this scene from adolescence to work through ever-changing definitions of “security” and “conformity.” She describes watching the young sailor abruptly exit the church “carefully and considerately”—though, because he was sitting in the middle of a row of candidates, “he could not do it silently, and his face wore that expression of contained, unwilling woe that designates the truebred Englishman when he knows he is making himself conspicuous” (93). She recalls hearing “the echo…[of] those departing steps” (93) and how, in the months that followed, she gradually shunned the far-reaching theories of her parents regarding why the sailor left, deciding instead that he simply “did not care about being confirmed, and had the courage of his opinions” (94). She
remembers how greatly she admired the young sailor’s “independent mind” and felt “such shame at my own sheepish conformity that though I went on being confirmed, I was to all intents and purposes unconscious of it” (94). Still, she reasons, “a profound spiritual experience had taken place…during my confirmation…. And by the time my mother … [and I] were lunching very late in a City restaurant, I knew that I would follow the young sailor out” (95).

Warner’s narrative filtering of this past event through her present provides an example of how modernist writers’ autobiographical engagement with processes of narrativizing memory functions as a vehicle through which to negotiate popular and literary culture. Take, for instance, the above-analyzed stories, “The Cheese” and “The Young Sailor.” Both are lighthearted, largely anecdotal tales—written, we ought to recall, for a mass market American magazine. Is it possible, then, to designate them as “literary”? According to some critics, the answer to that question is “certainly not.” As Dean Baldwin puts it in his fleeting analysis of SOC, Warner’s autobiographical stories are “comic,” “fanciful,” and “charming,” not without “sharp intelligence and acute sensibility” (78); yet, Baldwin concludes, “what this volume lacks in profundity it more than makes up in joy and laughter” (78). I certainly agree with Baldwin that Warner’s stories bring much joy and laughter to the reader—for, as Parts III and IV of this chapter suggest, humor plays a significant role in Warner’s Scenes. My main point of contention

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195 Baldwin’s commentary here reminds me of a conversation I had with Susan Howard several years ago about academics’ ongoing resistance to the idea of Jane Austen as a “serious,” canonical writer. Austen’s works as a whole can certainly be described (in Baldwin’s words) as “comic” and “charming,” full of “intelligence” and “acute sensibility.” The intellectual quality of her work, however, seems eternally up for debate—especially considering Hollywood’s interest in adapting (and/or modernizing) her novels for the big screen throughout the past decade or so. Like Warner, Austen clearly bridges popular and literary culture; and Warner evidently admired this, having authored the delightful biography titled Jane Austen, 1775-1817 (1951). Perhaps in a future project I could devote more time to exploring these Warner/Austen connections.
with Baldwin’s assessment, however, lies in his subjective, unsupported suggestion that “the volume lacks … profundity” (78). How can we define “profundity,” and is it a necessary quality of “good” literature? Baldwin’s opinion—related as it is to Caserio’s point (mentioned at the outset of this chapter) that Warner “is celebrated and popular among nonacademic readers” but has received “virtually no attention” from the academy (254)—raises another important question: how do we go about judging—or perhaps I should say “valuing”—texts that exhibit qualities of the popular and the intellectual?

To attempt to answer these complicated questions, I turn briefly to two sources: Raymond Williams’s discussion of modernist popular culture; and Warner’s own commentary on the nature of the literary. In his book *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (1989), Williams poses the important question, “what is popular?” (107). “The key to an understanding of the cultural history of the last two hundred years,” he argues, “is the contested significance of that word.” According to Williams, we can trace the “popular” by studying the intersections of theatre, cinema, and the press from the seventeenth century onward. The “popular,” he asserts was not only cinema; it was even more confidently a century earlier the press, which was seen by democrats and radicals as the extending, the liberating medium, pushing beyond the closed and controlled worlds of state power and the aristocracy. In a directly related case, there was the long struggle to restore legitimacy to popular theatre, since a State Act of the seventeenth century had restricted the lawful practice of drama to a few selected fashionable theatres…. When the Act was repealed, in 1843, there was a whole contemporary removal of obstacles to that other insurgent popular form—the newspaper. Difficult as it may now be to recall that history, in a time in which our labour movement and so many on the Left cry angrily against ‘the media’, the facts are that these were seen, and by the rich and powerful often feared, as liberating popular practices, or at least in the popular interest: indeed the means, the media of—though that phrase was not yet used—a cultural revolution. (107-08)
Williams’s points here are relevant to my current argument for several reasons. First, his exploration of the popular through cinema and theatre—i.e., venues of performance—suggests that what is popular is inevitably audience-aware. Second, in positing a triangular relationship between theatre, the popular press, and “legitimacy”—issues I discuss in detail elsewhere in this dissertation—Williams’s discussion of the vexed nature of the popular informs the critical assessment of a modernist autobiography like Warner’s: for, if one way of valuing (or, in some cases, “fear[ing]”) the popular is to recognize its potential contribution to a kind of “cultural revolution” (108), then texts designated as “popular” are indeed culturally—if not intellectually—valuable. The problem that remains with evaluating the “intellectual” qualities of popular texts (as Williams and many critics of autobiography remind us) is the factor of legitimacy, a factor closely related to narrative authority.

Warner is well-aware of women writers’ tense relationship with the issue of legitimacy regarding their narrative authority across literary genres. In a lecture titled “Women as Writers,” delivered to the Royal Society of Arts on 11 February 1959, Warner responds to Woolf’s A Room of One’s Own. She acknowledges at the outset of her talk that, since Woolf’s text “is not so much about how women write as about how astonishing it is that they should have managed to write at all” (538), she [Warner] will use her lecture to discuss how it is that women began writing. In so doing, she

196 Specifically, (in Chapter 1) I discuss how Martineau seeks to legitimize her travel writings in the context of the popular press; and (in Chapter 2) I explore how Kemble strives to authenticate her plantation journal in the context of her stage actress identity.

