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Audience and Narrative in Female-Authored Diaries of the Twentieth Century: Analyzing Diaries As Modernist Texts

Rose Grosskopf

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Abstract

During the early twentieth century the literary modernists reacted to a changing world by pioneering new literary forms that could depict the subjective experience of thought. Their new forms eschewed tradition, convention, and narrative and experimented with literary techniques that could depict the mind in an expanded moment of time.

In her modernist essay "A Diary," Gertrude Stein reveals the similarities between diaries and her own experimental modernist literature. "A Diary," which is both modernist literature and a diary, provides a critical lens by which to examine other diaries as modernist texts. An analysis of the diaries of Anne Frank, Virginia Woolf, and Anaïs Nin, three female writers who maintained diaries in the twentieth century, reveals that their diaries also contain elements unique to modernist literature.

Introduction: In Time: Diaries and Stein's "A Diary" As Modernist Narratives

"Why does a narrative replace a diary. Because it does not," writes Gertrude Stein in her essay "A Diary" (201). Part authentic diary[1] and part performative model, the essay documents her life and her experimentation with the alternatives to narrative that characterize modernist literature. Diaries themselves function much like modernist fiction and Elizabeth Podnieks suggests that there exists a similarity between the diary and many of the myriad aims of early twentieth-century experimental writing. Diaries, although fragmented records of events that are not considered a formal literary genre, constitute a form of literary narrative that can be effectively compared to other literary narratives such as works of modernist literature. A quick analysis of diaries reveals that they contain the key structural elements of any narrative. Three of these shared elements, when analyzed in "A Diary" or other diaries, invoke aspects of literary modernism's style.

First, both diaries and narratives require the presence of a narrator.[2] A common focus of modernist literature is the experimental exploration of the narrator's mind. The narrator of "A Diary" explicitly announces herself with first-person pronouns as in "I am I can. I can depend" (201), establishing herself as the source of the personal thoughts, observations, and life experiences within this diary. Second, both diaries and narratives gather meaning from their relationship to chronological time—and an unusual relationship with chronology often characterizes modernist fiction. Most narratives emphasize a causal temporality, but all diaries arrange themselves chronologically through their dated entries. Even Stein adheres to this linear order, listing successive entries—or paragraphs—such as "[t]omorrow Tuesday" and then "Tuesday …" (209). Third, diaries and narratives share the potential for structural fluidity.

[1] The text's recurring characters are those who visited Stein and Toklas in the spring of 1927 (Gallup xviii).

[2] *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Human Geography* defines diaries as a "recounting of one's thoughts and actions."

Likewise, modernist authors often experiment with form and structure. While narratives may vary in structure and be arranged in either episodic or linear forms, diaries feature episodic entries nested within a larger chronological sequence. The diary form, as practiced and delineated in Stein's essay "A Diary," not only illustrates the role of narration, chronological time, and narrative structure in literary modernism but also epitomizes tensions between modernist fiction and the autobiography.

Thus this analysis of Gertrude Stein's "A Diary," which is itself both a diary and a work of modernist fiction, will provide the basis for analyzing other diaries as modernist texts. In the subsequent chapters, the diaries of Anne Frank, Virginia Woolf, and Anaïs Nin will be introduced and evaluated as modernist texts. Each of these diaries was written in the twentieth century, either concurrently with or shortly following the era of literary modernism (c.1895-1945). However, it is their literary style, more than the date of their composition, that merits their evaluation as modernist texts.

I. Defining Diaries, Narrative, and Modernism

Before further examining the similarities between diaries and other narrative forms, however, we should first define both terms. Tracing the etymology of the word "diary" reveals the daily nature of diary keeping. It derives from the Latin *dies* or "day," along with the medieval Latin *diarus*, which, like the French *diarie*, means "daily." This etymology establishes the day as the diary's fundamental structural unit. The word's adjectival form, though now obsolete, emphasizes such dailiness,[3] as does the noun, which *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines as: "[a] daily record of events or transactions, a journal; specifically a daily record of matters

[3] *The Oxford English Dictionary* references the archaic adjective and defines it as "[l]asting for one day; ephemeral."

affecting the writer personally, or which come under his personal observation."[4] The diary ritualizes personal reflection and observation, and merges intangible thoughts with the physical world in the form of a written record. Through writing, the diarist commits ephemeral daily experiences to the future, independent of variables such as the length of the diary's existence as a physical object and its readership by a non-authorial audience. Diaries encapsulate a range of potential uses, both personal and professional. Even if they are not maintained every day, diaries are chronological,[5] with entries arranged chronologically, often dated. Accordingly, the concept of a day shapes both individual entries and the diary's larger temporal structure. While diaries are written and read chronologically—and in Western culture, horizontally, through the flipping of pages from left to right—each entry offers a vertical and modernist expansion of time through a continuous return to the present day.

The word "narrative" also requires explanation. The word has two literary meanings—one of which uses the term interchangeably with concepts like text, novel, or even genre—the other being an organizational structure present within literary texts, frequently a deliberately chronological structure. The type of narrative to which this chapter primarily refers is the latter. However, the earlier comparison of diaries and narrative and any reference to "narratives" in the plural refers to the former. To begin, however, we must acknowledge shifting definitions of this term in literary criticism. In short, "narrative, the process of story making and storytelling, is language arranged meaningfully over time," and demonstrates a humanist, if not a human, urge to derive sense from the world by filtering lived experiences through chronological progression

[4] Although diaries and journals are often considered interchangeable, I will use the term "diary" throughout this thesis, unless quoting another source.
[5] *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Human Geography* defines the "diary" as "a chronological journal of one's thoughts and actions."

(Sheehan 39). It offers "a fundamental way of making sense of experiences."[6] Narratives require the presence of a narrator[7] and literary elements related to narration, such as "point of view."[8] A narrative's meaning often, but not always, derives from the linear and chronological ordering of causal events.[9] While narrative structure has been traditionally associated with chronology, modernist writers sought other ways to organize a story. These alternatives included any structural pattern that creates meaning in a text, whether through repetition, causal relationships, or some other technique unique to the author, such as the continuous present practiced by Stein and stream-of-consciousness favored by Virginia Woolf and James Joyce.

Modernism itself suggests a celebration of the modern—that is the new—and of the present moment. Modernist fiction experiments with ways to expand a sense of immediacy, such as epiphany, stream-of-consciousness, and Stein's continuous present, which all emphasize individual subjectivity over historical progression. D.H. Lawrence describes modernism as rebelling against Western civilization's preoccupation with arranging narratives solely by chronological time. He writes:

> we have to … allow the mind to move in circles, or to flit here and there over a cluster of images. Our image of time as a continuity in an eternal, straight line has crippled our consciousness cruelly. (97–98)

Like Lawrence, modernist writers strove to liberate themselves from a "crippl[ing]" literary tradition and viewed their pioneering techniques not as innovative, but as a return to instinctual depictions of human consciousness. They rejected causal chronology as the primary mode of

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[6] *The Oxford Dictionary of Media and Communication* defines the narrative paradigm as such.
[7] Ibid. A narrator is requisite, as a narrative is "a story narrated by someone."
[8] Ibid. "Narrative discourse involves not only a story or plot but also narrative devices such as point of view and disclosure."
[9] Ibid. The *Dictionary of Media and Communication*'s second definition of "narrative" contends it to be "a story in any medium: a representation of a causal or associative 'chain' of real or fictional events," stressing causality.

meaning-making and instead looked to imitate the non-linearity of the human "consciousness." For example, stream-of-consciousness unites the narrator's past, present, and future in a momentary expansion of thought that reveals the inner working of consciousness, letting the mind "move in circles." Stein's continuous present uses the present verb tense along with key temporal markers to demonstrate how her characters' thoughts resonate with an expanded sense of immediacy, a technique that allows readers to see a narrator's mind "flit[ting] here and there."

Ezra Pound defines one of the central precepts of Anglo-American Modernism, the image, as "that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" (4).[10] These modernist techniques do exactly that, depicting emotion and character in a single moment, rather than tracing historical progression. Malcolm Bradbury interprets Pound's maxim as a "juxtaposing of contradictions for resolution" (48). Similarly, in "A Diary," Stein juxtaposes adjacent ideas, such as the two temporal locations of "[t]omorrow Tuesday" within a single entry (209). To depict these subjective, momentary experiences, modernist authors relied on pioneering experimental forms and alternatives to linear narrative. Stein uses the fragmented diaristic form of "A Diary" to feature modernist narrative techniques that emphasize and expand upon the moment.

II. Narratorial Presence

Both diaries and modernist texts focus on the inner life, often describing the mind of the introspective narrator. "Indeed," William Spengemann writes:

> the modernist movement away from representational discourse toward self-enacting, self-reflexive verbal structures and the critical theories that have been devised to explain this

[10] This famous excerpt from Pound's essay "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste" specifically relates to Imagism, a poetic movement which he himself largely created in the early 20th century. However, the movement is considered a sub-genre of modernism, and this tenet is easily and accurately applied to modernism.

> movement conspire to make the very idea of literary modernism seem synonymous with that of autobiography. (xiii)

Podnieks concurs that modernist fictions resemble autobiographical works, including diaries, because they emphasize the narratorial self. She posits that the modernists remained "especially preoccupied with the self and how it was portrayed in literary works" (71). However, despite modernism's affinity with autobiography, tensions exist between modernism's aesthetic goals and the structural limitations of biographies. Distinguishing the diary from other autobiographical forms clarifies its similarity to a modern novel while also revealing the literary significance of Stein's "A Diary."

Although a diary differs from an autobiography, both are composed by the subject of the narrative. By definition, all diaries can only ever be autobiographical, with the diary's subject and author being the same person and the narrator representing both. Phillipe Lejeune distinguishes between diaries and autobiographies, however, in terms of a single moment in the narrative, the ending. Autobiographies, he explains, face toward the past, because an author must be alive at the endpoint of her story. Because of this, autobiographies can be finished and concluded. In contrast, "the diary is virtually unfinishable from the beginning, because there is always a time lived beyond the time of writing" (Lejeune 103). A diarist orients the diary toward the future, expecting to write additional entries. This future-oriented thinking reveals itself in Woolf's diaries, which she carefully prepared with hand drawn margins. The last entry before her suicide appears near the beginning of a new volume in which she had drawn margins on each of the subsequent pages. This format, demonstrating "that Woolf had set up the diary as a book which she intended to fill," poignantly "underscores a life stopped short" (Podnieks 105-106); even in the midst of her depression, Woolf still directed her writing toward the future.

According to Lejeune, literature contains few instances of either pure diary, written "without any autobiographical reconstruction," or pure autobiography, which "gives no representation to the time of writing" (103). Stein's "A Diary" includes elements of both genres in Lejeune's terms. Her essay represents a "pure diary" rather than a work of memory, because every day is "today," and while the narrator remembers past events, her memories do not serve as an autobiographical reconstruction of self but rather as an objective reflection on those events. Additionally, since the narrator fails to locate herself within calendrical time, beyond a passing mention of days and dates, the work functions autobiographically because it does not situate the author's act of writing in the diary. Although the diarist offers meta-critical commentary on the concept of the diary, making assertions such as "a diary should be only very reasonable an account of those who have been here" (216), she does not reflect on her own act of writing.

Although "A Diary" features a first-person narrator—an element consistent with other diaries and autobiographies—additional voices echo within it. Rather than immediately introducing the narrator with a first-person pronoun, Stein opens the diary by referring to the recurring character of "Helen." The narrator's presence remains hidden until first-person pronouns appear in a moment of uncertainty—"[w]e went to I went to the garage" (201)—in which the narrator corrects herself, distilling a singular consciousness, "I," from a vague plural, "we." In such moments, the narrator seems hesitant to identify herself. Although "A Diary" clearly emerges as the account of this anonymous first-person narrator who writes "[a] diary of how I told everybody" (203), much of it appears in the passive voice, as in the phrase "to have pictures paid" (205), or features an implied subject, who "wrote a great many sketches" (203). Stein also displays a stylistic rift within the essay, juxtaposing domestic occurrences with critical and scholarly insights into the nature of diaries and narratives. Phrases like "to return to a

dogmatic diary" (214) seem to be spoken by a narrator distinct from the one who remarks "[t]here has been no real rain lately" (211).

The narrator of "A Diary" fades into the events she describes, establishing her environment rather than constructing herself through autobiographical reflection. The narrator's thoughts appear only when describing something or someone outside herself. She focuses, for example, on Helen's daily routine of procuring and preparing meat: "Helen bought a chicken to be boiled" (201); "Helen said that as it was Friday it was not possible to purchase pork (207); and "Helen was a disappointment in respect to veal" (209). The narrator comments, "[i]t was very easy to see veal to see veal" and "[t]oday is a pleasant day boiled beef tenderly boiled and roasted in the pot" (204, 214), as if Helen's daily meal preparation becomes a lens through which the narrator perceives the world. Helen also assists in narrating experiences, since "she is also to be ready to relate just what happened" (202). If a diary is indeed "[s]imply told events" (203), then Helen expresses a diaristic impulse simply by telling events. Although not a narrator herself, Helen can place events in time—unlike the narrator, who is limited to only referencing days in relation to the ever present "today" (202). While Helen identifies a specific day, stating that "it was Friday" (207), the narrator can only speculate that "Tuesday is still today" (202), unable to confirm that today is in fact Tuesday.

Helen's prominent role echoes what Stein herself writes, that "A Diary" is "[a] diary of theirs at first" (217), suggesting that a diary belongs not only to the narrator but also to the narrated, to the uninvolved parties that pass through its pages. Donald C. Gallup argues that in writing this essay Stein was "obviously preparing for a more important composition" (Stein xviii), *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas.* Stein's later work, though titled as Toklas's autobiography, was actually written by Stein herself, a fact revealed upon the last page. Just as

"A Diary" includes the perceptions of both the narrator and Helen, so *The Autobiography* introduces a dual narratorial presence that separates the author from the ostensible subject.

Whereas "A Diary" overtly situates itself within modernist techniques, *The Autobiography* struggles to balance Stein's modernist aesthetics with the expectations of the autobiographical form, a form which emphasizes the narrator' reconstruction of the self. This "relationship between the autobiographical impulse—the desire to write one's life—and modernist conceptions of objectifying form" becomes what Howard Finn argues is a central tension of modernist literature, especially for female writers such as Stein (191). James Breslin, however, considers autobiography antithetical to Stein's aesthetic principles. Citing another of her essays, "What Are Master-pieces and Why Are There So Few of Them," Breslin argues that Stein's commitment to evoking a continuous present is incompatible with the retrospective act of biography (902). Stein herself writes, "[t]he minute your memory functions while you are doing anything it may be very popular but actually it is very dull" ("Master-pieces" 135). For Stein, depicting a fixed identity and focusing on remembered events will "destroy creation" ("Master-pieces" 133) by dragging the past into the present through repetition. Autobiographies are usually always arranged in a chronological order, following the pattern of a human life, in which one matures from child into adult. However, this traditional linear sequence contradicts Stein's desire to "live and write within a continuous present," (Breslin 902). Stein suggests that meeting such expectations of an audience hinders creativity, because authors' awareness of an audience causes them to "write what the other person is to hear and so entity does not exist there are two present instead of one and so once again creation breaks down" ("Master-pieces" 133).

Breslin argues that through careful experimentation, Stein manages to resolve conflicts between her literary aesthetic and the genre of autobiography in both *The Autobiography* and the

later *Everybody's Autobiography*. However, she had already successfully negotiated that conflict in "A Diary." This first essay, published six years prior to *The Autobiography* in 1926, allows her to engage in an autobiographical act while being true to her aesthetic principles, because a diary can be autobiographical while also rooted in a continuous present (that is, both the temporal state and Stein's manipulation of verb tense and time markers used to evoke it). According to Gallup, Stein announces the singular purpose of "A Diary" in the line "A diary should be, simply be" (206). He argues that the essay fulfills Stein's aim to evoke a sense of the present moment, in which "the piece of writing should exist as a creation independent of its narrative of past, present, and future events, and rumors" (Stein xviii).

"A Diary" not only celebrates the modernist primacy of the narrator but also reveals the modernist tendency toward fractured narrators, those that lack a stable or fixed identity. Podnieks argues that Anglo-American modernists created a "self-reflexive and self-referential" art, in which:

> [t]he author's "I" was sacrificed to a persona that had no being beyond the text. Moreover, this "I" was fractured into multiple personae, so that identity was unfixed, unstable within the text, thus further undermining the authority of the text. (82)

She adds that the diary, a place where "the unitary self has been contested" since the seventeenth century, may represent the "ur-modernist text" (92). Stein's essay "A Diary" displays the same sense of unstable identity. Fragmented sentences, indented as separate paragraphs, suggest individual diary entries. Stein's indirect narration disrupts readers' awareness of narratorial identity and hinders their understanding of the text. Even Stein's distinctive modernist voice, with its inconsistent punctuation and syntax, echoes the fragmentation of the diaristic form. Podnieks claims that many diaries feature an ignorance of "the dictates of formal punctuation"

and instead expresses a "stream-of-consciousness replete with ellipses and dashes that would make authors such as Joyce or Jean Rhys proud" (92). In some sense, separate diary entries represent different moods, attitudes, and experiences, so that a consistent narrative voice and autobiographical sense appears only when analyzing the diary in its entirety. In a similar way, "A Diary" shifts among accounts of Helen's food preparations, lists of visitors, and observations on the nature of writing a diary; its autobiographical self is "unfixed" and "unstable," and derives its meaning from the arrangement of entries (however arbitrary this arrangement may be) that comprises "A Diary."

Diaries, unlike autobiographies, liberate the author from the expectation of objectivity and truth, allowing instead a focus on the self. A diary thus occupies a middle ground between fiction and reportage, as the depiction of reality becomes purely a matter of the diarist's perceptions, in contrast to what Woolf considers to be biography's limitations in her essay "The Art of Biography:"

> [w]hat do we mean by calling a book a work of art? … here is a distinction between biography and fiction … One is made with the help of friends and facts, the other is created without restrictions, save those of the author. (188)

However, fiction is not the only form to offer "[t]he truth of [the author's] own vision" (Woolf 193). Diaries, although depicting reality to some extent, also allow for the diarist to fashion a work of art from her own interpretive vision of her life. By interpreting her lived experiences, the diarist liberates herself from "restrictions" imposed by others (188). Because of the diarist's position as both subject and object, diaries are not subject to "necessary limitation" of "friends and facts" (193, 188). A diary is limited only by the scope of the diarist's vision and her ability to transmute her life into narrative.

Only by incorporating the fictive elements of a diary could Stein produce an autobiographic work consistent with her aesthetic principles. Breslin finds Stein's *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* to be both autobiography and fiction, because "it is the autobiography of someone other than the author" (911). While *The Autobiography* does merge fiction and autobiography, Woolf considers the interplay between known fact and literary hypothesizing within biographical texts to limit the work greatly. Woolf once disparaged a biography featuring fictionalized passages[11] and judged that its mixing of modalities resulted in the titular character "mov[ing] in an ambiguous world, between fact and fiction, neither embodied nor disembodied" (192). Stein achieves a similarly unsettling affect in *The Autobiography* by revealing that she herself wrote Toklas' autobiography. Explaining the true authorship of the book, Stein records the conversation with Toklas that inspired her writing:

> I am going to write [the autobiography] for you … as simply as Defoe did the Autobiography of Robinson Crusoe. And she has and this is it. (237)

Only by awkwardly invoking a fictional technique, that of depicting another person's thoughts, in *The Autobiography* does Stein balance autobiography with her aesthetic principles. In diaries, however, a self-created figure rendered by the author flourishes within the bounds of both factual reality and the author's own artistic vision. Ultimately, "A Diary," functioning like a genuine diary, liberates Stein, allowing her to produce a truly autobiographical work not limited by the confines of fact and without relying on fictional techniques. By producing a work in which the narratorial subject and object are the same person, she achieves in "A Diary" what she can only grasp at in *The Autobiography*. But Stein does not merely focus on the diaristic self by

[11] In her essay "The Art of Biography," in which Woolf reviews Lytton Strachey's biography, *Elizabeth and Essex; A Tragic History*, she complains that in constructing a satisfactory narrative of Queen Elizabeth's life, he invented facts to account for periods of historical uncertainty. She felt that the intrusions of fiction greatly limited the work.

emphasizing the narrator's presence in "A Diary;" she also employs narrative techniques that depict her thoughts and evolving identity.

III. Relationship to Chronological Linear Time

"Reading a diary," Elizabeth Podnieks argues, "becomes analogous to reading a modernist text." She explains that "the stream-of-consciousness method allows the author, like the analysand, and the diarist, to let thoughts come as they will," while additionally providing a realistic depiction of Freud's understanding of mental processes (90). Stream-of-consciousness is perhaps the most well-known modernist technique to have entered the vernacular. Novelist May Sinclair coined the phrase in her 1918 review of Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*, of which she writes:

> in this series there is no drama, no situation, no set scene. Nothing happens. It is just life going on and on. And in neither is there any grossly discernible beginning or middle or end. (qtd. in Podnieks 90)

Sinclair's description of Richardson's work can easily apply to Stein's "A Diary," as "A Diary" too insists on depicting the mundane reality of "life going on and on." In its celebration of the mundane, the essay rejects the traditional narrative elements of beginning and end, and instead revels in repetition—in the form of intermittent reflections on diaries, a continuing assertion of "today," and an endless return to the culinary preparations of Helen. Occasionally the faintest bud of an anecdote attempts to bloom, but these instances are shadowy and undeveloped, instances in which "nothing happens." Podnieks argues that diaries and modernist fictions are related by their similar employment of, if not stream-of-consciousness, then at least a literary depiction of the author's free-flowing thought. Stein's essay manages to occupy the space of both the diary and the modernist text. While "stream-of-consciousness" is a helpful way to

describe Stein's associative diaristic style in "A Diary," as the term can be applied to both diaries and modernist novels, Stein employs a more nuanced and personal technique. "A Diary" is merely one of many works that exhibits Stein's representation of a continuous present.

Because literary modernism emphasizes subjectivity, rather than a chronology of events, Finn explains that early modernist novels employed new narrative techniques, such as "variations on the 'stream-of-consciousness method, [to attempt] to capture the inner life with an immediacy and authenticity that preceding realisms had lacked" (191). Modernist fiction emphasizes an event's emotional impact instead of its placement in time. Diaries are similarly focused on the self; but like unlike modernist fiction, they are constrained by the reality of chronology. The linear, forward progression of days that organizes each diary inevitably directs its form and content. A day remains the diary's fundamental structural unit, but each entry is not limited to depict only a single day. Indeed, how the diarist arranges and describes each day can resemble a modernist novel: through personal reflection or memory's backward glance, one entry might encompass the entire chronological span of the diary. As Podnieks explains:

> [r]ather than being restricted to the conventional sequence of beginning, middle, and end, the modernist text merges past and future by representing the multiple layers of consciousness that constitute every present moment for any individual. This is precisely what occurs in a diary; the continual thoughts of the diarist are released in kaleidoscopic fashion in calendrical spaces that go "on and on." (90)

Like modernist texts, a diary "represent[s] the multiple layers of consciousness" of a moment, whether through stream-of-consciousness, the continuous present, or other techniques. Rather than limiting themselves to depicting only the present, the diarist and modernist author expand the moment through the "kaleidoscopic" and colorful illuminations of an inner life that shine

with memories, observations, and dreams. By expanding upon the present and "continual" thoughts of an author—her inner life—diaries relate to modernism's search for non-linear narratives.

Stein's essay "A Diary" exemplifies this modernist resistance to chronological structure as well as her own experimentation with alternatives like the continuous present. As if triggered by her sudden awareness of others, her "thought of people's impoliteness," the narrator of "A Diary" utters the exhortation to "[i]nclude a narrative" (201). She continues,

> a narrative cannot be in which in when is heard. Because a narrative to get impatient when anybody tells a story this means a story of others, this means a story and therefore a narrative and therefore. (201)

Stein's later statement that a narrative cannot replace a diary illuminates this passage as a denunciation of narrative's intrusion into the diary form. The ambiguous conditional clause of the first sentence, "when is heard," suggests that the narrative form conflicts with the declamatory style of "A Diary," which seems more a transcribed telling of events than a carefully plotted narrative. Stein's consideration of an external audience, whose presence transforms the story into "a story of others" leads her away from incorporating a narrative. Her writings suggest that positioning one's work towards an audience equates with conformity for the sake of comprehension, an authorial fate she seeks to avoid. In "What Are Master-pieces and Why Are There So Few of Them" she implies that authors who are too conscious of their audience cannot be creative and therefore cannot create a masterpiece. To Stein, including a traditional chronological narrative panders too much to the audience and detracts from the immediacy and intimacy she seeks. However, even if a diary excludes a traditional chronological narrative, it still derives some of its structure or meaning from its relationship to time.

The first sentences of "A Diary" immediately reference time, leading readers to question the text's temporal setting, duration, and chronology. "Helen bought a chicken to be boiled," Stein writes, "[i]f not in time veal. In time" (201). Her use of the vernacular phrase "in time," far from enabling comprehension, serves to confuse the reader. This phrase might suggest that one is "in time" to do something, for example, that someone or something happened "in time" to prevent the cooking and eating of veal, the alternative to the chicken that Helen is preparing. But the phrase also connotes the greater concept of time, in the sense that any such event might occur in a temporal structure, or within the linearity of time itself. Already the reader questions the text's scope and Stein's artistic goals. Is Stein offering topical commentary on a day's event or is she or philosophizing on existential realities? Regardless, the essay's early dismissal of chronological time and narrative leads to an emphasis on the moment—whether that be the "[d]ay today" (216) or the static instant of "Pablo Picasso in photograph" (208)—and not on linear order. Indeed, Stein's structural organization, which mimics the dailiness of individual entries, also makes it difficult to establish a clear chronological progression through the essay.

"This is a day of happenings," the narrator remarks, affirming the essay's reliance on the concept of the day (206). Every day described becomes today; indeed "[e]very day was Easter. Easter Monday and Easter Sunday" (205), as if suggesting a celebration of spiritual renewal that occurs daily. Every day either was or will eventually be today. But in a diary, every day is and remains today. Stein aptly mentions Easter, because the diary grants each day eternal life by memorializing it as "today." Through such verbal repetition, Stein's writing reinforces the transformative ability of the diary to crystalize the present, to transport the reader into the "today" of each separate diary entry. Although Stein references both "yesterday" (209) and "[t]he next day" (207), "[t]oday" (201) remains the focus of the text and the sole point of

temporal reference. All days other than "today" derive their meaning from their relation to "today," for the concept of yesterday is meaningless without a preexisting comprehension of today. Not only does Stein emphasize this concept in its own line—"[t]oday" (208)—but she also repeats the word in succession, "[t]oday today" (210), or in a series of eight lines, one after another, each beginning with the word "[t]oday" (204). Stein follows that series with a similar repetition of "yesterday" (204), again reiterating that "today" operates as the fount from which all temporal meaning flows. But Stein's repetition of "today" to represent different temporal moments destabilizes the narrator's conception of time. She explains that she and her friends have misremembered a date, as "an error is easily made between 1924 and 1925" (213). Being too focused in experiencing "today," she has lost her awareness of calendrical time. Stein's constant reprise of "today," along with the preponderance of first-person pronouns such as "we," epitomizes the reader's conception of a diary. Many diaries, especially those referenced in popular media, refer to the diarist, the date, and daily occurrences; Stein's exaggerated repetition of words like "today" mimics such stereotypical elements. Each sentence of "A Diary" suggests a separate diary entry referring to a different "today," emphasizing the diary's focus on the day.

With the revival of interest in Aristotelian unities, many modernist writers organized their works around the unit of a day, honoring classical traditions while also employing a diaristic trait. In modernist novels, the day functions as the essential unit of time, for purposes of either organization or narrative juxtaposition. In her essay on "Modern Fiction," Woolf urges writers to focus on "an ordinary mind on an ordinary day" (*Essays* 160). Indeed, this attention to "an ordinary day" appears in modernist works such as Joyce's *Ulysses* and Woolf's own *Mrs. Dalloway*, in which "the lives of the protagonists—like the lives of diarists—unfold within a single day" (Podnieks 81). Similarly, individual days shape the psychological experiences and

measurable narrative units of a diary, linking the form to the chronological and linear flow of time.

