This thesis considers how modernists used WWI as a platform to critique sexual norms and explore sexual diversity. Though the war was characterized by heteronormative rhetoric and policies that encouraged strict gender division, many writers of the era suggest that such measures only counterintuitively highlighted dissident sexual positionalities and encouraged a broad range of war workers and citizens, intellectuals and non-intellectuals alike, to contemplate complex notions of sexual identity. Gertrude Stein’s *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, Djuna Barnes’ *Nightwood*, and David Jones’ *In Parenthesis* are considered in respective chapters. Though these works largely contrast in terms of genre, theme, and authorship, each questions war propaganda and sexological discourse that attempted to essentialize gender and/or pathologize homosexuality. In addition, each work implies that WWI brought questions of sexual identity to the minds of soldiers and war workers, even those far removed from the discursive spaces of sexology and psychology.
ENTRENCHED PERSONALITIES: WORLD WAR I, MODERNISM, AND PERCEPTIONS
OF SEXUAL IDENTITY

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Introduction

World War I has been recognized as a particularly gendered conflict marked by international violence and a number of mostly non-violent, though no less transformative, internal struggles to establish women’s positions and reexamine gender boundaries. The already stratifying force of warfare (particularly turn-of-the-century warfare, in which women were still excluded in many capacities) was amplified through the enduring energy of fin-de-siècle gender politics and ongoing women’s suffrage movements. The sense of gender antagonism that surrounds the war has been explored by a variety of scholars. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in particular have noted “the asymmetrical responses of literary men and literary women to the Great War” which indicate “a distressing sexual competition which seems to have allowed at least some women to profit from male pain, a competition we must nevertheless acknowledge if we are to understand the dynamics of gender difference in the twentieth century” (2: xvii).

The idiosyncrasies of male and female experiences, indicated in Gilbert and Gubar, were not solely due to turbulent social and political circumstances, but also to the roles that each gender was expected to fulfill. At home, women were able to assume positions vacated by men that they would not have been able to hold prior to the war. And at the front, women often expressed enthusiasm for the roles of ambulance drivers, nurses, and volunteers. For men, however, the traumas that followed from the advent of modern war constituted the antithetical descendant of the traditional ground warfare that most new recruits imagined and romanticized. Paul Fussell refers to WWI soldiers, particularly those that waited in long lines at recruiting stations to enlist early in the war, as “those sweet, generous people who pressed forward and all but solicited their own destruction” (19). Gilbert explains the different experiences faced by the sexes succinctly: “To women who managed to get to the front…the war did frequently offer the delight of (female) mobilization rather than the despair of (male) immobilization” (214).

Because gender is so central to understanding WWI, it becomes difficult to separate discussions of sexuality from discussions of gender, even if this might be our initial impulse in other contexts. The rhetoric of inversion, which explained homosexuality as a gendered consciousness in the body of the oppositely-aligned biological sex, relied on an often-contradictory logic based around gender essentialism. And such logic could not explain why those who did not align with definitions of inversion would choose to have sexual relationships
with inverts themselves—a problem that needed to be answered as public recognition of homosexuality increased with the advent of WWI and its employment of gay and lesbian soldiers, workers, and volunteers. Increasingly, sexologists relied on situational explanations for non-invert homosexual behavior. One literary example is Mary Llewellyn in Radclyffe Hall’s *The Well of Loneliness*, who does not fit sexology’s model of inversion, but engages in a lesbian relationship with the inverted Stephen Gordon after being placed among women as a WWI ambulance driver. Many crucial studies of WWI have employed a similar situational logic. Fussell, for example, explains the common homoeroticism found in the works of soldier poets and writers as the “need for affection in a largely womanless world” (272). Though this interpretation can be easily challenged, it is indicative of larger, traditional explanations of WWI homosexuality. Even during the time period, as Deborah Cohler (drawing on the work of Michael Kettle) points out, Britain blamed German treachery for the existence of homosocial desire in its military. English journalist Arnold White claimed that Germany was conducting “a moral invasion of England” through “the systematic seduction of young British soldiers by the German urnings [homosexuals] and their agents” (qtd. in Cohler 71). In a similar vein, Elaine Showalter discusses how psychologists believed homosexual desire to be symptomatic of shell shock (64).

Often, situational explanations of homosexuality had larger political aims—especially those surrounding WWI lesbianism. Burgeoning feminism and the traditionally male forms of labor available to women drew closer attention to physiological traits associated with gender inversion. WWI contemporaries, as Jenny Gould explains, “drew links, either consciously or unconsciously, between displays of militarism and masculine women, feminism, and lesbianism” (121). Lillian Faderman similarly notes that early-twentieth-century sexologists, who tended to offer biologically-determined explanations for homosexuality, conversely “frightened, or attempted to frighten, women away from feminism and from loving other women by demonstrating that both were abnormal and were generally linked together” (240). And even sources that did not necessarily equate masculinized women with lesbianism conveyed male uneasiness with female workers that assumed previously masculine roles; Laura Doan discusses a 1917 political cartoon (“After the War: The War-Work Habit”) that “envisions a postwar society that continues to be run by strident and striding ‘manly’ women, whose breeding has accustomed them to assuming authority and issuing orders to men beneath them in social class,”
for example (519). In other instances, men claimed that women’s wartime mobility sparked an increase in female libido—a phenomenon they closely correlated with lesbianism; Gilbert suggests that Richard Aldington’s *Death of a Hero* and Lawrence’s “Tickets Please” and “Monkey Nuts” are especially attuned to such male panic over female sexual drives and same-sex eroticism (214).

In addition, a discourse of division that insisted on an experiential rift between women and men also arose out of the militaristic tensions outlined above. Many trench poets and writers crafted what J.M. Winter refers to as “a literature of separation” that established them as “a race apart, indelibly imprinted with an experience that those who had not been there could never really know”—particularly women but also men who did not directly experience combat (229). As might be expected, separatist literature (along with being anti-lesbian, as discussed earlier) frequently adopted antifeminist sensibilities. One of the most prominent examples of this subgenre is Siegfried Sassoon, who, as Patricia Rae explains, “target[ed] grieving mothers and others who cling to patriotic ideals, accusing them of encouraging war for their own profit” (25).

David Jones echoes some of Sassoon’s sentiments. Though not expressly antifeminist, an episode of *In Parenthesis* describes Jones’ anger in 1917 at the thought of a memorial being erected near his battalion’s position—or as he refers to it, near “our parapets”—and the “tourist activity” that would inevitably result (224n, emphasis mine). Women’s writing often shared these separatist notions. Some reinforced the sense that men and women’s experiences were irreconcilably different; Vera Brittain famously expressed, for example, that wartime experiences may have created the “possibility of a permanent impediment to understanding” between men and women (*Testament of Youth* 143). Others go so far as to suggest that such divisions are somewhat desirable or, at the very least, productive since they allow for female mobility—in particular, the work of Radclyffe Hall, which depicts the experiences of female ambulance drivers and directly explores themes of transgenderism and homoerotic desire.

But there are a number of authors who challenge the broad divisions indicative of WWI writing and question the resulting sexual and gender stratifications. I am particularly interested in Gertrude Stein’s *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, Djuna Barnes’ *Nightwood* and David Jones’ *In Parenthesis*. Barnes, Stein, and Jones make for an unusual grouping. The former two are queer icons associated with the Parisian lesbian community of the early twentieth century. The latter is almost entirely absent from queer discourse. Indeed, Jones is typically aligned with
the artistic-religious community of Eliot, a distinction he embraced—even going so far as to cite C.S. Lewis in his introduction to *The Anathemata*, perhaps his most accomplished work.

However, when their evident differences are set aside, Jones, Stein, and Barnes constitute a unique group of modernists who counterintuitively used WWI’s gender essentialism in progressive ways.

Of the three authors, Stein’s use of war has received the most attention. *The Autobiography* is of special interest because of the way in which Stein uses “glamour and jauntiness,” to borrow Elizabeth Gregory’s phrase, in her depictions of the war (272). Stein’s tone, however, does not suggest dismissiveness. Indeed, war is a consistent, if often sublimated, element of her writing. And a number of her poems that deal directly with her relationship with Toklas, particularly “Won” and “Lifting Belly,” draw from war experiences or displace battlefield imagery onto erotic desire. It is important to consider the ways in which *The Autobiography*, despite its carefree veneer, offers a model of queer community and altruism that poses the possibility of social progress in the middle of an essentializing war. In addition, drawing from Leigh Gilmore and Sidonie Smith’s work on autobiography and Stein’s subversion/manipulation of autobiographic conventions, I argue that *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* offers a satirical take on popular war memoirs, particularly the eager and patriotic women’s writings produced during the early months of the war.

Barnes’ work shares a number of similarities with Stein’s. Through the memories of a transgendered veteran, Dr. Matthew O’Connor, *Nightwood* reflects on the experiences of WWI and the results of its divisions, sexism, and homophobia. Barnes’ descriptions lack Stein’s cheerfulness, but they still resist convention. O’Connor’s discourse self-consciously refuses to engage in the separatist rhetoric of trench poets and writers. Indeed, his war memories invariably focus on transgendered subjectivity and the arbitrariness of the military’s gender distinctions. Barnes also undermines popular narratives that constitute dominant accounts of the past. Through O’Connor’s reflections, Barnes dialogues with popular sexological discourse and considers the presence of dissident sexual positionalities throughout time. When Barnes and Stein are considered together, it is clear that both were attempting to undermine the conventions of popular WWI writings while also using the conflict as a reflexive agent through which to assess sexual identity and categorizations.

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Jones’ presence in my discussion is more peculiar. Researchers have not retroactively identified the homoerotic undercurrents in his work, as they have in that of Eliot and other conservative modernists, a fact that I find surprising considering that *In Parenthesis*’s depictions of military homosocial desire are as striking as those found in the work of less-closeted soldier-poets like Sassoon and Owen. The lack of scholarship may be a result of Jones’ conservatism, or at least the belief that his work uses literary and military tradition as an alarming way to justify WWI. Fussell’s consideration of *In Parenthesis* in *The Great War and Modern Memory* offers the most damning appraisal. *The Great War* claims that *In Parenthesis* “is a deeply conservative work which uses the past not, as it often pretends to do, to shame the present, but really to ennoble it.” In the same section, he notes that Jones tries “to rationalize and even validate the war” through *In Parenthesis*’s allusive scope “by implying that it somehow recovers many of the motifs and values of medieval chivalric romance” (147).

Fussell’s reading of *In Parenthesis* is initially unproductive and ultimately unmaintainable when the poem is considered through queer, feminist, or even historical lenses. A major issue is that *The Great War* overlooks the ways in which Jones represents gender. We can certainly observe the residue, or even magnification, of chivalric romance’s homosocial bonding in *In Parenthesis*, but the role of the female body is radically displaced. Femininity, both embodied and abstracted, is a negative preoccupation that informs the men’s behavior and acts as a source of anxiety second only to direct battlefield violence. By turns, Jones satirically captures the “feminine” panic that arose out of military anti-venereal disease campaigns (and the ever-present fear of syphilis that such measures only intensified) and subtly reveals the male homosocial desire that sharply contrasted to heterosexual angst. Jones’ representations of women are alternatively progressive and regressive, but never chivalric, which suggests that Jones was doing something more than simply applying traditional, heteronormative tropes and schemas to a modern context. To his credit, Fussell does briefly include Jones in his chapter “Soldier Boys,” which explores the ways in which “front-line experience [was] replete with what we can call the homoerotic” (272). But he groups Jones in the camp of writers who represented “sublimated,” “temporary,” “chaste,” or “innocent” homosexuality (his terms, used interchangeably throughout the chapter)—focusing especially on Jones’ inclusion of a blond army lieutenant, blonds being a figure of “Victorian iconography” associated with desirable beauty—before moving on to more obviously queer figures, Owen in particular (275).
Ultimately, Jones fits into a discussion that involves Barnes and Stein because all three challenged notions of identity in complex ways. To varying degrees, they consider gender, sexuality, and their interrelation to question the extent to which identity is constructed. More importantly, they suggest that such questions were being considered by non-academics. Doan has recently argued that despite the rise in sexological discourse and the publicity of the Wilde trials, sexual identity was not a consideration for many people at the beginning of the century. She specifically argues that WWI contemporaries may not have made the “cultural linkages” between “gender and sexual deviance” (521; 519). She also questions the frequency with which women considered their sexual identities or associated with fixed identity categories; while, she posits, “the educated elite” frequently classified sexual feelings and acts, she also notes that “many masculine or mannish women completely lacked any kind of awareness about matters relating to sexual identity” (525). Barnes, Stein, and Jones, however, depict soldiers and women present at the front regularly engaging in such mental exercises. All three imply that WWI advanced broadly decentered notions of sexuality for elites and non-elites alike because of the increased visibility of homosexuality in the cultural and social spheres and also, paradoxically, the divisionist rhetoric it prompted.
The War on WWI: 
Sexuality and Conflict in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*

War is not immediately central to *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. One must go looking for its effects. Gertrude Stein, after all, once commented that she “could never take any interest” in the universal danger posed by the development of the atomic bomb because “it’s the living that are interesting not the way[s] of killing them” (*Reflections on the Atomic Bomb* 161). Despite such remarks (or, in the case of revisionists, because of them), scholars have taken careful note of the explicit and implicit representations of armed conflict that arise throughout her work. The categorically clear, sustained war memoirs and poems present in Stein’s *oeuvre* are of particular interest—some scholars, such as Gregory, even argue that they hold a more “definite statement” than Stein’s fragmentary work (269). However, despite their ruminations on armed conflict, most of Stein’s war texts focus on day-to-day domestic living and war’s interference with ordinary interactions rather than large-scale destruction or war’s lasting impact on culture and society.

While scholars frequently explore Stein’s WWII output, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* represents a rather unique addition to Stein’s war writings. Rather than simply considering the ways in which conflict impacts her daily civilian life, which provides the conceptual thrust for other works such as *Wars I Have Seen*, Stein recounts her direct involvement in a war effort. What remains curious about her account is the casualness of its depictions. The destruction and violence of the Great War is replaced with what Gregory describes as “glamour and jauntiness” (272). While it’s true that Stein did not see much of the front lines (she worked primarily as a hospital supply driver), she certainly interacted with injured soldiers and witnessed second-hand the devastation of the conflict. Her descriptions are further perplexing because of the patriotism they convey. Interpretations of her pleasant anecdotes and cheerful rhetorical choices are wide-ranging. Some, such as Gregory, have speculated that the lightness of the WWI sections have to do with generic conventions; others, such as Franziska Gygax, noting Stein’s indifference to generic conventions, suspect the patriotism and conversational tone are, to a certain extent, ironic affectation.

Such discourse is certainly relevant to the sixth section of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (simply titled “The War”). But what is perhaps most striking is not the absence of
devastation in general but rather the absence of injured bodies in particular. The memoirs of other supply/ambulance drivers are almost entirely comprised of stories of dead or dying soldiers, but Stein does not offer such accounts. Though soldiers die in Stein’s narrative, they tend to die because of accidents in their daily lives, not from war violence.