197 Like much of Warner’s work, this lecture is peppered throughout with humor. For instance, regarding the concept of women as “literary” figures, she offers the following: “…I have sometime wondered if women are literary at all. It is not a thing which is strenuously required of them, and perhaps, finding something not required of them, they thank God and do no more about it. They write. They dive into
describes what she deems a defining quality of the literary. For Warner, this quality is not “profundity” (Baldwin 78), per say, but is rather something she calls “immediacy.” She explains:

As far as I know, there is only one certain method of making things clear, and that is, to have plainly in mind what one wishes to say. When the unequivocal statement matches itself to the predetermined thought and the creative impulse sets fire to them, the quality we call immediacy results. Immediacy has borne other names, it has even been called inspiration—though I think that is too large a term for it. But immediacy has this in common with inspiration, that where it is present the author becomes absent. The writing is no longer propelled by the author’s anxious hand, the reader is no longer conscious of the author’s chaperoning presence. (542)

Notable in this passage is Warner’s emphasis on audience: for her, “the creative impulse” is inextricably linked to the idea of “making things clear.” Moreover, though Warner’s lecture is largely based on her reading of Woolf’s Room and addresses women’s fiction-writing (as opposed to their autobiographical writing), her words here resonate strikingly with Woolf’s concepts of “scene receiving” and “scene making” discussed in “A Sketch of the Past” (142). Like Woolf’s scenic concepts, immediacy causes an author’s characters to “remain in one’s mind and call one back to a re-reading because one remembers a queer brilliant verisimilitude, the lighting of immediacy” (543). This “lighting”—akin to an autobiographical subject’s photographic memory (scene receiving) and subsequent narrativizing (scene making) of life events—functions to “haunt” readers, says Warner (543).198

writing like ducks into water. One would almost think it came naturally to them—at any rate as naturally as plain sewing” (541).

198 Interestingly, Warner argues that “this quality of immediacy, though common to either sex, is proportionately of more frequent occurrence in the work of women writers. And though it is impossible in judging the finished product to pronounce on which pages were achieved with effort, which came easily, the fact that even quite mediocre women writers will sometimes wear this precious jewel in their heads seems to indicate that it is easier for a woman to make herself air and vanish off her pages than it is for a
When considered in the context of autobiography, the potential for self-writing to “haunt” readers with scenes of “queer brilliant verisimilitude” (543) lies in the author’s imaginative rendering of events located in memory. Yet, if we accept Warner’s assertion that, where the “lighting” of immediacy (analogous to photographic memory) is present in a text, “the author becomes absent” (542), then the autobiographical process of narrativizing memory becomes enmeshed in complicated questions of agency—the most important of which is, who (or what) governs self-narrative? While concepts of authorial absence and/or presence have long been debated by theorists such as Roland Barthes (“The Death of the Author”) and Michel Foucault (“What is an Author?”), the idea that immediacy nullifies authorial control—resulting in a text that is (in Warner’s words) “no longer propelled by the author’s anxious hand” and a reader who is “no longer conscious of the author’s chaperoning presence” (542)—poses problems to the legitimacy and the authenticity of memory-based autobiographical writing.

We can explore these problems more fully by casting the issue of authorial absence alongside some key tenets of feminist autobiographical theory. For instance, Warner’s suggestion that “the creative impulse” of immediacy yields a “vanishing” of the woman writer from her work (542) can be considered alongside Smith’s assertions that writers of autobiography are “deluged” in memory and are not in control of the past (Subjectivity 99). The autobiographical narrator, Smith explains, is “subject to memory, not its controller, not its authority” (99); thus, memory clearly problematizes—even compromises—narrative authority. The result is that the woman writer, when confronting the autobiographical project, subjects her “creative impulse” (Warner, man, with his heavier equipment of learning and self-consciousness” (543). See Part IV of this chapter for more of Warner’s comparative analyses of masculine and feminine (modernist) writing styles.
“Women” 542) to the “deluge [of] memory” (Smith, *Subjectivity* 99) and risks losing authority over her past *and* her narration of it. Counterbalancing the ways in which memory compromises authority, however, are the ways in which autobiographical subjects exert some level of control—whether or not that control is perceptibly present—over narrative form itself. In other words, in processes of narrativizing memory, scenes from an autobiographer’s past are dislocated from the space of memory and reinscribed in the eternal space of narrative; what happens along the way, as Gilmore reminds us, is an ongoing questioning of authenticity, wherein the “production of truth is everywhere on trial” and lines between “real” and “fantasy” become permanently blurred (19).

In Warner’s case, narrative authority is ironically tied to this blending of reality and fantasy, as it forms part of the “popular” qualities of her work: Warner’s fiction—in both novel and short story forms—has attracted moderate critical attention since the 1980s for its generic liminality and simultaneous engagements with fact and fiction, realism and fantasy; and (as mentioned in Part I of this chapter) her fantasy novel *LW* earned her great success in 1926 America. Because *LW* was designated a “popular” success (Allen 22), however, Warner’s subsequent work was not (and is still not) granted much attention by the academy. Still, I maintain that a key reason the stories of *SOC* are so useful to a critical assessment of Warner’s writing in general is that they show her boldly playing with the issue of narrative authority: On one hand, she scoffs at authority by using the popular medium of the mass market periodical to narrate scenes from

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199 Of Warner’s fourteen short story volumes, her fantastical *Kingdoms of Elfin* (1977) seems to have attracted the most (though still not much) scholarly attention. See William Jay Smith’s article in the *New York Times Book Review*, 27 March, 1977, pp. 14-15 for a review of *Kingdoms*. Similarly, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, Warner’s fantasy novel *Lolly Willowes* (1926)—which Jane Marcus describes as “feminist fantastic realism, the direct forerunner of Angela Carter’s work” (531)—reaped the most popular novelistic success of all her works (Allen 22).
childhood, not without reminding readers of the shortcomings of her memory (*Scenes* 93). On the other hand, she strives to associate her “popular” text with those of leading literary authorities including Stein, Pound, Eliot, and Marinetti (as I discuss further in the remaining sections of this chapter). In doing so, her *Scenes* illuminate tensions in transatlantic modernism not only between issues of popular and literary culture, but also between audience-aware narrative strategies and concepts of national identity.