For Stein in particular, this emphasis on a singular day as a moment in time reflects her pursuit of the continuous present as an alternative to linear narrative. In her essay "Composition as Explanation," Stein defines it as a technique that depicts not an evolving world but instead portrays her own evolving perception and depiction of the world through non-linear means. Daniela Miranda observes, however, that Stein's essay tends to confound rather than define. It does not so much "explain Stein's composing style but rather shows the decentering potential of what would become one of her signature techniques—"the continuous present" (1). Stein's explanations are self-reflexive and self-referential, implying that "[a] continuous present is a continuous present" (Miranda 1). Describing a work of art's relationship to its time, for example, Stein proclaims that:

> [t]he composition is the thing seen by every one living in the living they are doing, they are the composing of the composition that at the time they are living is the composition of the time in which they are living. ("Composition" 516)

Blending gerunds and nouns while subtracting punctuation, the passage intimately connects the process of "living" with that of "composition," referring to versions of each concept four times in a single sentence. Indeed, Stein's essay demonstrates her literary technique within labyrinthine sentences while suggesting that this very technique offers a new lens through which to view and refract life. Stein affirms that the primary difference between successive eras and generations remains "composition," or as she puts it, "what is seen[,] and what is seen depends upon how everybody is doing everything" (513). Stein interprets the act of seeing as comprehensive perception, an act of active interpretation rather than passive observation. "See[ing]" and "doing"

connect to one another in an interrelated action. Her own notion of the continuous present, which encapsulates both author and readers in an expanding yet ever-present moment, becomes "what is seen." Composition, exemplified in Stein's contemporary moment by the continuous present, is a variable act evolving alongside an evolving sense of observation. Stein points out, however, that it is the telling of the story rather than the story itself that changes in time, noting that "nothing changes from generation to generation except the thing seen[,] and that makes a composition" (513). Her continuous present, which offers an alternative to traditional chronologically ordered narratives, becomes merely a natural step in the evolution of the narrative in modernist literature.

Traces of Stein's technique of the continuous present appear in "A Diary," as if emphasizing the sketch-like quality of diaries that are filled with imperfectly worded phrases and casually constructed entries. Miranda highlights the stylistic markers of Stein's continuous present, which, in addition to emphasizing the continuous present verb tense, include "[u]sing everything" and "[b]eginning again and again" (2). Stein certainly incorporates "everything" into "A Diary," as she often uses exaggeration and repetition to depict a quality or characteristic. For example, she describes a man, perhaps the aforementioned "young man" (213) as "doing his duty which is his an advantage because very well because very well very well very very well" (213). Rather than varying her diction, Stein repeats the descriptor "very well" to praise the man's duty while also flavoring his description with the various connotations of the phrase "very well." Stein also uses this technique not only for dramatic exaggeration, but also for formulating exact definitions and phrasings. Rather than striking a line of text, Stein corrects an initial idea by repeating and correcting it, building upon the incomplete statement with additional writing that more closely approximates her intentions, as in, "[w]e went to I went to the garage" (201).

Here she "begin[s] again." After beginning the sentence and noticing an error in her pronouns, she corrects it to assert that "I," rather than "we," went to the garage. This technique imitates speech, because one cannot verbally cross out a word that has already been spoken. As Stein rewrites to articulate her precise idea, her writing compounds and crescendos into a sonorous cadence of meaning. Her style thus imitates the process of thought itself. In particular, her use of the continuous present in "A Diary" functions as a compounding of understanding and awareness. Stein's technique serves to expand a singular moment upon the page, incorporating elements of stream-of-consciousness and epiphany that are characteristic of literary modernism more broadly.

Stein's writing hints at another sense of continuous present—not so much the verb tense or her specific literary technique, but rather the diaristic trait of situating the text within an evolving present. By labeling a day's events as "today" within a diary, the diarist forever immortalizes that day as today. Similarly, reiterating "today" places "A Diary" in a continuously occurring present. Stein repeats many such simple phrases and sentences which hint at a profound understanding of the diary genre and of modernist writing. Her celebration of the everyday resonates with Woolf's exhortation in "Modern Fiction," to write about the ordinary day. Gallup points out that the names of characters in "A Diary" reflect Stein's daily experiences: they are actual people "whom Miss Stein and Miss Toklas were seeing in the spring of 1927 when this piece was written" (Stein xviii). Stein's records of daily shopping and food preparation denote household chores often recounted in women's private diaries. Her reveling in a litany of the mundane—"I can depend depend upon idolatry of spoons and water" (201)—echoes, and yet transforms, the trivial measuring out of one's life "with coffee spoons" in T. S. Eliot's "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock."

Modernist literature attempts to expand and illuminate such ordinary moments, rather than simply replicate linear progression. Woolf, herself quite familiar with diaries and diary-keeping, considers the creation of an ever-continuous present the goal of a diary. In her entry dated Wednesday January 31, 1940, she writes, "[a]nd I cling to my little philosophy: to hug the present moment (in which the fire is going out)" (262). Just as Stein keeps revisiting the concept of "today" in "A Diary" (208), so too does Woolf return again and again to the "present moment." Other modernist writers also root their words in momentary experiences, not historical progression. Lejeune proposes comparing diaries, "whose flux is irreversible and unforeseeable" (104), to other "fragmentary genres" such as musical variation, rather than traditional narrative; however, modernist works like Stein's essay also seek to encapsulate and envision individual moments, just like a diary.

IV. Structural Fluidity: The Episodic and the Linear

Ultimately, there exist two layers of narrative structure within diaries, a doubly layered structure of the individual entry and the diary as a whole, both of which are simultaneously linear and episodic. The diary as a whole functions as a sequential catalogue of episodic entries arranged chronologically through time. Each individual entry has the potential to vary in structure, some portraying events episodically, while others do so in a linear fashion. To discuss the narrative structure of diaries requires distinguishing between these two temporal structures—the momentary and the linear—which are superimposed upon each other. Diaries' dual narrative structure resembles the two forms of life experience in Woolf's novels, as Paul Sheehan describes it:

> [h]er writing articulates not one but two interpretations of experience, as both flux and fragmentation. Life consists of flowing streams of sensation yet is also centered in the

singular heterogenous moment. These two renderings—of vertiginous wavelike fluidity and atomised, isolated particularity ... they are not oppositions, bound in a relationship of meaningful tension … They operate, rather … as covariant properties of experience. Like wave particle dualism, the two modalities do not cancel each other out but exist in tandem, coextensive of each other. (128)

An individual diary entry epitomizes the "singular heterogeneous moment," whereas the larger and chronologically-arranged diary as a whole represents one of life's "flowing streams of sensation." If modernism features the "intersection of apocalyptic and modern time" (Sheehan 50), then diaries do too. By featuring a vertical expansion of time in each entry, the diary's entry embodies a conception of apocalyptic time, or what was classically considered *Kairos*. The diary's chronological whole likewise embodies a classical and horizontal depiction of chronological time, or *Chronos*. Diaries, like Woolf's modernist writings, render both the "flux and fragmentation" of experience.

The first of these two narrative structures exists on the level of the individual diary entry, which expands the moment like an epiphany in miniature. Diary entries "may be made on a consistent day-to-day basis or else at irregular intervals, and they may be lengthy and detailed or only brief jottings."[12] These variations in frequency and length may arise organically from inspiration or a passing thought, or may suggest a faithfully maintained ritual such as Parson James Woodforde's *Diary*, which takes the appearance of "murmuring over the events of the day to himself in the quiet space which precede sleep" (Woolf, *The Captain's Deathbed*, 25).[13] A diary kept for purposes of amassing artistic inspiration tends to be written more sporadically than one kept to preserve a record, provide therapeutic reflection, or pursue some other fixed purpose.

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[12] *The Oxford Encyclopedia of English Manuscript Terminology* suggests the variability of structure among diaries.
[13] Virginia Woolf analyzes a parish priest's diary in her essay "Life Itself," and finds it to resist generical limits.

Stein evokes this more random structure in “A Diary” where paragraph indentations demarcate the separate entries which range from a single word “[t]hought” (201), to epigrammatic phrases, “[s]hould a diary be written on the morning of the day described or before” (215), to much larger paragraphs.

The second narrative structure, the calendrical, chronological sequence linking each consequent diary entry, contains the individual entries and provides them with another narrative meaning through their arrangement. A carefully planned or edited diary may express a novelistic narrative that spans the entire text, using thematic repetition that unifies entries or a concluding reflection that offers a denouement. However, most diaries simply feature characters and places repeated across entries. Each new day brings a new entry written by an author who writes with a new tone, focus, and stylistic approach distinct from that of the previous entries. Podnieks suggests that, in addition to the diarist’s style changing daily, the diarist herself evolves in the space between entries. Viewing diaries as modernist texts, she argues that diaries display not the life of a singular person, but a fractured persona and an unstable and shifting identity (82). Diaries then are sites of juxtaposition. The diary juxtaposes the diarist of one entry, revealed in her observations and reflections, with the self who composes the preceding and following entries. Podnieks links such interruption of the continuous self to the structure of modernist literary texts and to the alienating experiences of modernity, arguing that the

> technique of employing gaps or division is fundamental to the diarist’s regimes of making separate entries on different days. Modernist fragmentation … highlight[s] the real fragmentation of lived experience which modernism sought to emulate. (91)

Thus the diary, by featuring the psychological fragmentation that modernists sought to embody, as well as the chronological cohesion that Lawrence sought to avoid, becomes a continuing site

of modernist narrative tension. In writing their diaries, however, diarists do not need to choose between experimental and traditional forms, because the duality of the diary form—which emphasizes both momentary episodes and linear progression—allows for both.

Stein's awareness of the diary's double narrative structure allows her to achieve a similar balance between her modernist aesthetic and the limits of autobiography in "A Diary." Because diaries contain two narrative structures—one being a moment or anecdote resonating in the space of a singular entry and the other being a chronological order that links such entries together—they straddle both the continuous present and what Breslin calls "the kind of narrative we are accustomed … to find in autobiography" (902). While biographical forms usually entail a linear sequence that contradicts a sense of the continuous present, a diary does not have to be solely reflexive or linear to depict a life. In a similar way, through its continuously present and non-reflexive entries and through the overarching chronological diary structure, "A Diary," achieves an autobiographical effect without sacrificing Stein's modernist aesthetic.

Diaries, with their emphasis on individual subjectivity and their use of narrative structures that both accept and reject linear chronology, embody many fundamental modernist concepts and tensions. At the same time, appropriately enough, they epitomize modernism's problem with endings. In his essay "How Do Diaries End," Lejeune questions the paradoxical impossibility of ending in a form that remains eternally present and cannot be concluded after the writer's death. How then does one resolve a diary, he wonders? But this is merely the same impossibility faced by modernist writers. They too struggle to find definitive closure when evoking a sense of immediacy. Like Joyce in his short story "The Dead," modernist writers can only conclude their texts with an epiphany that quietly, incompletely, and tentatively conveys a brief moment of reflective understanding. To end "A Diary," Stein offers a meta-critical

reflection on the diary form and her own ritual of diary-keeping through a statement that rejects the etymological origin of the diary. She chooses to return to her central goal, that of defining diaries and rectifying their relationship with chronological narratives. Answering her own question, and perhaps Lejeune's question as well, she writes in her last entry, "[t]here will not be a daily diary" (218).

V. Beyond Stein: Other Female Diarists

Given that the title of this thesis is "Audience and Narrative in Female-Authored Diaries of the Twentieth Century: Analyzing Diaries As Modernists Texts," all the diaries analyzed are female-authored and likewise written during the twentieth century. The limitation on gender arose organically from the diary's history. Mary Jane Moffat, in the foreword of *Revelations: Diaries of Women*, writes that the editorial team wanted

> to see if it was possible to define the diary, in particular, as a valid literary form, one that for women, has often been the only literary form available for honest literary expression. And we wanted to understand how it was that some women, even within the context of repressive social circumstances, managed to achieve an inner freedom of personal integrity when others remained alienated from their true nature. (3)

Moffat is among a great many number of literary scholars and historians who recognize that diaries are an inherently gendered genre. For many years they were the only "literary form available" to many women. The connotation of diaries as a female genre still remains, as they are often marketed in stores and in popular culture as lock-and-keyed books with pink-feathered pom-pom pens attached, the playthings of young girls who record frivolous topics like their middle-school crushes and the color of their purses. For this reason, evaluating diaries as literature offers a way toward redressing the lack of female-authored texts in the western canon.

In the subsequent three chapters, this thesis analyzes diaries as modernist texts, using the previous study of Stein's "A Diary" as a critical lens and guide. The first chapter, "When Is a Diary Not a Diary? Anne Frank's *Diary of A Young Girl*," examines Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl* in conjecture with Renia Spiegel's recently published Holocaust *Diary*. Frank's novelistic tendencies and revisions provide a counterpoint to many modernist aims and diaristic traits, yet still reveal some modern elements within her work. The second chapter, "Diamonds in the Dust-heap and Ordinary Days: Virginia Woolf's *Writer's Diary*," analyzes Woolf's diaries as extensions of and departures from the modernist ethos she espouses in her essays and fiction. Like Stein's "A Diary," her diaries feature experimental techniques, primarily stream-of-consciousness, to expand upon individual moments within her life. The third chapter, "Life Imitates Art: Anaïs Nin and the Invention of Self," displays Nin's public style of writing and living as it relates to her aesthetic philosophies. Her dual versions of diaries alongside her opposing tendencies toward both modernist experimentalism and fragmentary modernism reveal a text, like Frank's *Diary*, that is both a diary and not a diary. The conclusion offers a self-reflexive analysis of the author's own diaries and life, reflecting on the rich history of female-authored diaries.

Chapter 1: When Is a Diary Not a Diary? Anne Frank's *Diary of A Young Girl*

When one thinks of a diary, Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl* probably comes to mind as the most iconic example. It is by far the most accessible, recognizable, and widely read diary of the present day. Over 35 million copies in 65 languages have been sold since its initial publication in 1947, making it the highest-selling diary of all time.[14] Yet despite its status as the archetype of the diary form, it subverts the formal and cultural criterions most people expect of a diary. From the diary's first pages, Frank produces an intensely meta-critical document aware of its own limitations and anticipating its own eventual publication. However, the text she produces is not quite a diary according to the definition established in the introduction. Frank's aspirations toward novel-writing and the multiple co-existing versions of the text complicate an analysis of her work as a diary. Phillipe Lejeune remarks that we all know the story that Frank's *Diary* tells, but "who really knows the story of the text?" (237).

Understanding The *Diary*'s complex story and unusual form requires comparison with other diaries and their techniques. "Yesterday Today," an epigrammatic line from Gertrude Stein's "A Diary," offers an insight by which to compare Frank's *Diary* to the modernist and diaristic norms which Stein features in her work. *Renia's Diary*, written by a young Jewish Polish diarist and poet in the late 1930s, hints at what Frank's *Diary* could have looked like had she not chosen to novelize it. An analysis of these texts in conjunction with Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl* reveals how Frank's revisionist tendencies create an unusual document that resists certain diaristic traits while also demonstrating modernist techniques.

[14]Joseph Berger in "Recalling Anne Frank, as Icon and Human Being" has gathered *The Diary*'s statistics. It is also one of the highest-selling works of literary non-fiction.

I. Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story: The Complicated History of Anne Frank's *Diary*

From the very beginning, Frank imagined her diary someday having an audience. While other diarists her age might have been concerned about their writings remaining private, she remains acutely aware of a future reader's opinions of her work, an awareness she mentions in her third entry. Self-aware and precociously knowledgeable of the published end that awaits many diaries, Frank laments that her writing experience is "strange" because "it seems to [her] that later on neither [her] nor anyone else will be interested in the musings of a thirteen-year old schoolgirl" (6). This is certainly an unusual way for so young a diarist to begin her work and bears traces of her hallmark wit and awareness. Yet Frank's insecurities did not deter her from continuing to dutifully maintain her diary. Nearly two years later, Frank's diaristic diligence is seemingly rewarded as she discovers that her diary may become an important historical document. On March 29, 1944, she records a radio broadcast:

> Mr. Bolkestein, the Cabinet Minister, speaking on the Dutch broadcast from London, said that after the war a collection would be made of diaries and letters dealing with the war. Of course, everyone pounced on my diary. Just imagine how interesting it would be if I were to publish a novel about the Secret Annex. The title alone would make people think it was a detective story. (243–244)

From the moment she hears the broadcast, Frank begins pondering the reality of the diary becoming a published text, specifically a novel. Interestingly, she does not first think of publishing the diary as it is, in the form of a raw, firsthand eyewitness account desired by the Cabinet Minister. Rather, she imagines her diary as a novel, a transformation that would entail revisions and a drastic shift of genre. As such, her literary aspirations at present do not contradict

her writings in the third entry. She does not want to present the "musings of a thirteen-year-old schoolgirl" to the world. She intends to publish the edited and polished writings of a mature writer. Although the diary is already a semi-public text, as the Secret Annex's[15] entire population is aware of it, she begins considering the rhetorical changes necessary to make her book someday appeal to a truly public audience. Having devised a title for the novelized version of the diary, *Het Achterhuis*, or *The Secret Annex*, she already understands the rhetorical implications of artistic devices such as a title.

Frank continues to imagine the book's future as a novel. In April of 1944, she questions herself, and even wishes she could write with a greater sense of narrative continuity:

> [m]y writing's all mixed up, I'm jumping from one thing to another, and sometimes I seriously doubt whether anyone will ever be interested in this drivel. They'll probably call it "The Musings of an Ugly Duckling." *My* diaries certainly won't be of much use to Mr. Bolkestein or Mr. Gerbrandy. (263)

Again, Frank is concerned that others will find her diary to be mere "musings" and either reject or ignore them. In the third entry, Frank considered the words of a "thirteen-year old schoolgirl" to be what the world would care least to read, but here her awkwardness has ascended to literary levels—to that of the "Ugly Duckling." She no longer sees herself as merely awkward but as a literary figure who epitomizes awkwardness. Arguably Frank is no aspiring modernist, nor does she express any desire to follow in the footsteps of her female literary forebears like Gertrude Stein or Virginia Woolf. She never makes any mentions of such authors or their aesthetic aims in her diary.[16] Her primary interest in modern culture seems to be the movie-star pictures that cover

[15] The Secret Annex refers to the concealed upstairs rooms in which Anne Frank and seven other Danish Jews hid from Nazi persecution during the Holocaust. It is located in Amsterdam.

[16] However, Frank did produce a work called "The Book of Beautiful Sentences," in which she copied inspiring passages from other works of literature at the behest of her Father. While the Anne Frank House website does

her wall (27) and her literary interests are most conspicuous when she quotes the famed German poet Goethe (153). But by desiring to write a novel, she reveals a literary aesthetic that differs from that of the modernists. She views her "jumping from one thing to another" to be undesirable, and, through her nearly innumerable revisions, clearly reveals that she seeks to produce a continuous traditional narrative. She does not intend to be experimental, nor does she want to publish a diary that exists in an ever-present moment. After Frank decides to publish her diary as a novel, she begins filling many of her entries with expository information that would be expected in any published story. For example, on Monday, May 8, 1944, Anne introduces Kitty—the fictional name she gives her diary—to "our family" (286). While she continues to write her diary in the format of a diary, her entries fulfill a novelistic role, providing exposition and continuing the story. As evidenced by its great literary success, Frank's *Diary* does not remain the ugly duckling that she fears it to be, but rather matures into a swan, a creature of great literary majesty.

If you the reader were asked whether you have ever read the diary of Anne Frank, you would give a simple answer—either yes or no. The question of having read a book seems simple to answer. Yet even those who would answer yes have never read Frank's actual diary. Instead they have read a Frankenstein's monster of a text, cobbled together from Frank's various diaries, notebooks, and novelizations of her own work. Due to the complicated history of Frank's text, almost no one (save for those with access to its original manuscripts) has ever read the diary of Anne Frank. Certainly, this is because Frank intended for no one to ever read her diary; instead she planned to present the world with the diary's novelized form, her *Secret Annex*.

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include one picture of the book, in which she copies lines from Oscar Wilde's *The Ideal Husband*, (a book which she also mentions on Friday June 30th), I do not know whether she referenced any modernist writers. Lejeune notes that this text is not well known, as it was first mentioned publicly in 1989 and published in 2004 (*On Diary* 240).

Mirjam Pressler, the editor of the 1991 edition of *The Diary of A Young Girl*, explains in the foreword how Frank's *Diary* divided itself into a tripartite text. The story begins on June 12, 1942 when Anne Frank received a diary as a thirteenth birthday present from her father. She began to record her life in the diary and maintained it until the Gestapo raided the Secret Annex in August of 1944. Scholars who have studied her *Diary* refer to this diary as version *a*; it remains unedited, and, though parts are missing,[17] remains an essential part of any review of her life. After being inspired by Bolkestein's radio broadcast in March of 1944, Frank decided that she would publish her diary as a novel following the war (v). As Lejeune notes, Frank planned this new project for two months until she began writing it on May 20, 1944 (241). She revisited older entries and began revising them, removing passages and adding expository information. Already planning the novel that this work would become, Frank referred to this text as *The Secret Annex*; this is known to scholars as version *b*. As she edited passages from the past, she also maintained version *a*, keeping two diaries simultaneously. Version *c* was the text that was published posthumously by Frank's father, Otto Frank, in 1947. It combines text from both versions *a* and *b*, as entries of both versions were missing—version *a* lacked a year's worth of entries and version *b* did not include entries after March 1944.

Of the eight people hiding in the Secret Annex, Otto Frank was the sole survivor and so in 1945 he returned to the Annex alone. Following the Red Cross's confirmation that his two daughters had perished in the Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp, he was gifted Frank's diary by Miep Gies, his former secretary who had worked in the business beneath the Secret Annex. He had never before read the diary and, praising its depth and clarity,[18] desired to fulfill his

[17] The Anne Frank House reveals that "the original diary letters from 1943 have not survived, we do not know anything about them."
[18] Cynthia Ozick reports that, upon reading his daughter's diary for the first time, Otto proclaimed that it made him feel that he "did not know her."

daughter's desire by publishing the text. However, Otto's job of publishing *The Diary* was complicated by more than the diary's dual form. The disarray in which the diary's volumes and pages were presented to him required him to chronologically recreate the narrative of his daughter's life. When the Gestapo had raided the Secret Annex, SS Officer Karl Silberbauer removed papers from a briefcase containing Frank's writings, using them to wrap up the family's jewelry and other valuables. He left the rest of the papers scattered about the floor in disarray. After the residents of the Secret Annex were arrested, Miep Gies returned to collect as many of Frank's papers and notebooks as she could find. She intended to return them to Frank but gave them to Otto upon learning of his daughter's death (Lejeune 242–243). It took two years for Otto to reassemble his daughter's various manuscripts and complete the immense task of combining them into a coherent narrative and compelling story.

Frank's untimely death has only mystified the process involved with editing and publishing her diary. A popular belief holds that Otto Frank hijacked his daughter's diary[19] by censoring much of his daughter's writings, removing entries and passages that were absent in the original published editions but reappeared in the 1986 publication. Indeed, Otto did so, as these entries discussed topics considered taboo, such as Frank referencing her attraction to other girls and her father's earlier love affairs. While Otto did censor certain passages, Lejeune, following careful study of the three manuscripts, asserts that Frank often censored herself as she wrote version *b*. Lejeune finds that,

> Anne "censors" herself on two other points: almost everything to do with sexuality (her own sexual development and her conversations with Peter about sexuality … and some of the things she wrote against her mother. (252)

[19] Both Ozick and Suzanne L. Bunkers both question the implications of Otto's role in publishing his daughter's text.

Both Frank as she wrote version *b* and Otto as he compiled version *c* possessed mutual understandings of what 1940s society would consider taboo. Judy Wieder also studies the dual editing process, examining three versions of an entry dated January 5, 1944 in which Frank discusses her appreciation of her female friend Jacque's body. Across these three versions, the singular day is effectively rendered as three different days. Frank's original entry, version *a*, references Frank's intimate thoughts. In version *b*, Frank removes this passage, deeming it unseemly for publication. Yet this entry is included in Otto Frank's initial version *c*. However, although he wanted to include this passage, he was unable to publish it in 1947 and thus the passage was first published in the 1986 Critical Edition. Otto's editing process was complicated by the absence of several pages (seven of which were later recovered), and he himself complicated later editorial processes by giving two of diary pages away before they were recovered in 1990 (Bunker 14). As a result, Otto lacked the option of publishing certain entries that Frank had written. As Lejeune and Wieder demonstrate, Otto was not the only one to edit Frank's *Diary*. Frank censored herself and her father restored much information as he compiled her two diaries and discovered lost pages (Lejeune 252), resulting in a document that appears to be written by "two true authors" (237).

Yet the true extent of Otto's involvement in editing his daughter's diary would remain mostly unknown until the 1986 critical edition, which was translated into English in 1995 (Lejeune 237). Lejeune notes that prior to this publication, readers would have read the highly edited *Diary* as an unedited document, perhaps as a facsimile of Frank's own notebooks. The only evidence to the contrary was a brief note published by Otto Frank, noting that "except for a few passages ... [the diary was published] in full" (Lejeune 238). Otto's focus and motivation in publication was a backward glance toward yesterday—the yesterday that was his daughter's

present. By publishing her work in the form of a diary and in selecting her more traditionally diaristic entries that featured the present and emphasized immediacy, he was transplanting the past into the present. His editing was hindered by Frank's own preoccupation with yesterday, her reconstruction of the past, and the complication of her present.

II. "Yesterday Today:" Frank's Habit of Writing About the Past in the Present

Although Frank's approach to diary-keeping is unusual, there is precedent to interpret her text as both diary and not a diary. The duality of diary and novel within Frank's *Diary* recalls the generic duality of Stein's *A Diary*. Frank's *Diary of A Young Girl*, or at least the version of it that her father had a hand in publishing, cannot be considered simply a diary. By the end of her manuscript, Frank was not so much writing a diary as she was producing and revising an autobiographical work that was structured like a diary. While some scholars would not consider it a diary because she planned to publish it,[20] it nevertheless fulfills the definition established in the introduction; it is a daily record of events and thoughts. Like Stein's "A Diary," Frank's *Diary* contains elements of both an authentic diary and a conscious exercise in crafting a text that resembles a diary.

Besides being a model by which to understand the dual form of Frank's *Diary* as both diary and an intentionally published text, Stein's "A Diary" provides epigrammatic wisdom by which to approach the techniques and form of Frank's famous diary. One line in particular offers a critical lens through which to read her diary, a two-word, one-line entry; "Yesterday Today" (Stein 202). In a literal sense, Frank often writes about a previous day during an entry dated for and discussing the present day. Although most diarists write about the present day's occurrences

[20] Elizabeth Podnieks explains, "[o]f all the literary genres, the diary is the only one that, to be imaged "authentically," must be written with no consideration of an audience beyond the writer herself" (18). She also cites twentieth century scholar Arthur Posonby who condemns the "crafted diary" (23).

in a space dated for the present day, she writes about yesterday today. As for the audience, Frank's *Diary* transports its readers into the past and resurrects those long since dead. In short, it brings yesterday into the space of today, just as Frank did in the space of her diaries.

From the first page of her diary, Frank subverts both traditional diaristic practices and modernist literary aesthetics by focusing on yesterday, rather than today. Most noticeably, Frank's first revision appears on the first page, sandwiched between the diary's first entries of June 12, 1942 and June 14, 1942. But while this correction reveals Frank's desire to craft a story, the entries surrounding it also reveal her atypical practices. Both entries refuse to focus on the day they were written; on June 12 she issues a pronouncement on the diary's purpose. In the first, she writes a single sentence expressing her hopes for her diary to be a confidant unlike any she has had before as well as a "great source of comfort and support" (1). Indeed, Frank never refers to her experiences on Friday, June 12 at all, but instead features abstract desires for the future. She writes,

> I hope I will be able to confide everything to you, as I have never been able to confide in anyone, and I hope you will be a great source of comfort and support. (1)

Of the three verbs in the sentence, none are in the present tense; "I will" and "you will" both direct the focus to the future and "I have never been able to" provides a summary of the past (1). While Frank writes in the present moment, the entry itself does not reference it. As for the second entry on Sunday, June 14, only in the last three sentences does Frank turn to the present moment, writing, "[t]his morning I lay" (2). Prior to that, Frank returns to June 12, her birthday and "the moment I got [the diary]." Of the twenty-seven sentences in this entry, Frank only uses three to describe her present day. She spends twenty-four sentences describing the day of her birthday. Clearly her focus is on her yesterday rather than on her today.

