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Questioning Authorship in Twentieth Century Literary Autobiography.

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Questioning authorship in twentieth century literary autobiography

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Questioning Authorship in Twentieth-Century Literary Autobiography

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

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by

Donna Marie Perreault
B.A., Saint Mary's College, 1983 December 1991
Acknowledgments

Many voices other than my own have contributed to this project's spirit and shape. Most obviously, the authors whose autobiographies I read here taught and inspired me from beginning to end. Similarly, the many scholars whose works I cite in the end collectively helped me design and situate my arguments in the following chapters. And many formal and informal discussions with graduate student friends in Baton Rouge, LA, have energized my research to an incalculable degree. More specifically, the process of writing was improved in every way by the encouragement and commentary of Michelle Massé. Her wise and careful readings of early drafts especially refined my sense of the feminist dimension of this project. And James Olney, the project director, has my deep appreciation for his generous interest in my graduate studies, from the early seminar papers through the last chapter of the present study. He catalyzed then vigorously encouraged and enriched my research in autobiography.

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Abstract

This dissertation, "Questioning Authorship in Twentieth-Century Literary Autobiography," provides readings of narrative autobiographies by some of this century's most prominent and rebellious professional writers. Individual chapters interpret the autobiographies of Jean-Paul Sartre and Richard Wright, Gertrude Stein, Simone de Beauvoir, and Zora Neale Hurston. The autobiographies that I read variously represent the transformation of a writer into an author and collectively problematize the personal and literary authorizations effecting this transformation. I examine how these narratives put into question both processes of authorization and the cultural contexts in which they occur, contexts which, diverse though they are, all valorize and regulate the circulation of literary texts.

In contrast to contemporary studies in autobiography and in authorship, my project does not assume the neutrality of the term "author"; instead, I extend research into the differences among writing selves to help account for differences among authors' experiences and perceptions of authorship. Specifically, I illuminate the ways in which authors' race, sexuality, gender, and class positions shape their narrative inquiries into the life-plots of literary authorization. While twentieth-century authorship comes to appear as a broad field of difference through these readings, all four interpretive chapters concern themselves with the difference that gender makes in the authorization process. In addition, I attend to differences among the ambivalent responses that the women autobiographers make to masculine ideologies of authorship.
The title of my project, "Questioning Authorship in Twentieth-Century Literary Autobiography," specifies the kind of texts I study in this project. It aims to prepare the reader for individual chapters which examine the autobiographies of some of the most prominent, radical, and influential professional writers of this century. The double entendre in my otherwise prosaic title is intentional. The autobiographies of Richard Wright, Jean-Paul Sartre, Gertrude Stein, Simone de Beauvoir, and Zora Neale Hurston which I study collectively question the ideology supporting the institution of authorship while at the same time demonstrating an interrogative force essential to that ideology.¹ Some of the general questions that the autobiographies of these authors pose and respond to include: How and why do the narrator-protagonists become authors? What were the impediments and the frustrations they experienced along the way? How do their narratives pattern the movement from child to author or from private writer to public writer? According to my title, then, the texts at issue are insistently literary autobiographies, and without exception, they were written because of their authors' participation in literary culture as authors.²

Historical proximity holds the five autobiographical projects I analyze in relationship to one another. Although they were written by professional writers from widely disparate backgrounds and literary interests, these texts belong to the twentieth century. In this century the modern literature from industrial countries like America and France often portrays the isolated stance of the individual who questions persons
and systems of authority. This stance epitomizes the romantic legacy of modern literature—the free ranging of the individual imagination—but the romanticism has been thoroughly mediated by the social and material realities of individuals. The popularization of autobiography as a genre in this century, written and read with as much frequency as the novel, exemplifies how this sector of modern literature, devoted to the individual life story, appeals to and in turn reflects neo-romantic modern consciousness. The autobiographies I study, in their focus on the ideologies of authorship current during their authors' lifetimes, merely comprise a particular instance of modern texts where the individual narrator takes on society. Instead of "society" per se, these texts illuminate a cluster of societal issues which bear on the formation of the writing self and that self's actual life in the modern world as an author. They interrogate from the autobiographer's perspective economic and professional realities which attend life as an author and, just as importantly, the less tangible gender, racial, class, and sexual arrangements which inform those realities for the individuals who came to be authors. The popularization of authorship in this century among women and minorities in America and abroad makes this kind of inquiry of first importance to students of our self-consciously literary modern culture.

Because they go one step beyond the average literary autobiography by questioning their authors' author-ization (which I often hyphenate to insist on the specificity of the internal and external processes of authorization for authors), I call the texts that interest me in this project autobiographies. The use of a neologism always risks
appearing specious, but I required a term that would in shorthand fashion set apart those literary autobiographies which critically examine what is literary about their authors' lives. "Autobiography," as I define it, signals the importance of the writing self's particularity as an author, and it queries the relationship between self, writer, and author—all presumably the same historical person.

The term "authobiography" postulates a distinction critical to my project between being a writer and being an author. To be sure, an author writes, and the act of writing involves an internal sense of authorization by the writing self. But this sense of authorization is not a constant across cultures and across time, and the authority one assumes in speaking for oneself is a phenomenon to be studied for cultural significance: it is perhaps one of the most primary objects of inquiry in autobiography studies. Authobiography, then, can illuminate a self's personal though culturally informed sense of authorization to write. In addition, the distinction between author and writer serves to point up the significant difference between a writer who publishes and a writer who does not. When critics make a simple equivalence between writer and author—and they do so with great frequency—they also obscure the socio-political implications of an individual's undergoing an author-izing process from private writer to public writer, from private self to public self. No one who writes is ignorant of the difference which publishing or not publishing makes on herself and on her writing. The literary writer who publishes receives a mandate, an author-izion to write which the nonpublished writer does not. This mandate entails, however, some loss of individuality for the writing self as the writing and the writer's
signature undergo the process of commodification—a rarely acknowledged effect of authorship which deeply disturbed Gertrude Stein, for one.\(^5\) As with personal authorization, public author-ization is experienced as a change in identity not easy to articulate: indeed, as the following chapters show, there are great differences in the kinds of things authors say about the public author-izing and commodification process they have individually undergone. But the process can be studied as a cultural variable within texts. Because a writer's author-ization, in both senses, is a process which occurs over time and may be explained, meditated on, and otherwise detailed in a life story, it can be narrativized by authors. When the resulting narrative autobiography questions the process, it constitutes what I call an autobiography.

A related distinction that the category of "autobiography" postulates is between the self who writes and the self who writes for a living—between, for example, an autobiographer like Nancy Reagan and an autobiographer like Lillian Hellman. I recognized the need for this distinction in working not with autobiography theory but rather with feminist theory on women's writing—the first of three roots of this project. One of the principal challenges that feminist theorists have posed for themselves is discovering whether there exists some kind(s) of language or use(s) of language particular to women.\(^6\) One invaluable lesson I learned in my investigation of this issue is that what particularizes a female subject's speaking is that its authority circularly depends on her authority to speak as a female speaker within a social context. Rhetorically deviant or ambiguous semantic and syntactic language can result from the marginal female subject's efforts to play the
authority she does not feel or does not have—which may amount to the same thing. However, the notion of authority remains at the relatively impersonal and ahistorical level of language description (e.g. 's, women employ more interrogatives than men and use more expressions of subjective hedging, like "I believe" or "I think," than men) when theorists bracket the question of where they locate their "samples" of women's writing. What if a woman pursues a career writing creatively? I wondered: what difference might participation in this profession make in the way her writing expresses its/her authority? Would a housewife in Chicago, Illinois have a different relationship to the writing act from a publishing woman author living in the same town, even if they share the same race and class positions? While opposed in general to assuming that women authors are "exceptional women," I also opposed a simple agglomeration of women and women authors which, apart from homogenizing "the woman writer," precluded any investigation of the difference in women authors' paths towards author-ization from other authors, namely men. From studying "women's writing" I thus moved to studying women authors' sense of the writing self.

The best place to research such a topic is, of course, in autobiographies and autobiography studies. To my consternation, however, autobiography criticism manifested little interest in winnowing out questions of authority and authorship revealed by literary autobiographers, men and women. True, from its inception three decades ago, autobiography studies has concerned itself with life-writings by participants in literary culture. But curiously enough, this concern has not been explicitly acknowledged. Only Philippe Lejeune, of all
autobiography theorists, has stated his exclusive interest in autobiographies by the already-published (On Autobiography 11-12). In other cases, either literary autobiographers are treated as representative of all autobiographers (as in Paul John Eakin's Fictions of the Self), or literary autobiographers are treated in tandem with autobiographers who have made a living as scientists or philosophers or social activists or what-have-you (as in Estelle Jelinek's Women's Autobiography). To a project like James Olney's Metaphors of Self, which theorizes autobiography as an essentially human and universally metaphoric act, the distinction I am emphasizing between autobiographer and author may seem irrelevant. But my deep sense is that it is not. Preoccupation in the last decade with the art of constructing selfhood in language indicates that it makes a difference whether an autobiographer works professionally as an artist with language. It does not do to sneak in this distinction as Carolyn Heilbrun does in her essay Writing a Woman's Life, where the generic "woman" refers tacitly to the professional woman writer: "But what has begun to happen in women's biography since 1970 is that the consensus about the author's relation to her work (if she is a writer) has changed, or is changing" (29). While it blurs the distinction between writer and author, Heilbrun's parenthesis speaks volumes.

I too began my studies in autobiography, the second root of this project, with apparent inattention to the problematics of authorship in life-writing. Four years ago I wrote an essay that explores, as my title puts it, what makes autobiography interrogative, after perceiving the great frequency with which autobiographers drew attention to their penchant for questioning and to the questions that "implicitly and
explicitly" fueled their autobiographies' narration. In retrospect, the strength of this essay seems to me to be its conceptualization of the relationship between an autobiographer's self-reflexive, self-dialogic thinking and the writing that this activity produces. I still do subscribe to the general theory that autobiography is "the narrative correlative" of the interrogative sentence. However, my feminist interest in the woman author's self has caused me to reconsider my reluctance in the early essay to discuss any kinds of questions which specific autobiographical projects pose and respond to, other than the one I interpreted as an example, Black Boy. This reluctance, which permitted me to develop narratological considerations, ultimately weakened my theory by bracketing history. Such bracketing is incompatible with feminist consciousness of cultural production, especially if questions of authority--in a writer's voice, of a writer's writing--are considered. While Domna C. Stanton's work in "autogynography" exemplifies how well feminists may theorize autobiography with the bios excised from autobiography (much as H. Porter Abbott's theory of "autography" does), the historical and cultural dimension of narrative autobiography is yet indispensable to any discussion of how a (woman) writer's voice becomes author-ized since, as I say above, this process occurs through time and in material conditions. Instead of theorizing on the pure questioning of autobiography as a whole genre, then, I redirected my research to analyze authors' questioning of the ideological and so historical dimensions of their author-izations in their autobiographies.

The conceptual shift in my topic of research from that essay four years ago to this dissertation is not, however, very great. In his
introduction to The Rhetoric of Doubtful Authority called "Questioning the Question of Authority," Ralph Flores discusses the close relationship between questioning and authority in Renaissance rhetoric. He suggests persuasively that, in a fundamental way, posing a question instantiates a questioning of authority and a concomitant claim to have the authority to question. Flores describes how in the writings of Machiavelli, Descartes, and others, "authority" and "questioning" were "curiously intertwined with each other, and it was never clear which served or mastered which" (21). On the contrary, "Questioning became frequent and disruptive, and the question of questions was the authority of questioning as the questioning of authority" (20; author's emphasis). While Flores concerns himself with the dizzying deconstructive force of "self-questioning" per se, he helped refine my thoughts about questioning autobiographers who are authors. By explaining how issues of authority are perforce implicated in an author's autobiographical questioning, Flores provided for the possibility of studying how issues of authorship may be essentially implicated in this questioning as well. The historical processes of authorization undergone by authors had to be invoked sometimes when one concerned oneself with their autobiographical questioning. I suppose I recognized this invocation intuitively when I said in the essay mentioned above that in Black Boy Richard Wright "creates himself and [his] environment through an inversion of authority, where the self insists on its right to literally call into question the prejudicial assumptions afflicting a racist society" (141).

I discovered during preliminary research for the present project, however, that not every literary autobiography would suit the purposes
of my inquiry. Not all literary autobiographies question the connection between self and author to the extent that a new view of authorship comes into focus. Some, like Mary McCarthy's *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood*, may foreground questioning and thus evidence their author's indirect immersion in the issue of her authority, as a child or as a professional writer. But only a small group of literary autobiographies put into question the fact of the writer's transformation into an author; only a few particularize the problems encountered by writing selves authorized to write; only a few illuminate how race, gender, sexuality, and class identities inform the authorizing process in any social and historical context. I ultimately chose to study autobiographical projects of five (now) canonical authors whose autobiographies, far from taking the plots of their self-authorization as given, implicitly and explicitly question and sometimes critique the process and cultural context in which their writing becomes commodified and they move into positions of literary fame and authority.

The texts that I examine in the following chapters have this much in common with each other. But it is also true that the chapters which these autobiographies have guided are quite dissimilar and can be read independently of one another. Before explaining the connections I see between the chapters which would show what would be lost in reading them as autonomous essays, I want to emphasize how in this project "authorship" names an ideological field of difference occupied variously by historical authors. Perhaps when I began the project I dreamed that the chapters would relate to one another (to continue my plant metaphor of roots) as do the branches of a single tree. But in the end I do not have
any unifying conclusions to draw from the questioning (or theories) about authorship which Sartre, Hurston, and the others weave into the telling of their life histories. While I offer a coda which elaborates a theme common to the three chapters on Stein, de Beauvoir, and Hurston, I see the relationship between all four substantive chapters as being that of different trees in the same forest. Each author questions the authorization processes intrinsic to her or his authorship in an altogether specific, partial, and finite way. None of the autobiographies I study, then, is representative. Each bears out the remark of Henry Louis Gates, Jr., that theories are text-specific (*Black Literature* xix). My aim in illuminating the autobiographical dimension in each text is to contextualize the ways in which the author's (self-)questioning devolves from her subject position as evidenced in her particular narrative(s). Concluding the project on a universalizing note would undermine the great differences among these autobiographies in terms of narrative structure, theme, and voice—differences which distinguish the kind of author-ity each autobiographer holds and questions as a professional writer in her or his socio-historical context.

If I err on the side of difference, then, it is because the texts read in this project have collectively taught me the importance of counteracting the common critical tendency to see the term "author" as a homogenous, neutral, and ideologically free substitute for "writer." Such a vision of the "author" has been formulated and widely circulated in academic circles in the theoretical discourse exploring "The Death of the Author," the third root of this project. Since I go into some theoretical ramifications of this discourse in chapter three, I will only stress here the way the early
formulators of the theory represent the demise of the author-figure (or author-function) by stripping it—possibly him but not her—of its historical specificity. Whether he deploys the term "author" to mean the voice of "writing" that "enters in his own death" as writing assumes a symbolical, autotelic function, or whether he deploys it to mean "a modern figure, a product of our society," Roland Barthes launched the discourse of the author's death in an ahistorical direction (142). And while Michel Foucault described the historical development of the author-function, his very choice to focus on the (one) ideological system rather than on the persons within that system reflects his intention to keep the discourse socially indiscriminate. As a result of Barthes and Foucault, no one in literary studies in the 1990s who is familiar with the influential discourse about the mortified author supposes that a real live author—say, a Henry James or a Virginia Woolf—is at (the) stake.¹⁰

Feminist responses to the "Death of the Author" discourse have picked up on its textual emphasis and, while welcoming the disruption of narrative unity it affords, have charged that the wholesale extinction of the author seems to depend on a historical reduction of the authorial subject. Nancy K. Miller, for example, in her rereading in "Arachnologies" of Barthes's essay, asserts,

At issue for me, however, is not so much the "Death of the Author" himself—in so many ways, long overdue—but the effect the argument has had of killing off by delegitimating other discussions of the writing (and reading) subject.

. . . [T]he subject is self-consciously erased by a model of text production which acts to foreclose the question of agency itself (Subject 80).

In the chapter concluding her book on the female voice in psychoanalysis and cinema, Kaja Silverman draws out Miller's implication that the dead
author represents a specifically masculine form of subjectivity. Silverman writes, "The Barthesian fantasy would thus seem to turn not only upon the death of the paternal author, but upon the production of a female authorial voice, as well" (193). Importantly, in her inquiry into the production of cinematic female authorial voice, Silverman distances herself from the ahistorical methodology instigated by Barthes: "I am less prepared than was the Barthes of 1969 to bracket the biographical author altogether, and will instead attempt to propose a new model for conceptualizing the relation between the author 'inside' the text and what I will from this point forward designate the author 'outside the text'" (193). Silverman posits a deliberately ambiguous author as her subject (in both senses) of research, which refers back to its textual constitution at the level of narrative and character and out to its historical and cultural situation.

In the kind of reading which she proposes in "Arachnologies," Miller indicates a similarly dual sense of the author figure as constructed (in texts by readers) and given (in history). In proposing her strategy of "overreading," Miller continues to respond to Barthes's essay, which replaced the centrality of the author in the meaning-making process with the centrality of the reader in the text-production process. But Miller's readers are specifically feminist, and they have a particular interest in identifying the woman author and her relationships to her texts: in short, the strategy of overreading considers who writes and who reads to be significant. Miller explains that her practice of overreading often "involves a focus on the moments in the narrative which by their representation of writing itself might be said to figure the
production of the female artist" (Subject 83). In addition, it attends to "the conditions for the production of literature" that a narrative may thematize or narratologically articulate (Subject 83). The term "overreading" itself suggests that this reading strategy counters the practice of reading women's writings using master-paradigms that render the texts unreadable or underread. Miller's overreading, in this way, also names an attitude toward the woman author and her writing that assumes her difference. "To read for difference," Miller says,

is to perform a diacritical gesture; to refuse a politics of reading that depends on the fiction of a neutral (neuter) economy of textual production and reception. This refusal of a degendered reading fiction is a movement of oscillation which locates difference in the negotiation between writer and reader. The difference of which I speak here, however, is located in the "I" of the beholder, in the reader's perception ("Writing Fictions," Subject 57; Miller's emphasis).

In my chapters on autobiography I adapt Miller's loosely defined strategy of overreading to my investigation of the nexus between authorship and autobiography. What I have found most enabling is the stress which overreading lays on the attachment of author to text as a factor in interpretation. This attachment roots the interpretation in the social and historical circumstances of the text's composition, so that studying the author figured in and coterminous with the text simultaneously reflects on the author outside the text, narrating at a particular point in time. Overreading as I practice it is not a systematic way of reading literary autobiography, applied uniformly to any text in the genre. Instead, it constitutes a readerly stance which seeks out the salient terms of difference marking the processes of author-ization represented or enacted in autobiographies. In this way, my overreading results in quite distinct chapters and quite distinct portraits of writing.
selves who have undergone (or are undergoing, in Stein's case) processes of author-ization and are querying with varying degrees of conflict the resultant transformation in their identities. Indeed, within chapters three and four on Stein and de Beauvoir, the portraits themselves vary from text to text within the multiple autobiographies. Yet even the chapters on single autobiographies may be said to portray the author-figure variously. Because autobiography more than other genres reveals the play in relationships among author, narrator, and protagonist, overreading autobiography may illuminate a triple portrait of the author: the identity arching over the duration in which she retrospectively narrates her transformation from writer to author, the identity represented as prior to transformation, and the identity composed provisionally at each moment of narration in which her author-ization is in question.

The progression of chapters and the alterations in my overreading reflect Silverman's idea that the death of the paternal author—or at least his alienation—occurs with the production of a female authorial voice. The chapters generally move from canonical texts by male authors to noncanonical texts by female authors, from fictions of self-fathering to meditations about mothered voices. This progression is marked by a concomitant movement from the rigorously emplotted life story to the diffusive, meditative, and otherwise marginal forms of underread life-writing. In addition, the chapters flow from a thematics of self-authorization, where masculine preoccupation with origins and their control is in evidence, to a thematics of relational author-ization which explores the derivative nature of the authoring identity—from parents,
lovers, friends, academic mentors, editors, reviewing journals, and one's readership. The women autobiographers I read in chapters three, four, and five thus increasingly move the questioning of authorship outward, integrating psychic, internal, and "self-ish" issues with social and economic issues that frame the production of books--and the production of authors--in modern America and France. This last observation explaining the succession of chapters should not surprise. Writing from the margins of sexuality, gender, and race may make visible and potentially questionable the cultural norms for achieving personal authority and professional advancement which perhaps remain invisible to the white patriarchal establishment which these norms regulate.

To good effect, I think, the chapters may be read in pairs. The first chapter, examining fictions of self-fathering in Richard Wright's Black Boy and Jean-Paul Sartre's The Words, foregrounds the problem of illegitimacy for the fatherless authors-to-be and compares the ways in which the two texts both advance and critique the fiction of self-authorization--one's birthing of oneself through authorship--as a solution to this problem. The comparison reveals that both texts, but Sartre's more emphatically, emplot a fiction of self-authorization that is reflexively aware of its fiction. Two inquiries conclude the chapter: the first, investigating how Wright's speaking position as an African-American male in the 1930s alters the sense of the comparison of Black Boy and The Words; and the second, analyzing how the absence of women in the homosocial economy thematized in the chapter is significant. Chapter three, on Stein's Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas and Everybody's Autobiography, studies the problem of cultural illegitimacy for the writer.
from the marginal perspective of an expatriate lesbian devoted to her publically unacceptable modes of writing. While the first autobiobiography reveals Stein's wavering desire for author-ization from editors and readers alike, its great popular success irrevocably authorized her signature and made her an author. Distressed by the sudden shift in her identity that this autobiographical authorization catalyzed, Stein writes a second autobiography that deconstructs the epistemological basis for equating her self with her authorial identity named by "Gertrude Stein." The self-author equation that grounds both the problem and critique of authorial identity for the self-fathering Wright and Sartre thus comes undone by the Stein who experienced author-ization as a self-alienating process.

While gender issues are latent in chapters two and three, they lie at the heart of chapters four and five. Chapter four, the longest chapter, examines the four-book autobiobiographical project of Simone de Beauvoir, tracing the evolution of de Beauvoir's dual investigation of femininity and authorship and their intersection in her own life. The themes explored in de Beauvoir's meditations on the specific value and troubles of authorship for women provide a new understanding of how her reputation as an author of derivative authority is both true and gender-biased. Central to my analysis is de Beauvoir's disruption of the antinomy between independence and an ethic of relationship. By the final volume of her autobiobiography, she represents her authorship as necessarily other-oriented--whether the other is Sartre or a reader in England or the people of Greece--though problematically complicitous with a bourgeois economy and politics that ignores the poor, silent Others in the world. Chapter
five's examination of Zora Neale Hurston's *Dust Tracks on a Road* focuses on an author who never experienced this complicity. This autobiography makes explicit the connection latent but deducible in de Beauvoir's project between attentiveness to others and others' viewpoints and the woman author's maternal legacy. In a text highly critical of the requirements for correct "Negro writing" circulating during and after the Harlem Renaissance, Hurston establishes the roots of her outrageous perspective in her mother's authorization of her voice. Making this voice primary liberates the author "inside the text" to critique the secondary authorization of editors, critics, and readers--black and white. But it also constituted an invitation to place the author "outside the text" in the position of the noncanonical author--where too many of her contemporary black male writers thought that she belonged.

There are, of course, other ways to pair the chapters: for example, Stein and Hurston share an inclination to speak with an insistently marginal, unruly, unauthorized voice; Hurston and Wright share a concern with the proximity of their authorial identities to their black natal communities; and de Beauvoir and Sartre both weave a critique of bourgeois individualism into their questions about their historical situation as authors. I deliberately provide my own pairings of chapters two and three, four and five in order to counteract the critical tradition of viewing as "natural" dyads de Beauvoir and Sartre, Hurston and Wright. Such a tradition too easily lends itself to a simplistic man-woman comparison in which the achievement of one author ends up effacing that of the other. One of the secondary aims of this project is to trouble the waters of literary history-making with investigations into the cultural...
contexts in which authors' reputations (basically, ingrained ways of seeing authors) form. Overreading the texts of Sartre and de Beauvoir, Wright and Hurston independently of one another affords each interpretation the space to isolate what is particular to the authorial life and experience textually put in question. Again I may err on the side of difference, but it is with the conviction that some other critic will, if he has not already, compare and contrast the relative merits of The Words and, say, La Force des Choses, of Black Boy and Dust Tracks (if not Their Eyes Were Watching God).

Then, too, the present sequence of chapters satisfies my own narrative desire as interpreter of these twentieth-century authorship stories. Autobiography comprises a tricky subject for a writer writing for professional authorization herself: it is somewhat paradoxical to be ventriloquating voices which question an ideology that my own profession-to-be is deeply invested in, for the purposes of gaining entrance into that profession. Attentiveness to the overreading process has helped me reduce the risk of reading the insecurity of my own situation into the texts I study, but it is certain that the resultant readings are nevertheless mine. For this reason, what I called a double entendre in my title's phrase "questioning authorship" is actually a triple entendre, the third meaning of which supplies me as the missing agent: Donna Perreault, questioning authorship . . . A deep interest in differences among women's authorial identities and experiences has impelled my questioning of authorship, but so too has an interest in how literary professionals have transformed the "literary system," as Terry Eagleton has called it, in this century. Sequencing the chapters as I have creates
a trio of women's voices that, while very different in tone and substance, collectively affirm that women's interaction with the institution of authorship has destabilized it, challenged it. The coda that follows chapter five develops this point.

My strategies for overreading autobiographies, like Miller's, thus focus on the difference that gender makes in the authorizing process—but not exclusively. The very terms of the questioning of authorship in Black Boy and The Words initially inhibits the overreading process in chapter two. Explicating the self-fathering fictions dominant in these narratives requires a temporary inattention to gender difference because these fictions cohere only by patterning an androcentric, homosocial world of fathers and sons. I overread these texts beginning in the inquiries that follow the textual explications, and indeed the first dimension of difference I overread for is racial, not gender, difference. I turn after chapter two to overreading underread autobiographies written only by women; but my overreading in each chapter adapts to the particular relationship evidenced between author and text. As a consequence, I also demonstrate how dimensions of sexuality, class, and race make a difference in the life-stories of authors whose author-ization is in question. This prism of difference among authoring selves in the end may be enhanced by beginning with the questions of male autobiographers for whom authorship is a singularly masculine affair.
Notes

1. Raymond Williams' *Keywords* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) defines the current meaning of "ideology" as a set of ideas which arise from a given set of material interests, or more broadly, from a definite class or group (156). This set of ideas can also be understood as a system, whose regulation of these material interests into some "natural" order helps explain why it is unseen. None of the autobiographies I read in this project mentions the word "ideology," and yet each studies a part of a system of ideas that make sensible the material involvement of writers in the profession of authorship: issues of originality, legitimacy, publication, signatures, individual use of language, the (money) value of writings, having a representative cultural voice or alternatively an unrepresentative cultural voice. The ideology of authorship has a strong relationship to the ideology of individualism, which it intersects both at the level of aesthetics and at the level of material compensation. This relationship explains why the uniqueness of the authorial voice (even when it is Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar) leads to or is linked to the payment of one person and the credit, as it were, to her name. This ideological relationship is especially at issue in the de Beauvoir chapter.

2. My expression "literary culture" is not making some hidden distinction between high "literary" art and low "nonliterary" art. In fact, while all of the authors I read are modernists, two of them—Stein and Hurston—self-consciously occupied some middle ground between the high and low categories. In any case, the practices and ideological codes of authorship in question are not the experience of only some authors of literature, however defined, but of the majority of them. I might have used Terry Eagleton's "literary system" instead of "literary culture" to suggest that author-ization conforms to a regular, organizing pattern (123). But the word "culture" helpfully alludes to a broad context of experience at issue that includes both the publishing house and the family, the little magazine and the social movement.

3. Again Williams' *Keywords* provides the definition of "romantic" helpful in understanding its contribution to a broader ideology of authorship: After the 1880s, "[t]he existing sense of a free or liberated imagination was undoubtedly greatly strengthened. An extended sense of liberation from rules and conventional forms was also powerfully developed, not only in art and literature and music but also in feeling and behaviour" (275).

4. Questions about the authority of the speaker are, of course, most insistent in discussions of autobiographies by women and minorities, where the speaking subject belongs to a group with a collective history of powerlessness. So it is that Shari Benstock foregrounds the issue of authority as editor of *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writing* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1988) in her opening remarks on "Theories of Autobiography": "Where does the authority rest for writing 'autobiography'?"; and again in her contributing essay in this collection, "Authorizing the Autobiographical" 10-33.
5. My understanding of this commodification process was greatly clarified by Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 64-91. Kopytoff defines a commodity--"a thing that has use value and that can be exchanged in a discrete transaction for a counterpart, the very fact of exchange indicating that the counterpart has, in the immediate context, an equivalent value"--and observes that a thing commodified becomes common, "the opposite of being uncommon, incomparable, unique, singular, and therefore not exchangeable for anything else" (68, 69). Thus the author, writing within a culture that requires uniqueness to authorize, may paradoxically lose a sense of her or her writing's uniqueness at the time of author-ize.


7. For an example of such language description see Sally McConnell-Ginet, "Linguistics and the Feminist Challenge" in Women and Language in Literature and Society, ed. Sally McConnell-Ginet et al. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980) 3-25. Indeed, Part II: Language in Women's Lives in the same book includes six essays which provide the kind of impersonal description to which I am referring here.

