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**SAVAGE FAKES:
MISDIRECTION, FRAUDULENCE, AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN THE 1920s**

BY

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M.A., Spanish and Portuguese, University of New Mexico, 2008

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ABSTRACT

In the 1920s, Americans grew increasingly interested in the figure of the primitive man, who was championed as the antidote to civilization's weakening effects on the modern human spirit. Concurrently in the field of American Studies, Vernon Lewis Parrington theorized about the effects of the "broad currents" of American life; the return to a primitive, natural self was just such a "broad current" of the day. With primitive conduct as the potential salve for civilized humanity, a handful of American authors of the 1920s used fake autobiographies to articulate the savage internal self. In the four texts that comprise this study, the savage within is interpreted using two theories of identity: Hegel's Being-Other and José Esteban Muñoz's "disidentification." This study contributes to the fields of American Studies and literary studies in a historically centered formalist analysis that utilizes an original platform for reading and consideration, the misdirection spectrum, which may serve other scholars in analyzing fake autobiographies from other time periods. In *Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance: The Autobiography of a Blackfoot Indian Chief* (1928), Sylvester Long reinvents himself as an American Indian based on the expectations of his readers, using perlocutionary audience presumptions as his main strategy of misdirection. In Samuel Ornitz' *Haunch, Paunch, and Jowl: An Anonymous Autobiography of a Professional Jew* (1923), the savage being-other is

Meyer Hirsch, an adaptable and ruthless Jewish Daniel Boone of Manhattan, who uses the pendulum swing between felicity and infelicity as a tool of misdirection in his confessional narrative. In *The Cradle of the Deep* (1929), Joan Lowell invents a childhood spent on the high seas and employs the misdirective strategy of the as-if world to explore recrudescence and voluntary rebirth in an interpretation of the feminine savage. In *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1932), Gertrude Stein uses the domestic simplicity of Alice B. Toklas' voice to broaden her readership and connect with the ordinary "america" from whom she felt increasingly distanced, drawing on the power of the aura effect. The four savage fake autobiographies analyzed in this study, in conjunction with strategies of misdirection employed by each autobiography, reflect how Americans of the 1920s were conceptualizing notion of an American identity and the place of the individual in contemporary society. The internal savage acted as a device of self-reinvention, allowing authors and readers to draw on the figure of primitive man to fashion a more robust individualism in the following decades.

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Introduction: Hunting, Camping, and the Horror

“Never trust the teller. Trust the tale.” – D.H. Lawrence

At the turn of the twentieth century, middle class Americans had developed a growing interest in the “natural man,” a figure untethered by the conventions of society and civilized deportment. While Victorians from earlier generations emphasized self-restraint, refinement and self-mastery, the “new primitive” ideal man of the early twentieth century was defined by unrestrained passion and a certain level of acceptable savagery.¹ American psychologist and educator G. Stanley Hall argued that “adolescent races” were less evolved and therefore less civilized than the “white races” responsible for civilization itself. And yet, the “primitive” cultures of these “nascent” races appealed greatly to the American middle-class in the early part of the twentieth century, for whom the idea of being “a little bit barbarous” held great allure.² Beyond being alluring, a dabble in barbarity also was a healthy indulgence; a disease called “neurasthenia,” which many doctors considered the “great scourge of the nineteenth century,” was believed to be a direct result of life in an over-civilized, over-refined world.³ In the early 1900s, American psychologist and philosopher William James popularized the disease as “Americanitis.”⁴ Freud took an aggressive stance against the weakening effects of neurasthenia, prescribing long and intensive courses of injected cocaine as treatment.⁵ Yet for Hall and his contemporaries, including avid outdoorsman Theodore Roosevelt, the weak nerves of neurasthenia could be counteracted by embracing primitive conduct of the “nascent races,” as well as that of children—particularly boys—who represented the “light and hope of the over-civilized world.”⁶

With primitive conduct as the potential salve for civilized humanity, a handful of American authors of the 1920s used fake autobiographies to articulate the savage internal

self. In this gravitation towards the savage other as cure for the pressures of civilized life, one sees a conflation that circumvents the binary of “primitive” and “civilized,” as well as “self” and “other.”⁷ As popular interest in savagery grew in America, the high modernists of Europe became increasingly preoccupied with exhibitions of primitivism in art and literature. Sylvester Long’s *Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance: The Autobiography of a Blackfoot Indian Chief* (1928), Samuel Ornitz’ *Haunch, Paunch, and Jowl: An Anonymous Autobiography of a Professional Jew* (1923), Joan Lowell’s *The Cradle of the Deep* (1929), and Gertrude Stein’s *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1932) all demonstrate different versions of this internalized savage self, and each utilizes different devices of misdirection in the creation of a believable narrative.

Because primitivism was regarded as the temporal and historical past of civilization, the savage self was always readily available for reclamation. Historians and philosophers from all backgrounds, from Hegel to Vernon Lewis Parrington, identified the savage being within as the point of origin of modern man. American writers and theorists contended that Americans had a unique claim on this primitive self, due largely to this nation’s complex relationship with the westward frontier.

D.H. Lawrence contended that Americans shed history the way a serpent sheds its skin; he saw this gross disregard for our past to be an unnatural but also admirable depluming of the human spirit, something that was endemic to America as a nation of “self-conceited pretty-pretty darlings.”⁸ Then, as now, our national mythology and national character gravitated towards the power of the “self-made” mythic individual of the American “wilderness-jungle.”⁹ The wilderness-jungle itself was a kind of myth, embodied by various places at various times. During the time of American westward

expansion, the wilderness-jungle was the frontier; during the 1920s, the wilderness-jungle was more abstract: that of an American identity. As the emergence of an American identity progressed, so too did an increasing interest in the primitive, simple, savage self. Writers, artists, doctors, and hobbyists of the 1920s organized their identity practices around the figure of the “native,” a subject who “occupies a space between the West and the rest.”¹⁰ Many artists and writers of the 1920s were inclined to identify with the figure of the lone hunter, who was the “archetypal American mediator between civilization and wilderness.”¹¹ This essentialized savage self was, according to Richard Slotkin, the product of the American inclination to reduce “centuries of experience into a constellation of compelling metaphors” in the ongoing project of nation building and identity construction.¹²

In this chapter, I begin with discussion of autobiography and the slippery nature of fake autobiographies and autobiographers. I will then provide a background of American modernism, American Studies, and the “broad drifts” of American thought in the 1920s. Then, I will discuss how the figure of the lone hunter or “the natural man” was viewed as an antidote to the softening effects of civilization in the first quarter of the twentieth century. I will move to Hegel’s negativity as an antecedent of the principle theory of analysis in this narrative, José Esteban Muñoz’ disidentification. Finally, I will provide a brief introduction to my new intervention into the field of literary analysis, the misdirection spectrum.

By the 1920s, writers, artists, and even hobbyists in America embraced the savage self and the ideal of the primitive natural man, an ideal that was a lingering extension of Romanticism. Only a few decades prior, Conrad’s Colonel Kurtz made his 1901 debut,

with his horrific allure, in *Heart of Darkness*. What Kurtz represented and what 1920s America embraced was a return to savagery, a rejection of the comforts of society, and a declaration of the power inherent in that rejection and return. In this dissertation, I will consider four fake autobiographies that have as their central theme the savagery of the American self. This study is two fold. First, it is an exploration of American identity—and its savagery—in the 1920s. Secondly, it is an exercise in close reading—drawing from the school of New Criticism of the 1930s—that analyzes these four savage fakes as representative of several key features of a mode of reading and writing that I have come to call *the misdirection spectrum*. This analysis is in conversation with theorists in the fields of American studies, literary studies, and performance studies; In *Regeneration Through Violence* (1973), Slotkin discusses the ways in which American subjectivity is tied to the creation of myth, and how the notion of an American mythology is a result of violent regeneration. Slotkin particularly keys upon the figure of the mythic American “hunter,” whose individualism and savagery are clearly present in the case studies I will analyze here. Likewise, Suzanne del Gizzo notes that the primitive savage has long functioned as a kind of inverted mirror, which “reflects a fascination with not only a specific ‘primitive’ culture and the ‘other,’ but ultimately with Western culture and the self as well.”¹³ Finally, this study utilizes José Esteban Muñoz theory of disidentification as an important facet of the way in which the authors of these texts construct identity, often through authorial subterfuge and bifurcation.

Slippery Fish: Impersonators, the Bleeding Genre, and the Fictitious Real Self

Fake autobiographies are not a genre in and of themselves; rather, they are a subversion of the norms of autobiography, and as such they are an inversion of the reader's expectations. The nature of fake autobiographies and the way in which they challenge the very tenets of autobiography as a genre is precisely what makes them both a fascinating subject of study and, for many readers and critics, a sometimes infuriating authorial sleight of hand. This study is a continuation of the work done by Laura Browder on ethnic impersonators in literature and culture in *Slippery Characters* (2003). Though Browder makes a comprehensive survey of the dozens of instances of ethnic impersonation in America since the slave narratives after the Civil War, Browder never delves deeply into the questions of form and content of that most illusory and peculiar facet of these ethnic impersonators: the fake autobiographer.

Autobiographical acts differ greatly from other forms of literature, hallowed genres with well-defined edges like tragedy and novel, and upon being raised above the level of "mere reportage," scholars and readers find themselves in something of a quandary concerning the autobiography as genre. In "Autobiography as De-facement" (1979), Paul De Man contends that one cannot legitimately treat autobiography as a literary genre, and any attempt to define it as such reveals autobiography to be uncomfortably self-indulgent and incompatible with the "monumental dignity" of genres like epic and lyric poetry. At times, readers and critics of autobiography—fake or otherwise—are confronted with "questions that are both pointless and unanswerable,"¹⁴ namely, questions of truth, falsehood, and authorial intent. Any attempt at generic literary classification inevitably leads to a bleeding over into other genres, making autobiography a composite of generic multitudes. Philippe Lejeune, whose exemplary *On*

Autobiography (1989) discusses the matter of genre and form in great detail, argues that autobiography supersedes generic classification; instead, it is a contract, signed by the author on the title page.

Yet in spite of De Man's frustration at the form as bleeding genre, he sees a subtler mode of interpretation at work in autobiography than elsewhere in the written canon. De Man situates the relationship between reader and author not as a strict contract but a fluid process of understanding, of simultaneous interpretation and creation characterized at its beginning by "the autobiographical moment." But what of the question that autobiography is just another form of fiction, a kind of tricky "truthy" novel? French structuralist and literary theorist Gérard Genette equates the task of differentiating truth from fiction in autobiography to getting stuck in a revolving door for the rest of eternity; consequently, "it appears, then, that the distinction between fiction and autobiography is not an either/or polarity but that it is undecidable."¹⁵ James Baldwin said that "autobiography is a rehearsal for fiction," and consequently the two genres must bleed into one another.¹⁶ De Man contends that all autobiography is manufactured, to some extent, from fiction; likewise, fiction emanates from real experiences, so there is no real need to delimit the boundaries between fiction and autobiography, as if they exist at all. The genre of autobiography is a slippery fish; fake autobiographies even more so; and the fake autobiographer is perhaps the slipperiest of all.

In this study, the self that is projected by the fake autobiographers in question is treated not as a vapid fabrication but as a meaningful and telling whole. Through reinvention, adaptability, recrudescence, middling and other modes of self-recreation, the

authors and texts considered here reveal the complexities of creating and sustaining the internal savage in a fraudulently autobiographical context.

The Broad Drift of American Thought: Modernism, American Studies, and Savage Fakes of the 1920s

The 1920s was a period of vigorous artistic and literary production both in the United States and abroad. In America the ideal of the self-made man was gaining popularity, and immigrant autobiographers as well as American-born writers “had the luxury of self-transformation” as never before.¹⁷ As American writers and historians tested and interrogated the way in which they envisioned themselves, on the heels of the American Renaissance, the field of American Studies emerged as its own field of study.¹⁸ Arguing that the great spirit of America rested with the individual and that French Romanticism influenced American literature and the American spirit, historians like Vernon Lewis Parrington sought to highlight the importance of the individual in American history and letters.¹⁹

Vernon Lewis Parrington’s three-volume work, *Main Currents in American Thought* (1927), focused on the “broad drift of major ideas” that had come to impact American life and thinking by the 1920s, largely focusing on American literature. He argued that those “broad drifts” of thought were most fully reflected in the creative work of any specific era. Widely credited as the founder of American Studies as a discipline, Parrington is also credited with the idea of examining history as “an immensely *useable* past.”²⁰ Because of their subversion and lack of transparency, fake autobiographies are generative, provocative, and representative of the “broad currents” and individual interests that affected the lives of Americans in the 1920s. In this context, Parrington’s

thoughts on the American individual and the nature of American literature serve as a helpful basis for placing this study in the context of American cultural studies. Parrington is contemporaneous with the texts that I analyze in this study, and his assertions shed light on both the broad currents that gave rise to these four fake autobiographies and the discipline of American Studies itself.

Though Parrington's contributions to the field of American Studies and the act of identifying an historical American identity are widely agreed to be significant, critics have wrangled for decades over the degree and value of his contributions. Critics continue to argue that Parrington's work was "simplistic, narrow, at times slipshod, at times melodramatic," and suffered from a bi-polar view of history, but others, like Slothkeim and Vanderbilt, praise Parrington's imaginative interpretation of the past.²¹ Colwell defends Parrington's reputation and work, attempting to disprove those who considered him a narrow-minded militant Populist, instead arguing that his intellect was the collective product of his experiences and the America that surrounded him.²²

This imaginative and sometimes simplistic interpretation of history dovetails with this study's focus on the 1920s, because it was a decade of large-scale social and political changes that gave way to the emergence of "fantasies of origin," which derive from a "generic realm of associations, typically having to do with the animal, the countryside, the indigenous...which *stand in* for that 'original' something that has been lost," according to Ray Chow in *Primitive Passions* (1995).²³ The savage self and its various disintegrations and reintegrations is just such a fantasy of origin, and one that Parrington also identified as a trend in American thinking in the 1920s. In spite of what Lionel Trilling deemed Parrington's "wooly-minded imprecision" in his analysis of history,

Parrington's main theories again echo loudly in the savage fake autobiographies that are the focus of this study.²⁴ Parrington argued that two principle forces shaped the broad currents of American thought leading up to the 1920s: first, he saw the presence of French romantic thought in all forms of American literature and art, in politics and discourse, and he traced components of Romanticism back to the Revolutionary War era; secondly, he said that a "robust individualism" characterized the American people, "resulting from fluid economies" and the luxury of individual freedoms.²⁵ However by the end of the nineteenth century, Parrington feared that the American spirit of romantic individualism had begun to decay, giving way to a pervasive spirit of pessimism. The decay of the American spirit was correlated precisely with the rise of industrialized commerce in the late 1800s, and with the decline of the agrarian heart that had once defined the nation. With this reshaped industrialized psychology, so foreign to the agrarian mind, came a dwindling interest in liberty. With the "creature comforts" of industrialized society, Parrington feared, the American individual—and his or her unique robustness of romantic spirit—was being dwarfed.²⁶

The antidote for this dwindling spirit was not long in arriving. The four savage fakes I analyze here have been chosen for their unique voice, varying degrees of public success, and the ways in which they manipulated literary and social expectations; the broader cultural movement that housed these savage fakes—which also challenged previously held expectations and norms—was modernism. In Thomas Ernest Hulme "Romanticism and Classicism" (1924), Thomas Ernest Hulme identified modernism as an emerging aesthetic movement distinct from all others that came before. As Parrington pinpointed French romanticism as the origin of American individualism, Hulme also

credited romanticism with providing the foundations of modernist—and later primitivist—thinking.²⁷

In the early 1900s, an energizing, masculine, and primitive form of expression, known as the sublime became the trend in literature and art. Melting beauty had gone out of fashion, and with it the feminine as ideal. The rigidity of Victorian conduct was no longer fashionable or desirable; something freer, looser, and simpler was needed. In an 1891 speech, Parrington asserted that artists in America were uniquely poised to take hold of this energizing, masculine, sublime art: “On American soil the forces of the past had concentrated to produce a sublime idea of freedom.”²⁸ Sublime art, antithetical as it was to feminine beauty, was reflected in manly primitiveness. The Greek root of the word *authentic* is “authento,” to have full power, and also to commit a murder. The noun root is “authentēs,” who is a master and a maker, and also a perpetrator, a murderer, and even a self-murderer.²⁹ To find authenticity in the 1920s, the artist was charged with killing the civilized self, returning to a more primitive, sublime, manly origin. As Claude Lévi-Strauss described in *La pensée sauvage (The Savage Mind)* in 1922, the key lay in understanding “untamed human thought,” separate from any discrete mind of any particular human being or group.³⁰ An era of generalized savagery had arrived.

The savagery that is apparent in the four fake autobiographies explored here runs parallel to a simultaneous desire, taken up by the modernists, to create a form of art and writing that was educated and learned, but also simple and original. In 1930, when Parrington wrote the final volume of the seminal *Main Currents*, he argued that America as a nation was and would always be locked in a perpetual and tumultuous cycle of disintegration and reintegration. He wrote, “It is not without hope that intelligent America

is in revolt. The artist is in revolt, the intellectual is in revolt, the conscience of America is in revolt.”³¹ Indeed, this revolt was already under way, such that the spirit of pessimism that so deflated Parrington was giving way to a reintegrated American modernism, one that held onto vestiges of French romanticism with equal force as it defended the importance and power of the individual in art and life.

Traditional forms of expression and narrative were proving inadequate to articulate this emerging savagery. Ezra Pound, in his essay, “Make It New,” challenged the adequacy of logic itself in expressing the sentiments of the artist and the individual. By extension, he challenged the adequacy of logical words and reasoning in the expression of artistry and individuality. In the essay, Pound provided the following proof:

There are four different intensities of mathematical expression known to the ordinarily intelligent undergraduate, namely: the arithmetical, the algebraic, the geometrical, and that of analytic geometry.

For instance, you can write

$$3 \times 3 + 4 \times 4 = 5 \times 5$$

or, differently, $3^2 + 4^2 = 5^2$

That is merely conversation or “ordinary common sense.” It is a simple statement of one fact that does not implicate any other.

Secondly, it is true that

$$3^2 + 4^2 = 5^2, 6^2 + 8^2 = 10^2, 9^2 + 12^2 = 15^2, 39^2 + 52^2 = 65^2$$

These are all separate facts, one may wish to mention their underlying similarity; it is a bore to speak about each one in turn. One expresses their “algebraic relation” as

$$a^2 + b^2 = c^2$$

That is the language of philosophy. IT MAKES NO PICTURE. This kind of statement applies to a lot of facts, but it does not grip hold of Heaven.³²

As Pound advocated for a freshness of creative language and thought, not logic, the school of New Criticism argued that the significance of literature was derived through the analysis of language itself, giving it an autonomous realm of meaning, so that meaning in modern literature came principally from structure and language, and secondarily from authorial intent and inference. Meaning, for the New Critics, was “not behind the poem in the writer’s mind or in front of the poem in the external world.”³³ In line with this defense of language as autonomous and meaningful on its own, I have chosen to examine these texts, in part, through a formalist and structural analysis of form and content, considering language as paramount to the meaning of fake autobiographies.

In the very same way that Pound called for a new language that was free of the rigid logic of science and the determinism of the Victorian age, Parrington called for Americans to “unhorse the machine that now rides men,” and to cast off the pessimistic shackles that the era of industrialization had created. Parrington’s revolt of the American mind was characterized by a renewed and vigorous pursuit of liberty and individualism. This renewed vigor came in the form of a critical American modernism, distinct but also derived from its European counterparts and antecedents, which continued to embrace the basic tenants of romanticism and glorify the position and importance of the individual.

The four case studies I have chosen exemplify a glorified rejection of industrialized civilization. There have been many fake autobiographies since the 1920s, including a surge of them within the last decade, but none since these four savage fakes of the 1920s demonstrate so well the first attempts of American authors to manipulate and create the illusion of a particular kind of American literary, cultural, and social identity, which was principally centered around the individual. To achieve this goal, each

author determined a specific mode of misdirection that gave the illusion of veracity, ranging from linguistic sleight of hand to a powerfully persuasive aura effect. And the individual, in the 1920s, was surrounded by the influences of modernism, primitivism, and a resurgence of the lone hunter as archetypal American hero, a figure who was possessed by a dual nature of gentle innocence and fierce violence.³⁴ The savage self that rejected civilized society had to be prone to perpetual reinventions, needed to be adaptable, willing to reclaim the buried primitive internal self, and be a figure capable of cunning and thoughtfulness that put the successes of the individual above all others.

A Bifurcation: Disidentification and the Being-Other.

My analysis of the savage self in these fake autobiographies draws from two disparate theorists whose views on the being-other and disidentification are, at their core, linked by the notion of identifying “with a difference.” In Hegel’s 1807 philosophy of the human *Geist*,³⁵ variously translated as “mind,” “ghost,” and “spirit,” knowledge and reality itself are defined by the relationship between identity and difference. Because the human mind must outwardly project itself into a variety of forms that stand outside and in opposition to the self and then recognize itself in those external projections, the mind is both inside and outside itself at once, and that separation is what creates the oppositional unity that defines the workings of the human mind. The pivot point of Hegel in the analysis of the savage in fake autobiographies is the dialectic of difference. In order to have strength and unity, the human will is comprised of two component parts. The defining act of the mind or Spirit is to be aware of itself.³⁶ As fake autobiographers, this awareness is ever-present; often, the most important task is keeping the author’s true self

out of the narrative. The Spirit can only be considered a whole *thing* if non-Spirit is present in its self-conception. These two elements are always present together in order to present a stable unity. The negativity within the self is a necessary and fundamental aspect of the human mind at work; fake autobiographers give an extraordinarily clear, unique, and often unexpected voice to that internal opposite.

Hegel is the precursor to a contemporary theory that puts the dialectic into new terms: José Esteban Muñoz's idea of "disidentification," as explained in *Disidentifications* (1999), theorizes that when a subject disidentifies, he neither accepts nor rejects a certain mode of identification—be it racial, sexual, or cultural. He forms a new identity, *with a difference*. To disidentify means to simultaneously partially identify and counteridentify; it is a "third mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather, disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology."³⁷ Clearly, Hegel—that bastion of white male dominance—is in unlikely and awkward company with Muñoz, a theorist of queer performativity, but Muñoz himself acknowledges the link in *Cruising Utopia* (2009), explaining that his work on disidentification originates largely with the "thinking and language of the German idealist tradition" of Kant and Hegel.³⁸ The savage fakes of the 1920s are here understood as a kind of textual bridge between Hegel and Muñoz, situated roughly at a midpoint chronologically, as well as in terms of theory and practice. In many instances, the act of disidentification is a maneuver of ideological destruction and reconstruction, primarily invoked by minoritarian subjects who find themselves alienated and orphaned by the confines of social parameters and expectations. Parrington argues that the skeleton of these two theories, disidentification

or the dialectic, is a defining component of American thought, in the form of disintegration and reintegration. Fake autobiographies articulate and execute a regenerated, disidentificatory identity at great personal and professional risk. And yet this risk gives the endeavor weight and gravity, adding another layer of depth to these works of authorial subterfuge.

Disidentification originates at the crossroads of performance studies and queer theory. It is located at the intersection of these fields; in the same spirit, it is rooted in Crenshaw's legal notion of that which is *intersectional*.³⁹ Muñoz draws on Judith Butler and Michel Pêcheux, who "put forward an understanding of identification as never being as seamless or unilateral as the Freudian account would suggest...Instead, they pave the way to an understanding of a 'disidentificatory subject' who tactically and simultaneously works on, with, and against a cultural form."⁴⁰ The act of disidentification brings together disparate cultural forms and ideologies, which are many times at odds with one another, and that conflict is the point of origin for new negotiations and creations of identity. In the 1920s, that emerging (dis)identity was principally organized around the primitive, natural, and savage man who understood the confines of civilized deportment but chose, at turns, to reject or transform it.

With regards to inauthentic autobiographical acts and the underlying decisions to disidentify and engage in an eclectic and deliberate picking and choosing of identities and modes of performance, the question is not *why* one "pivots the border" of belonging, but *how* that pivot is achieved.⁴¹ The notion of *how* trumps the question of *why* in this analysis for a few key reasons, and the particulars of how (and who) over why define the role of the misdirection spectrum, which is a tool for analysis and creation more than the

understanding of motive. In *American Anatomies* (1995), Robyn Wiegman advocates for tackling “*how* as a response to the difficulties of handling *why*.”⁴² By investigating the *how* of a complex issue like fake autobiographies, a partial answer to *why* may emerge as a consequence.

The Misdirection Spectrum: Reading Past the Cacophony of Exposure

The methodology of this work is twofold, for while always keeping a theoretical and critical eye on savagery, modernism, and the negative self, I also utilize a new mode of close textual analysis in this study. I call this mode of analysis the “misdirection spectrum.” In each chapter, I will focus on one facet of the many that comprise the spectrum, which is a tool which allows us to elucidate the process of manufacturing a new, savage, internal being-other within the self with compelling veracity and believability.

Fake autobiographies, upon exposure, inspire a vitriolic ire among readers and critics. LeJeune would credit the depth of this betrayal to an egregious breach of the autobiographical contract. The cacophony of exposure is no less vociferous now than it was in the 1920s; the outcry against James Frey and *A Million Little Pieces* in 2003 was no less angry or acrimonious than it was against Joan Lowell and *Cradle of the Deep* in 1929. What the misdirection spectrum offers is a mode of analysis that acknowledges and appreciates the form and nature of the authorial deception at work in these texts, without outrage. Drawing from Stuart Hall and Muñoz, I present the misdirection spectrum as a strategy to decode these texts.⁴³ By focusing on the form *and* content of these savage fakes, the reader and critic are permitted an escape hatch from the apparent insincerity of

the fake autobiographer. The broad strokes and currents of American life and thought gave rise to these texts, not a pathology of untruth or meaningless deception. All of these fakes have been exposed, and the effects of exposure range from suicide, in the case of Sylvester Long, to instant and lasting fame for Gertrude Stein, from a moment of little personal consequence for Ornitz, to an embarrassing and career-curtailling excoriation for Lowell. At issue is not why these fakes were written but rather *how* and in what ways they captivated the reader and critic now as then.

Drawing from the formalist analysis of the New Criticism of the 1930s, particularly I.A. Richards and later Richard Ohmann, the misdirection spectrum is a mode of analysis that allows the reader to understand how and to what extent an author manipulates an autobiographical reality. The fake autobiographer employs a combination of misdirection, false truth telling, half-concealment, and the incorrect-inference dodge.⁴⁴ The reader is misdirected towards certain elements of the narrative and away from others; in this way, the author employs a variety of techniques—the aura effect, the tension between locution and perlocution, misdirective themes, and the as-if world—in the fabrication of a narrative that has the illusion of veracity. The misdirection spectrum is a mode of analysis that utilizes close reading and linguistic foci to unravel the form and content of the narrative, separate from its fraudulence. In this study, I am less concerned with the intent of each author than with the savage fake impulse in general and the ways in which that savagery manifests itself in a given narrative.

The four case studies that follow are each representative of a different facet of the misdirection spectrum, and all elucidate a different understanding of the savage selves of the emerging American identity of the 1920s. In Chapter 1: The Longtime Blackfoot, I

examine the theme of self reinvention in *Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance: The Autobiography of a Blackfoot Indian Chief* (1928), in which Sylvester Long invents a noble savage persona, using perilocutionary presumptions that conformed to the expectations and desires of the American public in the late 1920s. In Chapter 2: The Professional Jew, I consider *Haunch, Paunch, and Jowl: The Autobiography of a Professional Jew* (1923) by Samuel Ornitz, originally published anonymously, in which the protagonist is a rotund and ruthless Superior Court judge named Meyer Hirsch, who hones his adaptability as a savage urban hunter. As Hirsch attempts to impose his authority over the wilderness-jungle of Manhattan's Lower East Side, Ornitz employs the misdirective pendulum swing to counterbalance the performatives and constatives in the text. In Chapter 3: The Scurvied Starlet, I analyze *The Cradle of the Deep* (1929) by Joan Lowell, a one time Book of the Month Selection, in which Lowell spins a yarn of a harrowing childhood spent at sea, where reader's disbelief is overcome by the deft employment of the as-if world. In Chapter 4: The Dear Enemy, I tackle the case of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1932) by Gertrude Stein, in which Stein surrogates the narrative voice of her lover in an authorial bifurcation that served to distance her from the "rarefied airs of the avant-garde" of modernism, bringing her closer to a simpler and less complicated "american" identity.⁴⁵

1. The Longtime Blackfoot: Sylvester Long's *Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance: The Autobiography of A Blackfoot Indian Chief* (1928) and Reinvention Through Misdirection

"I wondered what it was and when I had seen that strange panorama, or whether I had ever seen it at all or not—whether it was just a dream."

– Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance (b. 1890- d. 1932), also known as Sylvester Long

The "Chief Long Lance Shoe" was first marketed by the B.F. Goodrich Rubber Company in 1930, which touted that the shoe's "barefoot tread" design would allow the wearer to adapt "our primitive bodies to modern conditions."¹ The shoe was promoted in a thin yellow volume, little more than a lengthy pamphlet, entitled *How To Talk In The Indian Sign Language* by Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance. In the introduction to this peculiar promotional text, Kenneth Williams of B.F. Goodrich explains that the shoe was developed by "the Chief" himself, who was in the habit of taking a razor blade to traditional athletic shoes, cutting away rubber and canvas until he had something that resembled a "modern moccasin," inspired by the "primitive and natural" training shoes of his youth. Williams declares that the shoe "deserves to be rated high among the many valuable contributions which Chief Long Lance, most famous of Indian author-athletes, has made to the white man's civilization."