“Yesterday was a very important day for me” (223) writes Frank in her diary on Sunday, March 19, 1944, before describing the intimate conversation with Peter which they had shared the previous day. This entry is one of many in which Frank references an earlier day or records events which occurred in the past. Certainly, one can see the practical need to sometimes delay recording an event until the next day; Anne and Peter talked for a long time after Saturday’s dinner and she likely lacked the time to record the evening’s conversation immediately after it occurred. But even the focus of the conversation she describes was inclined toward the past. Frank writes that they “talked about the year 1942, and how different we were back then” (225). Within their conversation, the topics of past and present were juxtaposed, just as the two days are juxtaposed within her diary. Frank lives and writes in an environment which constantly reflects upon the past, however distant it may be. Indeed, after Frank describes Saturday’s discussion, she makes little mention of Sunday, the day on which she writes. In fact, the only mention of the present moment refers to the act of writing itself, “I must apologize, Kitty, since my style is not up to my usual standard today. I’ve just written whatever came into my head!” (226). Frank’s admittance that the flow of her thoughts guided the writing of this entry suggests Frank’s occasional reliance on the stream of her own consciousness. While her subconscious mind might aid her in writing singular entries, her conscious mind clearly rejects such a formless style of writing. In Frank’s diary, March 19 exists only as an opportunity to reflect upon the past and summon it more fully into being.

Even the most significant event of Frank’s diary, the day in which the Franks flee to the safety of the Secret Annex, is framed as an event that has occurred in the past. Frank writes,

> [i]t seems like years since Sunday morning. So much has happened it’s as if the whole world has suddenly turned upside down. But as you can see Kitty, I’m still alive, and

that's the main thing, Father says. I'm alive all right, but don't ask where or how. You probably don't understand a word I'm saying today, so I'll begin by telling you what happened Sunday afternoon. (18–19)

Within the first sentence Frank contrasts the present moment, which the date identifies as Wednesday, July 8, with Sunday morning, the date of the previous entry. Her interest lies with what has happened "since" Sunday, and so the focus of this entry lies in a time that occurs between entries. She aims to explain the week's events by portraying a narrative that future readers, whether herself or her anticipated audience, will easily comprehend. In fact, "today" is not mentioned anywhere in this entry, whether in word or in concept. Today—Wednesday, July 8—is simply the time of writing and the temporal location of her reflection. Again, Frank subverts standard practice in diaries. Typically, dates always refer to the day on which an entry was written as well as the day to which the entry refers.

Frank delays describing the events of Sunday night and Monday morning intentionally, whether this is due to her being too busy to write until Wednesday or a previous inability to relay the trauma of the unexpected move. Wednesday, lying in the shadow of Sunday's trauma, is itself inconsequential. As such, Frank skips over Wednesday. The entry's last words, "More Tomorrow" (21)—part excuse and part promise—signify that Frank has transcended the present moment. The today of Wednesday is irrelevant to her narrative. Yet Frank's choice to relive the past with the present is practical as well as personal. Her immediate concern within this passage is for the audience, who is figured in "Kitty." Frank builds suspense as she assures Kitty that she is "still alive," a decision that evokes an emotional response from the reader. Through this introduction, she relays some of the tension that she and her family felt as they moved into their "hiding place" (20). By returning to Sunday—a yesterday of sorts—within today, she provides

her audience with the causal narrative they need to understand the present. She revisits the past so that her audience can identify the beginning—the unexpected events of Sunday—that results in the end—her sitting and writing on Wednesday. She returns to Sunday so that Wednesday's story is both easily comprehensible and emotionally effective.

One of the techniques that Stein uses to create such a discombobulating lack of narrative discontinuity in "A Diary" is her lack of linking words and conjunctions such as "then" or "but," meaning that little narrative thread links the entry-like sentences. While each short, fragmented sentence connects to subsequent sentences in a chronological sequence, little continuity can be drawn from immediately adjacent passages. In contrast to Stein's experimental writing style which delineates the nonlinear flow of thought, Frank seeks out a narrative and exhibits large amounts of self-reflexivity in the first few entries. On June 12, she writes "I hope I will be able to write" (1). On June 14, she opens, "I'll begin from the moment I got you" (1) and so recreates the chronological progression of June 12. On June 15, Frank similarly recreates the previous day, explaining that "I had my birthday party on Sunday afternoon" (3). In this third entry, which features an expansive addition that spans several pages, Frank establishes exposition for her diary. Rarely in her first ten entries does Frank employ a style that could in any sense be considered modern or experimental. For example, her strange, short, and highly stylized sentences at the end of her fifth entry: "There you are. We've now laid the basis for our friendship. Until tomorrow" (10) are anomalous to the surrounding writing. The only other instance of this shortened, telegram-like messages occurs at the end of the tenth entry, which Frank briefly concludes with the pronunciation, "More tomorrow" (21). As Frank approaches the end of her entries, she shortens her sentences, as if her reflective nature is the bulk of her writing

and forward-thinking shortens her writing. Everywhere else in her early entries Frank aims for connected, flowing sentences.

Meyer Levin, reviewing Frank's *Diary* in 1953, considers it to bear hallmarks of more modern literary movements, yet he also admires the thematic continuity and perhaps the narrative cohesion that Frank inserts into the work:

> it is this unfolding psychological drama of a girl's growth, mingled with the physical danger of the group, that frees Anne's book from the horizontal effect of most diaries.

Levin elevates Frank's work above other diaries and their "horizontal effect." On one hand, horizontality refers to the plodding disconnectedness of most diaries that, although ordered chronologically and progress forward through time, do not really move. On the other hand, the horizontality also refers to a linear diary that, while progressing forward through a plot, never delves into the deepness of the individual day and moment. But Frank's *Diary* surpasses both horizontal limitations. Like a soaring phrase of music that surpasses the end of the bar line, Frank's *Diary* pushes through with forward momentum and human psychological intrigue toward the sublime. While Levin considers Frank's *Diary* to tell a story of "ordinary people," he also considers the text to possess a structural narrative that shepherds the reader forward with suspense. He considers Frank to have crafted a "completely rounded story of the development of a social nature." While her narrative is not one she fully constructs—even given her extensive revisions—Frank manages to craft a compelling narrative from the story of her life. Frank's narrative is not a traditional one that relies on chronological plots, as she herself cannot plot out her life. Rather, the cohesion of her diary that imbibes the raw material of life with thematic meaning is an intrinsically human one, the story of a girl coming of age and the complicated relationships that unfold naturally in her life.

Although Frank aimed to craft her diary's narrative through revision, she did not intend her last few entries to offer a conclusion to her work. She certainly had no idea that she would be arrested on August 7, 1944 and forced to leave her works unfinished. As Lejeune notes, version *b* ends on March 19, 1944, revealing the last few months of *The Diary* to be based on her diary alone (255). As a result, the end of her *Diary* offers no intentional conclusion. Yet her final entry offers perhaps an acceptable concluding gesture, as her reflection addresses the duality present throughout her entire life. In the beginning of her final entry, Frank declares herself to be "[a] bundle of contradictions" (334). While she is not referring to the contradictory duality of maintaining two diaries, she nevertheless reflects on the inner dual nature that perhaps drives her to write two texts. Even in this last entry she cannot help but return to her previous entry which she concluded with the text "[f]orgive me, Kitty, they don't call me a bundle of contradictions for nothing!" (334). Frank's choice to return to her last entry reveal her tending toward narrative continuity, as well as an example of her referencing yesterday during the present day.

Frank begins her last entry on August 1, 1944, writing:

> "[a] bundle of contradictions" was the end of my previous letter and is the beginning of this one. Can you please tell me exactly what "a bundle of contradictions" is? What does "contradiction" mean? Like so many words, it can be interpreted in two ways: a contradiction imposed from without and one imposed from within. The former means not accepting other people's opinions, always knowing best, having the last word; in short, all the unpleasant traits for which I'm known. The latter, for which I'm not known, is my own secret. (334)

By connecting these subsequent entries, Frank intentionally interweaves a thematic unity within her diary, suggesting that she is generating a polished product. Interestingly, although the

concept of “contradiction” already suggests dual competing meanings, she subdivides the duality further, suggesting that there are contradictions “imposed from without” as well as those “imposed from within.” She suggests that she contradicts others, which represents her worst traits, while her inner contradiction is her “secret” nature. While this entry references yesterday, Frank does not anchor it in the moment of today. This reflection seems abstract and timeless; perhaps it presents a topic which Frank had been intending to discuss for a while.

In the entry’s subsequent paragraph Frank details exactly how her personality is divided and how it has isolated her:

> [a]s I’ve told you many times, I’m split in two. One side contains my exuberant cheerfulness, my flippancy, my joy in life, and, above all, my ability to appreciate the lighter side of things … this side of me is usually lying in wait to ambush the other one, which is much purer, deeper, and finer. No one knows Anne’s better side, and that’s why most people can’t stand me. (335)

She describes her two selves, which seem to mirror the characters of her two diaries. Her “exuberant” side, which “appreciate[s] the lighter side of things,” suggests the popular Anne, surrounded by friends, family, and admirers, who only talks about “ordinary everyday things” and lacks “one true friend” (6). This is the Anne who began the diary and is unafraid to write about anything within its pages. “Anne’s better side,” that which she considers “purer, deeper, and finer,” is the self which yearns for that “one true friend” (6). This is the Anne who laments her relationship with Peter, who regrets that “we talked about the most private things, but we haven’t yet touched upon the things closest to my heart” (331). This later side is Frank, the published and professional author that fifteen year old Anne longs to be and strives to make herself into through version *b*. Frank summarizes her *Diary* so succinctly when she describes

herself as “split in two.” As she states, she herself has two selves, but so does the diary she creates. Her text has two authors, two sources, and two audiences—one public and one private. While Frank is robbed of her opportunity to conclude her work, she nevertheless still offers the reader a fitting introspection by which to reflect on all that the *Diary* is.

III. Renia Spiegel: “The New Anne Frank”

Although Anne Frank lived an uncommon life as a member of a persecuted minority, she has become a universal figure, a familiar point of cultural reference to many. Her fame has resulted in many being compared to her, whether they are child diarists or those enduring a time of great tribulation. One thinks of Zlata Filipović, whose wartime diary published as *Zlata’s Diary* earned her the moniker ‘the Anne Frank of Sarajevo.’ Likewise, any diary kept by a child of the Holocaust will find itself overshadowed by Frank’s monolithic legacy. Karein K. Goertz notes that Frank’s story is definitively “the story of a Jewish childhood during the Second World War” and that *The Diary*’s fame transformed Frank into the "human face" of the Holocaust (655). And one doesn’t even need to write a diary to invite comparisons with Anne Frank. Kendal Wingrove, writing for the *Washington Examiner* during the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic, considers Frank’s story to be “more relevant than ever,” likening Frank’s experience hiding from Nazis to modern America’s hiding from the “invisible enemy” of coronavirus. A quick internet search reveals many other articles and social media posts asserting Anne Frank to be the patron saint of those in quarantine, while others denounce the link as problematic.[21] Certainly the continued “appropriation” of Frank’s identity is a complicated ethical question which Cynthia Ozick asks us to carefully examine. Indeed, it is easy to dissect aspects of her legacy and

[21] Sophie Levitt’s opinion piece “No, your coronavirus quarantine isn't comparable to Anne Frank’s” denounces Twitter users’ comparisons of quarantine with Frank’s two years in the Annex to be problematic, if not examples of Holocaust Denialism.

haphazardly attach her name to any young diarist, or to any person in distress or isolation. Yet to do so would be to reduce Frank to a stereotype or a one-dimensional figure, Ozick warns. She cautions us against denaturing *The Diary* in this way and consequently "promot[ing] amnesia" of the true tragedy of the Holocaust. However, if one is to compare Frank's *Diary* to any other work of literature, Renia Spiegel's *Diary* may perhaps be the best choice. Spiegel also maintained a diary before dying at the age of eighteen in the Holocaust, although she was born five years before Frank and lived over six hundred miles away in Poland. In addition to the similarities in their lives, the two diaries they produced both reveal complex, if not complicated, legacies of posthumous publications.

Renia Spiegel kept her diary for three years, between January 1939 and July 1942, yet her diary was only made public in 2012 and was only published in English in 2019. As Elizabeth Bellak, Spiegel's sister, relays in her afterword, the diary survived the Holocaust by the careful preservation of Spiegel's boyfriend Zygmunt. After the war, Zygmunt found Spiegel's mother and sister in Manhattan and delivered the diary to them in 1953. After Elizabeth's mother passed away from cancer in 1969, Elizabeth locked her sister's diary in a bank safe-deposit box. Only after telling the story to her children did Elizabeth eventually decide to make the long-hidden work public. Certainly, the 2019 hardcover edition is designed to accentuate the appearance of a long-hidden diary. The glossy embossed cover bears the facade of an old notebook, worn with age and fraying at the spine. Above this vintage design a twine bow keeps an antique photograph in place, suggesting that this diary and the pictures have been sealed away for many years. The back cover also invites an immediate and intentional comparison with Anne Frank. Large letters declare the work to be "the long-hidden Holocaust diary that *Smithsonian Magazine* calls the new Anne Frank." Invoking Anne Frank is surely a marketing no-brainer. But most readers

would be able to link the diaries without much prompting. The words "Holocaust" and "diary" are synonymous with Anne Frank.

Whereas the first editions of Anne Frank's *Diary* kept the text's complicated origins secret, the first edition of *Renia's Diary* features ample information regarding its own history. Elizabeth Bellak and Holocaust historian Deborah E. Lipstadt both situate *Renia's Diary* within the context of Spiegel's life and death and the diary's posthumous publication. Lipstadt marvels at the "emotional immediacy" (ix)[22] of the document—how it encapsulates the present of 1940's Poland more effectively than any work of memory could. Bellak's preface also addresses this immediacy but offers a seemingly apologetic note, an apology not unlike the apologies diarists offer to their diaries when they are unable to jot more than a few phrases down in an entry. She writes,

> [m]y memories aren't as clear as they were eighty years ago, but I do my best. At some points, my thoughts and Renia's may feel scattered or not linear, but that's how a diary is. It's immediate and impulsive, and sometimes my memories are like that. (xv)

While Bellak apologizes for the non-linearity of her sister's text, she does admit that diaries, as well as memories, are "immediate and impulsive." Although she is not evaluating her sister's work as a modernist text, Bellak identifies attributes shared between diaries and modernist texts—non-linearity, immediacy, and impulsivity. As David Lodge articulates, many forms of modernist fiction seek to replicate the unconscious mind, in its non-linearity and stream-of-consciousness (481). Although Frank also has moments in which she depicts the free flow of her emotions and thoughts, here Bellak identifies similar moments of non-linearity to be a frequent and perhaps defining aspect of Spiegel's *Diary*. By drawing attention to these moments of non-

[22] This mention of "emotional immediacy" recalls Howard Finn's explanation that modernist writers used new narrative techniques in order "to capture the inner life with an immediacy and authenticity" (191). This "emotional immediacy" is another characteristic shared by diaries and modernist literature alike.

linearity in the preface, Bellak immediately distinguishes the truly diaristic nature of *Renia's Diary* from the intentionally novelized elements of Frank's *Diary.*

The two diaries share many structural similarities, connections that extend beyond the merely topical and thematic, that make a comparison fitting and fruitful. Both were started by young girls seeking a friend in the form of a diary—Spiegel explains in her first entry, "[w]hy did I decide to start my diary today? … I just want a friend" (1) and Frank names her diary Kitty because "I want the diary to be my friend" (Frank 7). As Lipstadt addresses, both diaries inadvertently provide historically valuable insights into the lives of two girls who did not survive the Holocaust (viii). About the two diaries she writes that both:

> are filled with the seemingly mundane musings of young girls who are transfixed by young loves and filled with hope for the future. Renia Spiegel's diary is replete with familiar expressions of teenage angst—first love, first kiss, and jealousies, that in retrospect, may seem meaningless but at the moment seem, at least to Renia, to be momentous. (ix)

This linking of the "moment" and the "momentous" provides a succinct summary of how a diarist's focus on an emotional moment offers a subjective revelation of the self. Those emotional milestones, although "meaningless" to others, are truly "momentous" to the diarist. As a result, both Frank and Spiegel provide insights into the "mundane" moments and "musings" that Holocaust survivors may have excluded from their memoirs.

Interestingly, Spiegel, like Frank, expressed a desire to become a professional writer, and published some of the poetry which she writes within her diary. On November 6, 1940, Spiegel announces that she has won a poetry competition (59), and readers can see the drafts of her competition entries on the previous pages. The following day she establishes her career goals,

declaring, "I want to write poems forever" (61). Undeniably, both diarists possess a certain precocious clarity of writing that has allowed their works to survive with such high regard over seventy-five years after being written. However, the most striking similarity between the two diarists is that neither finished nor published their diaries by themselves. Just as Frank's *Diary* was preserved and published through the intervention of her friends and family, so too was Spiegel's *Diary* preserved through the Holocaust by the boy who she wrote so many poems about.

Spiegel fills pages of her *Diary* with poetry, and some of her poems recall the day-centric universe of "A Diary." Her poems frequently echo her mood; she writes love poetry when her romance with Zygmunt flourishes, sad poetry when her mother is absent, and almost all her poems encapsulate a moment's emotions. She even communicates in poems, telling her diary in 1940 that she got her revenge on a flirtatious (but then-single) Zygmunt by writing him "an offensive poem" (63). On October 19, 1940 Spiegel writes a poem entitled "Appears" (56). The subject is the ordinary day, which she names frequently across its lines. While "[l]ike so many before, an ordinary day/ Starts a bit gloomy and a bit gray," she affirms that it distinguishes itself from its grey-clothed siblings. In fact, after the sunrise, the day "follows a different direction from then on." And although she ends the poem with an ellipsis, acknowledging that "another one" will tomorrow take its place, she emphasizes "today" with an emphatic repetition of the word "[o]ne" that starts many lines and refers back to this central day. While she contrasts today with many yesterdays, her ultimate focus is on today and the individuality of each day. To return to Lipstadt's reading of diaries, it is clear that Spiegel uses her poems as way to produce an "emotional immediacy" within her work.

Spiegel uses her poetry to maintain this “emotional immediacy” throughout her diary, especially as it grows more haunting with the war’s progression. She writes on June 6, 1942, a few days before she is moved into a ghetto, “[d]ays and moods have shimmered. Not many days have passed, but many thoughts have flown through my mind” (254). The growing fear and trauma of the atmosphere causes her thoughts to fly and she catches up to them only by writing poetry. The following day she records a haunting poem. In the first stanza she writes:

Think, tomorrow we might not be
A cold, steel knife
Will slide between us, you see
But today there is still time for life
Tomorrow sun might eclipse
Gun bullets might crack and rip
And howl—pavements awash
With blood, with dirty, stinking slag
Pigwash
Today you are alive
There is still time to survive. (255)

As her reflections grow existential, “[t]oday” acquires a new urgency and importance. “Tomorrow” may bring the “cold, steel knife” of death but “today” still has “time for life.” “Today” is the day in which the narrator’s beloved is still “alive.” Spiegel’s lines are halting and haunting. The third stanza reveals that “you” likely refers to Zygmunt, as she writes that there is “[n]ot enough eternity for all the kisses” (256). One gets the sense that she does not have time for

narrative. Whether she is constructing a past or a future for herself, creating a narrative is a luxury for which she does not have time. She knows only that she has today.

As Spiegel's romance with Zygmunt blossoms, she focuses her entries on describing her emotions while expanding moments within the day. In an entry dated May 13, 1941, Spiegel writes:

> [h]ow intoxicating this May is, but perhaps only to me? My whole life is swelling up in me, all 17 years of it. All the emotions pile up into one heap of dry leaves and this May too, it's like fuel poured on this heap…And its growing, growing, just one spark and it will erupt, flames will burst high. (134)

Unlike Frank, who writes most of her diary in hiding, Spiegel spends most of her diary able to move about freely and is thus able to enjoy May with Zygmunt. Spiegel admits her focus to be herself and her "emotions." The ellipses are her own and they demonstrate her struggle to accurately depict her emotions; she struggles to think as she writes. Ultimately, she decides on poetic metaphors to depict her emotions. This passage recalls Pound's definition of the image, which portrays the "intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" (Pound 4). Spiegel conjures an image to describe the indescribable—the experience of being in love. Spiegel continues to rely on images, admitting that she cannot craft narratives of her time with Zygmunt (nor does she think she can remember every conversation). On May 18, she writes, "I'm really at a loss for words, so just picture silence, greenery May, sunset and fireworks, and the two of us, in love" (137). She admits that she is "at a loss for words" and turns to "pictures," to images, instead. Each word decorates a scene without offering a narrative. Again, on June 20, she again fails to describe her time with Zygmunt, explaining only that "we sat next to each other and talked. And it was so…" (141). Her ellipses depict her wandering mind once again, suggesting

that she is lost in a daydream, reliving the moment as she recounts it. She, unlike Frank, is content to offer vignettes, and to paint an impressionist work for her diary. Yet, however much her entries are fragmented, the days that she relays just so happen to depict the narrative of an unfolding love story.

Although Spiegel acknowledges that personal limits hinder her ability to relay certain experiences, she is also aware of the inherent limitations of her written craft. After another evening spent with Zygmunt she acknowledges the futility of writing:

> today I'll try to relay a few fragments and think aloud a bit, that is on paper. I say fragments, because it is hard for me to describe a three-hour-long conversation. You know, it's no use writing at all, it should be filmed and on color film too. (146)

Her desire for her encounters to be "filmed and on color film too" suggests that she wants to memorialize every moment of her time with Zygmunt in all its brilliancy. Even when she records these moments in her diary, her goal is not merely to depict the conversation accurately but to portray the emotions of each moment. Spiegel admits that she "thinks" as she writes, trying to relive memories so as to reconstruct them faithfully in her diary. But her memories are fragmentary, like the images depicted in a modernist text. On July 21, she explains that she considers her writing entirely inadequate to record these moments, admitting:

> [m]any more, many things I am unable to write about because I do not know how, I have to immortalize in my mind, preserve in my heart, so that I can draw on them in moments of sadness. (150)

She suggests that her inexperience, as much as the limitations of her craft, prevents her from writing. She realizes that no art form she possesses will truly allow her to "immortalize" and "preserve" these precious days. Instead, she resigns herself to daydreaming, retreating into her

mind where the stories and emotions reside. For example, a month later she admits, “I can’t describe everything, so I’ll mention the “alley of love,” i.e., Z and I’m off to daydream, live through everything, all over again” (155).

While Spiegel relies on expressionistic images to depict the wonders of a first love, she also struggles to depict the horrors of war. On June 26, 1941 she writes,

> [t]hese have been horrific days. Why even try to describe them? Words are just words. They can’t express what it feels like when your whole soul attaches itself to a whizzing bullet. When your whole will, your whole mind and all your senses cling to the flying missiles and beg, “Not this house!” You’re selfish and you forget that the missile that misses you is going to hit someone else. (143)

Spiegel demonstrates her awareness that certain emotions and situations lack the words to describe them. Words “can’t express what it feels like,” she writes. Just as she struggled to capture the immediacy of love, so does she also struggle to capture the immediacy of dread. She resorts to an imagined dialogue because she still relies on words, despite their insufficiency. Like the modernists, she finds that traditional language fails to relay the true extent of emotions. Later, on August 27, 1941, Spiegel proclaims language’s inadequacy, exclaiming “War! War! No end in sight. I would like to write something, but I can’t” (158). Once again, Spiegel admits her inability to convey these emotions. Her short sentences, devoid of narrative and continuity are her desperate attempts to recreate the sudden jolts of fear that disrupt her life.

Within *The Diary of A Young Girl*, Frank also admits to sometimes lacking the words to communicate her emotions and her situation. On August 4, 1943, nearly a year after her family arrived at the Secret Annex, Frank decides to share with Kitty the Annex’s daily routines. She writes,

> you know a great deal about our lives. Still, I can't possibly tell you everything, since it's all so different compared to ordinary times and ordinary people. Nevertheless, to give you a closer look into our lives, from time to time I'll describe part of an ordinary day. (121)

Frank's response to a life that is anything but "normal" and is instead so abnormal that it cannot "possibly" be fully relayed to Kitty, is to narrativize her experiences. Through description and writing she seeks to normalize the abnormal. As Rachel Brenner explains, "Frank's description of an ordinary day … demonstrates the remarkable determination of the individuals in hiding to lead normal lives" (111). However, Brenner wonders,

> [w]hat, then, causes Frank to sense the "indescribable" quality of her existence? I suggest that her decision to describe the "ordinary" indicates a conscious wish to defuse the notion of the anomalous situation of hiding. The meticulous listing of regular schedules, activities, and arrangements communicates the desire to hold on to the semblance of normalcy … She seeks terminology to narrate a reality which escapes the accepted linguistic connotation. (111)

Perhaps, because Frank's sense of the ordinary has been ripped away from her, she cannot relay her life in the form of typical diary entries. As if to fully acknowledge her life as abnormal, she feels inclined to portray her diary as a work of fiction. By novelizing her life, Frank can admit that her life has become the stuff of fiction, that it has divorced itself from her preferred reality.[23] In contrast, when Spiegel finds herself unable to express a situation, she attempts to relay her emotions through her poetry and poetic writing. Despite their differences, both girls utilize a

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[23] Rachel Brenner holds that Frank is not the only person to fictionalize her *Diary* through its novelization. Otto and subsequent editors of *The Diary* selected and emphasized the fictional elements of Frank's story to minimize elements of the Holocaust and market it more broadly. Brenner claims that "[t]he attempt to fictionalize the diary is signaled in the [title's] qualifier "Young Girl" and in the absence of any reference to the Holocaust. The wording of the title places the content in the realm of the "normal" (110).

written form outside of the diary—Frank her novel and Spiegel her poetry—to fully express the inexpressible within their diaries.

Although Spiegel is content with re-creating moments of her life isolated from a narrative, she demonstrates that she does frame her life in terms of the structures of fiction. During the start of her relationship with Zygmunt, she writes that "[p]erhaps this thing of ours will, however, have a happy ending" (140). She often references fairy tales and dreams, suggesting that they color her perception of life. Spiegel also describes her daydreaming which sometimes overwhelms her life and diaries:

> I can't write. My thoughts are just flying away somewhere far and I can't focus even for a moment. It could be called laziness, yes, outstanding laziness .e.g., I take people from my environment and I transport them somewhere into the spirit world, create thousands of contradictory situations and completely new persons … Ah if only one of those unreal, faraway dreams came true. (181)

She suggests that in her daydreams she thinks up stories and "situations" for people, perhaps imagining fictional narratives. While Spiegel has the ability to create fiction, she has no desire to write fiction in the way Frank does. And like the entry in June 1944, in which she writes that "thoughts have flown through my mind" (254), she immediately turns to poetry to depict her thoughts when they are "flying away." In the next paragraph, her romance with Zygmunt, which bloomed in the previous "green glorious May" (182), becomes the focus of her poetry. When Spiegel feels unable to order her thoughts and explain herself in chronological anecdotes, she uses poetry to depict the "emotional immediacy" of her reality.

Yet while Spiegel admires fictions and stories, she believes diaries to be mostly private documents, not books for publication. While she lets Zygmunt read her diary and also exchanges

diaries with her friend Nora, she is shocked when Nora writes in her own diary that she "won't write about her loves anymore" out of fear that others would label her as a "stupid, vain girl" (112). Spiegel exclaims,

> Norka! You're so wrong! Firstly, why do you care about other people reading it? You're writing it for yourself. And secondly, is your dearest, intimate diary to be a political almanac or an almanac of your heart??? Somebody very harsh, with a stony heart, might say what you thought. Every normal human being should rather say, "This was written by a young, 16-year-old girl who loved so deeply…" That's what I think, Norka, and I hope you soon agree with me … I'm in love which is my explanation for writing all this nonsense. (112)

Spiegel shares her artistic ethos quite simply in this entry. She is no Anne Frank. She does not write a political almanac because she has not heard the broadcast of any Mr. Bolkestein. She can write an "almanac of [her] heart" because she does not need to sanitize her emotions for the sake of publication. Unlike Frank, Spiegel does not incline herself to write for others. She has no qualms righting "nonsense" nor the "musings" of a "16-year-old girl."

IV. Dramatic Irony: Endings in Modern Times and Modern Diaries

> [T]he end precedes the beginning,
> And the end and the beginning were always there
> Before the beginning and after the end.
> And all is always now. (T.S. Eliot, "Four Quartets," 121)

When one reads a published diary, the diarist's end almost always precedes the diary's beginning. Most diaries are published posthumously,[24] with the author's death an established fact to any reader. Nowhere is this phenomenon more pronounced than in Frank's *Diary*. Her death is common knowledge and so her end precedes the beginning of her story. One knows how *The Diary* ends without ever having read it. Yet Frank's *Diary* does not end with her death, it ends with a blank page and the epithet added by the publishers, "Anne's Diary Ends Here" (337). Only in occasional scattered entries does she whisper her fears about death, reflect on the war, and ponder the ends met by the Jewish populace across Europe. As Goertz explains, "[e]ven though the terrors of persecution, physical suffering and death exist only on the margins,[25] they overshadow and determine our reading of [the diary]" (656). Although Frank's death is not a part of her diary, it is a part of her story and it has shaped *The Diary* into the text the world knows. This extra-textual knowledge merges with the text and impedes us from merely reading the text as itself. As Lejeune notes, "Frank's story prevents us from reading her diary as a text" (266). Not only did her death literally impede the writing of her story, preventing her from assembling a 'complete' diary or a personally published text, but her death overtakes the story itself. When we approach her diary, we do not approach it as merely a diary, but as a testament to one of the greatest atrocities of the modern world. We do not approach it merely as an incomplete text but as a story of an incomplete life. The audience's knowledge of the past overwhelms their experience of Frank's present moment, another instance of "yesterday" overwhelming "today."