It is tempting to suggest that Stein’s exclusion of battlefield deaths indicates a hermetic, anti-patriarchal project, a claim that might be supported by the fact that she frequently describes patriarchal processes and institutions (such as the military) using the language of machinery and industrialization while, whenever possible, divorcing the human subject from militarized sites altogether—opting instead to place humans, especially soldiers, in particularized, domestic scenes. And the lack of the wounded body would certainly seem tied to these tendencies. It is difficult to ground such claims, however, because of Stein’s conflicting political leanings and her support of various, now widely condemned, military operations. Can one comfortably argue that Stein was truly anti-patriarchal? Could she have viewed WWI as a site of political action to confront sexual hierarchies and sexism? While scholars who hope to partially recuperate Stein, like Margaret Dickie, Leigh Gilmore, and Franziska Gygax, have made affirmative arguments along such lines, particularly when dealing with the subversion of language conventions found in her poetry, biographically-based counterarguments are difficult to refute, especially when dealing with Stein’s WWII writings. The Autobiography, however, represents Stein in a liminal space between her early progressiveness and later conservatism. This is a Stein that still undermines gender essentialism and questions state power. When The Autobiography is considered closely, it is apparent that Stein is parodying the conventions and nationalist tendencies of WWI writing while also using the conflict as a way to confront the homophobia of the early twentieth century.

War’s arrival into The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas is gradual, and once it is finally present it does not radically disrupt the style or tone of the text (the prose remains, to borrow Gregory’s adjective, just as “chatty” as in previous sections). The chapter’s title, “The War,” is also self-consciously plain. But, despite the brusque treatment, Stein partially structures The Autobiography by using WWI as a point of stylistic and thematic departure. The final sentence of “1907-1914” (the chapter which precedes “The War”), with a title that is ominous in its own right if one keeps aware of the historical timeline, suggests such an impending narrative disruption: “In short in this spring and early summer of nineteen fourteen the old life was over”
Similarly, the book’s final chapter, “After the War—1919-1932,” stands as the only instance where a distinct section of *The Autobiography* is titled in reference to a prior event or experience. In these final pages of the book, the previously confident memory of the narrator betrays a sense of self-doubt not present, or at least discernible, in preceding sections: “It is a confused memory those first years after the war and very difficult to think back and remember what happened before or after something else” (193).

Textual indicators that set “The War” apart from the surrounding chapters are accompanied by a shift in literary objectives that has not gained as much attention as it deserves. In recent years, queer and feminist scholars have noted Stein’s subversion of autobiographic conventions to critique patriarchal self-authorization and history while also considering queer subject positions and gender performativity. Leigh Gilmore, for example, notes that Stein “resists reinventing a unified, lesbian subject” by blending her identity with Toklas, a technique that suggests “identity, sexuality and self-representation are irreducible either in identity politics or in autobiography” (72). In a connected argument, Sidonie Smith observes how Stein “has both filled and emptied the autobiographical ‘I’ of the heterosexuality that marks it in the paternal order” while also “dispers[ing] the authority of paternal narrative…by subverting the old stabilities of identity and chronology” (82). Such arguments are useful, but it is also worth noting that *The Autobiography* undergoes a temporary generic shift during its WWI segments. It retreats from the conventions of autobiography and assumes the temporary shape of a war memoir. As I argue below, despite the enthusiasm of these sections, and the retained conversational tone, the interactions in “The War” do more than construct the subject positions of Stein and Toklas; they invert the typical power-structures characteristic of propagandist censorship while also revealing the ways in which queer subjects could subvert war volunteer-networks to encourage social progress.

It is important to note the ways in which “The War” contrasts with its surrounding chapters—a task that is made difficult by the fact that Stein’s careful attention to construct war as both a historical and textual presence is coupled with her tendency to suppress it. Like previous segments, “The War” is comprised mostly of personal anecdotes—and even war memories

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2 Gilmore’s argument builds on the work of Mary G. Mason, and Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck, whose scholarship explores, as Gilmore puts it, the way in which “many women adopt strategies that allow them to represent the autobiographical self by representing others” (72)—a conceit regularly employed by Stein.
curiously mingle domestic tranquility with military mobilization. The first direct war account comes from Nellie Jacot, one of Toklas’ “old school friend[s] from California,” who witnessed the first Battle of the Marne. Far from teleological or therapeutic, Jacot’s description focuses on the frustrations of finding a taxi out of Boulogne (150). Stein persistently places the conflict of the everyday—whether finding a taxi or obtaining a passport—above armed conflict, relegating it to background zeppelin alarms or shell percussions. In one illustrative instance, when Toklas and Stein are having dinner with Picasso and Eve, a zeppelin alarm sounds and the group seeks shelter in a concierge’s quarter until the housekeeper, Jeanne, grows “bored with [the] precaution and so in spite of all remonstrance…[goes] back to her kitchen…[and] in spite of the regulations…proceed[s] to wash the dishes” (158). Eventually, the remainder of the group also becomes “bored with the concierge’s lodge and [goes] back” (158). Jeanne’s determination in leaving the shelter “in spite of all remonstrance” and “in spite of the regulations” suggests that there is indeed something defiant in valuing, or simply engaging in, the domestic while ignoring the directives imposed on the everyday routine of living through wartime. As Gregory notes in “Gertrude Stein and War,” many female war writers chose to focus on ordinary scenes as a way to “redefine what is considered important, moving the emphasis from the destructive theatres of battle to the creative theatres of daily life” (271). This is certainly at work in these sections of The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, but what is perhaps different is that war itself becomes something to battle against—as with Jeanne, who conducts her “war on war” by maintaining habitual domesticity despite warnings that it is unsafe to do so.

Stein’s resistance is further seen through The Autobiography’s recursivity of representation. She offers a dynamic portrait of WWI, particularly the Battle of the Marne, by including three varied testimonies, only one of which comes from a witness who directly observed the battle. The second account Stein offers, following Jacot’s, is Alfy Maurer’s, whose experience occurred while sitting at a café: “[I saw] lots of horses pulling lots of big trucks going slowly by and there were some soldiers with them and on the boxes was written Banque de France. That was the gold going away…before the battle of the Marne” (151). Once again, Stein focuses on everyday living; but it is not so much that an ordinary act (sitting at a café) is used as a necessary canvas for considering conflict; it is rather that Stein etches a still-life portrait on top of a well-known battlefield painting. She even lightheartedly skirts sections of the text that require direct battle descriptions, such as when she offers Mildred Aldrich’s direct account of the
Marne’s violence. The narrator indicates that Aldrich’s experience was traumatic, but the reader is offered a significantly abridged version: “[Mildred] had been through the battle of the Marne, she had had the Uhlans in the woods below her, she had watched the battle going on below her and she had become part of the country-side” (160).

In discussions surrounding the tensions between biography and autobiography in Stein’s body of work, scholars often note how she offers multi-vocal accounts of significant events—such as the three accounts explored above—never relying on her own memory or valuing one account over another. For example, in her analysis of Stein’s three eye-witness accounts of the Battle of the Marne (from Jacot, Maurer, and Aldrich), Phoebe Davis observes that “Stein’s experimentation...with narration and memory undermines the idea that any one account can claim authority as the ‘official’ narrative of a historical event” (24). I would further argue that her consistent elision of violence (or even traditional battle accounts that direct attention away from domestic reverberations) insists that the true impact of war can be found in its extensions to the ordinary. This act appears more subversive when one considers the amount of suppression it entails. It’s true that Stein’s accounts are multi-vocal, but one could not claim that they offer a true parity of representation; they simply reverse the typical patriarchal power dynamics that often determine which accounts “are told.” I tend to disagree with, or at least want to qualify, statements that argue that Stein finds something indecent about depicting war—such as Margaret Dickie’s observation that “[r]eveling the details of the public war was as taboo [for Stein] as revealing the details of her private erotic life” (48). While Stein may have found depictions of the war somehow unsavory, or incompatible with her literary projects, she actively excludes the very accounts that were most commonly circulated: an act that reverses power structures and assigns authority to overlooked, actively silenced voices. War is consequently subsumed by the domestic, only to emerge later as details that interrupt the ordinary.

Because of Stein’s insistence on suppressing direct war narratives, it becomes both difficult and important to distinguish the interpersonal exchanges in “The War”—which continues the novel’s conversational focus on cafés, art, and food—from those included in previous sections of The Autobiography; indeed, conversation, though occasionally interrupted, is essentially and thematically the same. This model is established with the first mention of WWI, which comes from an editorial writer who wishes to “bemoan that [consequently] he would not be able to eat figs in August in Provence as was his habit” (144). Following suit, the
narrator herself only initially mentions the war to note that a set of furniture she purchased arrived on time “in spite of the war” and that it “was greeted…with the greatest delight” (146). When the reader compares the circulation of personalities in “The War” to the circulation of personalities in surrounding sections, however, a rather clear distinction can be made. In Beautiful Circuits, Mark Goble parallels the constant stream of people that cycle through the text (more than 400 personalities are introduced, and many are only mentioned once) with both the newsreel medium, in which disconnected stories are spliced together in a sequence, and film’s popular use of celebrity cameos, especially in movies such as Grand Hotel. He notes, however, that while Grand Hotel has a narrative independent of the circulation of personalities, Stein’s text is “practically choke[d]” by celebrity appearances (90). Such appearances underscore Stein’s popularity, reception, and role in the burgeoning Parisian avant-garde, but they also, as Beautiful Circuits points out, relate to Stein’s project of “mixing the outside with the inside,” at least in one sense of the phrase (The Autobiography 156). Stein and Toklas provide an open, quasi-public space where the personalities that occupy the text are free to circulate at will in what would otherwise be closed and private—in much the same way that the writing of an autobiography often involves displaying a personal life for public consideration. As a device, Stein’s liberal use of cameo also renders the personalities interchangeable. Stein, self-aware as ever, gestures to this fact in a number of instances: “Who else came. There were so many…It was an endless variety. And everybody came and no one made any difference…There were the friends who sat around the stove and talked and there were endless strangers who came and went” (123-124). However, on another level, as Goble reminds us, Stein uses the current of personalities to display the workings of her relationship with Toklas—a display rendered as dynamically heterosexual: “While this series of interchangeable wives parades through 27 Rue de Fleurus, Toklas remains a constant around which a social comedy of broken marriages and mistresses swirls, the functional equivalent of Stein’s spouse…Stein sits with ‘the geniuses’ and Toklas with their wives” (99).

But what are we to make of the cameos in “The War”? Personalities are still introduced only to promptly disappear, but the people are not immediately recognizable figures of early-twentieth-century literary/artistic production. They are soldiers and workers for the American Fund for French Wounded. In other words, Stein appears to have taken the “celebrity” out of the celebrity cameo. So what is the function of the “non-celebrity” appearance? In many instances,
she seems to invert its original purpose; the cameo does not serve as an effective way for Stein to tacitly construct her role and position in the French avant-garde, but rather as a way to humanize and particularize the subjects of the cameos, typically members of military or paramilitary institutions. Despite the fact that she introduces a broad range of military workers and soldiers, the cameos do not feel interchangeable, as they do in previous sections, and they resist the sort of anonymity placed on soldiers by the state. Appropriately, Stein attempts this humanizing project through addressing the individual soldier (one rarely finds descriptions of collective units, such as battalions or platoons, in her poetry or prose). This is illustrated through The Autobiography’s descriptions of Stein and Toklas’ “military godsons.” The narrator explains that “the duty of a military god-mother was to write a letter [to the godson] as often as she received one and to send a package of comforts or dainties about once in ten days” (175). As can be expected, Stein sometimes describes the content of the letters she sends to mentees, but the letters sent from soldiers on the firing lines are rarely explored or paraphrased—except in the case of Abel (their most “delightful” godson) who only dismissively mentions the front: “He began by saying that he was really not very much surprised by anything at the front, it was exactly as it had been described to him and as he had imagined it” (176). Abel’s account aligns with the text’s tendency to leave the war itself unexplored, but it also reinforces the sense that the godsons are individuals. They are part of a larger unit and conflict, but their roles within the military unit are secondary to their interpersonal relationships back home. It is also important to note that when godsons appear in the text, the narrator affects a maternal tone. For example, the narrator describes Abel as “the youngest, the sweetest, [and] the smallest soldier imaginable” (176). Later, when Abel receives the red fouragère, Stein remembers that she and Tolkas “were very proud” of their “filleul” (176).

Stein does not simply seek to separate the solider from the military but also to divorce other figures from their associations with various patriarchal, paramilitary institutions. One illustration of this, also from “The War,” is when Stein and Toklas complain to two policemen that they are unable to obtain coal to heat their house. Later, the narrator explains that one “policeman in civilian clothes turned up with two sacks of coal. We accepted thankfully and asked no questions” (171). In this case, the narrator does not give the name of the policeman, but she depicts him in a civilian role rather than as a member of a larger institution (she carefully notes that he shows up in “civilian clothes,” for example). In addition, unlike the people
introduced in early chapters of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, Stein suggests long-term, personally meaningful relationships with the personalities found in the WWI chapter. The affection for the military godsons, particularly Abel, is quite evident. And she also suggests a positive, personal relationship with one of the policemen: “He did everything for us, he cleaned our home, he cleaned our chimneys, he got us in and he got us out and on dark nights when Zeppelins came it was comfortable to know that he was somewhere outside” (172).

Stein’s representations of masculine experience are starkly different than those offered by trench poets such as David Jones. While *The Autobiography* includes soldier testimony to an extent, it excludes statements that might hold confessional or teleological implications. Jones’ *In Parenthesis* famously ends with a self-affirmative statement: “The geste says this and the man who was on the field… and who wrote the book… the man who does know this has not understood anything” (187). It’s a coda that suggests the formative power of battlefield trauma and evokes exclusionary models of mourning (particularly those that assert the only people eligible to mourn war losses or “understand” war are those that experienced it firsthand). Abel was “on the field,” but the absence of his battlefield testimony makes it impossible for Stein’s audience to inscribe nationalist or pro-war sentiment onto his military involvement—as has often been the case with Jones. Stein suggests that one does not need to understand the soldier’s time “on the field” before one can “understand anything” related to his identity. By foregrounding Abel’s positive interpersonal exchanges (such as his stay at 27 Rue de Fleurus), *The Autobiography* suggests that domestic relationships are just as important to identity formation as war experiences. The inclusion of these masculine experiences holds important implications. As *The Autobiography* transitions from autobiography to war memoir, the male cameos serve a different purpose than in earlier sections. They certainly configure Stein’s simultaneous attempts at self-authorization and identity destabilization, as discussed by Gilmore and Smith, but the genre of war memoir typically calls for even more universalizing political goals—and like the traditionally heterosexist genre of autobiography, the war memoir also calls for male testimony. By silencing commonly expected testimonies, however, Stein inverts the techniques of propagandists and dismantles the ways in which male experiences of war are traditionally understood. James Olney theorizes that the construction of self in autobiography can only be attempted in reference to “objects outside itself, to…events, and to…other lives” (qtd. in Benstock “Authorizing” 29). In “The War,” Stein positions herself through a broad range of male
referents. This is important to note because, as Shari Benstock reminds us, male autobiographical writings do not traditionally “admit internal cracks and disjunctures, rifts and ruptures” (this is particularly the case, I would pose, with male war writings); with the rise of Modernism, however, the “instability” of the autobiographical subject comes under scrutiny—particularly by women writers, who undermined the affected stability of male autobiography (“Authorizing” 20-21). Stein’s autobiography disrupts any notion that individual male testimony can offer an accurate view of the war, and it also reverses the tendency to privilege individualized male testimonies of battle trauma by developing a pastiche, communal model of experience.