This strange little volume shows that the primitive, simple ways of the native man—from his footfall to his language—were an appealing alternative to anyone stymied by modern civilization, who ached to hunt, to run, to be like the Chief himself. After several pages of advertisements for the Chief Long Lance Shoe, a page of crude stick-figure hieroglyphs is intermingled with fragments of sentences that tell the "amazing story of the Life of the Chief of the Blood Band of the Blackfeet Indians." In his letter to the reader, Long Lance confides that Indian sign language is easy to remember because it

has a “natural origin.” Long too claimed such natural origins, but Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance was not at all what he seemed.

The natural man and the lone hunter were frequently embodied by the figure of the noble Indian in the 1920s and afterwards. Though occasionally prone to grotesque conduct, the noble savage was mostly a pensive, careful, and taciturn man who lived in close contact with nature and his surroundings. This quiet man of the earth was precisely the figure that Long repeatedly sought to personify. In this chapter I will first discuss the scholarship of this peculiar narrative and its author, and then provide a summary of *Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance: The Autobiography of a Blackfoot Indian Chief* (1928). In parallel I discuss what is known of the author’s life. I will then move forward to discuss the ways in which Long embodied the prized “It effect,” as described by Joseph Roach, by utilizing a regeneration through myth. I will then closely analyze the text from the perspective of the misdirection spectrum, here focusing on the tension between locution, illocution, and perlocution. Then, I will discuss I.A. Richard’s serviceableness and pseudotruth in conjunction with Rossini’s theory of “create and correct.” My core argument in this chapter is that Sylvester Long relied upon audience expectations of the noble savage to fuel an ongoing progression of self redefinition, and that by manipulating the tensions between reader expectations and the written word, he used misdirection to fabricate a childhood and heritage for his various reinventions.

Much of the scholarship on Long and the *Autobiography* centers on Long’s exposure as a fraud and his ability to capitalize on romantic expectations of the consumer public, which had clear—if stereotypical—notions of what a “real Indian” should be. Without question, the most devoted Long Lance scholar is Donald Smith, whose work

has hinged on the biography of Sylvester Long and his various reiterations of identity. Cultural critic Laura Browder identifies Long as just one of many “slippery characters” in American literature, an ethnic impersonator who capitalized upon the expectations and appetites of the American public to make himself a “consumable icon” with all the necessary facets of frontier romance. Browder contends that by drawing parallels between secret Blackfoot societies and the Masonic Order or young boys having a penchant for playing cowboys and Indians, Long stresses the Americanness of the narrator.² Through years of perfecting “the complex dance of successful imposture,” Long also perfected a seemingly “‘authentic’ Native voice.”³ Karina Vernon, a Canadian historian, makes a case for Long’s autobiography as the first Black prairie novel, a “strong work of imagination” that shows a story of belonging, passing, and racial transformation.⁴ Melinda Micco, similarly, places Long and other Black Seminoles in a movement of “ethnic transvestitism,” in which they were active participants and never passive observers in the “exhibition of their identities.”⁵ Other scholars see the autobiography as part of a larger project of counterfeit ethnography. According to Juhasz and Lerner, the autobiography is a necessary precursor to its subsequent “ethnographic documentary,” *The Silent Enemy* (1930), in which Long starred. In this context, the text confuses “the racial taxonomies of North America.”⁶ Sarita Cannon views Long’s entire life as a microcosmic representation of the volatility and result of racism and identity negotiation in the United States. And finally, Eva Garrouette bookends her study of *Real Indians* with Long and his mercurial life’s story as exemplary of the dangers and risks involved in claiming a Indian identity and trying to find legitimacy with the consumer public.

A Real American Indian.

In *Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance: The Autobiography of a Blackfoot Indian Chief*, published in 1928, Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance recounts a tale of a frontier boyhood, lived on the edge of savagery and civilization, narrating a life's story that conflates a "real American" self with a "real Indian" self. White Americans and American Indians embraced the simplicity and savagery of the text with equal zeal, demonstrating the power of the frontier in the American imagination of the 1920s.

Garrouette argues that Long's autobiography was written at a time when America was "coming into itself," and for this reason the text should not be interrogated for its truth or fiction, but rather considered as a document that forces scholars to ask what is entailed in claiming "real Indianness."⁷ I argue that the significance of the work is much larger than one of "Indianness," as it touches mostly on the vaguely significant time of early frontier Americanness. Frederick Jackson Turner, in his controversial 1893 essay, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," substantiates the immense importance of frontier life, arguing that the frontier was the crucible of *American* identity as a whole.⁸ Barbara Cook interprets Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance as a thoroughly regional figure, defined by geography rather than race, and drawing from Deloria she argues that Long gained cultural capital by connecting himself with the "powerful mythos of western history," but importantly, Long focuses on the Canadian—rather than the American—West.⁹ The Canadian frontier lay just beyond the scope of an ordinary American reader's firsthand knowledge, and as such it was a narrative setting that was simultaneously familiar and alien to the American reading public. A vaguely western

frontier was also just beyond the expertise of American critics who might otherwise have implicated Long's sometimes flimsy facts as outright fabrications.

The frontier as the nostalgic birthplace of the American self was never stronger than when the frontier itself was on the brink of extinction. The narrative frowns upon the complicated present as it celebrates the simplicity of a past era, a time just beyond the memory of most readers. This "lost era" trope allows Long to reinvent himself even in an imagined childhood, because the timeframe he discusses is not only past but also largely obliterated from history. In a maneuver that is endemic to fake autobiographies, Long creates a history and then validates that history with his own facts and experiences. Long tapped into the generalized frontier nostalgia of the 1920s, and through the course of the narrative the Blackfoot tribes witness the decline of their primitive origins, marked by the arrival of white settlers and the last of the great buffalo hunts. But as a masterful self-marketer aware of the demographic of the reading public, Long created a narrative that focused principally on the differences of "now versus then," never resting for too long on the matter of "white settlers versus Indians." He both creates and promotes this vague nostalgic frontier and then overlays the narrative with a semi-opaque fog of childhood recollection.

If the reader feels understandably a bit unclear on the specifics of his narrative, they are forgiven, for Long is admittedly equally unclear. This frankness and forethought permits Long a tremendous amount of flexibility, as he already has the attention and the empathy of the reader, and, by manipulating the power of nostalgia, he creates camaraderie with his audience that is imperative if his narrative is to succeed. The narrative commences with a skirmish between Long's tribe and another in northern

Montana; as a result, but without much explanation, Long's mother hands him off to his aunt as his mother rides away, never to be seen again. As his only clear childhood memory, it leaves him with an indelible impression of loss and loneliness for the rest of his life. Some years later—though the time of this memory is unspecified—he tells his aunt of remembering the day his mother abandoned him. His aunt is surprised at his ability to remember the event since he was “only fourteen months old” at the time.¹⁰ After recounting this startling memory, he slips back into “the mystic sleep of infancy” until the age of four when he “comes to life again” as he falls from the back of a horse.¹¹ Dreamlike and fuzzy, the years between his mother's departure and his metaphorical mid-air rebirth shape the tone of the narrative, heavy with mysticism and mystery.

In adulthood, Long's attempts to blur lines of racial and tribal distinction reflect the pressures and restrictions of a youth spent in the Jim Crow South.¹² Born on December 1, 1890, in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Sylvester Clark Long's mother, Sallie Carson Long, was part white and part “Croatan, (*sic*)” the popular nomenclature for a person of mixed white, African, and native ancestry. His father, Joseph, of African descent, was reared in slavery before the Civil War. Joseph Long's obituary includes a vague allusion to his having claimed belonging to the “Catawa” tribe of Indians; early in his childhood, he was taken into the home of Reverend Miles Long as a house slave. From Reverend Long, Joseph and his progeny received their surname. Whatever the cobblestone background of Long and his parents, the rules of the day made his position in society clear: Sylvester was “colored,” poor, and disadvantaged. Long found himself tangled in the middle of what race theorist and devout xenophobe Lorthrop Stoddard, in 1922, predicted would be the center of the national political, social, and cultural

debates—namely, questions of whiteness and blackness.¹³ Long found a loophole in the tangle, circumventing the “questions of whiteness and blackness” entirely by turning to a primitivism that was considered to be a salve to the destructive effects of industrialization.¹⁴

In 1904, Long left home to join a traveling Wild West Show that toured the country. He often referred to the show as the “little Circus.”¹⁵ Later in his life, he made no effort to correct those who erroneously assumed he was a part of the infamous Buffalo Bill Wild West Show. Upon arriving back in Winston-Salem, he was no longer willing to accept the humiliations and segregations of the Jim Crow South. Donald B. Smith, in his exhaustive biography of Long, suggests that while touring with the Wild West show, “[Long] undoubtedly passed as an Indian, capitalizing on his high cheek bones, straight, jet black hair, and coppery skin.”¹⁶ Upon his arrival home, Long aimed for entry into the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania. On his application, he merely wrote “Cherokee” for his tribal affiliation, which was the best-known and largest tribe in the area. He was accepted to the Carlisle School in 1909, but his decision to claim Cherokee descent proved to be the first of several foibles of identity that Long was to experience in his lifetime. The Cherokee were slaveholders themselves until shortly before the turn of the century, and fought for the Confederacy in the Civil War. The verifiably full-blooded Cherokee boys at the Carlisle School recognized Long’s lie at once, and many Cherokee students and parents were indignant at the ruse and his presence at the school. Long was the subject of much ridicule, known on the schoolyard as “the Cherokee nigger.”¹⁷ Eventually, a teacher at the school, James Henderson, added “Lance” to Long’s surname, making him Sylvester Long Lance. This was an essential turning point, as it is the first

moment when Long acquired tangible “evidence” of his fabricated past, allowing him a measure of social acceptance within the Carlisle School and its microcosmic native community.

In 1915, when authorities in the War Department and the Bureau of Indian Affairs began to doubt Long’s claims of native ancestry, they turned to Henderson for verification of his claims. By then, Henderson was the superintendent of the Cherokee Indian School in North Carolina, and effectively stonewalled all investigations into Long’s background.¹⁸ In a subsequent letter from Henderson to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Henderson admitted he had renamed his pupil in order to “Indianize” Long’s identity, allowing him to carry on with the practice of racial passing with less resistance. Long’s decision to pass not as white but as a Native American required a tremendous amount of performative competence since he had chosen to pass as a member of a highly insular social and racial in-group. Long may have known that he would eventually have to account for his nonexistent tribal childhood if he were to continue to pass as Native American. For Long, now calling himself Sylvester Chakuska Long Lance, disidentification was far too subtle given the climate of the time and the steps he needed to take in order to protect his new identity; instead, he opted for counteridentification and rejection of his own past.

In 1928, an editor at William Randolph Hearst’s Cosmopolitan Book Corporation asked Long to tell the story of his childhood. The day of reckoning had come; a childhood had to be fabricated. Long was a publisher’s dream; he was just the sort of heroic, jocular Native American that could sell copy. His best friend and training partner was Olympian Jim Thorpe. Long had lived a very public and triumphant life after leaving

the Carlisle School, becoming the first “full-blooded Indian” to be appointed to West Point, and became a decorated veteran of World War I. Notably, Long’s charisma and persona delighted even the most staunch segregationists since his West Point appointment came from President Wilson, whose anti-assimilationist leanings were notorious. While serving overseas in Europe, Long had earned yet another change of name, his battalion mates having taken to calling him “the Chief” for his fearlessness in battle. So it was again, by the decision of someone other than Long himself that his name transformed into Chief Sylvester Chakuska Long Lance. Again, he depended on those who surrounded him to confer cultural and racial capital upon his name and persona. In living this life of a full-blooded Indian, Long had to disassociate completely from his family in Winston-Salem, any member of which could have exposed his lies at any time. If President Wilson or any affiliates of West Point were to discover his true past, it would have spelled certain disaster for Long.

The autobiography is mostly episodic, loosely linked together by the chronology of Long’s movement from boyhood to manhood. Hardly anything happens to Long himself; he acts as a detached observer, employing a semi-omniscient first-person point of view. Other young men in the tribe routinely undertake the rites and rituals of becoming a warrior or medicine man, but Long never participates—he only observes. Long relies most heavily on the imperfect past tense, so that the narrative appears painted in broad, general strokes. “We would walk great distances each winter,” or “The young warriors would be whipped each morning,” for instance.¹⁹ Furthermore, there is frequent dependence on the first person plural “we” in the narrative, again enforcing the notion of broadly recounted episodes of life in the tribe. Though the first personal plural “we”

narrative voice is common in minoritarian life writings according to Mary Catherine Bateson, here it works as a means of misdirective generalization. The boyhood memories are at once both unspecific and simultaneously rife with detail and description. The tribe Long describes is semi-nomadic, snowbound in winter and moving within a fairly small radius during summer. Again, vagueness substantiates Long's narrative, for he could have been describing any tribe in Canada, and indeed it seems he was, a kind of Plains Indians tribe *en masse*. This unnamed tribe of Blackfoot Indians leads a simple life, governed by nature, turning to animals for signs that trouble was approaching or a hostile tribe was afoot.²⁰ Such an idyllic and simple life continues without much interference until later in the narrative with the first contact between Long's tribe and other neighboring groups, many of who were once enemies. Long sets his boyhood in a waning Garden of Eden, increasingly forced to sacrifice many traditional beliefs and lifeways. He makes few references to the encroaching "white man," instead favoring description of impending and non-accusatory "change."

The role into which Long initially cast himself became increasingly untenable as he attempted to conform to popular assumptions about Native Americans, and a new reinvention was necessary. Even though he had enrolled in Carlisle as a Cherokee, by the summer of 1922 he realized that he had selected the "wrong tribe," for the American public had come to see a "real Indian" as a Plains Indian warrior, with a Chicken Dance headdress, tobacco pouch, and calf skin vest.²¹ By the 1920s, the Cherokee had fully embraced a more "modern" and less primitive existence, accustomed to the conveniences of the day and a far cry from deerskin loincloths. Long wrote to the Commissioner of

Indian Affairs, William Morris Graham, in a pre-emptive defense of his decision to “become” a Plains Indian. Long explained that because he hadn’t lived with “his own people” since he was sixteen years old, he knew more about the Indians of the Pacific Coast and Western Canada than of “his own progenitors.”²² By altering his image into that of a Plains Indian, he explained further, “I believe that as a Plains Indian, *which I have become in toto*, I can do more for Indians who need something done for them.”²³ Commissioner Graham was fervently in support of the identity change, already sold on the image of Long as Indian athlete, Indian journalist, and Indian war hero regardless of his particular tribal affiliation. Validation of his ever-changing persona came from on high rather than from within for the third time. With the blessing of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Long abandoned his Cherokee “past” for a Plains Indian future. Torgovnick argues that Long embodied a generalized “Euro-American” inclination of the time to “approach the primitive as an inexact and expressive whole—often with little correspondence to any specific or documented societies.”²⁴ But more than that, this moment of reinvention is also indicative of what José Esteban Muñoz identifies as the starting point for disidentification itself. The “affirmation of that slippage, that failure of identification,” in the words of Judith Butler, opened a new realm of possibility for Long, providing him with a new platform for self-exploration and disidentification.²⁵

A particular passage in the narrative shows Long’s ever-evolving transformation from African-American under the thumb of Jim Crow to Long Lance as public persona. In life as in the *Autobiography*, Long was perpetually becoming a new, improved version of the individual he wished himself to be. He is the epitome of the self-made American.

Here, Long makes an oblique acknowledgement of the many names he has held, legitimizing this progression as a part of his Blackfoot ancestry:

In the civilization in which we live, a man may be one thing and appear to be another. But this is not possible in the social structure of the Indian, because an Indian's name tells the world what he is: a coward, a liar, a thief, a brave... No matter how many names were successively given to him, all of his past names belonged to him just the same, and nobody else could adopt them.²⁶

Notice how Long uses “we” to refer to modern society at large, but immediately reconnoiters back to a tribe-centered point of view and the “social structure of the Indian.” He knows that he is one thing but appears to be another, but tribal tradition allows for an erasure of that discrepancy in favor of a transforming-self world-view that suited his needs perfectly. There is an aura of truth in this narrative that is supported by Long’s honest, clear tone. The so-called “Indian” way of life, according to Long, is simple, straightforward, and primitively noble. The social structure he portrays allows him to shed the skin of the complicated racial lines of the Jim Crow South in order to present himself as a self-made man who belonged to one group, and one group alone. In the next passage of the text, Long continues to explain the provenance of his name:

One of my names, Chief Buffalo Child, is a dynastical name and title among the Blood Band of Blackfoot living at Cardston, Alberta. The original Chief Buffalo Child was killed in battle, in what is now Montana, more than eighty years ago; and years ago when I became a chief of this band his name was resurrected and perpetuated in the present holder of the title...²⁷

This section of the text shows a clear preoccupation with the issue of naming, echoed in the story of Long’s own perpetual renaming process in his life outside the *Autobiography*. But because Long believes in his performance and demonstrates the depth of his connection to the tribe, he casts himself as what Goffman calls the “accredited incumbent”

who has the right to perform the narrative.²⁸ He is not only a Blackfoot, but also a dynastical Chief. Because he had lived his adult life as a Native American, he was accredited to perform the role of his own childhood, a curious inversion of the norm. The word choice of “resurrected” here is also significant, as if Long and his dynastical chiefdom both rose from the ashes of an unclear but still noble past.

Long’s hoax was not exposed until forty years after his death, though some of his acquaintances had suspected that his story was not what he led those around him to believe. During its time, the book was heralded as an iconic and emblematic Native American text. The Philadelphia *Public Ledger* called it “a gorgeous saga of the Indian race.” The New Orleans *Times-Picayune* deemed the text “by all odds the most important Americana offered this year.” In Britain, the *New Statesman* offered the following reception: “This book rings true; no outsider could explain so clearly how the Indians felt.”²⁹ And in 1928 a well-known anthropologist from Columbia University, Dr. Paul Radin, welcomed this “authentic autobiography,” lamenting that there were not more such books. Yet Radin did note one caveat—one that now seems to shine a light right through Long’s ruse. Radin hailed Long’s portrayal of “the external side of the Blackfoot culture,” but criticized the dearth of internal description of Indian life, owing to Long “consistently refusing to reveal much about the inner self.” But Radin forgave this omission explaining, “no Indian talks much about himself.”³⁰ Later, when Long was on the set of *The Silent Enemy*, other cast members grew suspicious of Long’s punctuality, knack for small-talk, boisterousness, and habitual errors in his command of Plains Indian sign language. Chauncey Yellow Robe, who actually did grow up during the end of the great buffalo hunts on the plains, realized almost immediately that *Chief Buffalo Child*

Long Lance could not possibly have been Long's own story, for the herds had been exterminated before his birth. Yellow Robe kept his suspicions quiet for several years, concluding that "when the time came," he had no intention of keeping his suspicions to himself.³¹

The year before his autobiography was commissioned by the Cosmopolitan Book Corporation, Long wrote an article that captured the attention of one of the company's editors. This article "won Long instant fame" and was the brush with the limelight that brought him into the public eye.³² "The Secret of the Sioux" allegedly exposed the real story of General Custer's death at Little Big Horn, not by massacre or scalping, but by a self-inflicted bullet wound to the head. The article also claims that Sitting Bull and Custer had met before the massacre, an assertion never made before or since.³³ Long said he had heard the story while at the Carlisle Indian School from a young Cheyenne Indian, Wesley Two Moons, whose relatives were at the massacre and witnessed Custer's demise. Conveniently, Two Moons had died some years earlier of pneumonia and so could not contradict Long's version of events. It was an outlandish article that is now almost impossible to find, except in an obscure and rare volume of Long's collected articles, housed at the Sacramento State University Library. The article was not warmly received and caused disquiet and conflict among Custer's and Little Big Horn's descendants as well as members of the Cheyenne. And yet, the article had done its job; Long found himself with a public profile, and a notable infamy, which he worked to maintain for the rest of his life.

Shortly after *Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance* was published, the Chief starred as a pre-Columbian Ojibwa warrior named Baluk in the silent film *The Silent Enemy* (1930),

which portrayed the hunger epidemic that had long afflicted Native American populations. With a popular film and a bestselling book to his name, Long's reinvention appeared to be complete. He took up residence with a friend in Hollywood, during which time his father fell ill; Long's family was indigent and in need of money, which Long was able to provide. Two years later, Sylvester Long died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound in the San Gabriel Valley in California. Long's suicide coincides closely with the first contact he had with his family in Winston-Salem after leaving home for the Carlisle School, but the week before his suicide, Long sent a letter to his longtime friend Thorpe. The letter, Thorpe said, "gave no indication of worry or despondence."³⁴

The It Effect and Regeneration Through Myth

In September of 1923, a reporter arrived at the Polo Grounds in New York City to cover the fight between Jack Dempsey and Luis Ángel Firpo. An historic event, and the first time that a Latin American fighter would challenge a champion for the heavyweight title, neither the ambience of the ring nor the fighters were what first attracted the reporter's attention:

Among the newspaper men at the ringside of the Dempsey-Firpo fight in New York sat a young chap of athletic build. The casual observer might have thought this fellow had acquired a healthy tan at one of New York's popular beaches. Looking him over more carefully, the observer would have noticed that this individual's skin was copper-colored, his hair jet-black, that his cheekbones were prominent and that he had an unflinching eye. Inquiry would have brought out the fact that it was Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance, a full-blooded Indian chief representing a syndicate of newspapers in the Canadian Northwest.³⁵

There can be no doubt that Long had *It*. This is the most elusive component of the inauthentic autobiographer. This effect is explored in Joseph Roach's aptly named *It*

(2007). The text is a study on the origins and history of having “it,” that strange magnetism that attracts both sexes, that trait of “abnormally interesting people.”³⁶ From that sense of remarkable allure springs the creative process of inventing something at once real and unreal. When a performer or a performance has It, Roach argues, a residue remains after the performance is over or the performer has left the room. This is particularly true for recognizable figures, including celebrity actors and smash-hit autobiographers. As Marvin Carlson has shown, a famous or infamous figure is “entrapped by the memories of the public, so that each new appearance requires a renegotiation with those memories.”³⁷ In an article that appeared in the *Circleville Herald* in Ohio in 1928, an announcement reads: “Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance of Calgary, reputed to be the most notable Indian of the day, will be the principle speaker at the meeting of the Ohio History Day Association on Sunday, October 7.”³⁸ Long envisages himself the most notable Indian; in turn, those around him also see and promote him as the most noted, and also the most notorious. Long’s appearance in the popular nationally syndicated comic “Cicero Sapp” attests to the *it effect* of his image.³⁹ Carlson calls this phenomenon “ghosting,”⁴⁰ which is connected closely with the *after-image*, or residual presence of a performance in the memory of the audience and other performers. This after-image is a powerful distinguishing factor of the “*it effect*,” for even after the performance has ended, the residue remains. The tenuous nature of It makes for good entertainment, regardless of whether the performer can support the weight of the expectations that accompany the It Effect. A graceless stumble from the heights of possessing It might be likened to a colossal fall from grace, a faux pas of the most

astounding magnitude. Such a fall is tailor-made for ravenous audiences, and the loss of It proves to be just as compelling as possessing It in the first place. Roach explains:

‘It’ is the power of apparently effortless embodiment of contradictory qualities simultaneously: strength *and* vulnerability, innocence *and* experience, and singularity *and* typicality among them. The possessor of It keeps a precarious balance between such mutually exclusive alternatives, suspended at the tipping point like a tightrope dancer on one foot; and the empathetic tension of waiting for the apparently inevitable fall makes for breathless spectatorship.⁴¹

Long’s performer commitment was admirable and virtually unshakeable even in the face of the occasional guffaw. For the most part, his performance went unquestioned after he left the Carlisle School, and through the years long walked Roach’s tightrope, the one separating triumph and failure, infamy and obscurity, “singularity and typicality.”

Carlson defines this line as the division between “not me... and not *not* me.”⁴² Long depended on outsiders to validate his performance; consequently, the performance continued, emanating from within but spurred and perhaps even inspired from without. After death and after exposure, the ghosted image of Long Lance remains. Even five decades later, Long was still a topic of debate; in early February 1987, the *Lethbridge Herald* in Alberta advertised a lecture and discussion entitled “Long Lance: Black Man, White Man, or Indian Chief?” Due in some part to the *it effect*, Long’s persona resists erasure from the record, and ensured—beyond all odds—that he would be a subject of interest even after his fraud had been exposed.

The *it effect* indicates a prior presence, something upon which Long built his persona, and in this case that is the myth of the Noble Red Man. Slotkin maintains the myth is also the place of regeneration and rebirth. By playing into the perceptions of the Native man myth, or what Redding identifies as the frontier as “garden of the world” trope, Long forged a space for a new identity that was based on prior assumptions and

accepted beliefs.⁴³ Sylvester Long had spent most of his life crafting the Chief Buffalo Child persona, and indeed it became his only form of self-presentation by the time he wrote his memoir of childhood. Therefore, *Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance*, the text, serves to substantiate Long's Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance persona; it is the written history of a mythical figure. Simultaneously, the persona that Long played lent veracity to the narrative, but it also had its weaknesses. Long had to anticipate the shortcomings of the native myth in the construction of his narrative. Long broaches the perceived lack of morality of "the Indian," due in some part perhaps to an un-Christian upbringing, as he simultaneously deflects and anticipates criticism of the veracity of his narrative:

We had no Bible as the white boys have; so our mothers trained us to live right by telling us legends of how all of the good things started to be good. We had a legend for everything—from the care of our feet to the "great shame" befalling those who tell lies.⁴⁴

A one-two punch, the defense of a moral (if Bible-less) childhood gives credence to Long's self-portrayal as a truthful and trustworthy narrator. He would never lie to us, the audience, for his mother taught him through legends to be a strong and righteous man, upon whom that "great shame" of telling lies would, naturally, never fall.

Long's life, though rife with fabrications, was also flecked with truth. He was a winning sportsman, a close friend of Olympian Jim Thorpe; he was also a decorated war hero. However, on both his record as an athlete and his war record, he exaggerated lavishly, claiming to have played on Olympic teams with Thorpe in 1910, 1911, and 1912, and raising his war injuries from two to eight.⁴⁵ Long's notoriety as Olympic training partner and selfless war hero are tropes taken up by the narrative, yet when this tactic weakens, Long frequently relies upon the shock value of the grotesque in his narrative.

This takes the form of a variety of different descriptions, particularly feats of strength and bravery required of young boys in the unnamed tribe.⁴⁶ Details of a public whipping or a decapitated head atop a stake, reminiscent of Conrad and Levy-Strauss, are commonplace in the narrative.⁴⁷ Descriptions of primitive and brutal rituals are made even more grotesque by an abundance of details, described at length. Here, Long describes the ritual of the Sun Dance pole in Chapter VIII, “The Making of a Brave”:

The medicine man runs the sharp knife into the left breast of the man in front of him and makes a long, deep gash. Then he pulls it out and makes a similar gash about an inch and a half from the first one. Now he runs the knife under the flesh between these two gashes and while he holds his finger in the connecting hole, he reaches down with the other hand and picks up a stout rawhide thong about three feet long and draws it through the hole... The medicine man now takes a heavier thong, many feet long, and ties one end to the thong in the young man’s chest and the other end to the Sun Dance pole... As the drums boom to the singing of the Sun Dance song, the young man dances and jerks upon the long thong, trying to pull out the flesh which it holds and free himself... [With] a sickly sound of rending flesh, the young man would get up, with his chest hanging with blood and torn muscles. The medicine-man would “doctor” him for a moment with native herbs, and then the young man went on his way—now a brave.⁴⁸

Ekman and forensic linguists like Ohmann argue that inclusion of a superfluity of detail, as is so clear here, is a sign of a false confession, and not a particularly skillful one at that. Such “elective statements” and texture, for Kassin, increase the depth of the confession but are not at all representative of a veracious account.⁴⁹ In addition to the grotesque, the audience is also presented with a second theme of misdirection in the performance: nostalgia for a primitive way of life. Native peoples, for Slotkin and also Sahlins, “were closer to the primary sources of myth and more capable of perceiving the life around them with the mythopoeic eye of the godmaking believer. Where the settlers could only see chaos and wilderness, the Indian’s eye and mind could construe an order, a kindred intelligence in all things.”⁵⁰ This ability to construe order from chaos manifests in the

narrative as a generalized pervasive mysticism. Long explains at the start of the narrative: “Mystery pervaded everything. In addition to the natural mysteries attendant upon my early youth, we had also to grope with the weird mysteries of Indian cult and superstition.”⁵¹ In this statement, the well-trained reader—armed with an eye for misdirection—spots an inconsistency between the insider’s position of being raised within the tribe and the outsider-looking-in quantifier of weirdness. Long frequently uses that same outsider tone to describe many of the customs and habits of his supposed fellow tribesmen, hardly ever referring to them as “Blackfoot,” nor by their more specific tribal name. Implicitly, Long is speaking for all “Indians” and their mysterious “weird” customs. The actual reason for this tendency towards generalization, of course, is that the narrative is not based on the traditions of any one tribe in particular but rather Long’s observations of a variety of different tribes whom he encountered in Alberta and the northern Canadian provinces during his time as a journalist for the *Calgary Herald*. However, what seem now to be somewhat uncomfortable generalizations – “With an Indian, this means that he intends to kill as many [enemies] as he can before he is killed,” for instance⁵²—may have served to contribute to the overall mystique of the narrative in the 1920s, given that the United States was still in the throes of negotiating reservation boundaries and long-debated treaties. The reading public at large, one might well assume, may not have been well-informed about the complexities of tribal and inter-tribal native affiliations, so the employment of “Indian” would have made Long’s narrative a much broader representation of “Indian” life at large. This plays neatly into the myth of the Indian, so legible and alluring to American readers.