[24] Of the diarists in this thesis, only Anaïs Nin began to publish her diary before her death. However, her childhood diaries, the seventh volume of her expurgated diaries, and the entirety of her unexpurgated diaries were all published posthumously. Stein's "A Diary" was also published during the author's life, but was not marketed as a personal diary.

[25] Indeed, Frank even literally relegates these terrors to the margins, as in this comment added to a July 11, 1942 entry on September 28, 1942: "I'm terrified that our hiding place will be discovered and that we'll be shot. That of course, is a fairly dismal prospect" (28).

The dramatic irony felt by the reader is not limited to the knowledge of Frank's inevitable capture and death. We also know that she does achieve her goal of becoming a writer, but not in the way she intends. She continues to recapitulate her desire to become a writer, but as the author of a published story rather than as merely a diarist. She muses to Kitty:

> [y]ou've known for a long time that my greatest wish is to be a journalist, and later on, a famous writer. We'll have to wait and see if these grand illusions (or delusions!) will ever come true … In any case, after the war I'd like to publish a book called The Secret Annex. It remains to be seen whether I'll succeed, but my diary can serve as the basis. (293–294)

The readers encountering Frank's text while living in the present have no choice but to enter the past and enter into Frank's present day. Each reader must come to terms with her reality in an unsettling act of empathy. Frank never knew that she became a "famous writer." She never knew that her diary was published and is revered as far more than the "drivel" (263) she feared it to be. Nor did she know that she would never have the opportunity to write a novel about her experience. Her father had to publish it for her. The most uncomfortable irony is the inseparable linkage of her fame with her death. While her diary possesses a great deal of literary promise and undeniable talent, it owes its fame to the tragic fate of its author. Uncomfortably, Frank becomes famous precisely because she never lives to see her fame, because all her hopes remain unseen. Reading such a passage juxtaposes "yesterday's" limitations with "today's" knowledge.

Not unlike Mozart's untimely death during the composition of his fabled Requiem Mass, Anne Frank was arrested, removed from the Secret Annex, and killed before she could conclude her diary or publish it herself. The novel never reaches the end which Aristotle considers essential of stories and Frank Kermode considers essential of novels (140). Yet as a comparison

with Spiegel's diary and Brenner's analysis reveals, Frank transformed her life into a narrative partly as a coping mechanism, a way to make sense of her abnormal life in the Annex. Kermode would agree that transforming one's life into fiction indeed advances such a goal,[26] asserting:

> to make sense of our lives from where we are, as it were, stranded in the middle, we need fictions of beginnings and fictions of ends, fictions which unite beginning and end and endow the interval between them with meaning. I called these "concord-fictions," taking them to be like the plots of novels, which often end with an appearance of concord, or, in modern fiction, a denial of it. (190)

Indeed, Bolkestein's call for diaries and other primary sources from the war hoped that future generations could "make sense" of life during the War and the Holocaust by reading these writings. Likewise, Frank's *Diary* reveals moments in which she herself attempts to make sense of her life through diaristic reflection and novelistic revision. As for the "concord" or the lack of it that marks the end of this "fiction," Frank's *Diary* is what Kermode would consider to be "modern"—though perhaps the most apt word is *realist*.

A necessary and expected part of a traditional, chronological narrative is the end to which the text directs itself. Although diaries are chronological and not necessarily causal sequences, the presence of a diary's beginning and the beginning's continuation in the middle precipitates a diary's ending. While all diaries drive toward a final entry, either one that was predetermined or one determined only by the diarist's fate, they do not feature an ending in a causal or narrative sense, nor do they necessarily supply the reader with a satisfying sense of closure. Whereas Frank's last entry on August 1, 1944 makes no gesture toward a neat conclusion or an imminent

[26] Likewise, Kermode's understanding of fictionalization as making "our own human clocks tick in a clockless world" (135) similarly coincides with the Annex's predicament when the neighborhood's "dearly beloved Westertoten bells have been carted off to be melted down for the war" (129). As a result, Frank writes that "we have no idea of the exact time" (129).

end, Spiegel's last written entry hints at an encroaching close, knowing that "the worst moment is upon us" (271). But after she is separated from her diary, Zygmunt continues the diary for her until her death. After hearing the shots that kill her, he writes, "[m]y dearest Renusia, the last chapter of your diary is complete" (273). He feels as if he is intruding, yet through his conclusion he fulfills one of Spiegel's prophetic claims within her diary, that her relationship with the text "might continue until the end of our lives" (1). Interestingly, Frank's *Diary*, like Spiegel's, is also edited and published by someone in her life. Otto Frank, like Zygmunt, expands his role from mere diary character into diary co-author, stepping out of the work which has portrayed him.

While Otto Frank does not intrude upon Frank's *Diary* in a truly authorial role,[27] Zygmunt does. He finishes the narrative for Spiegel, writing entries after she had entrusted the diary to him in the last days of her life. By transforming her diary into a biography in its last pages, Zygmunt allows it to transcend a diary's limitations and record the diarist's life up until the moment of her death. In her afterword, Elizabeth Bellak reveals the story by which Zygmunt survived and managed to preserve "all seven hundred pages" (286) of Spiegel's diaries. Before his death in 1992, Zygmunt was able to do what Otto Frank was unable to do, to organize all the pages of the diary chronologically and photocopy each page. He even added additional entries, long after Spiegel's death, which fully incorporate himself into the writing and editing process that produced the diary. One such entry, reflecting on the past he shared with Spiegel, begins with an introduction that roots himself in the present moment, making the diary, if at least for a few lines, entirely his own. He writes, "[a]nother month of May is coming, the month of love … Today is 23 April 1989. I'm with Renusia's sister" (289). By adding an extra-textual preface and

[27] However, Otto Frank was named as co-author in the 1947 publication.

afterword, Bellak is also able to insert herself within the text's narrative while clearly demarcating her interventions.

Frank's *Diary*, or at least the one published by Mirjam Pressler in 1991, also relies on the presence of extra-textual information included by editors to make the book coherent and the ending conclusive. The afterword appears in simple and undecorated prose, distinctly unique from Frank's literary style and the conversational tone Spiegel adopts when relaying her story. In simple terms, this afterword relays the details of Frank's arrest and answers the questions left unanswered by *The Diary*. While many readers know that Frank died in Bergen-Belsen in 1945 and that Otto Frank survived, many do not know of the fate of others living in the Secret Annex and the details of Frank's life following her arrest. As such, this afterword grants the reader some aspect of closure by addressing the biographical specifics of its characters.

Regardless of why or how a diary ends, the diary form inherently prevents the diarist from knowing the ending of the narrative, as compared to autobiographical forms like the memoir (Lejeune 191). Lipstadt explains the difference between memoirs and diaries to be a contextual one, as diaries preserve the knowledge and understanding of a person at the moment of writing. Diaries, she writes, are "contemporaneous accounts. Simply put, the author of the memoir knows the end of the story. The diarist does not" (Spiegel viii). Additionally, she writes, diaries provide another aspect that memoirs lack, "emotional immediacy" (ix). The unique power of diaries is that they encapsulate, in some sense, the stream-of-consciousness that occurs in a person's life during an event like the Holocaust, rather than the trauma-flavored memories that arrive afterwards. By crystallizing a singular moment into a written record, they embody a modernist urge to fully embody oneself at the time of writing. Lipstadt also thinks the reader's "knowledge of the outcome" (ix) colors her experience with the text. But Spiegel's lack of

knowledge expands the story she presents and gives us insights into personal traumas, like her "be[ing] forced to live with her grandparents," which the atrocities of the Holocaust would have dwarfed, had she written a memoir. The duality of Frank's *Diary* also provides the reader with an array of diverse insights that would have perhaps been inconsequential in retrospection. In version *a* Frank records what was emotionally immediate to her and in version *b*, she records what she considered to be of interest to an external audience.

V. Evaluating Frank As a Modernist

The Diary of Anne Frank is many things. As the combination of a diary and a novelized diary, the work recalls the generic duality of Stein's "A Diary." Frank's striving, in the summer of 1944, to maintain a diary while also re-writing her earlier work, reveals two opposing artistic drives. Her desire to depict both life and fiction echo the tension between what M. K. Spears calls the "two primary impulses in modern literature" (62), a "heightening of life" as well as a depiction of art divorced from life. The published version of Frank's *Diary*, including excerpts of both personal version *a* and novelized version *b*, force these two aesthetic drives to coexist within a single space. Of course this final form, this battleground of modernist aesthetics, is not what Frank desired for her *Secret Annex*. Although *The Diary* would not exist without Otto's interventions, Ozick claims that this the published diary is nevertheless a result of Otto's "appropriation" of Frank's diary. Thus it is important to note that any interpretation of the diary's form is not necessarily an analysis of Frank's intentions.

As Ozick would have us remember, *The Diary*'s greatest tragedy is that Frank's future was ripped from her. As a result, we will never know whether Frank would have written in the style of a modernist or whether she would have been known as an author. She cannot be effectively (nor fairly) compared to other published authors because her work is unfinished,

unpolished, and hijacked, however lovingly, by her father, subsequent editors, scholars, and readers who came after her. Due to the many people who have shaped Frank's posthumous image, Suzanne L. Bunkers wonders how "editing, with its inevitable inclusion and exclusion of passages, possible rephrasing and rewriting, change[s] what the diary is as well as who its author is?" (16). One cannot fully evaluate her among her modernist contemporaries, firstly because her work is not fully her own and secondly, because she is a child, a dead child. The rest of the diarists in this thesis are known for their writings as adults. Frank, while in hiding, did not have access to many books or novels and, even before her hiding, her Jewish identity would have lessened her access to books. Yet, if modernism can be considered "a set of responses posed by the conditions of modernity" (3) as Michael H. Whitworth articulates, then Frank is more easily classified as a modernist when evaluated with the rest of the diarists that this thesis will examine. She reacts unflinchingly to the overwhelming proximity of one of modernity's most defining horrors, the Holocaust. She, alongside Spiegel, bears similarities to the Trench Poets of World War One. They are young people responding to the atrocities of war. Both transform their suffering into art; Spiegel even does so through poetry.

The arguable lack of closure shared by Frank and Spiegel's diaries, although tragically unintentional, suggests a similarity with modernist experiments in form. Modern texts often have endings that create an ironic disconnect between the reader and the writer. Lodge considers that "[f]requently a modern novel['s] … ending is usually 'open' or ambiguous, leaving the reader in doubt as to the character's final destiny" (481). If one were to remove the extra-textual information from both Frank and Spiegel's text, the resulting diaries would indeed be ambiguous and certainly invite questions as to the diarists' "final destiny." In fact, any diary concluded by

the author's death, yet lacking any extra-textual information, would leave the reader guessing the ending of the diarist's story.

As comparison of the two diarists has revealed, both often struggled to describe what they considered indescribable, whether it was love or war. Both attempted to bridge this communications gap in different ways, although both occasionally admitted that some topics and emotions were simply unrelatable. Yet when words seemed to fail, they both persevered in their writing, experimenting with ways to relate their emotions. Rachel Brenner borrows from Paul Riceour to interpret Frank and finds that Frank uses "a new narrative form" to describe her unparalleled experiences (109). This "new narrative form" is Frank's novelized diary. Spiegel also experiments with alternative narrative forms, blending poetry with her diary. Kermode states that "the novel … has been … the poetry which is 'capable,' in the words of Ortega, "of coping with present reality" (128-129). Both Frank and Spiegel embrace the forms which allow them to cope with their "present realities" As they merge their diaries with other literary forms—Frank with the novel (a broadly "modern" form) and Spiegel with her poetry—they leave us fragments of an unimaginable reality.

While Frank and Spiegel retreat to their diaries in times of duress to cope with an unbearable reality, the modernists had been turning to reality as the new source and focus of art. Frank describes "an ordinary day" (121) for the sake of informing Kitty and her future audience, contrasting her new "ordinary" with the ordinary with which she and her audience were more acquainted. But Virginia Woolf is among the first to claim the "ordinary day" as the domain of the literary modernists. She focuses her essays, her novels, and her diaries around this day, freeing herself from literary tradition through the infinite potential of the "ordinary." However,

just like Frank's diaries, Woolf's diaries will first be edited and published, not by herself, but by a man.

Chapter 2: Diamonds in the Dustheap and Ordinary Days:

Virginia Woolf's *Writer's Diary*

> I have just re-read my last year's diary and am much struck by the rapid haphazard gallop at which it swings along, sometimes indeed jerking almost intolerably over the cobbles. Still if it were not written faster than the fastest typewriting, if I stopped and took thought, it would never be written at all; and the advantage of the method is that it sweeps up accidentally several stray matters which I should exclude if I hesitated, but which are the diamonds of the dustheap.
>
> —Virginia Woolf, *Diary Volume 1* (233–234)

While Anne Frank's legacy has established her as perhaps the most famous diarist of all time, Virginia Woolf is certainly among the most enduring of the modernist writers. Her numerous essays, novels, and literature reviews merited her a success during her life that has continued into the present day. Like Stein, she pioneered experimental narrative forms, making extensive use of stream-of-consciousness in her work. But while she is known for the works which she published during her life—some of which demonstrate her interest in diaries—the diaries which she maintained for most of her life were only made public following her death. Just as Otto Frank controlled the posthumous publication of Anne Frank's *Diary*, so Woolf's husband likewise controlled her image, shaping her identity as he edited and condensed her work into a single volume. Yet, in publishing excerpts from Woolf's diaries in the expurgated volume, *Virginia Woolf: A Writer's Diary*, Leonard Woolf reveals her modernist spirit and devotion to her artistic craft through a fragmented form.

Comparing *A Writer's Diary* with Woolf's unexpurgated diaries reveals that a fragmented form prevails throughout both. Returning to Gertrude Stein's insistence in "A

Diary," that "[t]here will not be a daily diary" (218), offers an opportunity to reflect on the form of Woolf's diaries. Although the diary is a daily form, the publication of *A Writer's Diary* prevents the text from being read as such, as it instead features individual moments of Woolf's art and self-reflection. An analysis of her diaries across many volumes reveals her earlier struggles with daily writing, her husband's insistence on excerpting her life, and her repeated rejection of narrative. As a modernist writer, Woolf preached the primacy of the moment in her diaries, eschewing chronology, and pioneering stream-of-consciousness.

I. "There Will Not Be a Daily Diary:" The Publication of *A Writer's Diary*

In 1953, twelve years after his wife's death, Leonard Woolf compiled and published excerpts of her numerous diaries under the name *A Writer's Diary*. The text is so named for his inclusion of diary entries that solely reference Woolf's writing, her literary ethos, or her novels—any entry that emphasizes her identity as a writer. Lyndall Gordon, writing in her preface to the text, suggests that Leonard, as he combed through "thirty manuscript volumes" that spanned forty-four years of his wife's intermittent diary-keeping:

> only selected passages that related to her intellectual life. The reason he did this—and it seems extraordinary looking back over sixty years—is that he wished to restore Virginia Woolf 's reputation as a serious writer, since it was then at a very low ebb. (Gordon)

Leonard even admits to such a goal in his own preface. He states that he was motivated to highlight the yet-undiscovered aspects of her literary brilliance because "[h]er position as an artist and the merits of her books are a subject of dispute" (Woolf, *A Writer's*, viii). Gordon acknowledges that this need to bolster Woolf's reputation seems strange now, given her current fame, however many of Woolf's novels did not gain critical acclaim until after her death. The modernist experimental style for which she is well remembered resulted in "some critics [being]

irritated and many less sophisticated readers [being] bewildered by her later novels" (viii). In publishing this work, Leonard aimed to find common ground with those who admired her essays and other writings, yet who could "not understand or dislike[d] or ridicule[d] her novels" (viii). To do so, he assembled *A Writer's Diary*, searching within her myriad diaries for "practically everything which referred to her own writing" (viii).

Certainly, selecting "practically everything which referred to her own writing" from forty-five years of available diaries would normally prove to be an overwhelming and perhaps slightly too ambitious task, even for the most devoted of husbands. Yet Leonard manages to fill 351 pages with such excerpts. He describes his selection criteria as including three types of extracts from her diaries:

> passages in which she is obviously using the diary as a method of practising [sic] or trying out the art of writing … passages which, though not directly or indirectly concerned with her writings, I have deliberately selected because they give the reader an idea of the direct impact upon her mind of scenes and persons, i.e. of the raw material of her art … passages in which she comments upon the books she was reading. (Woolf viii-ix)

The passages Leonard selects are intended to provide the reader with insight into Woolf's mind. They depict not only the contents of her mind but the way in which "scenes and persons" have a "direct impact upon her mind" as well. Certainly, Leonard is hoping to expose her mind and make her thought process transparent to those who could "not understand … her novels" (viii). As stated in this thesis' introduction, Elizabeth Podnieks considers that "reading a diary [is] analogous to reading a modern text," as both diaries and modern texts feature the "stream-of-consciousness method [that] allows … the analysand … to let thoughts come as they will" (90).

By presenting the "raw material" of Woolf's art—its experimental form and its intriguing content—Leonard's goal was to present the stream-of-consciousness and experimental narrative in her diary, as he considered it to be more easily accessible than the experimental form in her novels. Even by reading a single entry of Woolf's diary, a reader unfamiliar with stream-of-consciousness could acclimate himself to her style.

Leonard Woolf's motivation for publishing his wife's work proved strong enough to override his aversion to publishing excerpted diaries. He states that:

> [i]t is, I think, nearly always a mistake to publish extracts from diaries or letters … [t]he omissions almost always distort or conceal the true character of the diarist or letter-writer and produce spiritually what an Academy picture does materially, smoothing out the wrinkles, warts, frowns and asperities. At best and even unexpurgated, diaries give a distorted or one-sided portrait of the writer, because as Virginia Woolf herself remarks … one gets into the habit of recording one particular kind of mood … and of not writing one's diary when one is feeling the opposite. The portrait is therefore from the start unbalanced, and … may well become a mere caricature. (viii)

By including this passage in the text of *A Writer's Diary*, Leonard does what Otto Frank failed to do when he published his daughter's text only six years prior. Leonard warns the audience of gleaning Woolf's personality from excerpts and reinforces the message of the diary's sub-title—*Being Extracts from the Diary of Virginia Woolf*—that *A Writer's Diary* is an edited work comprised of excerpts. He admits that edited diaries, and even "unexpurgated diaries," present biased and incomplete "portraits" of a person. Yet his warnings do not preclude him from criticism. Podnieks still calls the reader to examine:

> how the text is altered when it is prepared for publication by someone other than the diarist … our reading of this kind of prepared diary must take into account that the "completed book" may be a distorted version of the diarist's own vision. (35)

Just as many scholars have sparked debate on how Anne Frank's image has been appropriated by her father and all those who have invoked her name or story, so others have discussed Woolf in much the same way. Some feel that Leonard's warning failed to prevent "caricatures" of Woolf from developing. Anne Olivier Bell, Woolf's niece and the editor of her unexpurgated diaries, believes that Leonard's publication, "probably did a good deal to create or reinforce that popular journalistic image of Virginia Woolf, the moody, arrogant, and malicious Queen of Bloomsbury" (Podnieks 35).

Interestingly however, Woolf herself considered substantial editing a prerequisite for her diaries being published. Although she is only forty-four on March 20, 1926, a "slight melancholia" overcomes her and she considers the fate that awaits her diary:

> [b]ut what is to become of all these diaries, I asked myself yesterday. If I died, what would Leo make them? He would be disinclined to burn them; he could not publish them. Well he should make up a book from them, I think; and then burn the body. I daresay there is a little book in them; if the scraps and scratchings were straightened out a little. (*Writer's* 86–87)

Woolf's entry here echoes the sentiments of her famous "diamonds of the dustheap" line. She does not reject the whole of her diaries, feeling that she has written material of quality enough for a "little book." Yet she refers to her writing as "scraps and scratchings," which, without polishing, are unfit for publication. The "body" of her work, the collected sum of her diaries and journals, could not feasibly be published, considering she has written personal details about a

great number of people. Leonard chooses to include this prophetic entry in *A Writer's Diary*, perhaps because he wishes to publish her approval along with her writings. Yet her hesitancy here suggests a tension with one of her most famous artistic proclamations. However much Woolf claims in "Modern Fiction" that the "ordinary mind on an ordinary day," is the "proper stuff of fiction," not all of her "ordinary days" are fit for publication (*Essays* 160).

And as for Woolf's quiet prescience that presumes publication will be inevitable? Podnieks attributes this knowledge to Woolf's late-Victorian upbringing in which diaries were read socially and in which writers and society figures frequently published their diaries (20–27). Barbara Lounsberry has catalogued the numerous published diaries that Woolf read during her childhood, such as the diaries of Samuel Pepys, Sir Walter Scott, and Fanny Burney (11), and notes the many more which she read in her early life. Clearly Woolf lived and wrote knowing that diaries were public texts. Yet this knowledge did not belong only to those who wrote diaries. Being born in 1882, Woolf was raised at a time when "[Oscar] Wilde exposed as myth the ideas that the diary is a private text and that it is a spontaneous and immediate recording of events" (Podnieks 28). Wilde, in his 1895 play *The Importance of Being Earnest*, toys with the deceptive notion that diaries are private texts. When the character Algernon requests to read Cecily's diary, she denies him, replying:

> [y]ou see, it is simply a very young girl's record of her own thoughts and impressions, and consequently meant for publication. When it appears in volume form I hope you will order a copy. (Wilde)

Although *The Importance* is a work of fiction, Wilde wrote his play satirizing the genuine cultural duplicities of the time. And one such cultural duplicity was the diary—a public document masquerading as a private text.

Interestingly, the title *A Writer's Diary* has become a genre of diaries, a qualifying moniker that has attached itself to other diaries,[28] as well as to other volumes of Woolf's unexpurgated diaries. The title has also been applied to other writings, for example, Fyodor Dostoyevsky published a selection of nonfiction and fiction writings as *A Writer's Diary*. Although defining a diary offered a difficult task, defining what exactly constitutes this subsection of diary—the writer's diary—offers another challenging task. The definition itself seems intuitive, suggesting that it refers to the diary of a writer. But that definition soon becomes contradictory, if not redundant. Aren't all diarists also writers? Isn't diary writing merely a subsection of writing? Why then clarify that only some diarists are also writers? While there is a paucity of sources that define what constitutes a writer's diary, one can understand it as the diary kept by a known writer, oftentimes referencing the writer's writings and writing process.

Clearly Leonard's pioneering use of the term has established its enduring, yet elusive definition. Susan Sontag considers the form to differ from other diaries in its content and its goals. She wrote a great deal on writer's diaries, considering them to be a literary device. Jerome Boyd Maunsell cites Sontag's understanding of this genre, as she considers that the role of the writer's diary varies with the author's goals for her writing. They may function:

> as the source material for biography; as a creative notebook; as autobiography; as literary history; as criticism; as a hoard of quotations; even, one might playfully suggest, as a novel. (qtd. in Maunsell 2)

As Maunsell suggests, writer's diaries can offer a place in which the writer reflects on her extra-textual writing, but also function as a text with independent literary worth, approaching the realm of the "novel." Diaries can then operate both individually and in relation to other texts, providing

[28] An example is Duncan Hannah, who in his article "On the Real-Time Thrill of Reading a Writer's Diary," uses the term to describe the diaries of authors, writers, and artists whom he admires.

additional meaning to them. And, they can also be used by one besides the diarist, as "the source material for biography." The writer's diary that Sontag discusses encompasses the same purposes with which Leonard Woolf imbued his *Writer's Diary*. A writer's diary remains a rhetorical tool, using the stature of an established writer to appeal to a reader's ethos. Yet reading Woolf's diaries reveals Woolf to be her own harshest critic, judging herself against the standards of polished, published fiction.

II. Woolf's Self-Critiques

Woolf often commentates on her diaries themselves, usually to critique the quality or quantity of her writing. In one entry Woolf writes, "[t]his is a terribly thin diary for some reason" (106). In another, she explains that "[t]his diary shall batten on the leanness of my social life" (108). Again, she remarks in an entry on March 28, 1929, "[i]t is a disgrace indeed; no diary has been left so late in the year." (138). She then explains her limited diarizing, disclosing her trip to Berlin and subsequent sickness, which left her able to write only in "excited outbursts of composition" (138) during her recovery. Given her self-reflexive tendencies, Woolf notes in her own words that "[t]here will not be a daily diary" (Stein 218).

Woolf is not the only one to apologize for the scarcity of her entries, as both Frank and Spiegel would often apologize to their diaries in a similar way. Even Stein encapsulates this very human acknowledgement in the line, "[t]here will not be a daily diary" (218). When short on time and desperate to record information in their diaries, diarists often proclaim their apologies and excuses as to why they lack the time or energy to delineate the narrative of their lives. Instead they offer sentence fragments. Sometimes they scribble images, whether the merest traces of events or the detailed descriptions of trifling moments and emotions. They offer the crayon sketches that quickly fill a canvas with colors and perspective and body. These writings

are the truest sense of modernism, the stream of consciousness that appears in moments of frenzied desperation.

When needing to record a large amount of life in a short amount of time, the diarist finds it easier to record simple declarations describing a unique facet of the day rather than craft a narrative. Woolf herself does this, letting each moment resonate by itself and possess an individual meaning without the context of a moment's relation to other moments. In one of her earlier diaries, she proclaims "[h]ere I will make a short note of an effect last night" (374). Woolf's choice of the word "effect" to describe the "pale light" (374) of the moon emphasizes that Woolf walks through a literary world and records reality as one would analyze the techniques of an author's skilled hand. She describes this haunting experience of "a night which is not night" (374) and, rather than expanding instant herself, considers it to have expanded itself. Trying to distill the indescribably eternal into writing, she states "the process continued indefinitely, & indefinitely drearily" (374). Yet when she pronounces that she will write only a "few sentences" (166) within an entry, she seems defensive, as if she must confess this failure to gain the reader's absolution.

However, as a modernist, Woolf is unafraid to depict only individual instants in her diary. In an entry dated Wednesday January 31, Woolf writes "[a]nd I cling to my little philosophy: to hug the present moment (in which the fire is going out)" (262). Her precious "moment" illuminates her and gives her warmth. Yet it is only a moment and she feels it fading with the sunset and dimming with the dwindling fire. This fire that Woolf describes burns with an existential flame as well as a literal one. She writes this entry in 1940, a year before her death a year later. Yet moments also contain life itself and offer beginnings as well. Fourteen years earlier she wrote "I will now snatch a moment from what Morgan calls "life" to enter a hurried

note. My notes have been few; life a cascade, a glissade, a torrent; all together." (115). In this entry from November of 1927, Woolf juxtaposes the diarized moment with the far more fluid life. Because life is an ever-flowing "torrent," Woolf finds it difficult to portray a singular instant, to "snatch a moment" from life. While far from being merely a single moment, Woolf's own life becomes represented in the momentary glimmer of one of her diary entries, "I just open this for a moment" (118). Yet that instant in which she opened her diary is eternal. That same instant is the one the reader encounters nearly seventy-five years later.

Woolf saves her harshest critiques for that which is opposite to the momentary and the immediate, namely narrative. In a gorgeous passage that precisely identifies her literary aims, she expresses that:

> what I want now to do is to saturate every atom. I mean to eliminate all waste, deadness, superfluity: to give the moment whole; whatever it includes. Say that the moment is a combination of thought; sensation; the voice of the sea. Waste, deadness, come from the inclusion of things that don't belong to the moment; this appalling narrative business of the realist … it is false, unreal, merely conventional. (*Writer's* 136)

Woolf rejects the notion of the "daily diary" (Stein 218) if such a concept would dictate her to include "superfluity," "narrative," or the "conventional." Given this explanation, any short entry or fragmented sentence reveals itself as intentional on Woolf's part. She distinguishes herself from diarists who apologize for hurried sentence fragments and cling to "narrative." She seeks instead to maximize each word and "saturate every atom." She desires an economy of words yet a richness of meaning, accomplishing this by filling her writings with the "thought; sensation; the voice of the sea" which resound inside an instant of time. The "moment" is her polestar, for anything that doesn't "belong to the moment" leads her astray into wasted, empty writing. In

contrast, "daily" writing suggests repetition and connection, a series of moments unnaturally strung together into narrative. Narrative rots the content of a text from within. By rejecting to link the days together in some contrived fashion, Woolf admits that "[t]here will not be a daily diary" (Stein 218).