III. “The Wonderful American Fire Alarm” and the Anti-Imperialist Poodle: Objects of Memory and the Complication of National Identity

Indeed, Warner’s popularity in America and her targeting an audience of *New Yorker* subscribers infuses her autobiographical stories with an abundance of images—evident in *Scenes*’s focus on objects—that raise questions of national identity. In recreating her past, Warner describes America as having infiltrated her childhood. For instance, in the story “My Father, My Mother, the Butler, the Builder, the Poodle, and I,” she describes distinctly how what she calls “the ‘Americanization of Britain,'” manifested by an American fire alarm set in a British great house (*SOC* 24), affects her daily experience as a ten-year old. This experience takes place, Warner explains, when she and her mother accompany her father, an English public schoolmaster, to serve a temporary position as housemaster for forty teenage boys in a country residence. Upon arriving at the new home, Warner immediately senses its American qualities, reflecting that “the

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200 *SOC* is not the only place in which Warner “plays” with narrative authority. The publication of *Whether a Dove or a Seagull* (1933), a collection of love poems by Warner and Ackland, marks her first experiment: as Jane Marcus explains, “authorship was not attributed in individual poems as a protest from the Left, an ‘experiment in presentation’ designed to unsettle ideas about individual genius and to question the social modes of canon formation, …. Destabilizing the comforts of attribution for the reader, *Whether a Dove or a Seagull* confronts contemporary critical concerns with subject positions, subjectivity, and authorial identity” (qtd. in Marcus’s introd. to “Sylvia Townsend Warner,” Scott 533).
previous housemaster had, I think, visited the United States; at any rate he was conscious of them, for he had imported and installed a great deal of American equipment, which included twenty shower baths . . . . [and] the wonderful American fire alarm” (24). Warner then structures her entire story around this fire alarm, discussing how “it ran like a vine through the house, with little contraptions in each room, and larger nodal contraptions at strategic points” (25) and how, strangely yet repeatedly, its sounding coincides with the occurrence of rainstorms: “My father, my mother, the butler, Mr. Jessop . . . the poodle, and I ran up and down the house, looking everywhere for the fire, while the gong sounded, and the rain beat . . . . Again there was no fire” (27). Finally, the Warner family seeks the aid of a fire alarm “expert” from London, who explains that the alarm’s dysfunction results from its being moistened by the rain and that “the American style of building [houses] was better designed for keeping rain out” (28).

Thus, Warner’s story suggests that it takes a British expert to point out the Americans’ superiority in building not only watertight houses but also technically proficient fire alarms. Since the presence of “the wonderful American fire alarm” (24) in Warner’s story does not in any way signal fire, it is clear that her incorporation of the object exceeds its conventional symbolic use. For Warner, the American fire alarm represents a medium through which she can begin to explore her own national identity, retrospectively viewing and even questioning her British childhood through an Americanized lens and targeting a specifically American New Yorker audience, complimenting that audience’s technological advancements and “streamlined luxuries”
At the same time, however, her story also makes the American fire alarm seem a bit comic, even silly to go off in rain storms.

Warner’s recurring focus in *Scenes* on the “Americanization of Britain” suggests that she is using the autobiographical form as a vehicle for exploring national identity on a personal, anecdotal level. In “The Gorgeous West,” for instance, she reflects upon the domestic infiltration of American customs in Britain as manifested by the presence of grapefruit on the breakfast table: “One morning in the first decade of this century our breakfast table displayed a bowl of yellow fruit—globular, like oranges, but larger and sleeker. ‘Grapefruit,’ [my mother] said . . . . ‘Americans eat them. At breakfast’” (*Scenes* 51). After her mother explains precisely how Americans go about eating these strange fruits, Warner recalls: “My father observed that grapefruit was probably a regional breakfast dish eaten by leisured persons in the Southern States. And prepared for them, I added, by slaves. But our little revolt went for nothing. Grapefruit had got on to our breakfast table” (51-52).

Though Warner’s allusion here to “our little revolt” functions to question and perhaps even critique the political origins of American domestic customs adopted by the British, the grapefruit passage is immediately followed by a drastic change in topic—whereby “The Gorgeous West” shifts swiftly from a discussion of the object (grapefruit) to one of the subject “I”: “I have lived for a long time. In one respect I date from the

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202 While I want to read “our little revolt” as an overt reference to politics (perhaps to British anti-slavery sentiment toward the American Confederacy, or to British intervention in the American Civil War), the remark may simply refer to the domestic revolt of Warner and her father against foreign (American) fruit and custom.
Tudors” (52). Warner’s disjunctive narrative here, in its abrupt shift from self-deprecating British powerlessness (“our little revolt went for nothing”) to self-assuring royal alliance (“I date from the Tudors”), parallels the way in which the Americanization of her British childhood fractures her sense of national identity. Thus, in a vignette structured around grapefruit, Warner uses the materiality and signification of a simple domestic object to gesture at the ways in which nation—and, in this case, Empire—figures into daily customs.

Like those implied by the fire alarm and the grapefruit, references to nation through object abound in others of Warner’s SOC. For instance, the historically vexed relationship between England and Ireland manifests itself in “The Poodle, the Supernatural, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Tatos, and My Mother” in the presence of a seemingly haunted chair (14-23). This black oak armchair, with its “upright back” and its “great deal of carving,” is shipped to the Warners’ England home from Cousin Ursula’s “haunted house” in Ireland, which, Warner clarifies, is a “country that had been mismanaged for centuries” (14-16). Once transplanted to England, the Irish chair causes great consternation to the Warner family (not to mention their houseguests)—and, especially, to their poodle, whose response to the piece of furniture ranges from angry

203 It is helpful here to recall Smith’s argument that fragmentation in autobiography is politically empowering and, specifically, that “the politics of fragmentation reveal the cultural constructedness of any coherent, stable, and universal subject” (433-34). In engaging with the politics of fragmentation throughout her autobiographical vignettes, Warner ultimately articulates an empowering instability of subject/self and a distinct changeability of object.

204 Related to my reading of “The Gorgeous West” is Marcus’s reading of Warner’s poetry. She explains: “Explicitly denying divine inspiration or the high calling of Eliot or Pound, Townsend Warner compares poems to cups and saucers and writing to domestic labor, valorizing, as Woolf does in her portraits of charwomen, women’s daily work at the same time that she demystifies and undoes the ‘dignity’ of art and artists” (qtd. in Scott 532). Specifically, Marcus finds that Warner’s analogies between the domestic and the poetic abound in “Woman’s Song” (part of Warner’s Collected Poems) and “Wish in Spring” (part of The Espalier).
growling to “blood-curdling,” “hallucinated objuries” (18). Here Warner introduces humor—in the form of an anti-imperialist poodle—as a means of narratively negotiating the popular and the intellectual: through the image of the displaced Irish chair and the notion of the wailing poodle, her short story effectively critiques Britain’s colonial system.