8. James M. Cox, whose work in American autobiography moves fluidly among literary and nonliterary autobiographies, has proposed a reason for not doing so. Cox theorizes that literary and naive, as he calls them, autobiographers have very different approaches to the form of their life-writings: for the latter, form is an unproblematic mold into which they pour their experience, while literary autobiographers problematize narrative form and convey its meaning-making capacity in shaping their experience. See Recovering Literature's Lost Ground: Essays in

9. Wolfgang Iser's concept of "repertoire" may be useful in thinking about this field of difference inscribed in the texts themselves. Iser explains: "The conventions necessary for the establishment of a situation might more fittingly be called the repertoire of the text" (author's emphasis). But the situation my authors illuminate, though held in common under the one heading, is established with varying allusions to the elemental aspects of authorship. Iser continues: "The repertoire consists of all the familiar territory within the text. This may be in the form of references to earlier works, or to social and historical norms, or to the whole culture from which the text has emerged--in brief, to what Prague structuralists have called the 'extratextual' reality." So each texts pulls up a different repertoire concerning authorship which, as Iser says, will "undergo some kind of transformation" in being textually inscribed. See The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978) 69.

10. As an aside, it is interesting to note that the ascendance of literary biography and autobiography in the American, English, and French academy was contemporaneous with the ascendance of the structuralist theory of the "Death of the Author." So, while authors were being chased away from the center of textual interpretation on the one hand, on the other hand what they think, feel, confuse, visit, offend, transgress, subvert, ad infinitum, is still very much a central preoccupation of literary studies. The New Historicism might have something to do with this paradox since one of its aims is to make relational extratextual issues (like authorial biography) and intratextual matters (like narrative form, theme, and conflict).


Chapter 2  Self-Fathering Sons: Masculine Fictions of Self-Authorization in Richard Wright's Black Boy and Jean-Paul Sartre's The Words

In 1937 Richard Wright published his autobiography Black Boy in America while Jean-Paul Sartre in France was writing the fictional story of protoexistentialist Antoine Roquentin. Not until 1954 would Sartre begin drafting his autobiography, Les Mots (The Words 1964). By that time, these authors of radically dissimilar backgrounds would be friends, comrades working together in France. In an interview with Michel Fabre, Simone de Beauvoir recalls the literary and political ties between Wright and Sartre that extended from the mid-1940s to the mid-1950s.¹ Wright participated in the Rassemblement Politique Revolutionnaire (RDR) during this epoch, and Sartre had Black Boy published in installments in Les Temps Modernes along with "The Man Who Lived Underground" and other works or lectures by Wright. In addition to this professional tie, significant philosophical bonds existed between Wright and Sartre and have been documented by Michel Fabre, among others.² The 1940s and 1950s saw Wright immersed in French existentialism as propounded by Sartre—an important stage in the evolution of Wright's ideas about the social engagement of the individual. In general, then, several significant factors would support a study of the intersection between the contemporary trajectories of Wright's and Sartre's lives and authorial careers. My purpose, however, is to study not their lives per se but rather the narrative of childhood each wrote which explains, justifies, and authorizes the career of authorship each pursued. The proximity—personal, philosophical, and professional—between Sartre and Wright as
living authors lends the rapprochement of their authobiographies a certain historical credence. What motivates my comparison of Black Boy and The Words is less historical than narratological: the similarity between their authobiographical interrogations of the fiction of self-authorization.

Both Black Boy and The Words exemplify the general characteristics of authobiography developed in the last chapter. That is, both narratives conflate deeply personal, psychological issues of self-authorization with the socio-cultural effects of coming-to-be-an-author within societies that valorize the profession of authorship. The protagonist realized at the end of each narrative is not just a self or autos: he is a nascent version of the author whose signature circulates in a public way. As Philippe Lejeune has said, "An author is not a person. He is a person who writes and publishes" (On Autobiography 11). In twentieth-century America and France, at least, authors assume a position of authority and are extraordinary by virtue of their profession. But Richard Wright and Jean-Paul Sartre are both, for variant reasons, remarkable authors in twentieth-century literary history, as their respective authobiographies suggest. While the former overcame entrenched social and racial barriers to literacy and a literary profession, the latter actively critiqued--on social and philosophical grounds--literary professions to the extent of rejecting the Nobel Prize for Literature awarded him in 1964. In addition, Wright and Sartre were similarly remarkable authors in that they write authobiographies which interrogate their rapport with the profession of authorship and the processes of self-authorization underscoring their professional practice.
While significantly conditioned by disparate social contexts, the autobiographical narratives of Black Boy and The Words nevertheless invite comparison. At primary thematic and structural levels, the paradigms and rhetoric for—and against—self-authorization promulgated by these texts are closely related. Each narrative takes shape around oedipal conflicts over and desires for legitimacy and authority. In Reading for the Plot Peters Brooks valorizes father-son oppositions as "underlying structures" in "classic" fiction in the past two centuries. My analysis of Black Boy and The Words reveals the applicability of Brooks's oedipal paradigm as a critical tool but also inquires into that paradigm's restrictiveness and complicity in reinforcing this dominant fiction of self-authorization. The variety of fathers in question within and between these texts—literal and literary, absent and present, black and white, single and collective—argues generally for the paradigm's usefulness. These fathers represent origins that the son in each case repudiates in order to legitimate himself. Both Wright and Sartre have recourse to the fantasy of fathering oneself in explaining and interrogating the process and history of their self-authorization. Indeed, a repudiation and a recreation of origins on/in their own terms conditions the very possibility of the author's coming-to-be-an-author in Black Boy and The Words.

In separate discussions of Black Boy and The Words I will examine the specific struggles for filial legitimacy and authority thematized and interrogated in each work. Each narrative chronologically emplots anecdotes and memories that argue for and explain their common conclusion: the emergence of the author-to-be which effects the
equivalence between self and author. While each plot works to foreground this causally explicable trajectory of action, there are ruptures interspersed throughout each narrative which belie the fiction-making of self-making. Both Black Boy and The Words respectively question and satirize the groundlessness on which the boy-author would erect his autonomy, his authority, and, by extension, his authorship. Each narrator's awareness of this groundlessness represents his awareness of the fiction of self-authorization. In sum, Black Boy and The Words can be read as authobiographies that challenge the legitimacy of their fictions of self-authorization by exposing the fiction-making process replicated in their autobiographical acts. Accomplished within the filial economy of self-fathering, they together constitute one patently masculine version of the twentieth-century autobiographical critique of authorship.

Two inquiries of a theoretical nature conclude this chapter and begin the overreading process carried throughout the end of this project. The first inquiry considers the race-specific facts bracketed in a theory of the fictionality of self-authorization. Resuming a discussion of Black Boy, I ask: why is the severity of Sartre's critique of the self-imposturing endemic to authorship inappropriate when directed at Wright's story? If Wright questions the possibility of his origin-less, self-originating stance vis-a-vis his racist homeland, he decline to characterize his self-authorization as neurotic self-delusion as Sartre does in The Words. This first inquiry employs the overreading strategy of focusing on the varying racial and social contexts of the authors' production of their authobiographies. It shifts the context for discussing the theory of self-fathering fictions from a metaphysical, ahistorical
context to a historical context that takes into account the racial difference between Wright and Sartre.

The second inquiry, which looks ahead to chapters three through five, also destabilizes the theory of the fictionality of self-authorization, now from a feminist perspective. I ask in this section: how does the preoccupation with masculine (because filial) autonomy inherent in Black Boy and The Words render their overall critique of authorship inapplicable to women's lives and life-writings? At issue here is the limitation of a critique of authorship organized/emplotted though a rhetoric of origins and originality. What happens to women in such a rhetoric? Examining the relationship between the claim to self-fathering and the infantilization of the mother in The Words helps clarify how Sartre's masculinist critique of self-authorization invokes a Cartesian insistence on the separateness of individuals and the erasure of biological roots embodied in the mother. This inquiry puts into question the patriarchal premise evinced in both The Words and Black Boy that authorization entails (or supplements) legitimation by paternal powers. It is precisely this assumption that Gertrude Stein, Simone de Beauvoir and Zora Neale Hurston will query in their autobiographies.

I Black Boy, Black Author: The Paradox of Black Boy

Are "black boy" and Richard Wright the same person? The question, apparently banal, deserves to be asked rather than answered. A simple "yes" would seem precipitous in several ways. In the first place, it is not clear that "black boy" and "Richard Wright" are persons. Do they not rather exemplify nouns of divergent properties? The common
noun "black boy" stipulates a class of individuals, while the proper name "Richard Wright" designates a "proper" individual with a discrete identity. To simply equate the two would thus discount this obvious difference: the being referred to by "black boy" is generic while the being referred to by "Richard Wright" is specific.4

But the matter is more complicated yet. "Richard Wright" is at a further remove from "black boy" because it exemplifies an author's name. In "What Is an Author?" Michel Foucault contends that in addition to its indicative (referential) function, a proper name is "the equivalent of a description" of a person; but an author's name, like "Richard Wright," has the additional classificatory function of characterizing "a certain mode of being of discourse" (146). The author's name "seems always to be present, marking off the edges of the text, revealing, or at least characterizing, its mode of being. . . . [It] indicates the status of [a] discourse within a society and a culture" (147). "Black boy," to be sure, does not "group together a certain number of texts." If we are insisting on the author-ity of "Richard Wright," we must insist on the reverse with respect to "black boy"--for that is the real barrier to establishing an equivalence between these terms. According to Black Boy, "black boy" has nothing to do with texts or their public circulation; it refers to a set of boys negatively marked by race in Mississippi in the first decades of this century, lacking not just the "authorship function" of "Richard Wright" but the very independence and particularity betokened by proper names. Far from being authors, black boys are not even authorized.

Throughout Richard Wright's Black Boy, the mysterious incongruity between "Richard Wright" and "black boy" circulates. It
startles the reader during the celebrated lyrical catalogues of "moments of living [which] reveal themselves" to the boy growing in intimacy with nature (14-15). It assaults the reader when the boy Richard reviews his six-year-old career as a saloon drunkard (28-29). And it is embodied several times in figures such as the woman for whom Richard did "chores," who sneers, "'You'll never be a writer... Who on earth put such ideas into your nigger head?'' (162) But if at the text's end this incongruity still puzzles the reader, she is not alone. For even as the narrator recreates his childhood from a memory signally his own, he has no conclusive response to his own repeated questions about the authority he has arrogated to himself:

But what was it that always made me feel that [I've got to get away]? What was it that made me conscious of possibilities? From where in this southern darkness had I caught a sense of freedom? Why was it that I was able to act upon vaguely felt notions? What was it that made me feel things deeply enough for me to try to order my life by my feelings? The external world of whites and blacks, which was the only world that I had ever known, surely had not evoked in me any belief in myself. The people I had met had advised and demanded submission. What, then, was I after? How dare I consider my feelings superior to the gross environment that sought to claim me? (282)

Black Boy argues for the transformation of black boy into Richard Wright, questions the transformation from black boy to Richard Wright, but never accounts for it, never lays to rest Wright's own question of the source (auctor) of this transformation. A reader can say with certainty that Richard Wright authored the writing of his life and gave himself through the writing a life. But he entitled that "life" Black Boy, thus paradoxically rooting his authority/authorship in a being bereft of those qualities. This paradox reinforces rather than dispels the question of his authobiographical enterprise. Whence the authority of Richard Wright?
Without in the least settling this question, one response argued at different levels by the narrative is that Wright's authority comes from questioning. Questioning is represented as a natural propensity of both the child Richard and the narrator/author throughout the text. Through the narrator's recapitulation of black boy's questions soldered onto his own, a self/source independent from others apparently asserts itself, while at the same time arguing for the equivalence of black boy and Richard Wright. The narrator demonstrates the "consuming curiosity" of the small black boy with long question-and-answer sessions between the child and his mother as he becomes conscious of race relations and the negative determinism of being black in the South (29, 55-57, 65-68). In this way, questioning is closely aligned with the autodidactic process detailed by this black Bildungsroman. An example signaling this alignment is the juxtaposition of the anecdote about how black boy prompted his mother to teach him to read, with the paragraph which begins, "I soon made myself a nuisance by asking far too many questions of everybody" (30). Then turning to race relations, the paragraph continues, "Every happening in the neighborhood, no matter how trivial, became my business. It was in this manner that I first stumbled upon the relations between whites and blacks, and what I learned frightened me." In this way, the motif of questioning in Black Boy evolves to connect black boy's characteristic self-assertion, his autodidactic process of education, and his disruption of racial codes in his environment.

In brief, Black Boy's questions argue that individuals must question the authority of received race relations. But not all blacks are empowered thus as individuals. Much of the substance of black boy's
questions stresses that young Richard Wright, alone amongst his black peers, is individualized as such a questioner. The use of the passive here is deliberate: it seems that Richard is naturally endowed with a questioning disposition towards his people and his environment which sets him apart from them, despite their determining influence. In the following passage, the blended voice of narrator and black boy articulate an important instance in which the questioning Richard distinguishes himself from school, peers, family, and society--white and black:

What was it that made the hate of whites for blacks so steady, seemingly so woven into the texture of things? What kind of life was possible under that hate? How had this hate come to be? Nothing about the problems of Negroes was ever taught in the classrooms at school; and whenever I would raise these questions with the boys, they would either remain silent or turn the subject into a joke. They were vocal about the petty individual wrongs they suffered, but they possessed no desire for a knowledge of the picture as a whole. Then why was I worried about it?

Was I really as bad as my uncles and aunts and Granny repeatedly said? Why was it considered wrong to ask questions? Was I right when I resisted punishment? It was inconceivable to me that one should surrender to what seemed wrong, and most of the people I had met seemed wrong. Ought one to surrender to authority even if one believed that that authority was wrong? If the answer was yes, then I knew that I would always be wrong, because I could never do it. Then how could one live in a world in which one's mind and perceptions meant nothing and authority and tradition meant everything? There were no answers (181-182).

Conflating child and narrator into something like child-author, the questions in this passage establish Wright's position of opposition vis-a-vis the crippling world of the South. They exemplify, rather than pronounce Richard's role as usurper of the authority that would oppress him: by the activity of his mind he can generate at least questions if not answers that indicate he himself arbitrates meaning. Before his questioning mind--then as black boy and now as author--all is eclipsed.

The self-authorizing Wright here vindicates his childhood vision of himself
in the orphanage where he stayed for a year: "a distinct personality striving against others" (38).

Such evidence of Wright's romantic individualism has alternately troubled and appealed to critics of Black Boy. Robert Stepto, for example, hails the "marvelous self-assertion" of "the questing human being seeking freedom and a voice." But he likewise indicates how Wright's "authorial posture" might compromise him by so radically removing him from his environment in particular, and the Afro-American literary tradition in general (57-58, 65). George Kent, following the lead of Constance Webb, discovers in the "self-beyond-culture" argued for in passages like the one above, the source of Black Boy's flaws and of its power. Kent at once admires the power of the "cosmic," "outsider self" reaching out for the "beauty and nobleness of life" and complains that the book's intention to be "representative" of most black boys' childhood is compromised by this individualism (21). Michel Fabre, too, has extensively explored the significance of Wright's brand of individualism. In particular, his essay "Wright's South" focuses on Wright's "refusal to undergo the tyranny of origins," which explains for Fabre the heroic "authorial posture" that troubles Stepto (81).

Fabre's attention to the treatment of origins in Black Boy addresses the most important aspect of the narrative's interrogative rhetoric of opposition--most important because the narrator himself repeatedly questions the source or origins of his questioning pose. Indeed, as noted above, the narrative ends without resolving the question of black boy's transformation into Richard Wright. The source of the questioner is in this way indefinitely problematized. The circular rhetoric of Wright's
questioning the origin of his questioning authority, however, begs an important question: whether the origins being repudiated by the narrator and recreated by the narrative are origins. In fact, throughout the narrative of self-authorization, Wright has argued for the space in which to suspend questions of his origins by eradicating, repudiating, or bypassing three sets of fathers against whom he defines himself. Ultimately, then, Wright's questioning of his origins invites readers to consider how, if at all, his fiction of self-fathering answers the question of black boy's authority.

The fiction of self-fathering in *Black Boy* indicates the text's relationship to what Peter Brooks calls "the great tradition" of nineteenth-century novels concerned with issues of filial legitimacy and the conflict of generations. Given Wright's immersion in the nineteenth-century novel, the Russian variety in particular, it does not surprise that he might pattern his personal history with filial conflicts akin to those peopling his imagination. Brooks maintains that the "key problem" in these conflicts is that of the "transmission of knowledge":

> the process by which the young protagonist ... discovers his choices of interpretation and action in relation to a number of older figures of wisdom and authority who are rarely biological fathers—a situation that the novel often ensures by making the son an orphan, or by killing off or otherwise occulting the biological father before the text brings to maturity its dominant alternatives. The son then most often has a choice among possible fathers from whom to inherit, and in choosing—which may entail a succession of selections and rejections—he plays out his career of initiation into a society and into history, comes to define his own authority in the interpretation and use of social (and textual) codes (63-64).

A number of features in this synopsis of filial conflict are relevant to the repudiation and rewriting of origins in *Black Boy*. The fathers over and against whom Wright narrates in *Black Boy* include but are not limited to
his biological father. As Fabre and Stepto have noted, Wright slays this father in the narrative with quick dispatch in its first chapter; and the narrative subsequently introduces or otherwise reveals alternative figures of wisdom among whom black boy chooses what he wishes to inherit. These other fathers include his literary predecessors who wrote themselves out of slavery, and his more contemporary, white literary fathers who challenge American culture. Collectively, these fathers constitute a set of origins or roots at once recreated and rejected by the narrative. The narrator of Black Boy accomplishes a double self-authorization by weaving into the plot of his transformation from black boy to author his solitary ascendance over his paternal inheritances.

If Wright's narrative asserts its right to repudiate the father, it derives some justification from the fact that the father repudiated the son. The first chapter of Black Boy describes the callousness of Wright's father in abandoning his family and leaving them to starve. During one of the typically frank, intimate discussions between mother and son recreated in the narrative, the mother explains to Richard that he is hungry because his father, formerly the one to bring home the food, has left for a place unknown. The narrator then comments: "the image of my father became associated with my pangs of hunger, and whenever I felt hunger I thought of him with a deep biological bitterness" (21-22). This association of the father with bodily pain or deprivation is strengthened by the boy/narrator's naive belief in the exclusively "paternal right" a man possessed to beat his children (31); this belief evolves despite that fact that it is his mother who deals Richard a near-fatal beating in punishment for the fire he sets in the narrative's opening scene. The
father in this narrative is the body; he is representative of brute, physical force and, ironically, physical absence.

As Michel Fabre has argued, the father also symbolizes the brutality of poor black southerners from whom Richard is fated, by the logic of the narrative's emplotment, to escape. The end of the first chapter prepares for this narrative teleology by inscribing a memory not of black boy but of Richard Wright, returned to Mississippi, visiting his father. George Kent comments, perhaps on the basis of this memory's description, that the father is "a zero," thus building on Wright's precedent of refusing to individuate his father (20). But the father is not a zero: he is rather the brute earth personified in the mind of the adult Wright distanced irretrievably from father/South by twenty-five years of "scalding experiences" (42). Wright's recollection of his sharecropper father is telling: "I stood before him poised, my mind aching as it embraced the simple nakedness of his life, feeling how completely his soul was imprisoned by the slow flow of the seasons, by wind and rain and sun, how fastened were his memories to a crude and raw past, how chained were his actions and emotions to the direct, animalistic impulses of his withering body..." (43). The narrator registers his pity and forgiveness for this animalistic because mindless "black peasant." The same pity and forgiveness he likewise extends to his similarly brutalized peers, whose mindlessness he cannot share (115). With the objectivity of godlike "knowing" Wright distances and differentiates himself from a father and environment dispossessed of knowledge or curiosity (42).

The mind's ascent then is made possible by the denigration of the father/body, who is not a "zero," but who equals zero--a gap or absence
in the narrative logic. In popular critical jargon, the father is the Other in this narrative, which alternates between characterizing him as a "stranger" to his son ("we were forever strangers") and as an unreal, nonrelation ("You must remember that you have no father," Richard's mother tells him [40, 42]). The absence of the father, then, creates a space for Wright to write himself into history/to write his own history. As a son without a father, he is illegitimate; similarly, he is an illegitimate son of the South. Denying the paternal/regional inheritance permits Wright to father himself and so assume the role of a free agent who may come by his own means to legitimate himself as a self-writing author. Canceling the biological relationship to his environment through the absent body of his father enables Wright to open the question, otherwise precluded by his naturalist philosophy, "Then, how could I change my relationship to my environment?" (219).

The next group of fathers invoked and yet bypassed by the narrative of Black Boy provided a blueprint for answering this question. These fathers are the writers of slave narratives, whose path to an altered relationship to the South was the acquisition of literacy. Fabre, for one, acknowledges Wright's debt to the Afro-American valorization of literacy. Fabre contends that in Black Boy Wright "responded to the black tradition in which integrity and freedom must be won through flight to the North and the acquisition of literacy."9 Supporting a perspective emphasizing Wright's debt to these fathers is the fact that the narrator of Black Boy continually accents black boy's sensitivity to, interest in, and facility with language. In fact, one deep source of pathos in the first chapter is the demonstration of how black boy's environment stymies or
warp this linguistic facility. The narrator recounts how black boy is
delayed from starting school and then prevented from attending in
consecutive years; how, when in school, he is paralyzed with self-
consciousness and cannot write; and how what he learns and reproduces
are vulgarities that his peers pass on to him. On the last score, cussing,
or the "misappropriation of language" as Valerie Smith terms it,
represents a recurrent motif in the narrative (72). At different times
Richard outrages mother, grandmother, and uncle with his four-letter
words. In a peculiar way, anecdotes where Richard cusses serve to
underscore both his verbal boldness and his social degradation. With a
certain bravado mixed with sympathy, for instance, the narrator
represents the fledgling author hustling down the street with a piece of
soap writing four-letter words on nearly all the windows he passes (32).

But Richard, as this eloquent narrative testifies, has also mastered
the "right ways" of speaking and writing. I shall return to this point in
discussing Wright's straddling of two cultures in the first inquiry's
rapprochement between Wright and Sartre. Notably, "to master words" is
Wright's acknowledged purpose in life; and "master" is the word Ralph
Ellison used in reviewing Black Boy to suggest how the text effects the
experiences it represents.10 His slow start notwithstanding, black boy
excels in school to the extent of being bored with his studies. His
boredom and his restless questioning together suggest that the
acquisition of literacy is not enough for Richard. What counts is what one
does with language; what matters are the meanings one seeks through
language. Critics like Fabre and Stepto who attempt to place Black Boy
on a continuum of Afro-American writing "founded by slave narratives"
overlook the special pragmatics of language advocated by the narrator (Step to 65). In other words, they overlook what Harold Bloom in *The Anxiety of Influence* has called the "misprision" with which Wright reads his enslaved fathers' life stories. Whereas the slave narrative represents and demonstrates the use of literacy to legitimate oneself within society, *Black Boy* represents and advocates uses of language by which one legitimates oneself apart from society.¹¹

Comparing the way in which the theme of "writing a pass for oneself" is treated in *Black Boy* and in Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, respectively, should clarify this point. In chapter six of *Narrative*, Douglass records the principal revelation of the narrative: that "the pathway from slavery to freedom" was to learn to read and write. In chapter ten, after Frederick effects his transformation from brute to man by fighting the brutal Mr. Covey, he begins a Sabbath school and teaches his fellow slaves to read "because it was the delight of my soul to be doing something that looked like the bettering of my race" (121). Then, determining to run away with a company of other slaves, Frederick writes several "protections" or passes on which he forges his master's name (125). The ploy fails--it is only borrowed legitimacy--and the group is jailed and/or dispersed. But eventually Frederick does write his pass, the *Narrative*, whose concluding signs are the name of its author and the date of the signature. These signs mean, in the words of the narrative, "I subscribe myself": the "I" has become generally authorized in and through language and through the public circulation of a narrative fulfilling the authorizing conventions.
From Wright's perspective of *Black Boy*, Douglass's deference to legitimacy through this self-inscription entails a loss or eclipse of individuality. Within the rhetorical economy of self-fathering fictions, achieving individuality transcends in value the legitimizing effect of literacy. *Black Boy* has (at least) two anecdotes bearing on the theme of writing a pass for oneself. The first of these stories registers the author's impatience with the absurd uses of the signature's legitimacy. In this anecdote, young Richard dreams of a letter from the United States government which would verify his grandfather's claim to a pension long withheld from him. The old man, a wounded Civil War veteran, never received his pension because the white officer who filled out his paper had misspelled his name. Hypothesizing that "Grandpa's southern accent and his illiteracy made him mispronounce his own name," Richard reads his sullen and silent grandfather each real letter of rejection from the government, which responds to a plea that one of his friends writes for him (153). And the narrator comments, "Like 'K' of Kafka's novel, *The Castle*, he tried desperately to persuade the authorities of his true identity right up to the day of his death, and failed" (154). The allusion to the absurdist struggle for legitimation through legal channels suggests that Wright's concern is less with the evils of illiteracy than with the flimsiness of the legitimacy which rewards literacy *per se*.

The other pass-writing anecdote does not involve a pass, strictly speaking, but the speech which Richard will give as he graduates from school. The narrator recounts his conflict with the school principal, who insists that Richard read, not the speech he has prepared and memorized himself, but rather a speech written by the principal himself. In the
recreated dialogue, Richard's speech becomes a symbol of self-authorization and self-expression.

"We've never had a boy in this school like you before," he said. "You've had your way around here. Just how you managed to do it, I don't know. But, listen, take this speech and say it. I know what's best for you. You can't afford to just say anything before those white people that night.... I've been a principal for more years than you are old, boy. I've seen many a boy and girl graduate from this school, and none of them was too proud to recite a speech I wrote for them."

I had to make up my mind quickly; I was faced with a matter of principle. I wanted to graduate, but I did not want to make a public speech that was not my own.

"Professor, I'm going to say my own speech that night," I said.

He grew angry.

"You're just a young, hotheaded fool," he said. He toyed with a pencil and looked up at me. "Suppose you don't graduate?"

(193-194; Wright's emphasis)

At this point in the narrative, of course, the reader expects that Richard will defy this "bought" man and present his own speech at graduation (195). The heroic authorial posture this struggling seventeen-year-old black boy assumes has been prepared for by the accent on the very personal and feeling satisfaction Richard takes in using words. In describing this encounter with the principal, the narrator states, "I felt I had been dealing with something unclean"--the same adjective he used to describe his meeting with his father in chapter one. The principal and the version of literacy he represents must be denied just as his father had been denied. The question of "who is speaking" is of preeminent importance for Wright as a pure matter of "principle" distinct from the legal principle of legitimacy guiding Frederick Douglass's account of himself. Literacy, Wright might have told Douglass in 1937, is a necessary but not a sufficient cause of individual freedom.
The outcome of this struggle between the native son and the slave narrative tradition bears on the issue of the book's conflicting purposes. I have indicated that critics like George Kent view the book as a representative account of the "problem of living as a Negro" (181) as well as a descriptive account of a particular black boy's trajectory towards authorship. Wright's misprision of the Afro-American valorization of literacy in the narrative tips the balance towards the latter process of self-authorization. This process conditions the narrative teleology towards Wright's literary authorization, which is also the textual end of Black Boy. The final set of fathers the narrator invokes—directly in this case—are his acknowledged literary progenitors, and they are collectively white. Ironically, the outcome of Richard's struggle with these fathers, a comparatively benign struggle, will restore to the narrative its balance between being a representative and a particularizing account. For the authorship into which Richard enters as a result of his reading encounters with Mencken, Dreiser, Turgenev and the rest serves to reintroduce in a strengthened version the question of the equivalence between Richard Wright and black boy—the question: "whence the authority of Richard Wright?"

The important thirteenth chapter of Black Boy begins with the narrator's account of how Richard stumbles onto the name of H. L. Mencken. Reading a vehement denunciation of Mencken in the Memphis Commercial Appeal, Richard is intrigued by this man, who "must be advocating ideas the South did not like" (287). Richard's quarrel with the South—black and white—has dramatically intensified by this point in the narrative; he is virtually alone with his thoughts of discontent and
rebellion. A misfit in his grandmother's strictly religious home, he has left it with the aid of stolen money and goods, horrified by the very necessity of his crimes, but determined nevertheless to make something of his life (227). He has already been driven out of one optical company, in Jackson, by two terrorizing white employees there. Feeling like a "non-man" (267), he heads to Memphis en route north, hoping to escape total entrapment by southern racism. But in the Memphis optical company where he finds work, white employees provoke Richard and Harrison, another black worker, to fight one another for the white men's entertainment. And the two black boys fight:

Our plans and promises [to resist the white men] now meant nothing. We fought four hard rounds, stabbing, slugging, grunting, spitting, cursing, crying, bleeding. The shame and anger we felt for having allowed ourselves to be duped crept into our blows and blood ran into our eyes, half blinding us. The hate we felt for the men whom we had tried to cheat went into the blows we threw at each other.

After the white men pull them apart, the narrator recollects,

I could not look at Harrison. I hated him and I hated myself. . . . I felt that I had done something unclean, something for which I could never properly atone (265-266).

This fight is the immediate preface to Richard's discovery of Mencken and, through Mencken, the world of modern American cultural criticism and fiction. This hatred of the South--black and white--and its constant deformation of his personality is the immediate backdrop to Richard's wonder about "people other than Negroes who criticized the South" (267).