III. More Moments and Woolf's Narrative Alternatives

If one reads merely the discontinuous selections forming *A Writer's Diary,* then one will surely miss the many entries in which Woolf experiments with the diary form itself. Lounsberry notices a collection of entries in Woolf's 1905 Cornwall diary (no entries from which are included in *A Writer's Diary)* in which Woolf forgoes the traditional diary form and consequently "tries something new" (82). Of the fifteen entries that span this vacation, only the first two are dated, with the tenth being titled. However, the other twelve lack titles and dates and are instead demarcated by blank space, "as if they are vestiges of some larger whole" (82). Lounsberry interprets this span of entries as Woolf "suspending and expanding conventional diary terrain" (82). Just as readily as she forgoes narrative, so Woolf forgoes the standard practices of the diary form to achieve new literary affects.

More than a highly mutable form, diaries also offer an array of unique aspects, most noticeably their ability to convey a sense of immediacy with the reader. As Howard Finn states, modernism seeks ways to express "immediacy," particularly the immediacy of the mind's flow of consciousness (191). Yet diaries, compared to other standard literary forms, portray this immediacy with ease. In fact, Deborah E. Lipstadt praises diaries for their "emotional immediacy" and their ability to transport readers into the past more effectively than memoirs (Spiegel ix). Quentin Bell introduces *Volume 1* of Woolf's diaries with the same term, explaining that:

> in calling it a masterpiece I mean to indicate that it is a literary achievement equal to though very different from *The Waves* or *To The Lighthouse*, having the same accurate beauty of writing but also an immediacy such as one finds only in diaries; it is in fact one of the great diaries of the world. (xiii)

Quentin Bell finds the diary to be both a diary and a work of literature, a duality that once again recalls the structure of Stein's "A Diary." The literature to which Bell compares Woolf's diary is her experimental and non-linear novels. In short, Bell considers her diaries a work of modernist literature, capturing the "immediacy" unique to diaries alongside the polish and cohesion of planned works.

While Woolf directly rejects chronological orderings, she admires descriptions of the instantaneous. While in Italy in 1908, Woolf describes the frescoes created by Perugino that decorate the Collegio del Cambrio. She believes that "all beauty was contained in the momentary appearance of [the] human beings" (*A Passionate Apprentice* 392) that she saw painted there. As it has been elsewhere in her diaries, the "momentary" remains her focus. She believes that Perugino "saw it sealed as it were; all its worth in it; not a hint of past or future" (392). A transcendent experience overtakes her as she encounters the fullness of the time, the infinite and expansive moment of *Kairos*. To Woolf, the fullness of the present moment resonates within the paintings, existing without the constraining legacy of the past or the expectations of the future. She witnesses a glimpse of art so complete that it exists independent of time and context. In short, it exists by and for itself.

Woolf's experience leads her to reflect on her writing and the way she aims to replicate the potency of the frescoes. She writes,

> I attain a different kind of beauty … showing all the traces of the mind's passage through the world & achieve in the end, some kind of whole made of shivering fragments. (393)

Woolf's artistic goals mirror the goals of modernism that Lawrence and Pound articulate, that of portraying juxtaposed images, or "fragments" which comprise a "whole." Yet this fragmented "whole" also suggests the diary structure itself, its body of individual entries that combine into a complete entity. In this passage, Woolf articulates her modernist aesthetics as an inherent part of her diary. Her literary goal is to reveal the "mind's passage through the world," a feat that is accomplished as she records her thoughts in this travel diary.

In 1927, describing a solar eclipse that occurred nearly twenty years earlier, Woolf establishes the precise instant of the eclipse as the focus of a diary entry. In the time preceding the eclipse, Woolf looks toward the future. She and her companions constantly anticipate the imminent moment—"we kept saying this is the shadow; and we thought now it is over—this is the shadow"—but their expectation and waiting contrasts greatly with the unmistakable moment itself, "when suddenly the light went out" (*Writer's* 110). Within the brief time of the eclipse, Woolf uses the past tense and shortens each sentence, "We had fallen. It was extinct. There was no color. The earth was dead" (110). Each short sentence reflects a different facet of the lightless instant. Rather than depicting a sense of motion or of the passing of time within a long sentence, Woolf prolongs the present. These sentences recall the short, eternally present statements of Stein's "A Diary." Yet, by using the simple past tense for each verb, Woolf makes the act of reflection and writing visible. She writes and remembers in a present time that occurs after "the astonishing moment" (110). While she extends and prolongs the moment of the eclipse and allows it to become the epicenter of the entry, she acknowledges that it does not continue *ad infinitum*. Yet the effects of the moment linger, dazing her so that the sentences detailing her

reflection are shortened like those describing the actual moment; "[i]t had been much worse than we expected. We had seen the world dead" (110). She restates the thoughts that occurred to her during the moment, but now her reflection contains another level of temporal distance with the pluperfect tense, the "had been" and the "had seen." She does not merely record her thoughts during the eclipse directly, but instead adds a level of separation by stating them indirectly in a moment of pluperfect reflection that references the act of diary writing.

In the many essays whose writing perhaps kept her too busy to maintain a "daily diary" (Stein 218), Woolf synthesized an understanding of new narrative forms that accorded with her modernist aesthetics. Among these non-diary writings are many essays analyzing diaries; within them she critiques diaries as one would critique novels, autobiographies, and other literary forms. She considers diaries worthy of proper study, and so she begins her 1924 essay "Life Itself" proclaiming that "[o]ne could wish that the psycho-analysts would go into the question of diary keeping" (*Captain's Deathbed* 24). Posing diaries and "diary-keeping" as questions, she puzzles the personal motivation that leads both authors and non-authors to maintain diaries. Why does one write a diary she wonders,

> [f]or often [diary keeping] is the one mysterious fact in a life otherwise clear as the sky and as candid as the dawn. Parson Woodforde is a case in point—his diary is the only mystery about him. For forty-three years he sat down almost daily to record what he did on Monday and what he had for dinner on Tuesday; but for whom he wrote or why he wrote it is impossible to say. He does not unburden his soul in his diary; yet it is no mere record of engagements and expenses. As for literary fame, there is no sign that he ever thought of it, and finally, though the man himself is peaceable above all things, there are little indiscretions and criticisms which would have got him into trouble and hurt the

> feeling of his friends had they read them. What purpose, then, did the sixty-eight little books fulfill? Perhaps it was the desire for intimacy. (24)

Woolf scours the volumes of this country priest's diaries for clues; perhaps she searches for meta-critical references to writing and motivation within the diary yet can find none. And perhaps her conclusion is correct. After all, both Frank and Spiegel began their diaries with a desire for friendship, for an "intimacy" they did not share with others. However, Woolf's suspicion that "literary fame" would provide the prime motivation for keeping a diary affirms her understanding of diaries as public texts.

Purpose and audience are essential to Woolf's discussion of diaries. Podnieks describes the arguably antiquated "traditional theoretical distinctions" that categorized diaries during the early twentieth century. In the view of Woolf's contemporaries such as Arthur Posonby,[29] Woodforde's diary qualifies as a "pure diary" (Podnieks 4), one intended solely as a private document. But Woolf considers the diary's categorization and technical nomenclature inconsequential. In a modern world full of Freudian psychoanalysts, she inquires after the human urge to diarize, especially when she eliminates the most common motivations as Woodforde's inspiration. In her mind, "literary fame" or writing practice are understandable motivations for maintaining a diary. However, a man who possesses sixty-eight diaries yet possesses no artistic inclinations,[30] remains a mystery. The first sentence of her remark tends toward irony, as it is only through the "myster[y]" of the diary that she has had access to this "clear" and "candid" life. Without the diary there would be no question, no curiosity, no investigation. Perhaps that is why she later considers the diary "to be life itself" (26). Woolf emphasizes her conclusion by

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[29] Posonby's 1924 book *English Diaries* outlines this dichotomy.

[30] Analyzing the work, amidst its plain prose written by a priest possessing "no fanaticism, no enthusiasm, no lyric impulse about [him]" (*Captain's Deathbed* 26), Woolf notes only one artistic phrase which glimmers above the rest, a "single poetic phrase about the transit of Venus." This shimmering glimpse of artistic vision sparks another question, reveals another mystery among the prose as if it owned the "resplendence of the star itself" (26).

making it the essay's title, "Life Itself." Ultimately, Woolf views the diary as an extension of the diarist's self. Thus Woodforde's diary encapsulates his identity so completely that it effectively immortalizes him.

In Woolf's analysis, Woodforde's diary resonates with his very self, including an alternative to his "peaceable" self which surely would not have revealed his inner workings to his friends. She considers the diary a symbiotic extension of himself and his identity. She believes that, "[a]n essential part of him would have died were he forbidden to keep his diary" (25). To explain this symbiosis of self and text, she analogizes the process of reading the text to intimate and familiar encounters with Woodforde himself. In an artfully composed passage, she writes:

> [a]nd as we read—if reading is the word for it—we seem to be listening to someone who is murmuring over the events of the day to himself in the quiet space which precedes sleep. It is not writing, and to speak the truth it is not reading. It is slipping through half a dozen pages and strolling to the window and looking out. It is going on thinking about the Woodfordes while we watch the people in the streets below. It is taking a walk and making up the character and life of James Woodforde as we make up our friends' characters, turning over something they have done, remembering how they looked one day when they thought themselves unobserved. It is not reading; it is ruminating. (25)

Woolf, herself a diarist and celebrated writer who relates intimately to the language of discourse and literature, struggles to name the experience of reading Woodforde's diary. Woodforde's diary, a bridge between author and audience, cannot be understood through the pedantic lens of terms such as "writing" or "reading." She settles on the term "ruminati[on]" but even this fails to encapsulate the profound familiarity shared between author and audience in their joint

experience of the diary. Woolf's description of his writing seems to suggest a lively and descriptive mode of writing, a deeply detailed stream-of-consciousness that evokes the detail-sharing narrative of a book like Joyce's *Ulysses* or Woolf's own *Mrs. Dalloway*. Like Joyce's novel, the diary invites the reader into the intimacies of Woodforde's days, entirely enveloping the reader in a life and mind that is not his own. Woodforde does not employ traditional narrative techniques, yet he renders his life into something as haunting and dear as a bedtime story. If the diary speaks a language, it is one of familiarity.

Woolf asserts that she reads and rereads her own diaries to better understand herself and her life, just as her reading of Parson Woodforde's diary allowed her to grasp the immediacy of his life. Rewarding herself for her writing progress by reading her diary, Woolf wrote that she "indulge[d] in a contemplative morning" (*Writer's* 207) during December of 1933. Clearly, revisiting the past is a pleasant activity for her. But the diary has a practical purpose as well. A sentence later, Woolf explains that, "[t]o freshen my memory of the war, I read some old diaries" (207). Her memory, the voice of a past self emerging from the diary, brings a contradictorily more present perspective of the war. Although Woolf does not rewrite the language of the past in this present entry, this reflexive act creates a new memory and makes the event present. Within the span of a moment the reader becomes aware of three memories of the war; her memory before reading, the memory recorded in the diary, and the combination of the two into her present memory of the war. Her memory expands and changes, transformed by the diary. Having kept these records, Woolf's past self becomes her muse. As Woolf reflects on memories, both hers and others, her unconscious mind is revealed, both in her diaries and the thoughts that appear as she rereads them.

IV. "I Am Bored by Narrative"

"And as usual I am bored by narrative" (*Writer's* 138), Woolf pronounces, as if summarizing the modernist impulse. She expands her thoughts a bit, explaining that:

> I only want to say how I met Nessa in Tottenham Court Road this afternoon, both of us sunk fathoms deep in that wash of reflection in which we both swim about. She will be gone on Wednesday for 4 months. (138)

Woolf desires to encapsulate a singular moment without entangling herself in the chronological trappings of a story. To do so she offers flashes of the deep emotions that defined her day, her rendezvous with her sister in which they both were "sunk fathoms deep in that wash of reflection" (138). The vibrancy of the metaphorical language contrasts with the subsequent sentence, which is a dull, simple statement. Merely stating her sister's impending absence does not relay emotion. But expanding her desperation into an artistic image conveys overwhelming sadness, confusion, and the taste of salty tears. Woolf does not craft an anecdote out of this memory but instead offers an expanded moment.

Yet Woolf remains unsatisfied by her attempt at depicting emotions, as later in this entry she proclaims, "[o]ne ought to invent a fine narrative style" (139). She realizes that her habits of writing have grown stale. "Perhaps I ought not to go on repeating what I have always said about the spring" (138-139), she ponders. Not only does she need to find new things to say but she needs to find a new style through which to say them. She realizes that "one ought perhaps to be forever finding new things to say" (139). Immediately her mind moves to *The Moths*, the book that she is writing, and two entries later she proclaims that "I am not trying to tell a story" (140). In short, clipped sentences, she explains instead that she might render "[a] mind thinking" or an "[a]utobiography" (140). Woolf hopes to move away from a structural narrative in *Moths* and

instead supplant other forms of “unity” (140). Instead, she suggests in her own words a form of stream-of-consciousness. She intrigues herself at the thought of linking the “sketches,” which she writes “[e]very morning” (139). In her mind, the sketches become “islands of light—islands in the stream that I am trying to convey” (140). She herself identifies the flow of her consciousness as a “stream.” She admits that she “can tell stories” (140) but realizes that the conventional means of relaying information exhaust her. Her diary offers not only a place to reflect on her struggles with narrative but gives her a place to experiment with narrative alternatives. Woolf plans to transport her daily diaristic sketches into her novel, obscuring the nature of “a daily diary” (Stein 218).

While Woolf’s sentiments on narrative were shared by many of her modernist contemporaries, her own thoughts on the matter originate early in her diaries. On a trip to Italy in 1908, Woolf expresses her criticism of literature most harshly by using diaries as an example:

> [t]here are many ways of writing such diaries as these. I begin to distrust description, & even such humorous arrangement as make a days [sic] adventures into a narrative; I should like to write not only with the eye, but with the mind; & discover real things beneath the show. In default of this—& I shall have neither time not perseverance for much thought, I know, I shall try to be an honest servant, gathering such matter as may serve a more skilled hand later—or suggest finished pictures to the eye. The fact is, in these private books, I use a kind of shorthand, & make little confessions, as though I wished to propitiate my own eye, reading later. (*A Passionate Apprentice* 384-385)

Woolf writes this entry at the age of twenty-six in a diary that was not included as part of *A Writer’s Diary*. Yet even at this young age, a year before she writes her first novel, Woolf tends away from both “description” and “narrative,” two elements common to human storytelling and

diary-writing. Rather than developing a photographic recreation of an event, she seeks to craft an impressionistic interpretation of her days, teasing out "real things beneath the show." Woolf intends her diary to be "private," and thus feels unencumbered to write in "a kind of shorthand." She desires to write with the "mind" rather than the "eye," echoing the modernist goal of depicting the "multiple layers of consciousness that constitute the present moment" (Podnieks 90). Rather than transmuting a "day's adventure into a narrative" she aims to develop each and every layer of the day she has experienced so that later she can produce "finished pictures."

"Descriptive writing is dangerous & tempting," Woolf further elaborates while in Florence in 1909. Connecting "descriptive writing" to habitual storytelling and perhaps even narrative, she explains herself further:

> [i]t is easy, with little expense of brain power, to make something. One seizes some broad aspect, as of water or colour, & makes note of it … As a matter of fact, the subject is probably infinitely subtle, no more amenable to impressionist treatment than the human character. What one records is really the state of one's own mind. (*Passionate* 396)

Woolf is enamored with the painterly beauty of Florence and its "subtlety of color" (396), desiring to recreate its appearance in her words. Yet it is not enough to merely "make something." She wishes to do more than trace the outline of the world around her and the course of each day's narrative. She maintains high expectations for herself, yet acknowledges that:

> [t]o tell of this would need immense concentration. To make a good passage requires a heroic grinding of the mind & here am I, half asleep. (396)

She believes that good writing requires a Herculean effort. Good writing incorporates both an effective description of a subject and traces of the author's "own mind."

As an aside in an earlier paragraph, Woolf explains, “I feel (at the moment) great distrust of my own words. Is it worthwhile to write?” (*Passionate* 185). Her quizzical insecurity suggests a hesitancy to make the writings of her diaries permanent. By recording her thoughts on paper, she allows for the possibility of someone reading her “little confessions,” a prospect that disturbs her here. She rather wishes her writing to remain unscrutinized until she can perfect it and render the “finished picture” she desires to paint. Woolf wants merely to record the raw materials of the day in “shorthand,” presenting brief personal moments, so that, “reading later,” she can tease out the important information from her diary in the future. One recalls the hesitant indecision of T.S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock:” “[i]n a minute there is time/For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.” Woolf relies on the future possibility of completing an entry that fulfills her. This is not the only instance in which Woolf is burdened with the anxiety of producing a pleasing diary entry and rendering a fulfilling recapitulation of a day.

Yet, twenty years later, Woolf still valued the ability to edit and re-analyze her diaries. In a mystifying entry begun with an ellipsis, and dated Wednesday August 9, 1928, Woolf imparts that “I write thus partly in order to slip the burden of writing narrative” (*Writer’s* 127). This confusing sentence is itself a modernist technique, catapulting the reader into a text almost *in media res*. Generalizing aspects of modernist fiction, David Lodge considers many modern works to similarly lack a “real beginning” and instead “plunge … us into a flowing stream of experience” (481). Although Woolf is unburdened by narrative, the reader feels oppressed by its absence, wandering through a maze of obscure references and indistinct time without the guiding string of narrative. However, as if throwing a future reader some lifeline, she clarifies the importance of narrative, explaining:

> [y]et, no doubt I shall be more interested, come ten years, in facts; and shall I want, as I do when I read, to be told details, details, so that I may look up from the page and arrange them too, into one of those makings up which seem so much truer done thus, from heaps of non-assorted facts, than now I can make them, when it is almost immediately under my eyes. (127)

If narrative is indeed language arranged meaningfully over time, then the notion of "arrang[ing]" details describes the narrative making process. Woolf's passage then suggests that she is delaying the narrativizing process in her diary by merely listing "facts" and "details" so that later she will weave a fine strand of narrative from the bulk of "non-assorted facts." By shaping a story from facts, she will then be creating what seems like truth, or "one of those makings up which seem so much truer done thus." This passage clearly affirms that she anticipates re-reading and revision. She imagines her future self reading what she has written, and is driven by some need, whether external or internal, to portray life with perfection. Indeed, this constant doubt, which hints at the nervous breakdowns which fragment her writing routine, prevents her from maintaining that "daily diary" which Stein writes so much about.

A fear of criticism does reverberate through her work. Woolf kept her unfinished writing private even from her husband. In January of 1927, Woolf records that she has "finished the final drudgery" of writing *To the Lighthouse* and now deems it "complete for Leonard to read" (*Writer's* 102). It seems that external approval motivates her. The next week, Leonard pronounces the work to be a "masterpiece" without her asking, praise which Woolf considers to be "a great relief" (102). Yet she later suggests otherwise in May, a week prior to *Lighthouse* being published. "But I think, honestly, I care very little this time—even for the opinion of my

friends" (105). Is she merely being defensive, recording the carefree attitude she wants to possess? Or is she being genuine?

V. "The Proper Stuff of Fiction:" Ordinary Life As Modern Fiction

Meyer Levin praises Anne Frank's *Diary* for its focus on "ordinary people," bestowing the text with the honored designation of "classic" while also considering it to be vibrantly modern through its unfolding psychological drama. To Levin, the text is a "classic" because it is alive. In her essay "Modern Fiction," Woolf aims to delineate exactly what differentiates classics, which Levin would typically "leave on the library shelf," from enduring, intriguing fiction. She claims this distinction to derive primarily from a work's misconstrued "likeness to life" (*Essays* 160) and its slavish devotion to literary convention. Instead, one should turn toward an "ordinary mind on an ordinary day" (160) should one wish to write engaging fiction. Rather than shoving a "plot," a "love interest," and an "air of probability" (160) into an unwilling text, Woolf looks to the ordinary—ordinary people, ordinary minds, and ordinary days. Essentially, she considers the subject and primary investigations of diaries to be "the proper stuff of fiction." In Woolf's own analysis, diaries, in which "the mind receives a myriad impressions—trivial, fantastic" (160), are prime examples of modern fiction. So are her own diaries.

Yet if a reader were to encounter only the highly-edited *A Writer's Diary*, he would miss the "ordinary" elements of Woolf's diaries, the ordinary which she esteems so highly. *Volume 1* describes much of her normal everyday life, and the pages are riddled with footnotes explaining the identity of distant relations, local businesses, and all manner of mundane information. If Woolf tires of her routine, she admits it playfully, like this entry in January 14, 1915 in which she jests, "[w]e were woken this morning (I see this is going to become a stock phrase like 'Once upon a Time in a Faery story)" (17). Everything seems worthy of record, but she includes

mention of her reading especially: “I read Essay upon Criticism waiting for my train at Hammersmith. The classics make the time pass much better than the Pall Mall Gazette” (24). She reveals that there is something sacred about diaries, and personifies them in this strange passage:

> [s]hall I say “nothing happened today” as we used to do in our diaries when they were beginning to die? It wouldn’t be true. The day is rather like a rather lifeless tree: there are all sorts of colours in it, if you look closely. But the outline is bare enough. (30)

Even the mundane days, those summarized by the trite phrase “nothing happened today,” resonate with faint “colours.” She challenges herself to perceive these colors, to actively engage with her diary and the day she records, until she can glean some diamond from the dusty day. In this entry Woolf continues to talk about the day, despite “nothing” having happened. She feels no need to extract an unnecessary narrative. Although the day has no story to tell, there are moments to relay—“we walked down to the river, to that great mediaeval building”—and emotions to document—“a vague kind of discomfort”—and her personal thoughts to ponder—“I am sure her brain is full of illusions” (30). This entry contains “no plot, no comedy, no tragedy” and yet the day resonates with a touching beauty. Woolf is right. “[E]verything in the proper stuff of fiction” (*Essays* 164).

Considering her undeniable status as a modernist, it is easy to find overwhelming evidence of Woolf’s modernist styles within her diaries. Whether seeking moments in which she writes in stream-of-consciousness, expands upon a moment, or blatantly rejects the use of narrative, Woolf connects her diary entries to her artistic identity. Even in the passages that make no mention of writing or modernism, she transforms her life into modern literature by focusing on the “ordinary mind on an ordinary day.” While “[t]here will not be a daily diary” (Stein 218)

for Woolf, she repeatedly focuses on the individual day. Yet Woolf is not the only modernist to reject the notion of a “daily diary” (218). Just as Woolf pushes the boundary of diaries into the realm of fiction, so Anaïs Nin questions the role of the diary structure as she melds daily entries into swaths of narrative.

Chapter 3: Life Imitates Art: Anaïs Nin and the Invention of Self

I walked into my own book, seeking peace.

—Anaïs Nin, *The House of Incest* (62)

> I always thought of the artist as having the capacity to alchemize and transform ordinary daily living, the human condition, into something else. He has what Rank calls the creative will and which I used to call creative stubbornness. I found in the artist more of the ability to be given dross and to turn it into gold.

—Anaïs Nin, *A Woman Speaks* (195)

Anaïs Nin, a largely unsuccessful novelist remembered mostly for her diaries and erotic literature, lived in awe of the modernists who preceded her. Her artistic vision and creative process were so intertwined with her life that she lived as a breathing example of modernism's main tension—the opposing drives of depicting art divorced from life versus depicting ordinary life. While, like Stein and Woolf, Nin values the "ordinary day," she does not desire to make its ordinariness the focus of her diary or her literature. She instead makes it her model and in her writing transmutes the mundane into gold. In her own words, she sought to "transform ordinary daily living, the human condition, into something else" (*A Woman Speaks* 195). Like Frank's *Diary*, Nin's numerous diaries experiment with blending fiction and reality. She desired to publish them during her lifetime, yet only found a willing publisher in 1966 at the age of sixty. Like Frank, she possessed two versions of her diaries, one version written for herself and another edited for publication—the unexpurgated and the expurgated volumes respectively. Perhaps, if we still need an epigrammatic phrase from Stein to guide us through Nin's luscious life (which is itself almost a work of fiction), we can recall one of the earliest lines of Stein's "A Diary," "Why

does a narrative replace a diary. Because it does not." (201). Like Malcolm Bradbury's interpretation of Pound's modernist image, Nin's *Diaries* are a "juxtaposing of contradictions for resolution" (48)—discordant melodies that resolve in the harmonies of a grand orchestral cadence. Nin's *Diaries* are at once chronological narratives and modernist literature, fiction and reality, edited and yet full of truth.

I. Introducing Nin and Her Diaries

For the sake of simplicity, this chapter focuses on two of Nin's diary volumes, the first volume of her *Early Diaries* (1914-1920) and *Volume I* of her published diaries from her adult years (1931-1934), although it consults other volumes to provide further insight into Nin's art and life. Both diaries greet their anticipated audience at the start of autobiographical epochs. Her *Early Diaries*, published posthumously, begin with Nin's trans-Atlantic journey from Barcelona to New York City at the age of eleven. They follow the precocious and cogent Nin, who begins her diary as a correspondence to her absent father. During her youth and young adulthood, she wrote many diaries which were ultimately published as four volumes. They are grouped as her *Early Diaries*, separated from her later diaries due to their relative simplicity. These four volumes, published without substantial editing, detail her life from the age of eleven in 1914 until the age of twenty-seven in 1930, a period that includes her marriage to Hugo Huiller and numerous trans-Atlantic travels. By 1930, after Nin discovered Freudian psychoanalysis and self-diagnosed her own sexual repression, she moved, alone, to Paris.

As Nin began *Volume I* of her later diaries, the relationships she maintained became so complex that she began editing her diaries for publication. She edited the text so that she could one day publish the expurgated diary while preserving the unexpurgated version for herself. Eventually, after the original seven volumes had appeared, all the unexpurgated volumes were

published posthumously. This complex dual structure of Nin's diaries recalls the triplicate versions of Frank's text. However, this duality was not the only double structure within her diaries. In the fourth volume of her *Early Diaries*, sometime between December of 1927 and February of 1928, she maintained the diary of a fictional self named Imagy. On an unspecified day in this period she writes:

> I was tempted today to keep a double journal, one for things which do happen, and one for imaginary incidents which pass through my head. (*The Early Diaries IV*, 56)

This idea to write a double diary, one for herself and one for fictional Imagy, embodies the modernist tensions of both glorifying life through writing and writing a glorified version of life.

Volume I of Nin's diaries, which she published in 1966, was extracted from Nin's lifelong collection of diaries, a growing body of work that reflected the self-creative introspection of decades. *Volume I* spanned four years, from 1931, before Nin published her first book, *D.H. Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study*, to 1934, when she left Paris for New York. For years, her friends and supporters urged her to publish what they considered "her true life's work" (*Volume I,* x), but the work's size and personal nature made publication difficult. She originally wrote her diaries in volumes, and what was published as *Volume I* contains only half of the material contained within the original manuscript volumes, No. 30 to No. 40 (xi). She removed most references to her husband and other family members, upon their request, but "did not want to change the essential nature of her presentation" (xi). Of course, one wonders if a diary can still be considered accurate if a character is subtracted, or if events are removed. What then is diaristic truth? Can an edited diary still be considered a truthful recreation of the original diary?

Like the diaries written by the diarists discussed in the previous chapters, Nin's diary is edited. But unlike Frank and Woolf, Nin was able to oversee the publication of her first six

volumes, maintaining her artistic vision within the works. Gunther Stuhlmann, the diaries' editor, qualifies the nature of the veracity of Nin's *Diary*, remarking that "the factual identity of a person is basically unimportant within the context of the diary. Miss Nin's truth, as we have seen, is psychological" (xi). Indeed, Nin's "psychological" designs overwhelm life's factual realities until she finds herself transforming her life and her diaries into a work of fiction.

II. Nin As a Fictional Character

From its first line, *Volume I* establishes that Nin's *Diary* struggles to assert the primacy of either life or art. Immediately the landscapes of her life become the settings of fiction. Nin begins, "Louvciennes resembles the village where Madame Bovary lived and died. It is old, untouched and unchanged by modern life" (*Volume I* 3). Throwing her reader into the midst of her life in France, Nin relays that she could be living in the same town in which Gustave Flaubert set his novel *Madame Bovary*. Nin immediately establishes herself as the protagonist in the unfolding drama of her own life, comparing herself to the titular character Emma Bovary. With this opening gesture, Nin equates her life with fiction and contrasts reality with art. And like Flaubert's novel, Nin's *Diary* stars a complex heroine, whose romantic aspirations and literary allusions lead to dramatic happenstance. This immediate comparison reflects her view of her *Diary* being both fiction and life document.