But these notions of colonialism do not pervade Scenes only at the level of critique; Warner also uses her vignettes to assert a heightened curiosity toward and mystification by the British Empire’s relations with the Other—particularly, with India. In “My Father, My Mother, the Bentleys, the Poodle, Lord Kitchener, and the Mouse,” for instance, Warner structures her narrative around a simple, four-poster bed, which she employs not for its use-value of sleeping, but for its ability to conjure up images of southern India.205 Again, the poodle plays a hilarious role in making the imperialist connection, as he noisily voices his disapproval of the new bed that replaced the old one he had adored, Warner explains, because of its “shiny knobs” and its “starched white valance usually stenciled with dogpaws” (30). So the new bed, which is made in Britain and not India, invokes India via the dog’s reaction to it. Warner describes this reaction:

[The dog] would twitch in a martyred silence till the light was turned off; then he would rise to his feet and begin what my mother, whose childhood was spent in southern India, called Dead-Hindoo-ing. Dead-Hindoo-ing is uttering a succession of those flesh-creeping howls which end in a tremolo. My mother could do it very eloquently herself, and when I was younger had enlarged my mind by telling me how the chief jackal proclaims, “I’ve found a dead Hindoo-oo-oo!” to the rest of the pack, who, sitting round on their haunches in the slashing jungle moonlight, bark out, “Where? Where? Where?” But to have the poodle Dead-Hindoo-ing in nocturnal Middlesex was inappropriate. (30)

Through the poodle’s invocation of southern India, Warner explores the way in which what is Other to her (India) is, in fact, home to her mother and, similarly, how what is “an unknown land” to her mother (Britain) is quite familiar to her (36). In this way, Warner’s merging of her mother’s childhood memories with her own complicates and fractures both her national identity and her life-writing process. As she explains, “My mother’s recollections of her childhood in India were so vivid to her that they became inseparably part of my own childhood, like the arabesques of a wallpaper showing through a coating of distemper” (36).

Warner’s fascination with her mother’s ability to tell stories of her childhood in India inevitably affects Warner’s ability to narrate her own in Britain. She paraphrases the story of her mother’s transitional move from India to England, consistently and somewhat sarcastically contrasting the bleakness of Britain with the attraction of India:

The harshness of an English winter and of an English nurse disabled my mother like a mortal sickness, snapping the continuity between the adored precocious child in Madras and the stupefied little malapert in Hampshire . . . who could not even repeat the alphabet, because she was one of those unfortunate Indian children. What was the use of remembering everything when you could recall nothing? Only when she had a child of her own, a confidante and a contemporary, was she able to repossess herself. Then she began to unpack this astonishing storehouse, full of scents and terrors, flowers, tempests, monkeys, beggars . . . I never tired of listening. I remember being rather puzzled why we never went to India, since we often went to London; the journey to London took less than an hour, and India would have been more interesting. (36-37)

As her mother’s recollections infuse her own, Warner’s narrative seemingly adopts a version of what Rachel Blau DuPlessis terms a “communal protagonist,” wherein a female-authored protagonist breaks with individualism in order to invent “a collective
language” that discredits conventional narratives (162-63). For Warner, self-narration (in this particular story) requires a collective “I,” one that simultaneously recalls and merges Warner’s and her mother’s childhoods in order to comment on British colonialism in a way that minimizes its inherent oppression and rationalizes its attraction to the Other. We must remember that Warner’s project in SOC is to engage not only with self-writing processes, but also with marketing strategies. Accordingly, she writes with a keen awareness that her depictions of Britain must be met with accord by her American audience.

To ensure such a reception, Warner not only devotes multiple stories (and assorted objects) in SOC to ideas of vexed nationhood but also structures a satirical story entitled “Dieu et Mon Droit” around drinking mugs in order to poke fun at the British monarchy. The story treats the controversial abdication in 1936 of Edward VIII and the subsequent coronation of George VI. By 1936, Warner would have been forty-three years old; thus, this story (which is placed near the end of the volume) is one of a few in Scenes that recreates an experience from her adulthood. Accordingly, Warner’s narrative strategy within it differs from her technique in other SOC, as here the “I” takes a backseat to the other “characters” who, I argue, are exaggeratedly fictionalized (in a kind of eighteenth-century novelistic style) for the sake of parody. These suggestively-named characters include Mr. Pigeon, Mr. Truebone, Mrs. and Miss Pinne, and Mr. and Mrs.

DuPlessis’s theorizing the communal protagonist corresponds to the autobiographical theoretical approaches of Smith and Watson, both of whom argue for a kind of plurality and relationality in the female autobiographical “I” voice and discuss the ways in which women’s life writings emphasize and describe connections to other people, whereas men’s tell success stories and histories of their eras. See Smith and Watson, Introduction to Women, p. 8.

Pretty, who together represent the small-minded village people whose interest in their country’s monarchy lies not on the plane of politics but on the level of souvenir mugs. By juxtaposing George VI’s coronation against the townspeople’s need for such mugs, “Dieu et Mon Droit” clearly exhibits how Warner’s narrative strategy of humor negotiates—even closes the cap between—popular and intellectual culture. Specifically, Warner uses the domestic objects of souvenir mugs in this story to critique capitalism, creatively manipulating the space of autobiographical narrative to mock the concept of commodity consumption as “an organizing social and cultural principle” (Morrison 4).208

The story consists of arguments between the abovementioned villagers who, in seeking to provide their children with “souvenir mugs” during the Coronation celebration, become extremely disgruntled at the prospect of having to “modify the [Edward] mugs” to depict the new monarch, George (SOC 166-68). Warner describes the chaotic atmosphere of a village meeting during which angry parents vote for the particular monarch mug that they believe their children should own:

“Here!” exclaimed Mrs. Pretty. “I want that Edward mug, if you please! I don’t want to disappoint my child. He’s a patriotic child, whatever some people may say.” And she glared at Miss Pinne . . . .
Then, out of the tumult, voices aimed themselves at Miss Pinne.
“Please, Miss, will you put down my Eddie and my Doris and my Sheila and my Alice for Edward mugs? They’ve set their hearts on them.”