Another pass is subsequently forged: this time, Richard writes a note which allows him to borrow books from the library on the card of Mr. Falk, an Irishman at the optical company. What he wishes to steal is cultural literacy. He embarks on a journey of readings, and the narrator
lists some fifty names of authors—American, French, German, Russian; poets, philosophers, novelists—who, we are to assume from the compressed reference, Richard will investigate in the coming months. The compression and impressionistic intensity characterizing this recapitulation of his readings suggests that what transpires is nothing less than a Joycean epiphany. His readings cause the "impulse to dream," which "had been slowly beaten out of me by experience," to surge up again (272). Inspired in this way, he writes, "I hungered for books, new ways of looking and seeing. It was not a matter of believing or disbelieving what I read, but of feeling something new, of being affected by something that made the look of the world different" (272-273).

In this way, the narrator explains the profits of reading for the nascent author. Reading opens up to Richard's dormant imagination a renewal of feeling for life's possibilities. He says that what he derived from novels like Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* "was nothing less than a sense of life itself" (274). And as regards his own novels he will say, in *American Hunger*, that he wishes to "drench the reader with a sense of a new world" (22). An unmediated sense of life? On this score Wright is ambiguous. On the one hand, he learns from his reading that it is possible to use "words as a weapon" (272). The boy/narrator asks, "Then, maybe, perhaps, I could use them as a weapon?" (272) On the other hand, the narrative repeats how "books . . . opened up new avenues of feeling and seeing," and in this way suggests that his new sense of life is coincident with feelings and perspective (275). This point corroborates the narrator's earlier comments on black boy's youthful fantasies. While originally a response to the threat of the "white mob,"
Richard says, "My fantasies were a moral bulwark that enabled me to feel I was keeping my emotional integrity whole, a support that enabled my personality to limp through days lived under the threat of violence" (84). However, the status of these fantasies subsequently altered. They became "part of my living, of my emotional life; they were a culture, a creed, a religion" (84). Given, then, the connection between fantasies and emotions, and feelings and reading, the narrative suggests that far from investing Wright with others' sense of life, reading consolidated in him an emotional need "to live by my own feelings and thoughts" (276). But which are his own; how to sift out the South from this conflicted if insistently individuated personality?

The narrator himself asks something like this question when, at the narrative's end, he ruminates, "as I had lived in the South I had not had the chance to learn who I was" (284). "Deep down," he says, "I knew that I could never really leave the South, for my feelings had already been formed by the South" (284). Reading his white literary fathers also cast him down, forcing upon him the bitter realization that "vast ignorance" attended his "Jim Crow station in life" (274). But at the same time he asserts, "Well, the South had never known me--never known what I thought, what I felt" (273). The question becomes how to interpret Wright's paradox in centering himself as the author of himself, with all of his discrete feelings, while alluding fatalistically to the shaping effects of the South on his perspective. This question is a variation of the question I began with: that of the relationship between black boy and Richard Wright.
The last fiction of self-fathering discussed resituates the question in emphasizing the place of fiction-writing, of this writing, in the transformation from black boy to Richard Wright. The text itself bears witness to this transformation at a stylistic level. And it argues for this transformation at the level of plot: each anecdote contributes another cause to the etiological fabric of the narrative. But the narrative voice also questions this transformation, suggesting its incompleteness, and suspending the paradox of the "black self," and the even greater paradox of the "black author," over the entire narrative. Self-autorization through authorship, it seems, is the only route to freedom for this black boy; and yet, the persistence of diffuse and multiple origins, despite the fictions of self-fathering, obscures the boundaries of the "self" in the phrase "self-autorization." Written from the point of view of a de facto famous American author, Black Boy might be said to preemptively strike down whatever questions it raises about the authority of its narrator. And yet, this is precisely what the narrative militates against: a too easy acceptance of what constitutes individual autonomy, and by extension, authorship, particularly when the author in question is a black American. Having effectively equated his father with pure earth, Wright risks 'unearthing' himself by revealing the fiction of his identity as pure "mind," the identity which first helped him unfetter himself from the brutalizing effects of his environment. The process of self-authorization in Black Boy thus coincides with fiction-making; and it is belied as the seams of its fictions manifest themselves in the text's numerous questions.

Thus, while the narrative argues for the self-creation of its author, who or what authorizes Richard Wright remains a question that Black Boy
poses without answering. And this autobiographical state of affairs resonates with the philosophy of life the author articulates midway through the novel:

At the age of twelve, before I had had one full year of formal schooling, I had a conception of life that no experience would ever erase, a predilection for what was real that no argument would ever gainsay, a sense of the world that was mine and mine alone, a notion as to what life meant that no education would ever alter, a conviction that the meaning of living came only when one was struggling to wring a meaning out of meaningless suffering (112).

In a striking way, Wright's putatively individual ("mine and mine alone") sense of the world parallels his self-authorizing fiction-making in Black Boy. Just as he struggles to compose meanings out of meaninglessness, he struggles to authorize a self out of nothing. One might be tempted to argue, on the basis of the power of the narrative, that what meaning Wright achieves in the process of self-authorization in Black Boy redeems (or "masters" as Ellison said) the experiences of the boy inscribed. But does this figural power constitute the authority in question everywhere in the text? What kind of authorship results when authority is fictionally inscribed by and for a black boy? This, ultimately, is the autobiographical challenge Black Boy makes.

II  Jean-Paul Sartre—An Author Among Men

Sartre's 1948 essay "What Is Literature?" considers Richard Wright's vocation as a writer in the section entitled 'For Whom Does One Write?' This meditation follows Sartre's argument for the writer's role as "mediator" in society: while "freedom is at the origin" of a writer's choice to be a writer, the writer necessarily, according to Sartre, becomes invested with a "social function" (77). As a result of this function the
public "intervenes with its conception of society and of literature within it" (77). But such a neat system of exchange between writer and public becomes complicated when the writer does not square with the public conception of literature. And Sartre considers how Richard Wright, by virtue of his oppressed status as a southern American Negro, immediately discovers his literary subject within his complex relationship to his society. Wright's writing, he says, refers to two contexts and has a split public: cultivated Negroes of the North and white Americans of goodwill (78-79). Without knowing any of these groups of people, Wright "implicates" them, setting up unpredictable resonances "in their minds" concerning precisely the dual social function of a black author in America in the 1940s (78). Sartre thus provides for a reading of Black Boy like my own, which accents not the creation of an ahistorical self but the coming-to-be in history of an author. But Sartre never questions Wright's desire to be an author as he will, in The Words, question his own authorial desire. He accepts, in this essay, Wright's freedom (autonomy) in coming to be a writer, and Wright's freedom (situatedness) in writing from his position in social history.

In "What Is Literature?" and "Introducing Les Temps Modernes" (1945), Sartre shows himself to be generally uncritical of the decision to be a writer but didactically critical of the role of the writer. These essays designate this role in the program of "littérature engagée," or committed writing, which they lay out:

[F]or us, writing is an enterprise; since writers are alive before being dead; since we think that we must try to be as right as we can in our books; and since, even if afterwards the centuries show us to be in the wrong, this is no reason why they should prove us wrong in advance; since we think that the writer should commit himself completely in his works, and not in an abjectly passive role
by putting forward his vices, his misfortunes, and his weaknesses, but as a resolute will and as a choice, as this total enterprise of living that each one of us is, it is then proper that we take up this problem at its beginning and that we, in our turn, ask ourselves: "Why does one write?" (46-47)

Certain themes in the above description of the "enterprise of writing" recur throughout the essays composing "What is Literature?" including: the idealist belief in writing as a human act which, as the next section ("Why Write?") explains, is done for others; the emphasis on disclosing the present through writing and thus engaging with the realities of life rather than courting the immortal glory of the dead; and the idea that words make books while misfortunes remain a part of life which the writer briefly transcends in an effort to disclose them to readers. One key idea intrinsic to the program of littérature engagée not noted in the above passage is that writing changes the world. The call for change connects with the need for writing for the present, where the writer is situated: "to write for one's age . . . is to want to maintain it or change it, thus to go beyond it toward the [near] future, and it is this effort to change it that places us most deeply within it" ("What Is" 243). The changes that the writer devotes himself to are specific aspects of the world signaled by particular events, concrete situations, to which the writer applies his "gift." "Gift," indeed, is an operative word throughout "What Is Literature?" In "the ceremony of the gift," "a pact of generosity is established between the reader and the author" in which: 1) the writer appeals to the reader's freedom to collaborate in the production of the work, 2) the reader recognizes the writer's creative freedom, and 3) the writer discloses the world and offers it "as a task to the generosity of the reader" ("What Is" 54, 58, 60, 65). In the case of a writer like Richard
Wright, such an intersubjective pact is problematized to the extent that the public is dual and limited by prejudice against the writer's creative freedom. But according to Sartre, the writer in his autonomy is unperturbed. The most any writer has to fear, according to these essays, is the temptation of irresponsibility to which his (presumably) middle-class origins expose him.18

The last comment suggests Sartre's aggression against his bourgeois personal history in composing these essays. Indeed, "What is Literature?" could well be considered an example of Sartre writing against himself, a tendency which he explains in his autobiography The Words:

It's true that I'm not a gifted writer. I've been told so, I've been called labored. So I am; my books reek of sweat and effort; I grant that they stink in the nostrils of our aristocrats. I've often written them against myself, which means against everybody, with an inten...
Begun about six years after the publication of "What is Literature?" and nine years after the inaugural essay of Les Temps Modernes, The Words directly elaborates the condemnation of its author's past and posits his conversion from it. This elaboration indicates one reason for reading The Words from the purview of the 1940s essays; there are other reasons. Some of the chief concerns of Sartre's program for litterature engagée make their way into his autobiography, where Sartre confronts them within the context of his personal history: among them, the desire for authorial fame and immortality, the rejection of a futuristic attitude, the ceremony of the gift, and the sincerity of the writer's actions vis-a-vis his public. Early critics of The Words argue that the autobiography witnesses the "failure" of committed literature, thus stressing the distance Sartre travels between the 1940s and the 1950s, when he was writing and revising the manuscript. I contend, however, that Sartre's critical preoccupation with bourgeois literary culture provides a continuum between the essays and the autobiography. To be sure, the optimism which the earlier works evince regarding the writer's choice to be a writer has been replaced by an explanation and critique of that optimism. But the conversion from bourgeois to committed writer posited by The Words is, as Paul John Eakin observes, an incomplete one, a fact to which I will return (152). The narrative extends rather than departs from Sartre's lifelong questioning preoccupation with authorship and the social phenomenon of literature. Even as a child, Sartre insists, he wondered, "what do books talk about, who writes them, why?"—a perfect recapitulation of the questions addressed in his 1940s essays (The Words 57; Sartre's emphasis). By 1964, when Sartre rejected the Nobel Prize
for Literature, these questions had acquired a negative force. *The Words* reflects this negative force in the narrator's explicit suspicion of the insincerity and incompleteness of his authorial conversion. Both positing and doubting his critical posture towards his "rebirth" as a committed author, *The Words*, too, is systematically written against the author as an author. Thus, by Sartre's logic, it is written against "everybody" contributing to his once-deemed "free" choice to be an author: that is, against his fathers.

*The Words* deepens the exposure of the self-authorizing fictions underlying the choice of authorship earlier detailed in *Black Boy*; but in contrast to Wright's questioning and ambivalent assessment of the sources of his black authorship, Sartre vehemently condemns the cultural conditions that, blended with his familial circumstances, brought him to authorship. The most important familial circumstance in this context is Sartre's "orphanhood"—by which he means not the loss of both parents but rather the death of his father just after his own birth. (I will take up the significance of Sartre's claim to orphanhood when his mother is alive and well in the second inquiry.) *The Words* traces a causal relationship between this absent father and the self-begetting author Sartre becomes. Competing for attention with this psychodrama are the cultural conditions in question: the nineteenth-century bourgeois, secular humanism embodied by Sartre's grandfather, Charles Schweitzer. Both sections of the narrative begin with reference to Charles, the patriarchal model in Sartre's life from whom he is even at the time of writing still disentangling himself. Like *Black Boy*, then, *The Words* represents determinative environmental influences as well as psychological particularities of its
narrator/protagonist. As such, like Black Boy too, it has received interpretations accenting either its "representative" status (as an autobiography of a twentieth-century man) or its discrete, self-referential value (within Sartre's oeuvre). My reading of The Words as an autobiography intends to bridge this bifurcation between the individual and society much as Sartre would have desired. The category 'author' affords a dual vision of an individual and an individual participating in a broader cultural praxis. Focusing on the antipaternity arguments with which The Words theorizes—for and against—Sartre's childhood self-authorization and later authorial praxis, I will show how Sartre's critique of authorship is simultaneously a critique—but not a disavowal—of himself.

The self-fathering fiction propounded by The Words pushes this strategy of explaining authorship to a register higher than that used in Black Boy. While Wright repudiates his father as if he were zero, Sartre nullifies his father by equating his early death with the eradication of his existence. Sartre describes rapidly his mother's and father's brief association and marriage in order to posit the death of the father as the "the big event" of his own life (18). He is the son of a dead man, which is to say, of no one: "I was given to understand that I was the child of a miracle" (21). The narrator shows none of the expected disbelief in this proposition: rather he adopts it as a cause for his "freedom," for his persistent and "incredible levity," for his lack of interest in "the canker of power" and leadership, and for his lack of a superego (21, 19). Everything else relevant to Sartre's authorship in the narrative devolves from this proposition, including his vulnerability to the bourgeois
mentality which he so despises. On this one point the narrative exhibits total complacency: his father is the absent first cause which Sartre himself must replace. The narrative's rhetoric of self-justification and self-authorization flows from this premise, and in turn supports its veracity. But what if the premise were false?

This question is implicit in Douglas Collins' remarks on The Words in Sartre as Biographer. Collins reads Sartre's eradication of his father in much the same way that Fabre reads Wright's treatment of his father: as a preemptive strike against the father. According to Collins, Sartre exhibits a "positive narcissism" in "refusing filiation" and thus placing himself outside of cause and effect hierarchies--or rather, in command of them. Such a reading discredits Sartre's confident opinion that he has "no Superego" (20). And it discredits his breezy disclaimer that he had no curiosity about Jean-Baptiste, suggesting rather a kind of violent filial reaction (20). Reflecting this implied aggression are the narrator's remarks on the "rotten" "bond of paternity":

To beget children, nothing better; to have them, what iniquity! Had my father lived, he would have lain on me at full length and would have crushed me. As luck had it, he died young. Amidst Aeneas and his fellows who carry their Anchises on their backs, I move from shore to shore, alone and hating those invisible begetters who bestraddle their sons all their life long. I left behind me a young man who did not have time to be my father and who could now be my son (19; author's emphasis).

Evident in these remarks is an apprehension of filial subjection to which Sartre responds with hatred and an inversion of primacy: he fathers his father. Quite likely, his troubled relations with his stepfather, not mentioned in The Words, might have been displaced onto this absent father and the paternal relations he symbolizes for the narrator. In any event, the use of the absent father as a first cause which Sartre
assumes by default of the father appears under Collins' lens as a rhetoric rather than a fact beyond discourse.

In contrast to Collins, Paul John Eakin accepts as unproblematic Sartre's proposition that he is unfathered and the rhetoric of self-propagation it premises. Throughout his chapter on Sartre, Eakin builds on Sartre's testimony of his "causeless condition" without once questioning the terms of this rhetoric. And he is not merely describing the narrative when he discusses Sartre "in the act of becoming father to himself" and Sartre's orphanhood as "the sign of his causeless condition . . . the gratuitousness of his existence" (136). Rather, Eakin uses Sartre's self-fathering fiction to authorize a theory of autobiography dependent on this fiction. Eakin warrants Sartre's role as father and child, cause and effect, in order to argue that all autobiographers rely on Sartrean fictions of self-creation in narrating their lives.²⁷ In the last inquiry of this chapter I will discuss the problematic gender assumptions guiding such an extrapolation of Sartre's self-fathering fiction and the Cartesian rhetoric of origins it invokes. At present I want to stress that this extrapolation effects an elision between the categories of self and author, self-in-and-through-writing and author-in-and-through-history. Sartre makes such an elision, but in so doing he calls attention to the acculturated illusions persistently linking selfhood and authorship in modern intellectual discourses. Nevertheless, by designating his fatherless condition as the structuring principle of his life, Sartre's critique of his authorship becomes complicitous with the paternal bond he despises. This bond is "at the root" of his childhood self-authorization;
and this self-authorization is likewise "at the root" of his authorial career --including his autobiographical The Words.

Sartre's annihilation of his father reverberates throughout the narrative with the "annihilation" he reports he himself underwent as a child. This annihilation occurs first in his "play-acting" with his grandfather, who encourages it with romantic flamboyance. "I drew myself out of nothingness in a burst of altruism," he says, "and assumed the disguise of childhood" (31, 32) He plays the devoted grandson to his grandfather's adoring grandfather role, creating himself afresh with each variation on this theme. In describing the "full act" played out between himself and his grandfather, Sartre testifies that he was both "the giver and the gift" (32). Gone is the appreciation for "the ceremony of the gift" earlier seen in "What Is Literature?" The narrator now ironizes the generosity with which he presents himself to his grandfather. Similarly, The Words ironizes how this calculated if empty generosity contaminates how the narrator re-presents himself (as author re-presenting himself, ad infinitum) in writing. Pleasing his grandfather then (and perhaps yet, he feels [163]) is the "mandate" upon which Poulou acts (163, 32). "If my father were alive I would know my rights and duties," the narrator says, implicating his present authorial self in the present tense (32). But in this father's absence, Poulou is a mass of artifice, a "fake child," "an impostor" playing up to his grandfather's self-worship in doing him "the favor of being born" over and over (83).

The language of gift-giving and gratuitous pleasure studding Sartre's account of his theatrical relations with Charles contrasts sharply with the equally prevalent language of law. The rift between these
discourses of pleasure and legitimacy accounts for one source of the pervasive irony underlying the account of Charles and who he represents in Sartre's self-authorizing tale. Only occasionally does the narrator syncopate these discourses, as in this statement: "[Charles] chose to regard me as a singular factor of fate, as a gratuitous and always revocable gift" (23; my emphasis). Such heteroglossia, in Mikhail Bakhtin's terms, reflects both the pleasure of a romantic self and the illegitimacy it betokens. Thus, in Sartre's critique of [his] self-authorization, the pleasure of self-invention (the gift) comes at the price of legitimacy. Self-invention authorizes a being who is illegitimate at his origins. Notably, Sartre's illegitimacy is a metaphysical one in contrast to Wright's social illegitimacy as as black author. On metaphysical grounds, then, Sartre deems his self-authorization a "neurosis" which dates to his play-acting with his grandfather (254).

Sartre indicates his "fatherless" condition is the source of his vulnerability to this neurosis; but his tutelage in Charles's "priestly humanism" explains for him his continuing entanglement with the illegitimate gift of self-authorization. Charles introduces him at an early age to the "sacred objects" of books (43). With his mother's help, Poulou learns to read these sacred objects, discovering the world through words on the page. Like himself, the immediate world is insubstantial. As he fills himself with "ceremonious discourse," so too the world takes shape in words and ideas (49). Repeatedly in The Words, Sartre condemns the "idealism" implicit in this essentially structuralist understanding of the preeminence of signs over things. In one such passage he writes,

In Platonic fashion, I went from knowledge to its subject. I found more reality in the idea than in the thing because it was given to me
first and because it was given as a thing. It was in books that I encountered the universe: assimilated, classified, labeled, pondered, still formidable; and I confused the disorder of my bookish experiences with the random course of real events. From that came the idealism which it took me thirty years to shake off (51).

Sartre's condemnation of idealism is linked to his repudiation of his grandfather in that, through Charles's explanations, Sartre comes to situate his "idealism" within the religion of humanism: "[T]hese Humanities led us straight to the Divine, all the more in that added to them were the beauties of nature. The works of God and the great achievements of man were shaped by one and the same impulse. . . . I had found my religion" (59). Sartre's devotion to his grandfather thus leads directly to his belief that "nothing seemed to me more important than a book" (59). In turn, this belief is historicized by being categorized as the legacy of Charles, the prototypical nineteenth-century humanist, "the petty bourgeois intellectual," "priest" of secular humanism (176). Sartre endeavors to expose the ideology underpinning a religious devotion to books, accomplishing at the same time a justification of how he formerly shared this devotion. Charles, in this light, represents both a social agent and a familial agent in The Words.

The narrator defines Charles as a "clerk" and translator who wrote language textbooks, but he denies that Charles ever took himself as a "writer" (139). Charles harbored a suspicion of "authors" which has both an active and a reactive role in Sartre's story of Poulou's authorial vocation. While Charles pays homage to the "illustrious men" of belles-lettres in past centuries, live authors "bothered him," for he preferred to attribute "the works of Man directly to the Holy Ghost" (62); visible authors challenge this divine intercession. Quite likely, the stress on
writing for the present in Sartre's 1940s essays derives from his reaction against Charles's indictment of non-dead authors. But just as likely, those essays' protest against immortality as a proper aspiration of living authors, indicates Sartre's continuing preoccupation with the death-in-life that authorship represented for himself as a child. In *The Words*, Poulou reacts against his grandfather's opinion of authors in clandestine readings of the day's pulp literature, but he nevertheless integrates his grandfather's secular humanism in his belief in the immortality conferred on authors as a group, dead or alive. And this belief, like every other belief exposed and repudiated by the narrator of *The Words*, derives from Sartre's *prima causa*: his nothingness as an unfathered son.

The fable of the ticket-collector figures as the point of connection in the narrative between Sartre's explanation of his coming-to-be-an author and his metaphysical illegitimacy. In this fable, a ticket-collector on a train comes and asks Sartre for a ticket which Sartre cannot produce. Instead, he reveals to the collector, "I had to be in Dijon for important and secret reasons, reasons that concerned France and perhaps all mankind" (111). "A higher law" endows him with the right to be on the train, and by inference, this higher law is his authorial vocation. Sartre does not temporalize this fable by situating it within the imagination of his childhood or of his present recollection of that childhood. Instead, the fable functions as a lens through which to see Sartre as child/author. This double vision extends to the end of the narrative when the fable is retold in an altered form:

> I've again become the traveler without a ticket that I was at the age of seven: the ticket-collector has entered my compartment; he looks at me, less severely than in the past; in fact, all he wants is to go away, to let me finish the trip in peace; he'll be satisfied with a
valid excuse, any excuse. Unfortunately I can't think of any; and besides, I don't even feel like trying to find one (253).

In both versions of the fable, Sartre identifies himself in all four roles: as ticket-collector, train, unticketed person, and organizer of the fable. So too in _The Words_ he is narrator, narrative (concretized in language), unticketed author, and organizer of the whole scheme. The ticket-collector fable thus represents how the Sartre of _The Words_ interprets existence in terms of self-authorization in and through language; but it also shows how he supplements and justifies nonexistence through this self-authorization. Such a paradoxical explanation of the mandate to exist has its genesis in the paradox of filiation set in motion by Sartre's self-fathering fiction. Sartre inherits nonexistence from his absent father, but this inheritance makes possible his existence through fictions (such as _The Words_) which he authorizes as if he were his own father. In this way, the ticket-collector fable functions to explain the connection between Sartre's metaphysical illegitimacy and his coming-to-be-an-author. But the fable's situation within the broader context of Sartre's critique of authorship in _The Words_ denaturalizes the self-authorization it explains. It is culturally conditioned by the religion of books Sartre inherits from his grandfather, even as it challenges the religion by appropriating the role of organizer from the Holy Ghost (in Charles' view, the Author of authors). Against Eakin's conception of the ticket-collector fable as universally applicable and true, _The Words_ exposes its sustaining gendered (filial) and cultural biases.

Just as the process of self-authorization entails an alliance with and a departure from Charles, so too Poulou's "chosen" vocation to be an author reveals his dual positioning vis-a-vis Charles. Although Poulou
assumes the role of author partly in reaction to Charles, the narrator repudiates his authorial vocation and his grandfather as if they were wholly allied. In place of his infantine play-acting, the gifts that seven-year-old Poulou now gives begin with the gift of himself through his self-authorized vocation as a writer. Adult readers of his little novels admire his authorial play and so support his vocation, all except for Charles. In a man-to-man conference from which the women of the family are barred, Charles rather steers Poulou towards an academic clerkship modeled more or less on his own career and on his conception of the inferior status of authors. Poulou, however, requires the authoring career in order to counteract his sense of illegitimacy and insubstantiality: the quest for self-authorization guides his decision. The narrator explains how he comes to compose his juvenilia in response to his "inner poverty"—in contrast to Wright's actual poverty (163). Writing his clandestine tales of his imaginary heroism guarantees his own lacking reality: "Depicting real objects with real words that were penned with a real pen, I'd be hanged if I didn't become real myself" (160). In this way, the narrator explains, "if I said 'I,' it meant 'I who write'" (153). His self-authorized "Destiny" as an author guarantees his existence in making him the source/autour of the world: "everything derived from myself. I had pulled myself up out of nothingness by my own bootstraps in order to provide men with the writings they wanted" (172).

The glitch in this destiny is, however, Poulou's recognition that "it was I who conferred it upon myself" (171). Just as Sartre recognizes he is the organizer of the ticket-collector fable, so too he registers his sardonic awareness that the mandate from outside is lacking in his self-
authorized career. While Wright merely questions the bedrock of feelings propelling him incomprehensibly towards an authorship black boys were categorically denied, Sartre draws attention to the sourcelessness of his own vocation. For the "I" who confers the vocation, the self who authorizes his authorship, is nothing; and what can nothing mandate? "I who write" begs the question of the source of authorship; in Sartre's rhetoric of origins this source begins and ends by being indeterminate, just as Sartre begins and ends his life "amidst books" (40).

Notably, Sartre's narrator does not evince the complacency found in Eakin's structuralist interpretation that the author is per force an invention of himself through language just as the subject is subjected, in the Lacanian schema, through language. Self-authorization, as noted above, may rely on the subject-constituting (gift-giving) properties of language, but those properties do not authorize or legitimate the coming-to-be of an author. Sartre himself notes that he would never have written without the enabling illusion that "to name the thing was both to create and take it" (60). This illusion enabled him to name himself and the world, invent both, and so possess both. And arguably it still operates in the autobiographical's written repossession of childhood. But even granting the critical exposure of this illusion (or, alternatively, granting Eakin's position that this illusion reflects a linguistic necessity), Sartre as author—not self, but writer in-the-world—nevertheless remains ticketless within the drama of the authorization he organizes. "Why write?" remains an active question right through the narrative's conclusion, and Eakin's theory of autobiographical self-invention does not
offer an alternative to Poulou's pitiful answer to the question: "I wrote in order to write" (182).

Does The Words offer such an alternative? The stated object for writing, cast off in a mere sentence, echoes the program of litterature engagée developed in "What Is Literature?": "One writes for one's neighbors" (180). But at the narrative's end Sartre remains ticketless: can this fable be construed as a Barthesian avowal that the author is dead for Sartre? The evidence of The Words is conflicting. On the one hand, it literalizes Barthes's theoretical situation. Sartre completes his self-fathering fiction by relegating himself to the status he has assigned his father. Authors, like the child Poulou, are dead before their time; they are metamorphosed from flesh and blood into the books they write and the biographies that compose their lives, retrospectively, from the purview of their future authorship (64, 199-206). The narrator reveals how the summaries of authors' lives collected in The Childhood of Famous Men conditioned his early bourgeois understanding of authorship. The "retrospective illusion" of these summaries causes existence to have "the appearance of unfolding" towards an already known end: death (200). And Poulou, in search of the end that will mandate his existence, accepts the proleptic mortality an author suffers in exchange for the immortality that posterity later awards him. "I became my own obituary," the narrator maintains (206). As child-author, he saw himself as dead.

On the other hand, the narrator acridly acknowledges the psychological consequences of dying to his authorship. Far from being proud that "I made a human sacrifice" to literature, Sartre repudiates the death which Poulou equates with glory, and so repudiates his youthful
belief that "to write involves a refusal to live" (191). Whereas "What Is Literature?" challenged the social ethics of writing for immortal stature, The Words rigorously analyzes the psychological and existential foolishness of his personal implication in this ethics. Casting a humorous, self-ironizing eye on the juvenilia that demonstrates his self-immolation—the heroic adventures he wrote whose episodes were always "continued in the next installment" (116)—Sartre patently defies that authorship must entail annihilating oneself to live inside books by writing a narrative of childhood which testifies to the historical existence of the child he was (204).

Perhaps the most weighty evidence of Sartre's ambivalence towards the dead author that he was and that bourgeois authors are lies in the narrator's contradictory position on his conversion from Poulou's self-authorized/self-authorizing fictions. The narrating story of The Words, the story of the composition of the narration which the text inscribes, includes various references to the bourgeois ideals and illusions that the narrator professes to have overthrown. Among the repudiated beliefs are: that literature is produced and preserved by a "priesthood" devoted to the world's and the writer's salvation; that words, as the "quintessence of things," constitute and preempt life; that he himself answered a call to the literary priesthood by virtue of a gift with words, and so differs from others by his personal "mandate to give expression" to the possibilities and impossibilities of existence (142, 252). In general, it is his childhood that the narrator is writing against; and he asserts his intellectual distance from it in the theory-construction of his authorship.
But the narrating story of The Words and the self-authorizing fictions contaminating its critique of self-authorization likewise suggest a continuity between the child playing at authorship and the author at fifty. Anticipating readers' arrival at this conclusion, the narrator insists, "the reader has realized that I loathe my childhood and whatever has survived of it" (163). And the many remarks that the narrator makes regarding his present praxis of authorship which begin "even now . . ." manifest those places where the dead child-author persists in the very alive and famous man-author. Within the space of two pages, the narrator claims, "I have changed," and, "[A]ll the child's traits are still to be found in the quinquagenarian" (252, 254). Both claims appear true to this author writing against himself at every turn. Condemning self-authorization, justifying self-authorization; deconstructing his self-fathering fictions, and reconstituting his self-fathering fictions: contradictions in The Word support Sartre's claim to an incomplete conversion: "I've given up the office but not the frock" (253). Still garbed in the raiment of an author, he continues to write, though stripped of a justification to do so: "What else can I do?" (253). To be an author, by this reading, is not to be an author. Lacking a mandate, an author can do/be nothing, it seems, except continue to pose questions about the office, the function of authorship.