As she further explains her village's history, she reveals that it too had its share of intrigue, of love and death in revolutionary France. Stories, themselves a blending of art and life, weave themselves over her surroundings and are reflected in the "windows of the village houses" (3). The stories are as much a part of the village as a thick layer of ivy are its walls, the same walls over which the guillotined head of Madame du Barry's lover was thrown during the revolution. And through the very act of recording the landscape in her *Diary*, Nin fictionalizes its

"cobblestone streets," its all-surrounding "forest," and its "castle on the outskirts" (3). Even the manner by which she opens her *Diary* fictionalizes it. With the cinematic sweep of a wide establishing shot, Nin furnishes her *Diary* first with story-like exposition. The exposition moves through her garden, from the exterior to the interior, and the camera follows her as she reveals her house and its uniquely painted rooms. Each room is "a different color," each refracting a mood of her multi-faceted mind—"green for repose, gray for work at the typewriter" (5).

Her sentences are at first short and economical, the only aspect of her writing that suggests the genre of the text. These short statements indicate a genuine work, springing from Nin's mind with a certain immediacy. Still establishing Louveciennes, she writes,

> [t]he dogs bark at night. The garden smells of honeysuckle in the summer, of wet leaves in the winter. One hears the whistle of the small train from and to Paris. (3)

Her prose is simple and direct. Her words and the images they paint would not be out of place in a children's picture book. In each quaint vignette she invites the reader to enter Louveciennes through sight, smell, and sound. Perhaps this is her design, to mimic the simplicity of thoughts transcribed as they occur, or perhaps this entry documents her natural writing unveiled by editing. Regardless, the effect conjures a recognizable, if not unmistakable, diary. She writes in the present tense—"Louveciennes resembles," "[m]y house is," "[t]he fountain emerges" (3)—which only serves to establish the modern and diaristic aesthetics that Stein's "A Diary" and many other diaries possess. Yet, by the second page, she moves from the fairy-tale realm and its constant present as she focuses inward. She turns toward the past and predicts the audience's unasked questions. "I chose the house for many reasons" (4) she answers, unprompted. And in explaining her renovations she orients herself toward the future, informing the reader that "I had

a sense of preparation for a love to come" (4). The simple statements grow more complex as she reveals her mind—her motivations, desires, and thoughts.

As she grows introspective, she proclaims her artistic manifesto, suddenly focusing on herself as an author after focusing on her house. She writes,

> [o]rdinary life does not interest me, I seek only the high moments. I am in accord with the surrealists, searching for the marvelous. I want to be a writer who reminds others that these moments exist; I want to prove that there is infinite space, infinite meaning, infinite dimension. (5)

After establishing her relationship with her *Diary*'s tangible, albeit idealistic setting, Nin veers strictly into the abstract realm—toward an "infinite dimension." The castles which she saw when strolling through the village have now become castles in the air. This proclamation explains her diarizing; she writes her diary to remind herself and others of life's transcendental and "infinite" potential. In doing so she shuns the "ordinary life" which both Lynn Z. Bloom and Stein consider the primary focus of innumerable women's diaries.[31] Yet she doesn't ignore the everyday, acknowledging that she often "mend[s] socks" and "prune[s] trees" (5). Engaged in those mundane activities, however, "[she] feel[s she is] not living" (5). Aspiring to elongate the "high" modernist moments into infinity, Nin begins to contradict one of the formal elements of diaries. The "infinite dimension" to which she aspires is the antithesis of the diary's daily temporality.

Although *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines a diary as "a daily record of events," a record which reflects events the world that the diarist observes, Nin depicts in her *Diary* a world much different from reality. She writes,

[31] Lynn Z. Bloom's essay, "I Write For Myself and Others: Private Diaries as Public Documents," explores the focus of female diaries. Historically, women diarists described the duties and events of their domestic lives within their diaries.

> when I began the creation of the diaries, I never knew that I was creating a world which was an antithesis to the world around me which was full of sorrows, full of wars, full of difficulties. I was creating the world I wanted. (*A Women Speaks* 193)

Nin admits that she "create[ed]" a world" which was different from reality. She admits that her *Diary* does not accurately reflect the world to which it refers. Assuming rose-colored glasses, she painted her world with bold brushstrokes, favoring her favorite colors to the drab palette of reality. For her self-portrait she has found a gilt frame, using her *Diary* as a means of personal wish fulfillment.

Nin's penchant for dramatically recreating her own history and repossessing her own life appears no more evident than in her diaries' form—in the narrative style she uses. Her highly stylized narrative structure, one which suggests a novel more than a diary, reveals a woman taking artistic licenses with her life and her diary. Again, this thesis' introduction establishes diaries as a daily form. The etymology of the word "diary" itself confirms the day as the diary's fundamental structural unit. Yet Nin often rejects this critical element in her diaries. The formal differences between her *Early Diaries* and the diaries written in her maturity demonstrate this fact in a highly visible manner. Whereas she divides her later diaries into entries according to month or season, she commits her childhood diaries to standard diaristic organization—each entry describes a singular day. John Ferrone, the original editor of Nin's childhood diaries when they were first published posthumously by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. in 1978, admitted the difference among the diaries. He considered the first of the childhood diaries to be the "first volume of Anaïs Nin's diary to be published essentially in the form in which it was written" (*Early Diaries* ix). He considers *The Early Diaries* to be,

> unlike the six volumes already in print, which the author consciously shaped using “a craft like that of a fiction writer” and moving through a loosely connected time sequence to some peak moment of her life. (*Early Diaries* ix)

If *The Early Diaries* spring from the described day and are true to the familiar daily form, then her later volumes arise from artifice and arbitrary organizational divisions. By separating herself from the day on which an action occurred, Nin removes the immediacy that characterizes the diary form. Instead, the unknown relationship between the day experienced and the day recorded suggests an act of constant reflection and perhaps constant editorial changes. Her later diaries appear to be autobiographical, suggesting even a work of creative nonfiction, masquerading in the diary’s organic clothing. This stylistic gulf between her diaries and a diary’s typical form also distinguishes her diaries from ones written by her contemporary female diarists.

However, the germ of a self-created, or at least self-curated, life began to sprout even in her earliest diaries. Speaking at the Philadelphia College of Art’s commencement ceremony in 1973, Nin tells the audience that,

> [e]ven by beginning a diary I was already conceding that life would be more bearable if I looked at it as an *adventure* and a tale. I was telling myself the story of a life, and this transmutes into an adventure the things which can shatter you. It becomes the mythical voyage which we all have to undertake—the inner voyage, the voyage, as in classical literature, through the labyrinth. (*A Women Speaks* 193)

Nin reveals that even from the age of eleven, she believed her to diary to be capable of transforming her life into an “adventure,” a “story,” and a “mythical journey.” Certainly, this aspect of “transmut[ing]” her life transcends her childhood and colors the diaries of her adulthood. But even at the age of twelve, Nin seemingly predicts that she will maintain a similar

approach to her diary. On, May 19, 1915 she explains that "I am still the same Anaïs and for my diary I shall always be" (*Early Diaries* 64). This entry poses a promise which she does not quite keep. While many aspects of her probing mind and aesthetic inclinations remain the same from her youth into her adulthood, the topics of her focus alter greatly. Young Anaïs refers often to her father, her family, and her deep devotion to her Catholic faith. By the age of twenty-eight, however, the married Nin describes the explicit details of her extra-marital affairs, indulges her ego with long passages that describe herself, and practices Freudian psychoanalysis with the devotion of a religious convert.

III. "Include a Narrative:" Nin As Modernist

> She was a shining exemplar of the modernist dictum 'Make it new,' for she was prescient enough to poise herself directly in the path of all that was fresh, exciting, and frequently controversial. [Nin set herself] among the pioneers who explored three of the most important [concepts of the century]: "sex, the self, and psychoanalysis. (Deirdre Bair, *Anaïs Nin: A Biography*, xviii)

Although younger than many of the modernist writers and born in 1903, eight years after the modernist era is considered to have begun, Nin aspired to join the ranks of her contemporary authors whom she so admired. Richard-Allardyce writes that, prior to Nin publishing her diaries:

> [n]one of the six flawed but insightful novels Nin produced between 1946 and 1964 ha[d] yet fulfilled Nin's hope that they would establish her as a literary innovator of stature equal to that of Joyce, Proust, Lawrence, and the other Modernists with whom she identified. (143)

In the beginning of *Volume I*, Nin explains that she was in the process of writing her first book, *D.H. Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study*. Yet this book, like her many fiction novels that followed, did not bring her literary acclaim.[32] Interestingly however, her writing a book on Lawrence triggered a series of events which introduced her to Henry Miller and his wife, a meeting which set the diaries of her adult life in motion.[33] This meeting prompted her foray into psycho-analysis and her first extra-marital love affairs, setting the stage for years of drama and years of friendship with Henry. As Nin refers to Henry Miller as "Henry" within her diaries, this chapter will also be referring to him as such.

Henry Miller became a central figure in Nin's life precisely because of his influence on her development as a modernist. As he knew the publisher of Nin's book on Lawrence, he reads her work and asserts that "I have never read such strong truths told with such delicacy" (*Volume I* 7). Perhaps it was his praise of Nin's book that first attracted Nin to him, although she paints a portrait of him that reveals her own aesthetic sensibilities:

> [h]e is a man whom life intoxicates, who has no need of wine, who is floating in self-created euphoria … He talked slowly, as if enjoying his own words. He installed himself in the present. (9)

The qualities which she praises in Henry mirror the artistic ambitions she had established for herself only a few pages earlier. Intoxicated, he lives the same "high moments" (5) which she seeks. He dwells in a "self-created euphoria" just as she lives in a self-created world buttressed by her *joie de vivre*. Her expository descriptions of herself and her house linger because, like Henry, Nin enjoys her own words. And, just as Nin expresses a desire to root herself in the

[32] However, Nin does note that she wrote the book in only sixteen days (*Volume I* 5). Perhaps the passion of her effort would have benefited from additional research and writing.
[33] Due to the passionate relationships Nin starts with both Henry and June Miller in 1931, the first of her unexpurgated diaries, which covers a year between 1931–1932, is titled *Henry and June*. Their mutual presence dominates the first year of her life in Paris.

present and to elongate individual moments, so has Henry already mastered the ability to not merely live in the present, but to "install … himself in the present." Later, Nin attributes another modernist characteristic to him—writers' fascination with mythology—by considering him a "mythical animal" (10). In this short introduction, she depicts him as the apotheosis of her artistic goals.

Occasionally, in *Volume I*, Nin displays traits of modernist impulses and includes narratives which expand experimentally rather than linearly. She tells Henry of her "theory of skipping meaningless details, as the dream skips them, which produces not only intensity but power" (166). She discusses other modern forms with him and he is intrigued by,

> [t]he idea of the casual, unfinished book. There is no doubt that this was not a surrender to an easy way of creating, accepting the chaos, the fragmentary quality of life, but had much more to do with D. H. Lawrence's quest for a way to capture a description of life and character without killing it, a way to capture the living moments. (357)

One gets the sense that the "casual, unfinished book" that Nin discusses in this second-to-last entry is her own diary, which remains a long way from publication. And one could easily interpret *Volume I* as a selectively modernist text like the one she describes. Nin could not stand a work being "fragmented," however much other modernists had fragmented their work and their minds within its pages (Podnieks 91). Yet she does admire the momentary and the "living moments," for she has stated that it is to the "high moments" (5) which she aspires. Her idol Lawrence himself articulates that "[o]ur image of time as a continuity in an eternal, straight line has crippled our consciousness cruelly (97-98). Her own *Diary*, by replicating and embellishing her life and elongating moments into chapters, certainly rejects the "straight line" created by

chronological diary entries. By expanding moments within expansive month-long entries, Nin "captures the living moments."

At the end of the second-to-last entry in which she talks with Henry, she again ponders modern forms. When she writes that "[c]ertain qualities were lost by organization, by the forms of the old novel, the old way to tell things" (358), she sounds like Woolf, rejecting the "plot," the "air of probability," and the "two and thirty chapters" (*Captain's Deathbed* 160) that define the oppressive conventions of old fiction.[34] Nin looks toward the future to overthrow this oppressive "organization," likely looking to her diary, which will make her the "literary innovator" (Richard-Allerdyce 143) that she has longed to be.

While Nin's diaries are often quite lucid, her fictions resonate in a surrealist world, in which the richly rendered inner lives of characters bleed into their lush landscapes without the constraints of time. For example, Nin begins her prose poem *House of Incest* with poetic lines:

> [m]y first vision of earth was water veiled. I am of the race of men and women who see all things through this curtain of sea, and my eyes are the color of water. I looked with chameleon eyes upon the changing face of the world, looked with anonymous vision upon my uncompleted self. (15)

The eyes of the unnamed protagonist are "chameleon eyes," made of the same substance as the sea in which she dwells, giving her "anonymous vision" among this race who also peer through "this curtain of the sea." Her identity is ambiguous, as her "uncompleted" self blends into the amniotic ocean which envelops her. Her self is as fluid as her aqueous home. Time, chronology, and narrative fail to materialize in this indistinct world. In contrast, Nin's diaries are more

[34] Woolf describes in her essay "Modern Fiction" how one can escape the constraints of traditional fiction writing; this can be achieved primarily by eliminating aspects like plot and formal organizational structure.

tangible, less surreal. The Nin of her diaries develops as a person and progresses through time. Seasons change and Nin can sense the "end of summer, and leaves falling" (*Volume I* 349).

Yet even at its most modernist, *Volume I* differs greatly from Stein's experimental and epigrammatic "A Diary." Wendy Steiner summarizes Stein's style as repetitious, allowing the reader to "live in the immediacy of each moment" (176). Stein's style is therefore inherently diaristic, as earlier chapters have revealed diaries to project a unique immediacy, a sentiment shared by both Quentin Bell and Deborah E. Lipstadt. Stein's modernist aesthetic believed that,

> instead of projecting one forward in time to a final resolution, a modern narrative should force one into the fullness and depth of each moment and should proceed as a succession of such moments. (Steiner 176)

The earlier examination of Stein's "A Diary" revealed that Stein employed multiple techniques to halt the progression of time, instead projecting expanded, emotion-filled moments. For example, the fragmented entry-like sentences depicted this "succession" of moments. However, rarely in her mature diaries does Nin focus purely on the individual moment and express the emotions that resonate within that space. Early in *Volume I*, she explains that "[o]rdinary life does not interest me. I seek only the high moments. I am in accord with the surrealists, searching for the marvelous" (5). While she buries this phrase within the syntax of a plot-like narrative, Nin's intention is genuine. One can tell from the content of her diaries that she seeks to flit from one memorable moment to the next. On page 8, she spans what was likely several days in a few lines, progressing from a casual conversation with her friend Richard to a flirtatious dinner with Henry. Although a self-proclaimed modernist, Nin is not experimental in her narrative structure. Her diaries are causal and linear and chronological (quite in opposition to the experimental style of *The House of Incest* featured above); in short, they contain a narrative that is stylistically

exaggerated so as to let her diaries imitate literature. And so Nin, by including a narrative, directly contradicts Stein's assertion that narrative "does not" replace a diary (201).

Yet, despite Nin's typically exaggerated narrative and unusual structure, we can turn to a few passages in *The Early Diaries* which demonstrate a Steinian focus on each individual day. On November 18, 1915, Nin writes "After an ordinary day, after having studied my lessons, knitted and read, I am here for a little chat" (91). As Frank and Woolf often did in their diaries, Nin characterizes a particular day with an adjective. Here, the day is "ordinary," with only a short phrase describing what it entails. An ordinary day is one which consists of "stud[ying] my lessons, knit[ing] and read[ing]" (92). This is all she reveals of her ordinary day. "I have been thinking about something" (92), she writes after this introduction, and delineates her thoughts rather than further describe her day. In this entry, an ordinary day provides a blank slate, an empty bit of page on which to engrave her thoughts. While the day functions as an excuse to write, her thoughts are the entry's focus. Yet by choosing to discuss her "ordinary mind on an ordinary day" (*Captain's Deathbed* 160), Nin chooses to highlight in her diary what Woolf would consider the proper focus of modern fiction in her essay of the same name. Although Woolf has not yet written this essay, Nin's entry suggests an innate love of the ordinary that she shares with modernism.

At other times, Nin writes about the meaninglessness of individual days. "It is a new year," she notes, "and a whole week has gone by without my writing one line. To tell the truth, all these days have slipped by unnoticed" (*Early Diaries*, 101).Yet while she ignores the days, she remembers her thoughts and emotions, how she "felt nothing" and "thought nothing" and ultimately "felt only great sadness" (101). Her inner life, which knows no bounds of temporality,

overwhelms her perception of time. Likewise, her thoughts distract her from describing her actual day in detail.

But, while her thoughts retain such primacy in her diary, the day itself occasionally achieves a central position as well. Interestingly, she writes a second entry for the day of January 23, 1920. She leaves this entry undated. Logically, however, it must also have been recorded on January 23, because the subsequent entry is dated "January 24." Nin, in a reflective mood which isolates her from the world around her, muses on the temporal location from which she writes:

> [t]he irrevocable Today will soon end in deep sleep, and tomorrow morning I will begin to live again. What will I do with that superb day? I don't know. But if I can suffer deeply, then drive away my sorrow, if I can dream, relive my emotions, come out of ecstasy only to fall into confusion and puzzlement, and learn to love yet another poet, as I did today-then I won't regret that day! (*Early Diaries* 418)

Nin makes several choices that exalt the "day" within her entry. Must notably, she capitalizes the word "Today." Clearly, her intention is not merely a Germanic grammatical need to capitalize nouns, but a conscious choice to emphasize the subject of her sentence. The adjectives she uses to color her days, "irrevocable" and "superb," are both shockingly descriptive, quite unlike the plainly described "ordinary" day mentioned earlier. While Nin describes literal days, one also feels as if she broaches the metaphorical in her writing. The single inimitable day, followed by sleep, hints at life's ultimate end. She alternates between the concrete and identifiably present "today" and the abstracted "that day" of the past, highlighting the concept of the day, rather than merely "today." Her ending gesture, toward a "day" that may not be tomorrow but will certainly follow this "irrevocable Today," is one of hope.

Earlier, this thesis' introduction established the diary as a daily form. The diarist's ritual of writing a daily entry, or at the very least, recording what happened on specific days, provides a central tenet of the diary's nature. Etymologically and historically, we understand diaries to revolve around the fundamental unit of the day. Each chronologically organized entry which comprises the diary is most usually understood as a day, a day depicted in writing. Diaries' day-based entries, chronological organization, and the diarist's depictions of her thoughts or experiences comprise the elements of a diary. However, Nin often fails to provide her mature diaries with this first defining element of a diary, unlike the day-based entries of *The Early Diaries* that were examined in the previous paragraph. Within *Volume I* of her mature diaries, her entries nearly always recount the span of a month or a season, for example, "Winter, 1931-1932" (3), "February, 1932" (47), and "November, 1933" (269). These massive entries function less as a day's entry than as the epoch that Frank Kermode considers human nature to tend toward. If the typical diary entry, like those written by Frank or Woolf, has the spatial range of a paragraph or a page, then Nin's entry spans the space of a novel chapter. Each expands like a chapter, referencing moments and moods rather than the chronology of a day. If modernist narrative forms shatter linear narrative into individual moments of intense psychological resonance, then Nin's diary structure achieves the opposite. In carefully-crafted entries she excises the structural moment from the diary, stretching days into months. By removing daily entries she upends the fundamental unit of the diary. Nin's careful aestheticism also makes itself evident in her diary's physical appearance. According to Elizabeth Podnieks, her diary could be considered close to "immaculate," with few mistakes on the pages. Nin ensured that the quality leather-bound covers were matched by an equally beautiful interior. She meticulously ensured

that all entries were written in black ink, even going so far as to ink over passages that were originally written in pencil (291).

Although Nin's diaristic writings seem nearly antithetical to Stein's strict modernist tenets and continuous present, her fiction bears structural and stylistic similarities to Stein's own experimental fiction. Each sentence flows like the amniotic water she evokes in *House of Incest*.[35] Taking her prose poem as an example, one can find no halting, end-stopped lines that read with the ambiguity of a telegram. But the overall effect remains the same as Stein's "A Diary." The reader finds herself lost in the abstract and intangible world, tangled in the words which exist for their own sake. Nin evokes the world of *Volume I* in such a way. Describing a day in Paris she writes:

> Bloom. There is a bloom on everything and on everybody. Happiness. The soft bloom of happiness. Soft breezes, talk like summer breeze, love like ripe flowers, new dresses like new grass. (323)

Artistic metaphors blend with reality until one is unsure as to which aspect came first—nature or its literary imitation? Were blossoms and "bloom[s]" adorning Paris during her visit or has Nin conjured the language of flowers merely to compose the image of a ripening April day? Does she see "new dresses" or "new grass," or both, as she walks through a spring moment? Stein also conjures up intangibly abstract concepts through images of flowers within "A Diary":

> [Y]esterday we turned hyacinths into wisteria. / Today we turned them back into hyacinths from hyacinths to wisteria" (209).

The first sentence suggests the passage of time, with the arrival of summertime "wisteria" replacing the "hyacinths" of spring. Yet a closer analysis of the passage erodes any sense that

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[35] One thinks of the elegant sentences that Nin pens in this poem, like "I felt only the cares of moving—moving into the body of another—absorbed and lost within the flesh of another, lulled by the rhythm of water, the slow palpitation of the senses, the movement of silk" (17).

one could make of it. How could this passage of time, this changing of seasons, happen in one day, over the course of "yesterday?" Likewise, how could the transformed wisteria turn back into the hyacinths which it had formerly been? Like with Nin's "bloom[s]," one wonders whether these flowers are literal or whether they represent some complex, abstract notion. Occasionally, in both passages, concrete reality gleams from a metaphor and a breeze lifts the gossamer veil separating truth from reality. While the units of storytelling—the sentence and the paragraph—are far more coherent in Nin's writing than in Stein's, the larger effect remains the same. Both are modernists, evoking the subtle murmurs of the subconscious in their experimental work.

IV. Nin's Beautiful, Untrue Things

"Lying, the telling of beautiful untrue things, is the proper aim of art," proclaims the young aesthete, Vivian, in Oscar Wilde's 1889 essay "The Decay of Lying." Although fictional himself, Vivian echoes the thoughts and lifestyle of his creator, whose outspoken aesthetic practices even merited him the honor of being satirized in a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta.[36] In this essay, Wilde pronounces the "doctrines of the new aesthetics,"—most famously, the anti-memetic claim that "[l]ife imitates art far more than art imitates life" (118–120). Perhaps no other twentieth century author comes closer to Wilde's notion than Anaïs Nin. Although also a modernist critic and author, Nin is best remembered for her diaries, which gave her impetus to dramatize her actions and turn her own life into fiction. Although they may be unreliable, Nin's diaries portray two fundamental aspects of her life: her highly creative mind and her need to constantly invent herself. Podnieks explains that while they may not be "factually accurate … [e]ach diary is a version of self Nin believed in" (287). But if, as Bradbury claims, modernism is

[36] A fact which Gyles Brandeth shares in "Beautiful Untrue Things." This fact also reminds the reader that Virginia Woolf has a play named after her.

“a juxtaposing of contradictions for resolution” (48) then her diaries are a modernist experiment, juxtaposing herself and reality in a text that reflects both.

When asked why she continually lied about her actual experiences, Nin admitted in her unexpurgated diaries that it was “[t]o make life more interesting. To imitate literature, which is a hoax” (*Henry and June* 206). The very word “imitate” resounds with Wildean flavor. Nin’s life-long habit of embellishing the truth, whether through her actions or by narrating those actions in prose, arose from her desire to imitate the art of fiction. Through this imitation she hoped to transform her life into literature, into one of those “beautiful, untrue things” which Wilde praises. Nin’s tendency toward embellishment appears throughout her diaries and resulted from her childhood attempts to emulate the fictions she saw within art and popular media. At the age of sixteen, Nin began to notice and record the “romances” that proliferated in the “cinema,” the “theater,” and “everywhere in the whole world” (*Early Diaries* 385). Within her diary she wonders how she might “be worthy of receiving their golden rays” and what she might do to “make her dream come true” (385). With striking confidence, she proclaims “No doubt: be beautiful” (385)! As she becomes enamored with quixotic fantasies, her desire to “be beautiful” speaks to her flirtations with men as much as it does her flirtations with fiction. Nin longs to play the part of a heroine in a romance and enter a fictional world.

Studying diaries, which are generally understood to be faithful records of a person’s life and thoughts, prompts the question of whether art or reality should direct a work of literature. But this debate is also central to literary modernism. While the tension between exaggerated aestheticism and mimesis in art has been contested since the time of Plato and Aristotle, the question of the primacy between the two arises in definitions of modernism. M. K. Spears asserts that:

> there are two primary impulses in modern literature, both always present but one or the other dominating. The first is the drive toward aestheticism … The illusion becomes more convincing and self-sufficient; there is a tendency for the art-world to become separate and independent from life. This is countered by the opposing impulse, to break through art, destroy any possibility of escape to illusion, to insist that the immediate experience, the heightening of life is the important thing. (62)

For example, Spears recognizes both elements in Joyce's *Ulysses.* Within the text exists both the experimental literary forms that tend toward art and the emphasis on "immediate experience" in the unfolding day. Yet there are also modernist works which depict either art divorced from life or life untainted by art. Michael H. Whitworth considers that "modernism is born from the tension between [these two impulses]" (8). Nin—a self-proclaimed modernist—lives and depicts this tension, as she aims to present her life through the language of literature, dutifully and obsessively recording the days of her existence. By writing a diary she records the "immediate experience," yet by seeking out the beautiful and intriguing and using exaggerated narrative forms, she directs herself toward "aestheticism."

Certainly, Nin saw a kindred spirit in Oscar Wilde and his aestheticism, proclaiming,

> I am all the women in the novels, yet still another *not* in the novels … Like Oscar Wilde I put only my art into my work and my genius into my life. I change everyday … [m]y real self is unknown … I create a myth and a legend, a lie, a fairy tale, a magical world. (*Diary IV* 176–178)

Among the romantic descriptions of the fairy tales and myths within her fiction, she creates a "lie." She adheres to Vivian's aesthetic religion, the cult of lying, and likewise ranks her lies among her foremost creations. Here she separates herself from Virginia Woolf and many other

modernists, for clearly the proper stuff of fiction is not "the ordinary" (*Essays* 160) but the extraordinary, the "myth," the "legend," and the "fairy tale." As she "change[s] everyday," she clearly depicts an evolving, yet fragmented identity, whose "real self is unknown." This fragmented self suggests Podnieks' understanding of the "self-reflexive and self-referential" modernist literature in which the Anglo-American modernists fragmented themselves. In this literature, the "author's "I" was fractured into multiple personae so that identity was unfixed, unstable within the text, thus further undermining the authority of the text" (Podnieks 82). The "unfixed, unstable" identity of the modernist's literary selves suggests Nin's own ever-changing and unknown self. But unlike some of the modernists, Nin's evolving and fragmented self aligned with the conventional—with myth, fairy tales, and Wilde's beautiful lies.

The reflection from her entry in *Volume IV*, in which she creates "a fairytale, a magical world" (176), mirrors a passage in the prose-poem *The House of Incest*, which she had written a decade earlier in 1937:

> [o]nly the truth disguised in a fairytale, and this is the fairytale behind which all the truths are staring as behind grilled mosque windows. With veils. The moment I step into the cavern of my lies I drop into darkness and see a mask which stares at me like the glance of a cross-eyed man; yet I am wrapped in lies which do not penetrate my soul, as if the lies I tell were like costumes. (67)

The persona Nin assumes here is pseudo-autobiographical, and while the book's title perhaps hints at the brief incestuous relationship she shared with her father in her late twenties, it definitively refers to a selfish love that only appreciates aspects of the self. Someone with this "incestuous" love cannot genuinely love another, he instead only loves the aspects of himself he sees reflected in the other. The notion that the truth is "disguised in a fairytale," or that a fairy

tale contains the truth, suggests the primacy of fiction and of art. To return to Wilde, perhaps Nin knows that life, that truth, imitates art and so fairy tales are truth.

Nin's imagery further conjures fairy tales. The "grilled Mosque windows," "veils," and "cavern of my lies" perhaps suggest the Arabian exoticism of "One Thousand and One Nights." Nin, as perpetual storyteller, assumes the role of Scheherazade, the Persian queen who told a thousand and one nightly stories in order to survive the king's wrath. Lies, which are themselves stories, protect her.