208 Warner’s anti-capitalism here resonates with the political overtones of many of her novels (Summer Will Show, for instance) and reiterates the importance of studying her canon in the context of its author’s politics. When asked in 1975 if she would describe herself as a Communist or an anarchist, Warner responded: “I was a Communist, but I always find anarchists very easy to get on with. I think that’s because, if the English turn to the left at all, they are natural anarchists. They are not orderly enough to be good Communists and they’re too refractory to be good Communists. I became a Communist simply because I was agin [against] the government but that of course is not a suitable frame of mind for a Communist for very long. But you can go on being an anarchist for the rest of your life, as far as I can see, and doing [sic] very well. You’ve always got something to be anarchic about—your life is one long excitement. And anarchists are the most charming people!” (Interview 35). According to Marcus, the best treatment of Warner’s politics can be found in Wendy Mulford’s useful book, This Narrow Place: Sylvia Townsend Warner and Valentine Ackland: Life, Letters, and Politics, 1930-51 (Pandora Press, 1988).
“And my Doris and my Jimmy, too, Miss, if it’s all the same to you” . . . 

“Mrs. Lockett, two George mugs?” said Miss Pinne hopefully. 
“No, Miss. Two Edwards, Please” . . . .
“Perhaps,” said Mr. Pretty, “the best expedient would be for the children to have both mugs.”
“My Cuthbert don’t want no George mug,” said Mrs. Lockett.

(169-70)

In depicting the adults’ childish bickering over which monarch mugs should receive the greatest vote, Warner links politics with consumerism in a way that reduces the British system of royalty to a mere souvenir of national (and also self-) history. Again, we see a domestic object being used by Warner not to signify its traditional use-value but to raise associations that are meaningful in the larger realm of national identity and, in this case, national history. The villagers in Warner’s story insist that such objects are necessary to make British subjects reflect upon “our King and our Queen” and on “the Empire” because, as Mrs. Pinne points out, “I often think we do not think enough about our Empire” (170). According to Warner, the only thinking about Empire that does occur does so for the sake of consumerism, not for the sake of bettering the political state. The story’s conflict is resolved when the group of villagers agrees to order both Edward and George mugs, though a disgusted (and apparently pro-George) Mrs. Pinne retorts, “Oh, very well! . . . But I tell you this. You can pay for your Edwards yourselves” (172).²⁰⁹

Mrs. Pinne’s comeback demonstrates that Warner’s shrewdly satiric humor in SOC does not work against the text’s complex political message; rather, it underscores the ways in which SOC functions as a liminal text that forces readers to question the criteria involved in the construction of categories. The foregoing analysis reveals that Scenes is both popular and literary, fictional and nonfictional, personal and political; it

²⁰⁹ Interestingly, Warner ends “Dieu et Mon Droit” on the word “Bolsheviks,” spoken in disgust by Mrs. Pinne in the direction of the villagers as she exits the meeting (172).
cannot be pigeonholed within a single mode. Similarly, while its engagement with Steinian grammatical concepts—particularly, the treatment of the domestic object—locates SOC in the vein of feminist avant garde modernism, its application of Steinian poetic concepts to prose narrative renders it something different from TB (although it does, I maintain, deploy similar strategies). Warner’s work repeatedly resists categorization in a way that seems to have stumped and alienated scholars. As Caserio argues, “it appears that our criticism does not yet have in play the terms best to comprehend and to value Warner’s achievement” (255).²¹⁰

IV. When the Popular is Literary:

Warner and “the pantry window” of Literary Tradition

Though we may, indeed, not yet have the tools to understand Warner’s Scenes fully, we can still acknowledge it as a text useful to studies of modernism—particularly, to modernists’ vexed relationship to issues of literary tradition and the cultural and historical (chronological) past. Aside from its overarching focus on objects, a number of the stories in Scenes engages, on some level, with modernist issues ranging from futurism and war to dichotomies between space and time, old and new. For instance, Warner was clearly aware and quite critical of F.T. Marinetti’s “Manifesto of Futurism” (1909), wherein he describes hearing “the famished roar of automobiles” beneath his windows and explains how “the world’s magnificence has been enriched by a new beauty; the

²¹⁰ A frustrating roadblock I have encountered during this project is SOC’s not providing the dates of composition and/or publication of its individual stories. Currently, The New Yorker website is undergoing the exciting process of updating and expanding its archival records and search engine capabilities, which has enabled me to establish publication dates that were largely unknown to me when I first began working on Warner’s SOC four years ago. Nonetheless, neither Harman’s Biography nor the collections of Warner’s short stories, of New Yorker short stories, or of letters attributes composition or publication dates for individual stories (the only exceptions are the three stories whose dates I have footnoted above). This just affirms that much archival work needs to be done before Warner’s canon (not to mention those of other marginalized writers) can be given the critical respect it deserves.
beauty of speed” manifested by “a racing car . . . a roaring car” (39-44). Accordingly, she endows childhood memories in Scenes with the ruthless mocking of futurism on multiple occasions, recounting the technological advancement of modern automobiles regretfully in her story, “A Winding Stair, a Fox Hunt, a Fulfilling Situation, Some Sycamores, and the Church at Henning”:

> English people don’t visit country churches now as they used to when I was young. This is partly because modern cars are so difficult to stop. By the time one has finished saying, “There’s a church. Why don’t we have a look at it?” the car has gone on past recall . . . . and the driver’s mind is sufficiently disengaged to hear what one’s saying. (SOC 116)

Similarly, in the story “Deep in the Forest,” which describes the young adult Warner’s experience in taking “German-conversation lessons from Fräulein Hildegarde,” Warner tells the Fräulein that what she needs is “a more contemporary vocabulary. Perhaps [you] might begin by talking to us, slowly, about automobiles” (157). Warner’s oxymoronic use of the words “slowly” and “automobiles” here clearly parodies—perhaps even belittles—the futurist principles so carefully laid out by Marinetti and his followers; in this way, her use of humor (once again) functions to close the gap between the popular and the literary.