Another common and significant thread in the narrative is the pervasive threat of a gender switch. The boys of the tribe, including Long himself, are persistently called “girls” or “women” when they fail to live up to the standards of bravery and bellicosity upheld by their fathers and male elders. With the single exception of a momentary nostalgia for his mother, who left him when he was an infant, women are portrayed as static, unchanging, vapid personages who merely fill space between men.⁵³ In the simple, clear tone that characterizes the narrative, Long plods through the difficulties and triumphs of his childhood, but also casts the net beyond the targeted reader towards an audience that was becoming increasingly interested in the qualities of the “primitive man.” But he is also thoroughly in touch with his senses and the natural world in a way that his non-native counterpart, living in the urban world, would not be. This balance is also recognized as the Jungian *anima*, “the feminine principle of passivity, passion, and acceptance within the reasoning, cold, masculine consciousness.”⁵⁴ In order to realize this balance, Long must first convince the reader that his is a cohesive identity with two distinct yet fully-fledged internal halves.

They Do Not Speak the White Man’s Tongue: Perilocutionary Presumptions

In order to balance the two halves of the self, Long relies heavily on the reader to fill in that which he cannot or does not say. The tension inherent in fake autobiographies often springs from the intersection of the locutionary, illocutionary, and perilocutionary facets of language; in other words, the intersections of “what I say” (locution), “what I mean” (illocution), and “what you think I mean” (perilocution).⁵⁵ Adding further complexity are the multiple illocutionary goals of any text or performance, and there are

always changes to the performance during the course of perilocutionary interpretation and recollection, sometimes making the after-image more powerful than the event itself.⁵⁶ The distance between the locutionary act, “what I say,” and the perilocutionary interpretation, “what you think I mean to say,” is another means for understanding the differences between expression and impression, or the expression that a performer *gives*, and the expression that he *gives off*.⁵⁷ Phrased yet another way, the intersection of these three communicative facets can create a rift between “what seems to be said [and] the mental operations of the person who said it.”⁵⁸

The tension between locution, illocution and perilocution is often most evident in the foreword or prologue to fake autobiographies, usually presented as a disinclination to outwardly claim the ensuing narrative as *the truth* no matter what its title may otherwise indicate. The illocutionary and perilocutionary expectations of the audience are often fulfilled or challenged by the locutionary statements of the author; the question of truth does not always enter into that negotiation of meaning. Modernist thought would have us banish “truth” from the discussion completely. In the prologue or foreword, the audience has the opportunity to hear the voice of the author without the filter that is employed subsequently, thereby making the prologue—or similar foreword—one of the few opportunities for the audience to see whether or not the author is staking an unmitigated claim on the story, or subtly distancing him- or herself from the narrative and its contents. This moment of distancing is more common than one might expect.⁵⁹

On the surface, the perilocutionary understanding of *Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance* is a first-person account of growing up as a Blackfoot in the Alberta province of Canada. However, Long never lays any direct claim on such a narrative. He never

explicitly states that the events recounted in the narrative actually happened to him; the reader expects that he would and assumes that he does, but in fact he does not. In the field of deception science, Ekman calls this tactic an “inference dodge.”⁶⁰ Importantly, Long never corrects our perilocutionary assumption either. Lejeune contends that within the prologue, the contract between writer and audience is outlined and agreed upon. But not so with inauthentic autobiographical acts, for while the prologue is one of the most important elements in setting up the veracity of the subsequent narrative, and it is also a means by which the author can subtly tell the reader *I am not lying but I am not telling the truth, either*. To this end, Long states the following in the prologue to the first edition:

This dramatic period, the period leading out of the old tribal conflicts into that marking of the coming of the new white race, constitutes what is perhaps the most colorful period in the history of the North American Indian. And it is of the experiences of this period that I write, the experiences of our old warriors who are still living, but who cannot tell their own stories because they do not speak the white man’s tongue.

This is a book which my friends of the Northwest have urged me to write ever since I returned from the World War. They and my publishers have persuaded me that it is an interesting narrative. And, so, here it is.

Buffalo Child Long Lance

Blood Indian Reservation

Cardston, Alberta

July 1, 1928

Introduction to the 1st Edition⁶¹

Long does not state that these are his personal experiences and he never claims specifically that he lived through what he describes, yet the audience’s perilocutionary expectation of autobiography is that the narrator experienced some version of the narrative within. Here—and some critics vehemently argue that such is the case in *all* autobiography—the expectation of truth is misplaced and inevitably unfulfilled. In the above passage, Long neither claims nor rejects ownership of the *Autobiography*. Once

again he relies on the expectations of his reader to lend feigned veracity to the narrative. Such a maneuver creates an indirect sense of truthfulness, and allows Long to reinvent himself through the reader's eyes. The illusion of truth cannot be all smoke and mirrors, however, and Long intentionally inserts the first person plural possessive "our" in describing the aging warriors of the tribe, which is powerful misdirective that circumvents Long's locution and illocution, and goes straight to the realm of perilocution.

The audience makes a perilocutionary assumption that Long means to tell a story of *his people*, of whom the reader assumes he is a part. Ultimately, what makes the prologue a solid foundation for the rest of the narrative is Long's masterful balance between distancing and associative language – "their stories" versus "our warriors," for instance. Elsewhere in the narrative, such tensions between associative and distancing language continue to appear: Long describes the Blackfoot system of time keeping for the reader's benefit, and in terms familiar to the reader, making an awkward bridge between the "savage" and "civilized" worlds.⁶² Believably creating this bridge between worlds and crafting a narrative lived on a vague frontier is a dance that is complex enough, and Long makes no effort to integrate his own actual childhood into the narrative. His project is not one of reconciling his past with his imagined present and future; it is a task of total reinvention and disavowal of many aspects of his personality and history. According to Smith, "some evidence suggests that [Long] may have acquiesced in antiblack bigotry" or even incited it.⁶³ Long distances himself from his African-American heritage wherever possible, and when a neighboring tribe member attempts to explain this "peculiar black skins" to him, he treats them as beings beyond his imagination: "They even told us of 'black white men' who lived under the sun, where it rested when it went

under the horizon, and who were “scorched” until they were black.”⁶⁴ Long presents this as the first time he and his tribe ever heard of a black man, which further distances Chief Buffalo Child the narrator from the actual past of Long the author.

Writing For A Cause

In the prologue to the text, Long explains that his publisher and friends told him that his childhood was a story that must be told, and he feels obliged to agree in order to speak on behalf of the warriors of his tribe who cannot tell the stories for themselves. The narrative is presented as a duty to Long’s own identity, and to the memory of a tribe with whom he felt a great affinity. He explained his switch from Cherokee allegiance to Plains Indian in 1922 by saying that “he could do more” on behalf of the Plains Indians than the Cherokee. In reality, perhaps, it was the Plains Indians that could do more for Long as they were more welcoming of him and his feigned heritage than were the Cherokee. Their popular image, furthermore, was much more in line with that of his readers' and publisher’s expectations, and it was more prudent for him to reinvent himself into an already accepted framework. Leaving behind the segregated South and his African-American relations, Long searched for a group that would take him in. In the varied groups of Plains Indians, especially those in Canada, he saw an opportunity to be accepted and to promote not only himself, but the image of the “Indian” as most readers and viewers expected and understood “the Indian” to be.⁶⁵ He capitalized upon the expectations of the reader and underscored the vagueness of his narrative to make it a generalized narrative of an Indian boy growing up on an ill-defined but still thoroughly legible “western” frontier.

Long and all fake autobiographers enliven a generic and artificial skeleton with the unique nuances of the experiential. English rhetorician and literary critic I.A. Richards contended, “business of the poet...is to give order and coherence, and so freedom, to a body of experience.”⁶⁶ By reinventing himself repeatedly, Long created his own body of fabricated experience from which to craft a narrative of childhood. This process of self-legitimization is one seen in many other savage fakes of the 1920s. Richards sought to find a method for reading literature that was freed from the regimented restrictions of scientific truth, in favor of what he coined “pseudo-statements,” defined thusly:

A pseudo-statement is “true” if it suits and serves some attitude or links together attitudes that on other grounds are desirable. This kind of “truth” is so opposed to scientific “truth” that it is a pity to use so similar a word, but at the present it is difficult to avoid the malpractice.⁶⁷

Whereas a *pseudo-statement* finds justification in whether or not it organizes the “impulses and attitudes” of the poet/performer, a *statement* is justified by its “truth,” or “its correspondence, in a highly technical sense, with the fact to which it points.”⁶⁸ This is not a question of a signifier being emptied of meaning as in Baudrillard’s simulacra; quite to the contrary, pseudo-statements permit the fabrication of truth so long as it points to something sensorily relevant. These pseudo-statements are the building blocks of fake autobiography because they correlate not to a scientific truth, but to an artistic attitude or opinion as the point of origin for meaning. The meaning of these pseudo-statements is gauged by its “serviceableness,” or usefulness, to both reader and writer, and to its serviceableness to humanity as a whole. Richards acknowledges that while this position and mode of interpretation is a tenuous one, neither true nor false, it ultimately liberates the audience by dismantling the desire to find an irrevocable and illusive “truth.”⁶⁹

There is no one truth in *Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance*, but there is a serviceableness that aims to fulfill the needs of its author, and the perceived needs of his audience. Furthermore, the text furnishes a life without provenance with an apparently legitimate and archival history. Reading this text now, it is sometimes frustrating in its simplicity and its generality, but those very qualities are what Long was most in need of in creating this childhood for himself. His had been a complicated life of exclusion and navigating racist sentiments and expectations in the United States. Once he was discharged from World War I, it seemed, Canada offered him safe harbor from the past he had left behind. But he had to create something that would not only misdirect from his actual heritage, creating a narrative so heavy with details and so warmly acclaimed that nobody suspected it to be a fraudulent document, but also a narrative that would replace the painful humiliations and poverty of his own past. In *Wrighting Ethnicity* (2008), Jon Rossini discusses the means by which performers, artists, authors and playwrights take the opportunity to “create and correct” through performance.⁷⁰ Because the stage has become an applicable and relevant metaphor for examinations of daily life, according to Rossini, arguments and analysis of on-stage performance can also be applied to performances off stage. Individual cultural creations and identifications are where the daily action of change takes place. These deliberate creations and corrections are also moments of strategic disidentification. *Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance* is an exquisite example of the need of the performer to create and correct, for in writing this narrative Long not only created a new childhood but also attempted to reform and erase the injustices of his life and past. He made a place for himself in the world where there was none before.

Defrocked by Yellow Robe

Long's decision to repeatedly reinvent himself and to cut ties with his past was not a decision made lightly. It was, without a doubt, a question of survival. Growing up in Winston-Salem he was socioeconomically crippled, but his persistence and performer commitment to a newly fashioned Long Lance, one that had wide popular appeal, provided him with a sense of security and belonging absent in his childhood. If there is one thing that *Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance* reflects it is that Long ached to belong to a tribe; through the narrative, he creates the illusion that his links to that tribe, whichever he belonged to at a given time, ran deep and wide. In the end, it is thought that Long committed suicide because he thought he was facing imminent public exposure. The threat of the destruction of the performance was commensurate to the destruction of his very existence.

Shortly after the filming of *The Silent Enemy* (1930) ceased, Chauncey Yellow Robe, the Sioux Indian who starred in the film with Long, contacted the Bureau of Indian Affairs with his suspicions of Long's claims that he was a Blackfoot Indian. At about the same time, Long recited his own death chant in front of hundreds of guests at the annual dinner of the Poetry Society of America in New York City on the evening of January 28, 1930. In attendance that evening was State Representative William Chanler, an acquaintance of Yellow Robe's. In an afternoon of research, Chanler had discovered the truth about Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance. Days later, acting as the legal counsel for *The Silent Enemy*, Chanler summoned Long to his Manhattan office, and as Long entered the office, Chanler greeted him: "Hello, Sylvester." Long responded: "Who's

Sylvester?”⁷¹ What happened in the following weeks is unknown; three months later, he was dead by his own hand.

Neither Yellow Robe nor Chanler ever revealed what they knew publicly of Sylvester Long, and *Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance* sat comfortably with its shelf-mates as an autobiography for decades. The composite of Long’s reinvented selves and the generalized frontier Indian prototype he crafted gave him a sense of purpose, a sense of place, and a sense of belonging. The self that he forged was the only self that he could present to the world, and Long relied on outside forces and expectations to repeatedly reinvent himself as he saw prudent. Long also utilized the vagueness in his narrative to give an air of mysticism to narrative. My formalist analysis of the autobiography showed that Long deliberately played with the perlocutionary presumptions of the audience to give an illusion of veracity to his narrative, capitalizing on audience expectations and presuppositions. Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance was who Sylvester Long had become, not in a temporary performative act, but in a transforming act of reinvention and disidentification of the self. As we will now see, where some fake autobiographers are inclined towards reinvention, others find adaptability to be their strongest quality.

2. The Professional Jew: Samuel Ornitz' *Haunch, Paunch, and Jowl* (1923) and the Adaptability of Meyer Hirsch

I want to tell everything. Everything: so that even if
I tell pathological lies the truth will shine out like grains
of gold in the upturned muck.

- Samuel Ornitz (b. 1890 – d. 1957), writing as Meyer Hirsch, *Haunch, Paunch, and Jowl*, 1923

Mr. Ornitz: I say you do raise a serious question of conscience for me when you ask me to act in concert with you to override the Constitution.

The Chairman: Conscience?

Mr. Ornitz: Conscience, sir, conscience.

-Transcript proceedings from the House Un-American Activities Committee, 29 October 1947

On October 29, 1947, Samuel Ornitz was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee on suspicion of Communist Party involvement. Ornitz declined to testify on the grounds of “a question of conscience,” and was jailed for one year for contempt of court. Twenty-five years earlier, Ornitz inverted this extraordinary question of conscience in crafting the fake autobiographical persona of Meyer Hirsch. *Haunch, Paunch, and Jowl* (1923) is a bildungsroman that reveals a life spent undermining conventions of morality and civilized conduct. The reader is privy to an endless succession of alarming confessions, most made casually and without thought, ranging from tales of ballot rigging and the machinations of Tammany Hall, to rings of child prostitution in Manhattan’s most tawdry corners.

In this chapter I will first provide an overview of scholarship on Ornitz and *Haunch, Paunch and Jowl*, and discuss the narrative in conjunction with the background of its author, Samuel Ornitz of the Hollywood Ten. Then, I will elucidate one of the principle elements of the misdirection spectrum, misdirective themes, which here focus primarily around the savage man who seeks to impose his authority over those that surround him. I will then analyze Ornitz’ anonymous authorial revelation that his goal in writing the narrative was to alleviate Americans from the stranglehold of their “peculiar

isolation” in a narrative guided by a Jewish, urban, and deplorable Daniel Boone. Then, I will move forward to consider how disidentification and the being-other are at work in this text. In *Haunch, Paunch, and Jowl*, Samuel Ornitz draws from a cache of misdirective themes to craft a being-other in Meyer Hirsch whose adaptability allows him to conquer the Manhattan wilderness-jungle. Though brutish and ruthless, Hirsch adapts effortlessly to the tumultuous political and cultural climates that surround him, enabling him to exploit everything and everyone in his pursuit of capitalist accumulation.

Scholarly work on *Haunch, Paunch, and Jowl* is limited principally to its function in Jewish American fiction. Martin Japtok exalts the text as a “centerpiece of early twentieth century American (Jewish) literary history,” as a narrative that combines modernism, realism, naturalism, and ethnic sentimentality in order to create a complex portrait of cultural nationalism.¹ Japtok also sees *Haunch* as a narrative of ethnic and religious—not racial—passing. Insofar as Hirsch passes as a devout Jew in order to further his financial and social standing, the narrative is one of passing, but to compare it to a text of cross-racial passing, like *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912) by James Weldon Johnson, as Japtok does in *Growing Up Ethnic*, is to ignore the deep irony of this manipulative and cruel narrative. Where Japtok argues the “novel promotes selflessness and ethnic solidarity,” other critics understand it to be a ceaselessly individualistic, ruthlessly self-centered narrative. In Walter Rideout’s study of radical novels in American literature, the narrative is a “destructive foray against capitalist society” that reveals “the dirty underparts of ‘The System’.”² What Japtok sees as a sidelong celebration of solidarity Rideout sees to be an ironic “dead-pan revelation” of the protagonist’s utter lack of morality.³

Both Rachel Rubin and Rideout see the language and structure of *Haunch* as one of its defining characteristics, for though the bulk of the narrative takes place in the early 1900s, Rideout credits its unconventional form to be “twenties in spirit,” while Rubin sees the text as “antimodernist with modernist language.”⁴ On the matter of *Haunch* as parody, Rubin, Browder, and Japtok agree; yet while Browder and Japtok situate the narrative as a parodic autobiography, Rubin interprets the work as a fully-fledged and carefully crafted “jewface act,” a phrase coined by Dawidoff.⁵ In *Black Face, White Noise* (1998), Rogin studies the function of blackface and similar performances, crossing class and race, in the construction of a Jewish American community identity. Rogin cites Ellison, who explained in his 1964 “Change the Joke and Slip the Yoke,” that “the declaration of an American identity means the taking on of a mask,” ... because “the discipline of national self-consciousness gave Americans an ironic awareness of the joke that always lies between appearance and reality... The darky act makes brothers of us all.”⁶ In this regard, the parodic jewface element of *Haunch* may have had a galvanizing effect for the Jewish communities of the Lower East Side of the time, for the book was warmly received by various local theatres and was serialized in several Yiddish papers of the day. In Rubin’s interpretation, Ornitz’ lasting commentary on the power of minstrelsy, parody, and narrative is to make the most not of who you are by birth, but with what “performative mask you wear” and what you make out of the “cultural material that constitutes that mask.”⁷

Like the childhood tale of Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance, *Haunch, Paunch and Jowl* draws on the nostalgia and romanticism of a lost world and past era to ground the narrative. Tucked into the front matter of the text is an unattributed photograph of “New

York, circa 1900,” showing what could be a photograph of Warsaw’s Jewish ghettos; a burned façade is at the center of the image, with faceless men and women looking in the general direction of the camera. Behind these faceless figures, a billboard painted in Hebrew is affixed to a makeshift fence.⁸ As readers, we have no concrete evidence to suggest that this photograph does not correspond to the temporal framework of the novel; however, we cannot contest its link to the narrative either. Hirsch provides the photo as proof of narrative authenticity, continuing the long and effective game of photographs as perceived evidence of truth. Spurious though it may be, the photograph emphasizes that *Haunch, Paunch, and Jowl* belongs to the “fake ruin” subcategory of inauthentic autobiographies, to draw loosely from Ruthven. Hirsch presents a world that may never have existed at all, using nostalgia as narrative fuel. He constructs a society and culture that is both past and dismantled, its vestiges erased by time. However, the concrete ruins of the narrative—the Lower East Side, as it once was—are real. In other words, as Ruthven explains, the narrative is based on the collision of “a counterfeit materiality and an authentic nostalgia,” such that the reader is told of “the way things were” in a place that never really was.⁹ Because Hirsch manufactures this lost world and his position in it, the reader has no truth-finding recourse, not even the futilely revolving door of fact checking serves any purpose here. We have no grounding history or known counterhistory, and therefore we must accept what Hirsch tells us since no alternative exists.

What saves the narrative from a collapse under the weight of its fakery and unreliable narrator is a set of familiar and legible themes that guide the narrative forward and maintain the reader’s interest. One such theme is a thread of nostalgia for a cruel and

unforgiving past era, both alien and alluring. Fashioning himself after the bosses of Tammany Hall, Hirsch proclaims himself a Professional Jew, exploiting his religion and culture through his back-room street boss savvy. During this time, he works falsifying ballots and votes, which he finds immensely rewarding. The narrative is recognizable to the contemporary reader as a kind of dilapidated Jets-and-Sharks life's story, and in Hirsch shows that on the lost Lower East Side, the Jews were eternally pitted against the Irish, on Ludlow Street and elsewhere.¹⁰ From the hollowed shells of fire-addled tenements, Hirsch would have his audience believe that he carved a place out for himself against all odds to the contrary by adapting to any given situation, altering his appearance and conduct, demeanor and attitude, in order to better his social position. Browder contends that *Haunch, Paunch, and Jowl* "represents ethnicity as performance, certainly, but it goes far beyond its satire of the myth of the self-made man, its parody of American autobiographical conventions, and its mockery of the genre of immigrant autobiography."¹¹ It goes beyond its aims of satire and inversion by tingeing the narrative as a whole with an uncomfortable and peculiar hue of anti-Semitism, a thread that by extension creates an inescapable atmosphere of authorial self-loathing.

Ornitz and Hirsch

Hirsch is the invention—the negative self—of Samuel Ornitz, now most notable for his place among the Hollywood Ten, persecuted by the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1947. An outspoken anti-capitalist and the founder of the Screen Actor's Guild in 1933, Ornitz refused to speak to HUAC and was sentenced to a year in prison for contempt of court. It is clear that Ornitz was as principled as Hirsch is

unscrupulous. Blacklisted from Hollywood after his dealing with the HUAC, Ornitz never worked again. Born in 1890, Ornitz was the son of a wealthy dry-goods merchant in New York City, but never lived in the tenements of the Lower East side, never fought for turf against Irish gangs, never became a Superior Court Judge. Meyer Hirsch was, in fact, a real person, but was not the author of *Haunch, Paunch and Jowl*. He had died several years before the publication of Ornitz' fake autobiography. The real Meyer Hirsch was also a Superior Court judge; because Ornitz chose to link his fabricated narrator to a person who did actually exist, Hirsch embodies what Muñoz describes as “recycling or re-forming an object that has already been invested with powerful energy. It is important to emphasize the transformative restructuring of that disidentification.”¹² In that transformative restructuring, Ornitz comments not only on the atrophying nature of capitalism and the acquisition of wealth, but also on the impotence of American laws and freedoms and those charged with upholding those rights.

Lengthy research into Ornitz' background yields astonishingly little. Though a prolific screenwriter in Hollywood for decades, his work now seems largely regarded as insignificant or ordinary, the high point being *Little Orphan Annie* in 1933. In 1927, the same year as *Haunch* was published, Ornitz also wrote *A Yankee Passionist: The Biography of a Synthetic Self*, formatted like a modern hagiography, detailing the life and times of “Daniel Matthews, the mystic, and Orr Applegate, the medicine man.”¹³ During his time in prison after his sentence for contempt of court, he penned *The Bride of the Sabbath* (1953). After his blacklisting his screenwriting and fiction was shelved and forgotten. Even in the context of the Hollywood Ten, he garners little mention, but the HUAC could not obliterate Ornitz' Hirsch. Hirsch stands for nothing, while Ornitz'

personal beliefs were so profound as to cost him his career and reputation. Hirsch is the only tangible record of what Ornitz understood himself to be, shown through Hegel's negative spirit. And so even though *Haunch, Paunch, and Jowl*, variously published also as *Alrightnick's Row* and *The Making of a Professional Jew*, has principally been classified as an artifact of early Jewish American literature, here the narrative will be examined as a text where the narrator utilizes adaptability as a weapon of internal resistance against those who would attempt to define him.

Hirsch is both self-made and self-perpetuating, so his narrative omniscience seems in line with the egocentrism of his character. Rachel Rubin argues that Meyer Hirsch's sole interest, aside from his self-adoration and -promotion, is the "plundering of ethnic culture" through sinister masculinity, hostility, pimping and exoticizing.¹⁴ Switching frequently between the simple past, the complex past perfect, and the present, the narrative forms a temporal swirl around Hirsch's childhood and early career. Originally published as an anonymous autobiography, Meyer Hirsch is clearly the main character but is not, strictly speaking, the narrator. LeJeune balks at such deliberately vague tactics, yet here the anonymous author allows for bending of authorial rules that make the text compelling beyond the traditional confines of a memoir, and the device of an anonymous author echoes the same adaptable fluidity that characterizes Hirsch in the narrative. Filled with a perpetual street-corner and back alley hustle and studded with Yiddish thieves' jargon, the narrative challenges the reader's familiarity with the typical *bildungsroman*. What commences as a story of youth and adolescence descends into nothing more than an appalling racket of exploitation, from electioneering on behalf of Tammany Hall to a small-time but big-income trade in child prostitutes.¹⁵ The Ludlow

Street gang will do business with the Irish, the Jews, the Blacks, the Chinese; nothing is barred provided it flips a profit.

Hirsch's early years find him surrounded by shadowy family members; especially notable is his Uncle Philip who is even less scrupulous than Meyer himself. An ex-Talmud scholar, Philip has traded in a life of religious learning for a life of wealth built on the backs of immigrant laborers. The narrative is almost Dickensian in the number and nature of characters that fill the pages with endless conversations, giving layers of texture to the text, while never detracting from Hirsch's largesse. This narrative chatter serves to distinguish the solitary Hirsch from the masses, and his family and gang, with the exception of a choice few, are simple, static characters that change little throughout their lives. The utter focus on the drive and trajectory of the individual man as central to both narrative and society make these secondary characters a necessary foil, and allow Hirsch to display his prowess at adapting to suit his needs and trample those who stand in his way.

At City College, Hirsch cultivates a selfish interest in workers' rights in the inverse of the communist ethos. Never an advocate of unions, he takes a stance as a manipulator of the union as a mode of organizing labor. Secondly, he comes to see that what he had always thought of as a unified Jewish society was, actually, and usefully for his purposes, fractured into disparate groups, including the American, German, English, Galician, Lithuanian and Spanish Jews. This realization of a fractured Jewish society shows him that his ambition will be carried on the backs of *other Jews*, and that he does not need to look outside his own ethnic group to supply his labor needs.¹⁶ With some satisfaction, he invokes the rote Talmud learnings of his youth that allow him to shift

from a devoted Jew among Jews to a nondenominational autocrat as it suits his purposes. Hirsch uses the surplus pool of Jewish labor as a ready-made army of petty thieves or worse. Pandering to his own selfish needs, he plays a devout Jew as needed but more often a lawless street boss.

The Good Old Swelter and Seethe: The Pendulum Swing

In all fake autobiographies, the repetition of misdirective themes provides stability to the narrative. This effect can be likened to the swing of a pendulum, travelling between repetitious themes to stabilize the narrative. Even though thematic repetition is ubiquitous in literature, for fake autobiographies the *type* of themes that emerge is of the utmost importance. These themes counterbalance the pieces of the narrative that are linguistically classified as “performatives,” which according to J.L. Austin are “felicitous” acts. Felicitous acts *do something*, they surprise the reader, they create the illusion of a stable narrator, and they create a sense of truthfulness. On the other hand, an infelicitous act or theme is static and less dynamic—it is a “constative,”¹⁷ which offsets the action of performatives. Austin’s felicitous acts alleviate the weight of what Muñoz terms the “darkness of the lived instant,” so that even if the hopefulness of a felicitous act is unfulfilled, the promise of that hope is essential, even if disappointment—in—is inevitable.¹⁸ By setting the pendulum of felicity and infelicity in motion, the fake autobiographer gives the illusion of truth telling and furnishes the audience with the necessary elements that lead to sign acceptance, which include believable narrative texture, veracity in pace and content, and seemingly natural narrative form. Hirsch’s

shifting conduct and demeanor is stabilized by three key misdirective themes that run concurrently through the length of the narrative.

In *Haunch, Paunch, and Jowl*, the misdirective themes circulate around the manipulative savage, identifiable in three parts: the solitary man, the ruthless man, and the natural man. Presented in these three subtle tones, which overlap at times, Hirsch gives the illusory impression that he is a dynamic character, whose adaptable savagery is changeable but always on the upswing. Only once does Hirsch indicate that he was beginning to be “mindful of good repute,” but this is correlated exclusively to his image and not his actual conduct.¹⁹ Yet this illusion of dynamism is the foundation of the misdirection in *Haunch, Paunch, and Jowl*, creating a situation in which the reader is asked to attribute more value to Hirsch than he merits, putting the audience in a position of engaging with a protagonist who, from start to finish, repeatedly antagonizes the reader.

The Solitary Haunch

Hirsch is his own cultural, political, social and literary precursor. The narrative tells of a typified American immigrant experience from the turn of the century, but here it is deglamorized, all of its dirty laundry strung out, its filthy secrets revealed. Uninterested and alienated by his heritage, history, or culture, Hirsch finds he is not alone in his solitude, claiming that there is no “American identity” at all. Consequently, he delves into a project of continuing self-definition, driven to make *himself* an ancestor of note. Hirsch embraced no community or group, relying only on himself. The toughness of the Lower East Side and of Hirsch’s life of scheming and scamming is likened to a kind of

primordial soup: “There was not as yet an American identity. There was yet to rise up an American standard. It was this time and process of finding ourselves, a sort of evolutionary process that began as a creeping thing in the scum.”²⁰ Hirsch sees himself as the fundamental organism that climbed out of that “scum” to forge a new and self-fashioned American identity, and the turn-of-the-century era during which Hirsch began to form his ruthless self-conception was also, according to D.H. Lawrence, the era of the “essential American soul,” which was “hard, isolate, stoic and a killer;” consequently, Hirsch fits the profile of a recognizable—if heinous—American hero.²¹ Furthermore, as Slotkin famously noted, America’s founding fathers were not gentlemen but rebels and thieves who “tore violently a nation from the implacable and opulent wilderness.”²² As the pioneers wrenched land and sustenance from native populations, Hirsch and his followers tear street corners, tenements, food and income from other new and established immigrant groups in New York at the turn of the century. Hirsch exists in a kind of lawless urban frontier, such that there are few restraints on human conduct. Slotkin deems this an archetypal moment of regeneration through violence, for as far back as the earliest days of New World settlement, “a strong man could, by mastering the law of the wilderness-jungle, impose his personal dream of self-aggrandizement on reality. In Europe, all men were under authority, in America all men dreamed they had the power to become authority.”²³ And this is precisely Hirsch’s goal, to impress his authority over all those who surround him, becoming a master of his own “wilderness-jungle.” Yet in the narrative, the city functions as more than a man-made jungle; it is representative of the very failings of civilization to which Hirsch contributes, and against which Ornitz was so vehemently opposed. The modern city is a “humanly meaningless web,” according to

Pearlman and Lieberman, and though flaunted as the great achievement of human progress, the actually the “ultimate estrangement from the natural world,” and home to a “destructive and fundamentally flawed way of life.”²⁴ The ills of modern life are due not to modernity or capitalism, nor to industry or the state, but instead can be attributed entirely to the civilizing process itself, which has—in the primitive view—stripped humanity of its essential qualities and natural roots.