But there is something strange about conducting such a severe critique against self-authorization and bourgeois authorship within a medium that perpetuates one's authorship. Barbara Johnson addresses this puzzle when she says, "[A]n inquiry that attempts to study an object by means of that very object is open to certain analyzable aberrations."29
An author against authorship within the self-authorizing medium of autobiography and within the subgenre of autobiography which interrogates authorship: this author is indeed spinning a theoretical thicket. The question of the theoretical rigor of *The Words* has troubled at least one critic. Jane P. Tompkins insightfully comments, "The fact that Sartre has completely enclosed his past in a theory emphasizes his need to make experience conform to a pattern that is intellectually comprehensible" (274). Whereas Eakin applauds Sartre's biographical method of structuring a "life" around a single principle/cause, Tomkins disparages the "bad faith" of the method. In her view, this method allows Sartre to foreclose criticism from outside: the play-acting scheme supplies the theory of self-authorization with a framework that witnesses Sartre's transcendent shrewdness in seeing through his own disguises and his willingness to cast the first stone at himself. Ultimately, Sartre's candor and sincerity in *The Words* are what Tomkins suspects, and there she is not alone. S. Benyon John, for example, identifies Sartre's use of candor as an "offensive weapon" in the larger body of his autobiographical writings, and notes its particularly duplicitous role in *The Words*, which he groups with his most guarded documents of public image-making.

Sartre, of course, preempts all discussion of candor in the narrating story of *The Words*. After an especially vehement declaration of his present distance from "Karl's humanism," he writes,

What I have just written is false. True. Neither true nor false, like everything written about madmen, about men. I have reported the facts as accurately as my memory permitted me. But to what extent did I believe in my delirium? That's the basic question, and yet I can't tell. I realized later that we can know everything about our attachments except their force, that is, their sincerity. . . . Sincerely? what does that mean? (69)
Further on, in an equally dodging fashion, he explains his perspective:

I now regard my tricks and juggling as spiritual exercises and my insincerity as the caricature of an utter sincerity that was constantly grazing me and always eluding me (207).

Does "utter sincerity" still elude him at the narrative's end? Winding up this critique of (his) authorship, Sartre defines himself (who throughout has been "the undefined" [39]): "A whole man, composed of all men and as good as all of them and no better than any" (255). Eakin accepts this statement at face value, making it the conclusion of his chapter on Sartre. But Tompkins scorns the apparent earnestness of this self-professed poseur. Even Simone de Beauvoir, in her "Conversations with Jean-Paul Sartre" in 1974, finds the plea "an equivocal phrase"--"You think it and do not think it"--and asks Sartre for clarification. But the more compelling challenge to the candor of the theory of self-authorization and the ending of the narrative comes from Sartre's own definition of insincerity: "when the artist wants to ascribe a meaning to his misfortunes, a kind of immanent finality, and when he persuades himself that they are there in order for him to speak about them" ("What Is" 240; Sartre's emphasis). There is no mistaking the desire of "finality" expressed by the last line; but then Sartre has warned us, "My best book is the one I'm in the process of writing; right after it comes the last one that was published, but I'm secretly getting ready to be disgusted with it before long... and to end with a masterpiece" (241).

What leaves the question of Sartre's insincerity in The Words permanently vexed is the paradoxical treatment of origins in his self-fathering fiction. Killing off and repudiating his fathers generates a quest to replace biological and cultural origins with self-appointed
origins. The rhetoric of origins galvanized by this rhetorical act of violence is guaranteed to leave open the question of origins: to leave open the question of the site of the speaking author—the origin of the discourse. At the same time, the rhetoric permits the creation of the fiction of the author's primacy in his own scheme, guaranteeing that everything really does, as Poulou thought, derive from oneself. Sincerely or not, both The Words and Black Boy create this paradoxical state of affairs through their self-conscious fictions of self-fathering self-authorization. The peculiarity of both narratives lies in the unquestioned adherence to (or belief in) the fiction that one may father oneself. The paradox of both narratives lies in the attempt to repudiate psychological, biological, and cultural origins while recreating them. And the importance of both narratives lies in the ways in which they expose this paradox by self-consciously questioning or ironically attacking the self-authorization that their autobiographies exemplify and recapitulate. Profoundly sensitive to or critical of the changing role of the author in the twentieth century, these autobiographers offer one patently masculine perspective on the fictions of agency and authority by which authors authorize their voices within the literary arena. I will turn now to a brief study of the significance of race in differentiating Sartre's and Wright's fictions of self-authorization, in preparation for the feminist critique of the constraints of a rhetoric of self-fathering fictions as a mode of autobiographical inquiry.

Inquiry 1: "Then how could one live in a world in which one's mind and perceptions meant nothing and authority and tradition meant everything?" (Black Boy 182)
The child-author voicing this question is on the wrong side of authority: in this respect he could not differ more from Sartre's Poulou, insulated in the cozy bourgeois righteousness of his grandfather's home. The rapprochement of Black Boy and The Words began with the acknowledgement that their remarkable authors came from radically different backgrounds. In order to isolate the method of arguing for and against self-authorization which these autobiographies share— the fiction of self-fathering—I bracketed the difference of Wright's and Sartre's background. This bracketing permitted a close examination of each text's construction of the fiction of self-fathering and the fiction's exposure of itself as cause and effect of the autobiographical self-authorization. But insofar as these autobiographies function as stories about "real" and not "fictional" authors, it is essential now to steer this analysis from textual matters towards referential matters and begin the overreading process described in chapter one. Reviewing the conclusions of the foregoing interpretations from this referential and so culturally-sensitive angle, I will reintroduces into the critique of authorship generated by self-fathering fictions the variable of dissimilar backgrounds—the difference in race and class origins of Sartre and Wright.

Sartre wrote The Words towards the end of a full and variegated lifetime of authorship, after he had already been authorized as university professor, novelist, and editor. In a sense, his authority as a spokesperson of authorship by 1964 was indisputable, even if he used that authority to deny itself. It necessarily affects the import of Sartre's autobiobiography when we situate it within the context of his professional history. By insisting on the relationship between The Words and Sartre's
call for a *littérature engagée*, I began this contextualization process; if, however, his full history is accounted for, then it is difficult for Sartre's repudiation of his origins, of his self-authorizing fictions, and of the professional "office" of authorship that redundantly expresses that self-authorization to avoid appearing gratuitous. Brilliant and perhaps influential to other authors and would-be authors, Sartre's critique of the bourgeois roots of authorship and of his own roots in particular is, by his own admission, powerless to change the course of his eminently literary and privileged life. This powerlessness must be weighted when appraising the severity of Sartre's critique of authorship in *The Words*.

Indeed, issues of the relative power of Wright and Sartre are central to a comparison of their autobiographies. Working towards the conclusion that *The Words* offers the more severe critique of authorship, my analysis has risked creating the impression that Sartre is a "more radical" author than Wright, whose *Black Boy* "only" questions the self-authorization its fiction argues for. The coherence of this impression depends upon a static, individualistic view of authors, in which all things with respect to origins and to the relationship between author and literary establishment are equal. This first inquiry intends to subvert this impression by problematizing the category of origins with race and class considerations and so disrupting any simple equivalence between Sartre and Wright as authors. Since origins, their repudiation and recreation, are what has been at stake all along in this chapter, this problematization is the natural next step. By questioning the social pragmatics of *Black Boy* as a young black author's work of self-authorization, this section opens up Sartre's theoretical critique of the delusive authorship effected
by self-fathering fictions. It breaks up the rigorous logic of The Words and prevents the similarly rigorous view that The Words is the logical "end" of the inquiry against self-fathering fictions "begun" in Black Boy.

In "What Is Literature?" Sartre argued that Wright's audience constituted a double context for his writing's reception. In contrast, contemporary black literary theory argues for the need to see the doubleness voiced within Afro-American works. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., for example, characterizes the Afro-American literary work as "two-toned" or "double-voiced," where Western literary formalisms vie with black vernacular and formal traditions in the textual signification of meaning ("Criticism" 3). Such a polyphony of voices effects a discursive heteroglossia, in the terms of Mikhail Bakhtin, which might be deemed "rich" from a formalist point of view, but which may likewise indicate subjective confusion, where the assumptions of one discourse conflict with the assumptions of another. Such confusion is evident in the contradictory relationship between Wright and the South inscribed in Black Boy. Self-authorization via the humanist program of a "self-beyond-culture," as Kent calls it, supports the narrator's repudiation of the South/his fathers on the grounds that there his mind was imprisoned. On the other hand, the black vernacular traditions (which Wright later showed interest in) manifest themselves in the narrator's questioning revelation of the extent to which the assertion of his patently black voice derives from the South; they belie the adequacy of humanist discourse for figuring Wright's trajectory to authorship. This discursive confusion carries with it a parallel class confusion. The "outsider self" some critics have called Wright is actually a man between classes: a man condemned by
black Chicago workers as a bourgeois "who talks like a book," but a man nevertheless devoted to articulating the economic oppression of southern blacks from the personal standpoint of having been there, as his "How Jim Crow Feels" testifies. The questions teeming in Black Boy which serve to contradict the self-authorization argued for arise from this discursive and social category confusion, and not from a Sartrean theoretical rigor. The absence of ironic distance in the text suggestively underscores the immediacy of these questions for Wright as he wrote Black Boy in the mid-1930s.

If we compare for a moment Wright's and Sartre's treatment of the mind as the agent securing the metaphysical authorization thematized in Black Boy and The Words, the significance of Wright's discursive confusion in inventing and questioning his self-authorization will become clearer. In Black Boy the mind (including thoughts and feelings) of the individual is the instrument of redemption. The mind constitutes the agency systematically withheld from blacks by their acculturation in racist southern culture. In this way, the negation of blacks in Western culture maps onto their absence of mind; and conversely, their positive influence on the culture oppressing them depends on the presencing of the black mind. Barbara Johnson explains the potential danger of this transcendental inversion between black absence and black presence. The black mind, trapped in this system of negation, risks replicating the logocentric errors of the humanist white mind while sustaining its position of Otherness. But Black Boy exhibits the phenomenon of "repetition with a difference" insofar as the self-fathering fictions eradicating the father/body are ultimately questioned.
the persistence of the South in his identity mitigates the agency of the solitary ascending mind: as Valerie Smith observes, although isolation (of the mind) is the site of enunciation from which Wright begins, his writings tend to deconstruct rather than consolidate this isolation.\textsuperscript{38}

In contrast, the mind pervades \textit{The Words} as the source and object of change. The conversion that the mind engineers is a conversion within consciousness by means of an examination of consciousness: intentional consciousness is directed at consciousness itself. Except for a few spurious references to eating and evacuation, and to the haircut that transforms Poulou into an ugly boy, the body is expunged from the narrative; the author's mind is everywhere though hidden. By ignoring the body in this way, the narrative suggests Sartre's assumption that, of course, thinking is paramount. The revolution/revelation of the interior in \textit{The Words} imitates Sartre's philosophical realignment in the early 1940s when, after having read Heidegger, he became disillusioned with, though not fully extricated from, the Husserlian phenomenology of subjectivity. According to Boschetti, Heidegger convinced Sartre of the need to integrate the "historicity" of man into his philosophy of free consciousness (55-56). Hence Sartre's reorientation of his "mission" as an author: to affirm his being in-the-world, to affirm the social function of writers in \textit{littérature engagée}. But this program's call to action of freely choosing individuals shows Sartre's persistent adherence to the metaphysics of subjectivity (based on the Cartesian \textit{cogito}) that Heidegger renounces. Sartre's philosophical dislocation and relocation appear still in-progress in \textit{The Words}: the war it wages on humanism was destined to be compromised by its humanist orientation in the mind of the
speaker. Social criticism only piggybacks on the metaphysical (r)evolutions of the mind.

Thus while both Black Boy and The Words advance a critique of self-authorization based on questions of metaphysical (because mental) illegitimacy, Wright's illegitimacy is simultaneously "colored" by the persistence of his racial origins in the South. Perhaps more than anything, the fusing of metaphysical and social issues of illegitimacy in Black Boy accounts for the fact that the narrator comes to question self-authorization rather than the authorship that it authorizes in turn. The Words critiques authorship from a metaphysical perspective, mobilizing its self-fathering fictions to render absurd a profession over which Sartre has reigned in various institutional capacities for twenty-five years. But authorship is never simply a metaphysical question. Nor is it strictly a textual question, as Valerie Smith treats it when she equates "the process of authorship" with "the processes of plot construction, characterization, and designation of beginnings and endings" (2). Authorship serves, as Sartre almost grudgingly notes, "some purpose" (LM 54), although the agency betokened by the author's texts is not totally in his or her control. Editorial and publishing institutions, wholly unaddressed by these two narratives of childhood, condition the agency of the author and, depending on their impact, have the power to eradicate it. Published, promoted, edited, introduced, translated in Les Temps Modernes, Black Boy physically manifests the signs of institutionalization that it nowhere directly discusses. These signs contribute to the narrative's valorization of authorship by indicating the published text's circulative power, while strengthening the sense of the author's derived agency expressed by the
narrator's questioning ambivalence towards his self-fathering self-authorization.

What shifts within the critique of self-authorization when the fathers/origins repudiated and recreated belong to a black underclass? First, the very notion of origins is destabilized, moving from a purely metaphysical level to a socio-metaphysical level. Second, social and discursive rifts inscribed within the self-fathering fiction are emphasized instead of a merely philosophical resituation of authority within a continuously bourgeois symbolic. Third, far from refuting the hierarchical power of authorship predicated on bourgeois individualism and accenting the fiction of authority, the black self-fathering fiction opens questions concerning the authority of fiction, the power of authorship. Seen in this way, the self-fathering fictions of Black Boy answer the authorial nihilism of The Words instead of the other way around.

Inquiry 2: It astounded me that a man had his place marked out for him. His place: a nothingness hollowed out by universal expectation, an invisible womb from which, so it seemed, one could suddenly be reborn (The Words 91).

The processes by which Sartre and Wright father themselves, as represented in their respective autobiographies, may invoke a patrilineage, but the space into which they are reborn is an appropriated female space. As Sartre's words above suggest, "an invisible womb"—seemingly unattached to a woman, but with a woman's reproductive capacity—functions in the self-fathering discourse as a rhetorical space in which the writer's words can erect (the masculine verb is fitting here) a wholly new, wholly self-made identity for himself. The appropriation of the womb and the birthing process in Wright's and Sartre's self-fathering
fictions signals that the process of "gynesis" occurs in these master
narratives. According to Alice Jardine's theory of gynesis, modern
narratives by men which express a crisis in patriarchal legitimation often
create a space within themselves, a feminine space, which Jardine calls a
"gynema": "a woman-in-effect that is never stable and has no identity"
(Gynesis 25). In this inquiry I will stretch my overreading of The Words
to study its underlying rhetoric of gender: specifically, to demonstrate
the significance of the feminine birthing space within fictions that
otherwise are completely androcentric in their conceptualization of the
ideology of authorship. Because Sartre's is a more exaggerated fiction of
self-fathering than Wright's, I will focus on how the coherence of the
autobiographical questioning of authorship in The Words depends on a
displacement of the mother and a denial of Poulou's origins within her.

The entire plot of self-authorization, stretching from the "fake
child" (84) to the dead-in-life author, coheres around Sartre's premise
that he is an "orphan" (53). How can he be an orphan when he lives with
his mother who rears him in her parents' home? The idea of Poulou's
orphanhood is patently false, but it may suggest a "truth" about the
Sartre writing The Words: that of his persistent desire to be an orphan,
the adolescent fantasy which shores up a child's sense of radical autonomy
in the world. Desiring such individuation, Sartre simply nullifies his
mother's role in his existence. From the outset of his description of Anne
Marie, as he calls her, Sartre renames their relationship:

Whom would I obey? I am shown a young giantess, I am told
she's my mother. I myself would take her rather for an elder
sister. That virgin who is under surveillance, who is obedient to
everyone, I can see very well that she's there to serve me. I love
her, but how can I respect her if no one else does? There are three
bedrooms in our home: my grandfather's, my grandmother's, and
the "children's." The "children" are we: both alike are minors and both alike are supported. But all consideration is for me. A young girl's bed has been put into my room. The girl sleeps alone and awakens chastely. I am still sleeping when she hurries to the bathroom to take her "tub." She comes back all dressed. How could I have been born of her? (21).

Though referred to here and elsewhere as "elder sister" (54), Anne Marie is infantilized in this passage such that she appears rather to be Poulou's junior. Nowhere in the text does Sartre question or critique his childish vision of her girlishness. His three questions in the above passage--"Whom would I obey? . . . how can I respect her if no one else does? . . . How could I have been born of her?"--all indicate an awareness that as Anne Marie's son he owes her respect and obedience; but in questioning what authority he senses is her due, even at a distance of fifty years, Sartre replicates his patriarchal grandfather's condescending view of her and masters her with his rhetoric.

When he asks, "How could I have been born of her?" Sartre's vision overlays Poulou's in a joint repudiation of Anne Marie as his origin. Other than the one place in the text where he indirectly acknowledges himself to be "the son of a widow" (in discussing a friend's similarity to himself [224]), Sartre strictly emphasizes his absent paternal origin. Several times in the narrative, he (and not Poulou) speculates on how the process of self-authorization would have never begun "if my father were alive" (32). If he had lived, thinks Sartre, the father would have provided Poulou with a stable sense of origins so that "I would know my rights and my duties" (32). Maternal origins are thus superseded by paternal origins, even absent ones, on account of the law which the father represents. The language of the law alluded to earlier in this chapter occurs in those places in the text where the absent father is discussed;
the law of the father is the "mandate" which would have grounded Sartre's identity and individuated him unquestionably as a son. The absence of the father does not diminish the desire for this individuation; Sartre's focus on his father's absence indicates that he yet defines himself (or does not) with respect to patriarchal law.

Dorothy Dinnerstein explains how the law of the father (i.e., patriarchal law, encompassing legal systems, institutional authority, and the symbolic hierarchies that buttress them) is linked to fathers' uncertainty of paternity. Citing anthropological studies, Dinnerstein contends that "the tenuousness of [fathers'] physical tie to the young" lies behind the initiation rites of both primitive and modern cultures in which fathers "symbolically and passionately affirm that it is they who have themselves created human beings, as compared with the mere flesh spawned by woman" (80). In her essays on mothers and sons, Adrienne Rich quotes similar studies of tribal societies: "This spiritual rebirth signifies the birth of the 'higher' man who, even on the primitive level, is associated with consciousness, the ego, and will power. . . . The man's world, representing 'heaven,' stands for law and tradition, for the gods of aforetime, so far as they were masculine gods" (quoted in Of Woman 199). Bracketing for the moment the issue of rebirthing, I want to stress here how the law of the father underlies the induction of the son into civilization, with the bequeathal of the "higher" power of civilization as the reward for this induction. I would suggest that Sartre's retention of the father's law as that which arbitrates his identity formation (and reformation ad nauseam) reflects that within his challenge to authorship lies
a quite traditional perception of authorship as an inherently patriarchal institution.

Of course, Sartre's focus on the father's law from the son's perspective reverses the civilizing process Dinnerstein describes, rehearsing instead the son's complicity in negating his mother's power as physical origin in order to reap civilization's rewards. The rebirthing process which Sartre insists upon expresses the anxiety of the son over his mother's power which psychoanalytic research documents. Rich's study on mothering begins with the premise that "the male mind has always been haunted by the force of the idea of dependence on a woman for life itself, the son's constant effort to assimilate, compensate for, or deny the fact that he is 'of woman born'" (Of Woman 11; author's emphasis). This statement is supported by Susan Bordo's provocative psychoanalytic study of Cartesian philosophy, "The Masculinization of Thought." Bordo theorizes that the birth of the Cartesian subject--a Sartre-like individual who "start[s] anew, alone, without influence from the past or other people, with the guidance of reason alone" (448)--is not the end in itself but rather a means of attenuating the separation anxiety from the mother experienced by the male child. The separation is both feared and desired: the son both fears the rupture in his perfect union with the mother and desires the autonomy which will counteract the lack of differentiation from her which he feels in his infantile dependence on her (449). But this anxiety is intolerable. Bordo says, "One mode of dealing with [growing up, that project of] separation is through the denial of any longing for that lost union through an assertion of self against the mother and all that she represents and a rejection of dependency on her" (451).
Like a textbook case, Sartre's utter repression of his mother's mothering role in his origins points to a denial of continuity between himself and her and of the anxiety this continuity might occasion. Instead of pain and longing, then, Poulou's mastery is stressed, to the extent that he even envisions, though obliquely, an incestuous relationship with his Anne Marie. 40

Sartre's fiction of self-fathering as a story and critique of authorship pushes the psychic repression of the mother to its logical conclusion. Assuming the role of child-bearer, Poulou claims, "I keep creating myself; I am the giver and the gift" (32). His birthing abilities apply not only to the creation of himself, however, but to his story-making abilities in general: "I knew it, I was pregnant," Sartre says in describing how Poulou "gives birth" to a response to an adult's question (70). In her essay "Womb Envy: An Explanatory Concept," Eva Feder Kittay establishes the psychoanalytic roots for patriarchy's appropriation of birthing as a concept for conceptualization and artistic processes. Kittay explores the ambivalence of a son's perception of his mother's birthing ability: "[H]ere is a desired capacity which only an inferior being can possess, and her inferior status is intimately tied to her unique possession of that capacity. Is it then that he learns that such desires are unworthy of him . . . and that he must revalue and devalue birthgiving (and related nurturing) if he himself is not to be devalued and thought 'unworthy' of his manhood?" (104). Maybe the weightiest evidence that first Poulou's and then Sartre's crisis in legitimacy is something more than a story is his/their devaluation of actual birth and revaluation of birthing in terms of psychic and artistic creation.
Certainly, his perception of Anne Marie's inferiority—"but how can I respect her if no one else does?"—would account for Sartre's need to demote and displace her himself—first in life, and again in narrative.41

For the fiction through which Sartre authorizes his fiction of self-authorization, The Words, is after all a recapitulation, a re-presentation of the author-ization process remembered and reinvented over fifty years. In this recapitulation Sartre reinvents himself as an incessant reinventor of himself—and continues this pose of himself as author of himself, indeed nothing but an author-self. With something like Montaigne's hubris in claiming his consubstantiality with his book, Sartre claims, "I began my life as I shall no doubt end it: amidst books" (40; Montaigne 281). The great difference between Montaigne's Essays and Sartre's narrative, however—the latter's linear and ultra-logical plot—distinguishes Montaigne's writing self from Sartre's portrait of the author as a young boy. Indeed, the very rigor of the Sartrean logic in representing his self-fathering fictions quite sets The Words apart from Black Boy. Nevertheless, Sartre and Wright similarly authorize fictions that argue for and problematize their radically original being-in-the-world through a repression of their maternal birth. For all their preoccupation with origins, their rhetoric is hardly original. Their fictions of self-fathering replay Descartes' drama of separation anxiety from the feminine medieval culture which split subject (self) from object (mother) and concluded that "one can begin anew with reason as one's only parent" (Bordo 449).

In turning now to women autobiographers, I leave the masculine preoccupation with discovering/inventing origins, which is not, contrary
to Marc Blanchard's belief, a universal preoccupation of autobiographers or authors. The crisis in legitimation individually experienced and represented by Sartre and Wright sets their questionings of authorship apart from Stein, de Beauvoir, and Hurston, whose narratives suggest their relative ease with fluid boundaries of selfhood. Stein's *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, overread in the next chapter, even communicates this ease in its narrative perspective and voice, which authorize a kind of composite of Stein and her partner, Toklas. While the theme of legitimation will recur in the next chapter as Stein struggles with accepting the author-izing process, her crisis results, not from the loss, but from the accession of legitimacy. Ultimately, Stein's two-volume autobiographical project deconstructs the Cartesian epistemology which organizes Wright's and Sartre's self-fathering fictions of self-authorization.
Notes


4. Michel Fabre has this to say about the generic status of *Black Boy*: "Admittedly, when [Wright] declared that he wanted to lend his voice to his silent dark brothers by writing a generic autobiography, Richard Wright sought to create meaning from his youth by imposing upon it a pattern that would make his past the coherent story of a writer's growth against many odds" (*The World* 7). I would suggest that connecting the narrative's generic function with Wright's need to create a coherent pattern of his specific writerly development begs the question of what is generic (here, essentially southern and black) about Richard Wright's self-authorization. Wright's vexed relation to his roots makes this question an important one.

5. See Michel Fabre, "Beyond Naturalism," *Richard Wright*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987) 37-56, for a discussion of Wright's particular variety of naturalism. Fabre makes the point that Wright's personality possessed the naturalist "distrust of those natural forces that man cannot control," but that he could not accept the subjection and powerlessness of the individual in the way provided for by Theodore Dreiser's naturalism (39, 54).

6. An essay which details the earliest sources of literary influence on Wright is Michel Fabre's "Wright's First Hundred Books," *The World* 12-26.

7. Fabre, "Wright's South," *The World of Richard Wright* 78. Fabre also quotes Stepto: "[Black Boy] functions to slay the father symbolically, dismiss him forever or, as Robert Stepto puts it in *From Behind the Veil*, to 'bury him alive'" (78). Below I shall indicate why I think Stepto's metaphor is more accurate in suggesting the persistence of Wright's father in his imagination.
8. Michel Fabre contends that Wright turned both his father and his birthplace into "negative metaphors" in Black Boy. In this way, "The South mingles with Nathan Wright, and geography with genealogy" (The World 7). What interests Fabre in this rhetoric is the repudiation of roots, per se, rather than the (fictional) act of authorization which the repudiation conditions.


11. Describing Wright's general pragmatics of language, Smith says, "The more he writes, the more convinced he becomes of his capacity to harness the power of language and turn it to his advantage" (73; my emphasis). In her chapter on Wright's fiction, Smith observes particularly the isolation of Wright's narrators, which is both the condition for and the product of their self-authorization. What Smith does not consider, however, are the ways Wright's texts question the self-authorization they affirm and play out.

12. Again, see Fabre, "Wright's First Hundred Books," The World. The underlying point of Fabre's essay is to document Wright's awareness of his dual literary heritage, in Negro folklore as well as in European and American literature and philosophy (12). Indeed, Wright's attraction to Gertrude Stein's writing appears to have been based on the possibilities he saw it provided for the inscription of folk dialect and speech rhythms (as in Melanctha). Nevertheless, in Black Boy Wright is narrating against influence and arguing, in the chaotic profusion of names, for the incitement to write from his reading of Mencken et al.

13. The narrator freely admits that his interest in reading was in "the point of view revealed" (273). This admission testifies to Wright's interest that individual viewpoint, even of a countercultural kind, can be articulated in books. The moods of the books inhabit him, but they are gradually replaced by an urgent need to recognize and promulgate his own moods through writing.

14. Barbara Johnson addresses "the irony implicit in the attempt to posit a 'black self' in the very Western languages in which blackness itself is a figure of absence, a negation," in "Metaphor, Metonymy and Voice in Their Eyes Were Watching God," Black Literature and Literary Theory (New York: Methuen, 1984); so described in Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s introduction "Criticism in the Jungle" 7. To the extent that Wright exhibits through the inscription of self-paradox an awareness of this
irony, he requires us to consider the particular obstacles to self-authorization for the black author, even as he establishes a unique purview for understanding the fiction constitutive of self-authorization. See first inquiry below.

15. Michel Fabre, for example, asserts that the fact that Wright's authorship is a fait accompli by the publication of Black Boy influences at some level the point of view of the narrative (The World?). The implication is that the end of the narrative is thus unequivocally mirrored and so supported by the fact of Wright's authorship. I would argue, on the contrary, that the narrative ends up destabilizing this apparent fact of authorship.

16. Prefacing Denis Dutton's essay "Why Intentionalism Won't Go Away," Literature and the Question of Philosophy, ed. Anthony Cascardi (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), Anthony Cascardi begins with a definition of literary idealism that helps distinguish the idealism at stake in "What is Literature?" from that which Sartre critiques in The Words. Idealism, according to Cascardi, "[governs] that view according to which the work of art is regarded as the product of human action" (192). This idealism permeates Sartre's program of literatue engagee, and continues only in a nihilistic form in The Words. The Words adheres to the view that art comes from human action--authorial direction--even if that direction has nihilist consequences for the author's sense of existence. Any autobiograpy, I think, invokes this literary idealism insofar as the business of the author as creator is examined.

17. In an arresting later passage, Sartre elaborates this point by explaining the relationship between the literary representation of "misfortunes" and his own notion of sincerity: "But it is with words not with his troubles that the writer makes his books... One no more puts one's misfortunes into a book than one puts a model on the canvas; one is inspired by them, and they remain what they are. One gets perhaps a passing relief in placing oneself above them in order to describe them, but once the book is finished, there they are again. In insincerity begins when the artist wants to ascribe a meaning to his misfortunes, a kind of immanent finality, and when he persuades himself that they are there in order for him to speak about them. When he justifies his own suffering by this ruse, he invites laughter; but he is contemptible if he seeks to justify those of others... [O]ne does not redeem evil, one fights it; the most beautiful book in the world redeems itself; it also redeems the artist. But not the man. Any more than the man redeems the artist..." (What Is 240; author's emphasis). Sincerity becomes a pressing issue for Sartre in The Words, as I discuss below. What is notable here is this common ground between Wright in Black Boy and Sartre: that making meaning in language/literature transceeds experience, but is meaningful only in its provisionality--or fictionality, incompleteness--before contingent reality.