In addition to critiquing the male-centered concept of futurism, Warner’s Scenes also mocks established systems of indoctrination and learning in order to explore how, in the modern world, systems of old and new often collide. She reflects in “Troublemaker,” for example, upon the “irrational customs” of English public schools, where singing a “new tune” at Sunday worship is likely to cause a great uproar because “the new tune might be all very well—patriotic, no doubt—but it was new. That in itself was bad” (155). Similarly, in “My Mother Won the War,” Warner works to destabilize the old,
conventional traditions of domesticity and language in order to make room for new and improved versions of these systems. \(^{211}\) Here again, Frost’s argument—this time, concerning not Stein’s *TB* but Loy’s *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose*—can be used to enlighten a reading of Warner’s narrative. According to Frost, Loy’s work embraces the idea that engaging in word-play can effectively “alter language” and “create a new consciousness” that “liberates the reader from the fetters of outworn ideas” (34).

Warner’s “My Mother Won the War,” like Loy’s work, generates a similar kind of linguistic liberation that functions to promote the development of a new consciousness. Despite its political-sounding title, “My Mother Won the War” is essentially a story about buttons. It is the role of these buttons in the story, however, that enables the narrative to work toward creating the “new consciousness” about which Frost writes. Involving Warner’s mother as its main character, the story firmly establishes the way in which buttons—normally associated with the feminine, domestic activity of sewing—are positively crucial to the Great War of 1914-18 (*SOC* 125-127). Indeed, sewing plays a role here too, for the story’s central conflict involves Mrs. Warner’s frustration at her British Red Cross co-volunteers’ refusal to acknowledge the redundancy of sewing buttonholes into pyjama trousers for wounded soldiers. Warner recreates the scene: “[My mother] realized at once that, as the pyjama trousers were made to be fastened by a cord passing through a slot, the addition of a button and buttonhole halfway down the opening was redundant” (126). Unfortunately, she continues, “The other cutter, one of those dull,  

\(^{211}\) “My Mother Won the War” was the very first of Warner’s stories to be published in the *New Yorker*. It was published, according to Harman’s *Biography*, on 30 May, 1936, one year after Warner had bet her friend Jean Untermeyer (with whom she had shared an oral version of the tale) five pounds that the magazine would reject it (145).
faithful souls who can only do as they are told, repeated, ‘That’s what Mrs. Moss-Henry said’ . . . buttons had been specified, and must be affixed” (126-27).

Thus, the domestic debate between “the Moss-Henry minions” (129) and Mrs. Warner becomes a political one of old order versus new order, conformity versus nonconformity, as Warner relates her mother’s point that the buttons would surely inconvenience “our splendid soldiers,” since “if the buttons were there, regulations to enforce buttoning would be there too. Everyone knew that military-hospital discipline was like that” (128-29). The dispute is resolved in what Warner satirically describes as a highly publicized trial at the headquarters of the British Red Cross in Piccadilly, surrounded by “a terrific air of splendour and organization” and “crowded with people waiting for interviews” (129). Warner’s depicting such exaggerated publicity over buttons suggests that the domestic realm merits public attention even as her dramatizing the trial itself emphasizes the importance of the domestic during wartime. Though her political commentary here lies cloaked in anecdotal narration, Warner’s sharply satiric wit serves not to undercut but to underscore her message and, certainly, to attract and maintain audience attention. She summarizes the trial: “It was a matter of pyjamas . . . and my mother . . . made it clear that this was something that must be settled at once, and settled for all time” (130). Warner’s mother does finally, of course, “win the war” and, in describing how she does so, Warner—like Stein in _TB_—juxtaposes what Frost calls “the consolation of common objects” against “the carnage of the Great War” in an effort to suggest that “domestic detail [is] life affirming, in stark contrast to the hierarchy of organized violence” (9).
In addition to treating war-related issues, Warner’s *SOC* engages with ideas of space, time, and the fractured self, all of which are centrally important to the high modernists. The title story of *SOC*, “Scenes of Childhood,” opens on a note reminiscent of the beginning of Eliot’s “Burnt Norton,” as is evident in Warner’s first two sentences: “Space is subject to time. The garden I recall was an oblong, twenty by fifteen yards, perhaps; the garden I remember was more than twice as long as the morning shadow of the almond tree and as wide as America” (*SOC* 59). But rather than using the garden image somewhat negatively to describe, as does Eliot, “the passage which we did not take” or “the door we never opened” (“Burnt” I.12-13), Warner uses it to explore both “a dark path and a light path” (59). It is on top of “the rubbish heap . . . at the end of the dark path,” she reflects, “that I transcended existence” (59). Warner’s taking the opportunity to explore both paths, and her recalling how she “transcended existence” as a child, how she “left [her]self and was gone” (60) not only distinguishes her project from Eliot’s but also represents a microcosm of her self-writing process: As a collection of autobiographical narratives, *SOC* functions to create a self whose identity “transcends” reality in that it exists only at the level of discourse.

Thus, as it experiments with the creation of a discursive self, repeatedly using the object to access the subject, *SOC* effectively forges a link between life-writing processes and the central tenets of modernism. Warner’s shrewdly selective engagement in *SOC* (for purpose of critique or compliment) with concepts of Eliot, Pound, Marinetti, Stein, and Loy and her adopting and adapting these concepts to suit her own project result in a collection of narratives that thrives on the hybridity and unconventionality of its form and content. Warner uses autobiographical anecdotes to theorize the word and the thing in
ways that engage with Eliot’s “objective correlative,” yet depart from Pound’s suggested “austere, direct” treatment (Pound 516). She uses serialized (and fictionalized) “short stories” to narrate the self; and she uses deliberations upon the thing, ultimately, to access that self. As a result, the narrated “I” is fragmented and often is less the focus of any given story than the modernist concepts of word, thing, space, and time. It is through the stories’ intense focus on such modernist issues, however, that the fragmented “I” also locates itself discursively in a larger sociopolitical realm in order to comment on and, often, satirize the events occurring within it.