The Ruthless Paunch

Because Hirsch is unable to achieve his ambitions without help, he must forcefully organize those below him, and he leapfrogs up the social strata with one unethical, illegal arrangement after another. Whatever the cost and whatever the circumstances, he presses forward to accumulate more power and wealth. Never one to get his hands too dirty, Hirsch learns early never to be a laborer, to “always let others labor for you.”²⁵ He hires recently arrived German, Russian, Polish, and Romanian Jews—called “greenhorns”—as his underlings and legmen. “My policy,” Hirsch confides to the reader, “is to put as many people as I can under obligation to me.”²⁶ Atop this structure of servitude, he builds his political career. He finds himself perpetually surrounded by the “dream-stupefied,”²⁷ those romantics for whom art and beauty mean more than individual wealth and power, or for whom religious and cultural tradition form the basis for their own identity. Hirsch has neither patience nor tolerance for the dream-stupefied, revealing that “ambition is my undying desire,”²⁸ and there is no game or racket so rewarding as “the good old swelter and seethe,” as he calls the schemes and hustles that he organizes and initiates.²⁹

Perhaps representative of those gems in the upturned muck of pathological lies, Ornitz grants Hirsch a few moments of clarity and allows the reader a few glimpses of emotion, otherwise uncharacteristic of Hirsch's persona. This strategic decision does little to diminish Hirsch's image, but goes quite a long way in forging a link between protagonist and reader, albeit weak. More than once, Hirsch tells the reader that he feels trapped and immobilized, lamenting that perhaps that he had become a part of that which he strived—ultimately, unsuccessfully—to escape. Society itself had trapped him, and his amoral conduct relegated him to a place of disrepute: "I was in too deep to draw out," he says begrudgingly, "I had taken root in the morass; I didn't dare try transplantation."³⁰ Hirsch may be trapped, but Ornitz implies that the reader has the power to do whatever required to find their way in the world, to strike a balance between the individual and the collective, something that Hirsch, for all his bluster, cannot do. By this point in the text, too, the reader is in far too deep to turn back, and one gets the peculiar but very palpable feeling that to stop reading, and to reject the merciless way of life that Hirsch has promoted, would be to leave him absolutely alone. Strangely, it seems that to do so would be to do the very thing that Hirsch himself would be inclined to do. Just as Hirsch cannot extract himself from the savagery that he has committed to, unable to "take myself out of the cellar of my hulk," as he describes it, neither are we able to extract ourselves from what we have witnessed in the narrative.³¹

The Natural Jowl

By far the most salient misdirective theme in *Haunch* is that of the natural and virile man, which manifests both physically and psychologically as Hirsch ages. Once

lean and lithe, Hirsch's nickname was "ziegelle" among his family members, which is Yiddish for "little goat." As a boy he detested this nickname, pleading with his mother to call him anything other than this unfavorable diminutive. But in time, he comes to accept the many admirable traits of the goat—its adaptability, its stubbornness, its ability to thrive on anything and in any situation. But by the time he comes to respect his inner ziegelle, he is encumbered—and distinguished—by his considerable "bulk and waddle," such that he envisions himself a "hulking pachyderm."³² He longs for the days of his rowdy youth, but also finds some satisfaction in the respect his bulk and waddle affords him. These zoological comparisons are no accident. As a "natural" and primitive man, in touch with the animal within, he finds such comparisons to be an affirmation. From early in the autobiography of this Professional Jew, softness is equated to a dearth of strength and virility; in less natural men, with less awareness of their inner *ziegelle*, Hirsch asserts that their very manliness is in jeopardy.

Surrounded by scholars and poets, Hirsch's distaste for unmanly softness grows with each passing day: "I often noticed that good-naturedness is another name for softness and weakness... I think idealism is a refuge for the incompetent. The real force of life is too much for them, and they dream of a softer existence."³³ The softest member of the gang, and also the most beloved, is Davie, a poet and childhood friend of Hirsch's. He is a delicate soul, disinclined to the rough life that suits Hirsch and his fellow street bosses. In time, Hirsch comes to regard this artistic romanticism as intolerable and enervating. Upon Davie's death, Hirsch takes charge of the burial and disavows any knowledge of Davie's marriage to a gentile woman so that Davie can be buried in consecrated Jewish ground. Though presented under the guise of good spiritedness and

caring, this move to reject knowledge of Davie's marriage symbolically emasculates his already somewhat unmanly friend; furthermore, Davie's wife, Billie, is a rough, strong woman whom Hirsch finds irritatingly unfeminine—even her name acts to diminish Davie's masculinity. So, alone and stripped of his manliness, Davie is laid to rest; to distance Davie from the realities of marrying a gentle woman, Hirsch erases the memory of the marriage by calling it nothing more than a “market place rumor,” employing even here a phrase that equates Davie's life to the conjecture of gossiping women.³⁴

At his breaking point of tolerance with these soft-minded dream-stupefied poets, thinkers, and scholars, Hirsch lashes out physically at Esther, the subject of his obsessions. She is the consummate figure of womanhood, and his attack on Esther indicates that all women—and all unmanly men—are subject to Hirsch's aggressions as well:

Her beauty was too much for me. I fell to my knees... I was worshipful, too. I adored the woman. She drew back... a pulse beat in her throat... her hands fluttered to her hair. I hobbled on my knees closer to her and embraced her legs, pressing my head against her knees... Her whisper is terrified—“Meyer—Meyer—what are you doing?”... My pressure upon her legs was such that she was forced to kneel in front of me, and I grasped her wrists and talked close to her face. And Esther's kindness was almost her undoing... goodness... kindness... that is, weakness. She talked gently to me... her silver-bell-like voice inciting me more... I pressed her back on the floor, hanging over her head, speaking with all the passion raging in me... It was her first experience with the violence of passion.³⁵

This passage reflects the mythic presence of the greatest threat to the hunter in the wilderness-jungle: the presence and allure of “the goddess,” in whatever form. Hirsch as mythic hunter falls prey to “degeneration though the over excitement of their sexual passion.”³⁶ Obliquely, in the line “her kindness was almost her undoing,” Hirsch lays the blame for this near rape upon Esther herself, who in her beautiful delicacy shakes the foundations of his manly power. Note as well the manipulation of physical conduct in

this passage, described such that his masculine power and virility are beyond control: Hirsch does not force Esther to the floor, his power does; Hirsch does not terrify Esther, his manliness does. This moment is not an awakening for Hirsch, but rather an incident after which he redoubles his ruthlessness. He cannot adapt to Esther's rejection, and his inability to control her is agonizing; the lack of a physical release of this virility contributes to his brutal conduct thereafter. Hirsch would not be saddled with such raging desire and brutality if only more women would submit to his advances. He might have been a more kindly and gentle man if only women, and other weaker beings, would submit to his natural power and will. But alas, the dream-stupefied that surround him are mostly unwilling to submit to him and his desires. The remedy is to dig down further within himself, to be even more virile and primitive, to take control of the urban warzone that he inhabits. Hirsch gets a hold of his raging passion only at the threat of interruption, as he hears Esther's fiancée coming up the steps. Hirsch lets go of Esther, and addled with testosterone, he stumbles down the steps and goes home, turning his virility towards the family housekeeper, Gretel.

Hirsch's "undying ambition" is the accumulation of wealth and power by whatever means; this ambition is paired with a revolving accumulation of women, who are all mere possessions to be accumulated in the larder of the unrestricted capitalist. First Hirsch sets his scope onto Esther, then Gretel, then Lillie, then Margot. Like a bullet in a wild, yet predictable, ricochet, he comes back to Gretel time and again not out of desire but purely out of convenience, she being the family's cook and maid. Gretel had intimate knowledge of Hirsch's misdeeds and his Uncle Philip's schemes; because she knew all that he had done, Hirsch was obliged to marry her rather than have the whole truth

emerge. The reader is squarely in the midst of this tangle, as involved and implicated as Gretel herself. Hirsch confesses his misdeeds and triumphs to the reader, never having done so before, and having gone to great lengths to prevent others from knowing the full extent of his corruption and amorality. This intimacy between reader and anti-protagonist cinches the narrative closed, creating a private conversation that heightens the level of misdirection at work in this fake autobiography.

I argue that Hirsch's powerlessness over women is not a manifestation of weakness, but rather an affirmation of his primitive masculinity. These moments of desire, Hirsch says, result from the primitive lust in "the pull of the blood."³⁷ The dream-stupefied and dumbstruck members of civilized society are not prone to such impulses and desires, they being detached from their primitive internal selves. Because Hirsch is so very close to that internal beast, that inner *ziegelle*, these overwhelming episodes of desire affirm his ever-growing savage strength and virility. As Hirsch advances through society, these lusts and urges do not abate. Even after his marriage, long since the "remote yesterday of conquests," he continues thinking incessantly of Esther, who married an Irishman, much to his utter astonishment and revulsion.³⁸ He is perpetually powerless in the face of women, confessing that upon seeing a bare shoulder in the candlelight, "I lost all control."³⁹ Though an outwardly gruff, pachydermic man, who seems in total command of all other aspects of his life, the slightest glimpse of a candlelit bare shoulder demolishes his strength and turns him into a whimpering boy with his face buried into skirt-folds and bosoms.⁴⁰

Emanating from within Ornitz, the Hegelian negative (savage) self personified by Hirsch is highly revealing, knowing as we do Ornitz himself to be a civilized, refined, sophisticated man of high moral and political principles. Ornitz's negative self in the persona of Hirsch feels disdain at seeing an over-civilized gentleman of respectable social deportment—his social opposite, Dr. Lionel Crane. Whether this social opposite represents Ornitz as he really was, we cannot know. What we do know, however, is that both sides of the dialectic are at play here. As Hirsch succumbs to carnal desires in back alleys and storerooms increasingly often, Crain appears in the text with a corresponding frequency, as a dramatic and moral foil. Hirsch describes Dr. Crain thusly:

“Meet Dr. Lionel Crane,” ... Where did he get the bang-up snobbish name—doesn't go with his face. I mulled with distemper the cognomen... On the spot I disliked him, this Lionel Crane, *ne* (Harvard Matriculation) plain, vulgar, Lazarus Cohen. Like velvet rubbed the wrong way, sickeningly soft, creepily irritating, was this meticulous, modulated speech with its heavy Harvard accents. It cloyed. In consonant in *him*, not by his right, therefore an affectation, I felt, as were his distinguished manners—a nicety of deportment shaming mine and calling attention to my *gaucherie*.⁴¹

Hirsch views himself in as opposite to Crain in every way; Hirsch sees himself as an uncultivated, unconditioned, natural and potent man. His conduct is as nature intended, as smooth to the touch as velvet with the grain. But Crane serves an important function in the narrative, providing a platform for Ornitz to introduce the issue of “racial psychopathy,” as Hirsch calls it. Crane, on a windy street corner, laments the state of life and the “Jewish race” in the Lower East Side: “We are hysterical, overwrought, high-strung... We are neurasthenics... but here in America... it should be different... we can make it different.”⁴² Hirsch promotes the primitive and savage in the face of the weakening efforts of civilization,⁴³ against the pervasive threat of becoming “*surrafiné*,”

or “over refined, over civilized, too pale, too blond, too weak,” precisely as Dr. Crain laments on the street corner, within earshot of Hirsch.⁴⁴ Civilization was destroying the primitive natural instincts of mankind, and in response Hirsch was compelled to assert his most virile and aggressive self. As Hirsch was summoning his inner *ziegelle*, G. Stanley Hall furthered his studies of neurasthenia, which occurred when “a highly evolved person seriously overtaxed his body’s finite supply of nerve force.”⁴⁵ Hall and George Beard saw the neurasthenics as “highly evolved white men who had taxed their vital energies by over stimulating themselves, not with sex, but with civilization.”⁴⁶ Hirsch seeks to work as little as possible, and exercise his sexual prowess as frequently as he can; he is a living antidote to neurasthenia. Because of its link to civilization and civilized conduct, neurasthenia was constructed as a racialized disease, unique to the *surrafiné* white classes whose nervous energy was used up by the daily toils of civilized conduct rather than primitive action. Hirsch is concerned that the entire “Jewish race” might be coming down with the paralysis of neurasthenia, but he is determined to fight against it with his manliness intact. Hirsch is engaged in a continuous urban hunt for money, sex, and power, and though he is far from possessing “civilized manliness,” he is in total command of a more primitive masculinity in the face of the *surrafiné* throngs that surround him.

Hirsch’s particular quandary is not how to *return* to a more natural self, but how to adapt his natural impulses to suit urban life. Hirsch learns in his adolescence that when he was a baby, a female goat in the steerage compartment of a steamer ship suckled him when his mother was unable to produce milk to feed him.⁴⁷ Embarrassed though he is by his childhood nickname of *ziegelle*, little goat, he eventually comes to appreciate the goat’s primitive, basic instincts that he knows himself also to possess. As perhaps the

most adaptable of all domesticated animals, the goat is emblematic of Hirsch's life and desires.

The Peculiar Isolation of a Jewish Daniel Boone

On the dust jacket to the text, the anonymous author explains: "I wrote this book for the several million Americans who are bewildered by their peculiar isolation... I want them to understand why they are isolated in uniqueness as a result of trying to be more American than the Americans."⁴⁸ From the outset, there is palpable tension between the anonymous author's aims and the protagonist's interests. The actions of the main character are completely at odds with the expressed desires of the unnamed author, for Hirsch exists in the world as the consummate individual, unencumbered by the restrictions of family, morality, or conscience. This selfish individualism, he finds, is a part of his past; the recreant Uncle Philip tells Hirsch that his grandfather was an infamous horse thief who worked on his own, without help from other thieves. As a consequence, Hirsch locks proudly onto the idea that his is a heritage of thieves. He gladly casts off any sentimental or cultural connection to Jews and Jewish-Americans, who surround him at all times, in favor of a larcenous and mischievous ancestry linked to a shadowy grandfather that he never met. This knowledge solidifies Hirsch's feeling that his destiny and purpose is to be a man whose principle interest is his own success and ambition, no matter the cost. The dust jacket warns against just such a fate.

While the Lower East Side is brimming with recently arrived Jewish immigrants, and collectively the area strives to protect and preserve some of the ways of the "old world," Hirsch desires only to find solitude from the masses and engage in singular, selfish goals. As a character, Hirsch is clearly what Slotkin identifies as the "Daniel

Boone type of American hero,” who developed differently in each section of the nation, beginning in the early 1800s.⁴⁹ Hirsch has seldom a moment to himself, so he creates an aloofness that sets him apart from his peers and his family. As with Boone and Crockett before him, Hirsch belongs to a line of American heroes for whom “economics and politics [is] a hunt in which he who bags the most and biggest prey is the best man,” and for whom stoicism is an art form, solitude a haven.⁵⁰ Hirsch is not merely independent; he is completely and purposefully alone. From the very emergence of the individual mindset in the fifteenth century, this figure has maintained an important and unique position in the social order. According to Locke, “men in society are considered far different from those considered single and alone,”⁵¹ and so Hirsch is not under the same moral obligation as a man with a family and a respectable reputation. Indeed, a family and reputation are anathema to Hirsch. This forceful forward progression, which leaves no room for emotions or grief, solidifies the reader’s growing awareness that this autobiography is a narrative of a man with a myopic, ambitious streak that has shaded the narrative beyond our ability to empathize.

The narrative is heavily laden with Yiddish phrases and words, which underscore Hirsch’s perceived self-importance and force the reader to depend upon Hirsch for every scrap of meaning in the narrative, down to the level of word and phrase. Browder argues that these in-line translations, conspicuously translated in parenthesis, indicate that the text was written for a “gentile audience,” in spite of the fact that the narrative was later fervently embraced by radical Yiddish theatres in Manhattan.⁵² Eventually and not surprisingly, Yiddish too becomes a tool of manipulation in Hirsch’s grapple up the heaps of corruption. Rubin finds these translations intrusive and alienating, which I contend was

precisely Ornitz' goal.⁵³ The linguistic alienation achieved by the in-line translations distances the reader from Hirsch and increases his status as an incumbent and trustworthy, if unlikeable, narrator. As the narrative moves forward, Yiddish is deployed with increasing strategy. As Hirsch ages, Yiddish is one of the few vestiges of his family—aside from the dreadful presence of Uncle Philip—that maintains a place of any importance in his daily life. Hirsch laments the nickname he once hated, but eventually comes to embrace. This evolution from loathing to acceptance is mirrored in his attitude about a multitude of things, provided they support his own self-interest:

Ziegelle! Ziegelle! Eternally, the little goat. The curse of my life. The Ludlow Streets know me by no other name. They greet me with “maa, maa” and tug my chin as though pulling a beard... A love name indeed! Other children did not have to put up with an insulting diminutive... They were called, say *poppale* (little father) or *zadelle* (little grandfather), or *hertzalle* (little heart), but I, only I was marked for scorn as the little goat. Wherefore?⁵⁴

Here as in many other passages in the text, the flow of the narrative is interrupted repeatedly by the inserted translations, like jabs to remind the reader that Hirsch holds the power of the narrative. He imposes his will and his interpretations onto the reader, just as he imposes himself onto the characters and situations that he encounters. The change of names throughout the narrative gives the impression that Hirsch is a dynamic character undergoing change over time; his waistline grows, his power grows, he transforms from a lean, scrappy goat to an obese and crooked judge, but *he does not change* in the fabric of his character.

Yiddish and its corresponding translations are marked as belonging to Hirsch and Hirsch alone, as the reader relies exclusively on him for translation and usage. Small though this detail may seem at first, in fact it is a powerful tool of misdirection and manipulation, and the reader is an unwitting subject of this linguistic and authorial

manipulation. The issue of language is neatly disguised as a family matter, a home language, something associated with nostalgia that is imbued with auspices of emotion. In the struggle to identify with Hirsch as a protagonist, as is the structure of the reader-writer relationship, such glimmers of nostalgia are significant connective points between Hirsch and the reader. But these connections are single-sided; what facilitates this arrangement is the way the narrative has been structured from the very start, but clarified by the finish: The narrative is a private confession of an illegal act.

Hirsch, the Impersonal Self, and Embracing an Inner Watergate

To reject Hirsch is to embrace Ornitz and his ideals; the path to success is not based on unchecked individual hubris but on the collective will, the future will not be based on amoral conduct but on ethical and educated behavior; the most beneficial economic structure is not capitalism but communism. Through the analysis of this text one sees the careful interchange at play between Ornitz and Hirsch; to understand them together is to grasp the meaning of *Haunch, Paunch, and Jowl*, along with the obfuscated positive dialectic embedded in Hirsch, presented as a grotesque and impossible negative self. Late in the text, a brief conversation transpires between Hirsch and Esther, the woman for whom he exhibits an obsessive lust. Hirsch attempts to justify his actions and convey that in spite of the difficulties he claims to have faced, he had become a model citizen. Esther sees his past in a different light, finding everything he has done both inexcusable and as grave as murder:

She felt that under other conditions these condemned murderers might have been of some good to themselves and their community... Yet... I tried to point out... so many others, confronted with the same set of circumstances and conditions,

had turned out so much different and better... I thought her answer very cold and somehow it rankled me for a long time...

“Not so very different, Meyer, not so very different...”⁵⁵

This is one of the few times that anyone contests the conduct of Hirsch and his associates, and the event leaves him “rankled,” but not apologetic. Placing this scene into a wider scope of analysis, Esther represents both Ornitz and those in society who refuse to be overrun by capitalism and its bagmen, like Hirsch. As I have already explained, Esther is also the only character with power to control Hirsch’s conduct and behavior. In this light, Esther’s eventual rejection of Hirsch—and her decision to marry an Irishman—points clearly to Ornitz’s opinion that the collective of society can overcome the noisy power of capitalism with strength, personal conviction, and quiet power as Esther has done.

The link between this anti-self in the personage of Hirsch and of Ornitz as the external author is a tidy example of Hegel’s dialectic in action. As De Nys explains, Hegel’s notion of “absolute knowing involves thoroughgoing self-comprehension.”⁵⁶ Consequently, the unity of Hirsch and Ornitz provides a clear representation of Hegel’s “being-other,” such that neither piece of the dialectic is the actual *opposite* of the other, but each is the opposite within the self. In this way, *Haunch, Paunch and Jowl* is not just a carefully contrived ruse, but instead a narrative representation of that detestable negative self, that being-other counterpart against and through which Ornitz defines both himself and his ideals, as well as the personification of capitalism and its shortcomings bound up in a single man. Emanating from within, this critique of capitalism-run-amok shows the depths to which Hegel’s inverted world can permeate the self, such that the anti-Ornitz is now likely his most lasting mark on the world of art and letters. In its utter

falseness, *Haunch, Paunch, and Jowl* is the very thing against which Ornitz stood, against which he was obliged to invoke the First Amendment in front of HUAC in 1947.

Central to understanding this text as more than the astonishing tale of an execrable man is pinpointing the form and function of Hirsh as a savage, nuanced, and politically aware being-other. Though the narrative reads as a didactic and unpleasant life's story, its meaning and presentation are a particular form of Muñoz' disidentification. What Ornitz achieves in *Haunch, Paunch, and Jowl* is not the simple counteridentification it would first appear to be, for it is more complex than a fundamental rejection of capitalism and the rhetoric of individuality. Nor it is a simple copy of a previous text, like Cahan's *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917) to which *Haunch, Paunch, and Jowl* is all too frequently linked.⁵⁷ Instead, Hirsch exemplifies Muñoz' *disidentity*, which "functions as counterpublicity that provides pictures of possible future relations of power. The self of disidentity is ultimately an *impersonal self*."⁵⁸ Here, Ornitz presents us with the form and consequence of social upheaval as a result of capitalism and unethical ambition, which begins with the conduct of the individual man as a part of the larger social and economic scheme. While Hirsch appears to be a protagonist with dynamicism and weight, he is actually a vapid placeholder into which any personification of unfettered capitalist greed and ethnic exploitation could fit.

Hegel famously took issue with the question of Kantian morality as force of beneficent will; Hegel found morality to be vapid, a principle that provides no criterion for judging right and wrong.⁵⁹ According to the simplest interpretations of Hegel's dialectic, those judgments of right and wrong emanate from within the self, separate from external measures of morality. Amoral conduct is a fundamental element of Hegel's

theory of the human *Geist*. Morality is not only impotent at preventing such actions, but serves only as an empty retrograde judgment of a past action. Therefore, the conduct of the being or the being-other (within the self) was essentially contingent on the actions of its internal opposite; in this light, Hirsch cannot be dismissed for his despicable conduct, but rather must be appreciated for his abhorrence because of the way in which he relates to Ornitz and his own system of constellation of conscious beliefs. This relationship is what Hegel called “ground relations,” meaning that the essence of both the self and the being-other are *self-dependent*, so that the process of knowing one’s own identity is an entirely self-determinate endeavor.⁶⁰

Mediocrity on Riverside Drive

At the end of the narrative, as Hirsch settles into his position as Judge of the Superior Criminal Court, and as his girth grows—a physical manifestation of the destructive swell of capitalism—he notes that the socialists on the Lower East Side are a rising and potent political force. Having abandoned his old alleys for Riverside Drive, which he nicknames Alrightnick’s Row, Hirsch lives with the rest of the Professional Jews and one-time members of the Ludlow Street Gang, all now wealthy enough to encrust their women with jewels and furs. There he will live out his days in an empty mediocrity. The swelter and seethe of the Lower East Side continues, but now in a radical, leftist form, indicating that the Lower East Side and the streets of his youth are still the place where the new wave is rising; the new leftist radicals put Hirsch’s old power and authority in jeopardy, physically displacing him from his childhood home and the streets that facilitated his capitalist accumulation. For Ornitz, that new wave was leftist thought

in its most radical form. Influenced as he was by Marx, the power rested with the ordinary people, the ones that Hirsch so mercilessly trampled in his rise to the top of a vapid, individualistic, capitalist heap, and at whose expense he achieved a life of isolated and corrupt mediocrity.

Like the archetype of Daniel Boone, who adapted to whatever circumstances surrounded him, Meyer Hirsch adapted to his surroundings and created an environment of amoral conduct that suited his goals and character, ensuring his eventual success. Where Hirsch would have his readers believe that personal success is justified by any means, Ornitz showed in the inversion of his autobiographical self that no act could justify the trampling of the collective social interest. Ornitz employed the misdirective pendulum swing to give stability to his narrative, oscillating between felicity and infelicity as he drew from a cache of misdirective themes. The narrative is characterized by a conspiratorial reader-author relationship. While Hirsch was able to adapt his savage being other to aid him in negotiating the world around him, I will discuss in the following chapter how another fake autobiographer took a far less nuanced approach, favoring recrudescence and reawakenings over adaptability.

3. The Scurvied Starlet: Recrudescence in Joan Lowell's *The Cradle of the Deep* (1929)

"Anybody can be accurate... And dull." – Joan Lowell (b. 1900 – d. 1957)

When *The Cradle of the Deep* was published in 1929, "landlubbers," for the most part, were fooled. A handful of vitriolic seafarers were not, and they would eventually be responsible for the exposure of this narrative—and its author—as a fraud. Once such sailor, Lincoln Colcord, wrote a brief account of the day that he met with Joan Lowell, Richard Simon and M. Lincoln Schuster—Simon and Schuster themselves—in their New York offices, in advance of his review that *The Cradle of the Deep* was nothing but fabrication. At the meeting, Colcord, a decorated and experienced sailor, made his doubts about the narrative known. He described Joan Lowell's incensed reaction:

Joan had been sitting on the desk in the middle of the room, and I forget what it was that finally spurred her to action; the argument had waxed by this time. I was standing against the wall, facing her. Suddenly, she sprang to the floor and came at me. Many thoughts went rapidly through my mind. What precisely to do? [Her] powerful arms were extended, the fingers outspread and nervous looking. I remember saying to myself "I'll bet you are going to learn what it is to be scratched by a woman."... Her feet were kicking now. "God damn it!" she said. "No one has ever called me a liar before!" This was the cue for the classic incident of the afternoon. Behind her, on either side of the desk, ranged her brace of publishers. [Mr. Simon and Mr. Schuster] came forward swiftly; as if with a single impulse, they reached out and patted her on respective shoulders. "Never mind, Joan," they said soothingly, "we still believe in you."¹

Simon and Schuster vouched for Joan Lowell's narrative of nautical rebirth, and tolerated her outbursts as an integral part of her persona as a starlet with a dark and savage past. At the age of eleven months, Joan Lowell tells the reader, her father took her aboard a full-rigged schooner, docked at the San Francisco wharf. Unable to walk and motherless, her father strapped her into a tiny hammock lashed to the walls of his cabin. The tale she tells of growing up on the high seas in *The Cradle of the Deep* is astonishing, and it was

warmly received by publishers Simon and Schuster in 1928 and stamped with the approving nod of the Book of the Month Club in the same year. At the time of the book's release, Lowell was already a silent film star of some note. Glamorous and dark-eyed, her tale of a nautical childhood was so alluringly incongruous with her screen presence that it proved a sure-fire recipe for selling volumes by the hundreds of thousands.

In this chapter I will provide a brief summary of *The Cradle of the Deep*, and then move forward to consider the ways in which Lowell implements the "as-if world," one of the most important facets of the misdirection spectrum, in her attempts to create a believable and compelling narrative. I will then move to a discussion of the tremendous public excoriation that transpired after Lowell's fraud was exposed; her exposure, as I will then show, led to an extraordinary debate about the nature of truth in literature and the publication of an uncanny parody entitled *Salt Water Taffy* (1929). Finally, I will consider the meaning of this narrative particularly concerning a crucial scene in which Lowell witnessed the birth of a child on a remote Pacific island, transforming her understanding of identity as a woman. My principle argument in this chapter is that Joan Lowell utilizes recrudescence, or an awakening or rebirth after a period of dormancy, to express her internal savagery, to redefine her conception of feminine selfhood. In her reawakenings, Lowell uses the misdirective device of the as-if world to create a narrative that has the appearance of reality, but which breaks down quickly under scrutiny.

No critical work has been done on Joan Lowell's *The Cradle of the Deep*. What is known of Joan Lowell comes mostly from short newspaper articles of the early 1930s, leading up to and immediately following her exposure as a fraudulent autobiographer. In recent years, she has been the subject of renewed interest after the exposure of

contemporary fakes by J.T. LeRoy's *Sarah* (1999) and Margaret Seltzer's *Love and Consequences* (2008), earning her the moniker of "the grandmother of memoir fabrications" by the *Los Angeles Times* in 2008. Even once her fakery had been exposed, Lowell continued to try her hand as an author; in 1933, she published *Gal Reporter*, and in 1952, *Promised Land*, which told of her years spent in the jungles of Brazil, where she exiled herself after *The Cradle of the Deep* was debunked. Neither had any commercial success; *Cradle* however, was a tremendous commercial boon until its author took a glorious fall from the topsails, finding herself the subject of ridicule and anger from all corners of the literary world.