18. The opening sentence of "Introducing Les Temps Modernes" says, "All writers of middle-class origin have known the temptation of irresponsibility." Sartre is arguably directing this essay and "What is
Literature?" at a middle-class audience, insofar as it is a call to action. The workers, by the essay's own terms, have no need of such a call; but the bourgeois intellectual--again, in the terms of the essay--encumbered by the "analytic cast of mind," is enclosed on himself like "a pea in a can of peas," "solid and indivisible" (What Is 247).

19. I will quote throughout this essay from Bernard Frechtman's translation of Les Mots since it provides an excellent English version without any loss of nuance.

20. In "Introducing Les Temps Modernes" Sartre sums up bourgeois intellectuals' "legacy of irresponsibility" in this way: "They suffer from a literary bad conscience and are no longer sure whether to write is admirable or grotesque" (What Is 250). The Words demonstrates that this is a thinly disguised statement of personal suffering.

21. See "Introducing Les Temps Modernes" What Is 257: "[O]ne constitutes oneself as a bourgeois by choosing, once and for all, a certain analytic perspective on the world which one attempts to foist on all men and which excludes the perception of collective realities. To that extent, the bourgeois defense is in a sense permanent, and is indistinguishable from the bourgeoisie itself" (author's emphasis).

22. Jane P. Tompkins cites some of the earliest responses to The Words and observes that "the more comprehensive essays argue cogently that Sartre's autobiography reverses his earlier notion of the self as radically free, and demonstrates instead that man is a creature of social circumstance, the prisoner of his background and upbringing"; in "Sartre Resartus: A Reading of Les Mots" Critical Essays on Jean-Paul Sartre (Boston, MA: G. K. Hall, 1988) 272, note 1. The autonomy of the individual, the notion of social agency which corresponds to Sartre's notion in Being and Nothingness of the "radically free" self, indeed possesses positive value throughout the 1940s essays, which are devoted to upholding this autonomy: "Our journal will be devoted to defending [the] autonomy and the rights of the individual" ("Introducing Les Temps Modernes" What Is 285). But it is unclear whether Sartre has put aside this autonomy in The Words.


24. "Introducing Les Temps Modernes" specifies Sartre's dialectical view of the relationship between the individual and society, thus belying the views of litterature engagee which emphasize the individual's freedom within this program. In this essay he contends that "man is conditioned totally by his situation and the center of irreducible indeterminacy"
(264; author's emphasis). While it is not sound practice to categorically interpret an author's works in the light of his own philosophy, a dialectical view of the theory of Sartre's self-authorization in The Words enables an investigation of its patrological rhetoric—of Sartre's treatment of his biological father, his grandfather, and his relationship to the modes of thinking the latter represents.

25. In Sartre as Biographer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980) Collins observes, "The elimination of parental authority that Sartre says he experienced to a considerable degree does not result in the total absence of a superego but rather fixes the superego at a pre-oedipal stage." The result, he says, is that for Sartre "no authority is felt to be legitimate." But later Collins obscures the distinction he makes by positing that the superego challenges authority: "it . . . makes it possible for the censor to be censored" (192, 193). Could not Sartre's search for a mandate to replace that of his absent father be construed as a challenge to authority via the agency of his internal censor? The question of Sartre's ego formation remains an open one in The Words.

26. In "Conversations with Jean-Paul Sartre" Simone de Beauvoir incites Sartre to discuss his reaction to his stepfather and the effects of this troubled relationship on his choice to be a writer; Adieux: A Farewell to Sartre, trans. Patrick O'Brian (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) 144-145. See also Lejeune, Le pacte 204-206, 220-221.

27. Throughout his chapter on Sartre, Eakin blurs the important distinction between individuals who do and do not write for a living in order to argue that Sartre's discovery of his origin in words is "representative of the human condition in general" (179). Eakin argues for this representative status in order to address the fact/fiction debate within autobiographical theory and to use Sartre's own theory as a means of arguing universally for the co-determination of these antinomies. What is lost in this argument, however, is Sartre's own brilliant critique of the repudiation of history in such a self-constitutive theory; what is "gained" is a leveling of social differences between individuals as well as authors in order to universalize a theory outlining the relationship between language and people.

28. Lejeune also recognizes the metaphysical argument underlying the theory of self-authorization presented and exemplified in The Words (Le Pacte 207-209).


30. See also Anna Boschetti's chapter "Literary Debut," The Intellectual Enterprise, trans. Richard C. Mc Cleary (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988) 24-58. Boschetti helps us see how Sartre's theoretical rigor served to help him control the literary establishment he emerged into, well before the writing of The Words. Boschetti describes Sartre's use of theoretical rigor in analyzing his own works as a defensive strategy against would-be critics: "Sartre's confident tone, his philosophical titles, and the rigor which taken singly his analyses seem to
have as a result of the apparently systematic nature of a way of speaking which draws on the most consummate philosophical rhetoric all work together to discourage any effective counteroffensive from a weak-willed literary world. [Sartre's essays on his work] thus play objectively a decisive role in the construction and the consecration of the image of Sartre the author" (47).

31. Notably, the definition of "bad faith" Tomkins applies is Sartre's own definition, culled from Being and Nothingness. The person of bad faith thinks, "let us flee anguish by trying to grasp ourselves from outside as if we were other, or as if we were a thing." And so he retreats to "a space where no reproach can reach me since what I truly am is my transcendence; I flee, I escape, I leave my rags in the hands of the fault-finder" (Tomkins 278, 279; Sartre's emphasis).


33. Sartre's response, characteristically, is equivocally candid. "I think I may have a little more talent than another man, a slightly more developed intelligence. But these are only phenomena whose origin remains an intelligence equal to my neighbor's or a sensitivity equal to my neighbor's. I do not think I have superiority of any kind. My superiority is in my books, insofar as they are good, but the next man also has his superiority— it may be the bag of hot chestnuts he sells at a cafe door in winter. Each man has his own superiority. For my part, I've chosen this one" ("Conversation" 161-162).

34. Sartre does say, however, in de Beauvoir's "Conversations" with him, "As for The Words, that I did try to write well" (166).

35. In "Constructing the Subject: Deconstructing the Text," Catherine Belsey describes the process by which women are both produced and inhibited by contradictory discourses in a way that strikes me as wholly applicable to Wright's discursive struggles in Black Boy: "the displacement of subjectivity across a range of discourses implies a range of positions from which the subject grasps itself and its relations with the real, and these positions may be incompatible or contradictory. It is these incompatibilities and contradictions within what is taken for granted which exert a pressure on concrete individuals to seek new, non-contradictory subject-positions. Women as a group in our society are both produced and inhibited by contradictory discourses. Very broadly, we participate both in the liberal-humanist discourse of freedom, self-determination and rationality and at the same time in the specifically feminine discourse offered by society of submission, relative inadequacy and irrational intuition. The attempt to locate a single and coherent subject-position within these contradictory discourses, and in consequence to find a non-contradictory pattern of behaviour, can create intolerable pressures." Feminist Criticism and Social Change: Sex, Class and Race in Literature and Culture, ed. Judith Newton and Deborah Rosenfelt (New York: Methuen, 1985) 50.
36. Stepto discusses Wright's "failure to articulate" in speaking "above" his black proletarian audience in "I Thought I Knew These People" (Bloom, Richard 59-60).

37. Gates discusses the phenomenon of "repetition with a difference" in Black Literature 9, 10.

38. While perhaps accepting a little too readily the proposition that Wright was "unique," "that a specific set of forces and experiences combined to make him who he was," Smith nevertheless makes the interesting suggestion that Wright writes himself out of isolation through Black Boy, which "allowed him to establish contact with other people" (74).

39. In his "Letter on Humanism," Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), Heidegger responds to Sartre's 1946 public address, "Existentialism Is a Humanism." David Farrell Krell, editing the "Letter," explains that Heidegger strongly criticized Sartre's affirmation of the link between subjectivity and existentialism: "that man's freedom to act is rooted in subjectivity, which alone grants man his dignity, so that the Cartesian cogito becomes the only possible point de départ for existentialism and the only possible basis for a humanism" (191). Heidegger's "Letter" rejects the conceptual thinking endemic to metaphysics in an effort to "overcome metaphysics," which thinking cannot overcome "by climbing still higher" (231). Just as Sartre's essay reflects he is unprepared to abandon the metaphysics of Descartes, The Words shows his continuing embroilment in the hall of mirrors of subjective self-conceptualization.

40. Sartre's strange digression on incest between himself and the sister he never had impresses me as a significant instance of the self-fathering fantasy I have not yet mentioned: the son envisions intercourse with the mother in one of the most extreme forms of denial of "the actual passivity of having been born from that original state of union" (Bordo 452). Sartre says, "In any case, had I been a brother I would have been incestuous. I would dream that I was. A displacement? A camouflaging of forbidden feelings? That's quite possible. I had an elder sister, my mother, and I wanted a younger sister. Even now--1963--that's the only family relationship which moves me" (54).

41. At one point in the narrative Sartre breaks the sardonic tone and comments in apparent earnest, "My grandfather supports me and I make him happy; my mother devotes herself to all of us. When I think of it now, only that devotion seems true to me, but we tended to overlook it" (32). In thus registering his belated appreciation for his mother's care, Sartre actually reinforces his earlier claims of her inferiority. Rich explains, "Denial of . . . anxiety toward the mother can take many forms: the need to view her as Angel of the Home, unambivalently loving, is merely one" (189). If the angel did not have an inferior status in her home, how could "we" have the audacity to overlook her?
42. In "The Critique of Autobiography," Comparative Literature 34 (1982), Blanchard sounds more like an advocate of autobiographical tail-chasing of origins than a critic: "[T]he study of a literature of self mandates a reactivation of the search for an origin, for a reference which would not only precede all judgments but would also antedate all previous guarantees for past judgments" (98; my emphasis). Blanchard's use of "mandate" certainly invokes the patriarchal father's law which Sartre, for one, at least attempts to confront.
Gertrude Stein has the dubious honor of being one of the few women autobiographers regularly written about in autobiography criticism and theory. Even before the efflorescence of women's autobiography theory in the 1980s, Stein's texts were routinely included in male theorists' assessments of modernist or American autobiography; in fact, two of the most recent studies by men of American autobiography showcase Stein's texts.¹ Women theorists of autobiography, perhaps suspicious of this overexposure of Stein to the male gaze, have evinced some wariness about her position in traditions of women's autobiography. An exception in this climate of cautiousness, Catharine Stimpson has studied Stein's life and writings repeatedly and, with characteristic insight, has challenged women critics of autobiography to consider the particular marginality of Stein's writing position as an expatriate lesbian in early twentieth-century Paris.² But this challenge founders with the difficulties raised by Stein's self-proclaimed deafness to the feminist enterprise of her time, by her progressively conservative politics, and by her relative silence about private matters—including her sexuality.³ According to Carolyn Heilbrun, while Stein might be the subject of "radically new considerations of female biography and autobiography, . . . in fact [she] has not been so treated" (Writing 29).

This stasis in women theorists' interest in Stein's autobiographies is also attributable to the general practice of focusing on her first autobiography, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, reading it as the
epitome of her work, and severing it from either her experimental poetics or her other autobiographies. A number of problems result from this practice. The formal audacity of The Autobiography endows Stein with a bold, coherent, confident authorial identity discoverable nowhere in her other writings. In addition, the narrative's accessibility to readers becomes understood as the norm, causing her other, less reader-friendly works to disappoint. Finally, The Autobiography, when read in isolation from Stein's other works, and especially from Stein's later autobiographies, assumes an ahistorical, representative status in her life-writings at odds with the text's historical situatedness, both in the context of Stein's life and in the context of twentieth-century literary autobiography. This last problem may be the most troubling aspect of feminist alienation from Stein. When feminist critics acquiesce to the tyranny of The Autobiography and ignore its place in Stein's writing, they demonstrate a critical naiveté that runs contrary to the enduring feminist project of recovering the history of women's textual production. Although reading Stein's autobiographies in relation to one another is the surest way to recuperate her history and contextualize her autobiographies, critics have typically shied from this method.

This chapter's focus on the composition, context, and relationship of Stein's first two autobiographies thus extends criticism of her autobiographies in important ways. It also helps put into practical perspective the current feminist theoretical debate on authorship. I argue for the need to read Stein's Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas and Everybody's Autobiography jointly as an autobiographical history through which Stein creates, queries, and ultimately deconstructs the signature
holding together her authorial identity. Central to this chapter is Stein's fusion of questions about autobiography and authorship over the issue of her signature's author-ization. Stein exhibits a peculiar ambivalence throughout her autobiographical project toward the status of her signature. She desires to authorize it through autobiographical writing; then daunted by its circulative autonomy and power and its identity-bearing function—both results of The Autobiography's success—she desires to expose the "nothing" behind it and autobiographical narrative in her second autobiography.

An important question in this analysis concerns how to situate Stein's idiosyncratic dis/play of her signature within the context of current feminist debates in autobiography and deconstructionist theories concerned with the function of the signature. How does Stein's critique of her own authorization and of her own experiences of authorship illuminate the conflicts of women authors who adopt the patriarchal authority of the signature? What compromise is worked out between the power of public circulation and the submission to patriarchal institutions of law and property? How does Stein's autobiographical history epitomize the hazards for feminist autobiographers working in a genre dependent on the signature's authority and its identity with its bearer?

The progress of this chapter conforms to the history of the texts while at the same time reflecting the priority of these questions. I preface the textual analysis of The Autobiography and Everybody's Autobiography with a review of the most canonical position on the role of the signature in autobiography, Philippe Lejeune's theory of the autobiographical contract, and a feminist response to the questions of
signatorial authority begged by this contract. This preface serves to foreground the salient feminist issues of the authorial signature which guide the subsequent analysis of Stein's autobiographies.

I The Autobiographical Contract Reviewed

In her introductory essay to The Female Autograph, Domna C. Stanton voices the now commonplace view of Stein's Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas as "a text which openly rejects the 'autobiographical pact' of identity between a real person, the subject, and the object of enunciation" (15). It needs to be asked how Stein could reject a pact not in circulation at the time she wrote her first autobiography. In fact, the author of the contractual agreement between autobiographer and reader economically termed the "autobiographical pact" is Philippe Lejeune, a Paris resident born in 1938, the same year Stein's second autobiography appeared. No doubt Stanton intended to describe a proleptic reaction on Stein's part to Lejeune's theory: a rejection of a set of conventional rules which Lejeune later exposed and rendered canonical as guidelines for interpreting autobiography. But to argue thus entirely bypasses the fact that the "autobiographical pact" was conceived of and author-ized by a male literary theorist living mainly in the second part of the twentieth century. And to ignore the origins of the theory obscures one of the most interesting aspects of Stanton's viewpoint for theorists of autobiography: to wit, that theories of autobiography to a large degree shape readings of autobiography. Though these theories are "secondary" to the text, often by virtue of chronology but more readily by virtue of the critical habit of privileging the work, the primacy of the theory often manifests itself in
our readings of autobiographies. As a consequence, when we are trying
to resee texts, as I am trying to resee Stein's autobiographies, we need to
resee/revise the theories that provide the norms and terms of our
readings, norms which may (as in Stein's case) guide our notions of what
is subversive in texts. To help shake up the (theoretically) normative
readings of Stein's first two autobiographies, then, I will review Lejeune's
"autobiographical pact."

Writing contemporaneously with the Tel Quel group associated with
Roland Barthes, Philippe Lejeune also makes questions of authorship
central to his best-known theory. But whereas the Tel Quel group
replaces the notion of author with that of "scripteur," Lejeune maintains
that the "anonymous" literature thus imagined will never be realized in
practice (that is, in print) (On Autobiography 20). Leaving aside the
questions of intentionalism posed by the Tel Quel group, Lejeune
embraces the realities of authorship as determined by legal and publishing
conventions. Indeed, he grounds his theory of autobiography on the
publishing conventions and codes that make a printed text an authored
one. Not that Lejeune fancies himself the champion of authors. To the
contrary, he theorizes autobiography as a reader of texts:

By taking as the starting point the position of the reader, (which is
mine, the only one I know well), I have the chance to understand
more clearly how the texts function (the differences in how they
function) since they were written for us, readers, and in reading
them, it is we who make them function (On Autobiography 4).

It is thus for the reader/himself that Lejeune sought to define
autobiography in his 1975 essay and book by the same name, Le pacte
autobiographique. And the definition that the essay establishes is this
one: "Autobiography (narrative recounting the life of the author)
supposes that there is identity of name between the author (such as he figures, by his name, on the cover), the narrator of the story, and the character who is being talked about" (On Autobiography 12; Lejeune's emphasis).

Throughout his explanatory chapter on this pact, Lejeune attempts to justify the preeminent place assigned the proper name in this definition. The proper name, he maintains, is "the deep subject of autobiography" (On Autobiography 20). Whereas the first-person pronoun "I" of autobiography has the deictic function of pointing to any speaker referring discursively to himself, the proper name, according to Lejeune, designates a unique speaker. And its equivalent in written discourse, the signature, designates one enunciator (On Autobiography 10, 11). The proper name sums up the "entire existence of the person we call the author" as

the only mark in the text of an unquestionable world-beyond-the-text, referring to a real person, which requires that we thus attribute to him, in the final analysis, the responsibility for the production of the whole written text. . . . [T]he place assigned to this name is essential: it is linked, by a social convention, to the pledge of responsibility of a real person (On Autobiography 11; Lejeune's emphasis).

However, Lejeune qualifies his notion of the "person" named in autobiographical discourse. Only the proper names of authors concern him; that is, only literary autobiographers interest him. Authors are not really persons, he says, and may not "really" be authors until their second book has been published (On Autobiography 11). The author is "simultaneously a socially responsible real person and the producer of a discourse" legitimated by the publishing institution (On Autobiography 11). And this equivocal private/public status of the author is reflected in
the two modes of guaranty underpinning the autobiographical contract: the person/author must "honor his/her signature" and the signature will be guaranteed by "implicit and explicit codes of publication" (29). Thus the contract hinges on the person/author's will (to "pledge" and "honor" his signature) and on the impersonal systemic "will" of social--and I would add, capitalist--conventions.  

Lejeune's elisions between person and author, name and signature, are neither inadvertent nor unreasonable. Stanton notes dismissively that Lejeune "confused the proper name in the text with the authorial signature" (10). It rather seems to me that both the strengths and the weaknesses of his theoretical pact devolve from the subtle way he combines a psychology of naming to a logistics of the signature's institutional function. Built into his theory is the not wholly romantic notion that people care about their names--at the least, "the name is never indifferent." Lejeune contends that crucial to the "story of me" is the acquisition of "the name received and assumed first--the father's name--and especially the Christian name that distinguishes you from it" (On Autobiography 21). (I will return to the paternalism grounding these assumptions.) However we feel about our names, he says, we value them as a "vital statistic" and as a repository of identity: "each of us thinks instinctively that the essence of his being is registered" in "those few letters" (On Autobiography 21). Here the name assumes a metonymic function of expressing the being ("essence") of the person to whom it refers. To be sure, Lejeune's claims for the universal applicability of his psycho-mythology of names undermines its usefulness to his consideration of authors' autobiographies. Less unreasonably, Lejeune probably
intends this psycho-mythology of names to palliate the dry legal responsibilities of the authorial signature which really ground his contractual theory. Like it or not, he intimates, a published name operates within an informational system that, for better or worse, assumes the proper name refers to the signer of the name. Identity, in this way, constitutes "a fact," as opposed to the fiction proposed by Paul John Eakin. In proleptic response to Stanton (who wrote seven years after him), then, Lejeune remarks that "autobiography is a literary genre which . . . best marks the confusion of author and person" (On Autobiography 20). The confusion is not in his mind but in the duplicitous proper name itself, which solders personal and professional identity through institutional mediation.

In representing a vexed relationship between the proper name and the signature, Lejeune is not wrong. And he is certainly right in identifying the proper name in its author-ized version as a central issue in autobiographies. But his articulation of the autobiographical pact (presumably "out there" before he authorized it) does reveal problematic assumptions about both the referentiality of the signature and the supposedly universal "passion" for the proper name (On Autobiography 20). On the one hand, his theory too readily accepts the conventions underpinning the signature's circulative power. On the other hand, it too quickly assumes the neutrality of these conventions for real men and women who become authors. Lejeune's psychology of names and naming offers a specifically male-oriented view about the meaning of a name to its bearer, and consequently forecloses the idea of difference between men's and women's signatures.
Deconstructionist theorists, most notably Jacques Derrida, provide one alternative set of lenses with which to re-view Lejeune's assumptions about the signature's binding of textual and referential matters. While Derrida has devoted much attention to the proper name and the signature derived from it as unstable guarantors of meaning, Glas is his most thoroughgoing critique of the way the signature regulates relationships between autobiographers and their texts. In a provocative essay Jane Marie Todd explains how Glas opens up Lejeune's theses on the signatorial contract. Derrida's fascination with Genet's journals, the text glossed in Glas, lies in the "antonomasia" with which Genet transforms "the signature as source, sun, non-figure, into the proper name as flower [genet], that is the proper name as a common noun" (Todd 7). Through "the operation of antonomasia," Genet "does nothing but sign with the flower of his proper name," littering his text with figural substitutes for a signature (Todd 11). Todd maintains that through manipulation of the signature's metaphoric plasticity, Genet's text disrupts extratextual reference to an author. Referring out to no one, the signature authors literally no one. Nameplay, and not representations of Genet's bios, constitute this autobiography.

Most germane to a critique of Lejeune's pact is Todd's contention that Genet's figural play with his name stems from his refusal of the legal aspect of his nominal identity in favor of a poetic or rhetorical one (10). Equivocally, however, Todd acknowledges that the play ultimately reaffirms the sunlike function of the signature (by which Derrida means that it organizes the discourse around a stable origin of meaning: the extratextual person of Genet). The poetic investigation of the name
merely exposes its double potential (as Lejeune observed) to express its bearer and to function as the author's sign in a literary context. Derrida ultimately contends that Genet's text is not governed by his signature, i.e., that having effloresced, the name never re-coalesces into an author's unitary sign. But I would disagree. After all, the attribution of the autobiography to Genet the real person (in Lejeune's terms) is never seriously in doubt in *Glas*.

A more persuasive critique of Lejeune's autobiographical pact is found in Stanton's essay, which searches for a theoretical basis to posit the difference in the female subject inscribed in women's autobiography. Like Nancy K. Miller, Stanton applauds and shares Lejeune's reader-oriented rhetorical position but questions the reality of an apolitical, undifferentiated reader. Stanton describes with evident vexation her ambivalent reaction to Lejeune's notion of an authorial signature:

> On the one hand, 'author' spelled the phallic myth of authority, not to speak of the patriarchal institutions of property and law. On the other, I wondered uncomfortably, what would the elimination of the signature mean for women autobiographers, whose texts had yet to be explored, acknowledged, and included in the literary critical canons. Better to bracket the question, I decided in frustration . . . (10).

In contrast to deconstructionists who refuse to acknowledge the legal identity built into the signatures, Stanton vacillates between a desire to condemn the patriarchal institutions in which the authorial signature operates and a desire to champion women's exploitation of these institutions to ensure women's authority in canon formation. By the end of the essay she concedes that "the author had not, and perhaps could not, at present be [sic] eliminated" (17). Institutional authority is necessary to the self-assertion that Stanton sees as crucial to the writing
and publishing of autogynography: "the graphing of the auto was an act of self-assertion that denied and reversed women's status [as other]" (14). Should Stanton's concession be interpreted as acquiescence before Lejeune's autobiographical contract and the "policing reader" it advocates? (Stanton 17)

Stanton's ambivalence about Lejeune's contract, the phenomenon of authorship, and the signature that, in shorthand fashion, represents the text's regulation and appropriation by patriarchal institutions, is symptomatic of a larger disquiet amongst feminist theorists struggling to identify their relationship to institutions not yet divested of patriarchal operational bases. Few are so sanguine as Carolyn Heilbrun when she says, "There are alternatives to the choice between seeking more space for women in the patriarchy and moving out of the patriarchy altogether."¹⁰ What are these alternatives? Can they be articulated within critical theory, which already assumes the writer's engagement with the institutional systems in question? Should they be? It is a relatively short step from questioning the institutional bias of Lejeune's pact to questioning, always at the level of theory, why women wish to be authors/author-ize themselves at all. But the woman theorist authorizing this line of questioning in her own signed text demonstrates a critical schizophrenia, being of two minds about empowerment for women writers.

The difficulties which complicate a specifically feminist reader's response against Lejeune's pact are manifold. At the most basic level, to marshal a critical reaction against that which (as Lejeune coolly observes) is part of the historical reality of authorship in our time, puts one in a defensive position not just towards the theory of the autobiographical pact
but towards one's own implication in this pact (insofar as all authored
texts are categorized by their signatures). There does, however, exist
one simple vantage point from which to critique Lejeune's formulation of
the pact. It is easy to reproach him for not recognizing that women's
relationship to their proper names, and so to their signatures, is
qualitatively different from men's. In an extensive meditation on this
issue, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar write,

For woman in our culture, however, a proper name is at best
problematic; even as it "inscribes" her into the discourse of society
by designating her role as her father's daughter, her patronymic
effaces her matrilineage and thus erases her own position in the
discourse of the future. Her "proper" name, therefore, is always
in a way improper because it is not, in the French sense, _propre_,
hers own, either to have or to give (24).

Their essay exploring women writers' strategies to name themselves and
so to assert their "own" identities in feminized signatures yet begs the
question of whether women's appropriation of the power of naming is truly
subversive to the patriarchy. 11 Certainly, women writers' ambivalence
about the patronymical baggage of their names may leave women feeling
cold about Lejeune's exhortation to "honor" the signature. But besides
registering a complaint about the putatively expressive quality of names,
theorists following Gilbert and Gubar's lead can voice little more than
discontent with an autobiographical contract which showcases the
signature. After all, the autobiographical contract hinges at bottom on
the publishing conventions underwritten by the state, to which women
writers conform in order to be published. Can a woman writer, should a
woman writer, snub the publishing contract and so remain an un-
authorized writer?
In essence, the difficulties facing feminist theorists arguing against Lejeune's pact derive from the power that the author-ized signature represents within autobiographical discourse: on the literary level, the power to be read and to be heard; on a financial level, the power to make money, achieve self-sufficiency, and so to earn a living with one's writing; and on the historical plane, the power to introduce and circulate, not just a woman's voice and not just one's own voice, but one's own voice as a woman's voice, a historically new voice, as guaranteed by one's perhaps improper name. It may be easy to take Lejeune to task for treating the publishing contract as just one more reality that "people"/writers face without also recognizing that publishing conventions are essentially and systemically patriarchal. Preserving his masculinist viewpoint to the end, he nowhere acknowledges how the questions of agency and empowerment are enfolded into his contractual privileging of the signature. But how can feminist readers supplement Lejeune's contractual theory? Or more importantly, how can women authors respond subversively to signatorial conventions?

My working response in this essay is that feminists need first to cease bracketing the question of the authorial signature as Stanton has done. While the question may not be solved, per se, we can at least cease wrestling with it in a theoretical vacuum and return to women's autobiographical (con)texts where questions of signatorial empowerment come alive in the writing. Reviewing Lejeune's pact from a feminist viewpoint above all clarifies how, as a theoretician, he himself brackets the social, material, and literary issues embedded in the authorization of the signature. We should not do the same if we wish to resee questions of
author-ization—of women as authors and authobiographers. As historical attributes of authorship, these issues appertain to the context of autobiography and belong in the beyond-the-text-world which we, paradoxically, depend on the text to represent. Consequently, the narrative strategies with which women represent the context of their autobiographical writing praxis—in Nancy K. Miller's terms, the methods they use to "overread" themselves—assume an extratextual importance. Reading for the signature in women's autobiographies in this way helps lighten the normative weight of Lejeune's pact insofar as the signature we encounter is a woman's signature operating in a gendered textual field instead of the neutral sign premised by Lejeune. Overreading also ensures that the signature read figures as a sign of power interacting in a socially-defined, gender-defined historical context; that the signature figures across the author's specifically feminine history instead of constituting merely a mark on the "margins" of the text—the title page.¹²

If such a reading of women's autobiography produces a picture of the interaction between the linguistic/symbolic and social/institutional dimensions of the signature, all the better. At the very least, adopting a revisionary stance towards the autobiographical contract which historicizes the authorial signature allows students of women's literary autobiography to examine the real-life attributes of the "female autograph" in the conflicted union between women autobiographers and the conventions of authorship. Turning now to the history and texts of Gertrude Stein's first two narrative autobiographies, I will leave behind Lejeune's contract as a "test" for autobiography but retain his invaluable focus on the author's signature. Reading for the signature in Stein's
autobiographies, I will attend to her position as a largely unpublished lesbian writer of experimental literature. Far from "bracketing the question" of the signature as a merely theoretical problem, Stein explored it within the autobiographical representation of her experience of authorization. In so doing, she helps feminists to resee Lejeune's contract from a material and gendered standpoint.