Despite these clear engagements with central modernist issues, Warner’s relationship to modernist tradition—and to literary tradition, in general—is a complicated one. Extraordinarily interested in the question of how women writers have “entered literature” (Warner, “Women” 544), Warner offers the following explanation:

… women have entered literature—breathless, unequipped, and with nothing but their wits to trust to. A few minutes ago, or a few centuries ago, they were writing a letter about an apoplexy, or a recipe for custard. Now they are…writing with great clearness what they have in mind to say—for that is all they know about it, no one has groomed them for a literary career—writing on the kitchen table, like Emily Bronte, or on the washstand, like Christina Rossetti, writing in the attic, like George Sand, or in the family parlour, protected by a squeaking door from being discovered at it, like Jane Austen, writing away for all they are worth, and seldom blotting a line. (“Women” 543)

Again, we see Warner valuing the stylistic quality of “great clearness,” which she juxtaposes against a kind of un-“groomed,” unedited form, regularly composed amidst domestic multitasking. Following this passage, Warner provides her audience (for this passage is extracted from her earlier-cited 1959 lecture) with the fanciful, almost mythical, analogy that there exists a glamorous, male-filled palace that curious women can know only from the outside, until they locate an alternate entry—via the open pantry
window. In sum, the point of this “pantry window” analogy in the larger context of Warner’s lecture is to attribute differences in men’s and women’s writing to “circumstance,” as opposed to sex: as Warner explains, women’s circumstance of “entering literature by the pantry window” meant that “no butlers were waiting just inside the front door to receive their invitation cards and show them in” (544).

Though Warner maintains that women may not have been “invited” into literature, she admits that male writers can share women’s “pantry window traits” (545),\(^{212}\) which suggests that she is not necessarily interested in forging a separatist feminist literary tradition, but that she wishes to make room in the palace—i.e., literature—for modernist women writers. Strikingly, recent work addressing the gender of modernism echoes Warner’s plea for more canonical “room” for women: in her introduction to volume 15.3 of the National Women’s Studies Association Journal (2003), Margaret McFadden asserts that “gender questions have not yet made it to the academic mainstream of modernist studies. It’s still the stage of ‘add women and stir.’ Gender questions have not yet become central, even though important feminist theorists have published significant works on modernism” (ix).\(^{213}\) In language that engages with

\(^{212}\) Warner then lists what she calls “pantry window traits”: 1) “a conviction of women’s volition”; 2) a “kind of workaday democracy, an ease and appreciativeness in low company”; and 3) a “willing ear for the native tongue, for turns of phrase used by carpenters, gardeners, sailors, milliners, tinkers, old nurses, and that oldest nurse of all, ballad and folklore” (544). These traits, she argues, “are technical assets. They affect presentation, not content” (544). She further explains that some men’s writing can uphold these “traits” but not as fluently (Keats’s does, she says; P.B. Shelley’s does not) (545).

\(^{213}\) McFadden makes this claim in reference to the program of the September 2003 Modernist Studies Association Conference, held in Birmingham, England. “A quick count of the program’s sessions,” she notes, reveals “261 separate papers, presentations, and seminars, of which 76 (or 29%) were on women writers or gendered topics. If sessions are counted, only 8 of 100 sessions (or 8%) dealt with women or gender. Of the eight session titles, three were on poetry or writing by women, and one session was on a particular woman from Birmingham. Thus, only four had broader modernism themes dealing with gender: “Vision and Gender,” “The Gender of Modernism,” “Women and Modernism in Berlin,” “Women’s Friendship Networks.” Most of the goodly number of papers on women or gender concerned a particular woman writing during this time period—Barnes, Woolf, Stein, Radclyffe Hall, Dorothy Richardson” (ix).
Warner’s pantry metaphor (“add women and stir”), McFadden’s claim here makes an ardent call for scholarly attention to modernist women writers.

In taking up McFadden’s call, I have sought to argue here that Warner’s *SOC*, by associating its autobiographical stories with the likes of Eliot, Pound, and Marinetti, acknowledges the importance of modernism’s central (masculine) figures at the same time that it suggests a desire to depart from and revise their narrative styles. One way in which Warner goes about such revision is by seeking out a popular, “public forum” (Morrison 11)—the magazine—which purpose is dialogic in its highlighting of “the engagement of literary production with nonliterary discourse” and its frequent inclusion of “lively correspondence pages for public discussion” (11). The dialogic quality of Warner’s *New Yorker* stories effectively counteracts the “monological” qualities that Bonnie Kime Scott has associated with male modernist manifestos: In her persuasive argument about the importance of considering modernist literature in the context of gender, Scott asserts, that “modernism is not the aesthetic, directed, monological sort of phenomenon sought in their own ways by authors of now-famous manifestos” (Marinetti’s futurism, Pound’s Imagism and Vorticism, Eliot’s Tradition, etc.). Rather, she continues, “modernism as caught in the mesh of gender is polyphonic, mobile, interactive, sexually charged; it has wide appeal, constituting a historic shift in parameters” (4). Scott’s point here that a critical focus on gender illuminates the ways in which modernism is not necessarily “aesthetic” or “monological” suggests the significance of clear, audience-aware narrative strategies—ones that effectively negotiate
boundaries of popular and literary culture—strategies like those used by Warner in
\textit{SOC}. \textsuperscript{214}

The merging in \textit{SOC} of popular and literary culture and of forms of satire, self-
writing, fiction-writing, and theorizing makes the text extremely useful to discussions of
the ways in which the “literary” interacts with the “popular” in modernism. Despite
\textit{SOC}’s usefulness—and notwithstanding the popular and economic successes of \textit{The New
Yorker} stories in general—critical interest in them remains tepid, and their conversion
into volume form seems more of an effort by Warner’s literary executors to memorialize
her work than to afford it the critical attention it deserves. \textsuperscript{215} One likely reason for this is
that Warner’s journalistic work—collapsing as it does so many literary styles and forms
(much like what we see in Martineau’s \textit{RWT})—has fallen through the critical cracks,
because it cannot be designated as belonging fully to any single genre. Nonetheless, as
Warner’s Steinian exploration of the signification and materiality of language and her
experimentation with multiple narrative forms reveal, conventional forms do not work for
her. Her transformation of the short story genre in a way that builds alliances with the

\textsuperscript{214} While Scott’s concepts of gendered modernisms are certainly pertinent here, it is important to
acknowledge, as Janet Lyon has pointed out, that Scott’s and others’ pivotal studies of the 1980s and 90s
(e.g., Benstock’s \textit{Women of the Left Bank}; Gilbert & Gubar’s \textit{No Man’s Land}) “are now more than a decade
old” (221). “Their original force,” Lyons continues, “has been diffused and supplemented by explorations
of modernism that elaborate the roles of gender and sexuality through studies of national identity and
citizenship, racial identity and race politics, queer identity and aesthetics, marketing and magazine culture,
performance, visual culture, capitalism and market economies, and historical accounts of twentieth-century
political modernity” (221). See Lyon, “Gender and Sexuality,” in \textit{The Cambridge Companion to American