Like a storyteller, Nin also wears her lies as "costumes," suggesting their artistic and aesthetic value. Yet they are merely topical, suggesting a distance from her inner self. The "fairytale" which is truth is separated from her by a "veil."[37] Some of her other works of fiction display this same tension between art and life. Sharon Spencer, reviewing *Cities of the Interior*, Nin's self-proclaimed continuous novel which features five fiction novels designed as one volume, considers her to have alchemically transformed "ordinary life into art" (xii). She achieves this transmutation through the medium of fiction. Yet as Woolf elevates "ordinary life into art" within her fiction, Nin's entry from *Volume IV* reveals that her diary entries are inspired by her own fiction. Only a gossamer veil separates "truth" from fiction, allowing the two to mingle and confuse the reader as to which is which. Which came first, one wonders, the truth or the fiction? Does life imitate art as Wilde suggests, or does art imitate life?

V. Toward Fiction

The diarists that earlier chapters examined derived their fiction from their diaries. Woolf explains that she finds literary diamonds in the "dustheap" of her diary and Frank reveals that she

[37] Within her diaries, another person refers to a 'veil" separating reality from the internal self. One of her psychoanalysts, Dr. Allendy, relays that his vocation as an analyst has prevented him from living his life. He has "missed all the joys and pleasures of life. There was always a veil between me and reality" (*Volume I* 165).

used her diary as inspiration for her *Secret Annex*. Yet Nin's *Diaries*, which at times suggest works of fiction, find inspiration from other works of fiction. Various fictions appear with her diary—Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, Nin's own *House of Incest*, and unnamed fairy tales—establishing Nin as both a fictional protagonist and a modernist author. While this thesis has revealed how a diverse variety of diaries can be read as modernist texts, the conclusion will delve deeper into the questions posed by Nin's Diaries. When a diarist records her life in a diary, does her life imitate art or does her art imitate life?

Conclusion: Revisiting "The Diary of Cinderella" and the Diary's Place in Fiction

> By beginning a diary, I was already conceding that life would be more bearable if I looked at it as an adventure and a tale. I was telling myself the story of a life, and this transmutes into an adventure the things which can shatter you.
>
> —Anaïs Nin, *A Woman Speaks* (193)

I. Prologue: Once Upon A Time

Long before there was a plague there was a girl who kept a diary. And long before this plague, the one which kept her home and musing about the past, there was another plague. Or so it was called by the girl who called herself Cinderella. The girl who called herself as such hadn't always called herself Cinderella. But after one fateful day at the festival, after intruding upon a conversation she shouldn't have heard and dreaming a dream she shouldn't have dreamt, she penned a new story and a new name for herself.

She rushed home, and pushing past the fairy tales that crowded her bookshelf, opened the cover of an empty diary that she had been saving for a special beginning. On its cover was an orange and yellow and blue painting, Van Gogh's *The Sower*. She could tell you what every color meant and what the sunrise and the parable of the Sower represented; she had even catalogued the symbolism of flowers in her head. She was so sure that she could conjure up a story and write a happy ending for herself, for what is life but a story? What is man but an author and a character?

And with the arrogance of an author who crafted worlds and breathed life into dusty pages, she wrote the words that would control her destiny and weave the threads of fate into her name, her story, and her ending. In retrospect the words are mundane, ridiculous, miniscule. But they were as final as the name inscribed upon a tombstone: "The Diary of Cinderella."

This concluding chapter discusses the story of my lifelong relationship with diaries—my reading, writing, and being inspired by them. While I have seen myself and my thoughts reflected in each of the diaries I've read during this project, the diaries of Anne Frank and Anaïs Nin especially have urged me to ponder my own approach to marrying fiction and reality through the diary form. While this thesis analyzes diaries as modernist texts, my earliest conceptions of this project attempted to study fiction's influence on a diarist's use of narrative in her diary. As such, this chapter will be returning to some of the earliest questions I had, although approaching them through the lens of the knowledge I've acquired from this project. Rather than directly addressing many of the topics that my thesis has covered and the questions it has prompted, I will be letting them arise organically as I explain my history with diaries and autobiographical literature, and how my relationship with fiction and storytelling has evolved throughout my life. Among other topics, I will be addressing the relevance of diaries in the present coronavirus moment, the interrelation of life and art, and the paradox of emplotted diaries. But as I am a diarist who has dedicated the last eight months of my life to the study of diaries, I think it best to approach my analysis through the diary form. Like other diaries, this work will be introspective and set myself as the center of its universe. Like Stein, I offer a genuine yet manufactured, a personal yet critical, and an organic yet organized diary. And to continue my approach of analyzing diaries through the lens of Stein's insights, I will use the following phrase as my guiding light "[t]hinking in terms of a diary its origin and its nationality and its return" (212), for this is a story of the diary's origin in my life and its return to me in this project.

II. A Retelling of Tuesday March 10, 2020

[Because "[a] diary should not be in writing" (Stein 210)]

"I wish to go to the festival," I sing, in between sobs that echo around the bathroom stall.

Showtunes often resonate in my brain, and tonight it's Sondheim—specifically "The Prologue" from *Into the Woods*. And, as usual, I am Cinderella.

"I wish. More than life, more than the moon …"

Unzipping the dull, black dress, I strip off the insensitivity of the comment tossed at me by the old man who had stopped me in the music library. Smiling to the bearded man besides him, he told me that my red lipstick made me stand out on stage. Any other night that wouldn't have bothered me. Or maybe it would have bothered me more.

I fish the floral jumper out of my bag and pull it over my head, a few loose bobby pins detaching themselves from my hair. They clatter, metallic, to the floor. But this would be the end of red lipstick. There would be no more reasons to wear red lipstick anymore as there would be no more places at which to wear it. There would be no more concerts, no more parties, no more dances, no more events. Whatever the festival was, the one Cinderella desperately wanted to attend, had been cancelled.

Although I've never stopped thinking of myself as Cinderella (even though I was never really her), nor quite stopped viewing the world as the extension of a fairy tale, I thought I had let go of the *Cinderella* that had been so important to me in high school. I thought I had moved past the spring musical of senior year—Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Cinderella*—the one where everyone got sick with the "play-gue" during Hell week. But this, this horrible Tuesday in the middle of March, likely the last day before my senior year ends, this is worse than getting laryngitis three hours before the opening night of *Cinderella*.

I'm crying loud enough to trigger the noise-activated air freshener in the bathroom. That's my cue to stop.

In my imagination I hear the clock strike twelve. So I slip off a gleaming heeled shoe and slide boots over my leggings. The magic ends at midnight, I think to myself, but midnight has come unexpectedly early. Now the spell I cast has lifted and everything seems to be turning back into a pumpkin.

I fold the dress around my shoes and pack the bundle into my bag. I push open the stall door and stop in front of the mirror. There would be time for tears later.

I stand reflected before me, exactly how I presume I look. The red lipstick and the layers of concealer can't camouflage the tears. I look defeated, pathetic, and decidedly unromantic. I certainly am not the fairest in the land nor am I Cinderella. I've always assumed mirrors offer truer reflections than diaries, but sometimes they've baffled me. Sometimes they've catapulted me into the past.

Tonight the long mirror over the sink reflects half-forgotten memories under the white fluorescent lights. A haze of hair spray hangs like clouds, and mannequins stand, dressed in Quinceañera gowns, as if I've never left the dressing rooms in the basement of Kennedy Catholic High School. I also picture my mother next to me, as if we're chatting after a choral concert before leaving campus for dinner.

Suddenly I realize that more than *Cinderella,* more than high school, it was my mother's stories that had set me on the path of confusing fantasy and life. But I can't mull over the melodrama of my life now. I still have a thesis chapter to write—my chapter on Anaïs Nin is due tomorrow. It's refreshing and almost comforting to think that someone else has confused their life with fiction even more than I have.

By the time I arrive at the library my sister has already been studying for half an hour. But the night air, with its stars that are hidden by streetlights and its pines trees that sometimes roar like the ocean, had sang to me as I walked. So I drop my bags at her table and promptly walk back outside to waste an hour on the rooftop garden sobbing to my boyfriend over the phone. As I complain about losing the closing rituals of senior year—my senior recital, my last Spiritual Exercises, and graduation—I hear the harmonized yells of my drunken classmates from the pub. Maybe I should be drinking.

My boyfriend offers me advice, reassuring me. But I'm barely listening. As I stare at the clock tower face that gleams like the moon, a puff of some student's cigarette smoke has transformed into clouds of hairspray and the patio furniture has become mannequins and makeup-covered counters. For some reason I'm sitting in the dressing rooms of my high school again. Mirrors and lights and late night melodrama surround me. And there are still sobs echoing in my ears.

But I'm not the one crying. One of the two Cinderellas is crying about everything—how very soon it would be over, how the boy who played Prince Charming didn't like her back, how she'd never again get to be Cinderella. In fact, everyone seemed to be falling apart that night. I had been too sick to sing as the fairy godmother, so I was slipping into a purple gown to sneak onstage as an extra at the ball. Yet I had never felt more like the fairy godmother than that night. A chorus girl had broken her dancing heels, so I lent her my favorite pair of purple velvet shoes. Like magic, they fit perfectly. One of the stepmothers needed jewelry so I conjured a pair of crystal earrings from my costume box. Like glass slippers they sparkled and twinkled. And to the sobbing Cinderella, I offered advice.

"But you get to be Cinderella for one more night," I told her with a gentle smile, "that's more than most of us will ever get. Enjoy it while it lasts."

As I would skip the next day's show, that performance was my last. But I enjoyed it while it lasted.

Yet it is the warning that I would give to Cinderella that rings through my ears as I catch the clock tower's illuminated face staring at me. "All this magic is very powerful, but it will end at midnight tonight."

Midnight is close. And my thesis chapter is still due tomorrow, the tomorrow that will arrive when the clock strikes twelve.

I had enjoyed nights in the pub with friends. And I'd have them again. But I doubt I'd have any more late nights in the library as a student. So tonight the festival would be there, with my sisters and one of my best college friends.

"I'm going to be ok, Craig," I say, my sobbing having faded to the occasional sniffle. "But I should be writing." And though I've convinced neither him nor I of my being alright, I hang up the phone call.

Once I'm sitting in the library, I can barely glimpse the sky through the ivy-covered skylight. Of course my mind floats up and away through the roof, to the patio above, still thinking of the clock tower, still thinking of *Cinderella.* Maybe I'm immature for still thinking of my life in terms of fairy tales, but then I think of Spiegel. She calls her diary an "enchanted book" (1) on the first page of her diary. I force myself to replace my daydreaming with work. Halfheartedly, I open one of the books on Nin that I had pulled from the shelves. As I flip through an anthology of her speeches, my eyes fall on a conspicuous quote:

> [b]y beginning a diary, I was already conceding that life would be more bearable if I looked at it as an adventure and a tale. I was telling myself the story of a life. (*A Women Speaks* 193)

Never before have I seen the reality of my life reflected to me so clearly! And yet someone else has written this. It is as if Nin lives and writes inside my head. I too had always viewed my life as a "adventure and a tale." Growing up, I was never quite sure of the boundary between reality and fiction. At times, the boundary seemed illusory, as indeterminate as morning mist, a gossamer veil between the primordial sun-bleached dandelion fields of my childhood and the diamond-studded velvet sky of dreams. The balance between these two realms was often precarious—I stacked my diaries besides fairy tales on the bookshelf. I blame this confusion, in part and yet entirely lovingly, on my mother. She was and is a storyteller as much as me.

Desperate to read more of this woman who speaks the truth of my life, I open another diary. This is *Volume I*; Nin is an adult now. She is saying that "Louveciennes resembles the village where Madame Bovary lived and died" (1). She is a fictional character and she is the protagonist of her story. I too have always lived in the shadow of literature and legends. Rip Van Winkle slumbered beyond the river, in the Catskill mountains where the sun set. Sleepy Hollow was sixty miles south, although I always confused it with Spooky Hollow, the road next to my grandparent's house that possessed its own local legend. I was always amazed that I hadn't encountered a casual ghost while growing up.

My mother always told me stories and I seemed to have constantly blended them with reality, just as Nin blends the two in her first entry. Of all the books she shared with me, her favorite source of immigrant narratives and morals was *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. I was eventually quite surprised to discover that the Irish Francie and her family were entirely fictional

and not my distant relatives. My mother would relate the fictional vignettes of depression-era life with the same reverent tone she reserved for tales of my Italian great grandmother. Yet only by more deeply encountering some fiction did I eventually discover my history. When I finally read *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* at the age of nineteen, while recovering from a break-up, I felt that I had encountered an aspect of my mother's girlhood more distinctly than she had ever shared with me. Even I saw myself reflected in the person of the teenage Francie, having encountered a Lee Rhynor of my own.

Laura Ingalls Wilder and Anne of Green Gables were also introduced as my long-lost sisters, distant aunts, or perhaps long-departed grandmothers. These characters often substituted for my distant extended family, especially in the ten-year period that stretched with no reunion with my dad's Wisconsin relatives.

But as I learned about my fictional ancestors, I inherited some unspoken need to narrativize my life. I remember pacing in front of the old grandfather clock in our dining room when I was eight, wondering what I was supposed to include in my book. How did Laura Ingalls Wilder remember every detail of her life? Would I need to write about the moments in which I was thinking about writing a book? Certainly, Laura Ingalls Wilder included no mention of preemptive literary planning. If I had only encountered Anne Franks' *Diary* when I was younger, I would have known that I could have included all my literary aspirations in my diary, even if I would edit them out later. I did not yet know that one could edit the truth.

It was around this time that I felt the need to begin a diary, knowing that my inevitable fate would be to publish my entire life as fiction. Yet I knew, even then, that I would be unable to record the daily detail with the same quantity and quality of an author like Wilder. I prayed that my unaided future retrospection would be able to reconstruct my childhood. During this

time, my act of occasionally jotting down unusual days in a notebook led to me congratulating myself as if I had in fact been maintaining a daily diary (yet, in retrospect, I agree with Stein that "[t]here will not be a daily diary (218)). Even at this young age, I, like Nin, had fashioned myself as the protagonist of my own story—in my mind and on the page. I tattooed the corners of notebooks with autobiographical doodles, dreamt up daydreams that placed me at the center of my favorite fictional universes, and began a constant and unrelenting inner lament of my boring suburban life. Although I moved into the countryside before beginning fifth grade, to a house with most of the accoutrements of rural romance, I still lamented the lack of narrative intrigue that my life supplied. In fact, by moving into my mother's childhood home, I had regressed. I had moved to a part of the world in which nothing happens. We were no Kansas pioneers like Laura Ingalls Wilder, but we lived a life seemingly as isolated from civilization.

By the time we entered high school, my twin sister and I were aching for some excitement to upset the predictability of provincial life. We were confident that scholarships to a Catholic school fifty miles away would offer a much-needed change of setting along with the American high school experience promised by 1980's rom-coms and *High School Musical*. The very notion of a scholarship for a far-away private high school seemed like a reversal of fortune straight out of a fairy tale. However, we forgot to realize that the three hours spent commuting daily would drain the experience of it romance.

As I was understandably unfulfilled by the daily diet of calculus and commuting, yet still craving the plots I had seen in movies, I retreated into my mind. I crafted a mental masterpiece that I never fully wrote down, a story based on some of the new characters I had encountered in fiction. I dreamed up the perfect high school and imagined the most cliché events—long lost

loves, a romantic reunion at prom, being the lead of a high school musical—and designed a main character who slowly became me.

I was enraptured in this world of dreams in the August before my senior year when my mother told me two things. She first told me that there would be a second shuttle bus, a late bus, that would allow my sister and I to stay later after school. Second, she revealed that the school musical would be *Cinderella*. With the impossible confidence in her child that only mothers have, she encouraged me to audition as the titular character. Desperate to seize this moment and further become the main character of my own story, I promised myself that I would audition. Despite knowing in my heart that gaining the part would be an impossibility, I arrogantly titled my diary for that school year "The Diary of Cinderella."

Once the whirlwind of *Cinderella* began, sweeping me away in tulle skirts and clouds of hairspray, reality and fairy tales blended irreversibly in my mind. Small obsessive details bridging these worlds filled my diaries. After the October audition that secured my spot as one of the two double-casted fairy godmothers, I ran out the theater to the bus that was waiting for me. As I ran, my shoe slipped off. I smiled to myself as I slipped my shoe back on and climbed onto the pumpkin-colored school bus. I was Cinderella.

Even recently, I've compared my life to *Cinderella*, jotting my thoughts down on the notes app of my phone as I walked around campus:

Friday 2/21/2020

> she was leaving for her date by the time I had passed through the shadow pines and the cold. I looked west, where the faintest strawberry stain still rimmed the sky. Past the parking lot, past the construction lot, past the curves and edges of hill, the sky was orange. I saw the school bus which had climbed up through the blue dark hill as white

> mobile moonlight, this time silhouetted against the pumpkin pink sky. The carriage stopped. I saw the sunset through its empty windows.

Again, the magic of the fairy godmother transforms the mundane school bus into a fairy-tale carriage. As I climbed up the hill, I reached toward the sublime, not unlike how Nin aspires toward the infinite in the first entry of her first diary. While these moments of artistic interpretation illuminate my life, committing them to paper has offered a continuous challenge. While I haven't titled every diary, my continued insertion of fairy-tale references has made each diary a continued version of "The Diary of Cinderella."

…

I startle suddenly into the waking world, I had fallen into a dream at my desk. My sister is poking me awake. I had been dreaming about the past. But it is time to go to bed, my sister tells me. It is time to sleep.

I don't want to leave because my heart knows that Holy Cross will announce its closure in the next twenty four hours. Leaving the library and going to bed will usher tomorrow and all of its inevitable sorrows into the present. But I get up. Unlike four years ago, I do not fight reality.

Several diaries in hand, I descend the grand steps of Dinand. I think of the graduation photos I would have taken in front of the pillars, imitating hundreds of alumni before me. The elaborate pillars lend an air that the three of us are indeed leaving a grand ball. Suddenly I wonder if Cinderella felt more sadness or fear as she hitched her skirts and fled the party and the prince.

Memories of golden afternoons and sun-warmed bricks bask on the dim steps in the fluorescent light. I had walked these steps so many times. The cool March air, so full of promise

and hope, almost deceives me into thinking that tonight is like any other night, that I am merely leaving behind hours of study or another off-campus party. Far beyond the hill, the rush of cars on the highway tells me that Worcester and the surrounding world has not yet slowed for the night, nor for the year. The stars twinkle a little more than usual tonight, but I suppose that is just the tears blurring my vision.

However, I can clearly see that the clock tower, glowing in the dark, has already chimed midnight. The magic has ended. Everything has turned back into a pumpkin.

I don't need to turn around to know that my shoe has stayed on. No prince will come to chase after me. There will not be another ball.

Oh I had enjoyed it while it lasted. I truly had.

But the ball was over.

III. The Week of March 16, 2020

I flip through the news page of my phone and see a *New York Times* article about coronavirus diaries. I'm intrigued by the quote at the top. It's a tweet:

> [t]oday has been quiet, sort of, so far. Take a moment and make some notes about what's happening. Call it your Coronavirus diary, your plague journal, whatever. It's important. Later you will want a record." (Ruth Franklin, March 16, 2020)

I screenshot the article and the quote, I'll read it later. That is the extent of my thesis research today. I swipe back to my notes app to ponder the diary entry I wrote in bed:

> [i]t's been 2 years since I met you. It took several hours to unwrap myself from the cocoon. Unwashed face, unbrushed teeth.

Clearly, I am no Anne Frank and Ruth Franklin is no Mr. Bolkestein. No tweet, diary, or historical figure will tempt me into productivity. History will only hear of my laziness. Hygiene

and motivation both left with the campus that trickled out on Saturday and the roommate that left yesterday. My only future is in the past, my only celebrations will be anniversaries.

Bored, I look at Snapchat. No new messages, no new photos. But there were featured memories, pictures from the night exactly two years ago. In one of the photos I stood smiling through red lipstick, a green feather necklace around my neck and an arm around my roommate. I smile. Two years ago today was the night I met my boyfriend for the first time. But I have no motivation to reread my diary entry from that night. I already know what it says.

The blue diary I kept two springs ago sits on the bookshelf by my desk. Like Woolf, I enjoy rereading my diaries. I have found many diamonds in these "dustheaps" and I polished them up whenever I needed inspiration in my creative writing class last semester. My mind flashes to *Renia's Diary*, when she talks of Norka discussing her own diary, on March 16, 1941, "I know she'll write an entry in her diary and compare those two days one year apart" (111). Is March 16 auspicious, worthy of reflection? It is to me.

On March 16, 2018, I had desperately wanted to record the night's St. Patrick's Day party but all I scribbled was a quick placeholder, a title of sorts—"The Best Moot Party." Spiegel was also right when she wrote about the futility of writing,

> [i]t's good to write down the details, but today I'll try to relay a few fragments … [y]ou know it's no use writing at all, it should be filmed, and on color film too. (146)

I too long for a film of that night. When I recall the evening, I can vividly picture the concert that began it, the piano performances excerpted from Prokofiev's ballet *Romeo and Juliet* interspersed with Shakespeare's monologues read by theater majors. The romance that the performance evoked in the orange-lit hall set my heart aching. Already drunk with the idea of love, I arrived at an off-campus party with my roommate. Only in retrospect I discovered that I

had become a modern Cinderella as I opened the door to the dingy basement. In the musical version of *Cinderella*, the ball was thrown as the prince's birthday celebration. This party, though mainly celebrating the holiday weekend, coincided with the birthday of the host's best friend. The birthday boy became my prince after we were introduced by the host; we didn't talk again until several weeks later. But we began dating within a month.

Although I remember the events of the night clearly, I wish I had recorded my initial emotions then. What did I think of the tall boy in the Italian leather shoes, whose hand I nervously shook? Or about how we were all throwing our coats into the dryer and pouring drinks on the washing machine? Or how my roommate and I cursed the cold night air as we ran back to our room past headlights dancing in icy puddles? My retrospections are tinged with future-colored knowledge. Like Deborah Lipstadt (among others) says, diaries provide an "emotional immediacy" (Spiegel ix), an immediacy distinct from memory. I will never regain that immediacy.

Eventually I did write about that night in my diary, nearly a year later. That diary was the only one I maintained truly diligently, as it was intended as a birthday present for my then-deployed boyfriend. My daily diligence was karmically rewarded with my boyfriend receiving his birthday care package exactly on his birthday.

Compared to that smartly-written diary, which was full of text from cover to cover, most of my diaries are disappointing patchwork quilts. They alternate patches of carefully planned cursive writing with splotches of sloppy rushed script connected by wide swaths, and even pages, of blank white page. Alison Bechdel, in her autobiographic graphic novel *Fun Home*, explains how her childhood OCD had consumed her diaries at the time. She was so overwhelmed by an obsessive need to record the truth in its entirety that she soon developed symbols to acknowledge

each statement's questionable veracity. Over time, she would draw this symbol over entire entries until they were nearly obscured by this concession of subjective and inaccurate diarizing. I myself have never felt insecure in my portrayal of the truth. Instead I have obsessed over my need to record the entirety of each and every day. I've wanted to render the causal chronology of the day while also including the mundane minutia.

I fear forgetting.

As a result, my diaries are often filled with empty lines and pages where I hope I will one day return to fill in missing moments.

I usually write my diaries like most do, matching the beginning of a day with the beginning of an entry. Sometimes I've attempted to become more modernist, recording only the most prominent emotions and jotting down events in quick succession. Although such entries may be awkward to read and write, the lack of narrative does not hinder my memory. But most often I have aspired to record a comprehensive narrative of each day, following a chronological pattern that is only occasionally broken by my summarizing important events at the top of an entry. However, despite my optimistic goals for myself, I truthfully detest spending long periods of time writing. My mind wanders. My hand cramps. And, amid recording an event that occurred in the evening, I will often remember another event that took place in the afternoon. Because of this, I try to outline my diary, listing important events while estimating the number of lines that will be necessary to recount the events and the events in between. I attempt and often fail to equate the spatial and the temporal.

Although I've always struggled to maintain my diaries, I've always returned to writing after absences. Recording my life has been practical and therapeutic, and it has allowed me to return to my past when I've most desired it. So naturally, I was quite pleased with myself when

my diarizing was validated at Senior Convocation. Several speakers explained why Holy Cross holds the event in January, rather than in May, like most schools. The reasoning became a command: to savor the rest of the year. That night I wrote,

> [t]hey told us to savor the rest of the year so I will, just as I did the dumplings I cooked on Sydney's stove with all of her roommate's stir-fry sauces. So I will write. Then I can savor it again later. (1/20/2020)

My last sentence echoes one of Anaïs Nin's sentiments—"we write to taste life twice, in the moment and in retrospect." And after hearing that the school year would be ended two months prematurely, I kept writing diaries cathartically as seventy-something days on campus dwindled into a number I could count on one hand.

Still bored and with nowhere to go and nothing to do, I flipped to the first phone diary entry I made during this transitional period, which I typed last Wednesday,

> I wanted to write everything down, the way the old hand railings glimmer black, crumbling with years and layers of paint. The sound of drunk girls singing Abba songs, muffled outside the sanctuary of the chapel, faint shadows that existed on the other side of the stained glass. After my last Mass, my last private concert followed. I had walked up to the main chapel, noticing one of the organists walking in the choir loft … I stood by the door, transfixed in the amber glow. The music, each note taking so long to fade, hung in the air like the lamplights. The ceiling glowed with a gentle golden glimmer, delicate as the fluttering songs, as if a haze of incense rose to heaven. (Wednesday March 11, 2020)

This is a prime example of the "moment" that Stein, Woolf, and Nin all seek to discover and depict. I think of Woolf, who asserts in "Modern Fiction" that "life is luminous halo, a semi-

transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end" (*Captain's Deathbed* 160). Here I was transfixed in a halo of light and music and God—but not quite the type of transcendental experience Nin describes at the end of *Volume I*.

I think of Nin quite a lot, as she always brings magic into each moment she depicts. I think of her first entry in *Volume I* when she proclaims that she is "in accord with the surrealists, searching for the marvelous," how she wants to prove that there is "infinite space, infinite meaning, infinite dimension" (5). *Kairos*, that notion of an eternal moment which I briefly touched upon in the introduction, is a religious term. Perhaps the notion of the infinite is glimpsed most easily through a religious or spiritual lens, whether rose-tinted stained glass or the enrapturing haze of incense. I myself believe that the infinite is easier to find at church, especially when the organ plays Brahms. And the moment in the chapel was one of those "high moments" where "the music in my head" (5) had flowed out of my mind toward the stained glass and the lamps and the golden ceiling.

In the days after last Wednesday, I obsessively recorded details into the notes app of my phone but I have yet to connect the short lines I wrote. In true modernist fashion (although mostly because I was short on the time and sleep necessary to compose full sentences) my "entries" resemble the disjointed lines of Stein's "A Diary." Each idea or moment has its own line and I recorded the moments shortly after they occurred:

> I heard birds chirp as I would freshman year. Cool air. Spring air. Like walking through happiness. No light shines from my old window. The wandering bark finds no shelter.
>
> Sunrise
>
> Ran into David, the entire ROTC unit in uniform
>
> Ate breakfast with Ryan. I will miss his three-piece suits in Kimball

Opened the library alone. (6:30 am Thurs, March 12, 2020)

Podnieks is right. Many diaries feature an ignorance of "the dictates of formal punctuation" and display an expression of "stream-of-consciousness replete with ellipses and dashes that would make authors such as Joyce or Jean Rhys proud" (92). My entry only further affirms her statement. I don't think I've written a proper sentence in days. These lines are truly short, epigrammatic to the point of being telegrammatic. Perhaps modernism was born out of the short, meaty messages of the telegram. Stein quips, "[a] diary should be instantly in recording a telegram" (213). I cannot help but notice the similarities between the two forms, specifically the economy of words. Even Henry James remarks upon this brevity. In his novel *Portrait of a Lady*, the character Ralph Touchett attributes his lack of knowledge about Isabel's arrival to his mother's telegrams. He explains,

> [m]y mother has not gone into details. She chiefly communicates with us by means of telegrams, and her telegrams are rather inscrutable. They say women don't know how to write them, but my mother has thoroughly mastered the art of condensation. (James 24)

Perhaps James predicted the wild experimentalism of some of the female modernists. Stein's "A Diary" is a tickertape of telegrams, just like my "diary" of sorts.

Bored again, I scroll back to the news page on my phone. Another article tells me to keep a coronavirus diary. No. I am tired. Diaries are too much work. Narrative requires too much effort. There are no glimmering moments to be found. If I gain the energy to do so, I will write a letter to the editor, that "[t]here will not be a daily diary" (Stein 218).