II Authorizing the Signature: The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas

When Gertrude Stein wrote The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, she was fifty-seven years old to Alice Toklas's fifty-five, and the two had been living together for twenty-five years. The last fact receives mention in the text in one of the titles Gertrude had invented for Alice's proposed autobiography: "My Life With Gertrude Stein" (14, 251). This title notably implies an intimacy of relations nowhere explicitly described in the text, while hiding that intimacy in the neutral word "Life"; and it announces a celebration of that life shared with Stein, while suggesting—erroneously—that the celebration is all on Toklas' part. Toklas' coming to stay with Stein in 1910 was the most important event in either of their lives. Toklas got a lover; a "Baby"; the security of commitment; and a life mission as nurturer out of the deal. And Stein got a housekeeper; a person with whom to share her literary theories; a woman to motivate, liberate, and promote her writing métier; and a lover to steady her lesbian identity. When she was writing The Autobiography in 1932, Stein had good enough reason to celebrate her life with Toklas by providing a record of it. But The Autobiography does not provide such a record. Contrary to Timothy Dow Adams' claim that it directly reflects "the
closeness of [Stein's] loving relationship with Alice Toklas" (22), this autobiography is only enabled by and grounded in that relationship. This first of Stein's autobiographies rather directly reflects Stein's conflicted desire to be a successful, accepted, famous author.

Pieces Stein wrote before and during her composition of The Autobiography indicate the degree to which this desire preoccupied her. As early as 1926, in "Composition as Explanation," she dwells on the problems of composing unpopular art. About the rejection from other artists she writes, "[The artist's] contemporaries who are also creating their own time refuse to accept . . . for a very simple reason and that is that they do not have to accept it for any reason" (27). "Creating their own time" means for Stein creating new composition. "In the arts," she maintains, "the creator of the new composition . . . is an outlaw until he is a classic, there is hardly a moment in between and it is really too bad very much too bad naturally for the creator" ("Composition" 27).

Undoubtedly, Stein's thoughts here reflect her own discontent at the mockery and parody that her experimental writings of the 1910s and 1920s elicited—when published: a response that Toklas' biographer, Linda Simon, calls a "dubious measure of success" (137). Success for Stein in this essay and in the writing of The Autobiography means acceptance; successful art means accepted or "official art." Prophetically, Stein announces in "Composition as Explanation," "For a very long time everybody refuses and then almost without a pause almost everybody accepts. . . . When the acceptance comes, by that acceptance the thing created becomes a classic" ("Composition" 28). She experienced precisely this "volte-face" from writing the Autobiography.
In 1931, Stein wrote two short pieces that consider her need for, and her fear of, acceptance by a readership. In "Forensics" she writes, "At last I am writing a popular novel," but then questions, "popular with whom."13 At greater length, in "Winning His Way. A Narrative Poem of Poetry," Stein considers the "pleasure of fame," but here she queries the relationship between the poem's creation and its favorable reception:

Or because. Of future greatness.
Or because. There is no cause. . . . 14

The masculine pronoun "his" in this poem's title is not an inadvertence. Stein frequently referred to herself in her short pieces and erotica with the masculine pronoun, to Alice with the feminine, and in this way defined their respective roles within a heterosexual frame of reference. Though I will return to the question of Stein's masculine persona, it is important to recognize in this piece how little certainty attends Stein's male writer role-playing. Her impulsion to write is uncomfortably caught between "a kiss" and "future greatness," between her lesbian "pleasure" in poem-making and the masculine paradigm of success--"future greatness," canonization.

Stein's vexed desire for authorship, witnessed in these pieces, was complicated by Toklas's pressure on her to succeed, to be known. In Stanzas In Meditation (1932), written simultaneously with The Autobiography, Stein composed what Linda Simon calls "an apologia for producing a popular book" (348). The trick of writing in Alice's voice in The Autobiography is directly alluded to in Stanzas:

This is her autobiography one of two
But which it is no one which it is can know.15

But the Stanzas suggest that Alice's role in the production of the
autobiography is more active than passive. While Stein acknowledges a sense of compromise—"I have been thought not to respect myself/To have been sold as wishes"—she perseveres because of pressure to write from Alice: "Shove is a proof of love." As in "Winning His Way," Stein here appears stretched between her love for Alice and desire for fame in the world beyond their relationship, only the desire seems patently Alice's:

Tell me darling tell me true  
Am I all the world to you  
And the world of what does it consist. 

Shari Benstock, writing about Stein and Toklas in Women of the Left Bank, emphasizes Stein's chagrin over her difficulties in getting published and represents the mature Stein of The Autobiography as unequivocally ambitious. Notably, Ernest Hemingway also suggested that Stein was hungry for popular attention. In his response to The Autobiography in The Green Hills of Africa (1935) he says, "But I swear she was damned nice before she got ambitious." But as the pieces above suggest, Stein experienced a conflicted desire for something more than personal notoriety, and Alice played a large part in urging Stein to seek recognition. Linda Simon contends that Stein did not want to write a memoir, and implies that it was not because a memoir would fail but because it would be a success: "It does not bother me not to delight them," Stein said.

Alice's role in the composition of The Autobiography only surprises readers if they assume that her place in the relationship with Stein was recessive, subjugated. According to Catharine Stimpson, "To oversimplify the Stein/Toklas marriage and menage is stupid. Toklas was also a willful woman whom Stein sought to please" ("Gertrice" 130).
Benstock helpfully elaborates on the nature of Stein's dependence on Toklas. Alice supplanted Leo Stein in Gertrude's home and heart officially in 1910 when she moved in at 27 rue de Fleurus. Leo had been anything but supportive of Gertrude's writing, which must have been hard for her to endure given that at the time of her expatriation to France, rebounding from an unhappy affair in Baltimore, Gertrude was insecure and emotionally unstable (Benstock 144). Since Leo was scornful of her writing, she showed him nothing and eventually came to depend on Pablo Picasso as the man with whom she could share her writing and theories of art. When Alice entered her life in 1907—an event whose importance The Autobiography insists upon by repeatedly returning to it in the first four chapters—the break with Leo irrevocably occurred, and Alice became the liberator, auditor, and motivator of Stein's emerging voice.

Although some feminist critics may dislike the apparently heterosexual model of menage that Toklas and Stein proceeded to set up, it was an enabling one for them during this time when, as Stimpson notes, lesbians were not winning any medals and women's efforts were typically met with scepticism ("Gertrice" 129, 135). In any case, Stein's borrowed title as husband only placed her in the driver's seat of the couple's car; otherwise, as Stimpson notes, Stein was often the dependent and Alice the dependable one ("Gertrice" 132). Stein celebrated their relationship's pleasure and success in the short, private pieces of encoded erotica she wrote throughout the 1910s and 1920s, especially during their Mallorca and Barcelona trips during World War I. The couple and Stein's writing remained isolated and private, especially after their famous salon closed in 1913 at the onset of the war. Stein wrote, as she said in Making of
Americans, "for myself and strangers," and for Alice—the subject and guarantor of her writing. Before Stein ever appealed to the public as a would-be author in The Autobiography, Alice had privately authorized her voice.

The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas marks a new stage in Stein's relationship to her writing and to her readership. It departs from her private, experimental short pieces, bereft and even defiant of a public, to join the long history of modern narrative autobiography grounded at least since Rousseau in claims of self-exposure guaranteed to attract an audience. In some ways Stein's choice of autobiography as the medium in which to inscribe her conflicted desire for authority and authorial success is commonsensical; in other ways, paradoxical. Stein understood herself as a writer: in "An American and France" (1936), she says, "Writing and reading is to me synonomous with existing" (69). Consequently, for her to write about herself is to write about a writer, and to write about authorial desires is to write about herself. Her autobiography, like all autobiographies in this project, inscribes her tendency to see herself as one who writes; but while Stein had plenty of experience behind her as a writer by the time she wrote her first autobiography, unlike Sartre and Wright she had not accepted the equation self=author or the accessibility to readership that attends authorship. In writing The Autobiography, Stein attempts to court a public, but from afar, in Alice's voice, without apparent personal implication in the flirtation. Stein both did and did not want to have an author-ized signature, both did and did not want to write a memoir. Autobiography, as Lejeune argues, always rivets attention to the identity of the author and to the signature as a sign of this
authorship; Stein desired only the second half of this attention, and this only in part. Her movement into the genre represents something less than acquiescence to the accepted autobiographical practice of exposing the consciousness of the person behind the author's signature. The instant fame that *The Autobiography* won indicates that it more than fulfilled Stein's and Toklas's desire to author-ize the signature "Gertrude Stein." What needs to be clarified are the ways in which the text thwarts the identification of Stein as an author and reflects her peculiar conflict about authorship.

*The Autobiography* interweaves two narratively dispersed stories about "Gertrude Stein": the history of her as an outlaw writer and the history of her as a refused author. "Gertrude Stein" is thus situated somewhere between writer and author in this text as these two stories representing her thirty-year practice at writing jostle one another for dominance. Each is composed by various elements of the narrative: anecdotes, expository meditation, play with reference/referents and voice. Of these elements, anecdotes comprise the most apparent contribution to these histories--short, pointed, and apparently countless mini-stories. This fact in itself is significant when judging Stein's relationship to her first autobiography. In light of her remark to Hemingway, reported anecdotally by Alice, that "remarks are not literature," we can assume that Stein did not consider *The Autobiography* literature in the way that she did "Lifting Belly" or *Tender Buttons*. In short, the conversational, anecdotal style of the text contributes to the conflict I am calling attention to between the history of the writer and the history of the author-to-be, a conflict both occasioned by and explored
during the writing of The Autobiography. Deceptively light-toned and
careless with facts, the fabric of anecdotes presented by "Alice" suggests
the seriousness of Stein's private conflict over authorship.

The history of Stein the outlaw writer generally develops the theory
and praxis of Gertrude Stein's writing. This history takes as its premise
the thesis that Gertrude Stein is a literary genius. The narrator Alice's
insistence at the beginning that Stein is one of the three geniuses she
ever met, and that she intuited this genius-quality before ever hearing
Stein speak or write, sets this history in motion (5). Michel Foucault
contends that beneath the modern conception of the author lies the figure
of the genius, whose potential for a "perpetual surging of invention"
readers focus on in order to obscure the "thrift" and economy of meaning
the author-figure really introduces in our critical discussions (159).
Stein's Autobiography foregrounds this persona of genius and the
brilliance that she need not even demonstrate to satisfy Alice; in so
doing, however, it shows Stein's refusal to conflate the ideas of genius
and author. Several anecdotes represent Stein as genius writer, roaming
Parisian streets while concocting commaless sentences that are the
hallmark, the "tuning forks" of her writing (206). Certain others, like F.
Scott Fitzgerald, share this gift with sentences (218). But in the main,
Stein is isolated in her devotion to the Sentence: "Sentences not only
words but sentences and always sentences have been Gertrude Stein's life
long passion" (41). Similarly, she is isolated in her night work, the
description of which follows on the heels of the last sentence: "And so she
had then and indeed it lasted pretty well to the war, which broke down so
many habits, she had then the habit of beginning her work at eleven o'clock at night and working until the dawn" (41).

In addition to revealing how Gertrude Stein works, the history of the outlaw writer explains the evolution of Stein's literary experiments. In a passage frequently quoted, the narrator Alice describes the "tormenting process" by which Gertrude Stein refigured for herself the problem of the internal and the external and came to express the rhythm of the visible world (119). *Tender Buttons* was the ultimate product of this creative process, and it, along with *Three Lives* and *Making of Americans*, is notable as being one of the main works of Stein to receive press in *The Autobiography*. (The erotica is by and large absent history.) But I jump ahead. The history of the writer also flittingly informs Stein's audience-to-be of Gertrude Stein's "intellectual passion for exactitude in the description of inner and outer reality" (211); it portrays Stein in knee-to-knee conference with Picasso puzzling out "the basis of creation" in the twentieth century (77); it shows Stein coaching the young writers of the 1920s how to write "real" literature; and it presents Stein coolly questioning "why since [her] writing was all so clear and natural they [everybody] mocked at and were enraged by her work" (35). Isolated, nocturnal and enigmatic, on the fringe of the public but at the helm of the avant-garde, Gertrude Stein appears in this dispersed story as an outlaw writer content with her marginal status and creative work.

Opposed to this version of "Gertrude Stein" is the more complexly composed history of the refused author, the writer half desiring authorization from the press, publishing houses, and public. Stein
inscribes this history with patent ambivalence, voicing her desire to be known and accepted through a polyvocal debate among acquaintances of her and her work rather than in representations of herself or her meditations, as was the case in the outlaw-writer history. Stein employs three narrative strategies which form three separable strata of this history of "Gertrude Stein": dialogic anecdotes, writing in Alice's voice and from her point of view, and signatorial play. The topics of the anecdotal stratum, to be examined first, chiefly concern established art, careerism, and Stein's unpublished manuscripts.

Stein's old friend Duret, for example, contributes his distinction between art and official art, which "pleased Gertrude Stein immensely" (32-33). Duret's idea about "official art" mocks the idea of an established artist and satirizes the acceptance of art dependent on this stereotype of the artist: "[The public] need[s] as representative painter a medium sized, slightly stout man, not too well dressed but dressed in the fashion of his class, neither bald or well brushed hair and a respectful bow with it" (33). Duret advises an aspiring young friend, "You can see that you would not do. So never say another word about official recognition, or if you do look in the mirror and think of important personages" (33). The mockery of official art in this anecdote typifies the spirit of chapters two and three of The Autobiography which mainly celebrate the outlaw art of Matisse, Picasso, and Braque at the Independent salon and its unacceptability to popular audiences. Late in the text, in a similar vein, the narrator Alice reports Stein's thoughts on Hemingway: "[H]e looks like a modern and he smells of the museum. But what a story that of the real Hem, and one he should tell himself but alas he never will. After all,
as he himself once murmured, there is the career, the career" (216-217). This "real story," Stein and Sherwood Anderson agree, would "be for another audience than the audience Hemingway now has but it would be very wonderful" (216). Undoubtedly this other audience would be a small, understanding coterie like Stein's.

Other views about public acceptance of art and the effects of publicity, especially with reference to Stein's unknown, unappreciated, or unpublished works, contradict this sneer at Hemingway's careerism. Henry McBride is quoted as saying he "did not believe in worldly success":

> It ruins you, it ruins you, he used to say. But Henry, Gertrude Stein used to answer dolefully, don't you think I will ever have any success, I would like to have a little you know. Think of my unpublished manuscripts. But Henry McBride was firm, the best that I can wish you, he always said, is to have no success. It is the only good thing. He was firm about that (121-122).

But then Alice adds almost coyly, "[Henry] now says he thinks the time has come when Gertrude Stein could indulge in a little success. He does not think that now it would hurt her" (122). Couching Stein's question about her unpublished manuscripts within a denunciation of publicity, which Stein does not refute but which is ultimately retracted in her case, forcefully reflects Stein's ambivalence about the wider circulation of her work and its acceptance in popular culture. But this ambivalence notwithstanding, she communicates unquestionable concern about the future of her unpublished manuscripts. The narrator Alice explains painstakingly the elaborate processes by which Gertrude Stein's manuscripts are sent to journals, rejected by editors, doctored and printed for publication. Indeed, anecdotes concerning publishers' and editors' responses to Gertrude Stein's submissions are among the most
humorous elements of this history. Consider the young man from Grafton
Press reporting the director's uncertainty about Stein's knowledge of
English; or T.S. Elliot's shilly-shallying over her "very latest" piece,
written especially for the Criterion; and the Atlantic Monthly's imperial
resistance to Stein, despite Mildred Aldrich's great wish to see her
published there (68, 194-195, 201-202). Unless readers acknowledge
that Stein is working out a conflicted preoccupation with authorship, The
Autobiography's continual mention of Stein's manuscripts and publishing
attempts makes no sense.

At the most basic level, such pervasive attention to Stein's
unpublished manuscripts calls attention to the very practical components
of the process of public authorization which Wright and Sartre ignore in
their preoccupation with self-authorization. At a deeper level, attention
to the publishing process in The Autobiography constitutes an
authorbiographical chapter of some importance given the dubious value
Stein places on a broad readership. Stein reportedly says towards the
text's end, after her success at Oxford, that "she could never have
enough of glory," and that "no artist needs criticism, he only needs
appreciation" (235); but appreciation from a broad audience is precisely
what she avoids in her fiercely isolated life, and glory is what her Duret
and Hemingway anecdotes suggest she suspects. Although the narrator
Alice fills the concluding ten pages of the narrative with an explanation of
her Plain Editions project intended to set Stein's work in front of a broad
readership, she represents Stein as relatively passive in this enterprise.
In a dizzying double vision, Stein represents Alice as "shoving," while
representing herself through Alice's eyes as passive before the
conundrum of authorship.\textsuperscript{27} Indeed, while Stein's self-portrait in \textit{The Autobiography} catalyzed accusations of her egotism, in her response to authorship a kind of passivity betokening self-division, as this last anecdote demonstrates:

One day not long after [Madame de Clermont-Tonnerre] asked to come to the house as she wished to talk to Gertrude Stein. She came and she said, the time has now come when you must be made known to a larger public. I myself believe in a larger public. Gertrude Stein too believes in a larger public but the way has always been barred. No, said Madame de Clermont-Tonnerre, the way can be opened. Let us think (249–250).

Stein's signature is Madame's problem; Madame desires to talk about it, not Stein; Madame and Alice must first acknowledge their belief in a large—but only comparatively so—public before Stein does; and then Stein qualifies this belief with the observation that the way has always been barred, is beyond her control. Stein's ambivalence about her authorial ambitions registers itself in such anecdotes which depict her as passive if not indifferent to her success.

The second stratum to contribute to the history of "Gertrude Stein" the refused author-to-be—the perspective and voice of Alice Toklas as spokesperson for Gertrude Stein—forcefully reflects Stein's apparent passivity on the question of her author-ization. No other aspect of the narrative commands so much critical attention as the use Stein makes of Alice as narrator. All the discussion about Stein's breach of Lejeune's autobiographical contract revolves around this issue (despite Lejeune's claim that the contract involves "identity of name" and not person). Adams suggests that Stein's speaking through Alice constitutes "egomania twice removed," since it enables Stein to glorify her genius without being the direct source of praise (20).\textsuperscript{28} But then Adams argues that the
technique is also designed to "keep the reader off balance about her homosexuality" and "her loving relationship with Alice Toklas" (22). James Breslin's essay on The Autobiography contends that Stein's choice of Alice's viewpoint expresses her own struggle with autobiographical conventions. Breslin explains how Stein's commitment to creating "entity" rather than "identity" drove her to find a way to write an autobiography that linguistically undermines the assignment of "identity" to its speaker. Cynthia Merrill, extending Breslin's idea of Stein's subversion of the genre, argues that adopting Alice's viewpoint permits Stein to expose "the self-division concealed within the autobiographical "I"" (15). Using Lacanian theory, Merrill explains how Stein's choice of Alice's viewpoint "mocks the illusion of a unitary self," calling attention to "the irreducible gap"--"the other"--that exists between any subject and her autobiographical self (14, 16).

Of these positions, Merrill's alone is germane to my study of how Stein inscribes her ambivalences about authorship through writing The Autobiography. The "self-division" that Merrill underscores supports the idea that far from merely experimenting with the genre of autobiography, Stein's personal conflicts infused her text's composition. While Stein was self-divided about authorship, Alice was not; Alice's voice could be assertive on the prevalent issue of Stein's authorization whereas Gertrude's could not. Had Stein written The Autobiography in her own voice as she would do in Everybody's Autobiography, she might have confronted more directly her ambivalent desire for authorization. Imitating Alice's matter-of-fact, conversational speaking style allowed Stein to inscribe her queries about authorship in a tone that would hide
her vexation. And finally, foregrounding Alice's voice has the salient
effect of foregrounding the woman in the world who most helped her hear
and know herself, as I mention above. Alice the narrator assumes the real
Alice's role of authorizing Stein, but this time vis-a-vis the public instead
of Leo. Contrary to Breslin's radical claim that The Autobiography does
not construct an identity for Stein (152), Alice's central and leading
viewpoint in the text ensures that Stein's professional identity--
oscillating between outlaw artist and refused author--comes to be
constructed.

The most important effect of Stein's decision to write from Alice's
point of view is that she refers to herself, not just in the third person,
but as "Gertrude Stein," always and everywhere. Although she says,
"Everybody called Gertrude Stein Gertrude, or at most Mademoiselle
Gertrude," Alice the narrator does not invite readers to refer to her lover
(her "Baby") in more intimate terms than "Gertrude Stein"--the author's
name, which is the basis of the signature (60). In this way, the text's
point of view is related to the last stratum of the history of "Gertrude
Stein" the refused author: signatorial games. The viewpoint permits
Stein to repeatedly impress her name as a signature on her hitherto
resistant audience, making her signature and its author-ization the
primary subject of her narrative. But built into this creation of the
signature is the joke that Gertrude Stein disclaims responsibility--until
the last page--for her own text. I agree with Lynn Z. Bloom that the use
of Stein's authorial name gives her "dignity and authority"; but Stein
uses this authority to question itself, to question the authorship to which
she aspires (83). Throughout The Autobiography the repetition of her
signature has the dual effect of claiming and obscuring her authority as an author. First, Stein's authorship assumes the status of a given fact; indeed, insistence on the full name helps "mythologize" Stein, as Breslin puts it, and reflects Stein's determination to create the author "Gertrude Stein." In addition, by leaving out the intimate and personal details of her life with Alice, Stein apparently intended that "Gertrude Stein" denote only a public entity descriptive of the body of her works. In this way, the signature seems independent of the person Gertrude Stein, a screen instead of a mirror reflecting back on her nothing private of herself. Lejeune's claim about the personal expressivity of the proper name is totally inappropriate here. It is almost as if "Gertrude Stein" refers to a would-be author without a person.

The Autobiography's numerous stories about naming mistakes and signatorial deceptions also argue for a distinction, a radical disjunction, between personal identity (a sense of self, say), and public identity (here, authorial identity in particular). For the most part, these anecdotes play with the unreliable connection between signature and signified: they occlude the possibility (as Foucault puts it) of the proper name's being the equivalent of a description of the named (146). The anecdotes which disrupt the adhesion of personal identity to the name emphasize Stein's ambivalence regarding authorship in that they disrupt readers' confidence that "behind" "Gertrude Stein" is a person. Significant examples of this kind include the story of Nellie Jacot's admirer who said, "I love you Nelly, Nelly is your name, isn't it" (150); the fun Alice has with the secretary at the Atlantic Monthly, calling her Ellen instead of Ellery and again delighting Gertrude Stein (195); and the
reflections of the dog Polybe's infidelity following a brief absence of Gertrude and Alice: "When we saw him a week after he did not know us or his name" (164-165). The anecdotes which replicate the title's play with the responsibilities of the signature likewise humorously reflect Stein's conflicted desire to be an author. Most notable in its reversing the trick of the narrative's authorship are the anecdotes about the major during the war who addresses Alice as "Mademoiselle Stein" much to Alice's confusion until, some way into their discussion, Alice reveals, "But I am not Mademoiselle Stein" (177-178); and about Picasso's denial of an interview he participated in which lambasted Jean Cocteau, which he ultimately pawns off on Picabia in order to spare the feelings of Cocteau's mother (222). The text's fiction of perspective indicates Stein's irreverence towards the responsibilities of the signature, stressed by Lejeune, and her valorization of a more personal, often unstated artistic agenda.

Collectively, the three strata of the history of "Gertrude Stein" as a refused author-to-be--anecdotes, Alice's voice and perspective, and signatorial games--bespeak an ambivalent appeal to The Autobiography's readers to see Stein as an author. Considering this history together with the history of the outlaw artist reveals even more clearly how The Autobiography both promotes and compromises the signature of "Gertrude Stein," mixing the bold colors of the outlaw genius with the pale shades of a woman "denegating" her agency, passive and reliant on others to authorize her. The composite "Gertrude Stein" that emerges possesses an admixture of aggression and reticence before her prospective readership and publishers that may in shorthand be called her "betweenness." Before addressing the effects which The Autobiography
had on Stein's life and writing, I will briefly digress to explain how Stein's position between writer and author, outlaw and aspirant, is of a piece with the overall "betweenness" of her literary and social status.

To accurately describe Stein—or her *Autobiography*—one must relinquish a binary, oppositional way of speaking in favor of a rhetoric of betweenness. She viewed herself as an exceptional woman, a woman among men, a woman like men. Viewed as monstrous by some, and detrimental to a feminist praxis of cultural change by others, Stein's perception of herself as an exceptional woman was enabling in that it allowed her to subsume questions of gender which might have threatened her creativity. Unquestionably, there is a dark side to her silence on these questions, especially in the area of politics. Her frank indifference to women's politics was simply the negative image of her intensely patriotic appreciation of American democracy, modeled on masculine individualism. As "Alice" reports in *The Autobiography*, "There can be, said Gertrude Stein severely, no privilege extended to one american citizen which is not to be, given similar circumstances, accorded to any other american citizen" (161). Of course, her democratic fervor was qualified in practice: Stimpson explains that Stein was "unable to picture a world in which men, and an exceptional woman, did not plumb language and define culture" ("Gertrice" 131). If feminists are to find anything redeeming in Stein's perception of her exceptional woman status it will not be through "correcting" the portrait of betweenness to make her "more" feminine. Arguments like Cynthia Secor's supporting "the complex force of [Stein's] femininity" uselessly try to make Stein fit essentialist definitions of femininity. Nor will it suffice to condemn her internalization of
patriarchal notions of gender roles (gleaned most easily in her marriage with Toklas but, as I contend above, not even fairly attributable there). Only by examining the peculiar betweenness of her position—as a woman among men, as a lesbian, as a literary experimenter—will we arrive at anything like appreciation for her and her writing.

Such a fullblown task is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, the growing numbers of scholars who focus on ways in which Stein's experimental writings play with and transform gender hierarchies reflects this kind of sensitivity to her betweenness. A good example is Harriet Chessman's study *The Public Is Invited to Dance*, which proposes that Stein's pre-autobiographical writing demonstrates a feminist "poetics of dialogue"—between text and reader, between words in a text, between words and the objects they "caress," between characters and narrators (3). Chessman argues convincingly that Stein's dialogic poetics is feminist insofar as it thwarts readers' desire for dominance and logical mastery of her language and exposes patriarchal hierarchies of gender disseminated through monologic forms of discourse (2-3, 8). Benstock similarly observes how Stein exchanges monologue for dialogue in her experimental writings of the 1910s and 1920s (163). In her Stein/Toklas chapter in *Women of the Left Bank* Benstock maintains that with the advent of Alice's love Stein "ceased imitating the patriarchy" and relinquished the writer's right to make language submit to her will (163, 159). Benstock exhibits care, however, when speculating on how Stein's lesbian sexuality relates to this kind of writing. With Stimpson, Benstock contends that Stein does not express or represent lesbian sexuality and
subjectivity but rather that her sexuality informs her linguistic experimentation.\textsuperscript{31}

The picture of Stein's writerly allegiances that is currently emerging shows them delicately balanced between the powers of language and the impulses of her sexuality. In "Lesbian Identity and Autobiographical Difference[s]" Biddy Martin stresses that it may be hazardous to generalize about inscriptions of lesbian identity; and generalizations about connections between Stein's sexuality and textuality seem especially daring given that concerns of sexuality are always sublimated and obscured by her focus on language and modernism in the arts. In this light, Chessman's idea that Stein's writing exhibits "utopian" linguistic strategies for undoing and transcending gender appears as a sign of Stein's betweenness rather than of sheer radicalness. In general, acknowledging the broad pattern of betweenness in Stein's life and writings should help feminist readers of The Autobiography appreciate the "dance" she inscribes there respecting the authorization of her signature by the hierarchies regulating literary production and exchange in Europe and America.

III Between the Autobiographies

Fame, publishing contracts, money: these signs of authorial success came to Gertrude Stein following the popular reception of The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas. Regardless of the ambivalence towards literary success it inscribes, the text created a readership for Stein that her earlier works lacked or repulsed. In other words, it made her an author instead of a writer, and more specifically yet, an author of
autobiography. Supported by romantic ideologies of the author (a person writing original works) and the self (a unique source/author of meaning), The Autobiography's public created/discovered a hybrid Gertrude Stein—an author-self, an author whose personal identity was implicated in their knowledge of her.

Stein's authorization may have occurred overnight, but it has proven to be tenacious. The unfortunate result is that the fact of her/The Autobiography's fame eclipses now as then the drama of ambivalence I have just described in overreading the text as well as her doubts and worries about the fame she came to receive. Perhaps current critical opinion accepts Stein's success with untroubled appreciation because of the widespread belief that The Autobiography did for Stein what she wanted it to do. Catharine Stimpson, for example, states without referring to this text that "Stein created Stein the writer," collapsing the distinction between author and writer and assigning total agency to Stein ("Gertrice" 135). For feminist critics like Stimpson, an unawareness or unwillingness to attend to the question of Stein's empowerment may be traced to the problem of mutual implication in authorship: questioning authorship while at the same time being immersed in the process of being empowered by the institutional system. But such unawareness has several negative consequences. Topically speaking, it distorts by simplifying the story of The Autobiography's composition; and it leaves the critic totally unprepared to interpret Stein's major response to her autobiographical fame, Everybody's Autobiography. More broadly speaking, this critical unawareness "brackets" the question of women's literary author-ization as an instance of women's general
assimilation into patriarchally organized institutions; and it makes it impossible to study how women authors like Stein challenge their literary author-ization in their lives, their writing, and their life-writings. In order to contextualize my discussion of Everybody's Autobiography, I will first explain how Stein's identification as "Gertrude Stein" the autobiographer was a source of worry to her immediately following The Autobiography's publication.

The most compelling evidence of the depth of Stein's disturbance by The Autobiography's success was her inability to write. Her betweenness concerning author-ization prior to The Autobiography's publication probably exacerbated her disturbance in the book's having decided her authorial fate for her. As a result of her/the book's instant popularity, everyone seemed to know her, in Europe and then in America, and yet she no longer seemed to know herself. Preoccupied with the shift in her identity from writer to author, she wrote nothing. The irony is that since her break with Leo she had been a writer, but not an author; now here she was an author, but seemingly stalemated as writer. Was she stalemated because she was an author?