\textsuperscript{215} For instance, the brief editor’s note to Warner’s \textit{One Thing Leading to Another} (London: Chatto &
Windus, 1984) consists only of Susanna Pinney’s statement, “The stories in this volume, as in \textit{SOC}, are a
personal selection from ones not previously collected in book form.” No similar note introduces \textit{Scenes},
and neither volume (nor any other short story collection I know of) includes any sort of critical introduction
or textual notes. Even the \textit{Selected Stories of Sylvia Townsend Warner} (New York: Viking, 1988) includes
only a brief prefatory note to the text stating that “This is a personal selection by Sylvia Townsend
Warner’s literary executors [Pinney and William Maxwell] of what they consider to be her finest short
stories. They have been selected from over forty years of work, from 1932-77, the year before her death.”
Of the forty-five stories in this volume, only three are from \textit{SOC}.
works of Woolf, Stein, and Loy and finds fault with those of Eliot and Marinetti functions as a means through which she can be located distinctly within—not on the outside margins of—a feminist (but not separatist), modernist literary tradition. Like the works of Woolf, Stein, and Loy, then, Warner’s contribution to this tradition needs to be recognized. Specifically, her work in SOC should not be dismissed as “popular;” rather, it ought to be viewed as manipulating the popular in order to access the literary and the political in a way that, ultimately, metamorphosizes the process and the product of self-writing into a modernist experiment that comments on issues of language, gender, and politics.
Epilogue

Twenty-First Century Autobiography and the “Problem” of Form

“For lack of a natural memory, I make one of paper.”
~Michel de Montaigne, Essays (1580-88; 1595)

For some months now, my mother has been encouraging me to read a host of texts selected and discussed by her book club, which consists of a group of ten or so women living in a small town in western Pennsylvania. These texts include Esmeralda Santiago’s When I Was Puerto Rican: A Memoir (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo, 1993); Firoozeh Dumas’s Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America (New York: Random House, 2003); Jeannette Walls’s The Glass Castle (New York: Scribner, 2005); and Diana Abu-Jaber’s The Language of Baklava: A Memoir (New York: Anchor, 2005). When considering this compelling list of titles, I am struck by two things: First is the notion that my mother and her peers—all of whom have achieved some level of postsecondary education, but none of whom are associated with the academy—are choosing to read and discuss some of the very same authors and titles that are likely taught in Contemporary Women’s Literature courses in American colleges and Universities.216 Second is the glaringly obvious fact that these titles are all memoirs written by women, three of whom (Santiago, Dumas, Abu-Jaber) suggestively use their

216 Take Abu-Jaber, for instance, whose novel, Crescent (if not her Language of Baklava) has been taught regularly in Contemporary Literature courses at Duquesne University.
books’ titles to emphasize their own multicultural lineages. Together, these points reinforce my argument in this study concerning the potential for autobiographical texts to transcend boundaries not only among nations, but also between literary and popular culture, scholarly and mass reading audiences.

In a recent article titled “The Entangled Self: Genre Bondage in the Age of the Memoir” (PMLA 122.2, March 2007), Nancy K. Miller defines autobiography studies as “a young and rapidly expanding field” and predicts that “autobiography [in general, and the memoir in particular] may emerge as a master form in the twenty-first century” (545). Miller’s article, in referencing folks ranging from Oprah and Larry King to James Frey, Elie Wiesel, and Alison Bechdel, discusses contemporary readers’ “fascination” with the memoir genre and makes the important point, simply put, that “form matters” (541).

When, after thoughtfully perusing the shelves at their local Borders or Barnes and Noble, readers select a memoir, says Miller, “they make certain assumptions” (539).217 Namely, they “expect to be reading the truth, even if, being sophisticated modern reader[s], [they] realize that some of the details might not stand up to Googling” (538).218 It follows that these “sophisticated modern readers,” academics or not, who approach memoirs with truth expectations are often stumped by the texts’ hybrid appearances. As a result, autobiographical texts like Bechdel’s (Fun Home) and Art Spiegelman’s (Maus, Maus II)

217 Miller admits to using the terms autobiography, memoir, and life writing interchangeably in this essay (547), though Smith and Watson caution against such usage, as I discuss in Chapter 3 of this project (Reading 193).

218 This expectation has much to do with what Philippe Lejeune terms “The Autobiographical Pact.” He explains: “What defines autobiography for the one who is reading is above all a contract of identity that is sealed by the proper name. And this is also true for the one who is writing the text” (qtd. in Smith and Watson, Reading 8). For Lejeune, Smith and Watson explain, “two things indisputably distinguish autobiography…from the novel”; 1) the author’s “vital statistics” (date of birth, etc.) must be identical to those of the narrator; and 2) an “implied contract or ‘pact’ [must] exist between author and publisher attesting to the truth of the signature” (Reading 8).
are regularly miscategorized by bestseller lists and bookstores alike because of their comic book form. In Miller’s words, “it seems clear that autobiographical writing in the early part of the twenty-first century is posing sticky problems of reception” (539).

These problems of reception are essentially problems of genre, but they become less problematic and more fruitful when we consider some of the effects they produce on twenty-first century readers. In short, a reader’s uncertainty over how to categorize a book, and whether or not its contents are true, requires some level of careful attention to the book’s form and its workings. Autobiography, then, is a genre that encourages readers from all walks of life to think critically about the ways that different formal choices work to represent different realities. In the case of my mother’s book club, as in the case of this dissertation, the realities at stake have much to do with the self-narration of women’s identities shaped by life in, and travel throughout, multiple cultures. In the works of Santiago, Dumas, and Abu-Jaber, much like those of Martineau, Kemble, Stein, and Warner, we find cross-cultural, hybrid narrative forms that not only suggest the complicated nature of national identity in the modern world, but also reveal American readers’ ongoing fascination with what Miller calls “the other citizen, preferably female—the exotic, foreign self in translation (like us after all)” (542). As such, these works, when eagerly read by wide-ranging literary and popular audiences, succeed in broadening our cultural understanding of self-narrated realities in ways that narrow the gap between our work in the academy and the world surrounding it.
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