Stein’s other subversions of traditional war writings should not be overlooked. Through her employment of irony, she effectively lampoons a broad range of conventions. Irony, and the tension of knowing and not-knowing, is at the very heart of *The Autobiography*, whose true authorship is not even revealed until its final lines, when the narrator offers a simple admission: “[Gertrude Stein said] I am going to write [your autobiography] for you…And she has and this is it” (252). A similar sort of irony is at play with “The War.” By the time *The Autobiography* was published, in 1933, most of Stein’s readers would have been aware of WWI’s horrors—revisionists (typically those who had experienced the conflict firsthand) had more than a decade and a half to dismantle the nationalist veneer placed upon the conflict by newspapers and propaganda. This is important to note because it makes Stein’s “jauntiness” feel even more out of place. In fact, *The Autobiography*’s historical placement (in the 1930s, not the 1910s) suggests the parodic nature of its war sequences. It crafts an understated caricature of early WWI women’s writing which often expressed the eagerness exuded by women able to assist at the front and those who inherited jobs previously held by men. Passages of *The Autobiography*, particularly those that elicit excitement for the war, ironically echo the enthusiasm of writers who later became pacifists and anti-war activists despite initially supporting the call to arms. Even Vera Brittain, a month before the war’s start in 1914, expressed fear that Britain’s “bungling Government will declare England’s neutrality” (*Chronicle of Youth*, 73). By maintaining similar enthusiastic sentiments throughout the duration of *The Autobiography*, in a decade when her audience would be well-aware of the war’s atrocities, Stein turns those conventions on their head.

These parodic patterns are at work in the way that Stein uses “The War” to challenge common interpretations of male combat experiences and female war writings, but she also uses
WWI as a way to evaluate and experiment with the ways in which gender is constructed and performed in a broader sense. As previously noted, many critics have argued that Stein’s relationship with Toklas was structured around heterosexual power dynamics. This is suggested in a number of instances, particularly when the narrator discusses the gender divisions that arose during social gatherings at 27 Rue de Fleurus:

As I have said, Fernande was the first wife of a genius I was to sit with. The geniuses came and talked to Gertrude Stein and the wives sat with me. How they unroll, an endless vista throughout the years…geniuses, near geniuses, and might be geniuses, all having wives, and I have sat and talked with them all all the wives. (87)

Goble argues that the above passage constructs Toklas as the domestic wife and Stein as the masculine genius (99), but many other sections prompt this sort of reading as well. In other instances, Toklas describes the frustrations with preparing meals for Stein according to her liking, for example, and some sections describe Toklas’ frustrations with similar household efforts: “Gertrude Stein is awfully patient over the breaking of even her most cherished objects…[I]t is I who dust them and alas sometimes accidentally break them. I always beg her to promise to let me have them mended by an expert before I tell her which it is that is broken, she always replies she gets no pleasure out of them if they are mended” (88). This “Victorian” arrangement, to use Benstock’s term, has proved a barrier for those who try to recuperate Stein. Though she can be defended on many levels, her inscription of heteronormativity onto a lesbian relationship is where some arguments surrounding her progressiveness begin to break down.

In a comparison of Stein to other lesbian expatriates living in Paris, such as Djuna Barnes, Gilbert and Gubar note that “[Stein] express[es] her desire not by reclaiming a pre-patriarchal past through Sappho but by claiming a post-patriarchal future” (2: 238). But one may argue that Stein wants to assume the role of the patriarch, not necessarily to build a post-patriarchal future. Some scholars have tried to peer past Stein’s heteronormative construction by recognizing it as just that, a construction. Gygax in particular argues that Stein appropriated heterosexual, gendered power dynamics (especially in her popular writings, such as *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*)—perhaps, Gygax suggests, begrudgingly—as a way to present a lesbian relationship in a piece of popular (non)fiction without raising eyebrows: “Stein can manipulate her self-presentation and evade confidential matters if necessary. This strategy is
evident in the way *The Autobiography* presents her relationship to Toklas as a heterosexual arrangement, and thus cannot harm her reputation as a public figure” (115). Gilmore asserts that Stein actively recognizes gender as performance—particularly in the dinner parties. She notes that these “vignettes [demonstrate] how the gendered practice of ‘sitting with wives’ cannot explain who Alice is, cannot fix her as ‘woman’ in that scene” (65). Both arguments seem plausible. There is certainly a significant, subtle subversion in Stein’s choice to treat a same-sex bond as normative (even if that involves adopting the problematic aspects engrained in “normative” unions). Gilmore’s argument is also applicable. A self-conscious critique of gender roles certainly seems possible when one considers how the “Genius” Gertrude Stein of early chapters drastically shifts subject positions and performances in “The War.”

But while Stein’s “heterosexual marriage” to Toklas has been thoroughly examined, her shift of positionality during “The War” has not. When the chapter is surveyed closely, however, it is clear that Stein’s performance of gender and her interactions with Toklas undergo a drastic evolution—and these changes are as initially problematic as Stein’s previous appropriation of patriarchal gender power dynamics. In “The War,” Stein does not appear to assume a traditionally masculine position but rather the opposite—she relinquishes her dominant persona for a submissive one that relies on assistance from the patriarchal institutions she supports as a supply driver for the American Fund for French Wounded. This fact is most evident in Stein’s consistent reliance on male labor and aid. One example is of course the policeman who provides coal for Stein, but other situations arise as well, particularly when Stein and Toklas’ service car malfunctions:

[T]hey were always doing something for her, whenever there was a soldier or a chauffeur or any kind of a man anywhere, she never did anything for herself, neither changing a tyre, cranking the car or repairing it…

This faculty of Gertrude Stein of having everybody do anything for her puzzled the other drivers of the organisation…It was not only soldiers, a chauffeur would get off the seat of a private car in the place Vendôme and crank Gertrude Stein’s old ford for her. Gertrude Stein said that others looked so efficient, of course nobody would think of doing anything for them. Now as for herself she was not efficient… (174)
The depictions of gender dynamics in this section of *The Autobiography* are, to say the least, uncharacteristic of Gertrude Stein. In fact, they seem more reminiscent of WWI propaganda campaigns in which governments “deliberately,” as Bonnie Kime Scott describes, “accentuate[d] gender differences and inequalities reaffirmed by war policies” (520). From moment to moment, however, it is difficult to determine exactly what type of female gender performance Stein is trying to enact. In her role as a “military godmother,” she appears to assume the propagandist figure of the noble mother, illustrated in wartime posters and bulletins as a “mother pointing her son to his duty” (Scott 522)—an image reinforced through her parroting of American patriotic rhetoric. At other moments, when Stein relies on the help of soldiers (“or any kind of a man anywhere”), she enacts the role of the defenseless sister relying on the patriarchal state for help and protection.

One wonders, however, why Stein decides to portray herself in such stereotypical ways. She was well aware of WWI propaganda campaigns and openly mocked them in her works, such as the parody film script *A Movie*. In this five-page “screenplay,” characters are identified only in reference to their nationalities and occupations. One plot thread, which echoes Nellie Jacot and Alfy Maurer’s accounts of the Marne, involves an American painter, who eventually decides to drive a taxi after sitting in a café and watching “cabs file through Paris carrying French soldiers to the battle” (3). A second character is described only as a “Bretonne femme de ménage” (or “female housekeeper”). Throughout its short duration, the work pokes fun at the ways in which government propaganda constructed and conflated notions of gender and nationalism. It ends with the painter and the femme de ménage driving a taxi “in the march under the arch at the final triumph of the allies” with “the Bretonne driving and the american painter inside waving the american flag Old Glory and the tricolor” (5). In *The Autobiography*, Stein explains that she wrote *A Movie* when William Cook, a painter who eventually became an American soldier, taught her to drive before she started her work for the American Fund for French Wounded: “[Gertrude and William] went out beyond the fortifications and…[sat] solemnly on the driving seat of one of those old two-cylinder before-the-war Renault taxis, William Cook taught Gertrude Stein how to drive…It was William Cook who inspired the only movie Gertrude Stein ever wrote in english” (162). It is a brief reference, but it holds a number of implications. It reveals that even in the initial years of WWI Stein was thinking about the ways in which the conflict was being used by propagandists to solidify gender definitions and emerging sexual
So how then can Stein’s submissiveness throughout the chapter be explained? Using Gygax’s reading, Stein’s passivity can be understood, much like her “traditional” depiction of her relationship with Toklas, as a self-aware construction. And Stein was certainly one to use a variety of different masks, both in her life and in her poetry. For example, in “Lifting Belly,” one of the Stein poems that deals most directly with lesbian love and eroticism, Stein fluctuates between different subject positions and performances: “Even as [‘Lifting Belly’] celebrates the stability of affectionate family life and portrays lesbianism as the epitome of any loving relationship, Stein’s verse dramatically depicts the lesbian couple taking or relinquishing the roles provided by heterosexuality” (Gilbert and Gubar, 2: 243). In her social life, Stein similarly oscillated between the self-lionizing, socially-active Gertrude Stein and the reclusive “genius” who “managed to isolate herself for considerable parts of the day and to avoid at least one of the three or four meals” while staying with friends in London at the outset of the war (The Autobiography 127). So it is not unlikely that Stein’s “feminized” performance in “The War” was, like her patriotic rhetoric, a matter of ironic affectation. This notion is supported by Stein’s decision to name the car she drove “Auntie” after “Gertrude Stein’s aunt Pauline who always behaved admirably in emergencies and behaved fairly well most times if she was properly flattered” (172). The car’s name mirrors Stein’s familial/maternal performance in general, suggests the British war propaganda of the day, and also, in many instances, appears to be an extension of Stein and Toklas themselves. She even complexly entwines her identity with Auntie in war poems such as “Won”:

Thousands of trucks.
And hundreds of marines.
And in between them.
Aunt Pauline losing oil…
We will have a dish.
Radish.
That is a good food.
Aunt Pauline will justify herself. (Bee Time 187-188)
Stein continued to give her cars names with feminist resonances when she obtained a second Ford in 1920, directly following the war. She named the second car “Lady Godiva”—suggesting an ironic progression from wartime maternal caregiving (Aunt Pauline) to a post-war sense of female sacrifice bordering on martyrdom. It seems likely that Stein associated the cars with female experiences of WWI; though she bought other Fords after Lady Godiva, they remained unnamed.

When trying to reconcile the conflicting elements of the essentialism present in Stein’s “heterosexual” relationship with Toklas and her affected gender performances during WWI, remembering Stein’s interest in sexology, particularly the work of Otto Weininger, can provide a number of answers. As Barbara Will explains, the work of Otto Weininger, particularly *Sex and Character* (1903), had a profound impact on Stein’s outlooks as early as 1908. She was particularly interested in Weininger’s gendered “typologies,” which attempted to group individuals along a spectrum according to how closely they aligned with “ideal Man” or “ideal Woman” (the ideal Woman being adversely positioned to the positively-constructed state of ideal Man). Personal alignment, in Weininger’s formulation, is largely determined through bodily “sex cells”—Will points out that this “universal continuum of sexual types…closely resembles…Stein[’s] ‘universal grouping’ of bottom natures…in *The Making of Americans*” (63). Importantly, Weininger’s system allowed for a wide combination of “M” and “W” “sex cells” within the individual, meaning that all bodies are “sexually intermediate,” to use Will’s term (64). Even those that are not biologically male can be aligned with ideal Man and vice-versa. Stein was therefore able to essentialize gender, since Weininger’s sexual types are heavily gendered, while, to a certain extent, divorcing gender identity from the body, since the combination of gendered sex cells are not dependent on biological sex.⁴ This explains how Stein was able to view herself as essentially masculine while still “playing” with gender roles, as she does when strategically enacting femininity during *The Autobiography’s* WWI segments. By adopting Weininger’s ideas, Stein was able to consider the degree to which gender and sexuality

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⁴ Will also explains how Stein used Weininger’s theories when discussing her relationship to Tolkas. Weininger’s formulation divided the category of Woman into the mother and the prostitute, and recognized the prostitute as the “preferred” partner of “great men.” Noting this distinction, Stein refers to Toklas as “the prostitute type” in her personal writings, thereby “position[ing] herself as Alice’s sexual opposite, as her ideal counterpoint” (75). In Weininger’s understanding of sexual attraction, desire is framed around “sexual complementarity of types,” an idea that engages with nineteenth-century debates regarding homosexuality as attraction to sameness. As Will points out: “[I]n accepting the definition of sexual complementarity of types…there need be no other rationale for sexual desire, even same-sex desire” (75).
are interrelated and the extent to which both are somewhat substantive and somewhat performative in ways that appear paradoxical on the surface.

Stein’s assumption of various gender performances also had a strong political component—it is somewhat reductive to simply label Stein’s wartime demeanor a self-aware enactment of the prevailing gender models circulating in the public sphere. Though Stein allows men to fix Auntie when it breaks down, she does so by choice. The narrator notes that Stein was “very good” at repairing the car “as often as there was nobody else to do it” (177). In fact, the men’s willingness to aid her, something she seems to inversely link to a positive trait in her own character, is a source of pride. In an explanation of why men (“or any kind of a man anywhere”) readily helped her and not the other drivers, Stein states: “The important thing…is that you must have deep down as the deepest thing in you a sense of equality. Then anyone will do anything for you” (174). It seems arguable then that Stein allows the men to assist her, not solely because of self-aware gender performativity but also to form cooperative bonds with those she would not otherwise come in contact with. While previous sections of The Autobiography featured a somewhat public circulation of bodies in an otherwise private space, the types of people Stein interacted with were limited to painters and writers. WWI, however, presents Stein with a more universalizing approach to mixing the outside and the inside. The fixed stage of 27 Rue de Fleurus is left behind and Auntie Pauline emerges as a new, mobile platform for a more varied range of actors to perform upon. And it is Auntie Pauline’s dysfunctions that generate many of these encounters, along with Stein and Toklas’ “habit” to offer “any soldier on the road a lift” (174). In addition, as I have previously noted, these new bonds (particularly with her godsons) prove more meaningful (or at the very least more purpose-driven) than the relations included in previous sections.

It is also worth noting Stein’s emphasis that such positive interactions could be had with soldiers and her impression that this fact may be disorienting; these elements underscore the political project suggested throughout “The War.” Stein insists, for example, that she and Toklas “never had…but the most pleasant experiences with these soldiers” even though, as the reader may imagine, “some of them were…pretty hard characters” (174). The interactions are on one level particularized (they offer humanized depictions of the soldier as an individual), but they also offer a sense of the collective that sharply contrasts what Gregory describes as military patriarchal “structures of domination,” which may at first appear as brotherly collaboration (269-
To help Stein, the soldiers must share her deep “sense of equality,” in order to sense mutual imperative in a space where structures of domination have been suspended. Such notions of equality and inclusive collaboration as signified through individualized acts are extended to Stein’s treatment of automobiles in a parallel that is indicative of Stein’s recursive tropes and her tendency to displace human interplay onto objects. Similar to the human body, automobiles are described *en masse* as a component of the patriarchal war machine (such as the “thousands of trucks” and “hundreds of marines” described in “Won”), but—when described as particularized units (such as “Auntie Pauline”)—automobiles take on a helpful, nearly-human form in the domestic sphere. Large numbers of automobiles were directly used on the front, but individual cars could be used by supply and ambulance drivers to foster a more positive form of community.

The absence of war corpses in her narrative similarly correlates to such tendencies. Battlefield teleological narratives undermine Stein’s project because war deaths contributed to ongoing patriarchal processes and were used by propagandists to justify the war and inspire national pride. In addition, because of the number of deaths, soldiers were often mourned unceremoniously. Stein could use domestic deaths, on the other hand, to display the sense of solidarity present in the communities she fostered. She notes, for example, the “excitement” she and Toklas felt when they learned that the brother of Jeanne’s friend was to have a civilian funeral after drowning before he was officially enlisted. “It was a great honor,” Stein explains, “to have a brother have a civilian funeral during the war” (166). In a similar instance, a large funeral is given to a soldier who accidentally falls from a train. Stein does not focus on the details of the death, but rather the sense of collectivity that surrounded his funeral: “This was a tremendous occasion…Duncan and two others blew on the bugle and everybody made speeches. The Protestant pastor asked…about the dead man and his virtues…It was difficult to find any virtue…Finally Taylor, one of his friends, looked up solemnly and said, I tell you he had a heart as big as a washtub” (184).