The evidence suggests that Stein realized immediately that her autobiography had "made" her an author (and not the reverse) in giving her an audience, and that now she had lost control of her writing to the immense systemic processes of authorship. Steins autobiographical history and her reflections on it underscore how she experienced authorship in nearly Foucauldian terms: as "a complex operation that constructs a certain rational being that we call 'author'" (150). Her writings between her first two autobiographies show her recognition that
The Autobiography had created an "identity," a self—despite her efforts in that narrative to depict an externally seen, impersonal self. This identity was necessary for the functioning of her authorial signature in the economy of the literary establishment. These writings reveal, too, that as a construct of the text and its public circulation, her authorial identity as "Gertrude Stein" both did and did not refer to her as an individual. Overwhelmed by her alien and alienating new status, Stein was silent.

It was only after her celebrity trip back to America that she broke the silence and began tentatively responding to her creative dilemma. Just as several shorter pieces prepared for and so prefaced The Autobiography, so too Stein wrote several short pieces which at once respond to the first autobiography and preface the second. In these pieces, Stein's earlier ambivalence about authorship is replaced by reactive defensiveness, the exemplary expression of which is her claim, "Authors need not authorship." With evident nostalgia, she communicates her sad and tardy realization that the success she won compromised her status—and private autonomy—as an outlaw writer. In these pieces, Stein's primary topics are identity, creative genius, and the effects of audience recognition on creative genius; she manipulates these topics in short essays like "First Page" (1933), "What Are Master-Pieces And Why Are There So Few Of Them" (1936), "An American and France" (1936), and in the poem-play "Identity" (1936), as an outlaw artist deprived of her marginal (non)identity and burdened with authorial identity.
As Nancy Blake has observed, Stein used the term "identity" in several contradictory ways (135-140); but during this period between the autobiographies, she principally equated identity with recognition: being seen and so known from the outside. In "What Are Masterpieces And Why Are There So Few of Them" she comments, "Identity is recognition, you know who you are because you and others remember anything about yourself" (84). The poem-play "Identity" questions in disjointed form the nature of this identity coincident with recognition in using the figure of the "little dog" to mean "others" in general and "audience" in particular (a metaphor Stein will continue to use throughout Everybody's Autobiography). She writes,

I am I . . . even if the little dog is a big one and yet a little dog knowing me does not really make me be I no not really because after all being I I am I has really nothing to do with the little dog knowing me, he is my audience, but an audience never does prove to you that you are you (77-78).

Stein in this way denies the validity of audience recognition and the identity it begets, craftily situating her critique within a piece of writing akin to her former audience-repulsing pieces. The paradox about the relationship between identity and audience recognition that she states in "What Are Masterpieces" similarly suggests her rekindled allegiance to her former outlaw status. She says there, "Identity consists in recognition and in recognizing you lose identity" (94). I interpret this paradox to mean that not only does one's audience/little dog not "prove" your identity, but in seeing you and establishing your identity (with all the incumbrances implied by 'established') they take away your ability to be seen. Stein here mourns the loss of her potential to be seen—and to see herself—alternatively or not at all. Within the flow and process of life the
static audience-created identity seems to her an invisible statue. Compressed, this progression of ideas leads to the conclusion that audience recognition gives a writer an authorial identity which consists in her being not seen except as this identity, which is not a person but a thing seen.

This reactive conclusion about authorship is naturally linked with Stein's lapse in creativity. Her idea that once seen, you are seen no more is a restatement in different terms of her belief that once something has been said and rendered classic, it "goes dead" ("What" 92). Identity, according to Stein, also kills creative genius and writing: "creatively speaking the little dog knowing that you are you and your recognizing that he knows, that is what destroys creation" ("What" 84). Stein seems to be recalling her days of public anonymity, when without an audience she never thought about identity, in her comment that "if you remember yourself while you are you you are not for purposes of creating you. This is so important because it has so much to do with the question of a writer to his audience" ("What" 86).

Without explaining this connection logically, Stein hints throughout her writings before Everybody's Autobiography that for her there is no dependence between the writer and a would-be audience; that in fact far from needing an audience, she as a writer needs not to have an audience so as to be free of remembering herself and thus free to write. Gone is the anguished concern for unpublished manuscripts that in The Autobiography manifested Stein's half-need for audience "appreciation." Now she expresses her sense of alienation from that which she has printed: "there is something about what has been written having been printed which makes it no longer the
property of the one who wrote it" ("What" 84; my emphasis). And she
repeats this gesture towards the economics of authorship, taken up in full
in Everybody's Autobiography, but with an emphasis on writing's value:
"When you are writing before there is an audience anything written is as
important as any other thing and you cherish anything and everything
that you have written. After the audience begins, naturally they create
something that is they create you" ("What" 94-95). These last remarks
intensify Stein's expression of her distance from her published works.
Their audience has created the signature "Gertrude Stein," and there is
no possibility of this authorial identity cherishing what she has written.
An author does not equal a feeling self for Stein.

Showing how the pendulum between writer and author has swung
from a position of betweenness to the side of the outlaw writer, these
pieces ultimately signal Stein's resumed allegiance to her earlier separatist
position vis-a-vis the public (others) at large. At least one critic, a
male, has lamented Stein's earlier isolation from a readership, her break
of the "discursive pact" between writer and readers (for him, an
undifferentiated mass) (Schmitz 189). But at this juncture in Stein's
history, I perceive how she values isolation with a fervor that indicates
its importance to her beyond the act of writing. Despite Stein's refusal of
any political association, I am tempted to call the privacy, isolation, and
disconnectedness she craved the elements of her version of lesbian
politics. Withdrawal from her newly-born public is accompanied by her
increased gravitation to Alice and her need to resume the style of writing
that, as Shari Benstock has argued, grew out of this guarded, intimate
alliance.
While "First Page" reveals Stein's resignation to adapt to the changes in and exposure of her life as a result of *The Autobiography*, "An American and France" reveals how creating separateness from her public, especially her lionizing American public, remains her objective. The entire piece argues for the value of a general expatriate experience; its rhetoric, however, peppered with her idiosyncratic views about language, reflects how the expatriate experience described is wholly Stein's (in conformity with the title's singular noun). She explains that "Americans go to Paris and they are free not to be connected with anything happening" (68). There they are between two civilizations, "which I insist any one creating anything needs to have if he is to create anything" (66). Her country of residence is important, she explains, not for what it gave her but for "what it did not take away from [me]" (70). Again her rejection of recognition surfaces: "After all what you are you are even if you are not all of it, but any one being interested in you you are likely to lose it and that is what France did it was not interested in you" (70). In "An American and France" her theories of the detrimental effects of audience recognition are translated into the geographical metaphor of being (again) between two civilizations or countries and protected from recognition and identity-stealing interest by virtue of this betweenness.

The freedom to be not connected is a politics in that Stein felt empowered by it; and the freedom she craved from specularization and public objectification is her kind of lesbian politics in that this cloak of privacy is precisely what she and Alice assiduously cultivated to preserve their relationship and autonomy. It was tragic for Stein that at this moment she could not return to the lost paradise of pre-commodification
where her identity was not a public thing of exchange. The event of author-ization which took place in her signature already made her an author; she needed to find an alternative way of relating to her authorial identity or else live with a sense of compromise in silence.

IV Deconstructing "Gertrude Stein" in Everybody's Autobiography

In composing Everybody's Autobiography Stein discovered this alternative way to relate to her authorial identity which would let her have her cake and eat it, too. Without relinquishing her claim to being an author, she here critiques how in her recent experience authorship and identity interrelate and depend on one another when, to her mind, they should have nothing to do with one another. Since the main subject of this autobiography is again authorship and since its perspective on this topic derives from the changes in Stein's life since The Autobiography, it is safe to claim that Everybody's Autobiography responds directly to its predecessor and to its autobiography-loving readers. It is aggressively a second autobiography. In fact, its first two chapters are "What Happened After The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas" and "What Was the Effect Upon Me of The Autobiography"—although, as in the last autobiography, Stein's narrator never remains totally faithful to the themes her titles set. Everybody's Autobiography is easily distinguishable from the short interim pieces which also responded to The Autobiography in that it moves beyond their reactionary posture towards a kind of confidence about Stein's right to query the author-ization she has undergone. Jean Starobinski has remarked that "one would hardly have sufficient motive to write an autobiography had not some radical change occurred in his life—
conversion, entry into a new life, the operation of Grace" (78). While Stein may not have had "sufficient motive" (so defined) to write her first autobiography, she reveals that she has one in *Everybody's Autobiography* in meditating on the changes that had halted her writing and made her think hard about her autobiographical/authorial identity.

Yet *Everybody's Autobiography* is not a retrospective narrative which chronologically examines change. It does not emplot Stein's experiences and meditations to form a coherent description, and it does not argue her themes to form a logical critique of authorial identity. Structurally speaking, it is a meta-autobiographical study of disconnection in the "continuous present." Stein comments on her efforts as she writes to "get this here not as I see it not as it happened but as it is" (64). Creating a "present thing" does not call for adherence to the present tense; Stein says "the writer can include a great deal into that present thing and make it all present" (24). And Stein includes a great deal, intermingling meditations and observations and anecdotes from past and present with only cryptic reference to sequence or association.

I will present her critique of authorial identity in a coherent way. However, in the text this critique consists of obliquely connected passages which consider: on the one hand, the economic trappings of authorship including money, the attribution of value, and the role of the audience-buyer; and on the other hand, the skewed epistemology of identity including the error of being known and knowing someone, and the greater deception of knowing one's self. To many critics this "critique" may not qualify as a critique at all, flouting as it does the constraints of systematically applied reason. And even in terms of autobiographical
arguments, it is far afield from, say, Sartre's ultra-logical representation of evidence against himself in support of the unifying conclusion of The Words. But by writing in the continuous present, Stein "argues" stylistically against the evocation of an airtight personality, against the representation of an identity which extends and is knowable across time. She writes about identity without creating identity, and in this way her style of writing in the "continuous present" complements her critique.41 Herein lies the difference between her first and second autobiography: "the first Autobiography . . . was a description and a creation of something that having happened was in a way happening not again but as it had been which is history which is newspaper which is illustration but is not a simple narrative of what is happening . . . as if it is existing simply that thing. And now in this book I have done it if I have done it" (264). Thus, Everybody's Autobiography is not just another autobiography; "if you do [anything] again then you know you are doing it again and it is not interesting" (Everybody's 18). .

But in being everybody's autobiography, and in crippling the linguistic mechanisms by which identity forms, is the book Gertrude Stein's autobiography? With this question I do not propose to cavil about the attribution of the text, but rather mean to suggest that, in a way altogether different from The Autobiography, Everybody's Autobiography fronts the question of how the signature unifies, "roots," and author-izes an autobiography. There are a couple of ways to address this question, and I will suggest them without being conclusive (as Stein says, "I never liked hearing any one recite or any one ask questions that needed an answer" [Everybody's 70]). If we focus on what representation the
narrative does offer, then unquestionably it is Stein's "story." She is really not writing about everyone, nor is her critique of authorial identity for everyone. It is apparently for Gertrude Stein: the self-proclaimed genius quarreling with success, the newly-born woman author as she was inadvertently created in The Autobiography. Indeed, Stein's interest in her genius status persists in Everybody's Autobiography and separates her, as I argued earlier, from everybody--women, men, artists, public--while leaguing her with a nineteenth-century, masculine tradition of literary self-representation. Estelle Jelinek is principally reacting against the representational content when she finds Stein's voice in this autobiography to be that of "a successful male" (Tradition 147). This judgment crowns Jelinek's review of the book as a "straight-forward chronological narrative" of Stein's life as a celebrity (145). Jelinek's bias against Everybody's Autobiography notwithstanding, she is not wrong to assume that what happens in the book happens to Stein and comes to us through an act of writing that calls attention to "Gertrude Stein" as the autobiograpy's signer.

Jelinek also has some (equally sexist) complaints about the book's style: she observes that it has no "female component," being "intellectual, self-conscious, and dull" (147). Although I think Jelinek's judgment about the style is simplistic, her focus on style nevertheless provides another way to think about the signature of Everybody's Autobiography. If Jean Starobinski is right to attribute autobiographical significance to narrative style, then despite its title, this autobiography will seem "individualized" as Stein's. Its style, though resistant to the inscription of temporality, harkens back to Stein's pre-Autobiography writing, to its
fragmentation of voice and refutation of subjective representation.

Additionally, the prose style recalls the ideas of disconnection thematized in "An American and France." Stein supports the effect of disconnection in *Everybody's Autobiography* by commenting, "but now since the earth is all covered over with every one there is really no relation between any one and so if this Everybody's Autobiography is to be the autobiography of every one it is not to be of any connection between any one and any one because now there is none" (80). Were this narrative taken as an objective account of "everybody," the style and theme of disconnection might argue against the book's being about Stein. But disconnection also resonates with what I earlier called Stein's lesbian politics of separatism. Projecting the disconnection on "everybody," Stein here avoids the defensive posture of withdrawal and instead employs her politics offensively, to sting her readers into the paradoxical position of seeing as she sees but without seeing her. But that observation still does not answer whether Stein's signature functions to link her alone with her autobiobiography.

Far from being a mere digression, this consideration of whose autobiography *Everybody's Autobiography* is bears directly on its critique of authorial identity; and as I examine this critique, I would like for the question to continue to float. To the extent that the autobiobiography is not read as Stein's, it deconstructs the "universal" conventions, psychology, and epistemology of authorship, while transcending issues of gender and history; it could be signed by everybody's signature. To the extent that the autobiobiography is read as Stein's, circumscribed by her signature and its reference to the historical
woman—the reading position I favor—its critique of authorial identity is
gendered, rooted in her experience of authorship and in the ambivalence
about authorship she inscribed in The Autobiography. By adopting a
"disembodied" voice that shuns subjectivity and intersubjectivity while
representing events of her particular life, Stein virtually asks for such a
double reading. My analysis provides one, first working through the
critique of authorial identity as Stein's narrator presents it, in a
historical vacuum; and then reviewing the implosion of Stein's
autobiographical signature which this critique effects from the standpoint
of feminist inquiry in authorship. This final reading does not replace
Stein's deconstruction but rather resees it as a feminine practice that
instantiates and illuminates current feminist theory on women and
authorship.

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Although properly speaking "there is no beginning and no end" to
it, Stein's critique of authorial identity is based on her meditations about
money and the commercial value of her published texts (70). Money is
primary in being the most elemental sign of her success, and the
commercial value of her texts is also primary for having catalyzed the
changes in her relationship to her writing. At the outset it should be
noted that Stein's meditations on money are detached from any broad and
systematic concern with economics or the function of money in modern
capitalist societies. Indeed, she makes a couple of casual references to
Marxist communism that demonstrate her distance from that philosophy
(28, 29). However, her puzzlement about the role of sudden ready cash
in her life suggests an almost Marxist distrust of the relationship between
literature and property. In Chapter Two Stein discusses how for the first time in her life, by publishing *The Autobiography*, she has earned money by selling her writing. Hitherto, as a writer, she had lived quietly with Alice on an "income"; now she has an agent, money to spend, and visitors in abundance--"Everybody invited me to meet somebody"--and though she was not writing, she was in this way coming to be "an author" (78, 31).

In this narrative Stein distinguishes absolutely between writer and author, and the salient difference is money: 

"[I]n the twentieth century if you are to come to be writing really writing you cannot make a living at it no not by writing" (81). Money is the sure sign that she moved as "an author" into the realm of "official art." It made her "feel differently now about everything" (30).

It is not that she wished the money away: "there is the spending of money and there is no doubt about it there is no pleasure like it, the sudden splendid spending of money and we spent it" (34). But these expenditures appear to be dubious recompense for the trouble that money causes her. She says,

slowly everything changed inside me. Yes, of course it did, because suddenly it was all different, what I did had a value that made people ready to pay, up to that time everything I did had a value because nobody was ready to pay. It is funny about money. And it is funny about identity. You are you because your little dog knows you, but when your public knows you and does not want to pay for you and when your public knows you and does want to pay for you, you are not the same you (32).

Stein's phrase "pay for you" shows how she makes an equivalence between herself and her writing, an equivalence which was unproblematic while she wrote privately and her writing's value was a private one. But when she and her writing became successful and acquired a monetary value, the equivalence broke down and her relationship to her writing became
uncertain. So did the relationship between her writings. She writes,

Before one is successful that is before any one is ready to pay money for anything you do then you are certain that every word you have written is an important word to have written and that any word you have written is as important as any other word and you keep everything you have written with great care. And then it happens sometimes sooner and sometimes later that it has a money value I had mine very much later and it is upsetting because when nothing had any commercial value everything was important and when something began having a commercial value it was upsetting, I imagine this is true of any one (27).

While doubtless other new authors (like Tennessee Williams) experienced a variety of Stein's disturbance over the sudden commercial value of their art, few can have written against this evaluation with the fervor Stein shows here. Her disturbance reflects a form of betweenness similar to that of The Autobiography, with this difference: that the outlaw artist has ceased to be refused but takes issue with the process of acceptance. In particular, she queries the kind of writing responsible for her displacement from the margins to the center of public interest. Why author-ization only implicates certain of her texts is the question underlying this observation:

but somehow if my writing was worth money then it was not what it had been, if it had always been worth money then it would have been used to being that thing but if anything changed then there is no identity (67). . . .

The foregoing citations may imply that Stein saw the economics of authorship as a subject divorced from people's actions, but in fact, her deliberations on money also challenge the role of her autobiographies' readership. Identity in Everybody's Autobiography still occasionally means audience recognition, and Stein is still coming to terms with this recognition and the way it silenced her. What is different here is that the audience's creation of authorial identity is entangled with their role as
"buyers" of art. Stein comments that she "had always been interested in the good American doctrine you should not prepare anything without having a prospect, that is there should be a buyer for every seller" (50). This disclosure comes after a particularly poignant paragraph that closes with, "I was not doing any writing." She says that "there is no bother" when there is no buyer. But "how once that you know that the buyer is there can you go on knowing that the buyer is not there[?]" (50). The knowledge that there is a buyer stymies Stein rather than excites her in the "good American" way. She half explains here:

The thing is like this, it is all the question of identity. It is all a question of the outside being outside and the inside being inside. As long as the outside does not put a value on you it remains outside but when it does put a value on you then it gets inside or rather if the outside puts a value on you then all your inside gets to be outside (34).

In this way, Stein's buyer puts an "outside" value on her/her writings which draws her into self-conscious awareness--she sees her self/inside as from the outside; and this awareness in turn upsets her private understanding and relationship to her writing (inner versus outer may be readily translated into private versus public). This last idea echoes the interim pieces' emphasis on how inimical identity/recognition is to the creative process. But in Everybody's Autobiography, Stein addresses with relatively uncharacteristic representational language the worst effect of her audience-buyers:

All this time I did no writing. I had written and was writing nothing. Nothing inside me needed to be written. Nothing needed any word and there was no word inside me that could not be spoken and so there was no word inside me. And I was not writing. I began to worry about identity. I had always been I because I had words that had to be written inside me and now any word I had inside could be spoken it did not need to be written. I am I because my little dog knows me. But was I I when I had no written word
inside me. It was very bothersome. . . . I was not doing any writing (49-50).

The way her sentences in the above paragraph fret with the idea that she wrote nothing indicates the pain the hiatus in her writing must have cost Stein. The shift from theorization in the second person ("you") to meditations in the first person ("I") in particular registers her troubled self-involvement in this otherwise universalized critique. But Stein's representation of herself as not writing calls attention to itself as description of the past, for Stein is obviously writing again, the audience-buyer notwithstanding. Now in this autobiography Stein begins to rebuild the frontier between inner and outer, private and public, on which her creativity depends. Since she enjoys being lionized and reading her fan mail, her disposition to her reader-buyers is never hostile (xxi, 132 passim). But the tone of her remarks, and often their very sequence, betrays an implicit—and sometimes explicit—irony. For example, the irony directed at both autobiography and readers of the genre is unmistakable in these remarks:

But now well now how can you dream about a personality when it is always being created for you by publicity, how can you believe what you make up when publicity makes them up to be so much realer than you can dream. And so autobiography is written which is in a way a way to say that publicity is right, they are as the public sees them. Well yes (53).

Without discrediting either her remarks about money and commercial value or her immediate responses to them, Stein's irony in this autobiography helps her disentangle herself from the public that stymies her. Since The Autobiography catalyzed the money, the buyers, and the publicity that recreated her identity as an author, the medium of autobiography quite reasonably comes to be the target of her irony—"Anything is
autobiography"—and of her most provocative meditations (xxiii).
Refraining from identifying a/her self with the claim that "neither
classic nor identity are necessary to him who meditates," she uses this
autobiography to break down the authorial identity and implode the
signature that The Autobiography created (83). In the "second part" of
the critique in Everybody's Autobiography she thus exposes the illusion-
studded epistemology which underlies autobiography and is responsible
for soldering signature and identity in authorial identity.

Throughout the narrative, Stein comments and reflects on the
fallacies of intersubjective knowledge responsible for the creation of
identity via autobiography. The dispersal of these meditations does not
lesser their weight in the narrative; rather, this presentation endows
them with an almost subliminal effect. Collectively, however, they
constitute the most subversive dimension of Stein's autobiographical
confrontation with authorial identity for they tease the reader with the
fragile and duplicitous knowledge she has or receives about herself and
others in life and books. Stein calls into question the knowledge
constitutive of identity, rendering it impossible for her new readership to
persist in seeing an equivalence between her and "Gertrude Stein":
"There is me myself," she says, "and there is identity my identity" (176).
Undoubtedly, Stein's assault on Cartesian epistemology is fuelled by her
interest in redirecting readers' focus from herself to her writing; she
says, "It always did bother me that the American public were more
interested in me than in my work" (39). But this grudge alone cannot
account for the deconstructive method Stein employs to undo and discredit
autobiographical identity. In her essay on Stein and the Cone sisters,
Carolyn Burke documents how Stein apparently coined the term "deconstruction" in describing the aim of her work to Mina Loy:
"deconstruction preparatory to complete reconstruction of the objective" (238). And Burke explains how Stein's proximity to cubism is precisely this deconstructive "dismantling of both the structural principles of the subject and traditional, unexamined habits of perception" (238). Couple this overarching aesthetics of anti-subjectivity with her project to undo the inadvertent creation of her autobiographical identity and Stein's critique of the epistemology of identity appears an intentional (if unsystematic) methodology.

Over and again, Stein's meditative narrator plays with the illusion of knowing another, from her own or anyone's point of view. Some comments are plainly parodic or ironic, as her suggestion in this (one!) sentence that to know someone means to greet them:

Bernard Fay asked me if it did not make me self-conscious to have everybody in America know me and say how do you do, it does seem extraordinary but they all did know me and they all did say how do you do, of course I never imagined that they would all know me and that they would say how do you do any one anywhere but when they did it it was afterwards as it is here in Bilignin, everybody here and in Belley knows me and as I go about any one anywhere says how do you do and America is a little larger of course it is a little larger there are a great many more people there but after all if they all do know you and do say how do you do to you once it happens it really does not make it different that America is larger and that there are so many more people over there than here since they all do know you and they all do say how do you do to you (61-62).

Stein's leveling of "everybody" into this superficially knowing group is characteristic of her method. Elsewhere she says that "you that is I well now any one often meets them people you know or people who know you" (3). In this way she specifically implicates herself in the epistemology she is discrediting. Discussing the Making of Americans she says, "In
writing [it] I said I write for myself and strangers and then later now I
know these strangers, are they still strangers, well anyway that too does
not really bother me. . . ." (82). In a seeming paradox she thus
suggests that she knows strangers; they remain strangers because "I
never do know what they can do, I really do not know what they are"
(89). Does anything support Stein's protested ignorance? It certainly
resonates with her above-mentioned accent on disconnection, echoed
elsewhere in her (literally) eccentric opinions of relations between people:
"but now individual anything as related to every other individual is to me
no longer interesting. . . . now there is really no relation between
anyone" (80). Stein's implicit use of tautology here--relations between
individuals are not interesting because there are no relations between
individuals--shows how even with logic she defies a subject-object form of
knowledge which would contradict her "argument" against
knowing/recognizing/identifying others. But she also denies this
knowledge overtly in the following sort of claim, "The moment you or
anybody else knows what you are you are not it" (74)."" In sum, the
autobiographical significance of these comments pointing to the illusion
of knowing another can be put succinctly: how can she be personally
recognized as "Gertrude Stein" if knowing another is illusory? How can
her audience know "Gertrude Stein" from The Autobiography when
authorial identity is essentially false?

A different but related part of Stein's challenge to the subjective
basis of authorship consists in her meditations on the reflexive act of self-
knowledge. All of the numerous permutations of the statement first
declared in the interim pieces--"I am I because my little dog knows me"--
contribute to this inquiry. By the narrative's end in Chapter Five, Stein will lay this theme to rest with the open suspicion, "I was not sure but that that only proved the dog was he and not that I was I," and the more dismissive conclusion, "perhaps I am not I even if my little dog knows me but any way I like what I have and now it is today" (259, 278). Wedging a barrier between the I who speaks and the I who is referred to, Stein reveals her distance from the Cartesian position, as detailed by Stanley Cavell in his essay on Descartes and Emerson. Cavell argues that the cogito argument Descartes formulated, and which his inheritors in Western, masculine autobiographical traditions used to premise their narratives, was not simply, "I think, therefore I am," but rather, "I say that I think therefore I am" (279-281). In contrast to Sartre (and Wright to a lesser degree), Stein does not use evidence against herself but positions her meditations against the practice and epistemology of self-evidence. The Words derives neatly from Rousseau's Confessions in which the narrator maintains that he is completely known to himself and can therefore reveal himself in all of his inimitable uniqueness to his readers. Stein problematizes the reflexivity of this self-knowledge and those recollective texts which bespeak this reflexivity.

The most daring passage in Everybody's Autobiography brilliantly articulates Stein's problems with self-knowledge:

And identity is funny being yourself is funny as you are never yourself to yourself except as you remember yourself and then of course you do not believe yourself. That is really the trouble with an autobiography you do not of course you do not really believe yourself why should you, you know so well so very well that it is not yourself, it could not be yourself because you cannot remember right and if you do remember right it does not sound right and of course it does not sound right because it is not right. You are of course never yourself. Well anyway I did tell all about myself... (53).
The place to begin unpacking this passage is at the end: she did tell all about herself in *The Autobiography*. And yet, as a remembered account featuring the act of remembrance, that narrative produced an equivalence between the woman Stein and the author-to-be Stein that "is not right." Stein's suggestion that autobiographers like herself incite this equivalence between "you" and "yourself" despite their disbelief in the equivalence has the rhetorical function of a joke. The joke is not that "I" was "Alice" in *The Autobiography*; the joke is that Gertrude Stein was not "I" and "of course" is not "I." But more than mere disclaimer engineers this passage; there is Stein's tautological play with syntax in "You are of course never yourself." A subject "you," so goes the logic, cannot by definition be the reflexive "yourself," for that would require an erasure of the subject-object distance with which "you" perceives "yourself" as an object. An effect of this tautology is that Stein's current audience also becomes implicated in the deceit because of their reliance on the subject-object distance to know "Gertrude Stein" from *The Autobiography*. Stein obstructs personal identification in authorship through autobiography by removing its basis: a self to be recognized. In her poised matter-of-fact manner (in which a reader may think she hears the voice of Stein) Stein discredits the self-implication in the last autobiography and, by extension, in the autobiography underway. Her "disembodied" meditations on the illusion of self-reflexive knowledge argue: if I am not I, then how can you recognize me?

Stein's dismantling of the subjective basis of identity turns around the question posed earlier: Without effecting self-creation, can this be Stein's autobiography? If Stein's assertions are heeded, indeed it is:
"Anyway autobiography is easy like it or not autobiography is easy for
any one and so this is to be Everybody's Autobiography" (xxiii). But
Stein's sprezzatura here regarding the ease with which Everybody's
Autobiography composes itself serves to unsettle expectations about what
autobiography is and does. Throughout her present narrative Stein
drops hints about what it is, arguing quite literally for the "nothing" that
it takes as its subject. The words "nothing" and "nobody" actually
reverberate with significant frequency, in giveaways such as "the
difference between knowing [everybody] a long time and not knowing
them at all is really nothing," as well as in more substantive remarks like
"And anyway except in daily life nobody is anybody" (41, 89). The
second observation in particular connects Stein's razing of identity with
her politics of isolation by implying that not in autobiographies but in
daily existence alone is Gertrude Stein to be "known"; otherwise she is
nobody. But even that formulation does not hold, given the way the first
remark disqualifies any kind of long-term "knowing" such as we might
envision between Stein and Toklas. In life she is with Alice, not knowing
her/greeting her with "how do you do." In the autobiography underway,
however, Stein's meditations anticipate and refuse in their subject and
method the creation of identity; she is nobody, with respect to her
knowing readers.

Similarly, her narrative trumpets its nothingness, as these
representations of it "argue": "I am telling it now so simply that perhaps
it is not anything" (89); and near its "end,

I went on writing, I had always wanted it all to be common-place and
simple anything that I am writing and then I get worried lest I have
succeeded and it is too common-place and too simple so much so that
it is nothing, anybody says it is not so, it is not too common-place
and not too simple but do they know anyway I have always all the
time thought it was so and hoped it was so and then worried lest it
was so. I am worried again now lest it is so (271; my emphasis).