IV. Sunday April 5, 2020

I'm hearing what must be the Kaddish being recited and I hear the plaintive strains of Hebrew mourning. I'm writing this, scribbling really, as I sit on the couch, watching some

recently released historical movie on PBS. My mother, who had sent me *Renia's Diary* when it was first published in October, had asked me to watch the movie with her. She's sitting in the rocking chair as we learn about young Holocaust survivors who were brought to a school in the English countryside following the war. Anne Frank and Renia Spiegel were not among the children.

I remember how Professor Sweeney asked me how I was coping with reading these Holocaust journals. I answered simply, I don't want to sing any more Requiem Masses. In fact, here is that entry now—Valentine's Day, Friday, February 14, 2020:

> I want to sing no more requiem masses, I told Professor Sweeney, when she asked how I was handling the diaries. The Holocaust memoirs and the death and the requiems have eroded me away until there is now nothing but my own mortality.

I sang parts of Faure's *Requiem* for the organ concert in honor of Grace Rett. I have never been so afraid of losing composure as when I sang that night.

But I am unsure if I'm hearing the Kaddish, as I have never heard a Kaddish prayed. I have only ever heard it sung. In fact, I have sung it myself, in a performance of Leonard Bernstein's *Kaddish* during my senior year of high school, a month after *Cinderella*. Bernstein has the children's chorus sing the Hebrew prayer while the narrator, perhaps enraged by the Holocaust, begins an arguably sacrilegious, yet beautiful monologue directed at God. A few lines had always struck me:

> (t)he rainbow is fading. Our dream is over. We must wake up now, and the dawn is chilly. The dawn is chilly, but the dawn *has* come.

I have been re-reading *Renia's Diary* recently and she speaks often of dreams and colors and symbols. One of her poems echo similar phrases:

Will you fantasies, all fade

Just like the very first dreams?

Will you flow with such small tears

Leaving behind just weepy streams?

Will my sun, so bright in my dreams

And my life so full of colors

Plunge and drown in dark themes

And if so? Stop crying, alas (51).

Looking back, my two senior years are so intertwined, so eerily parallel. I notice how they both seem to have followed a similar schema, the same plot. The spring terms of my senior years began with a funeral in January, followed by sickness that cancelled at least one meaningful event. In high school, one of my classmate's mothers died of pancreatic cancer in late January and most of the seniors attended the funeral. Then the "play-gue" struck me, rendering me barely able to perform on opening night and making me forfeit my second performance as the fairy godmother on Saturday. But the greatest tragedy was the second death that spring.

It occurred on the second night of the musical when I was sick at home, barely able to move from the couch without falling. I remember, as I lay on the couch, my father walking over to me and telling me the news he had heard from my mother. She called from school, where my sister was helping with the costumes for the show. I felt my heart breaking as I heard that Sister Barbara had died in a car crash earlier that day. I stopped hearing. My chest ached with a pain I had not felt before nor have not felt since. Death was instantaneous. The two other nuns survived. Sister Barbara was dead.

Sister Barbara was beloved throughout the school as a grandmotherly figure; she had taught me Latin for two years and had sewn costumes for the annual musical for years. The mourning and the funeral that followed, like Grace Rett's, ripped apart the seams of my reality and upset the routines of an entire school. And yet when I remember that weekend of the musical, when I've recounted it to friends each of many times, I always start with my laryngitis. I always begin the story with how *I* missed my moment to shine, how a night and months of preparation were ripped away from *me*. I was the fairy godmother who failed to conjure up magic, but wasn't she the real fairy godmother, the one who had sewn those costumes, the one who taught me the Latin words that could be magical incantations or the language to commune with God? Sister Barbara always played a major role in the story, but she was only an addition that reinforced the near comic exaggeration of a tragedy that revolved around me. I never thought of how years of her life were ripped away from her in the skeleton of that crushed car. I lost three months at Holy Cross, seventy days, a sixteenth of my time there. But Grace…

Writing this entry is the first time I realize the haunting similarity of these deaths. Car crashes, both of them. But more than anything, the strange atmospheres that these two deaths ushered in in their wake will always haunt me.

***

Virginia Woolf says that she is bored with narrative. But I can never be. As I've been re-reading my old diaries, I've seen my interest in plot and narrative return again and again. At some indeterminate point, maybe around my graduation in the May of 2016, I had written a short passage near the end of my journal, after many empty pages. This passage, written in a strange blend of print and cursive in fading turquoise ink, made me cry as I reread it. My diary gives no immediate context to explain this sudden epiphany of the human condition in which I address

more than self-pity. But I remember the general disappointment that had prompted this unusually pessimistic and genuine reflection, the disappointment that my idealized senior year had failed to materialize, and that I had failed as an author and character.

I believed that if I had simply mustered the courage to introduce myself to my crush during study hall, I would have found my Prince Charming. Had I drank more water the night before the opening show as I felt a sore throat growing, I wouldn't have gotten sick and could have performed again on Saturday. Had I studied harder I would have been valedictorian. And if I were luckier, my life would have been more like a story. But I will let my seventeen-year-old self explain herself in a colloquial style quite unusual for my diary:

> life is sad sometimes, but not in an over-the-top melodramatic way—nothing like *The Fault in Your Stars* or something like that. For some people, it is, and its truly sad. Like for Sara.[38] But for everyone else, it is sad because it is boring and simple, nothing like the grand stories I read. But it is also beautiful because of this. Unpredictable. The unpredictability is good of course—otherwise I'd be bored … life is both boring and not. Well, books are too. They're beautiful but predictable, a song I love, but a song whose every line and lyric rhyme is headed in a direction I know. I need something rough and discordant instead, which sometimes glimmers with an occasional grand full chord of orchestral glory, well-earned after working. It doesn't matter if the effort or wait is worth it—I've no other choice. But I don't like to think like that.

My suggested need for the "rough and discordant" in my life sounds like Woolf's many exasperated entries rejecting narrative and plot. This need also echoes an artistic metaphor of narrative which I recently scribbled in a notebook as I wrote my thesis,

[38] The girl whose mother had died from pancreatic cancer in the January of my senior year of high school. She was also a senior.

> [n]arrative is melody. Maybe Stein's writing echoes with suspensions and building chords, perhaps resolving but often decaying, as if after the pedal had lifted and the period falls, into dissonance.

Out of desperation I was suggesting that I become a modernist by rejecting my desire for a cohesive life narrative. However, I admitted that I don't like to reject narrative, that I indeed "don't like to think like that." Even now I don't fully agree with Virginia Woolf when she suggests that "the ordinary mind on an ordinary day" is the "proper stuff of fiction" (160). I believe that my own suggestion was disingenuous and melodramatic but, nevertheless, I still humored this alternative to the traditional, chronological narrative that I craved. Had I embraced this new aesthetic philosophy, I may have kept more successful diaries and been less disappointed when my life failed to conform to the pattern promised by movies. Indeed, my diaries could have resembled Woolf's by now, celebrating every moment and relishing every "ordinary day." But my desire for narrative is instinct. I am not "bored with narrative," I am bored with its absence.

More than anything, this entry reveals my fear of living a boring life, a meaningless life, one which amounted to nothing. I always chased narrative cohesion, even on Friday afternoons. I always hated when my sister would choose to relax on Friday afternoons by playing on her phone, rather than playing a video game or watching a TV series. Even then, unconsciously, I was craving a narrative unto which I could latch myself. A large part of me wanted to transform my life into that desired narrative. That's why I find Frank and Nin so approachable; they accomplished what I have failed to do in my haphazard diaries.

It was around this time when I began to wonder exactly how I would organize my life when I finally wrote a story about it. I soon discovered that memoirs were a legitimate genre. I

realized that I could publish my life, heartened and yet slightly disappointed that I wasn't the first person to think up such an idea. I wondered if I could compile some of my diaries and memories into a "journey of me becoming myself." In a 2017 diary I considered stylistic options, writing "I don't think the story should end with a letter/diary. I think it should end in real life." Just as eight-year old me worried about living within a still expanding story when I was obsessed with Laura Ingalls Wilder, so did I later worry whether my desire to record interesting events was pushing me to dramatize my life.

When I reflected on a fairly complete diary detailing the summer of 2015 in a diary I wrote two years later, I already began to narrativize the diary entries I wrote. As I concocted a retrospective label and aesthetic aim for the summer, I was almost trying to pitch my story at myself. I was desperate to qualify my diary as something grand, something approaching literature. I especially desired to be profound:

> I was convinced that that summer would be the foundation of the next great American novel. While I knew that it was not exciting in extraordinary terms, I was pleased by its quiet story-like continuity and provided a look into my own thoughts. It was something story-like in my eyes, because I wanted desperately to believe even my simple ordinary life could contain an adventure, and I was sure that my writing could transform it into an adventure, so that others could see it the way I saw it.

My conception of that summer as an adventure recalls Nin, specifically the philosophy that sparked her childhood diarizing, her viewing life as an "adventure" and a tale.

Questions of plot prompted those of endings. In this diary entry from June 30, 2017, I affirm Frank Kermode's hypothesis that humans incline themselves toward endings. I write,

> [w]hat I wanted from the Cape was a feeling of reaching an end—of fulfillment and arrival—cadence to my confusion, a conclusion to my wanderings and my wonderings—like the feeling I get when I imagine driving home at night to Amato—the perfect feeling of arrival.[39] The Cape provided that feeling every year when we arrived—just going to the edge of the ocean has usually satisfied my desire for closure.

Perhaps it was a desire for closure which kept pushing me to write narratives. More than creating a narrative, I wanted to impose a moment of finality and fulfillment upon my life. As a high school senior, I looked toward all the coming-of-age rituals that demarcated the end of childhood—prom and graduation. But my desire for living these events led me to be quite disappointed when they didn't quite live up to the proms and senior years promised in the movies.

What will my life be without the closure of my college graduation? Will the narrative of my life unravel further?

V. Mid-April 2020

I stare out my window, watching the Highland Cattle lead a flock of snowy white sheep across the paddock on the other side of the road. Since returning home I've already walked to the cow at least twice to play him a recording Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony* from my phone. I'm quite sure he likes Beethoven.

I've mostly abandoned my diary, replacing it with the diaries I've had to read for my thesis. With the exceptions of the hosts of daffodils dancing in our garden and the pastoral tableau across the street, there isn't much to write about. But even these modernist moments

[39] My childhood home, so named for its location on Amato Drive. In Italian and in Latin, "Amato" means beloved.

repeat themselves daily. My thoughts echo themselves, alternating the good, the bad, and the boring like a Möbius strip within my mind.

I decided that Renia Spiegel's *Diary* is my favorite diary from all the diaries I've encountered this year. She is so wonderfully human and her poetry provides so many lovely images. Spiegel insists on naming May her month of love. And Zygmunt calls it so too, telling Renia's diary years after her death that "[a]nother month of May is coming, the month of love" (289). But April is my month of love.

And so, after trying to find some April love stories, I find myself returning to F. Scott Fitzgerald. And, as I flip through an anthology of Fitzgerald's short stories, I find a quote at the beginning, a quote that has inspired me many times before:

> [m]ostly we authors repeat ourselves—that's the truth. We have two or three great and moving experiences in our lives—experiences so great and moving that it doesn't seem at the time that anyone else has been so caught up and pounded and dazzled and astonished and beaten and broken and rescued and illuminated and rewarded and humbled in just that way ever before. Then we learn our trade, well or less well, and we tell our two or three stories—each time in a new disguise—maybe ten times, maybe a hundred, as long as people will listen. (6)

I repeat myself too. I tell my stories to my diary year after year, drawing similarities between various spring times, and always calling myself Cinderella. I have my three stories as well—two of loss and one of love.

As I mull over personal events and relate personal anecdotes, I instinctively measure the present against the pattern of the past. Just as I have found similarities between my two senior years, so have I found extended conceits linking other events in my life. My diaries, just like my

unfiltered mind, love to analyze the past as a work of literature—identifying symbolism, parallelism, and artistic devices. And even this thesis, especially this conclusion, is repeating questions that I have pondered before, academically and informally. My thesis found its origin in my lifelong interest in diaries and texts that exist simultaneously as fiction and life writing. But it was kickstarted by a final project two years ago for my Honors seminar—The Book as A Concept and an Object. We were asked to design our own graphic novels for the final project and so I designed one that explored the interrelation of fiction and reality in my life. The focus of the paper and the book it described addressed my own worry that I was repeating the past. But specifically, I had always wondered how much of my life was predetermined by the stories that I told myself in the past. Had I already written the story of my life?

The introduction of this paper markets the book to a publishing house. I tell the publisher that I am presenting:

> a memoir that depicts the story of a girl who was intrigued by the influence of fiction in her own life. She has written a story when she was younger and, although childishly romantic and riddled with literary clichés, it has seemingly become the pattern for many of her adult experiences. She wonders whether she lives out a predetermined fate, or whether she has [sub]consciously written about her dream life and thus [sub]consciously attempted live out that life. (Grosskopf 1)

This summary of this fictional book encapsulates the book more succinctly than I can now. The topic is one that has always intrigued me, and I will not say too much more at the risk of being redundant.

I continued to explain the book to the publisher, revealing that I was excerpting the book's ending, specifically its epilogue. In all honesty, I had no idea what the body of the book

would entail. But the notions of epilogues—their existence beyond plot and ending—was what inspired me to label the excerpt as The Epilogue, the epilogue of a graphic novel called *La Vie en Rose*. Writing an epilogue allowed the form, alongside the content, to ask questions. Although I had encountered little academic writing on the matter at the time, I wrote greatly on the topic:

> [e]pilogues epitomize the strange relationship that exists between story and reality, calling to mind the author's reflection on and distance from the main narrative … The idea of creating an epilogue for a memoir raises an interesting question, that of whether life can naturally form its own compelling and satisfying plot. This topic can only be truly explored through a depiction of reality, thus I have used events from my life to approach this topic. (Grosskopf 2)

I focused on the epilogue, the liminal space "between story and reality," because I felt that I had reached a similar point in my life. In the May of my sophomore year of college I believed that I had moved beyond the stories I created when I was younger, yet I found myself continually returning to them. While Phillipe Lejeune would assert that all memoirs and autobiographies can have epilogues, as they excerpt a person's life, I know that not all diaries can have an epilogue, as some end with the diarist's death. This topic still intrigues me.

The central focus of this brief epilogue was my encountering the location in which I had set the story that I had devised and written during high school. The Epilogue was based in truth—in the January of 2018 I traveled to New York City to visit a friend, and finding myself with a few free hours, I visited Roosevelt Island. So this paper, like Stein's "A Diary," is a work of critical analysis and a genuine memoir. It features that duality of genre that has constantly appeared in my study of diaries.

During that January trip, I was quite aware that I was visiting my fictional character's home. I began to wonder if I should revisit my story from high school now that I was a jaded college student who understood the world a bit more. As I rode the Roosevelt Island Tram in my fictional graphic novel, my inner dialogue described my motivations:

> [a]lone in the city for the first time, I decided to visit my good friend. We had become friends in high school, but I haven't talked to her in a long time. She didn't know I was visiting … but I knew where I would find her" (Grosskopf 4).

I still remember considering the unplanned trip a long-awaited pilgrimage and I was eager to 'visit' an old companion who I hadn't interacted with in years. In college, I had largely forgotten this story. While the story of this day is true, I embellished the language of the inner dialogue. Nevertheless, the paper references many of the thoughts I had that January day and I did my best to only include ideas and thoughts that I remember. Like Frank and Spiegel, I aimed to make every conversation and moment of dialogue accurate.

Roosevelt Island became the place in which reality and imagination coexisted simultaneously. These realms collided silently in the chill January wind. I was encountering a world that I had only ever seen in pictures and in daydreams. The trip was surreal. My inner dialogue reflects these thoughts:

> I had never visited the Island, yet I knew it by heart. I started walking, without knowing why and yet I had a goal. Somehow, I was convinced that I would find myself when I got there … that I would gain some sense of finality or understanding. Somehow, magically, my life would make sense there. (Grosskopf 5)

I did know the island "by heart" because I spent many hours on Google Street View, following each road and finding every laundromat, coffee shop, and grocery store I could find. I even

perused apartment websites, looking for apartments that the character's fictional family could have afforded. Desperate for my story to be real, I had fiercely entwined it with reality. Instinctively, I knew that I craved fiction for the ending it supplied. I did not need to read Kermode to understand this. But as a child, we don't tell ourselves stories because we need to make clocks tick in a "clockless world," we tell ourselves stories because we want our lives to mirror the fairy tales that we were told as we drifted toward dreams. We want adventure. We want to experience something momentous.

As soon as I stepped foot on the island, I knew where I wanted to go, even though I needed to walk some forty city blocks to get there. I had decided that:

> I would go to the lighthouse. It was where the story began. It was the setting of the first chapter as well as the last. It was the beginning and the end. The lighthouse was pulling me, calling me, urging me to start my story. Perhaps I thought that if I arrived at the place where the story began, I could magically enter into it. (Grosskopf 6)

I had not read Woolf's *To the Lighthouse,* but my inner modernist decided to fixate on this symbol. I only knew that I had written important scenes at this lighthouse; it was the most important place on the island. The lighthouse was where the gossamer veil separating fiction and reality was thinnest. And like that visit to Cape Cod I had described in a 2017 entry, the boundary between earth and sea provided space for a natural conclusion.

Even now, the similarities between the story I sketched in high school and aspects of my life in college seem too coincidental to be true. Indeed, parts of my story became self-fulfilling prophecies. After I made my main character an aspiring opera singer, I decided to study musical performance in college. Other similarities, however, were truly and eerily prophetic:

> [t]he main character was an idealized version of myself, she too was a singer. Her boyfriend first noticed her when he heard her sing. That was how I met my ex-boyfriend-who-wasn't-ever-really-a-boyfriend last year. He heard me sing at a concert and the rest of our whirlwind romance followed the plot foreshadowed by the story I had written. (Grosskopf 6 –7)

This fiction had infiltrated my life, establishing a plot which my life followed in college. I was unintentionally reliving the story I had written long ago. My real-life "ex-boyfriend-who-wasn't-ever-really-a-boyfriend," eerily resembled the love interest I had created. He noticed me after hearing me sing a concert, just like the love interest had fallen in love with my fictional character. Both men were both tall, blond, and muscled. And, the strangest coincidences—both studied science, both were in the military, and both spoke fluent German, having both lived in Germany.

It seems ridiculous in retrospect, "[e]ven he had tumbled right out of my dream story and into my life before leaving me with a broken heart" (Grosskopf 10). In January of 2018 as I walked Roosevelt Island's streets, I was still grieving the end of this almost-relationship. In retrospect, I now know why letting go of him was so hard.

Since I knew that I seemingly had the power to conjure up fiction, to shape the events of reality, I grew excited as I reached the lighthouse. I knew that the character and the story I created was fiction—yet was it? I wondered:

> if I take my journal out of my bag and write an ending for my story, would something happen? Would I meet *him* at the lighthouse? Would my story begin, or would I realize I had reached the limit to which my childish fantasies could come true? (Grosskopf 11)

While both Frank and Nin both edited and fictionalized their lives, I felt that I had done something more. I had written a story that subsequently became my life, became the subject of the diaries. It was as if I had written my diary preemptively, yet unknowingly. And since my life was too full of coincidences, I couldn't ignore the potential for another one. But the journey of self-discovery was taxing, as it was cold outside and my knees were aching. I knew that after reaching the lighthouse I would need to make the return journey back into the world of reality, of sad truths, and of disappointment.

When I finally reached the lighthouse, I stood alone. No one was there. I knew that no one would be waiting for me, but I felt my heart ache along with my cold knees, I wondered, "[w]as the story over now" (Grosskopf 11)?

I knew that the story I had written had been over for years. But the closer I crept to the edge of the island the more I realized my life was inextricably intertwined with the fictions I had created. This culminated in a moment of modernist epiphany. I saw myself reflected in the water, but I also saw my fictional protagonist, within my reflection. Like Nin, I was the protagonist of my story. But how could I connect myself to this fictional story now that I knew the story was truly fiction? An idea came to me suddenly:

> [c]ould I rewrite the ending now to make it more realistic? Would real-life inspire my fiction? My mind started plotting a new setting, a new plot, a sadder ending. (Grosskopf 11–12)

I think of the Muppets proclaiming at the end of the *Muppet Movie* that "life is a story, write your own ending." My thoughts turned to revision because I still wanted to align my story with my life. The story was too important to forget. As I could not revise my life, I would revise my

story. I suppose this is what Frank does with her diary. She couldn't make her life more publishable, but she could make her diary more publishable through revision.

My trip to Roosevelt Island ends with me pulling out my diary as I sit down on a bench. On the bench I reflected upon a poem that I had written in my freshman year of high school, a poem entitled "The Epilogue," I understood that I could never fully extricate myself from the pleasures and disappointments of fiction. I would always dream and write and think. Yet the ability to write and think would allow me to change endings. I included the end of the poem in my paper:

> …Years later, when the stories are legend … the stories are still in my mind and as I've learned, there is always room for an epilogue. (Grosskopf 12)

With that moment of self-referentiality I ended my description of Roosevelt Island, having directly addressed the concept of the epilogue.

For the last panel of *La Vie en Rose*, I decided to make a meta-fictional statement, and include the moments of me sitting in the library as I wrote the final Honors Paper. In the final scene, the diary has retained its place in the panel, but the background has changed. I sit in the library with a boy sitting across from me. He does not look like either the imagined love interest or his real-life counterpart. I had moved on from the past. I had transcended the limitations of the story I wrote, yet I still reflected on it now that my journey was over. With few words I aimed to convey my hopeful realization that I could not be disappointed with this burgeoning romance because I had no preconceived story to which I could compare it. The Epilogue ends as I return to that same diary entry, to the notion that "there is always room for an epilogue." As I wrote my final paper, I was also writing an epilogue to the plot I had penned in high school.

In this moment, I am a modernist. Dwelling in the disconnected instant of a single panel, I release myself from the constraints of narratives. In this moment of self-referentiality I have achieved my epiphany and am content.

In this moment, I am happy.

VI. The Epilogue: May 2020

I sit at my desk, surrounded by stacks of diaries. As I write this conclusion, my past becomes my future and my present. When I haven't been reading diaries I return to my past selves, flipping through old yearbooks (my hair looked horrible) and returning to childhood obsessions (my sister and I are planning a *Doctor Who* marathon when I finish this). I still can't write narrative, but neither can Virginia Woolf. Here she is in *Volume V* at the end of April 1939:

> [b]ut what are the interesting things? I'm thinking of what I should like to read here in 10 years' time. And I'm all at sea. Perhaps literal facts. The annal, not the novel. (216)

Her sentences are short, like mine. They are "facts," not "the novel." And she is always rereading her diaries. She makes me feel less guilty about re-reading mine.

A few poetry anthologies are mixed in with my diaries, one of them has my own poetry in it. One of the local rotary clubs annually published an anthology called *On My Mind*, which featured the poems and musings of high school students from all over the tri-state area. In my freshman year I had written a poem, one detailing my relationship with fiction and my desire to live within the fictions I admired. This was the same poem, "The Epilogue," that I had revisited in *La Vie en Rose*. With winding prose, I made a bittersweet acknowledgement that I could write an ending for fictional characters, but I could never write a happy, fairy-tale ending for my own story. My English teacher had praised the work and suggested I submit it. I glowed with praise

after hearing that she had sent it to her daughter who was so impressed that she shared it with her college professors.

Now as I read the last page of the "Diary of Cinderella," a graduating student once again, I see that I had composed a slightly altered version of the poem in honor of my high school graduation. In between lines of poetry I had inserted bracketed commentary, reflecting the change in perspective that four years of growth had provided. Returning to the poem was a familiar act of escapism. By including it in the entry I was admitting that I had not yet moved beyond fairy tales. But my revisions reveal a growing maturity. I understood that fairy tales don't always come true. But I also knew that sometimes they do, just not in the way we imagine.

I force myself to stop thinking about my past and *Cinderella* and read the poem instead:

(the author of the book knew that she and everyone else in the world were writers of the story.

She knew the whole time)

But you cannot know the ending to your own story—once a book is bound the story is done

and all you can do is relive the memories and hope they were real

and not a dream.

And yet I still cry at the end of every story

(yet sadly and happily it is so very far from the end)

for the love story went awry because the fates are cruel

(or the girl weak and the lovers too shy—yes, it was never meant to be)

and for the hero (—no he was not a hero, just a red-haired boy who looked good in a blue shirt and who I have yet to really meet) who has left and will never return.

I don't mind the wait,

even if I have to write the ending myself

(because I wrote the end, no I wrote it all, myself.

This is my story)

And, as I've learned, there is always room for an epilogue.

I am amazed by my revisions. The original poem resonated with teenage melodrama and an angst gilded with fairy-tale images. When I wrote the poem, I believed that happy endings were something to which I was entitled. But I had matured, realizing that "fate" was a misnomer. I couldn't blame an elusive "fate" for my lack of fairy-tale prom, if anyone at all was to blame, I had to first blame myself. Maybe, if I had worked up the courage to introduce myself to that cute boy with the red hair, I would have had my fairy-tale moment. But even that was just a maybe. I had learned that my life was not some cosmic fairy tale, in which outside sources conspired to make my life miserable. My senior self realized just how much agency I possessed—a scary yet comforting thought. As a diarist, I understood that I did not write just my own endings, but have written everything, because "this is my story."

The five diaries I've read have revealed that diaries are almost always public documents, a claim affirmed in each diary's style and goals. However, public does not guarantee publication. Renia Spiegel's *Diary* was a public document during her life as she shared it with her friends, yet she never intended to publish it. And even the most private of diaries still function as unsent correspondences. Surely they are correspondences with others, unmailed letters intended to communicate with family members, like Spiegel's, or with an unknown, unrecognized future audience, like Nin's, Frank's, and Stein's. But foremost they are private correspondences with

the diarist herself, just like the entry which Woolf writes in April 1939. Diarists certainly do think of what they "should like to read here in 10 years' time."

As I sit re-reading the musings of my younger selves (and they are certainly other selves, for I am none of the people who wrote these entries), I seem to have unearthed a time capsule. The self I was speaks earnestly from her vantage point in the past and encapsulates a lovely little moment for me. She has, in her run-on sentences and cursive script, expanded a singular instant toward infinity. She has made what science and alchemy have failed to produce, a time machine and the elixir of life. This is the magic of a diary's immediacy. That moment she renders, although past tense, is eternally present as long as that little book containing it survives.

A physical letter catches my eye. There is a letter protruding from my current diary. I smile and pull it out from between the pages of January. I know what this is!

In January I received the most wonderful present, a diary entry I didn't remember writing. I had forgotten that being given the letter was a ritual of Senior Convocation. Every year the second-semester seniors get a letter that they had written their future selves during the September orientation of their first year. As a Latin scholar I cannot help but ponder the word "orientation." It derives from the participle *oriens*, or "rising," and from *oriens*, which refers to the sunrise and the direction in which it rises. To orient oneself is to gain one's bearings, primarily in relationship to the sunrise. My high school self smiles at that etymology. The sunrise remained a crucial symbol as I entered college. There is a sunrise imprinted on the "Diary of Cinderella" and there are many sunrises within my diaries and captured in my phone's photos.

I unfold the letter and watch the sun rise on my time at Holy Cross. As I had been instructed to do, I wrote about my goals. I was told to reflect on the past as well, and so I did,

referencing my friend Max's salutatory address from our high school graduation. Even then I knew that I would never stop viewing my life as a story, as a diary I write one day at a time:

> Max said at this turning point, we may all choose the direction of our step. We may choose to step forward, to step back, in a sense to remain in place and even neglect to choose. But it was so similar, the idea of choosing your own story, of writing your life … I hope I paint the path boldly with color, the determination of choice. I care not the specifics of course, but I hope that there is Mozart playing, like now. May I cry only watercolor tears. I hope to look back with no regret and importantly know that mistakes are temporary … Dear me, I set no goals, I'll write them down later surely. Please watch the sunrise—that is all I want in four years—a sunrise.
>
> P.S. I hope you can still look at *Cinderella* and smile—please. And now I will do my best.

For a beautiful, infinite moment, I am eighteen again. I can still hear the Mozart. I do not know when I will write down my goals for college, but I have so much time. I have four years, after all! I smile as I fold the letter and place it into the envelope.

As the orientation leader walks us out of the chapel toward our next activity, I notice that the gold-domed ceiling looks like a sunrise. I have already forgotten what I've written but I wonder who I will be when I open that envelope again. That is a question for later. I have four wonderful years of sunrises ahead, each as present as the last.

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—*The Muppet Movie*

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