It would seem then that, for Stein, WWI had its purposes. Through writing *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, she was able to join other women attempting to inscribe female presence into a historical experience where the voices of women were often silenced or denied. In addition, she found a platform through which to offer a counter-narrative of collaboration and meaningful community to predominant war accounts that valued individual
sacrifice and loyalty to the state. WWI also afforded her opportunities to display her sexuality and relationship to a broader—and typically receptive—public. In many ways, the supply driver sections of *The Autobiography* mirror the supply/ambulance driver accounts given in other novels and memoirs written by lesbian writers. *The Autobiography*’s patriotism mirrors the nationalism of *The Well of Loneliness* where, as Claire Buck explains, “the war [provided] a special emancipatory status for the female invert which is linked to the opportunities it provides for service” (177). A similar notion of emancipation and limited acceptance is found in *Nightwood*: O’Connor tells of a homosexual who feels the “ignominyn of [his] past” being absolved as he received the *Croix de Guerre* (96). But in *The Well of Loneliness*, “the invert’s patriotism during the First World War did not make her sexuality any more acceptable to British society [despite her contributions]” (180-181), and in *Nightwood*, WWI acts as a springboard to consider the historical persistence of queer subjectivity—not necessarily as a site through which to encourage social progress. What sets *The Autobiography* apart is that it suggests the possibility for both social contribution and increased acceptance. Within the text itself, Stein even subtly mixes images of war and physical intimacy between herself and Toklas, such as when they “weep together” after learning that the Germans had been forced to retreat before reaching Paris (149). This passage is similar to other texts where Stein parallels a discussion of her lesbianism with WWI imagery. In “Lifting Belly” for example, Stein has a habit of “interweaving her lesbian love lyric with war references; the female body is invoked and transposed into war narrative through the conflation of domestic images and war references” (Godspeed-Chadwick 95). Stein suggests that if the ever-present patriarchal processes and power structures, which became even more apparent during the war, were to be suspended, then a sense of gender and sexual inclusivity could take hold. This is made plain by the fact that the men she interacts with throughout “The War,” who are far from the progressive personalities associated with the Parisian avant-garde, are nonplussed by her relationship with Toklas. And it seems likely that many of the men knew about Stein’s lesbianism, particularly their godsons (some, such as Abel, lived with Stein and Toklas for a time) and the police officers who seem quite familiar with, and helpful to, the American expatriate lesbian community living in Paris—“Oh yes… certainly madame we know you very well,” they state when Stein and Toklas first approach them (171). Similarly, one military officer, familiar with Stein because of her work and the discussions of her in newspapers of the time, invites Stein and Toklas to have dinner at his
home because, as he explains, his wife was “very anxious to make [Stein’s] acquaintance” (177). The suggestion that homosexual couples occupy an important position in society and culture and that the heteronormative (though always homosocial) society of the time could accept, and perhaps even celebrate, this fact is also illustrated by Stein’s artistic tutelage in general. Unlike some lesbian expatriates living in Paris who constructed a gender exclusive “no man’s land” (to use Gilbert and Gubar’s phrase), 27 Rue de Fleurus was—though a lesbian space—still a site where “Stein as a woman artist [saw] and transform[ed] the lives of famous men” (Gygax 79). It is not therefore difficult to imagine that Stein used WWI, somewhat paradoxically, as a way to undermine patriarchal structures and work toward a broader societal sense of sexual inclusivity.
When remembering Gertrude Stein’s only visit to Natalie Barney’s salon, the Temple of Friendship, for a celebration in Stein’s honor, Djuna Barnes stated: “I couldn’t stand her [Stein]. She had to be the centre of everything. A monstrous ego” (qtd. in Gilbert and Gubar, 2: 238). And it is not likely that Stein, with her penchant for—as Shari Benstock puts it—“cast[ing] herself as a teacher among apprentices” (Women, 17), would have had much interest in the independent Barnes or her various modernist projects. Indeed, when Stein spoke to Barnes at the Temple of Friendship it was to compliment her legs, not her literary work, a slight that Barnes did not forget. This instance of interpersonal tension reflects both the personal and generic differences between the two. Barnes’ sexualized persona and reclusiveness are opposite to the desexualized, self-lionizing Stein; Stein’s stripped-down experimental compositions read quite differently than Barnes’ verbose body of work; and Stein’s writings, even her war writings, avoided embodiment while Barnes’ Nightwood and Ryder consider little else than the body and its excretions. For these individual and artistic reasons, Barnes and Stein are difficult to compare despite their similar statuses as expatriate authors and dissident sexual subjects.4

When considering WWI writing, however, Barnes logically follows a discussion of Stein because both employ the conflict as a site of significant narrative, stylistic, and temporal ruptures. Similar to the way in which The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas posits WWI as a space where activism and queer performativity can produce a model of progressive community, Barnes’ Nightwood uses the war to depict timely, if sometimes problematic, outlooks related to the position of queer subjects in the society of the early twentieth century.

It is important to note that as Stein and Barnes consider WWI, both are concerned with the gender and sexological discourse of the time period. Stein’s interest in Weininger’s gendered “typologies,” which attempted to group individuals along a spectrum according to how closely they aligned with “ideal Man” or “ideal Woman”—categories that were not inextricably tied to biological sex—allowed her a complex and often contradictory way to both essentialize and deconstruct notions of gender and sexuality. And Barnes engages similar notions. A number of scholars view Nightwood’s Dr. Matthew O’Connor, a transgendered character whose

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4 In Women of the Left Bank Benstock attempts to draw parallels between Stein and Barnes through a hermeneutic comparison of critical approaches.
philosophical asides comprise much of the novel’s content, as a direct parody of various sexological ideologies. Andrea Harris identifies Dr. O’Connor as “a parody of the nineteenth-century sexologist and as a prescient sketch of the contemporary gender theorist” (95). And Jane Marcus notes that O’Connor “lampoons” Weininger and other sexologists whose “own sexual ident[i]es were]…so troubled” (230); she also observes that Freud is “brilliantly parodied” in O’Connor’s demeanor, ideas, and apparent “womb envy” (233). Barnes highlights his Freudian qualities by placing him as the central confidant and analyst in the story—two central characters, Nora and Felix, regularly present him with their problems and ask for his comfort, interpretations, and advice. Nora even prompts him to conduct a dream analysis in one segment of the novel. But O’Connor evokes a broad range of sexual researchers and theorists, not only Freud and Weininger. Through Dr. O’Connor, Barnes is able to consider the nature of sexual identity, including topics such as inversion, which was quite popular at the turn of the century, as well as the nature and formation of sexual identity in a way that encompasses a vexed field of speculations and positions. Like Stein, Barnes reflects on the degree to which gender and sexuality are interrelated and suggests that both are somewhat substantive and somewhat performative.

It is worth noting that the complexities of gender and sexuality contained in Nightwood are also characteristic of Barnes herself. Much like Stein, Barnes enacted a variety of different gender performances and suggested a range of sexual positionalities. Barnes’ competing representations did not arise posthumously as a result of appropriation, but have circulated since her time in Paris when she cultivated a reputation for both feminine beauty and masculine crudeness; Walter Mitchell once characterized her as “the femme writer…[who] can hit a cuspidor twenty feet away” (qtd. in Benstock, Women 231). Gilbert and Gubar also capture her ambiguity when they group Barnes with other Parisian female writers (along with Gertrude Stein and Radclyffe Hall) who “[t]ransgressively appropriated male costumes or oscillated between parodically female and sardonically male outfits, as if to declare that, as Woolf said, we are what we wear, and therefore, since we can wear anything, we can be anyone” (2: 327). Such an image feels appropriate. It evokes popular photographs of Barnes from her Parisian life—rouged, caped, posed like a stage actor—and additionally captures the pageantry and gender coalescence characteristic of her literary productions in general. Other scholars, however, paint Barnes as predominantly feminine. In Women of the Left Bank, for example, Benstock notes Barnes’
“vanity” and discusses her post-Paris wardrobe, when she abandoned her masculine adornments, and the outfits felt intentionally, rather than “parodically,” feminine. But even when gender performativity is set aside, Barnes remains a contested figure. One is even uneasy qualifying her sexuality because, when asked about her sexual identity, she famously stated, “I’m not a lesbian, I just loved Thelma” (Field 37). Consequently, discussions of her work alternate between celebrating Barnes as a queer figure and criticizing her work as an attack on her lesbian benefactors, particularly those associated with Barney’s salon. Karla Jay, for example, refers to Barnes’ *Ladies Almanack* as a work of “biting satire, verging on viciousness,” that is the equivalent of Barnes “bit[ing] the very hands that brought *Ladies Almanack* into existence” (185). But regardless of how one reads the fluidity of Barnes’ identity and works, it is clear that she was largely concerned with contemporary writings surrounding gender and sexuality.

In *Nightwood*, gender and sexuality are regularly interconnected with characters’ views of their positions to history. Notably, WWI is the impetus for many of *Nightwood’s* reflections on gender, sexuality, and historical memory. Dr. Matthew O’Connor, a WWI veteran himself, acts as both the novel’s sexologist and chronologist. Barnes uses his “historic memory” (he relates personal “memories” from a variety of centuries and subject positions) to create a pastiche or collective understanding of historic events that often focus on sexuality and gender. Other characters, however, such as Robin Vote and Nora Flood, feel as though they stand outside of history even as, conversely, their bodies trigger processes of historic memory in those around them. Felix Volkbein, who desperately tries to find his way into dominant history, is also key to Barnes’ project; through his attempts to enter collective memory, Barnes critiques the way in which dominant histories are structured through gender essentialism and heteronormativity. When all of these characters are considered together, it becomes clear that Barnes uses the gender imperatives imposed by WWI as a way to consider a range of sexual positionalities and experiences that undermine the sorts of essentialist categorizations employed by the conflict. Unlike Stein, who imagines the war as a site of collective obligation with progressive potential for social progress for queer communities (while still recognizing a sort of gender essentialism, albeit relegated to a Weiningerian lens), Barnes counterintuitively uses it as a way to think about

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5 It should also be noted that I am using Cheryl J. Plumb’s edition of *Nightwood* because it restores passages and word choices that were either removed or altered throughout the much-discussed editing process. Plumb’s introduction and Fleischer’s “Djuna Barnes and T.S. Eliot: The Politics and Poetics of *Nightwood*” examine these editorial changes in more detail.
the way in which WWI’s rigid categorization, and the sexological discourse of the surrounding years, only highlights the multifaceted, unclassifiable nature of identity; she reveals, in effect, the self-defeating prospects of essentialist measures.

Barnes’ attention to the placement of gendered bodies within *Nightwood* echoes the way in which “the Great War” promoted strict gender stratification and reinforced gender hierarchies that had been coming under lively public scrutiny. During the early years of WWI, women suffragist activists were already engaged in what Gilbert and Gubar refer to as a “most ferocious literal battle between the sexes” that involved such public acts as “[s]lashing the Rokeby Venus, burning letters in letter boxes, flinging themselves in front of racehorses, requiring to be force-fed [a process Barnes voluntarily underwent as a reporter]…and—most important—meeting and marching by the thousands” (1: 18). Despite such acts of resistance, WWI’s accompanying propaganda campaigns give “no hint that such a movement even existed”—to quote Michele J. Shover’s analysis of American and European propaganda posters (472-473). Propaganda encouraged women to help the war effort by filling temporary service positions or simply cast women as homemakers who needed to be protected from external threats; men were expected to “prove” their masculinity through military performance and voluntary enlistment. The cultural and societal pressure to demonstrate individual masculinity on the battlefield was immense. The *Times of August 9, 1914*, even describes the suicide of one man, Arthur Sydney Evelyn Annesley, who committed suicide due to “worry caused by the feeling that he was not going to be accepted for service” (qtd. in Fussell 19). And just as men were encouraged to view themselves as participating in an international struggle for masculine dominance, propagandists fostered a transatlantic competition of feminine domesticity; one American poster suggested that US women, particularly those who ignored food conservation imperatives, look to their French counterparts for an example of feminine duty that “struggle[ed] against starvation” in order to “feed not only themselves and their children; but their husbands and sons who are fighting in the trenches” (qtd. in Shover 478). Through reinforcing the very binaries that suffrage activists were struggling against, WWI rhetoric was able to use the dichotomizing energy of gender roles to bolster the war effort, both in combat and in the social/domestic spheres.

Such binarization resulted in patterned silences. It was all too easy for many (with dispositions like *Nightwood*’s Felix Volkbein) to maintain a phallagocentric view of historical progress that suppressed the contributions of individuals who were not white, heterosexual, and
male; even women present at the frontline as nurses, volunteers, and ambulance/supply drivers struggled to find platforms through which to record experiences and voice outlooks. Barnes rather carefully, if implicitly, engrains “silenced histories” into her work and, even outside of *Nightwood*, challenges the gender performances enacted on the stage of the Great War. Margaret Bockting, for example, reads Barnes’ short story “The Rabbit,” which doesn’t directly mention WWI, as a discussion of the sort of “obligatory identification” with “the role of the killer” that the war placed on men while silencing “conflicts about aggression, gender identity, or potential injury” (29). “The Rabbit” also features a female character who mocks the male protagonist for being “unambitious and womanly,” a description which clearly correlates to propaganda posters that encouraged women to pressure male relations into enlisting (often by implying that men who did not enlist would fail to undergo a masculine realization that only war could facilitate) (Bockting 26).

An attention to history and its relation to gender is key to any discussion of *Nightwood* because of the way it is woven together with Barnes’ characterizations. Each major personality in the novel betrays an identification with or self-conscious departure from history that configures, sometimes paradoxically, a sense of self-identity. Felix Volkbein, the son of a Jewish dandy who fraudulently claimed a barony and Austrian lineage, is of course the character most emphatically, if artificially, concerned with the past. His desire for an heir is not only tied to inheritance or “Aristocracy” (to use Dr. O’Connor’s layered term) but also to Felix’s desire to preserve a heteronormative, patriarchal historical knowledge in his son: “The Baron admitted that he…wished [for] a son who would feel as he felt about the ‘great past’” (129; 42). The reader recognizes the irony of Felix’s desire. His own past and familial identity were constructed by his father from “the most amazing and inaccurate proofs: a coat of arms that he had no right to and a list of progenitors…who had never existed” as well as two family portraits (referred to as “an alibi for the blood”), that he claimed were commissioned by his own parents (8). In addition, the “great past” Felix longs to uphold is maintained by a dominant culture that excludes the contributions and experiences of Jews from popular memory. Rather than reacting against dominant historical narratives or acting as a proponent for a new, universalizing record, Felix attempts to enter collective memory through a different course: supplication. He is seen, for example, bowing to those in restaurants whom he believes might be “someone” in hope that “the great past might mend a little if he bowed low enough, if he succumbed and gave homage” (9).
Felix’s inability to assimilate himself into the dominant historical narrative is paralleled with a sense that “the great history” has become noticeably decentered. The novel suggests that recent historical violence (chiefly WWI) has made it impossible to easily hold—or perpetuate—constructivist views of historical progress based on causality; the past acts of “great men” cannot satisfactorily explain the arrival of the war, and it is difficult to imagine WWI’s place in the “great past.” “La Somnambule,” Nightwood’s second chapter, includes an episode where Felix is unable to offer a cohesive imagining of Austria’s past when he tours Vienna with Robin: “[Felix] tried to explain to [Robin] what Vienna had been before the war; what it must have been before he was born; yet his memory was confused and hazy, and he found himself repeating what he had read, for it was what he knew best. With methodical anxiety he took her over the city” (40). Ironically, Felix does not notice the constructed nature of historical narrative, despite the fact that he must rely on “what he had read.” Later in the same passage, he also engages in the act of creating history as he “labor[s] under the weight of his own remorseless re-creation of the great generals and statesmen and emperors” while reflecting on such figures as Emperor Francis Joseph and Charles the First (41). For Felix, the increasingly difficult, if “remorseless,” act of maintaining and recreating a patriarchal history is a facet of his own self-authorization, and upon thinking of Emperor Francis Joseph and Charles the First, he feels as though he “were supporting the combined weight of their apparel and their destiny” (41). His preoccupation with history’s “great men,” and his insistence that others (particularly Robin) take notice of them, make Felix a sort of gatekeeper of heteronormativity and patriarchal time. Julie L. Abraham, who also notes the implications behind Felix’s exclusion from popular memory and the artificial nature of his historic narrations, suggests that Barnes parallels the “relation of the Jews to the dominant Christian culture” to the experiences of non-heterosexual characters of whom “there was almost no trace of a record [in popular history]” (256). Such readings are illuminating (and Barnes certainly uses Felix as a figure through which to explore dynamics of marginalization that extend beyond Felix’s own individual abjection), but one should not overlook the ways in which he also operates as an agent of heterohistorical order.