Lowell presents herself as a likeable, magnanimous, and honest heroine. As a child, she learns a magnificent litany of curse words, judging herself equal to any sailor in lewd vocabulary. She tells in engrossing detail of the adventures she witnessed and experienced aboard the *Minnie A. Caine*, her father's trusty four-masted windjammer. During Lowell's seventeen years at sea, the *Minnie A. Caine* and her crew—among whom Lowell includes herself—traded mostly in copra and sandalwood between the islands that speckle the South Seas and Australia. She confesses that she cannot remember any piece of her childhood that did not occur aboard a ship, but she knows from her father that she was the last of eleven children; after four of her brothers and sisters died within two years, she grew up as the runt of an already scrawny litter. Her family called her "the lick of the pan," because as she explains, "I was last, and there wasn't much of me."² Nobody in her family expected her to survive her infancy, let alone her father, but he was determined that she should not only survive but become the strongest of all his children. Life aboard the *Minnie A. Caine* was an uncomplicated one,

for “father brought me up with no creed except fear and respect for the gods that brew the storms and the calm.”³ She is a “man-raised” child, by her own description, and takes pride in her separation from the female sex, finding “civilized” women repellant and terrifying, always followed by a cloud of cloying perfume.⁴

Contrary to Popular Belief and Maritime Law: The As-If World

By the very nature of this fake autobiography, Lowell is forced to prove her story and her authority to tell it from the outset. She is not a natural choice for the incumbent narrator, and so from a somewhat defensive position she must assert her authority over the text and its contents. Her knowledge of life comes not from books or schooling but through observation of facts.⁵ From observation she comes to know all manner of things, including the particulars of animal reproduction, which she learned from dissecting a pregnant shark aboard the *Minnie A. Caine*.⁶

Taking the stance of an eyewitness, Lowell like many other fake autobiographers before her, constructs the world that surrounds her and then substantiates it with spurious facts. Originally proposed by Richard Ohmann, *the as-if world* is an essential component of literature and performance, no matter its specific (mis)classification or genre.⁷ The as-if world creates a sense of narrative trustworthiness by employing familiar or expected elements. These constituent elements of the as-if world are known as *sign-vehicles*, which point to recognizable referents familiar to the audience.⁸ If not wholly familiar, they are at the very least expected sign-vehicles. These sign-vehicles are even stronger when they point to an emotionally charged referent, or one saddled with a specific kind of emotional nostalgia, like war, childhood, romance, and adventure.⁹

In one of the few scenes in the narrative that does not take place on the *Minnie A. Caine*, a pubescent Lowell is at her mother's house in California, talking to several professors whom her mother has as lodgers. She begins to regale them with the tales of what she has seen and done, but they are disinclined to believe her. Indignantly, she says to the reader: "Those professors thought I was lying. What did they know about the sea, anyway?"¹⁰ Likewise, the reader must logically conclude, neither do we "landlubbers" know anything about the sea. On matters of science and nature, she is equally headstrong in reciting her own experiences and observations as fact:

I have since learned that some modern naturalists, who evidently have never traveled further south than Sandy Hook, have expressed a doubt as to whether there really is such a beast as a man-eating shark and whether it will actually attack a man unprovoked. Evidence, they claim, has always been at second-hand and the testimony of sea-faring men they reject. Well, without wishing to lock horns with the learned, you may be interested in first hand evidence of man-eating sharks.¹¹

The central feature of the as-if world is that it be believably constructed, which sometimes means contesting the reader's beliefs and expectations. In the above passage, Lowell gently forgives the "learned" for their unlearnedness; such a gentle forgiveness is an ironic and sympathetic technique. Hardly didactic, the narrative reads as an excited child telling of a vacation to far-off lands, and forgives the reader their understandable land-locked disbelief. Elsewhere, she contests the veracity of the ship's log with her own testimony, nullifying the daily record on happenings on board. *The Cradle of the Deep*, therefore, functions as an eyewitness modification of the ship's log, providing details omitted from the log for being too unsavory or brutal. A member of the crew, "Gooney Bulgar, a Hungarian sailor who was a bit of a bully," taunts Lowell's caretaker, Stitches, and the handful of other men charged with making her infant's clothing from flour

sacks.¹² They react violently, attacking Bulgar, apparently leaving Lowell to writhe around on the deck in her swaddling clothes. When the sewing sailors finish with Bulgar and toss him into the ocean, Lowell says he resembled “a piece of raw hamburger” floating in the water, while the ship’s log—which she quotes in the text—mentions nothing more than the captain fining him “five dollars for carelessness after he fell from the decks.”¹³ So it is that the narrative is also something of a “setting-the-record-straight” project, attempting to show what life was really like at sea for seventeen years. Lowell achieves this tone by acknowledging the reader’s apprehensions and misgivings, correcting apparent misconceptions, and modifying any existing record. This facilitates a narrative that is expected to be unbelievable and unverifiable, which permits Lowell infinite room for artistic license and unchecked lies. Therefore, these moments where she corrects an otherwise dependable record, such as a ship’s log, are both expected and welcomed as an essential part of the very fabric of the narrative.

She also strikes at those critics and readers who would call her narrative a novel. About the realities of a captain bringing a young girl aboard ship, she reports that it was hardly as romantic as one might think, for “it might be the case in novels, but in real life, it is far more practical!”¹⁴ Critics of Lowell’s autobiography, like Arnold Mulder who suspected it was fraudulent from the start, found the style of the text so professionally *unpolished* that it almost certainly had to be the work of a professional writer. It was never revealed whether or not Lowell wrote the narrative herself or not, though it did become very clear—as I will shortly discuss—that none of what was presented was in fact true. Lowell counterstruck ahead of her critics who challenged fact and form, saying that the narrative was born when she regaled “a couple of writers” with her stories of

growing up on the sea. Upon their telling her to put it into book form, she said, “I don’t know enough words.” The combination of the self-confident narrative voice, which challenges common sense and maritime law, along with this apparently humble, almost childlike woman who had to be *convinced* to write the narrative does show a very distinct separation between Lowell in person and Lowell in print. These mysterious “writers” told her that it didn’t matter if she “had the words” or not, that she should put down exactly what she had told them, with all of its roughness and curses.¹⁵ What resulted was an entertaining, unpolished—and yet curiously well-polished—sea-yarn of a life begun under extraordinary and indeed unbelievable circumstances. Lowell never spoke to the accusations of fabrication made against her. She never said she was lying, nor did she ever unequivocally say she was telling the truth.

In the five years before the publication of Joan Lowell’s story of her childhood, three other texts of the same name were published: *The Cradle of the Deep* (1924) by Sabine Wood; *The Cradle of the Deep: An Account of the Adventures of Eleanor Channing and John Starbuck* (1928) by Jacob Fisher; and *The Cradle Of The Deep: An Account Of A Voyage To The West Indies* (1928) by Sir Frederick Treves. When Lowell’s text was published in 1929, then, it was situated in a trajectory of sea-faring tales of the previous five years. It also bore the name of a wildly popular ballad, sung by baritone Wilfred Glen and distributed by the Black Victor Exposition label as a 78 LP in 1913. Not unlike a cuckoo in a robin’s nest, Lowell’s *The Cradle of the Deep* found company among other such tales of the very same name, some fictional and some otherwise. What this signifies is that this text did not merely materialize out of the ether, but was part of a popular literary tradition going back hundreds of years, and part of a less-lengthy

tradition of like-minded tales with the very same title of the immediate past. Therefore, this text appears *as if* it is legitimate, even traditional, from the very outset.

But a title only carries so far. The beauty of a swashbuckling sea tale as the basis for a fake autobiography is the wealth of detail and facts that naturally come with such a narrative. Because the majority of her readers, assuredly, would be landlubbers, the reader's frame of reference is far removed the events of the narrative. Certainly, it is difficult to spot a fake if the original is equally unknown. The reader carries with them perceptions about life at sea, and into these preconceptions Lowell fits satisfyingly well, evidenced by her bravery and vernacular, or entertainingly badly, detailed in her numerous foibles. The reader naturally expects her to swear proficiently, like a sailor, which indeed she does, recounting a delightful plethora of sea-faring curses, and boasting that her first word was "goddamned."¹⁶ Full of moxie and with total disregard for the conventions of feminine deportment of the 1920s, she is an enjoyable, feisty, and sympathetic narrator. By eliciting sympathy and a feeling of reader-author kinship, she does somehow manage to escape the ordinary reader's scrutiny. Particularly helpful at misdirecting the reader's attention is the wealth of ship's jargon that floods the pages. Here, she describes a moment of chaos aboard the *Minnie A. Caine*, as the schooner begins to run afoul in the wind:

He had lost his temper and began cursing me, but he kept to the wheel. I heard the topsails aloft begin to flap. The wind had caught them "aback." The jibs and mainsail began to luff—and in vain Svenson spun the wheel to get the ship back on her course. Then it was my turn to laugh. I heard the mate, on the fo'c's'le head where he was fixing a jib, bellow aft at Svenson to pull the goddamned ship back into the wind. The mate ran down the deck to help her get back on course... Father grabbed the wheel from Svenson's hand and spun it hard over to leeward. With a slapping crash the booms when over the port tack, and he got her once more headed up to the wind.¹⁷

The “fo’c’s’le” is ship’s jargon for the forecandle, or the upper deck of a sailing ship. The majority of the events of the book, it seems, transpire on the fo’c’s’le. The peculiarity of this word is of tremendous misdirective value, because for readers without ready access to a catalogue of ship’s jargon the word is peculiar and laced with maritime romanticism.

To make the as-if world believable, there must be at least a smattering of true and verifiable facts to uphold the falsehoods of the narrative. These facts Lowell provides readily and frequently, often with strategic placement following a passage of dubious veracity. After telling us of how she had to fight with sea birds for salt pork in a grotesque and ill-defined game her father called “Grub,” and how she learned to swim by being repeatedly shoved from the gangplank, she provides a small amount of substantiated factual information, as if to assuage the reader’s doubts. One of the *Minnie A. Caine*’s principal cargos was copra, which Lowell describes as “dark brown and fibrous,” with an “almost unbearable stench,” that is only considered saleable once the vermin infest it and it takes on a putrid and explosive quality.¹⁸ Indeed, copra was one of the most commonly traded items in the South Seas in the early 1900s, and it was used for munitions, its oils for preservatives, and the acids for surgical procedures. Lowell tells that copra is “the meat of coconuts dried in the sun,” and the process of putrefaction takes three months before it is ready for market.¹⁹ This description bears an uncanny likeness to one provided in a *Scientific American* supplement from May of 1897. After telling a barely believable tale of a near-mutiny of which she was the cause, she informs the reader that to prevent scurvy, all ships carried barrels of lime juice on board.²⁰ Lies are effectively mitigated by facts, it appears. Again, descriptions of using lime juice to prevent and treat “sea-scurvy” are mentioned, in a startlingly similar fashion, in the

March 10, 1883 supplemental edition of *Scientific American*. It was not an uncommon occurrence, she continues, to find little black flecks in the daily bread. These, which she thought were raisins, were actually fragments of cockroaches, which jumped into the dough during kneading.²¹ Now the reader's attentions are so fully reconnoitered to this revolting image of cockroaches-as-raisins that the mutinous bathing scene loses some gravity. It may come as no surprise that cockroaches in ship's bread was recorded in great detail in *Once A Week*, a popular informational weekly from 1860.

Seventeen years at sea leads the reader to expect at least one serious bout of scurvy. Fortuitously, a bad case of scurvy does hit the crew of the schooner towards the end of the narrative with no mention of why the lime juice failed its function. Even Lowell, in spite of being the strongest and youngest aboard, succumbs to the dreaded scurvy. At this point in the text, the crew is inexplicably comprised of a rag-tag group of drunken, inexperienced "shanghaied" sailors from New Zealand. Sitting on the fo'c's'le, "picking dead skin off my arm," she says, her days appeared to be numbered.²² Luckily, though, the crew is delivered from the sea-scurvy by the appearance of a porpoise that, she helpfully explains, is "a mammal and its meat very like that of beef."²³ To the land-bound reader, this porpoise does not seem the cure for scurvy, yet Joan Lowell and the crew are overjoyed. Indeed, porpoises, dolphins and whale blubber contain what the Inuit people call *muktuk*, which is one of the only parts of a mammal body that does, indeed, contain vitamin C. Where the reader may expect to catch Lowell in an all-out fabrication, she substantiates her narrative with facts, sometimes from *Scientific American*, sometimes with anthropological or ethnographic curiosities. Yet is in the day-to-day

humdrum of sea life, not the splashy moments of melodrama, that her narrative falters and eventually fails.

Excoriating the Skipper's Daughter: A Fall From the Topsails

“The American book-publishing world will not soon forget the *Cradle of the Deep* incident. I'm not so sure about the American bookreading world. Perhaps a good many book readers are still a bit confused about the entire affair.” – *The Morning Call*, 18 May 1929

Unlike *Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance* and *Haunch, Paunch, and Jowl*, Joan Lowell's *The Cradle of the Deep* was never reprinted after its first run of 175,000 copies in 1929. In comparison, Long and Ornitz' fakes saw a miniscule initial publishing run of 9,000 and 21,000 copies respectively, but both have been reprinted several times. Long's exposure as a fraud was mostly a private matter resulting in Long's suicide; Ornitz' exposure was hardly an event of note, given the colossal troubles he faced from HUAC and the Hollywood film machine. But the exposure of *The Cradle of the Deep* as fraudulent took on an astonishing magnitude, covered from coast to coast in daily newspapers and weeklies like *Time* magazine. Lowell's fall from grace was also a favorite topic for E.B. White, the resident “Talk of the Town” columnist at *The New Yorker*.

In March of 1929, *The Cradle of the Deep* was distributed via advanced copy to a handful of influential members of the publishing industry, as well as several professional sailors charged with vetting the story for authenticity. In the most peculiar coincidence, as I opened my copy of *The Cradle of the Deep* to read it for the first time, a tiny quarter sheet fluttered out of the pages. It is yellowed with age, but only slightly. It is the insert provided by the Book of the Month Club; this tiny document is not mentioned anywhere, not referenced by any scholar, critic, or newspaper reviewer, and not included in any

library copy, yet this tiny sheet is enormously significant in showing that even as *The Cradle of the Deep* was disseminated to readers across the country, questions of its authenticity were at the fore, preventatively stunted by “expert” verification of its veracity. In 1929, the Book of the Month Club was a tremendous money-earner, and a mark of approval not unlike more contemporary national book clubs.²⁴ Felix Riesenberg and William McFee, two of the experts that Simon and Schuster recruited to verify its authenticity “waxed enthusiastic” in the pamphlet that accompanied the original text, and agreed that the text was, without question, a factual document. In the Book-of-the-Month introductory pamphlet, Felix Riesenberg, one of these “sea-man novelists,” praises the way in which Lowell recreates the “blasphemy of the sea,” while Captain William McFee considers each scene like an “explosion of unabashed description.”²⁵ The third man that Simon and Schuster recruited is not mentioned on the insert, for he was Lincoln Colcord—witness to Lowell’s legendary outburst in Schuster’s Manhattan office—and he didn’t believe a word of what Joan Lowell had to say.

Simon and Schuster published *Cradle* in March of 1929. Glowing reviews poured in from newspapers and magazines across the country. The *Indiana Evening Gazette* reported on March 6, 1929, that “Skipper Joan’s Ship Comes In, Laden With Gold: Her Life Stranger than Fiction.” In the article, Joan Lowell offers advice to young girls: “Stand on your feet. Take your lickings like a man.”²⁶ On March 13, 1929, *Time* reviewed the book in a one-page feature. *Time* warns “an occasional incident smacks of fish-tale—the skipper dissipates a water spout by a few shots from a rifle—but the artless progress of the narrative carries conviction and interest. Sea writers William McFee and Felix Riesenberg have raised many cheers for the book. The Book of the Month Club

offered it to 80,000 subscribers.”²⁷ On March 14, it was included in the AP wire’s list of the week’s recommended books, the endorsement appearing in dozens of large and small newspapers across the country.²⁸ It was excitedly reviewed in *The Los Angeles Times* on March 24 by Thomas Ford, who erroneously called it *The Candle of the Deep*, but goes on breathlessly that “she became the huskiest of puppies and she had no more training, as we conceive of what a girl child’s training should be, than a puppy,” finally concluding that “it can’t be reviewed. It must be read.”²⁹ *Cradle* was featured on the *Eveready Hour*, the first commercially sponsored variety program in the history of broadcasting; the airing of the feature was excitedly anticipated in *The Lowell Sun* on April 9, 1929.³⁰

On April 12, 1929, the tide begins to turn. A book reviewer from the *Appleton Post Crescent* in Wisconsin was suspicious, asking “Cradle of the Deep: Sea Yarn or Fact?”³¹ But even as Mulder discussed his suspicions, even going so far as to question whether Lowell hired a “spirit writer” to pen the tale, the fake made it to the top of the New York Nonfiction Bestseller list on April 14, 1929.³² By the morning of April 13, the news had broken in New York that the narrative was a fake. That morning, the following article appeared in the *New Yorker*, in the “Talk of the Town” Section, written by none other than EB White himself:

The editor of our Balderdash Department is out of town, so we will probably have to handle the Simons and Schuster affair for him. When it turned out that the Minnie A. Cain cradle of Joan Lowell’s particular deep, was not at the bottom of the sea but in Oakland harbor, and also that there were several other incidents of the lady’s book-life that failed to check with history, the publishers said in effect: “Oh, well, the book isn’t supposed to be an autobiography—it’s a human document.” Mr. Heywood Broun, one of the charter endorsers said in the *Nation* that there is a “fundamental verity in fairy tales.” All this gives us what can briefly be described as a pain. The old balderdash pain. Publishers, it appears to us, are becoming increasingly unscrupulous in their exploitation of books and authors. They are more concerned with ballyhoo than with the essential business of literature. It is intensely interesting to us, after two or three weeks of reading

Simon & Schuster's blurbs, to learn direct from them that "The Cradle of the Deep" is a "human document." That clears up everything.³³

What White determines as the problem with this issue of a "human document" is that the publishers marketed it otherwise, not that Joan Lowell herself lied about its contents. The outcry against Lowell and Simon and Schuster in the publishing world and in the media was immense. The notion of a "human document" as substitute for autobiography was rejected as smoke and mirrors, and the idea that a fairy tale could be held to the same standard of publishing ethics as an alleged autobiography rang hollow.

It was Lincoln Colcord's review of the book in *New York World*, just one day before White's lamentation of "balderdash pain," that presented a fifty-one-count indictment of *The Cradle of the Deep* and its author. Colcord took issue with Lowell as the author of a fraudulently presented—and factually inaccurate—text, not with Simon and Schuster as publishers. Colcord scolded that the blame was entirely with Lowell. He railed against her description of the *Minnie A. Caine's* rigging, the lack of water rationing, the time spans of journeys, the ship's jargon, the behavior of the captain, and sporadic use of charts and maps. With this careful disposal of the as-if world of the novel, Colcord commenced the public excoriation of the Skipper's Daughter. The *Galveston Daily News* headlined the story, "Joan Lowell's Seamanship Flayed as Absurd by Deep Water Sailor." In point 21 of his indictment, Colcord contends, "she could determine ship's position to within a quarter mile at sea... No navigator can be sure within two miles." In point 18, Colcord argues, "She says sailors never wear shoes at sea... What does she mean? Ship men always wear shoes in cold and warm weather." Lowell never spoke out against

Colcord's criticisms or in her own defense. She remained silent, eventually doing what amounted a moonlight flit to Brazil.

Simon and Schuster bore the scandal badly. On the heels of their publication of Alfred Aloysius Smith's *Trader Horn* in 1925, another "factual" adventure tale of dubious origin and questionable content, Joan Lowell's exposure as a fraud occurred during the only fiscal quarter during which Simon and Schuster made fewer profits than they had expenditures.³⁴ As the profits fell into steep decline, Simon and Schuster chided the Book of the Month Club, charging that they were to blame for the unusually large-scale distribution of *The Cradle of the Deep*.³⁵ In the *Syracuse Herald* on April 19, 1929, the headline reads "Book Clubs Denounced by New York Publisher," arguing that such clubs did nothing but endorse "canned reading" to the general detriment of their subscribers. Even within the Book of the Month Club, blame was hurled in every direction. The article reports that three of the five judges of the Book of the Month Club voted against Lowell's autobiography; one of the judges, a Mr. MacRae, lamented that the book was approved by the board in spite of the "issues" that he raised.³⁶

Critics took great delight in Lowell's public fall from grace. A regular columnist from the *Appleton Post Crescent*, Arnold Mulder, who had always suspected the *Cradle* to be a hoax, boasted that his instincts were correct in his article, "A Hunch That Was Justified."³⁷ He expresses dismay at Lowell's unwillingness to comment, and apparent disappearance from the scene: "Until recently she was fêted extravagantly in New York but now that the bubble has burst she is not to be reached. Nothing would have been said if the book had frankly appeared as fiction, because it is a good story. But those who swallowed it as autobiography are quite naturally peeved now." The outrage, however,

went beyond a peevish irritation, and eventually spurred a public debate about the nature of truth and literary hoaxes.

Joan Lowell, though not speaking directly to her critics, did appear in a publicity photograph at the Oakland Estuary docks. The accompanying article from the *Oakland Tribune* from September 8, 1929, reads: “Curious Storm Ship that Made Girl Famous: Minnie A. Caine Now Is Tied at Oakland Wharf, Out of Commission.” When the *Minnie A. Caine* was spotted in port, Lowell’s critics and supporters alike were forced to reckon with the unquestionable, tangible proof that her narrative—from stem to stern—was a fabrication. If the *Minnie A. Caine* hadn’t sunk with all hands on deck, as Lowell had said it had, then nothing about the narrative could be deemed true; it was no longer a case of fuzzy maritime details, for if the ship was still afloat, then the whole notion of the narrative as representative of a lost and nostalgic world collapsed. Lowell had no comment in the story, but the dock owner said: “Maybe we’ll sell copies of *The Cradle of the Deep* from the main deck.”

Lowell garnered almost no further public mention after the exposure of her autobiography as a fake—and after the ensuing outrage—until, in 1952, E.B. White reviewed her forthcoming *Promise Land*, about her life as a witch doctor in the Brazilian Jungle. After the catastrophe of *The Cradle of the Deep*, White notes that she divorced her then husband, Thompson Buchannan, taking up immediately with a “sea captain who felt that homesteading was his real forte and who wanted an indestructible bride to lend him a hand.”³⁸ Delicately phrased, White rejects her newest endeavor at adventure life-turned-memoir. The exposure of *The Cradle of the Deep* as a fake autobiography led to a public and financial disappointment, casting an unshakable pallor of failure and obscurity

over the rest of Joan Lowell's life and work. In spite of its good humor and compelling main character, *The Cradle of the Deep* could not be excused for its shortcomings or fabrications; indeed, its very publication and exposure threw the question of truth and ethics in writing into the realm of popular consideration and debate.

Parody and a Debate About Truth

“Our lovely heroine scans the horizon anxiously for the first approach of another hurricane, such as Lincoln Colcord. ‘Censorship ahoy!’ she cries.” – *Vanity Fair* review of *Salt Water Taffy*, 1929

The exposure of Joan Lowell and her childhood story as fraudulent spurred immense public and media attention; so great was the interest in this ridiculous and entertaining story of a childhood at sea that a parody was published in short order. *Salt Water Taffy*, by Corey Ford, was published in June 1929, only three months after Colcord exposed Lowell as a fraud. Joan Lowell is renamed June Triplett in the parody, and the book is dedicated to the author himself, Corey Ford, “who encouraged me by writing this autobiography for me.”³⁹ A primer of the characters in *Salt Water Taffy* and their counterparts in *The Cradle of the Deep* appeared in *Vanity Fair* in July 1929. The review is bursting with tongue-in-cheek irony:

Little June Triplett's reminiscences, guaranteed to contain more imaginative embroidery than any other true-story on the market, are now available to the idle and the curious in any bookshop, under the title of *Salt Water Taffy: Twenty Thousand Leagues Away from the Sea*. And on this page, *Vanity Fair* is privileged to reproduce for the first time exclusive photographs (the camera cannot lie) of a few members of the distinguished crew.⁴⁰

Tellingly, *Salt Water Taffy* makes ironic use of photographic “evidence” to support the narrative in much the same way that *The Cradle of the Deep* depended on bogus visual evidence of Lowell, as a grown woman, on the poop deck and elsewhere aboard the ship.

The parodied photos are audaciously vaudevillian staged shots of a full grown woman, looking exactly like Joan Lowell, behaving like a young girl in diapers and pig-tails. The review in *Vanity Fair* “reproduces the photos for the first time,” hinting at yet another jab at the inauthenticity of Lowell’s text, and the hidden truths of the parody. Ford’s parody is a witty, well-written inversion of *The Cradle of the Deep*, using the “original” as the format for this “novel autobiography.”

In each scene, Ford has the characters calling the ship by a different name—sometimes the *Carrie L. Maine*, the *Minnie J. Cohan*, the *Minnie I. Cohen*, the *Lane Bryant*, the *Edith Wharton*, once the *Ruth F. Platt*, and eventually the *Virginia C. Gildersleeve*. Ford seizes on the most ludicrous facets and details of *The Cradle of the Deep* in crafting *Salt Water Taffy*, thereby indicting the text as even more fraudulent than Colcord asserted in his indictment of seafaring factual discrepancies. Facts have surface value, but Ford shows that this text fails miserably even as a so-called “human document.” Ford’s bone of contention appears to be a literary one, demonstrating how swiftly the reader is scooped into the drama, effectively misdirected from its erroneous details and tenuous plotline. Ford, through parody, exposes the reader’s disinclination towards spotting discrepancies in detail, as demonstrated here in a passage where June describes her family history, precisely as Lowell did, but with a twist:

My father was the son of Henry Greenleaf Lowell and a beautiful sloe-eyed Turkish princess named Mezzanine, who met my grandfather while she was playing the Boston vaudeville circuit as a partner in a roller-skating team. Nineties proved anything but pleasant with a Turkish wife (let alone life in the Nineties *without* one), and shortly before my father was born the young couple set out for a trip around the world... Unfortunately, my grandfather, already weakened by the hard journey, died giving birth to my father.⁴¹

The detail of her *grandfather* giving birth to her father is only the start; no detail escapes Ford's shrewd comic illumination. *Salt Water Taffy* was an immensely successful literary endeavor, displacing sales of *The Cradle of the Deep*, eventually serving to stand in for the original all together. In *Salt Water Taffy*, Ford employs both of the traditional functions of parody—inversion and amplification—amplifying the drama into a burlesque absurdity, and inverting Lowell into an untenably vain and naïve heroine.⁴²

Why such a public outcry? Why were readers and publishers, the media and critics, so uproariously angered at the revelation that this text was not as it appeared to be? The reasons can only be made in speculation. The answer may lie in the fact that *The Cradle of the Deep* serves no other apparent function than making money and garnering attention. At the height of the Roaring Twenties, just months before the stock market plummeted, it seems that Lowell went one step too far. While the works of Long and Ornitz are compelling, they are far from page turners of the swashbuckling sort like *The Cradle of the Deep*. Furthermore, there was a tremendous amount of fiduciary and emotional investment on the part of readers and publishers; for Ornitz and Long, such was certainly not the case. The whole inglorious affair was an immensely costly embarrassment for all involved; even, clearly, for the unapologetic Lowell who skittered off to Brazil, scarcely ever heard from again. There was one brief mention of a book that she had planned to write, tellingly titled *Kicked out of the Cradle*, which was mentioned in an article in the *Sarasota Herald Tribune* in September 1929, and has since been mentioned in scholarly texts, *as if it were real*, even though it was never written.⁴³

The Book of the Month Club contritely offered its members the option to return *The Cradle of the Deep* for a full refund in May of 1929. In a retrospective on the scandal

a decade later, *The New Yorker* reported that “only a few copies were returned,” and revealed that “the book sold better than ever for a few days after its exposure, moving from non-fiction to the fiction best-seller lists in the paper, and then sales dropped abruptly.”⁴⁴ At about the time that sales slid sharply to almost zero, an extraordinary public debate began, headed by Lincoln Colcord himself, the original whistleblower against Joan Lowell’s fraud, who argued that the “exploitation of Joan Lowell’s book shows the decay of American ethics,” and he was invited by the respectable and widely read literary review *The Bookman* to argue against Heywood Broun, one of Lowell’s supporters, in a published debate on the matter. In the affirmative of the debate, “Are Literary Hoaxes Harmful?” in 1929, Colcord argues, is unique not because of its egregious falsehood, but because nobody involved in the scandal attempted to undo the damage once the hoax had been exposed. Colcord found it to be a case of a “plain breach of a heretofore universally accepted standards of literary ethics.” The publishers of the work, he goes on, “instead of admitting facts which have become known, attempt through advertising and publicity to maintain the validity of claims which have been disproved.”⁴⁵ Colcord maintains that this ethical breach is harmful to literature as an art, and to the reading public as a pursuant of that art, who, in good faith, read books that are presented either as autobiography or as fiction. For the negative in the debate, Heywood Broun finds Colcord’s take on the subject to ring of a Puritanical distaste for all creative work, and continues that Colcord has disregarded the fact that literary hoaxes have a long and illustrious history in their own right, and that *The Cradle of the Deep*, regardless of its publishers’ reactions or conduct, was part of that long history. Such texts cannot be dismissed for their lack of veracity, he argues: “I will not admit that only such things as

happen are true. A fine novel may be as faithful to human experience as the most deadlly literal chronicle of events.”⁴⁶ Indeed, two scenes in particular substantiate Broun’s position, and also demonstrate the recrudescence of the primitive feminine in *The Cradle of the Deep*.

A Native Birth and a Mutinous Bath

Being a man-raised child, Lowell reveals she has little patience or interest in the softness of “women folk,” and indeed finds land-living women somewhat terrifying. The unsavory influences of perfume, against which her father warns her, are embodied in women of all sorts, from the whores on the docks to her own mother. Lowell has a broad notion of what women are like, and from her preconceptions she deduces that she does not want anything to do with them, and indeed would prefer to be as unlike them as possible. Her life on the *Minnie A. Caine* is a life—if unconvincingly—at least consistently spent among men. The only women whom she considers to be different or welcoming are “native women.” Her encounters with these “native women” come to shape her entire worldview, and her understanding of her own self and body.

Lowell’s understanding of her self and the place of women in society is upended when she sees a woman give birth to a child on an unnamed island, “about eighty miles south of Suva,” near the southern coast of Fiji.⁴⁷ (Incidentally, Ford takes a swing at Lowell’s vagueness of location here, indicating in *Salt Water Taffy* that the “Virgin Isles” were located somewhere in the South Seas, near the “Isle of Man,” but noting that “in general their longitude is unknown; but their latitude, on the other hand, is strongly suspected.”⁴⁸) The beauty that Lowell finds in the native woman giving birth has nothing

to do with physical beauty, a meaningless attribute since she has never laid hands on a mirror. Her life is transformed by seeing the emotional beauty of giving life in the most basic surroundings. This moment of unadulterated human love, and of witnessing a woman's place in the creation of life, is a significant turning point in her view of the world. In this revelation, Lowell places tremendous value on the power of the primitive *female* self; in parallel, she begins to form notions of how the female body is connected to that primitive, simple, unsullied feminine identity.

Before witnessing the birth scene, she understands her own body only in terms of its functional qualities. When she learns to swim, her father teaches her first how to float by distending her stomach. "Throw your head back and puff your stomach up until you can see your belly-button!" her father barks.⁴⁹ The belly button is stripped of its actual function, serving only as a type of flotation device. Once she sees the baby born ashore, however, and sees the mother sever the umbilical cord with her own teeth, the meaning of the belly button is completely transformed, now representative of the power of the life-giving female body. These are not exceedingly complex revelations, but considering the relatively shallow level of depth and thought at which Joan Lowell lives her life, these realizations are some of the few moments of consequence in the text.

There is a distinction between primitivism and savagery for Lowell; the ship's crew represents a version of a brutish and savage masculinity, which is repellant, coarse, and unattractive. The native women she encounters—in particular, the woman who has given birth—represent a primitive femininity that appeals to her greatly; the native woman is natural, alluring, elegant, and seems somehow more "civilized" than the white women she has encountered while ashore in the United States and Australia. So

compelling is this native birth scene that she has trouble pulling her thoughts away from the beach, long after she has re-boarded the *Minnie A. Caine*. In this respect, Lowell undergoes a type of “captivity conversion” common in the mythic history of America, becoming so “wholly absorbed in the wilderness way” of native life that she severs long held connections to “the white world.”⁵⁰ Lowell begins to identify with the native woman, and in so doing, begins to know herself for the first time in her life. She identifies with the native feminine ideal, yet with a difference, for she recognizes that she is white, not native, with Western morals and logic, but she wishes to retain some of that strength and primitive grace. In this moment, she negotiates “between desire, identification, and ideology,” which are the three most crucial elements of negotiating identity and disidentity, according to Muñoz.⁵¹

With the native women she feels a profound sense of camaraderie and respect, unparalleled by any other experience she describes. She never had any solid ties to “the white world,” as Slotkin terms it, for her sole frame of reference is a life upon the high seas, excluded from the mooring conventions of social norms and standards, subject to an entirely different set of rules and expectations determined by the age-old standards of maritime law. Life on the *Minnie A. Caine* has facets, therefore, of what Lukács calls “transcendental homelessness,” that state of alienated being that displays an acute separation between the human being and the conscious self, as well as society at large.⁵² While life aboard the *Minnie A. Caine* is perhaps not quite consequential or profound, the trope of a woman among men cast away from society does place Lowell in a unique situation for understanding the significance of primitive and savage ways of life. Furthermore, cast adrift in the ocean she finds herself in what Muñoz’ theorizes to be a

“space of hybridization,” a location that is neither here nor there, where “complex and ambivalent *American* identities are manufactured.”⁵³ Severed from the confines of nationhood and unsure as to the nature of her own selfhood, Lowell must construct an understanding of her place and function in the world.

Without a modern social frame of reference, she is left with a basic human understanding of her body and her self as a being among others who are entirely different from her. Not unlike Margaret Mead in *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928), published just shortly before *Cradle*, Joan Lowell must go to a far-off Pacific island to understand the simple and uncluttered significance of giving birth, as Mead traveled to Samoa to understand the basic realities of female adolescence in the middle of the twentieth century. Mead contended that it was essential to travel to a “primitive” locale in order to escape the “complexities” of modern life.⁵⁴ Similar to Lowell’s narrative, *Coming of Age in Samoa* was fiercely attacked by critics for its inaccuracies and apparent fabrications.⁵⁵ Certainly, Lowell does not travel to this remote island near Fiji with the *express purpose* of coming to understand primitive life and the miracle of birth, but the realization takes place there nonetheless, linking that place with that action in her mind forever. The scene shows both a moment of maturity in the admiration of a woman giving birth unaided, and a parallel childlike exuberance at the novelty of having a baby to care for:

Once ashore, Stitches and I left the sailors and wandered through the village streets. We hadn’t gone more than a quarter of a mile before we were attracted to a group of natives playing tom-toms... There in the center of the group I saw a native mother in childbirth. Unaided by any other woman, when the time came, she squatted on the sand...

I didn’t care what happened to me afterwards for I was so fascinated with the native mother that I didn’t want to leave her. I thought it must be fun to have a baby and have a lot of natives singing and celebrating the event, but I was to learn years later that most civilized women didn’t agree with me.

When we returned to the ship I was full of my latest experience. But somehow life had turned from a simple thing into something so full of puzzling contradictions that I longed to leave the ship and live on shore where I thought I would find an answer to everything that bewildered me.⁵⁶

Unfortunately, for all the importance placed on this scene in the moment, Lowell returns to her life at sea, without much time spent on those “puzzling contradictions” that briefly occupied her thoughts. She makes a subtle critique of “civilized women” in general, for whom, she believes, caring for a child is not a particularly enjoyable or fulfilling task. It is an inversion of the Freudian notion that while civilization arose to protect humans from the uncontrollable urges of aggression and sexuality, “uncivilized people”—like the native woman squatting in the sand—are exempt from that repression of physical urges, so that the native woman represents an unsullied, pure version of the female self.⁵⁷ The native woman is the anti-self, the being-other within, that attracts but also confuses.

In Hegel’s original assertions in *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, the feminine was regarded as the antithesis of the individual self, which was masculine by default. Because the masculine was actualized through self-externalization and forward drive, the feminine—all women included—were considered fully subjective, under-actualized selves, dependent upon the man to find meaning *from without*. Furthermore, Hegel contended, the woman as bearer of children contributes to the very irony of society, for it is she who contributes to the collective nature of social life, thereby undermining the power of the individual self and his internal dialectic; because women pertain to a *collective*, under the thumb of the broadly articulated power of the state, they are always to be dominated by the masculine. If one considers *The Cradle of the Deep* to be the microcosmic frame of reference for Lowell’s life—it is she who states that on the ship

she came to understand all sorts of classifications of people by letting individual sailors stand in for larger groups—then this woman on the shore is not necessarily understood as simply a feminine being. Her understanding of the sexes is cursory at best, such that this being on the beach, capable of giving life and creating *new individual selves* unaided, is the antithesis to the group-minded crew of the *Minnie A. Caine*. The primitive individual woman is for Joan Lowell the ideal self, much in contrast to the crude sailors aboard the ship, and quite to the contrary of Hegel’s misogynistic view of the feminine.

In spite of its masculinity, life aboard *Minnie A. Caine* does not free Lowell from “women’s work” and she finds herself saddled with responsibilities of housework, chores, and domestic duties traditionally ascribed to women. While she often appears busy, following the orders of her father, she is usually charged with menial chores unsuitable for skilled sailors; she is not even skilled enough to work in the kitchen, the designated space of the highly prized and immensely important “Jap cook.”⁵⁸ She confides quietly that, “I never worked very hard at my duties.”⁵⁹ Lowell’s role aboard the *Minnie A. Caine* is one of lesser significance than that of the men on board; as the only woman on the ship, her duties are also, by default, marked as feminine ones. With men’s work marked as masculine and undertaken at a much faster pace than what is expected of Lowell, the division and importance of labor on the ship is not unlike the increasingly obvious separation between the domestic work of women and the work of men outside the home in the United States in the 1920s. Such were the preoccupations of writers and scientists focused on preventing women from succumbing to the effects of neurasthenia. Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote against the diminishing effects of the “nervous disease” in 1899, distilling the matter thusly: “The role of the housewife creates the disjuncture

between the pace of the subject and the pace of the world which necessarily results in neurasthenia.”⁶⁰ Because she is forced to focus on a wide variety of different tasks during a day—some of importance, some of total inconsequence—she must also combat the very same multiplicity of duties confronting the ordinary housewife, and fight against the dissipative influences of multiple consciousnesses brought about by not being able to focus on a single household chore at any given time.⁶¹ The primitive island woman is the opposite of Lowell in her total focus on one given task; the primitive feminine is more masculine than the civilized feminine, so that the native mother represents a being apart from Lowell, but not *entirely* apart from her, either. The native woman is, in Carlson’s words, “not *not* me.” The native woman seems the antidote for both the busy boredom of life at sea as well as the unsavory influences of perfumed civilized woman on shore. Drawing from Hegel, the native woman represents the being-other that Lowell wishes to realize in herself. This moment is one of middle disidentification because she does not wish to identify wholly with the woman on shore, but does seem to believe that to be near her and to be surrounded by the life she lives would allow her to find the answer to those puzzling contradictions that are part of her own efforts to understand her self.

After witnessing the birth scene, she is so full of confusion and excitement that she attempts, as Richard Poirier would say, to “try it out” on board.⁶² A sudden downpour inspires her to strip naked on the main deck, and she covers herself with a soapy lather, not in order to clean herself but rather to feel the curves of her body for the very first time. Her desire to re-enact the primitive sexuality she witnessed on shore nearly poisons the ship’s entire water supply, leading to a near mutiny. As the soap runs down the “fo’c’s’le” planks and comes within inches of the collecting buckets below

deck, the sailors—her father among them—toss her into the sea before the soap can spread any further. This scene reinforces the realization to which she is slowly coming, that there is a space for that primitive, natural womanhood, but the *Minnie A. Caine* is definitely not that space. This mutinous bathing scene is one of the most serious moments and by far the clearest scene of feminine rebellion in the narrative. Lowell attempts to make light of the event, saying, “I’ve never wanted to be clean since then!”⁶³ And yet, her outlook on the world and herself was permanently altered because of her brush with primitive feminine power. She gains an awareness of the normative regulations under which she must live aboard the ship, while becoming cognizant that there is another mode of existence, allowing her to strategically disidentify and be figuratively reborn within the colliding worlds of masculinity aboard ship and femininity on native shores.

Lowell’s recrudescence into a new primitive femininity demonstrates that the savage self need not be male or even masculine. The time spent on the *Minnie A. Caine* taught her physical strength and endurance, but the truly valuable savage self that resulted from her fake autobiography was the new woman she identified within herself. Relying on the as-if world, Lowell created a narrative that gave weight and substance to her public persona as a film star. She imparts to the reader that she was a man-raised girl who felt out of place in civilization and was repulsed by civilized white women in short; however, in the scene of the native birth, she identifies the primitive feminine within. In the fourth and final case study, this rebirth is echoed in more subtle and deliberate tones in a middling of narrative voice and style, where savagery is exchanged for a simple domestic simplicity that serves to mediate the complexities of high modernist art.

4. The Dear Enemy: The Art of Middling in Gertrude Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1932)

"Let me listen to me and not to them."

– Gertrude Stein (b. 1874-d. 1946), *Stanzas in Meditation*, 1932

Thirty years later after the publication of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, and long after Gertrude Stein died, publishers approached Alice B. Toklas to see if she would write her own memoir. Alice Toklas replied: "Oh, I couldn't do that. Gertrude did my autobiography and it's done."¹ Toklas maintained that the autobiography was both genuine and final, in spite of the fact that Stein wrote it on her behalf, using her voice, appropriating her narrative persona. As a compromise, Toklas agreed to write a cookbook as a memoir, in which she provided her famous recipe for hashish cookies. To write another memoir would have been redundant, Toklas said, but to write a book of recipes seemed thoroughly useful, as it was an area of expertise that had nothing at all to do with Gertrude. When asked to define Toklas' and Stein's life and relationship in 1937, fellow writer and expatriate W.G. Rogers mused that Alice was undoubtedly Gertrude's alter ego, and if nothing else, they were "dear enemies."²

In 1932, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* was published first in serial in the *Atlantic Monthly*, and then by Harcourt Brace in full. Until the autobiography's publication, some thought that Alice B. Toklas was Gertrude Stein's own invention, so illusive was her "secretary-companion" and lover.³ Toklas was a relative unknown except to the inner circle of writers and artists who frequented the apartment at 27 Rue des Fleurus in Paris. The memoir describes expatriate life in Paris in the early 1900s, depicting the first iterations of the movement now known as modernism. The first edition bore no signature of anyone other than Toklas, but within the pages of the text itself the

ruse of authorship was revealed. This is the first striking difference between this, the most famous of fake autobiographies, and the other cases that I have considered thus far.

Gertrude Stein herself admits to penning the work in the closing paragraph:

About six weeks ago, Gertrude Stein said, it does not look to me as if you were ever going to write that autobiography. You know what I am going to do. I am going to write it for you. I am going to write it as simply as Defoe did the autobiography of Robinson Crusoe. And she has and this is it.⁴

While she said she wrote Toklas' fake autobiography "for the fun of it" and in pursuit of some monetary recompense in less than six weeks, she also considered the endeavor as significant as Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*.⁵ As I have shown, savage fake autobiographies had developed a new popular prominence by the end of the 1920s, and into this subgenre Stein inserted herself. *The Autobiography* was also the product of zenith of early avant-garde modernism in Paris, which Muñoz identifies as one of the many historical and cultural "productive spaces of hybridization where complex and ambivalent *American* identities are produced."⁶

In this chapter, I will discuss how Stein utilizes Toklas to simplify her narrative tone and style, crafting a pristine narrative self unencumbered by the complexities of modernist high art; while not a savage internal self as examined in the previous chapters, Stein-as-Toklas shows a narrative self that appealed to modernist aficionados as it appealed to "ordinary americans." I will then discuss the scholarship on Stein and Toklas, focusing on critical work on identity as well as collective authorship. Then, I will provide background of Stein and Toklas in conjunction with an analysis of the content of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. In continuation, I will discuss how Stein's contemporaries in the Parisian avant-garde reacted to the text in the "Testimony Against Gertrude Stein" (1935), attacking the text itself and Stein and Toklas as individuals; I will

show how in spite of a small amount of resentment on the part of a few disgruntled modernists, the work was a tremendous success that finally brought Stein the popular recognition of her work that she had always desired to achieve. Then, I will discuss how this work is illustrative of a disidentificatory bifurcation of Stein's writing. Stein employs the persona of Toklas as narrator to distance herself from the "rarefied airs of the avant-garde," thereby putting her in closer proximity to the ordinary American individual. Next, I will show how this work is representative of the final facet of the misdirection spectrum—*the aura effect*—which places Toklas in the center of the modernist movement, acting as a facilitator of genius and an inspiration to the most illustrious members of the group, even acting as Hemingway's bullfight informant. Lastly I will discuss how this text brings together Stein's beliefs in the extraordinary nature of America and "americans" and the fundamental importance of the individual, original self. Central to this chapter is my argument that Stein engaged in a deliberate conciliatory middling of both style and content in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, modifying her erudite and difficult style of writing—known as Steinese—by taking the voice of Toklas as narrator, and using Toklas' world of domestic simplicity to bridge the gap between popular savagery and high modernist primitivism. Stein also employed the misdirective aura effect, positioning Toklas as neither inside nor outside the world of Picasso, Hemingway and Braque; in the narrative Toklas reveals she recognizes genius and even facilitates it, but generally underplays the significance of everyone in the narrative—with the exception of Stein, of course.

Sitting With One's Back to the View: Toklas, Domestic Simplicity, and America

Toklas makes her introductions to the reader at the start of the narrative, explaining that, “I myself have had no liking for violence and have always enjoyed the pleasures of needlework and gardening. I am fond of paintings, furniture, tapestry, houses and flowers even vegetables and fruit trees. I like a view but I like to sit with my back turned to it.”⁷ The primitive internal self expressed by Stein-as-Toklas is not that of the Native or the lone hunter; instead, Toklas embodies the simple and homey qualities of the “ordinary american,” a figure from whom Stein felt increasingly alienated, and with whom she wished to forge a lasting connection in order to broaden her readership and resituate herself as an American author. While the previous three case studies have examined an archetypal savagery, Stein uses Toklas to express a more personal authentic self, one who sat with her back to the goings on of the avant-garde modernists.

Because Stein was adamant in her self-conception and self-promotion as an avant-garde tastemaker in Paris in the 1920s, the utilization of Toklas’ voice was one way for her to assume a simpler narrative tone and to write an autobiographical text freed of modernist “rarified airs.” The fin-de-siècle trend of escaping urban centers in order to reprimativize and simplify modern life, as did Gauguin in 1891 and as explored in Poe’s *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838), was not a possibility for Stein who claimed her very identity was enmeshed with the city and modernity of Paris. She preferred the city, but Toklas preferred their trips to the countryside, trips that Stein found almost unbearably dull. Taking Toklas’ voice and surrogating her persona, as described by Joseph Roach, allowed Stein to engage in “erasure and repristinization” of her urban life without ever having to leave Paris or suspend her involvement in modernist art and culture.⁸ Toklas’ interest in domestic life and apparent disinterest in the cultural avant-

garde were anathema to Stein's espoused ideals, and in assuming the uncomplicated narrative voice of Stein-as-Toklas in *The Autobiography*, Stein demonstrates an intriguing variation on the primitive internal self, one characterized by simplicity and authenticity.

Though much has been written about *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, for my purposes here it is necessary to focus on two lines of criticism. First is the question of identity in both the narrative and for Stein as an author and modern pioneer. Second, the matter of collective authorship carries significant weight, for this is the only one of the four case studies in this project in which such collaboration is known to have occurred. Timothy Gallow contends that complexities of identity negotiation at work in *The Autobiography* are only made clear with Stein's subsequent work, *Everybody's Autobiography* (1937). Because *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* was such a commercial and critical success, Stein struggled to reassert her own voice in subsequent narratives, a voice that was quite in contrast to the relatively linear, logical, and straightforward narrator of *The Autobiography*. As Stein's identity was in flux, she began to see the notion of identity itself as a nuisance, which as Curnutt posits, may have been a "defensive reaction to the self-doubt and creative insecurity that she suffered after the popular reception of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* in 1933."⁹ In order to find her way out of the quandary of the nuisance of identity, Stein "makes use of multiple subject positions in order to invent a historiographic practice that she deemed appropriate for modern living," according to Kelly Wagers.¹⁰ What distinguishes *The Autobiography* from previous and subsequent works by Stein is that it was an openly collaborative work.¹¹ Critics from many disciplines have taken up the question of multiple authorship,

and for many, the act of collaborative creation is “at once ancient and fiercely modern, at once a nod to history and a disintegration of it.”¹² According to Troeung, the act of collaboration can be a “gift or theft,” depending on who is doing the writing. Many critics’ first interpretation of the narrative is that Stein steamrolled the voice of her lover, obliterating Toklas’ identity in favor of her own. Such occurrences did take place, as artistic authority was wrested from one party to favor another, as in the case of Hurston and Hughes, or Lawrence and Jovita Gonzalez.¹³ Lawrence, for his part and having benefited greatly from collaboration with a variety of women writers, argued that collaboration of the sexes would “re-vivify” modernism and its legacy.¹⁴

Like *Haunch, Paunch, and Jowl*, which Rideout deemed to have the “spirit of the twenties” even though much of the text takes place earlier in the 1900s, I make a similar argument for *The Autobiography* here. Though published in 1932, the text is distinctly Twenties in style and spirit, in spite of a later date of publication.

Meeting Gertrude, Life Begins

True to her previous endeavors, Stein sought in *The Autobiography* to dismantle the expectations of readers, as well as the simplest tenets of literature and writing. The protagonist of *The Autobiography* appears to be Toklas herself until the close of the text; only then is it revealed that the protagonist was Stein-as-Toklas all along. Much is told about Stein in the text, but relatively little is divulged about Toklas herself. This relationship between protagonist, author, and apparent narrator challenges the very essence of autobiography as a form. Her irreverence for the autobiographical form was preceded by a general disregard for rules of language and the written form; T.S. Eliot

published Stein's "A Description of the Fifteenth of November" in *Criterion* in 1924, later saying he recognized her writing as powerful but also worrisome: "It is not improving, it is not amusing, it is not interesting, it is not good for one's mind. But its rhythms have a peculiar hypnotic power not met with before. It has a kinship with the saxophone. If this is the future, then the future is, as it is very likely, of the barbarians."¹⁵ The barbarity that Eliot feared was a criticism frequently leveled against Stein; even decades after her work was published, critics argued that her work was nothing more than the "monotonous gibberings of paranoiacs in private wards of asylums."¹⁶

Stein's own work and the work of her contemporaries for whom she advocated, evoked those two principle qualities linked closely to most work of the "moderns," as Everdell terms them: First, it had a newness that represented a break, for better or worse, with the work of its forerunners; and secondly, the artist endowed the work with a self-conscious "spark of genius," that albatross of modernism. Popular appreciation seemed not to figure into the equation, as often to appreciate modernist works was a challenge more than a pleasure, according to Elliot. However, as I will discuss it is clear that Stein was concerned with her popularity as a writer, wishing to reach a larger audience than the small circle of admirers that surrounded her. *The Autobiography* permitted Stein to adopt a new authorial voice, reaching a wider audience and transforming an elitist modern style into a more accessible one. Stein opined that the artist had a right to say and do whatever was necessary to create art and culture; the modern artist was entitled and prone to what Conan Doyle called "fads and fancies," and their artistry put them outside social and artistic convention.¹⁷

The narrative commences with Toklas' departure from San Francisco after the great earthquake and subsequent fire of 1906. As a result of these events, she meets Gertrude Stein's brother and his wife, who eventually bring her to Paris where she meets Gertrude for the first time. Within the first several pages, the reader sees the dissolution of an old life and the beginnings of a new and eventually infamous one among the Parisian avant-garde of the 1920s. To commence the narrative in this highly traditional fashion is very unlike Stein's normal disregard for form and function of narrative. The narrator is, in this way, fundamentally different from Stein, yet still appreciative of Stein's work; the narrator confesses a great prescience and appreciation at meeting Stein in these early days in Paris, noting that "only three times in my life have I met a genius and each time a bell within me rang and I was not mistaken."¹⁸ The meeting of this unmistakable genius, the narrator states, punctuated the start of her "new full life" in Paris.

Toklas' new life is the reader's romanticized world of artists and writers like Picasso, Matisse, Braque, Hemingway, and Fitzgerald. Toklas is privy to an array of intimate conversations between Gertrude Stein and Picasso, in particular. Toklas shows only a passing interest in these goings on, confessing, as I have previously mentioned, that "I like a view but I like to sit with my back to it."¹⁹ This is the narrator's stance for much of the narrative, crafting a portrait not of herself—as one would expect in an autobiography—but of her Other, of her dear enemy, Gertrude Stein.

The original frontispiece of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* shows Toklas at the door of Stein's study, looking gaunt and slightly frail in a loose-fitting dress while Stein sits stoutly at her writing desk with her face turned slightly towards the camera; the

frontispiece is a cropped version of Man Ray's *Alice Toklas At the Door*, which features Toklas at the center of the original frame. Subsequent editions of the autobiography removed Toklas from the scene entirely in favor of Stein's face alone. Later editions also had Stein's name on the spine and bore the title *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas: The Life Story of Gertrude Stein*, by Gertrude Stein. These later modifications obliterate the nuanced commentary that one can glean from the form of the original text, which showed a literary relationship that as not one of erasure or obliteration but rather textual cohabitation. Stein, in each page of the book, relies on Toklas to find self-definition. In many ways, this photograph is a visual *mise en abyme* for the entire narrative, a miniature representation of the larger form and function of the text: Toklas is present, she looks on, but seems almost summoned to the scene by Stein. Or, perhaps she is intruding on Stein as she works, and Stein's smile reflects delight at her intrusion. These are things impossible to know, but I contend that this is the level of nuance and delicacy at which *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* is at work. Critics would eventually berate Stein's inaccurate portrayal of the past, but even those inaccuracies seem carefully crafted and deliberately mistold.

In the first quarter of the text, Toklas is a disengaged observer who is sometimes bewildered and alienated by what she sees and hears. Yet she confides in the reader that while she may not have understood conversations about art and writing and "the vernissage of the independent" at the time, "gradually I knew and later on I will tell the story of the pictures, their painters and their followers and what this conversation meant."²⁰ She never delivers on this promise to explain herself at a later time, so even this phraseology is a carefully contrived device that makes the syntax and style appear to

be direct, conversational, and clear. As she becomes more at ease in the world that she finds herself in, so too does the reader; again, a traditional and effective narrative strategy is deployed, joining reader and narrator in a progression of understanding.

As Andersen explains, Stein inverts the normal form of the autobiography to explore her own selfhood from the vantage point of the Other, and Stein exists only in relation to and as a result of others.²¹ The reader is privy to insights about Stein as understood by an outside perspective; the narrator shares many small and intimate details of Stein's worries and work, telling the reader that during *The Making of Americans*, Gertrude Stein "was struggling with her sentences, those long sentences that had to be so exactly carried out. Sentences not only words but sentences and always sentences have been Gertrude Stein's life long passion."²² The narrative is effacing of both Stein and Toklas, and while Stein is the focus of the narrator's attention she is also often the focus of her critique; the narrator shows detachment at Stein's preoccupation with issues of sentence and word, for she finds much more pleasure in needlepoint, her garden, and her dogs.

The reality of the world of the artistic and literary avant-garde of the 1920s in Paris is not exactly what the reader may have assumed. Even today audiences have an illusion of how life must always have been for the artistic modernist elite of the 1920s, as clearly shown by the popular and critical success of Woody Allen's 2011 *Midnight in Paris*. But far from the sort of coming-and-going salon life that seems to define Stein and Toklas' apartment at 27 Rue des Fleurus, Toklas explains that in the early days, life was hardly so convivial. "It may seem very strange to every one nowadays that before this time Matisse had never heard of Picasso and Picasso had never heard of Matisse. But at

that time every little crowd lived its own life and knew practically nothing of any other crowd.”²³ Toklas and Stein placed themselves at the epicenter of the coming together of these many different and disparate “little crowds,” holding an open house each Saturday evening, which brought together a group that the narrator comes to call “the Saturday evening crowd,” comprised only the most serious and “modern” musicians, painters and artists, as distinguished from the “Sunday artists,” those for whom art was merely a weekend hobby.²⁴

The narrator is aware of Stein’s peculiarities of style and conduct, making many of the episodes in *The Autobiography* ironic comments on the public reception of Stein and her work. One afternoon, a man from the Grafton Press presents himself at Rue des Fleurus. He is welcomed cordially, and the following conversation ensues:

You see, he said slightly hesitant, the director of the Grafton Press is under the impression that perhaps your knowledge of English... But I am an American (*sic.*), said Gertrude Stein indignantly. Yes yes I understand that perfectly now, he said, but perhaps you have not had much experience in writing. I suppose, said she laughing, you were under the impression that I was imperfectly educated. He blushed, why no, he said, but you might not have had much experience in writing. Oh yes, she said, oh yes. Well it’s alright. I will write to the director and you might as well tell him also that everything that is written in the manuscript is written with the intention of its being so written and all he has to do is to print it and I will take the responsibility. The young man bowed himself out.²⁵

What the young man from Grafton Press came to discuss is what was once called “Steinese,” a particular type of literary syntax that Stein invented around 1910. It was “gnomic, repetitive, illogical, sparsely punctuated,” a style that was both scandalous and delightful to admirers and critics of Stein’s work.²⁶ This style of writing created a tremendous distance between reader and author, yet the narrator confides that it was never a serious exercise. The outlandish Steinese of early days was, as Toklas recounts,

deliberate and lighthearted, an intentional choice for which Stein took full responsibility. Rather than transform her style, Stein transformed her narrative persona into that of her constant companion, who served as the link between the ordinary American individual and the cultural avant-garde of the 1920s.

In 1914, British art critic Clive Bell proclaimed that “most people who care much about art find that the work that moves them most... is what scholars call ‘Primitive.’”²⁷ Yet there was a very considerable chasm between the popular interpretation of primitivism and savagery and that of the avant-garde modernists. Steinese was alienating, high-brow and confusing. Though Stein championed its originality, thoughtfulness, and simplicity, few others were in agreement. Popular audiences of the time found primitivism in the conduct of the “natural man” and not in the illogical erudition of the Parisian artistic elite. So it was that Stein desired to bridge the gap between high and low art, and Toklas proved to be her most effective means for doing so. Toklas embodied what urban sociologist Robert Ezra Park called “the marginal man,” for she lived in two worlds, “in both of which [she was] more or less a stranger.”²⁸

There was also a double standard at work within modernist critical circles, for while male members of the artistic elite of the 1920s welcomed the label of *madness*, women in the movement—few though they were—were branded as *hysterical*, and often were considered insane in a way that a man never could be. Steinese was equated with the mumblings of asylum lunatics, yet Joyce’s impossible ramblings in *Finnegan’s Wake*—“For that (the rapt one warns) is what papyr is meed of, made of, hides and hints and misses in print”—was embraced as genius.²⁹ Together, Stein and Toklas challenged the hysterical double standard that questioned their sanity. Their life together was, in

many ways, a collaborative project, and *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* is a logical, if unexpected, zenith of their shared life.