In contrast to Felix, Nightwood’s major female characters express a sharp dissociation from dominant memory. Nora Flood, for example, views her relation to the past as one where “the word and its history” are “ship in a bottle” to which she is “outside and unidentified” (48). Robin displays a similar detachment, which can be seen in her indifference to Felix’s tour of
Vienna’s historical sites. There is also a rather clear instance where Robin, in an attempt to find guidance, looks to the examples set by historic figures—an exercise that doesn’t prove fruitful:

She wandered to thoughts of women, women that she had come to connect with women. Strangely enough these were women in history, Louise de la Valliere, Catherine of Russia, Madame de Maintenon, Catherine de Medici, and two women out of literature, Anna Karenina and Catherine Heathcliff; and now there was this woman Austria. She prayed and her prayer was monstrous because in it there was no margin left for damnation or forgiveness, for praise or for blame—those who cannot conceive a bargain cannot be saved or damned. She could not offer herself up, she only told of herself, in a preoccupation that was its own predicament. (43)

This moment marks a rupture in Robin’s sense of religious order as well as her conscious disengagement from historic memory—a disengagement that is triggered by the belief that her experiences differ from those faced by women in the past. Abraham ties these instances of marginalization and the inability to connect back to the “official record” as a result of the exclusion of homosexuals from historical memory. This is certainly true, but it is also important to note the ways in which Nora and Robin’s relation to history is also mediated by gender.

Consistently, Nora and Robin are associated with history by the people surrounding them despite their own feelings of individual displacement. Robin is characterized as a “carrier of the past,” and Felix describes the sensation that the “past were a web about her” (36; 101). Similarly, when people interact with Nora, they are reminded of “stories they had heard of covered wagons” and feel as though “early American history was being re-enacted” during the meetings at her American salon (47). This tendency to associate the female body with the past and historical progress is established during the novel’s opening pages—which mostly details the relationship between Hedvig and Guido Volkbein, Felix’s parents, as well as Felix’s birth. When Hedvig Volkbein first enters the text, she is described as having “great strength and military beauty” (3). Barnes employs similar military allusions and signifiers for nearly all of Hedvig’s descriptions. Guido, Felix’s father, tries to adopt her “goose-step of a stride” and notices that her demeanor and gestures resemble those of military men: “Hedvig had the same bearing, the same though more condensed power of the hand, patterned on seizure in a smaller mould” (5). The key difference among Nora, Robin, and Hedvig is the way in which the latter feels acceptance within
history. The militant sense of purpose, and the generative rhythm of historical progress characteristic of her passages, is clearly illustrated when she gives birth: “[W]ith the gross splendor of a general saluting the flag, she named him Felix, thrust him from her, and died” (3). Through this depiction, it is clear that much of Hedvig’s military-like sense of duty (and, by extension, purpose) is tied to family and reproduction. Through Robin, Nora, and Hedvig’s different positions within history and progress, Barnes shows the gendered condition of collective memory. Implicit in these passages is the idea that dominant historical narratives are largely masculinist and that the male gaze often mediates acts of memory through the female body. The male gaze, Felix in the case of Robin and Guido in the case of Hedvig, intuits a sense of the past and historical progress from the female form even though, in the case of Robin, the female subject feels outside of that very history. Unlike Hedvig, Robin cannot embrace a heterohistorical order. Barnes suggests that a historical consciousness based around fixed gender identities and heteronormative constructs cannot act as a stable model. As we will see, she uses WWI’s strict gender divisions to critique such notions.

Barnes used WWI as a way simultaneously to critique fixed notions of gender and to consider dissident sexual identities even before writing Nightwood. Her early antiwar paintings in particular, such as The Doughboy, are discursively and ideologically aligned with Nightwood’s critiques. Even Frances M. Doughty’s relatively objective description of The Doughboy, Barnes’ composition of “a standing male nude in a murky battlefield, holding a phallic rifle with bayonet while an elongated hand rises surrealistically from the ground,” cannot avoid suggesting Barnes’ political aims (138). The soldier’s nudity and his “phallic rifle” in the scorched, otherworldly environment subvert the pathos of WWI propaganda that celebrated the power and predatory character young men could display on the battlefield. On another level, the sexuality engrained in The Doughboy, particularly in the early painting6 (in which a second naked form lies at the feet of the soldier, an element of the image that was removed before it was used as the cover of Trend magazine in October 1914) evokes the silenced eroticism often underlying the homosociality of military institutions and groups. This simultaneous consideration of gender and homoeroticism mediated through a historical moment (specifically WWI) is also a major component of Nightwood.

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6 See Mary Lynn Broe, Silence and Power: A Reevaluation of Djuna Barnes, Plate 5.
WWI acts as a springboard for considerations of gender and homoeroticism at many points in Dr. O’Connor’s various conversations and, importantly, there are striking contradictions between Felix’s constructions of the past and the historical fluidity of O’Connor’s recollections. Like Felix, the Doctor identifies with historical personalities but, significantly, he reflects on queer figures and ostracized women (such as Marie Antoinette)—people that are outside of the Baron’s historic assemblage. O’Connor also recognizes the forgotten history of those who were “without office or title”; histories that, he implies, are more important than those of the “high and mighty”—a notion that Felix finds unsettling (14).

Further distinctions can be seen in Felix’s tendency to see himself as a “support” for (or repository of) a stable, homogenous past and O’Connor’s empathetic use of historical figures to approach discussions surrounding contemporary twentieth-century queer subjectivity. In one anecdote, removed from the original printing, O’Connor aligns himself with the homosexual King Ludwig II, who was “called infirm” and removed from office because, O’Connor speculates, “he’d had everything but a woman and a lace collar—and I wouldn’t be too sure about the lace collar” (23). Jane Marcus reads *Nightwood* as “a prophecy of the Holocaust” that “attack[s]…the doctors and politicians who defined deviance and set up a world view of us and them, the normal and the abnormal, in political, racial and sexual terms” (249). With Marcus’s perspective in mind, it becomes clear that O’Connor uses the memory of Ludwig and his institutionalization as a limit case through which to consider the increasing medical and psychological discourse surrounding homosexuality and mental illness. By depathologizing Ludwig’s equivocal and more introverted behaviors, he draws attention to the homophobic and political underpinnings of Ludwig’s psychological evaluation, as well as the problematic elements involved in much of the discourse of the early century. In one illustrative moment, O’Connor notes Ludwig’s affinity for “dress[ing] up like Lohengrin in a boat like a swan” and sitting solitary in his Winter Garden while listening to music; he continues: “What’s so crazy in

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7 These differences in historic approaches are also echoed in their use of titles. Felix identifies as a baron because of a belief in patrilineal order and bestowal. He is a baron, he believes, by rights of filial lineage. On the other hand, O’Connor adopts the title of doctor despite being unqualified. The unlicensed practitioner and the fraudulent Baron draw attention to the arbitrariness of title and descent. O’Connor’s recognition of the theater behind his appropriation, and Felix’s refuses to recognize the illegitimacy of his own, reflects their uses of history. Jane Marcus hints at the affected qualities of personal identity and history throughout *Nightwood*—particularly during her discussion of the carnival performers in *Nightwood*’s first chapter (224-227).
that? If wanting a theatre all to yourself is madness, I’m madder than most; and if screaming would empty the world out I’d scream until I broke” (23).

In other instances, however, O’Connor’s stories allude to the capacity for sympathy that sometimes arose out of sexologist and medical discourses as well as sexual taxonomies, particularly from the notion of inversion (the idea that homosexuality represented a gendered consciousness in a body of the opposite sex). One such instance is illustrated by an exchange between O’Connor and his father at the start of WWI:

My father, Lord rest his soul, had no happiness of me from the beginning. When I joined the army he relented a little because he had a suspicion that possibly in that fracas which occasionally puts a son on the list of ‘not much left since,’ I might be damaged…He came in to me early in the dawn as I lay in my bed, to say that he forgave me, and that indeed he hoped to be forgiven; that he had never understood, but that he had, by much thought, by heavy reading, come back with love in his hand, that he was sorry, that he came to say so; that he hoped I could conduct myself like a soldier. For a moment he seemed to realize my terrible predicament: to be shot for man’s meat, but to go down like a girl, crying in the night for her mother. (65)

Parental recognition (or even acceptance) of inversion is something of a trope in novels surrounding WWI. One is reminded of Stephen’s father, Sir Phillip, in *The Well of Loneliness*, who, like O’Connor’s father, completes “heavy reading” (in Sir Phillip’s case, the works of Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, the German sexologist who established early sexual categorizations)—and ultimately becomes sensitive to Stephen’s identity (26-27).

One key difference, however, between *Nightwood* and other texts where sexologist sensibilities are implicit (such as Stein’s writings) or are clearly present (such as in *The Well of Loneliness*) is that Barnes both embraces and pokes fun at sexology’s theories and figures rather than closely adhering to them. O’Connor often attempts to understand sexual identities through gender binaries (often by employing the formulae and terminology of inversion), but as Andrea Harris points out, his own “sex, gender, and sexuality are incongruent in that they form no logical, intelligible order according to prevailing norms” (79). The ultimately unsuccessful attempts to understand sexual positionalities through male/female constructs unconsciously “work…to undo the binary opposition between male and female” (87) and also brush up against
the limitations of turn-of-the-century theories. Barnes acknowledges that sexology’s projects held positive potential, such as O’Connor’s reconciliation with his father, but she resists the notion that the present discourse can offer a totalizing view of the spectrum of identity.

Barnes’ engagement with the complex sexological discourse of the time surrounding dissident sexuality is sometimes problematic, but often illuminating. Sexology’s rise was threatening because it was frequently used to pathologize homosexuality, even if in other instances it encouraged ideas of biological determination that allowed for the sorts of sympathetic exchanges offered above. But ideas of biologically determined sexuality often led to eugenicist notions of genetic deficiency. Barnes, to her credit, challenges psychological readings of homosexuality as mental illness. In fact, she chose to include Robin’s marriage to Felix in the novel to undermine arguments that homosexuality could be “cured” by forced heterosexual arrangements. She insisted that this facet of the novel was essential, and when Emily Coleman (Barnes’ friend and editor) suggested that Robin’s marriage to Felix detracted from the overall plot, she replied: “Robins [sic] marriage to Felix is necessary to the book for this reason…that people always say, ‘Well of course those two women would never have been in love with each other if they had been normal, if any man had slept with them…’ Which is ignorance and utterly false.” To drive the point home, she adds: “I married Robin to prove this point, she had married, had a child yet was still ‘incurable’” (qtd. in Plumb xiii). While Barnes undermines arguments for the prescriptive power of compulsory heterosexual marriage, she unfortunately perpetuates the popular counterargument of the early 1900s that homosexual reproduction could hold genetic consequences. This cautionary sentiment is represented in Guido, the son of Felix and Robin, who exhibits a number of physical and psychological disabilities.

Appropriately, many of Nightwood’s reflections on gender and sexuality arise from O’Connor’s memories of WWI, a conflict marked by mandatory gender divisions and a disregard of sexual identity, possibly alluded to by Dr. O’Connor in Nightwood when he ironically refers to the military as “the celibate’s family” (16). The use of the term celibate does not ironically parallel military service with a life of religious devotion, as it does in In Parenthesis, nor does it reproduce Radclyffe Hall’s “war inverts” who are sexually devoid in the eyes of the state, if still sexually active in private. Instead it carefully intersects a number of models of homosexual servicemen to consider the complicated structure of identity and to reveal the progressive ways in which even soldiers who were not of the elite or academically-inclined recognized sexual
identity, even if the state did not. O’Connor tells of one homosexual soldier, MacClusky, who is awarded the *Croix de Guerre* without actually killing anyone and therefore, as Bockting points out, is able to find validation without engaging in dominant narratives related to male aggression and valor.\(^8\) During the ceremony when MacClusky receives the medal, he does not reflect on military service or nationalism, but rather on the homophobia he has encountered throughout his lifetime: “[H]e had been so far away and beaten up in his heart for the opinion the world had of him…that he had forgotten where he was standing and what he was waiting for” (96). Upon being pinned with the *Croix de Guerre*, however, MacClusky experiences “great joy” and O’Connor notes, “you knew that under that piece of cast-iron all his *faux pas* had gone light, and that the weight of that cross had tossed him up into a shape of approval” (96). While the passage does not echo the notions of queer military community offered by Stein, it also doesn’t enter into the sorts of queer service proposed by Hall—in which queer subjects\(^9\) find opportunities in military service not typically afforded them, despite the fact that their sexuality goes unrecognized. The men in MacClusky’s unit are aware of both his sexuality and the fact that he has been awarded the *Croix de Guerre* without having actually engaged in violence, but they refrain from “outing” either his orientation or the details of his military performance to superiors because, as O’Connor states, “[W]e felt he was just the kind [of person] that should have a consignment of medals left at his door for breakfast every day” (95). Barnes constructs a military unit whose members recognize the issues of homophobic state ideology and passively resist it. They also recognize MacClusky’s homosexuality as part of his identity, rather than subscribing to notions of temporary or situational homosexuality popular during the era.

It should also be noted that the passage is somewhat parodic and Barnes constructs MacClusky’s affective response, as Bockting points out, using the language of religious salvation. When he receives the medal, he thinks, according to O’Connor’s imagining, “Here’s where I come into something that will take away the ignominy of my past, and the marrow of my nature will be refilled and made glorious”—but despite the sardonic tone, the passage is interested in the potential experiences of queer servicemen. MacClusky is not necessarily using

\(^8\) This anecdote was removed during the editing process at the urging of both Coleman and Eliot. Plumb notes, however, that Barnes’ “concurrence does not appear…to be a matter of preference” (202). It is restored in Plumb’s edition.

\(^9\) Note that I use the term “queer” in this context because WWI authors often suggested a broad range of sexual identities that subverted heteronormativity and the binaries structuring it.
the war, like Stein, for progressive queer politics but does find a recognition of sexuality that is not available to Hall’s characters. The ironic tone is not extended to the sections that deal with the servicemen’s reactions to MacClusky. Their camaraderie and general affection for him is genuine. It is MacClusky’s desire for acceptance from his superiors (an extension of the state) that Barnes subtly mocks.

But MacClusky’s award ceremony is only one such instance; *Nightwood* in general, and the segments of it that deal with Dr. O’Connor’s war memories in particular, are the most disorienting of Barnes’ war texts because they present the reader with the unique phenomenological and affective consequences of WWI that arose, sometimes paradoxically, because of the strict gender division enforced through the cultural and social arenas. O’Connor’s ruminations on WWI allude to gender dichotomies and the exaggerated divisions they produced during “the Great War” as a catalyst for considering transgendered subjectivity throughout time. In one instance, O’Connor remembers losing his kidney to shrapnel, but rather than focusing on the physical sacrifices of men, thus “embrace[ing] the risk of feminization” (Bockting 32) or engaging the separatist sensibilities of Sassoon and Owen, he reflects on the comparatively silenced experiences of those behind the line, noting—in fact—that he longed to be “the girl found lurking behind the army” (77). Following this, he imagines that “in the old days” he “was possibly a girl in Marseilles thumping the dock with a sailor.” And notes that “perhaps it is this memory that haunts” him. He concludes with a summation: “The wise men say that the remembrance of things past is all that we have for a future, and am I to blame if I’ve turned up this time as I shouldn’t have been” (77). In this sequence, as well as in the episode where O’Connor’s father realizes his son’s “terrible predicament,” the Great War acts as a reflexive agent which disrupts heterohistorical time and, through its gender dichotomization, accentuates the sort of dissident sexual positionalities that transcend gender.

Significantly, a sense of temporal recurrence or even continual presence is inherent in these passages. O’Connor’s imaginings of his past female lives place him in a number of historic and geographical settings—much like the Tiresian figure in Eliot’s *The Waste Land*. There are points where O’Connor tells ostensibly autobiographical stories that take place hundreds of years in the past, such as his memory of Catherine the Great, who asked him to bleed her: “She took the leech with Saxon abandon, saying: ‘Let him drink, I’ve always wanted to be in two places at once’” (135). When his friend asks that he “remember [his] century at least,” O’Connor
responds, “[D]on’t interrupt me. The reason I’m so remarkable is that I remember everyone even when they are not about.” His “prehistoric memory” offers a more universalized construction of the past than the heterohistorical accounts fabricated by Felix. And though Robin and Nora may feel a separation from historic progress, O’Connor implies that queer subjects always have a deep historic entanglement, even if they are made to feel distanced from the past because of an exclusionary dominant record.

Through the dynamics of O’Connor’s continuous present (often growing out of his ruminations on WWI) and Robin and Nora’s simultaneous historical signification and alienation, Barnes presents a radically different view of the past that not only accounts for queer subjects in narratives from which they are often excluded but also presents them as fundamental to a more accurate historical consciousness. This notion is echoed in Barnes’ tendency to queer common literary tropes. When talking to Nora about her love for Robin, Dr. O’Connor wonders:

[W]hat is this love we have for the invert, boy or girl? It was they who were spoken of in every romance that we ever read. The girl lost, what is she but the Prince found? The Prince on the white horse that we have always been seeking. And the pretty lad who is a girl, what but the prince-princess in point lace—neither one and half the other, the painting on the fan. (145)

On a structural level, the text itself inverts Romantic symbols and situations—such as when Nora (the lesbian stand-in for an Arthurian knight) confronts a supernatural force (the “possessed” Robin) in an empty chapel—a trope commonly subverted by modernists, most famously Eliot in the final stanzas of The Waste Land. This inversion of Romantic tropes suggests that the text itself desires to reject the past, in its breaking of various conventions, even as it seems to “redeem” it by offering accounts from subject positions that are often silenced and by recasting traditional situations and symbols through a queer lens.

Nightwood certainly exemplifies the ways in which the multifaceted reality of human sexuality undermines the dichotomous categorizations and constructs used to understand patriarchal time and culture. Barnes’ tendency to use the gender binaries enforced by WWI as a platform to consider issues such as transgenderism and sexual variation insists that the Great War, and the rising conversations surrounding sexual taxonomies as a result of their own rigid categorizations, only opened the way to a possible restructuring of historic understanding—one that recognizes gender diversity and sexual variation rather than phallogocentric “normalcy”—
because of the indirect way in which they highlighted the multifaceted nature of identity. She expresses the possibility for historic restructuring in Felix and Robin’s son, Guido, who inherits his name from a patronizing grandfather and is raised almost exclusively by the essentializing Felix and yet has a “love for the women of history” (101) rather than for the masculinized accounts of his father. MacClusky’s lament for the “ignominy of [his] past,” is ironic. Barnes indicates that the past’s true ignominy is collective, not personal, because it is exclusionary. She acknowledges the need for a historical consciousness that recognizes the presence of different sexual positionalities and suggests the potential for sexological discourse to accomplish this; but she shows more resistance than writers such as Stein to theories that claim an exhaustive understanding and cataloguing of sexual identity.
“[T]hey Had Been Nurtured Together”:
Gender Relations and Homosocial Desire in David Jones’ In Parenthesis

David Jones is somewhat of an anomaly within the ranks of “high modernism.” His poetry’s allusive range and technical proficiency place it in close proximity to that of Eliot and Yeats, while the autobiographical detail found in his early work, particularly in In Parenthesis, reminds one of Joyce’s fiction. But unlike these writers, Jones deals almost exclusively with war, a topic that Joyce and Yeats outwardly avoided and Eliot only marginally explored. Though he will always be classified as a trench poet—WWI even lurks below the surface of post-war endeavors The Anathemata and The Sleeping Lord—his investment in myth does not place him easily alongside other Great War poets like Siegfried Sassoon who, as Andrew J. Kunka points out, found “consolidation in poetic tradition” early on but later avoided subtly critical conventional poetry in favor of aggressive social critique (73). Unfortunately, due to the obscurity of his work and the lack of biographical information available to scholars, Jones has been all but absent from current discussions of Modernism. When he is considered, he tends to be relegated to a secondary level in order to supplement larger discussions of more prominent figures, particularly Sassoon and Eliot; and even focused analyses of In Parenthesis tend to be concerned with the work’s theological and Arthurian-medieval elements. Queer theoretical readings of In Parenthesis concerned with its representation of early twentieth-century gender relations are especially rare. The general lack of Jones scholarship is unfortunate and somewhat surprising considering that his poetry ought to, as Eliot stated in his introduction to In Parenthesis, “undergo the same sort of detective analysis and exegesis as the later work of James Joyce and the Cantos of Ezra Pound” (vii). But because current understandings of Jones construe him as an especially theological poet, and perhaps because of early recognition of the explosive sexual implications of his work, Jones’ poetry has never been a typical subject for critical inquiry.

Throughout this chapter, I will offer an analysis of the gender relations and sexual anxieties that populate In Parenthesis, Jones’ novel-length WWI narrative poem. The obscurity of the text demands a more multi-faceted approach than the relatively approachable trench poetry of writers like Sassoon and Owen. Since it is, among other things, a sort of war memoir, any analysis requires a certain amount of historical contextualization to illuminate the social concerns
and interpersonal dynamics that Jones grapples with. In dealing with WWI, the poem is also by its very nature deeply invested in mourning, and in this case mourning is—as it is with Sassoon—entwined with attitudes regarding gender and sexuality. Even more pressing than an analysis of *In Parenthesis*’s outlooks on historical conditions and its conceptions of mourning, however, is the need to explore the eroticism and homosocial desire present, if often unacknowledged, in Jones’ allusive layering. This is not to imply that Jones’ language is as infused with equivocation as the prose of someone like Djuna Barnes. His poetry is certainly concerned with its Romantic and Arthurian references “at face value,” but it is not necessary (nor desirable) to view the sexual connotations as solely auxiliary or to somehow imagine that Jones was unaware of such alternate meanings. The regular placement of sexualized stories and biological signifiers is simply too consistent to be limited to their “traditional significance.”

I am not the first scholar to consider the representations of gender in Jones’ *oeuvre*. Other researchers have acknowledged, often dismissively, the presence of “feminine influences” in Jones’ work, particularly in *In Parenthesis*, which presents Jones at his most autobiographical and, I argue, most critical. But such discussions often link to the poet’s interest in fertility rituals and motifs of rejuvenation—which can be seen in the allusions to Mary that appear throughout *In Parenthesis* and also in the presence of the Queen of the Wood in the poem’s final act. Much can be read into *In Parenthesis*’s female figures, but analyses often fail to venture beyond their extension to Jones’ interests with theology and myth. Jones does not offer the same parity of experience found in Stein or Barnes’ war writings, but he does reveal a more sympathetic view of women than many have argued, and certainly more than other trench poets like Wilfred Owen or Siegfried Sassoon. Gender aside, even less has been said about the underlying sexual tensions within the poem, or the ways in which desire is manifested through the actions of various characters and referential suggestion. Scholars such as Thomas Dilworth have gone so far as to suggest that Jones nearly eschewed sex altogether while crafting *In Parenthesis*. He grants that some sexual references do exist, such as in Ball’s name—which, he notes, “initiates a motif of sexual fertility” and links to “every soldier’s great fear, castration”—but then quickly adds that the soldiers are meant to resemble “an obedient, celibate religious community” (*Reading* 29). A community where, presumably, sexual desire is absent or, at the very least, unrecognizable. There are certainly elements of celibacy, but to interpret the poem as devoid of sexual content is to limit the reader’s understanding of the troubled and often complex gender relationships within
Jones’ work. In fact, when the poem is examined closely, a number of interesting patterns emerge throughout its duration—patterns in which the “feminine influences” progressively become sites of anxiety and the evolving homosocial dynamics within the narrative border on the homoerotic as *In Parenthesis* progresses to its final act. Once Jones’ work is viewed from a perspective that acknowledges the traces of gender and sexuality ingrained in the text, it becomes clear that his poetry cannot be understood solely as an anthropological exercise in applying traditional tropes and archetypes to WWI in hope of somehow placating the trauma of WWI through imagining it “in the tradition” of romanticized British warfare (as Fussell suggested) (146). Rather, *In Parenthesis* offers a unique view of the homosocial desire engrained in British military institutions while also considering, if sometimes problematically, the enhanced gender conflict imposed on European citizens through governmental war efforts.

In Jones scholarship, it is generally agreed that female characters function more symbolically than narratively. Kathleen Henderson Staudt, for example, points out that *In Parenthesis* uses “female figures” to configure the “inevitably triumphant natural order” and to “incarnate both the redemptive and the demonic aspects of the natural cycle of life and death” (93). In many respects, Staudt is correct. Female characters are absent from most of the poem; in fact, only one major female figure appears that is not explicitly mythic or merely a notion of femininity embodied through natural forces. And even disembodied femininity is typically invoked through double entendre or as a displacement of heterosexual desire—such as with Hurne in Part 5, a “runner” who is removed from his “deep-bosomed” day-dream to deliver a message for a sergeant (128). A similar instance can be seen in Part 4 when the men read a “limp and soiled Graphic” that details how “Miss Ashwell”—presumably Lena Ashwell—“perform[s] before all ranks” and that “land-girls stamp like girls in Luna” (95). Interestingly, however, though Jones reveals the heterosexual desire of the men, there are no direct instances of heterosexual intercourse within the poem—despite the fact that Ball’s battalion moves through several French towns and, in one instance, meets a barmaid, Alice, who (the poem implies) also serves as a prostitute.

It would seem then that within the pages of *In Parenthesis* sexual desire can be suggested but never fulfilled. Like Arthur, Pen Nant Govid, or any other allusion, it is consistently present but never tangible. For such reasons, readings such as Dilworth’s that construct Ball’s platoon as “an obedient, celibate religious community” are quite commonplace. Unlike allusions to Welsh
legends, however, the constant presence of desire, particularly heterosexual desire, is not always a positive element for Jones. In fact, femininity—actual women and also feminized natural forces—are often sites of anxiety. Because of this, Jones is quite vulnerable to accusations of misogyny. Even Staudt, who seeks to defend Jones through her analysis of *The Anathemata*’s progressive segments as well as Jones’ critical reactions to a sexist excerpt from the diary of Gerard Manley Hopkins (the same passage, Staudt points out, that is attacked by Gilbert and Gubar at the beginning of *The Madwoman in the Attic*), admits that Jones gives little “particular evidence, in his personal life or his writing, of supporting feminine power as a political program” (143). The evidence for the sexlessness, and to a certain extent the misogyny, of Jones’ writing is made even more damning by a rather significant biographical parallel: Jones’ own celibacy and his self-diagnosed oedipal complex, which was of interest to the doctors that psychoanalyzed him following his mental breakdown in 1932. In correspondence, Jones noted that “Freud really had it right, this father/mother relationship.” He also felt that Freud’s work allowed him to view “the ramifications of the sexual impulse and how the fear of assuming the ‘father figure’ position works in the most unexpected conjunctions” and that he had “avoided such a position in innumerable and subtle ways” (qtd. in Dilworth *The Shape* 204). Questions of Freudian validity aside, it is clear that Jones believed his mother’s affection for him as a child created repressed sexual feelings, feelings which he could see embedded in his own work, that certainly seem tangential to many of the gender anxieties found within *In Parenthesis*.

It is possible, however, that Jones’ use of femininity is not so much misogynistic as it is a way to define his own subject position and reconcile his homoerotic feelings. Jones was very invested in *Totem and Taboo*, in which Freud offers a schema for the oedipal complex, and read it several times while under the care of the Dr. William Stevenson, a trained Freudian. “The Return of Totemism in Childhood,” the final chapter of *Totem and Taboo*, details the “two taboos of totemism with which human morality has its beginning”: “the law protecting the totem animal,” a sacrificial substitute for the father, and “the prohibition of incest” (144). Freud notes that the mutual desires to both protect and kill the totem animal/father figure in tribal communities is “founded on wholly emotional motives” while the reservations against incest has a “powerful[ly] practical” rationale: “[If men] were to live together [following the death of the father figure]…[they must] institute the law against incest, by which they all alike renounced the women whom they desired and who had been their chief motive for dispatching their father” or
risk the “collapse” of the “new organization” that would come with being “rivals in regard to…women” and the desire of men to “have all of the women to himself” (144). Implicit in Freud’s formulation is that the taboo placed on incest, and the reservations against assuming the role of the father figure (one of Jones’ major neuroses), is not solely in place because of a desire for functional male organization per se, but also because of a fear that a collapse of male homosocial bonds and institutions (which would result if every male were able to vie for every female) would invalidate the “homosexual feelings and acts” that also strengthened the organization of men against the father figure to begin with (144). If Jones adopted such a reading of Freud, and it seems likely that he did, judging from textual evidence and biographical anecdotes, then he would be closely aligned with what Eve Sedgwick identifies as “gender separatist” definitions of homosexuality—which view women as a threat to male homosexual identity and progress (88). One of the earliest gender separatist arguments was made by Benedict Friedländer, who in 1908 wrote his “Seven Theses on Homosexuality” which argued that “[t]he erotic and social presumption of women is our enemy” (qtd. in Sedgwick 89). Jones could assume such a separatist position by simply extending the taboo placed on the mother to all women, an act implied by his celibacy.