Though the avant-garde tolerated their lesbianism, it was certainly not the normative mode of conduct for the time. To this end some scholars, notably McCabe, have focused largely on the “aesthetic eroticism” of the nature of collaboration in *The Autobiography*. Linzie, in her exhaustive study of Toklas, asserts that the cooperation of Toklas and Stein over the course of decades contributed to a sexualized assemblage of identity, allowing a glimpse into the mosaic “true story” of Toklas, who found self definition through Stein’s voice and work. Hemingway once said, upon overhearing Stein beg Toklas—whom she called “Pussy”—for “mercy,” that he had “never heard one person speak to another; never, anywhere, ever.”³⁰ The relationship was threatening to some and delightful to others. Stein, being the most vocal and boisterous of the two, reveled in the uncomfortable subversiveness of their relationship, but Toklas cast herself as a more traditional housewife, content with matters of cookery and domesticity. Placing the more traditional figure of Toklas as the narrator of *The Autobiography* circumvented the resistance against cross-dressing lesbians, yet it allowed Stein to exert continued control over their shared life. Where Stein’s irreverence was a threat to the “normal” way of American life, Toklas was a safer narrative voice, and she provided a middle road for Stein to introduce herself to the American reading public.³¹

An Accepted Thing Becomes A Classic: An Indictment Fails

Stein and Toklas surmised that, once accepted by readers, *The Autobiography* was destined to become a classic work of American literature. Some years later in

“Composition in Explanation,” Stein explained her views on the progression from refusal to acceptance, not merely of literature it seems, but of all things:

For a very long time everybody refuses and then almost without one everybody accepts. In the history of the refused in the arts and literature the rapidity of the change is always startling... When the acceptance comes, by that acceptance the thing created becomes a classic. It is a natural phenomena a rather extraordinary natural phenomena that a thing accepted becomes a classic.³²

In waiting for this natural phenomena of acceptance occur to *The Autobiography*, Stein was attacked with great zeal by those who populate the pages of the text. Uncertain selfhood and the shifting tides of perspective were two of the central aims of the Parisian avant-garde in the 1920s, but once *The Autobiography* was published, the argument suddenly became personal. Those who contributed to the critical pamphlet entitled “Testimony Against Gertrude Stein” (1935) fully divorced the aesthetics of modernism from *The Autobiography* as an exploratory and subversive text, reading it literally and with great dismay. The criticism went beyond the work itself, attacking Stein as a person and Toklas as a silent presence. In the “Testimony,” Matisse moves point by point through the narrative, taking issue with Stein/Toklas’ description of himself and his wife, citing pages and quotes, precisely as Lincoln Colcord indicted Joan Lowell. Matisse argues with Stein’s description of a Cézanne on “page 41,” for though she describes the painting as being “of bathers and a tent,” Matisse corrects that “there was no tent.”³³ Later, Stein recounts a lunch at “Calmart with the Matiesses,” but Matisse retorts: “This incident took place on the Boulevard des Invalides, not in Calmart.”³⁴ Next, Marie Jolas asks “what function the cryptic passages” of *The Autobiography* serve, for if not accurate then they must have no value.³⁵ Yet, such a statement was so fully antithetical to the modernist aims as to be almost laughably out of place.

Poet, essayist, and performance artist Tristan Tzara dismisses the work as nothing but a litany of inaccurate and “sordid anecdotes,” and Georges Braque condemns Stein’s “total lack of awareness.” And yet, only one paragraph beforehand Braque explains his own creative process with Picasso: “In the early days of cubism, Pablo Picasso and I were engaged in what we felt was a search for the anonymous personality. We were inclined to efface our own personalities in order to find originality. Thus it often happened that amateurs mistook Picasso’s paintings for mine and mine for Picasso’s. This was a matter of indifference to us because we were primarily interested in our work and in the new problem it presented.”³⁶ This is precisely the point of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*; indeed, Braque explains the collaborative process here more clearly than Stein herself ever did. The power of that confusion and conflation is precisely what Taussig advocates for in his discussion of mimesis and copy. Braque and the other critics in the “Testimony” do not consider, even for a moment, that the work and person they are so angrily condemning was an example of just such an “anonymous personality,” such a collaboration that led to confusion, such a dismantling of norms and mores. Braque concludes his remarks by noting that until *The Autobiography* was published and circulated, nobody among their group knew for certain that Stein was a writer even though they had heard rumors that that effect, in spite of the fact that by then she had gained some critical and audience acclaim in the United States.³⁷ Braque snidely concludes that, “Now that we have seen her book, *nous sommes fixés*,” an idiomatic and here a highly ironic phrase that translates roughly to “we have been set straight,” sniping that none of the avant-gardes was yet convinced that Stein could ever be a writer, given their grievances with *The Autobiography* and its author.³⁸

Hemingway did not contribute to “Testimony Against Gertrude Stein,” for it seems he had far too much to say to squeeze into a few pages of a pamphlet with miniscule circulation, even though the “Testimony” did get a mention in the *Books* column of *The New Yorks Times* on February 22, 1935.³⁹ Hemingway took his case to a much wider audience, berating Stein in any publically read venue that he could find. Hemingway attributed the “difficulty” of her writing style in general to the fact that she was a first generation Jewish immigrant, linking her interest in abstraction to a poor command of the English language, or perhaps it was a result of her lesbianism.⁴⁰ Hemingway took grievous issue with Stein’s work ethic, which he found too speedy to be that of a serious author, and the fact that he perceived her to be a writer who took no risks, opinions that he illuminates through parody in his unpublished, six-page “mock memoir” entitled “The Autobiography of Alice B. Hemingway,” now kept at the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston.⁴¹ Stein’s infatuation with the English language, again, he attributed to its having been in her family for so few years.⁴² Hemingway’s remarks went largely unnoticed, or at the very least has no public effect on Stein. The text in time was accepted by those outside the circle of visitors to the Rue des Fleurus, and it became Stein’s most popular and widely analyzed work.

The accepted thing did, indeed, become a classic in spite of fierce opposition. In *The New York Times* in September of 1933, the work was reviewed in full, replete with Stein’s portrait sketch by Francis Pictabia. In the article, “Gertrude Stein Articulates At Last: Her Autobiography, Written Simply, is Thronged with Contemporary Figures in Literature and Art,” Edwards Kingsbury finds the text a kind of “pleasant fiction” by a writer “both famous and obscure, who has a growing audience of the fittest and whose

works, in her own language, the world cannot be long deprived.”⁴³ At the age of fifty-seven, Stein finally found the recognition she had desired for so long, and *The Autobiography* became her first best-seller, selling its entire first printing of 5,000 copies nine days before its official release.⁴⁴ The text is now in its 29th printing.

Smashing Connections and Difficulty as Method

Despite Stein’s persistently alienating writing style, so nonsensical that the Grafton Press believed her to be either a non-English speaker—or, worse, an inexperienced writer—she confessed that her fervent desire was to be a popular author. Her early works were not an attempt to alienate the reader but rather explore language and writing. In his 1935 essay “A 1 Pound Stein,” William Carlos Williams explained that Stein had a system of “smashing every connection that words have ever had in order to get them back clean.”⁴⁵ In just such a fashion, *The Autobiography* smashed the conventions of individual authorship, individual selfhood, and the genre of autobiography but this time in a more conversational and less experimental form than previous works. Linzie characterizes the style of *The Autobiography* as having a “gossipy informality” that appealed greatly to all types of readers.⁴⁶ In a letter to friend and collaborator Virgil Thompson in 1926, Stein wrote: “Neither you nor I have ever had any passion to be rare, we want to be as popular as Gilbert and Sullivan as we can, and perhaps we can.”⁴⁷ In spite of this hope, Stein cultivated an erudite style that utilized “difficulty as method,” only shifting registers once she assumed the persona of Toklas in *The Autobiography*.⁴⁸ By middling her style, Stein made her work accessible and popular. The emergence of Stein-as-Toklas marks a disidentificatory bifurcation in Stein’s career, and one that

brought her more popularity among the general reading public than she had ever imagined she would have, while simultaneously straining her ties with her once close-knit group of Saturday evening visitors. According to Utta Dydo, Stein envisioned these two facets of her writing as “real work,” on one hand, which was the illogical and repetitious style of *Tender Buttons* and *How to Write*, and “audience writing,” like *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, its sequel *Everybody’s Autobiography* and subsequent narrative portraits.⁴⁹ Where the former was difficult to read and interpret, the latter was conversational and familiar, garnering wide popular appeal. To this point, the narrator of *The Autobiography* explains, “Gertrude Stein, in her work, has always been possessed by the intellectual passion for exactitude in the description of inner and outer reality.”⁵⁰ As Hegel contended, both realities must function in tandem to give meaning to the other, so that Stein’s “real work” was never displaced by her “audience writing,” and she pressed forward through her writing from the perspective of that inner and outer reality by turns. The drastic differences in these syntactical styles, which was enough for readers to be momentarily fooled into thinking Alice B. Toklas really had written her own autobiography, is indicative of two well-defined narratives selves. These two styles are the verbal display of those two realities, one driven outwards towards a plot and a logical conclusion, and the other driven inwards towards the illogical whimsy and darting attentions of the mind. The “real work” continued to be “a literature of word compositions,” while “audience writing” was more than anything “a literature of subject matter.”⁵¹ But *The Autobiography* is not the simple “audience writing” that it seemed to be. Linzie’s description of the “gossipy informality” and the general feeling of a conversational tone of the text is an illusion, a feeling inspired by language. Stein relies

frequently on transitional conversational phrases such as “as I was saying” to give the illusion of clarity and familiarity, when the text is lacking in both. It is lacking in accuracy and cohesion, it wanders wildly from one subject to another, but it appears to be like any other autobiography because of the language that Stein so expertly utilizes. It is a text with a palpable aura of authority.

Vying for authority over her contemporaries, *The Autobiography* was a strategic move of disidentification that acted to distance Stein from the “rarefied airs of the avant-garde” while still keeping her above the everyday realities of the ordinary American individual. By focusing on the basic aims of modernism, as Stein saw them, and wholly rejecting the many individual artists that comprised the “modernist movement,” Stein engaged in what Slotkin deems a “violent act of self-transcendence.”⁵² Her forceful ejection as a result of her own actions from the inner circle of the avant-garde afforded her the opportunity to become the successful, popular artist as she had confided to Thompson that she wished to be; but her one time affiliation with that “world apart” of the artistic elite elevated her from the masses. *The Autobiography* emphasized her eliteness, but also brought her closer to earth, thanks in no small part to the outraged response of her contemporaries.

Unlike Long and Lowell, Stein was allowed by the reading public, that driving consumer force of publication, to continue writing—there was no public hue and cry, and indeed *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* was an immediate bestseller, spurring popular interest in her “real work,” where its illogic found a broad audience at last. The text itself is both a betrayal and also a useful inversion of Stein’s espoused literary ethics, and done under the thin guise of Toklas as narrator, the text permits indulgence in a

process of “creating autobiography” and simultaneous divergence from her trademark repetitious and maddeningly circular syntax. *The Autobiography* permitted Stein to do three things: The first was to bring her lover, her wife, her publisher, and her strongest advocate out into the light of the public gaze. Secondly, the publication of *The Autobiography* generated much needed capital and allowed the wider publication of lesser-known works, “real work” in Stein’s terms, like *Tender Buttons* and *The Making of Americans*. Finally, the text also allowed Stein to implement—for the very first time—a simple, easy to read style of writing about a subject matter with wide appeal. By using Toklas’ voice, she created an escape hatch from the complex illogic of her earlier style of writing.⁵³

The Aura of the Bullfight Informant

The facet of the misdirection spectrum most salient in *The Autobiography* is the “aura effect,” which is an air of legitimacy that substantiates the illusion of veracity. The aura effect of a given narrator or narrative must be substantial enough to support the emotional investment of its audience. Fake autobiographers cast themselves as an “accredited incumbent” to the role they are playing; the confidence inspired by the accredited incumbent is, more than any other factor, a guarantor of sign-acceptance by the audience.⁵⁴ Stein, because of her friendship and intimacy with Toklas—and moreover, having Toklas’ consent—found herself in a position to freely execute the experiment as an autobiographical proxy for her lover. Because the principle subject of Toklas’ narration is Stein herself, the illusion of legitimacy is hardly an illusion at all; with Toklas’ consent and approval, the misdirection was not directed away from Stein

and to Toklas as an individual, but away from the pair as individuals towards a unified collusion in subversion of the audience's expectations. The task for Stein in creating a substantial aura effect was placing Toklas in a position where she is both privy to and an originator of the inner workings of modernism as a movement. It was not enough that Toklas merely be present; she must also be an involved narrator to give her authorial voice weight and substance.

The aura effect is a phenomenon first recognized in observations of investigative interviewing. The power of this effect is derived from the confidence of the narrator rather than the content of the actual narrative:

Cialdini (1993) suggests that authority can also be defined by competency. Research has shown that people take it for granted that experts know what they're talking about. People have a tendency to accept information on the grounds of the person who proffered it rather than on the grounds of its content (Maddux and Rogers 1983). *This is the aura (or halo) effect.*⁵⁵

In criminal investigation, the aura effect is most palpable when the interviewer exudes an air of authority in order to sway the interviewee into a confession. But the aura effect often functions in the reverse such that the performer's command of the aura effect sways the feelings, beliefs, and confidence of the audience. The aura effect is not necessarily correlated with assuming an authoritarian voice or point of view; sometimes, the performer is most successful when underplaying the role, seeming to present him- or herself for judgment before the audience. According to Olsson, when we "believe, or believe *in*, what we are saying," we exhibit a quality that he terms "speaker commitment."⁵⁶ This commitment comes naturally to the Toklas persona. When a performer is committed to the performance, he or she uses simple, congruent grammatical constructions. At the same time, elements that may appear at first to be mistakes, slips, or

missteps such as errors in sequence, excessive superfluity of detail, irregularities in tense and aspect, and vacillating subject pronouns can also be indicative of a high level of performer commitment; such grammatical “errors” are typically seen as truth-markers in everyday discourse. Simple eyewitness accounts are often jumbled in all of the above, and display a loss of focus that is characteristic of trying to recall a past event.⁵⁷ Stein-as-Toklas maintains a conversational, quotidian, and simple style of syntax and phrasing. At times, the narrator does confuse her tenses, replicating the ordinary inconsistencies of speech. The careful balance of lexical control and excited storytelling exuberance both contribute to the aura effect. In *The Autobiography*, this conversational authoritativeness effectively familiarizes the reader with the peculiarities of the artistic elite, and draws the reader closer to the narrator, not unlike the conspiratorial tone of *Haunch, Paunch and Jowl*.⁵⁸

Toklas’ aura emanates from her position as an originator of great ideas in her own right, and as an intuitive facilitator of genius. The task in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* was to create a persona that was authoritative and likeable, who spoke in a fashion that was comprehensible in a way that Stein’s writing was not. Furthermore, the narrator and the content of a work with a successful aura effect appear to have “horizons of significance” beyond the text, as Charles Taylor terms it. Toklas actively participates in Stein’s growth as an artist, especially helping to expedite her exposure to a wider audience, by working as a proof corrector for Stein’s manuscripts.⁵⁹ Toklas also helps to facilitate Stein’s genius by being a bridge between her lover and the outside world; the narrator confides that “Gertrude Stein liked country-house visiting less than I did. The continuous pleasant hesitating flow of conversation, the never ceasing sound of the

human voice speaking english (*sic.*), bothered her.”⁶⁰ Toklas found social outings pleasing even if they were otherwise to Stein. As a consequence, the reader extrapolates that it was Toklas who was responsible for their visiting the country, for branching out from the inner circle of the Rue des Fleurus elite. It was Toklas who “reprimed” and simplified their urban life, and Toklas bears the responsibility for encouraging and even coaxing Stein away from clutches of the artistic elite that attempted to define and confine her.

Though often self-aggrandizing and sycophantic, there are subtle hints in the narrative that indicate the deep level of collaboration that transpired between Stein and Toklas. The narrator credits Toklas with the publication of *The Making of Americans*, which Toklas and Hemingway proofed together after Ford Madox Ford expressed an interest in its publication, and this involvement gives Toklas an aura not of merely authority but also the responsibility for recognizing and promoting greatness. The narrator of *The Autobiography* reveals that it was Toklas who informed Hemingway of bull-fighting for the very first time, a claim that put Toklas at the epicenter of Hemingway’s career and passions, transforming him from a good looking “shadow boxer” to a legitimate and respected author. Toklas and Stein would later criticize him for failing to give credit to those who inspired him, never mentioning that Toklas was his first bullfight informant. The narrator laments that nobody ever knew the “real story of Hem” while simultaneously recounting the “true story of Hemingway” as she saw it unfold.⁶¹ Toklas’ nonchalance only serves to increase her aura effect, making her involvement in the development of great art and writers and active and constant pursuit of modern newness and genius.

The Autobiography brought Stein recognition and success among the reading public; before its publication, there was little widespread interest in her work. As a result, Toklas herself took up the cause, printing an “edition of one hundred copies [of the poem “Before the Flowers of Friendship Faded Friendship Faded”]... those one hundred copies sold very easily.”⁶² Her next task was to find a means to bind *How to Write*, publishing it privately for sale in the many bookshops in Paris. The matter of finding a suitable means of binding, one that was both economical and sturdy, proved difficult. Toklas strikes up a conversation with a publisher, Maurice Darantière, at a party at Georges Poupet’s house. The narrator says that Toklas “told her troubles” to Darantière, and was particularly adamant that the books should not be expensive since Stein’s audience was comprised of writers, students, librarians, and young scholars. Toklas is firm in asserting that “she wants her books read and not owned,” in spite of the fact that the *Portrait of Mabel Dodge* and *Tender Buttons* had become collectors items to her chagrin. Darantière proposes to press them on high quality but inexpensive paper and bind them in paperback.⁶³ This pleases Toklas immensely, and they strike a deal without Stein’s knowledge, but much to Stein’s subsequent delight. The innovation of Toklas’ position in the text and in Stein’s life and career is that she was a facilitator of genius *and* of modernism. Stein-as-Toklas maintains a position of detachment—leaving the real genius to Stein—while making her a figure of paramount importance in the movement. Furthermore, Toklas’ attitude in the text of always wishing to sit with her “back to the view” enables the reader an intimacy of a fellow observer. Stein’s middling style in the autobiography permits this collaboration between narrator and audience, and the deployment of the aura effect lends her an air of credibility.

Toklas' illusiveness and self-effacement heightens the aura effect and acts to misdirect the reader in a dizzying ricochet of logic where Stein is Toklas, Toklas is Stein, and ultimately they are one. Linzie argues that Toklas' absence from the text, her general aloofness, and her habit of avoiding a firm "identity" for herself—variously casting herself as maid, cook, wife, secretary, publisher, lover, and press agent—is exactly indicative of Toklas' "predilection for self-effacement," such that her absence is actually a clear mark of authorial agency.⁶⁴ *The Autobiography* would have the reader understand the relationship between the two voices as a unified self.⁶⁵ Toklas was in the habit of lending her name in all sorts of capacities, as a nom-de-plume, as Stein's secretary of unknown gender, and to other friends and acquaintances who wished, for a variety of reasons, to remain anonymous in their art or writing, reveals the definition of Toklas' own personal *identity* to be a collective rather than private matter.⁶⁶

Every One is One Inside Them: Stein, America, and Abstraction

This text does not conform to the savage identity clearly present in the other three case studies I have analyzed, but in its way it does serve a similar function for Stein in that it provided her with a platform for a simpler narrative voice. Stein was summarily opposed to autobiography as a genre because she felt it was an impossible task to provide a simple, single-sided description of anything in the past tense; it was not only impossible to do accurately, Stein felt, but also intolerably dull should one attempt it. Stein saw a good autobiography, if it should ever exist, as "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 which is not a simple narrative."⁶⁷

The conflation of genre in this description reflects the many facets Stein attributed to a legitimate autobiography; *The Autobiography* is hardly a simple narrative, even though it appears to be direct and straightforward. We know from “Testimony Against Gertrude Stein” that her facts were not truthfully presented; instead, it is a quasi-veracious illustration of a past time. The feeling of the narrative, not its factual accuracy, takes precedence. As Ezra Pound elucidated in his algebraic proof, facts take no hold of heaven.

If there is but one point that the work of fake autobiographies makes, if there is but one maxim that Stein herself stood for, it is that in each individual American there is an internal self apart from the external self, which is the negative self, the *geist*, the point of origin of the savage fake. In addition to being a self-styled patron of modernism, a cross-dressing Jewish lesbian, a writer, a playwright, and a critic, Stein was also proud of her background as an American. In her consistent sentiment to create work that was original and unique, she saw the very essence of America. Her life in Paris did not sour her feelings of America, rather her life as an expatriate permitted her an outsider’s clarity. As Ornitz said as Meyer Hirsch, in the 1920s there was as yet no clearly articulated American identity, and so Stein’s return to a primitive, conversational tone, in conjunction with her fierce Americanness, allowed her to articulate a new identity for herself and also for her American readers. The “individual american,” as Stein preferred in miniscule, was set apart from all others because he was in the perpetual act of identifying himself in contrast to and in comparison with those who were around him, but not with those who came before him. Stein felt a firm connection to both her home country and her new home in France, saying that “America is my country, and Paris is my hometown,” and it was through her writing that Stein felt most like she was home in

America, whereas it was through Stein that Toklas found a sense of home.⁶⁸ At several points in *The Autobiography*, the narrator muses on Stein's feelings on "americans": "[Gertrude Stein] always said that americans can understand spaniards. That they are the only two western nations that can realize abstraction. That in americans it expresses itself by disembodiedness, in literature and machinery, in Spain by ritual so abstract that it does not connect itself with anything but ritual."⁶⁹ Later, she continues with her thoughts on "americans and abstraction," as Toklas tells of a wandering monologue in which Stein was "mingling automobiles with Emerson," until Bertrand Russell—their guest at the time—found himself "fussed" beyond words and was obliged to go to bed.⁷⁰ In these americans who were so able to realize abstraction, Stein also found a people who were individuals above all else, a quality that she thoroughly admired, believing that in all Americans there was "a whole history in each one of them... Every one is one inside them."⁷¹

Stein claimed that *The Autobiography* was what brought her back to America; in the commercially unsuccessful sequel to Toklas' story, *Everybody's Autobiography* (1937), Stein notes that once *The Autobiography* was published she felt a slow internal change, and realized that "suddenly...what I did had a value that made people ready to pay, up to that time I did have a value because nobody was ready to pay. It is funny about money. And it is funny about identity... it was natural that sooner or later I should go to America again."⁷² Only once Stein-as-Toklas emerged was Stein able to articulate the inner voice that allowed her to speak about her own experiences in writing the text, her feelings about success, and the collision of identity, material wealth, and a return to America that the publication and popularity of *The Autobiography* brought about.

The art of middling in *The Autobiography* has not been interpreted as an intentional endeavor, but I argue that it was a skillful and carefully considered manner of crafting a fake autobiography that served both high modernist and popular interests. The art of middling in *The Autobiography* also facilitated a drastic change in Stein's narrative voice and tone. Many scholars have tackled the work as one that defies the masculine subject of the autobiography by placing at the center two women, lesbians, who together identify as a single "I" subject, or one that deliberately fragments the phallogentric voice of traditional first-person narrative. My contention is that the work is much more complex than a rejection of the unified first person narrator of earlier and more traditional autobiographical forms; it is a conciliatory text that uses the aura effect to give weight, gravity, and strength to a narrator that is thoroughly changeable. Just as Stein argued at all Americans have two people inside them at once, so too does *The Autobiography*, which is guided by the voice of an uncomplicated, straightforward "everywoman" who preferred to sit with her back to the view. The narrative bridges the erudition and elitism of the modernist avant-garde with a more tangible quotidian existence that was legible to Stein's widening readership in the United States at the end of the 1920s.

Conclusion: The Grind Against the Human Spirit

“The true liberty will only begin when Americans discover IT, and proceed possibly to fulfill IT. IT being the deepest *whole* self of man, the self in its wholeness, not idealistic halfness.”

– D.H. Lawrence, “The Spirit of Place,” 1923

In the 1920s, fake autobiography emerged as a tactic of self-expression, and it is a strategy that has persisted ever since. It was the time when the savage self came into clarity as a result of the perception that modern society was grinding down the human spirit. In this study, I have shown that the articulation and exhibition of the savage internal self was seen as the antidote to that slow withering of the human spirit.

Americans, in particular, thought themselves to have a particularly close relationship with the savage self due to the importance of the western frontier in the American imagination, a thread that was reflected in the work of Parrington and Slotkin. This intimacy with the savage within has explored in my analysis of four savage fake autobiographies of the 1920s, each of which uses a different mode of misdirection to elucidate various aspects of the savage self. I have also considered this interest in the primitive self as a social preoccupation that went beyond the confines of literature; the 1920s saw a rise in interest in camping, hunting, and fishing, which were the survival tactics of primitive man. In high modernist circles, there was a corresponding rise in the primitivist aesthetic. The savage self proved to be an elegant and simple means of exploring what Hegel called the being-other, and what Muñoz calls disidentity.

This dissertation contributes to the fields of American Studies and literary criticism by taking a careful and measured approach to the analysis of fraudulence in autobiography. In a resurgence of fake autobiography in any time period, we see reworking of the same questions considered in this study, questions that confront the

nature of the contemporary self and where it fits into contemporary life. Grounded in history and theories of identity, I have here presented a model for the analysis of other fake autobiographies, and the lessons learned from the savage fakes of the 1920s can be applied to similar texts of other eras. My hope is that my interpretation of these savage fakes will shape subsequent interpretations of fake autobiography by other scholars. It is significant to note that the savage primitivism that became popular in the 1920s was not based on any one conception of the savage Other; instead, it was based on an ill-defined proto-being without concrete historical referent. Neither scholars nor historians point to a specific “savage” culture or image that is the source of origin for the interest in savagery and the primitive that arose in the 1920s. The concept of a pure and natural primitive savage was an illusion of something that had never existed; the ideal savagery first articulated in the 1920s was a primitiveness devoid of primitives, such that no amount of empirical or quantitative evidence could either prove or disprove that original, pure, primitive’s existence.¹ In this way, even so-called “primitive” native populations could not sully the ideal of the pure savage.

The savage self draws on the myth of an original, primitive being. Henry Nash Smith, originator of the myth and symbol school of American Studies, held that this myth is “an intellectual construction that fuses concept and emotion into an image.”² Primitive, natural man fuses the nostalgia for a simpler time with the concept of the perpetual reinvention of the human self. In America, such incarnations of the primitive savage find a loophole in racist doctrine by pointing to a vague era *before* race, to a primitive, natural lone hunter whose basic impulses and desires continue to drive the modern individual. Due in part to the influences of French Romanticism and the belief in the robustness of

the “American,” the lone hunter was conceptualized as the authentic self of America, and was spurred by a desire to break with the formality and refined gentility of the Victorian Age. This savage self was adaptable, reinventive, able to be reborn into a new self-awareness and into new times with the same set of essential human skills of survival. This figure was also one who could endure and thrive in any wilderness-jungle, finding the middle ground that served his individual interests and needs above all others.

The four works of this study are documents of American history and culture that reflect “broad currents” of American thought during and leading up to the 1920s. The act of disidentification and the construction of the impersonal self within, I have shown, allows an individual to recognize and explore the competing component parts of the whole self; the shadowy natural man was and continues to be a construct of the Western mind that allows for self-conception through the creation of a pure Other. This exploration has affected the ways in which America has identified and fashioned itself over the past century, and perhaps much longer. The lack of a concrete or tangible primitive referent ensures the enduring power of the savage self. In the same way that fake autobiographers create and then substantiate their as-if worlds, the American interest in the primitive self within ensures its continued recreation, particularly in the venue of the fake autobiographical form.

When fake autobiographies emerge, they amplify particular points of anxiety about the construction of the self in modern life. This can be a reflection of personal anxieties, as in the case of Sylvester Long and Gertrude Stein, or more broadly conceived social anxieties of a particular era. Since the 1920s, many fake autobiographies have been published in the United States, especially of late, and the observations I have made in this

study are applicable to texts from other historical periods. Though the savage self is apparent to varying degrees in many fake autobiographies, there are other conspicuous elements in other fakes that employ the same conventions of misdirection outlined in this study. In the last two decades, a smattering of fraudulent deliverance-from-addiction-and-sin narratives have become best-sellers, including James Frey's *A Million Little Pieces* (2003), J.T. Leroy's *Sarah* (1999), and Margaret Seltzer's *Love and Consequences* (2008). The fake native boyhood trope appeared in Asa Forrest Carter's acclaimed and still beloved *The Education of Little Tree* (1976), in Naasdiq's *The Blood Runs Like a River Through My Dreams* (2000), and elsewhere. The phenomenon has extended beyond the limits of the traditional autobiography as well. "A Gay Girl in Damascus," a blog of much interest and with many followers that told of life as a half-American, half-Syrian lesbian named Amina Arraf was revealed to be the work of a white straight male in Scotland. Upon the revelation of his identity in 2011, Tom MacMaster, who had written for years as his lesbian Syrian other self, apologized to his readers. His explanation revealed the central premise of understanding and appreciating fake autobiographies from any historical time period, and underscores an important conclusion of this study, which is that the value of a fake autobiography is not erased by its fraudulence. MacMaster explained: "While the narrative voice may have been fictional, the facts on this blog are true and not misleading as to the situation on the ground," he wrote. "I do not believe that I have harmed anyone — I feel that I have created an important voice for issues that I feel strongly about."³

The project of fake autobiography as explored here is not one of grandiose myth making, but instead is a task that identifies and cultivates an inner self expressed as a

protagonist apart from external self of the author. Through the savage self, the fake autobiographer extrapolates and explores questions that reconceptualize identity and self-definition. Each author approaches this authorial bifurcation differently, but I have shown that this savage simple self emerges in clearly identifiable ways in each text. Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance grew up in the complexity of the Jim Crow South, and in order to escape his childhood and reject his past, he was obliged to reinvent himself, so we see the reinvented savage. He became different kinds of Indians, an inclination that illustrates his continuing desire to become a more real and authentic Indian and to perpetually attempt to solidify his own self-definition. Sylvester Long conceived of himself, both within and outside of his autobiography, to be a kind of consumable Red Man. In considering Samuel Ornitz, it is clear that Meyer Hirsch was ruthless but also exceedingly adaptable, and that adaptability ensures the survival of the primitive self in the urban, literal, or figurative wilderness-jungle. He adapted to his environs, presenting himself as more Jewish at certain times and less so at others, professing a love or hatred for the Talmud as suited the occasion, allying himself with Tammany Hall or severing his connections to politics, all of which allowed him to grow his figurative and literal girth. Joan Lowell crafted a spartan and manly childhood that gave substance to her starlet persona. At first glance, Lowell's fake autobiography appears to be a grandiose publicity stunt, but upon closer scrutiny it reveals an intriguing interpretation of primitive womanhood in the context of gendered roles as defined by civilized society. Gertrude Stein bridged the gap between the popular savageries of texts like *The Cradle of the Deep* with the high modern primitivism what was in vogue among the avant-garde. I place Stein at the end of my study's continuum of savage fakes, for while the other three

authors endeavored to embrace the savage in a more literal sense, Stein showed just how nuanced the savage self can be, because for her the task was to simplify her written voice. To do so without betraying her own style, she assumed a more domestic and feminine identity, using Toklas as the conduit for her new authorial voice which was simpler, less abstract, and had broader popular appeal.