However, even if we view In Parenthesis through a historical lens, rather than simply as a psychobiographical artifact or as a composite myth contained in a historical vacuum as a result of its referentiality, striking social critiques begin to emerge that undermine, if not entirely reverse, the surface-level gender constructions and sexism. Ultimately, what materializes is not so much an imperative for celibacy as an ever-present anxiety surrounding compulsory heterosexuality. Such mandatory sexuality can most clearly be seen in propaganda posters of the era, but it is also present in trench social conventions. Despite the physical isolation of the troops, they still shared what Fussell refers to as a “ridiculous proximity” to England that allowed for the regular distribution of newspapers, parcels, and popular magazines (64). Fussell notes that common periodicals in British trenches included current issues of “the Bystander, the Tatler, and Punch”—as well as “Country Life and the Burlington” for officers that wished to suggest “upper-class interests in the pastoral and in connoisseurship” (67). Relatively low-brow magazines that featured sexualized images were in especial demand. Jones implies, however, that the excitement men expressed over such magazines was frequently performative. Even the passage, mentioned earlier, where a group of men read about Lena Ashwell, ironically contrasts
the nationalism and sexual energy of the *Graphic* article with the sense of boredom that pervaded much of everyday trench life:

…for an hour or more [the men] were left quite undisturbed, to each his own business. To talk together of the morning’s affairs; to fall easily to sleep;…to look at illustrations in last week’s limp and soiled *Graphic*…to be assured that the spirit of the troops is excellent, that the nation proceeds confidently in its knowledge of victory, that Miss Ashwell would perform before all ranks, that land-girls stamp like girls in Luna. (94-95)

Many passages deal with the everyday monotony of the foot soldier, but Jones is at his most ironic when dealing with the sterile heterosexuality energized through magazines and the sexualized gossip of the men. Similar sections that illustrate daily routine also explore the eroticism underlying homosocial exchanges and friendship; one instance, which subtly evokes the language and imagery of classic pastoral romances, describes three soldiers who “loved each other” as they walk with “linked arms” to a “sequestered…grassy slope” in order to bond and discuss their lives in England (139). These homosocial sections lack the sort of irony found in passages where soldiers review magazines or simply talk about women in general. While I want to resist a reading of Jones that suggests he criticizes the role that women were playing in the war effort, the way in which *In Parenthesis* couples female sexuality with nationalism certainly reveals disillusionment with the way in which the state, through propaganda and popular media, was simultaneously trying to promote heterosexual drives and celibacy.

In a similar vein, Jones critiques the sexual hygiene campaigns conducted by America and Britain during WWI. Both countries released widely-distributed sexual purity propaganda posters with taglines such as “Go back to them physically fit and morally clean” (qtd. in Brandt 110). These concerns became especially heightened when troops advanced into France—where red light districts were less regulated than in other parts of Europe. It became necessary to explicitly instruct soldiers regarding sexual health and to control their sexual habits as much as possible since, as Brandt notes, “venereal disease presented a greater menace to the expedient operations of the army than did many battle wounds” (62). Fear of infection contributed to existing male paranoia that grew out of a number of espionage cases involving women. WWI writers were well aware of such initiatives. Many even began to see venereal disease as a sort of
war casualty. Sassoon, for example, directly groups it with battlefield injuries in his poem “They”:

‘For George lost both his legs; and Bill’s stone blind;
Poor Jim’s shot through the lungs and like to die;
And Bert’s gone syphilitic: you’ll not find
A chap who’s served that hasn’t found some change.’ (45)

Like Sassoon, Jones presents sexually transmitted disease, as well as the paranoia created by celibacy propaganda, as part of the trauma of WWI.

Sexual health campaigns and direct instruction are alluded to during Part 2 of the poem when Ball’s battalion is offered “lectures on hygiene” by a medical officer who “glossed his technical discourses with every lewdness” (13). The presence of this “lecture” early in the poem establishes the fear of women (and feminized elements) that is carried throughout the work as a whole. The rhetoric of sexual propaganda is also echoed in later passages that deal with broader forms of sanitation. Part 3, for example, discusses iodine (which is “used so freely”) and chloride of lime, a compound frequently used in the trenches to prevent infection and disease. The military used these chemicals to, as Jones wryly puts it, “have a perfectly sanitary war”—a statement that draws its language from sexual health propaganda posters that were circulating at that time (43; 46). The importance of sanitation is also alluded to in the extended “Welshman’s boast” during Part 4 when the soldier notes the Welsh “built a shit-house for Artaxerxes”—a statement that was included, according to Jones’ footnote, because of a “front-area” conversation with a soldier, carrying two latrine buckets, who observed that the importance of his work could be seen in the fact that “the army of Artaxerxes was utterly destroyed for lack of sanitation” (79; 207).

*In Parenthesis* consistently conflates trench spatial sanitation with bodily health and sexual purity directly. The most striking example of this occurs in Part 5 when Ball’s battalion drinks in an estaminet that employs a barkeep/prostitute named Alice. In this scene, the smell of iodine from the Medical Officer’s orderly wafts over the room as Alice tells the men “good night good voyage good fortune” as they leave with “a finger-tipt renewal here and there” (104). The layering of sexual desire with the odor of chemicals renews the sense of conflict between desire and the specter of disease. A similar instance occurs in the same section when a post-corporal, Howell, stands next to a water pump and talks to a woman “pied freshly for the afternoon” who
“wasn’t half nice with her small apron-strings tied” (127). Significantly, the water pump has been placed off limits, as signified by a “sharp white rectangle of paper.” As Jones explains in an endnote: “The pump—water in French farm-yards was very frequently put out of bounds by the medical officer” (216). The sequences in the estaminet and the farmyard hint at heterosexual desire that is undermined by the continual suggestion of medical propaganda. In the bar, the evocation of the medical officer’s warnings, signified through the scent of iodine, limits desire to only “finger-tipt renewals.” Similarly, the “forbidden” French woman that the post-corporal pursues stands next to a water pump marked “verboten” by medical officers for fear of poisoning or contamination.

While sexual health and the propaganda surrounding it contribute to gender tensions found within In Parenthesis, a number of other factors are also worth considering. In one sequence during Part 5, when the men are again drinking in the estaminet, two major sources of anti-feminine anxiety can be seen when a man from Rotherhithe states that Alice should not be trusted “with yer body or yer dough” (113). The statement, which is directly connected to concerns of sexual health, and recalls Sedgwick’s discussion of anti-femininity and homosexuality, is inexorably linked to the established fear of espionage when he adds: “remember the white mare at Ler-ven-tee in ’15”—which alludes to an incident in which “peasants near Laventie signaled to the enemy by means of a white horse moving in a field” (113; 214). The mutual anxieties over espionage and contagion were key concerns during WWI especially since there was constant fear that military movements and plans were being “leaked” to prostitutes employed by enemy forces. Espionage and homosexuality were similarly linked, a fact alluded to when a sergeant jokingly asks if Lance-Corporal Lewis is “Von Kluck’s [a German general] fancy lady” to be “whistle[d] for…if you want to know the writing on the wall” and if the “square-heads privilege him with operation orders” (108).

Despite statements such as the sergeant’s, Jones actively critiques the Great War’s regressive attitudes surrounding gender, homosexuality, and compulsory celibacy. Jones’ admiration of Lewis Carroll was such that characters and entire sections of In Parenthesis allude to Alice in Wonderland and “The Hunting of the Snark.” It is no coincidence that Lance-Corporal Lewis and Alice (the barmaid) are often the targets of sexist and homophobic remarks despite being two of the more sympathetic characters.
However, while Jones presents a fairly progressive reading of government-distributed anti-sex rhetoric, and also points out the ways in which the female body was used as the site of medical scare tactics, he betrays a more uneasy view of women beyond the battlefront—particularly the women associated with the troops’ domestic lives in England. Throughout the poem, Jones positions the soldiers on both sides of the battle as sacrificial figures for their feminized home-nations. This is sometimes manifest in the way that Jones imagines how the “women left behind” would view the men in the trenches. In one example, which directly follows an allusion to Jewish sacrificial rites, the narrator notes: “[P]oor Johnny—you wouldn’t desire him, you wouldn’t know him for any other. Not you who knew him by fire-light nor any of you cold-earth watchers, nor searchers under the flares” (43). The term “desire” is especially telling. It implies that, as soldiers/sacrifices, the men have been cut off from “traditional” avenues of sexual fulfillment (even if the women “back home” could see Johnny, they “wouldn’t desire him”). Jones reinforces this view at several points when he notes how men, during leisure time, tend to focus on “silly thoughts for their fond loves” who “go queenly in soiled velveteen”—oblivious, Jones implies, to their lovers who are forced to remain on the front-lines (69).

Interestingly enough, Jones alternates between depictions of the men as jilted lovers and abandoned children. Once Jones turns from the sexual to the maternal in his critique of femininity, his work is reminiscent of Wilson or Sassoon for whom, Patricia Rae reminds us, “resistant mourning [went] hand in glove with misogyny, as [the poet] target[ed] grieving mothers and others who cling to patriotic ideals, accusing them of encouraging war for their own profit” (25). One such “maternal” passage can be seen when the soldiers are collectively described as a “motherless child” when they march at night with “no kind light” to lead the way (34). A connected instance occurs later in Part 3 when the march is nearly at its end and the men are compared to “little children” that “try to keep the pace” (41). Such passages reaffirm the sense of the men as sacrificial figures who are equally subjected to maternal indifference and sexual neglect. In each sequence, national(ist) femininity is accompanied by an indifference to masculine suffering.

As the poem nears the end, however, Jones’ feminine symbols evolve from cruel lovers and indifferent mothers to assume more active and sinister presences within the work. This is most clearly seen in the ways that Jones tends to represent death as a sexualized feminine force,
such as in Part 7 when death is described as a “debauched…sweet sister” that “stalks…with
strumpet confidence” (162). Here, Jones explicitly demonizes both the feminine body (death
walks “with all of her parts discovered”) and feminine sexual desire (death does not “veil…her
appetite”). These motifs are established earlier in the work when the battlefield is imagined as a
“coal-black love” and Ball wishes to “breathe more free for her grimly embrace” (28). There are,
of course, a number of parallels between these segments and the conventions of heterosexual
desire already established within the work. The undermining of heterosexual desire and fantasy
by gender anxiety and venereal disease is similar to the way in which battle is longed for despite
the fact that its enactment leads to the death of its “beloved.” This relationship is further
highlighted by the fact that, in the eventual encounter with death, it is embodied as a
hypersexualized woman with an “appetite” that cannot be stopped no matter how the men “may
howl for their virginity” (162). It is clear that the poem links a loss of masculine sexual purity
with death and, ultimately, female corruption.

Such readings contradict those offered by scholars who recognize the rejuvenating
quality of many “feminized forces”—particularly those associated with maternity. The moon in
Part 3, which lights the way for the battalion, is recognized by Dilworth as a “feminine
influence” whose light acts as a healing force on the scorched ground (Reading 39). The sense of
maternity is further accented by the allusions to the birth of Christ (Part 3 does, after all, take
place on Christmas Eve) and the fact that the moon is associated with Mary. Despite its
benevolent qualities, the moon acts as a larger extension of the strained gender relations found
throughout the work. The narrator notes that the moon only “briefly aide[s]” the troops because
of her “capricious shining” (39). Once again, the feminine is portrayed as inconstant or
untrustworthy—certainly helpful, but only when it chooses to “half [break] her cloud cover”
(51). Other “feminized forces” commonly identified by scholars, such as the woods in Part 4, are
subject to similar treatment by Jones. When Ball views the forest, the poem notes: “He found the
wood, visually so near, yet for the feet forbidden by a great fixed gulf, a sight somehow to
powerfully hold his mind” (66). The use of the term “forbidden” is also linked to the “verboten”
water pump—and its connotations of bodily and sexual purity—that come later in the narrative.
Additionally, the passage is meant to connect to previous and following sequences in which the
men think of their “fond loves” left behind in England. It once again suggests the immediacy of
desire and the separation of desire from fulfillment because of physical space and personal
anxiety. Continuing the sexual tension embedded in the passage, Jones notes that “to groves always men come” to “their joys and their undoing” (66). The clear connection between the forest and desire is made more explicit by the observation that “first loves” often come to such groves in order to “tread the tangle frustrated” (66). Consistently, before the passage ends, the feminized natural object is connected to death and illness: “Come with Merlin in his madness, for the pity of it; for the young men reaped like green barley, for the folly of it” (66).

It is worth comparing such passages to the masculinized presence of the sun that Jones also introduces in Part 4. The sun is depicted as a source of comfort and renewal: “As grievous invalids watch the returning light pale-bright the ruckled counterpane…fearful to know afresh their ill condition; yet made glad for that rising, yet strain ears to the earliest note—should some prevenient bird make his kindly cry” (61). This natural force both reinforces and establishes a number of gender binaries within the poem. It is clear that the masculinized sun is juxtaposed with the feminized moon of the previous section. The use of gendered pronouns establishes a clear binary and implies that these forces stand in opposition to one another. As the moon created a dreamlike landscape where reality was difficult to discern because of shifting shadows—and the men would “go stumbling” when clouds blocked the moon’s light—the daylight environment is, inversely, a place in which the “real” is easily determined: “[Y]ou could begin to know that thing from this; this nearer from that away over” (35; 59). Throughout Part 4, the language suggests that the darkness (consistently referred to using the feminine pronoun) must be conquered by the sun’s light: “Her fractured contours dun where soon his ray would show more clear her dereliction” (59). Such phrases are used periodically until later in the chapter when “the light of day is fully master” and rejuvenates the men (62). The poem revives these motifs of daylight and rejuvenation again during the Welshman’s boast when the soldier states, “I am the Single Horn thrusting by night-stream margin”—a phrase that alludes to a pool of water, traditionally believed to be purified by Aaron’s staff, that was poisoned by “venomous animals…at the setting sun” until a Unicorn dipped its horn into the spring, making it safe for “good animals…[to] drink there during the day” (84; 210). The unicorn’s phallic horn and its healing powers connote notions of male sexual purity and employ the binaries of masculine/feminine and day/night. It is clear, in Part 4, that Jones is attempting to integrate a new masculinized energy into the poem, one that alludes to In Parenthesis’s homosocial conventions; a fact that can be seen when John Ball is on guard, or “brother keeping” as the
poem calls it, and notices that he can finally “observe the dispositions of his companions” after the sun has risen and exposed the “nature of the place…robbed of [the] mystery” that had shrouded it during the night (69).

These gendered motifs directly reflect the forced gender divisions of WWI, particularly those that were enforced through propaganda and popular media, while also mixing public mourning with gender in complex ways—but, as with earlier passages, they are not as expressly misogynistic as they first appear. Sassoon and Wilson’s writing works in a similar vein. Gilbert and Gubar trace “complex hostilities” against women in their poetry that have also been detected subsequently by many scholars (2: 261). Sassoon’s resistant mourning, encapsulated in his later poetry, “declares the only just arbiters of wartime mourning [are] those who have witnessed the violent death war brings first-hand” (Rae 24). Sassoon particularly levels criticism at women safe on the home-front who, he implies, profiteered off of the war (his poem “The Glory of Women” is frequently analyzed by feminist scholars). Because of the problematic symbolic place that women occupy in In Parenthesis, it is tempting to posit Jones in the same camp. In reality, he offers a much less misogynistic, though no less resistant, conception of public mourning. Late in the poem, as Ball lies wounded on the battlefield, he rests his rifle under the tree for, he ironically thinks, some “tourist to the Devastated Areas” to find (186). In an endnote to this section, Jones explains that during a wartime conversation surrounding “the possibilities of tourist activity if peace ever came” he found himself “feeling very angry…as you do if you think of strangers ever occupying a house you live in, and which has, for you, particular associations” (224). Unlike Sassoon, Jones is not specifically concerned with the idea of women engaging in public mourning or attending public memorials for “first-hand” casualties of WWI. He instead imagines the memorialization of his experiences to express anxiety about compulsory heterosexual norms, particularly marriage.

After his second nervous breakdown, Jones’ doctors were concerned with his sexual inhibitions and his choice to avoid romantic relationships. He related: “I do not question the findings [of the doctors] at all about my fear etc. with regard to sex—but I do emphatically say that over and beyond those symptoms of imbalance in my own makeup there is the concept of ‘not marriage’ as a perfectly rational desire.” In the same correspondence, Jones explained that the “breakdown” of culture, which he believed was underway, would cause “great abnormality at all levels and very great divergence of stands of every sort…all detrimental to mating and normal
marriage” (qtd. in Staudt 108). These anxieties are reflected in the passage. Jones’ endnote evokes images of families enjoying future WWI memorials. It does not express disdain for women expressly, but rather anxiety over the heterosexual expectations that would be in place following the war. Furthermore, from a position informed by Judith Butler’s reading of melancholic heterosexuality, Jones’ conscious objection to marriage and sex could also be linked to a fear that he would have to deny his own homosexual feelings (this seems especially plausible because of the male fear surrounding the loss of homosexual feeling implicitly engrained in Freud’s conceptualization of the Oedipus complex—which, as noted above, Jones believed he suffered from). As Butler explains, the “accomplishment” of heterosexual identity involves the refutation of any sort of prior homosexual feeling or attachment, which makes the loss of homosexual feeling unacknowledgable and therefore initiates an “unfinished process of grieving” (135; 132). The attainment of heterosexual identity can been seen as “mandating the abandonment of homosexual attachment, perhaps more trenchantly, preempting the possibility of homosexual attachment, a foreclosure of possibility which produces a domain of homosexuality understood as unlivable passion and ungrievable loss” (135). Jones’ insistent gender binaries and the mistrust of the feminine in the poem may relate both to an unwillingness to reject the male attachments and losses of his war experience and also a need to establish a sexual identity divorced from women, sentiments that are also, as we will see, echoed in In Parenthesis’s representations of homosocial desire.

Jones employs a broad range of allusions to homosocial relations that further attempt to divorce the men’s self-identity from their bonds with women. The repeated term “brother-watcher,” to describe those on guard duty (an ironic inversion of Cain’s question, “Am I my brother’s keeper,” in Genesis) is only one such example. A list of other instances would certainly include the Gododdin fragment used as a preface to “The Many Men So Beautiful,” Part 1 of the poem, which reads: “Men marched, they kept equal step… / Men marched, they had been nurtured together.” These elements help form what Paul Robichaud has described as a “familial intimacy” between the troops in In Parenthesis and also evoke a sense of “ancient unity” in the poem’s allusions to “three distinct periods” (the men of Gododdin, the Roman legions, and the Royal Welch Fusiliers) (65). The use of the layered term “nurtured” in the Gododdin fragment establishes the maternal anxieties present in the work but also evokes the homosocial bonds and desire that the men have formed to one another. Jones’ references are not exclusively ancient, he
includes romantic and medieval allusions—creating a historical range of homosocial referentiality that parallels the poem’s allusion to distinct eras. In the preface, for example, he notes that during WWI “Roland could find, and…enjoy, his Oliver” (ix). Another early instance of this can be seen in Part 3 when “the voice of his Jubjub” gains each David his Jonathan. This allusion combines two references, one Victorian and one biblical. The first is Lewis Carroll’s *The Hunting of the Snark*—in which (during the sixth “Fit” of the poem) a perilous encounter with a Jubjub bird binds the Butcher and the Beaver, who—like Roland and Oliver—were initially rivals: “Such friends as the Beaver and Butcher became, / Have seldom if ever been known” (56-57). The second refers to David’s friendship with Jonathan, Saul’s son, in *1 Samuel* and *2 Samuel*—a friendship that has been historically interpreted as homoerotic, particularly by the nineteenth-century *fin-de-siècle* avant-garde.

While all of the above allusions establish the homosociality within the poem, many of Jones’ influences extend the gender anxieties deeply embedded in its plot and allusions. For example, a number of Jones’ referent texts evoke unfaithful or deceitful women from history or mythology; other allusions refer to stories that deal with dysfunctional male/female relationships. One example is Sir Balin, who accidently kills his brother after receiving an enchanted sword from a vindictive woman. Other references include Lancelot who, Jones states in one of his footnotes to Part 4, was driven to “madness…because of Guenever’s stupidity when he lay the second time with Elaine unwittingly, and by an enchantment”—an episode, he explains, that helped her earn the epithet “Gwendohwyr…bad when little, worse when big” (203). Jones also references female figures who, whether intentionally or not, caused historical and legendary conflicts—such as Helen of Troy and, in Part 4, Fflur (a Welsh legend): “I marched, sixty thousand and one thousand marched, because of the brightness of Fflur” (82). Whether related to fraternal betrayal or large-scale military deployment (with its resulting deaths), all of these references suggest male unity that is undermined through female influence.

The men in these stories—particularly Balin and Balan—tend to be sacrificial figures. Jones clearly links the story of the brothers Balin and Balan to ancient sacrificial rites in Parts 3 and 7 of *In Parenthesis*. Such rites are invoked when Jones notes the British troops and German troops are like Azazels to the other’s Azazel in “Starlight Order”—a reference to a passage from Leviticus: “And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats: one lot for the Lord, and the other for Azazel…the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel, shall be set alive before the Lord, to make
atonement over him, to send him away for Azazel into the wilderness” (16: 6-8). This passage, in the context of the poem, suggests that the men have to serve as both the sacrifice and the sacrificial priest in the process of atonement for their feminized home-lands (the British and German troops are, simultaneously, expected to play the parts of the scapegoat and the demonic Azazel). This idea is repeated in Part 7, which describes how Balin and Balan “embraced beneath their single monument”—an allusion Neil Corcoran argues links to the “fratricide” being committed between the “enemy” troops that are “racial[ly] brother[s]” and have a shared bond (32). For Jones, the relationships he forms with other men are more meaningful and sexually charged than those he can maintain with women. He implies that he could even form such connections with enemy soldiers if national and political tensions could be suspended; the contradiction he recognizes, however, is that current society only allows for such male separatist bonds in the context of warfare.

At a number of key points throughout In Parenthesis, Jones assumes a more direct role as a gender separatist to consider the homoeroticism underlying male homosociality; he often does this by ceremoniously lifting naturalized feminine influences and displacing gendered descriptions of the female form onto male bodies. One instance can be seen in Part 3. When the feminized moon disappears, the men “go stumbling” and are compared to “green girls in broken keeps” which “have only mastiff-guards—like the mademoiselle at Croix Barbée” (35). A sort of transformation is suggested by the corresponding disappearance of the moon’s influence and the attributes of sexualized femininity assumed by the men. The passage is also interesting because it ends with a reminder that the poem is about transfiguration (“suffer with us this metamorphosis”)—a theme that Jones describes in his preface (54). A similar instance occurs in Part 3, when a soldier, the current “brother-keeper,” is feminized to appear as a figurehead on the prow of a ship: “He angled rigid; head and shoulders free…outward toward them, like the calm breasts of her, silent above the cutwater” (51). Similar “transformations” of clothing occur at several places where uniforms are described as, among other things, “bridal clobber” (104). This type of gender inversion—such as where the men are compared to “green girls” in fairytales—is regularly repeated throughout early sections of the poem, such as in Part 4 when a soldier asks another to “be a kind virgin” when he needs to borrow supplies to clean his rifle (63). While these types of verbal exchanges could be examined as homosocial disavowals of erotic feeling through homophobic banter, there are several sections where the dialogue hints more directly at
desire. One sequence can be seen earlier in Part 4 when Sergeant Snell—who refers to himself as Prince Charming—wakes the men (whom he refers to as “slumberin’ lovelies”) and one soldier—playing along with the fairytale trope—asks Snell to kiss him (4). In this passage, gender inversion occurs once again (the men are transformed into Sleeping Beauties by Jones), and desire (or at least mock desire) is expressed. It is also worth noting that many of the allusions that Jones uses to establish the fraternal bond between the characters have traditionally been interpreted as (at least vaguely) homoerotic. One instance of this can be seen in the story of Balin and Balan when Balin fulfills the curse that he will “slay the man that…he loved best” (Malory ii:19). Similarly, in 2 Samuel, when David learns of Jonathan’s death, he cries: “I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant hast thou been unto me; wonderful was thy love to me, passing the love of women” (1:26). Passages such as these are invoked at key emotional points in In Parenthesis, including Part 6 when Ball, the Lewis gunner, and Signaller Olivier try to meet: “These three loved each other, but the routine of their lives made chances of foregathering rare. These two with linked arms walked together in a sequestered place above the company lines and found a grassy slope to sit down on…And Signaller Olivier came soon and sat with them” (139).

With the complex way that Jones persistently weaves homosocial desire and gender anxiety throughout In Parenthesis, it is surprising that more scholars have not mined his work. With its insistence that fraternal bonds are more constant than traditional heterosexual relationships and its displacement of sexualized femininity and courtship rituals onto troops and military life, In Parenthesis holds subversive potential that deserves recognition. In Jones, we are given models of homosociality and resistant mourning that hold very different implications than those of other trench poets like Sassoon. While Sassoon critiques women directly, Jones uses figurative constructions of femininity with which to configure his own sexuality and to consider the possibilities of homosocial bonds free of female relationality. Furthermore, Jones’ model is not as immediately misogynistic as the resistant mourning of his contemporaries; in In Parenthesis, Jones grants Alice, the only actual female character in the work, one of the most sympathetic roles, and he also critiques governmental sexual health initiatives that demonized women and held implications for real bodies. It is only metaphoric and disembodied femininity that Jones positions himself against, often as an exclusionary form of self-authorization. The fact that such an interesting model of identity formation comes from such an unexpected source
(Jones—largely recognized as one of the most theological modernists) reaffirms that WWI literature still holds much potential for future scholarship concerned with outlooks on gender and sexuality at the beginning of the twentieth century.
Conclusion

While researching and writing the preceding chapters, I was consistently struck by the way in which WWI created a unique discursive space for twentieth-century authors. Regardless of whether the writing occurred “in the moment” of 1914-1918 or if the author was returning to the topic of the “Great War” after several years, WWI provided an apt platform for the consideration of topics ranging from trauma and mourning to mobilization and social progress. That this space and the topics it entertained were regularly entwined with gender and sexuality, whether directly or indirectly, is something that should not be overlooked. The social and historical influences that prompted a communal preoccupation with questions of sex and gender—the regressive insistency of propaganda and war initiatives that clashed with the fervor of first-wave feminism, the pathologization of homosexuality that attempted to counteract the increased visibility of dissident sexualities, and, perhaps most importantly, the scrutiny placed on such matters in widely-consumed periodicals such as Punch—were so immediate and visible that it was perhaps inevitable for WWI to become a forum to consider a wide range of vexed opinions.

Because the writings surrounding WWI were so polarized and concerned with societal questions that predated the war (the anxiety over gender and sexual identity is much more central than it is in any subsequent conflict, even WWII), it is important for researchers to identify the unique patterns and conventions through which authors used the war as a way to discuss, with varying degrees of directness, issues that were auxiliary to the direct conflict. I have identified a number of popular patterns in the previous chapters. One included what J.M. Winter refers to as a “poetry of separation,” which insisted that the experiences of those who had witnessed combat could not be understood (and should not therefore be addressed) by those who had not witnessed and engaged in combat first-hand, particularly women. This notion continued to have cultural momentum inside and outside of literature well after the conflict. Even Virginia Woolf suggested in Three Guineas, with tongue-in-cheek candor, that the male biological makeup holds a predetermined compulsion for war that women cannot understand: “[F]ighting…is a sex characteristic that [women] cannot share, the counterpart some claim of the maternal instinct which [men] cannot share, so [it is] an instinct which she cannot judge…[Man must be] free to deal with this instinct by himself, because liberty of opinion must be respected” (107). And
researchers have noted a number of other patterns—from Sandra Gilbert’s analysis of the excitement characteristic of women’s writing at the beginning of the war, to Patricia Rae and Andrew J. Kunka’s discussion of the resistant mourning of WWI trench poets (which often entailed misogyny). Regardless of the pattern being considered, however, nearly all resonate with complex issues regarding gender and sexuality.

It is also important, however, to recognize that as much meaning is produced by the ways in which writers consciously depart from, resist, and alter the patterns we have identified. The excitement of Gertrude Stein’s war prose seems to mirror the enthusiastic women’s writing of the WWI era, until one remembers that The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas was written in 1933, well after the early eagerness for the Great War gave way to disillusionment and grieving. Stein’s apparent parody of early women’s writing, and the way in which she undermines the authority assumed by individualistic male war autobiographies by compiling the experiences of many soldiers, many voices, is an important facet of The Autobiography’s ultimate objectives regarding community and identity politics (and it proves, once again, the subversive potential of Stein’s work). Similarly, in a radical inversion of WWI norms, Djuna Barnes decided to have a trangendered veteran, and one that sustained battlefield injuries at that, use the war as a springboard for ruminations on female experience and contradictorily-gendered sexological understandings of sexual identity at the very moment when, tropically, veterans would engage in separatist reflections on masculine experience and exclusive rights to mourning. The incendiary forces behind Barnes’ choices in crafting Dr. O’Connor are easy to overlook if we forget how seriously war testimony was taken. Typically, during the years of the war, only patriotic, masculinist accounts could be easily circulated; and much testimony was actively silenced—one journalist, Keith Murdoch, was even arrested by British investigators when simply trying to publish news on the failure of the Gallipoli campaign (Winter 188). Though post-war pacifist literature somewhat softened the reception Barnes would have received if she had published Nightwood earlier, Dr. O’Connor’s testimony represents an important recasting of WWI literary conventions. And David Jones is perhaps the most surprisingly subversive of the three authors I explored at length. He maintains many of the trends of separatist literature while avoiding the degree of misogyny present in the work of his contemporaries. His attention to separate the historic female bodies directly impacted by the war and the rhetoric of government propaganda from the disembodied feminine presences in the poem that allow him to authorize and define
homosexual identity and homosocial desire makes him feel surprisingly complex and, though not beyond scrutiny, still more progressive than would be inferred from the academic indifference and critical backlash of past decades. The critical observations and transformations of WWI literary tropes performed by Stein, Barnes, and Jones are important to catalogue. They too are reactionary and politically driven. And they often manipulate WWI literary conventions in order to interrogate the attitudes regarding gender and sexuality that they inherently contain.

While it is important to observe and index the ways in which some modernists actively engaged with WWI tropes to avoid reproducing them and to examine their implications, it is perhaps even more pressing to consider how such writers also frequently represented non-intellectuals confronting notions of sexual identity. Some academics such as Laura Doan have recently questioned the extent to which war volunteers without access to critical publications of the era would have been able to question their own sexual feelings or interpret them as a fundamental component of their own identities. Her article “Topsy-Turvydom: Gender Inversion, Sapphism, and the Great War” focuses mainly on the experiences of “mannish women”—those that transgressed gender boundaries on a number of visual and occupational levels during the war—but many of her arguments could also be extended to non-academic servicemen. She notes that while gender deviance, particularly in relation to demeanor and modes of dress, were certainly coming into question, conceptualizations of sexual identity were “perhaps well outside of…[non-intellectual] psychosexual experience” (521). While Doan’s argument strikes at the important problem of what she refers to as “a ‘one label fits all’ history of lesbianism” (536) it overlooks a number of historic instances that support the idea of widely-spread apprehensions of sexual identity that transcended understandings of sexual deviance as simply behavioral. One particular example is the Newport scandal of 1919 in which the Senate Naval Affairs Committee discovered widespread homosexuality among its naval officials and servicemen in Rhode Island. George Chauncey notes that Newport’s complex homosexual categorizations allowed men “a means of structuring their vague feelings of sexual and gender difference into distinctive personal identities” (193). And medical discourse had “little or no role” in the formation of these identity categories (203). Such historical anecdotes are also supported through the works of Stein, Barnes, and Jones. Stein details the growth of close bonds with servicemen and other military workers that appear conscious of and, more importantly, accepting of her sexual subjectivity and relationship with Toklas. Barnes similarly includes an anecdote involving
members of a military unit recognizing a fellow serviceman, MacClusky, as identifiably homosexual and forming close bonds with him—even refusing to “out” him to their superiors. And the homoeroticism at the heart of Jones’ work is pervasive. These instances should not be overlooked. They suggest that WWI encouraged a widespread recognition of sexual identity, and an increased awareness that such identity positions were not always governed through clear gender binaries.