This study has also delineated the misdirection spectrum, which draws from the formalist analysis of the New Critics. The misdirection spectrum allows readers a means by which to analyze fake autobiographies without getting stymied by the issue of fraudulence. In looking at these savage fakes, I have identified four principle strategies of misdirection. While I focused on one particular mode of misdirection in each case study, all forms of misdirection can be found in each text to varying degrees. I have looked at the as-if world, the aura effect, the pendulum swing, and the perilocutionary presumption. Rather than dismissing these works as peculiar documents that are excluded from the larger literary tradition of identity narratives, I have shown that these texts are part of a social and literary history that still has significance today. Furthermore, it bears mentioning that the overwhelming majority of fake autobiographers end their lives in suicide. The crafting and presentation of a fraudulent autobiography is a very high stakes gamble, not an insignificant game of wits. These explorations of the self are often questions of survival for their author.

I recognize that due to my sustained focus on disidentificatory cultivation of the internal savage or primitive self, the decoding method of the misdirection spectrum may seem an afterthought. Yet at the beginning of this study, a focus on misdirection was what fueled my research. My initial interest was a study in just *how* such believable fakes

are crafted, and how to appreciate these texts in spite of their dubious content. When considering fake autobiographies, one must always be mindful of the accompanying outrage at their exposure, but as curiosity-driven interdisciplinary scholars, it is our obligation to read around that outrage. That public outcry is demonstrative of the emotional power that narratives such as these carry; the betrayal expressed by the reading public at large demonstrates the importance and weight of these texts. It is also indicative of the trust bond forged between reader and writer. There is an intimacy of interpretation and recitation that forms an imaginary but still powerful bond. So the public outcry is not surprising, but I argue that often the noisy outrage of public exposure obscures and sometimes erases the value of these texts. Indeed, the only one of the works considered here that is still analyzed by scholars is Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. In retrospect, the public outrage is often the only residue left of such narratives, for once exposed and labeled as fraudulent, reshelved as fiction or discarded entirely, the interest in these narratives falls away drastically. The misdirection spectrum allows the reader to circumvent that outrage, and to be retrained to read these texts with an awareness of authorial subterfuge and also with appreciation for their expert fakery. In "The Longtime Blackfoot," I analyzed the tension resulting from perlocutionary presumptions to show the gaps between what Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance said, what the reader understood, and what he may have intended to say. In "The Professional Jew," I discussed the idea of the misdirective pendulum swing, defined by Austin's felicity and infelicity, or performatives and constatives, to how fake autobiographies have an ebb and flow, balancing fabrication with hints of fact. In "The Scurvied Starlet," I showed the importance of the as-if world in the creation of a believable narrative, and focused on

Joan Lowell's integration of maritime jargon and trivia to obscure the shortcomings of her autobiography. And finally, in "The Dear Enemy," I examined Stein-as-Toklas' aura effect, a technique which draws from the strength of the narrative voice and the cultural capital of the subject at hand.

Though Muñoz' original implementation of disidentification was in the sphere of queer performances of identity, I have shown here that it is part of a tradition of theories of the self that harks back to Hegel, or perhaps even earlier, as a mode of understanding the external self by reinterpreting the internal being-other. Muñoz states that disidentification "can be a world-making project in which the limits of the here and now are transversed and transgressed."⁴ Fake autobiographies, in the same way, create an identity and narrative world that challenges expectations, and subverts the norms of genre. The study of narratives of identity from any era illuminates obscure facets of the preoccupations of authors and audiences. I contend that fiction is both the product and the reflection of the "broad currents" of thought of a given time. Narratives such as these are cultural, historical documents that have a far-reaching relevance for two reasons: First, the work of creating narratives is continuous; the fake autobiographies of the 1920s drew inspiration from earlier works and movements, and directly impacted later works. Secondly, the preoccupations of those who were writing in the 1920s are still not only tangible but also eminently legible to us today. There has lately been a fringe movement known as anarcho-primitivism, which contends that life before civilization was enviable, and the state of modernity as it exists today is hurling civilization towards a fire-and-brimstone apocalyptic collapse.⁵ The texts analyzed in this project show that anarcho-primitivism is merely a new iteration of an age-old theme, the very theme that governs

these savage fake autobiographies, the very theme that gave rise to Colonel Kurtz in the Congo. It is also the same impulse that has spurred the phenomenon surrounding Katniss Everdeen, and the dystopic future of *The Hunger Games* (2010). It is the savage self, adept at self-preservation and self-protection that embodies the desire to return to a simpler, less rigid, and more natural existence. I have had little success at identifying an era when at least some part of a return to a simpler, more primitive way of life was *not* a subject of creative and social interest. Nor have literary hoaxes, particularly autobiographical ones, ever disappeared as a phenomenon. Theoretical and social changes, from postmodernism to postnationalism, have altered the way that scholars, artists, and ordinary individuals live in and understand their surroundings in the United States. And yet, the allure of the savage primitive internal self remains strong, and the effects of modernist primitivism are still palpable.

It is no longer a question of articulating an “American” identity, for the idea of such fervent nationalism seems now hackneyed and old fashioned. The task now seems to be to differentiate the self from other individuals, regardless of national affiliation; or, to align the self with other like-minded selves across continents and languages. Because civilization is a man-made construct, the dismantling of civilization and its barriers—according to the anarcho-primitivists—is the right and indeed the duty of mankind. Likewise, because autobiography itself is a constructed genre, it is the artist’s duty to manipulate that form as needed in order to provide a veracious version of the self. There is nothing inherent in the genre of autobiography, aside from traditional expectations of the form, which says an autobiographical account must be a truthful narrative. As James Baldwin said, autobiography has always been a rehearsal for fiction.

Any quest for a single American identity is not only fruitless but also unhelpfully reductive and essentializing, and quashes the multitude of perspectives and opinions that define this country, all of which contribute to *an* identity that originates with the individual and broadens out to the collective. Savagery and primitivism when considered as themes of the constructed American self run through the decades and across disciplines, showing a recurrent desire to regenerate ourselves, to adapt, and to restructure our understanding and place in the world. The simple, refined savagery of an unspecified early period in a collective—but unclear—history, continues to be both a point of origin and a point of conclusion for narratives of identity, both fake and otherwise.

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Notes on the Introduction

¹ Bederman, 72.

² Bederman, 78.

³ Everdell, 132.

⁴ See William Sadler, *Americanitis: Blood Pressure and Nerves*, New York: Macmillan, 1925.

⁵ Everdell, 132.

⁶ Bederman, 96.

⁷ Thompson, 1.

⁸ Lawrence, 93.

⁹ Slotkin, 3.

¹⁰ Muñoz, 1999, 78.

¹¹ Slotkin, 23.

¹² Slotkin, 6.

¹³ Del Gizzo, 498.

¹⁴ De Man, 919.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Muñoz, 1999, 19.

¹⁷ Browder, 160-2.

¹⁸ Garrouette, 9.

¹⁹ The 1920s came on the heels of what has been called the “American Renaissance” by T.O. Matthiessen and others, a few years of extraordinary literary production in the mid-1800s. It was the time of Hawthorne and Emerson, Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*, Melville’s *Moby Dick*, and Thoreau’s *Walden*.

²⁰ Wise, 298.

²¹ Slothkeim and Vanderbilt, 100.

²² Colwell, 53.

²³ Chow, 22. *Italics original.*

²⁴ Cowan, 56.

²⁵ Parrington, Vol. 3, xix.

²⁶ Parrington, Vol. 3, xxx.

²⁷ Modernism and savagery were both responses to movements that had come before, for by the close of the 1910s, Hulme contended, romanticism had been exhausted, its “field of artistic activity harvested.” At precisely this time, Parrington speculated, pessimism began to rise in the American mind. These shifting grounds were not the same in America as in Europe, but the basic threads of modernism—and romanticism—were similarly understood both in America and in the European academy. While the classicists found beauty in standard “fixed forms,” and the romanticists found it “in the infinite,” the modernists argued that “beauty may be in small, dry things.”²⁷ The classicists found beauty in a bucket, the romanticists found beauty in an endless well. The modern ideal found beauty everywhere, neither confined nor infinite, but instead relative to the needs and interests of the artist himself. Hulme and others contended that this beauty would be mined by employing a “freshness” of idiom, a zest for those small things that had previously escaped the eye of the artist. Beauty would be everywhere in life; truth would remain always individual, according to Pound. Yet Hulme warned that “works of art aren’t eggs,” so we must be wary of how far we carry out this “freshness of idiom” ideal. Rules of language still apply, though writers like Stein challenged the very foundations of grammar. By applying precise language to sources of unexpected beauty and inspiration, and being vigilant that judgment of beauty remains individual, the aesthetic aim of modernism thought leaned heavily on an intuitive use of language and artistic sensibility. Hulme is clear that “the avoidance of conventional language” is imperative “in order to get the exact curve of the thing.” American modernists and the scholars of the fledgling field of American studies sought to distance themselves from the European academy and its traditions, while also embracing that zeal for language and

romantic individualism. Some scholars even argue that the American obsession with the primitive originates with French romanticism, and that the savage “has occupied a central place in French discourse on the nature, culture and identity of the (Western) man.” The American artist as an unpredictable genius, an originator of newness, and one in perpetual search for the primitive, rank chiefly among the most prominent residues of romanticism in early American modernist ideals.

²⁸ Hall, 4.

²⁹ Trilling, 131.

³⁰ Lévi-Strauss, 219.

³¹ Parrington, Vol. 3, xxx.

³² Pound, “Vorticism,” 141 in Ellman and Feidelson. Originally in Pound’s *Gaudier-Brzeska: a memoir* (1974), p. 91.

³³ Feidelson, *Symbolism*, 45.

³⁴ Torgovnick, 7.

³⁵ First mentioned in *The Phenomenology of the Mind (Phänomenologie des Geists)* by G.W.F. Hegel, 1807.

³⁶ Trilling, 24.

³⁷ Muñoz, 11.

³⁸ Muñoz, 2009, 2.

³⁹ Muñoz, 8.

⁴⁰ Muñoz, 12.

⁴¹ Kapchan, 137.

⁴² Wiegman, 1.

⁴³ Muñoz, 1999, 26.

⁴⁴ Ekman, *Telling Lies*, 42.

⁴⁵ Stein was a great believer in challenging grammatical conventions. In this spirit, she believed adjectives of nationality should never be capitalized as they should be considered as important—but not more so—than any other descriptor.

Notes on Chapter 1: The Longtime Blackfoot

¹ Long, *How To Talk ...*, 1. *Ibid.* for entire paragraph.

² Browder, 126.

³ Browder, “100 Percent American,” 109.

⁴ Vernon, 32.

⁵ Micco, 74.

⁶ Juhasz and Lerner, 27.

⁷ Garrouette, 9.

⁸ See Redding, 2007.

⁹ Cook, 140.

¹⁰ Long, 2.

¹¹ Long, 1.

¹² What we do know of Long’s life is due largely to the work of Dr. Donald B. Smith who has devoted his career to tracing the history of Sylvester Long.

¹³ See Lothrop Stoddard, *The Revolt Against Civilization*, 1922.

¹⁴ See Bender, 11.

¹⁵ Smith, in introduction to Long, xiv.

¹⁶ Smith, in introduction to Long, xiv.

¹⁷ Smith, 1999, 52.

¹⁸ Smith, 1999, 70.

¹⁹ Long, 8.

²⁰ Long, 5.

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- ²¹ Smith, 1999, 100.
- ²² Smith, 1982, 100.
- ²³ Smith, 1982, 101, quoting a letter from Long to S.H. Middleton, dated Regina, Saskatchewan, November 11, 1922. Long omitted this letter out from his selected works, *Redman Echoes* (1933), which he had compiled before his death, but which was published posthumously. Italics mine.
- ²⁴ Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive*, 20.
- ²⁵ Muñoz, 1999, 12.
- ²⁶ Long, 41-43.
- ²⁷ Long, 44.
- ²⁸ Goffman, 59.
- ²⁹ Smith, 147-148
- ³⁰ Radin, Paul. *New York Herald Tribune*, 14 October 1928, “An Indian’s Own Story: *Long Lance* by Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance.”
- ³¹ Smith, 1982, 175.
- ³² Long, 135.
- ³³ Smith, 1982, 134.
- ³⁴ “Indian Death Story Accepted,” *San Antonio Express*, 22 March 1932.
- ³⁵ From an unidentified clipping found in Long Lance’s possessions. Reprinted in Smith, 119.
- ³⁶ Roach, *It*, 4.
- ³⁷ See Roach, 2007, 6.
- ³⁸ “Indian to Speak Under Logan Elm: Chief Buffalo Will be Principal Attraction at Annual Event,” *Circleville Herald*, 10 Sept 1928.
- ³⁹ See illustration plate in Smith, 1982, 213.
- ⁴⁰ Roach, *It*, 6.
- ⁴¹ Roach, *It*, 8.
- ⁴² Carlson, 54.
- ⁴³ Redding, 313.
- ⁴⁴ Long, 11.
- ⁴⁵ Smith, 1982, 190.
- ⁴⁶ Long, 81.
- ⁴⁷ Long, 8 and 25 respectively.
- ⁴⁸ Long, 132.
- ⁴⁹ Williamson (Ed.), Saul M. Kassin, “A critical appraisal of modern police interrogation,” 220.
- ⁵⁰ Slotkin, 26-7.
- ⁵¹ Long, 3.
- ⁵² Long, 259.
- ⁵³ To see these threats of gender switch, or taunts as being girls or women, see Long 3, 8, 28, 114, 148.
- ⁵⁴ Slotkin, 29.
- ⁵⁵ Ohmann, 9. Here he provides a summary of the same points as explained originally by Austin in *How To Do Things With Words*.
- ⁵⁶ Hänlein, 1998, in Olsson 2004, 24.
- ⁵⁷ Goffman, 2.
- ⁵⁸ Richards, *Practical Criticism*, 6.
- ⁵⁹ Austin, 18. Footnote integrated.
- ⁶⁰ Ekman, 41.
- ⁶¹ Long, xxxviii.
- ⁶² Long, 121.
- ⁶³ Smith, 1999, 52.
- ⁶⁴ Long, 4.
- ⁶⁵ So deep was this affinity that it spurred Long to political activism. Long became a champion of voting rites for Native Americans. In an article from the *Freeport Journal-Standard* from 5 October 1928, we see his devotion to the “Indian” cause:

As for the Indian’s right to suffrage, Chief Buffalo seems to clinch that, and give the paleface voters something to think about, when he says:

“The Indians deserve to aid in the councils of the government, for they had established a democracy on this soil long before the white man came. The great Iroquois confederation was so perfectly form that their constitution was largely adopted in framing the on under which the country exists today.”

Indeed, Long knew his facts. Sixty years later, the House of Representatives passed a bill to acknowledge the influence of the Iroquois on the United States’ Constitution and the Bill of Rights.⁶⁵ Long’s interest and involvement in Native American life, regardless of tribal affiliation, it seems, represents a complex, life-long negotiation of identity expectations and restrictions; this text, coupled with his longtime devotion to becoming a legitimate Native American, shows a tremendous amount of performative competency. It is a sustained performance that we will not see again in any other inauthentic autobiographical act that I will examine in this study.

⁶⁶ Richards, *Science and Poetry*, 55.

⁶⁷ Richards, *Science and Poetry*, 58-9.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Richards, *Science and Poetry*, 67.

⁷⁰ Rossini, 10.

⁷¹ Smith, 1982, 192.

Notes on Chapter 2: The Professional Jew

¹ Japtok, “Socialism,” 21.

² Rideout, 118.

³ Rideout, 119.

⁴ Rideout, 118; Rubin, 63.

⁵ Dawidoff, 1987 and 2000.

⁶ Quoted in Rogin, 64.

⁷ Rubin, 50.

⁸ Ornitz, iii.

⁹ Ruthven, 20.

¹⁰ Ornitz, 183.

¹¹ Browder, 160.

¹² Muñoz, 1999, 39.

¹³ Ornitz, *Yankee*, 13.

¹⁴ Rubin, 50.

¹⁵ Rubin, 55.

¹⁶ Ornitz, 186.

¹⁷ Bernstein explains this simply and clearly. See “Dances with Things,” p. 70.

¹⁸ Muñoz, 2009, 9.

¹⁹ Ornitz, 183.

²⁰ Ornitz, 287.

²¹ Quoted as epigram in Slotkin, front matter.

²² Slotkin, 4.

²³ Slotkin, 35.

²⁴ Lieberman, 48.

²⁵ Ornitz, 28.

²⁶ Ornitz, 183.

²⁷ Ornitz, 204.

²⁸ Ornitz, 244.

²⁹ Ornitz, 249.

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- ³⁰ Ornitz, 227.
³¹ Ornitz, 286.
³² Ornitz, 300.
³³ Ornitz, 122.
³⁴ Ornitz, 169. See also Rubin, p. 65, for a bit more creative analysis of this event in the book.
³⁵ Ornitz, 123.
³⁶ Slotkin, 525.
³⁷ Ornitz, 189.
³⁸ Ornitz, 267.
³⁹ Ornitz, 229.
⁴⁰ Ornitz, 189.
⁴¹ Ornitz, 191.
⁴² Ornitz, 202.

⁴³ The question of neurasthenia was a timely one for Hirsch to encounter, as it was a condition of growing medical and social interest by the 1920s. It is tied directly to the savage-within attitude that Hirsch maintains and promotes throughout the narrative. Some of the earliest questions of masculinity and “civilized behavior” arose with the first moving images, recorded as ethnographic films by the French scientist, ethnographer and filmmaker Félix-Louis Regnault, who was at work towards the end of the nineteenth century in France. What Regnault noticed, after many years of anthropological film work, was that his West African subjects, though “primitive” in conduct, speech, and cognition, were in many ways closer to the “ideal man” that civilized society had begun to destroy. This ethnographic anthropological filmmaking acted to, on one hand, classify the subjects it documented, and on the other to better the European body. This is one of the earliest collisions of “the primitive man” and “civilization,” in which indigenous societies were seen as closer to the ideal form of man—unaffected by the emasculating and weakening forces of civilized society. And so at the same time as these “primitive” subjects are repellant, they are also tantalizingly alluring. The world that surrounds Hirsch is not one of anthropological betterment through study of primitive gait. See Fatimah Tobing Rony, *The Third Eye*.

- ⁴⁴ Rony, 58.
⁴⁵ Bederman, 85.
⁴⁶ Bederman, 86.
⁴⁷ Rubin, 59.
⁴⁸ Ornitz, dust jacket inscription.
⁴⁹ Slotkin, 464.
⁵⁰ Slotkin, 464.
⁵¹ Locke, Virtue B, 1681.
⁵² Browder, 160.
⁵³ Rubin, 61.
⁵⁴ Ornitz, 15.
⁵⁵ Ornitz, 237.
⁵⁶ Grier, 94.
⁵⁷ Rubin, 64. Without a structural or formal precedent, critics persistently link *Haunch*, in terms of content and theme, to *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917), a seminal text of early Jewish American fiction. But other scholars of Jewish fiction during the early part of the 1900s hardly acknowledge Ornitz at all, including Merwin who mentions Ornitz only once, as a “1920s Jewish writer,” in his study of New York Jews in the jazz age.
⁵⁸ Muñoz, 178.
⁵⁹ Wood, 130 n5.
⁶⁰ Yeomans in Grier, 75.

Notes on Chapter 3: The Scurvied Starlet

- ¹ “Department of Amplification,” *The New Yorker*, 11 November 1939, p. 79.
² Lowell, 2.
³ Lowell, 2.

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- ⁴ Lowell, 13.
- ⁵ Lowell, 81.
- ⁶ Lowell, 84.
- ⁷ Ohmann, 5.
- ⁸ Goffman, 1.
- ⁹ Also, sports often figures frequently into this nostalgia.
- ¹⁰ Lowell, 151.
- ¹¹ Lowell, 84.
- ¹² Lowell, 83.
- ¹³ Lowell, 24.
- ¹⁴ Lowell, 40.
- ¹⁵ This incident is mentioned in Mulder, "Sea Yarn or Fact?" from 12 April 1929.
- ¹⁶ Lowell, 21.
- ¹⁷ Lowell, 62.
- ¹⁸ Lowell 34.
- ¹⁹ Lowell, 34.
- ²⁰ Lowell, 41.
- ²¹ Lowell, 48.
- ²² Lowell, 210.
- ²³ Lowell, 211.
- ²⁴ Like Oprah's Book Club, an organization with which I take issue but shall not pursue it here.
- ²⁵ "About this Book," 1. Book-of-the-Month Club Insert to first edition of *The Cradle of the Deep*.
- ²⁶ "Skipper Joan's Ship Comes In, Laden With Gold: Her Life Stranger than Fiction," *Indiana Evening Gazette*, 6 March 1929.
- ²⁷ *Time*, "Books," 3 March 1929.
- ²⁸ *Daily News Standard*, 14 March 1929, p. 2.
- ²⁹ Ford, Thomas. "Sailor Girl's Tale Spun." *Los Angeles Times*, 24 March 1929, p. 311.
- ³⁰ No relation whatsoever between Joan Lowell and *The Lowell Sun*, which is a regional paper based in Lowell, MA.
- ³¹ Mulder, 12 April 1929, p. 6.
- ³² *Los Angeles Times*, 14 April 1929, p. 20.
- ³³ EB White, *The New Yorker*, "Talk of the Town," 13 April 1929, p. 13.
- ³⁴ Hellman, 25.
- ³⁵ Indeed, had the work of Long or Ornitz gotten such immense publication attention and that much-desired stamp of Book of the Month approval, it is doubtless that a similar game of finger pointing would have ensued after their exposure as fakes.
- ³⁶ *Syracuse Herald*, 19 April 1929, p. 20.
- ³⁷ Mulder, Arnold. "Hunch," 6.
- ³⁸ *The New Yorker*, 19 April 1952, "Books," p. 146.
- ³⁹ Ford, dedication page, *Salt Water Taffy*.
- ⁴⁰ *Vanity Fair*, July 1929, p. 49.
- ⁴¹ Ford, 5-6.
- ⁴² Trivigno, 30.
- ⁴³ See Bender's *Sea Brothers*, p. 141. He retracts his statement that it was published in a footnote, but makes no changes to his assertion in the body of his text.
- ⁴⁴ Hellman, 26.
- ⁴⁵ Colcord and Broun, 348.
- ⁴⁶ Colcord and Broun, 351.
- ⁴⁷ Lowell, 97.
- ⁴⁸ Ford, 135.
- ⁴⁹ Lowell, 29.
- ⁵⁰ Slotkin, 453.
- ⁵¹ Muñoz, 1999, 15.
- ⁵² Torgovnick, 227.

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- ⁵³ Muñoz, 92.
⁵⁴ Torgovnick, 226.
⁵⁵ Chief among these critics was anthropologist Derek Freeman.
⁵⁶ Lowell, 98.
⁵⁷ Torgovnick, 228.
⁵⁸ Lowell, 47.
⁵⁹ Lowell, 65.
⁶⁰ Lutz, 228.
⁶¹ Lutz, 228.
⁶² See Poirier, *Trying It Out In America* (2003).
⁶³ Lowell, 46.

Notes on Chapter 4: The Dear Enemy

- ¹ Toklas, Publisher's note, 1984.
² Souhami, 225.
³ *The New York Times*, "Gertrude Stein Articulates at Last," 3 September 1933.
⁴ Stein, *Toklas*, 252.
⁵ Souhami, 1.
⁶ Muñoz, 1999, 92.
⁷ Stein, 4.
⁸ Achilles, 143.
⁹ Karl, 85. For Darcy Brandel, this "creative insecurity" and ensuing writer's block were part of the great risk of collaboration between Toklas and Stein. It was a risk that ultimately paid off, and contributed to Stein's belief that the purchase of art—and books—assured modernism's continued success. In other words, Stein saw the stability in modernism in its commodification.
¹⁰ Wagers, 26.
¹¹ See Brandel, and Man Ray's "Alice B. Toklas At The Door."
¹² Gorman, 242.
¹³ See Rosenberg.
¹⁴ McDonald, 22.
¹⁵ Watson, 20.
¹⁶ Brandel, 379, citing Gold 76.
¹⁷ See Conan Doyle, "The Adventure of the Copper Beeches," first published in *Strand Magazine* in 1892.
¹⁸ Stein, 5.
¹⁹ Stein, 4.
²⁰ Stein, 15.
²¹ Andersen, 30.
²² Stein, 41.
²³ Stein, 53.
²⁴ Stein, 17.
²⁵ Stein, 68.
²⁶ Van Vechten, ix.
²⁷ Gluck, 150.
²⁸ Marotta, 422, and Robert Ezra Park, *Human Migration*, 356.
²⁹ Joyce, 20.
³⁰ Stimpson, 71.
³¹ See Newell and Lamont, 2005.
³² Stein, "Composition as Explanation," in Van Vechten, 515.
³³ Jolas, "Testimony," 5.

³⁴ Jolas, "Testimony," 5-6.

³⁵ Jolas, "Testimony," 9.

³⁶ Braque in Jolas, "Testimony," 13-14.

³⁷ Andersen, 26.

³⁸ Braque in Jolas, "Testimony," 14.

³⁹ p. 19.

⁴⁰ Curnutt, 124.

⁴¹ Linzie, 8.

⁴² Quoted in Brandell, 378, from Curnutt, 124.

⁴³ *The New York Times*, 3 September 1933, BR2.

⁴⁴ Galow, 111.

⁴⁵ Williams, 63. Also cited in Vanskike, 151.

⁴⁶ Linzie, 55.

⁴⁷ Watson, 12.

⁴⁸ Brandel, 372.

⁴⁹ Galow, 115.

⁵⁰ Stein, 211.

⁵¹ Dydo, 4-5.

⁵² Slotkin, 564.

⁵³ While *The Autobiography* is a text of an entirely different style and form than those previously analyzed in this project, it serves a similar grounding function for its author. The consequences of the narrative were mostly favorable, primarily because it was not a ruse that had to be discovered—the narrator tells us the secret herself—there was no painful public exposure necessary. All the cards were already on the table and the stakes were relatively low. The benefits of the risk of shifting authorship proved immense. The grounding function is not one of typified primitive savagery, but instead one of clarity and relative simplicity. Until Stein penned her memoirs from Toklas' point of view, she found writing to be a highly aesthetic, solitary, and thankless pursuit. *The Autobiography* was a work that alleviated the solidarity of writing, bringing Alice Toklas with her into the frame. One finds her dutiful and devout, for while she may have said she wrote *The Autobiography* "in six weeks to amuse herself," elsewhere she spoke of writing as an ascetic and serious endeavor.⁵³ For Stein, to write by finding inspiration from writers who came before was akin to unfettered greed, an act that she equates to serving Mammon, the greediest of the Seven Princes of Hell.⁵³ To write as *you write*, to be original and distinguish yourself from all that preceded you is to be a true writer, a writer with honest aims, with truthful and meaningful intentions. Stein contended that nobody chooses what sort of writer they will be, indicating that perhaps it is the audience who chooses for you, or perhaps showing yet another moment of ironic word play for she did choose what type of writer to be, making a deliberate choice to switch allegiances—devoting herself and *The Autobiography* to Mammon and monetary gain. And yet, *The Autobiography* was unlike any work that had come before. Stein contended that the only way to break into the realm of popular writing and gain a paying audience was to create a text from "audience writing;" in order to become a writer that worshiped Mammon without betraying all that she believed, it was necessary to take Toklas' voice in the process. The fairly traditional organization of *The Autobiography*, due in large part to its very genre, was a space in which Stein embraced a style of writing and discourse seemingly primitive in comparison to previous works. As a social negotiation, *The Autobiography* bears all the necessary stamps of an author stepping away from the self, attempting to convince the reader of their authority, and embracing a reality simpler and more primitive than their point of origination.

⁵⁴ Goffman, 59.

⁵⁵ St-Yves, 99. Italics mine.

⁵⁶ Olsson, 2010, 113.

⁵⁷ Olsson, 2010, 114.

⁵⁸ Where some performers rely on internal performer commitment to build this aura, like Ornitz and Lowell, others depend on the creation of "outside" legitimizing forces, as did Long and as does Stein-as-Toklas. In *Taking It Like A Man* (1998), David Savran explains that "literary and cultural texts, in other words, because of their high entertainment value and their success in engineering consent ("that was real!"), are decisive for the ongoing production of hegemony..." The "that was real" component of this fictive autobiography is paramount, since the narrative has the appearance of being a traditional autobiography

until its close. Stein-as-Toklas engineers consent to give weight and gravity to the text by flooding the narrative with an aura of legitimacy, giving the audience permission to affirm their inclination to accept the performance as “real.”

⁵⁹ Stein, 69.

⁶⁰ Stein, 127.

⁶¹ Stein, 216.

⁶² Stein, 244.

⁶³ Stein, 244-245.

⁶⁴ Linzie, 12.

⁶⁵ Linzie, 12.

⁶⁶ Linzie, 61.

⁶⁷ Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography*, 312.

⁶⁸ Souhami, 15.

⁶⁹ Stein, 91.

⁷⁰ Stein, 152.

⁷¹ Stein, *The Making of Americans in Selected Writings*, 262-3.

⁷² Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography*, 46.

Notes on the Conclusion

¹ Li, 36.

² Smith, *The Virgin Land*, vii.

³ “A Gay Girl in Damascus” Comes Clean, *Washington Post*, 12 June 2011.

⁴ Muñoz, 2009, 169.

⁵ See Zerkan, *Against Civilization* (2005)