Such reflections on the narrative showing Stein overreading herself need
to be distinguished from the "defacement" that Paul de Man theorizes all
autobiographies enact; de Man's deconstructive theory about
autobiography writing, coming from "outside" autobiographical narrative,
assembles the explicit construction of a "face" which despite itself
disintegrates in the language (9). Stein, in contrast, actively writes
against a face and against the possibility of one from "inside"
autobiography. It might be argued that the description of her and
Toklas's American tour in the lengthy fourth chapter constitutes a
betrayal of her critique of the identity-creating language and thought of
autobiography. However, the narrative recreation of the tour partakes of
the "continuous present" informing the whole narrative, which obstructs
the facile tendency of autobiography readers to "see" a self under
construction. Instead, this style ensures the representation of nothing
but the story of narration underway, which Stein occasionally refers to
with voluptuous concentration: "I like writing, it is so pleasant, to have
the ink write it down on the paper as it goes on doing" (271).

Having disrupted the subjective basis of her authorship, Stein has
argued through her second autobiograpy that authors--like her--do not
have an identity. If reference need be made, Stein's second
autobiography indicates that her signature points not to her self--for
where is that?--but to her texts. No anecdote in the text more eloquently
argues for this signatorial repositioning than the one "concluding" the
Preface:
And then we four Max White and Lindley Hubbell and Alice Toklas and I walked down Fifth Avenue together and my book Portraits and Prayers was just to come out that day and on the cover was to be a photograph of me by Carl Van Vechten and as we were walking down Fifth Avenue together, a young coloured woman smiled and slowly pointed and there it was a copy of the book in a show window and she smiled and went away (xxvi).

This anecdote traces a trajectory from photograph to authorized book to shop window into which Stein as well as the passing woman looks as a spectator. If the woman's gesture has any referential significance it is to underscore that "Gertrude Stein" only names an author of books to be sold and read. In this way, Stein's signature can be said to have imploded in Everybody's Autobiography: it is violently dislocated from the field of subjective representation guaranteeing a person on one end of it and displaced across texts which it author-izes without ever producing the author "in person." Peggy Kamuf's spatial discussion of the authorial signature supports and clarifies this point:

A signature is not a name; at most it is a piece of a name, its citation according to certain rules. But neither is it simply a piece of common language that can be picked up and used by just anyone to any purpose. Like a dash or a hyphen--a trait--the signature spaces out, joins, and dissociates. It is not, however, a line of division, nor a dividing line--unless one hears that phrase as a line that is at every point dividing itself (but, since a point is precisely the indivisible unit of this figure, better not try to measure the signature geometrically or to plot its position in this way in the textual space). As a piece of proper name, the signature points, at one extremity, to a properly unnameable singularity; as a piece of language, the signature touches, at its other extremity, on the space of free substitution without proper reference (Signature 12-13).

Kamuf stresses how the signature thus ordinarily functions as a continuum of sorts both joining and dissociating the "unnameable singularity" and "free substitution"; readers of autobiography, typically making the equivalence between author and narrator, cause the signature's function to be more one of joining. Stein's project is to disjoin
the signature from the "unnameable singularity" but not to leave it an object of free substitution (like a common noun). Her deconstruction of authorial identity ultimately strengthens the role of the author indicated by the signature by insisting on reference to the texts "pseudoanonymously" signed. 

The autobiographical contract suggested by Everybody's Autobiography is a destabilized variety of the Lejeune model I reviewed earlier; but there is plenty of reason to consider it yet a contract where the author's signature presides without need of identity with narrator and protagonist so-named. Stein's deconstruction is, in this way, nonprogrammatic at best. But is that quality not what deconstruction is all about?

Deconstruction, as the word says, is not just a destruction of an old program, or the putting in place of a new one. Its force is precisely not that of a program or a project, but of an unprogrammed newness that arises there where the old has worn out without yet yielding the ground to a stable and recognizable structure (Signature 17).

But does Stein's signatorial repositioning really oppose the institution of authorship?

The lesson should be that the authorial institution and the critical attitudes it fosters are not to be simply opposed or thrown over. Such oppositional "strategy" has proved to some extent to be but an anticipation of its own reversal in a new valorization of the "author," the "historical subject," or a "new subject" (Signature 15).

Nevertheless, Stein's second autobiography does seek some kind of valorization of the author. Her ambivalence before and after her authorization indicate her half-willingness to participate in the institution of authorship, but on her terms. The evidence suggests that Stein's is an ambivalent deconstruction of the signature.
First, in *Everybody's Autobiography* Stein continues to wish not to prevent the promotion of her signature; on this point, she has not changed her mind much since *The Autobiography*. She equivocates here on the question of the printing of her texts:

Besides I said I wanted them to go ahead and print everything, it has always been my hope that some day some one would print everything, it does not bother me so much now, well partly because it does not and partly because if it is not printed some one will discover it later and that will be so much more exciting or they will not and that will be so much more disturbing (90).

As it turns out Bennett Cerf arranges to print everything—not just the autobiographies, as her first agent suggested—which is precisely what Stein wanted (109). Second, Stein wants not to relinquish the power of controlling her signature and texts' circulation. Stein's pride in her small audience, and her tacit desire to keep appreciation of her real work small—so as to preserve a semblance of her marginal outlaw status—suggests this negative desire:

[A]t last I found out what was bothering them they wanted to know how I had succeeded in getting so much publicity, I said by having a small audience, I said if you have a big audience you have no publicity, this did seem to worry them and naturally it would worry them they wanted the publicity and the big audience, and really to have the biggest publicity you have to have a small one, yes alright the biggest publicity comes from the realest poetry and the realest poetry has a small audience not a big one (246).

No doubt Stein adored circulating herself in the public domain, as she did during her American tour. But as an author she preferred to rule as a sovereign non-subject from the margins. Finally, Stein does not do more tactically than cast dubious slights at patrology and patriarchy:

I used to think the name of anybody was very important and the name made you and I have often said so. Perhaps I still think so but still there are so many names and anybody now-a-days can call anybody any name they like (2).
There is too much fathering going on just now and there is no doubt about it fathers are depressing (113).

Daniel is my father's name, it is a good sounding name and yet not a very real name to me and I never have found out whether it is a name that I like or not, anyway it was my father's name. . . . Here in Belley it interests me very much when the father dies or the mother and it is a large family and the children are all old enough to like it better. What ever happens they do like it better (117).

Far from being radically new and subversive, Stein's comments on these subjects evoke a dismissively weary tone perfectly in keeping with her overarching claim in this autobiography, "I detach myself . . . " (103). For all three of these reasons, Stein's dismantling of authorial identity differs from the deconstructionist project per se. It reflects instead the persistence of a healthy if ambivalent desire to be authorized as a writer of publicly circulating texts. In the most neutral language, Stein's authobiographies straitjacket the role of the author as a textual function while supporting the material interests of a person who is an author.

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I launched this analysis with the premise that there is no such thing as a neutral signature; that all signatures operate in gendered textual and historical fields. Stein's signature is no exception, and by way of concluding this section, I will consider how Stein's quasi-deconstruction of authorial identity instantiates the figure of the unwilling if interested female participant in the institution of authorship—a figure promulgated by the contemporary debate amongst feminists on authorship. Peggy Kamuf and Nancy Miller's dialogue in the Summer 1982 issue of Diacritics addresses and exemplifies the polarizing themes of this academic debate.

Peggy Kamuf's contribution to this dialogue typifies the feminist deconstructionist. Kamuf warns that gynocentric critics, in valorizing
women's authorship, replicate the errors and illusions of androcentric humanism which depends (philosophically and practically) on this institution. Kamuf acknowledges that rectifying women's exclusion in academic canons may be cosmetically accomplished: by either "expanding" the canon "to include what has been excluded" or by "installing . . . a counter-institution based on feminine-centered cultural models" (43, 45). But each of these "solutions" entails the promotion of the authorial signature as an emblem of identity, which makes Kamuf wonder to what extent [women's] efforts must remain caught as a reflection of the same form of nineteenth-century humanism from which we have inherited our pervasively androcentric modes of thought. In other words, if one can accept the major part of this analysis of how and why Western thought about human forms has taken the shape it has, then can one also conclude that modifying that shape to include its feminine contours will result in something fundamentally different? . . . If feminist theory can be content to propose cosmetic modifications on the face of humanism and its institutions, will it have done anything more than reproduce the structure of women's exclusion in the same code which has been extended to include her? (45)

Nancy Miller's response to Kamuf does not "solve" these questions at the level of theory because, she says, "I do not believe it is possible to theorize, to think aloud, the grounds of such a practice in a way that transcends powerful internal contradiction" (48; Miller's emphasis). Miller positions herself "against" Kamuf "for the purposes of argument," aligning her thoughts with her speaking position: as a gynocritic valorizing women's authorship in order to "correct" women's exclusion from the canon (49). Astutely, Miller acknowledges that by taking a side she helps reinforce the polarities of the feminist/deconstruction theoretical debate on authorship where dissension occurs between "material contingencies" and "theoretical urgencies" (48). Here is my own tally of these polarities:
Miller's feeling is that these kinds of polarities are "unfortunate, if all too accurate" in describing divisions amongst feminists; yet because she finds that the question of "who is speaking" continues to be supremely important to women who do work in the institutions of universities and literary scholarship, she throws her weight towards the material contingencies. The theoretical urgencies, she implies, are not truly "post-humanistic"; rather they perpetuate a "sovereign indifference" to the fact of women's historical and material voicelessness in Western civilization (53). Women's signatures at the practical level function differently from men's in Miller's eyes because, as gendered signs, they "make visible the marginality, eccentricity and vulnerability of women [as] they concretely challenge the confidence of humanistic discourse as universality" (52). Indeed, Miller postulates, women authors (and their signatures, I would add) cause theorists to rethink their ideas of center and margins. Finally, by way of conclusion, she claims that "we must live out (the hortatory always returns) a practical politics within the institution grounded in regional specificities," even though, as she says at the start, "the question of effective feminist practice is insoluble" (53, 48; Miller's emphasis).

Representing this archetypal debate between Kamuf and Miller helps to clarify the peculiar relevance of Stein's critique of authorial identity in Everybody's Autobiography to gender-conscious students of authorship.
Stein infuses this autobiography, even more than her first, with a distrust reminiscent of Kamuf's about participating in an institution hinging on authorial identity. However, since she implodes "the" signature while also accenting her pleasure in the power hers gives her, Stein exhibits a Miller-like concern— with all its betweenness—for the persistence of her authorized voice. After all, though it questions the structures of her author-ization, Everybody's Autobiography in no way de-authorizes Stein or returns her to her previous outlaw status. Rather, her autobiography's concessions to "material necessities" reflect the complexities women face in questioning the metaphysics of selfhood underpinning the institution of authorship while at the same time accepting the empowerment entailed in becoming an author of "official art" (as The Autobiography calls it).

Stein was a professedly exceptional, women-denying woman. Just as the question of "feminist praxis is insoluble," so too the question of any woman's relationship to "women" and feminism's goals is unfixed. Stein cannot be said to exemplify either this praxis or this relationship. And yet, perhaps owing to her efforts to represent the marginality and separateness inherent in her own practice of authorship, her first two autobiographies are invaluable to feminists. Because they are autobiography, they cannot repress the relevance of Stein's feminine subject position though they strain towards the rigor of abstract and neutered theory. They effect, by their very ambivalence, a rapprochement between "material necessities" and "theoretical urgencies" which divide women investigating the process of their authorization. And they pioneer a third route of searching compromise between the fallacies
of the speaking presence and the perquisites of the signing author. It is unlikely that a theoretical debate could represent this conflict with quite the force and acuity of Stein's historical, praxis-centered texts. And no merely theoretical debate among women can dramatize so well as these conflict-ridden autobiographies the compromises women authors work out between the power and control of the literary institutions in which they participate. The story of Stein's vexed relationship to her signature endows a merely academic debate with history's particularity and art's resolution.

If there is a limitation to Stein's autobiographical critique of authorship, it may be its assumed gender neutrality. But Stein's resistance to ideas about how her femininity operates as a variable within her critique should not be wished away: the historicity of this position has helped feminists to judge the limits of humanist feminism as a means of transforming society. I have tried to show with my methodology how this position can be supplemented. In overreading her texts I have situated "Gertrude Stein" within a gendered narrative space, reading back into the signature a condition of difference that its narratives' universalizing language represses. I have not endeavored to portray Stein as a woman-centered cultural critic, but rather as a cultural critic whose insights are conditioned by and revelatory of her particular "féminitude." In the next two chapters I will examine how Simone de Beauvoir (who is largely responsible for exciting worldwide interest in "féminitude") and Zora Neale Hurston respectively deploy the variable of gender in their autobiographical critiques of authorship; and I will demonstrate how attending to this variable illuminates the questions about authorship their
texts pose. Analyzing first Gertrude Stein's quasi-deconstruction of her signature foregrounds the fallacies of the self=author equation which Sartre and Wright presuppose. De Beauvoir and Hurston's autobiographies, exploring the differences gender does (and does not) make in their lives and writing, will suggest alternative ways to conceptualize the terms self and author in this masculine equation.
Notes


4. Ulla E. Dydo discusses the importance of Stein's decision in 1932 to depart from her "disembodied" style and to compose and publish "audience writing" in "Stanzas in Meditation: The Other Autobiography," *Chicago Review* 35.2 (1985): 4-5.

5. Shirley C. Neuman notably departs from this pattern of devotion to *The Autobiography* in *Gertrude Stein: Autobiography* (Victoria, BC: English Literary Studies, 1979); but there Neuman reads Stein's works primarily for evidence of narratological shifts. Similarly, Fichtelberg considers Stein's repertoire of autobiographical works for evidence of their shifting treatment of consciousness.

6. It is important to make the connection between the contractual function of authorial signatures and the money that accrues to authors as a result of their publishing contracts. Lejeune nowhere mentions economic or financial compulsions or compensations, which is perfectly in keeping with the metasocial nature of his rhetoric. However, questions appertaining to revenues received for published (as opposed to unpublished, unsellable, unvalued) work will figure prominently in Gertrude Stein's critique of the author-ization of her signature in *Everybody's Autobiography*.

7. Lejeune says, "Identity is not resemblance. Identity is a fact immediately grasped" (*On Autobiography* 21; Lejeune's emphasis).

8. Jane Marie Todd, "Autobiography and the Case of the Signature: Reading Derrida's *Glas*," *Comparative Literature* 38 (1986): 1-19. Todd's reflections on Lejeune's pact, like the feminist meditations below, emphasize the role of the state which underwrites the signature's contractual force (2). But this concern becomes eclipsed in the course of her essay as the figural play so important to Derrida comes to fascination.
her as well. The one important reference to the institutional enchainment of the signature coming later in the essay serves to compromise Todd's ultimate agreement with Derrida that no text is really "regulated by a signature": "no name is absolutely proper to the person it designates; it operates within a system, classifies the individual, grants him a place within language and within the state" (9).

9. Against Lejeune's declaration that the position of the reader "is mine" and his agglomeration of readers into the undifferentiated pronomial category of "us" (On Autobiography 4), Stanton carefully qualifies her reader position as "feminist." She thus immediately draws attention to a kind of reading which eschews universal statements in favor of inquiry which has the position of women as its focus. Notwithstanding this caveat, Stanton like Lejeune assumes the position of consumer rather than author of texts, a position likewise adopted by Nancy K. Miller, who writes, "To be sure, Lejeune is not concerned with female autobiography. But his notion of a contractual genre dependent upon codes of transmission and reception joins our [feminist] purposes, because it relocates the problematics of autobiography as genre in an interaction between reader and text." See "Writing Fictions: Women's Autobiography in France," in Subject to Change: Reading Feminist Writing (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) 61.


11. In an unpublished essay entitled "Women's Strategies Against Their Im/Proper Names," I have challenged Gilbert and Gubar's contention that the female autograph can be used to subvert the masculine symbolic and the patriarchal institutions that symbolic grounds. I reasoned: "[T]hey do not seem to view naming as a masculine power, although they recognize that hitherto it has been exercised almost exclusively by males. Their argument thus begs the question of whether naming and renaming can be considered feminist strategies—a question I think needs answering. In addition, they seem to argue that the power to rename can pre-empt the power to name: that women can replace the ancient cosmos and their former identities through specifically feminine rites of rechristening. This claim, of course, problematically assumes that the symbolic order permits feminine expression of feminine subjectivity," an assumption running contrary to the Lacanian analysis with which I went on to examine the issue.

12. Interestingly enough, both Lejeune and Todd accent the marginal position of the signature despite its textual control: Lejeune calls the title page "that fringe of the printed text which, in reality, controls the entire
reading," (29, Lejeune's emphasis); and Todd states, "It is not by accident that autobiography is often considered "marginal" to literature, since it is the genre that incorporates literature's margin, the signature that links it to its outside, into itself" (19).


15. Again, quoted in Simon from Stein's Stanzas in Meditation 77. See n. 14 above.

16. Quoted in Simon from Stein's Stanzas in Meditation 134 and 146. See n. 14 above.

17. Quoted in Simon from Stein's Stanzas in Meditation 50. See n. 14 above.

18. Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940 190. Comments such as, "When she did finally manage to draw the attention of the outside world, . . ." evidence Benstock's tendency to view Stein as unequivocally self-promoting, someone who lived for a long time as "an 'absent presence' in Paris, working quietly on her literary project, seeing only those who could foster her career" (169).

19. Quoted in Simon, 152.


21. Benstock quotes Leon Katz in this context: "The notebooks and her letters of the first months in Paris--in fact of her first four years there--suggest that Stein underwent a period of the most relentless despair, surrender of ambition, and psychological disorientation. She became passive, cynical; she was moved to do nothing. . ." (130).

22. On Leo and Gertrude's relationship see especially Stimpson, "Gertrice/Altrude" 126-127; and Benstock, Women 144-149, who surveys James R. Mellow's and Richard Bridgman's assessments of the relationship. On the alleged transference of dependence from Leo to Picasso, see Neil Schmitz, Of Huck and Alice: Humorous Writing in American Literature (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).
23. Benstock observes that Stein had great need to be listened to, and Alice's listening helped Stein to hear her own voice, to affirm the reality of what she was trying to do with words, and to know who she was (145).

24. Stimpson qualifies, "More than a writer, Stein was a person of language" ("Gertrice" 128).

25. In anticipation of the below discussion of "official art," I want to pose the interesting question of how Stein's coming-to-be an author is circumscribed by The Autobiography's limited representation of her works--made more interesting by the fact that it is Stein's hand that separated the wheat from the chaff. If she chose for reasons of privacy to shadow her erotica, it would be consistent with the external, public image of her which "Alice" provides, from which all evidence of Stein's and Toklas's intimacy is expunged. If, however, some blend of self-censoring and a heterosexist understanding of "official art" is behind her choice to eclipse those texts of hers that violate normative social codes, then the text's relationship to the "official art" it sometimes sneers at appears appreciably nearer.

26. As a postscript to the Eliot anecdote, the narrator Alice remarks, "Gertrude Stein was delighted when later she was told that Eliot had said in Cambridge that the work of Gertrude Stein was very fine but not for us" (202). Stein's need to preempt Eliot's refusal with her own delight at being thus snubbed indicates something more than one-upmanship. Craving acceptance from publishers and editors and delighting in their rejections reflect a mind truly divided over the issue of public circulation and authorization of her writing.


28. Adams here corroborates Elizabeth Winston's appreciation of how Alice's voice is used to ventriloquate Stein's view of herself as a genius. See "The Autobiographer and Her Readers: From Apology to Affirmation," Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press) 93-111. In this essay Winston is concerned with showing how women autobiographers after the 1920s, including Stein, had conquered their "ambivalence about being professional writers" which Mrs. Oliphant, Mary Mitford and Lady Sidney Morgan's autobiographies, for example, inscribe. Winston accents how Stein and other modernist women writers "openly affirm their achievements" and are "vigorously self-affirming" (95). My trouble with Winston's argument is that it interprets women's "ambivalence about being professional writers" as a conflict between being a writing woman and being a domestic woman. Collapsing the distinction between writer and author, Winston ignores the possibility of ambivalence generated by women writers' participation in a patriarchal literary establishment.
29. The concept of "denegation" was introduced to me in Jane Gallop's essay on Luce Irigaray's Speculum of the Other Woman, "The Father's Seduction," The (M)other Tongue: Essays in Feminist Psychoanalytic Interpretation, ed. Shirley Nelson Garner, Claire Kahane, and Madelon Sprengnether (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 33-50. This essay resonates strangely with the story I am telling here of Stein. Gallop explains Irigaray's "denegation" of her desires for the father's (Freud's) law: "the process by which the subject, although formulating one of his until now repressed desires, thoughts, feelings, continues to defend himself from it by denying that it belongs to him" (48). This process identifies Stein's projection of her desire for authorization—to have a signature—onto Alice, and her portrayal of her own passivity before the dilemma of her unpublished manuscripts.

30. For a discussion of metaphors of monstrosity used to describe Stein as well as the betweenness of Stein's body itself as a sign of gender, see Stimpson's "The Somograms of Gertrude Stein"; for a discussion of exceptional women as authors see Heilbrun's Writing a Woman's Life: "Exceptional women are the chief prisoners of nonexceptional women, simultaneously proving that any woman could do it and assuring, in their uniqueness among men, that no other woman will" (81); see also Benstock on the question of Stein's betweenness as an exceptional woman, a self-styled genius (193). Benstock's description of the "anxiety of authorship" Stein experienced as a result of her status of betweenness is relevant to my argument (192).


32. In contrast to the overexposed Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, Everybody's Autobiography has received little critical attention, and as I discuss below, this attention has been principally unfavorable. Most importantly, its function as a response to its predecessor has been obscured. The patent preoccupation of both texts with authorial identities has likewise gone unnoticed in Stein criticism. Both texts may be classed as autobiographies: my neologism for autobiographies which query or critique the practice and ideology of authorship. The autobiographical fame they both question is the peculiar exposure of an author's identity through her life writings.

33. See Simon 185-194.

34. See Foucault's description of the four attributes of the author-function (148-153).

35. Quoted in Simon 187. The piece from which the quotation is taken is "First Page," also collected in the 1956 edition of Stanzas in Meditation and Other Poems. Simon provides another telling quotation on the subject
of Stein's confusion about her authorization from a piece called "And Now," published sometime between the autobiographies: "What happened to me is this. When the success began and it was a success I got lost completely lost. You know the nursery rhyme, I am I because my little dog knows me. Well, you see I did not know myself, I lost my personality. . . . Here all of a sudden, I was not just I because so many people did know me" (187). Although Simon simplifies Stein's dilemma as being caused by Stein's being "conscious of thousands of readers" (187), in general, she is the critic most sensitive to Stein's conflicts with authorship before and after The Autobiography. I wonder if Simon's candid attention to this topic might stem from her primary focus on Toklas, which frees her from the demands of portraying Stein as heroic author.

36. In a style reminiscent of Stein's disjunctive one, Blake reflects on questions of identity that moved Stein as she wrote her second narrative autobiography; but Blake does not do more than signal how Stein's public recognition initiated her inquiry into identity. Perhaps Blake's most provocative insight is how Stein's tautological discussions of identity relate to her experiments with language in earlier years. See also Dubnick's fifth chapter, "'Anything is What It Is': Naming, Ordering, and Logic" in The Structure of Obscurity for a discussion of the significance of Stein's use of tautology on the subject of identity.

37. The ambiguity of the play's title, "Identity a Poem," reflects Stein's attempts to win back identity from the usurping publicity. Identity in the title is a poem and is the subject of the poem. And if it is a poem, it is not a static recognition decided apart from the writing of the author but is connected with poetic creation.

38. Stein presents the equation between classic writing and dead writing earlier in "Composition as Explanation" (27-28).

39. Starobinski's choice of the masculine pronoun corresponds with his criterion that a "radical" change must motivate narrative autobiographies. In the case of Stein's second autobiography, radical change may be prompting the composition, but her text's dispersal of time and event and meditation into a "continuous present" works against the coherent recollection and re-construction of this change.

40. Neuman coins the term "meta-autobiography" in her chapter describing Everybody's Autobiography (47). "Continuous present" is a term Stein uses to describe her narration, a tack she often takes in this text, which causes the story of its narration to be as important as the stories of biographical events strung throughout the narrative's continuous present.

41. In such a text one expects contradictions, and there is one on this very issue. Stein says, "The only thing that makes identity possible is no change but nevertheless there is no identity" (54). I have argued that no identity is created in the text because its style mutes or diffuses readers' perception of change. This apparent contradiction may be solved by
understanding that Stein, as I mentioned earlier, meant different things by the word "identity." Her comment above first intends identity to mean sameness; while I, along with her second reference, intend identity to mean the representation/recognition of self organizing a unified pattern of changes. See more on identity below.

42. See especially the third chapter where Stein opens with a consideration of what a genius is and why there are so few of them, to prepare for her question, "And if you stop writing if you are a genius and you have stopped writing are you still one if you have stopped writing" (67-68).

43. Stein here enters a tradition of women novelists who have taken money, and writing as a means of money-making, as their subject. See Ellen Moers, Literary Women (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976) for an elaboration of the centrality of finances in women's fiction throughout the last centuries.

44. This claim subtly restates her cryptic announcement in "What Are Masterpieces" that "identity consists in recognition and in recognizing you lose identity," cited above.

45. Stanley Cavell calls this emphasis on "saying" the "performance aspect of the cogito." And he entertains, from Descartes and then from the analytic philosopher's point of view, "the question of what happens if I do not say (and of course do not say the negation of) 'I am, I exist' or conceive it in my mind. . . . Surely the saying or thinking of some words may be taken to bear on whether the sayer or thinker of them exists at most in the sense of determining whether he or she knows of his or her existence, but surely not in the sense that the saying or thinking may create that existence." In "Being Odd, Getting Even: Threats to Individuality," Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought, ed. Thomas C. Heller, Morton Sosna, and David E. Wellbery (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986) 280-281; Cavell's emphasis. Stein is distrustful of this connection between saying and knowing and "I" and perhaps also of the creative potential of this "performance aspect of the cogito."

46. For similar reasons, Nancy Blake's thesis that Stein is "absent" in the narrative does not hold; absence participates in a dialectic premising a presence which Stein's language and method and critique against authorial identity all thwart.

47. Kamuf explains the "pseudoanonymous regime of the text's signature" as a marginal or indeterminate position the author assumes in relation to the "law of the proper name and the space of reading." The author, she says, "is positioned by a certain effaceability of his/her name with regard to the text it signs" (Signature 66; Kamuf's emphasis).

48. Compare this role with that of today's proper deconstructionist who, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak maintains, "puts into question the 'purposive' activities of a sovereign subject." See "Displacement and the
Chapter 4  Authorizing Others in Simone de Beauvoir's
Authobiography

One peculiarity of Simone de Beauvoir criticism is that it treats de
Beauvoir as an author while throwing doubt on her authority. She has
important and irrefutable signs of authorship to her credit: her 1954
Goncourt Prize, her world-renowned work on women's situation, and her
more than twenty publications legitimize her attraction to growing
numbers of critics. But awakening critical attention usually entails
awakening critical quandaries. And arguably the most common quandary
feminist and other critics of de Beauvoir's work are discussing concerns
the power and authority of de Beauvoir's literary and theoretical voice.
Whose ideas really authorize The Second Sex? What is so original about a
(seemingly) endless chronology of a life? "[D]id Simone de Beauvoir know
the first thing about men and women, most particularly men-and-women,
or about tradition, the rationale of sex, the requirements of the heart, or
the common sense of loyalties?" (Gallant 963) Even when brilliant
argumentation defuses these kinds of questions, a certain defensiveness
persists concerning de Beauvoir's originality which eclipses assurances
that this mother (as Carol Ascher among others has called her) of
contemporary feminism will have an enduring authorial reputation. In
brief, with few exceptions, critics of de Beauvoir's writing typically
become critics of de Beauvoir, and their collective judgment—from the
1950s through the 1980s—portrays her as a woman of derivative
authority.

To help determine whether or not this portrait is appropriate, it is
worth considering how de Beauvoir's writing justifies it. To be sure, the
weighty autobiographical dimension of her writing may be partly responsible for the slippage between work and woman in the criticism. But a more compelling invitation to make this elision—and to make it in such a way as to put her authority in question—comes in the form of her six-volume autobiography spanning her life from baby to "femme écrivain."³ Far from content just to be an author, de Beauvoir needed "se mettre en question" as a woman author in a published life-writing project begun at fifty and continued for more than two decades.⁴ These autobiographies represent de Beauvoir from an early age as having a penchant for self-dialogue. Besides keeping a diary in adolescence (and through many periods of her adult life), she wrote a dialogue at twenty between two personae, "both of whom were [her]self."⁵ Also, as an adult she admitted to preferring the task of both posing and answering questions for herself to merely giving interviews (Choses II, 128). Putting herself and her life as a public writing woman in question in her late-in-life narrative autobiographies, de Beauvoir continues this process of self-dialogue, raising it to the second power, as it becomes both the impulse and substance of the autobiographical works she authors.⁶ In fact, her reader-intended autobiographical project advances with increasing concessions to the waywardness and contradictions which scrupulous self-dialogue naturally begets. As a whole, it possesses an intensity, particularity, and reflectiveness that are hard to find matched in other multivolume literary autobiographies.

Critics willingly recognize these qualities. However, critical interpretation regularly turns their detail and excess (an issue I will return to) against de Beauvoir's autobiographies.⁷ All these people and
places and travels accounted for—for what? So many others in de Beauvoir's life come to share and even dominate the stage of her life-writings: Jean-Paul Sartre principally, but her mother and father, her friends and lovers, authors and artists known and unknown to her, as well. The profusion of others creates what Claude Roy insightfully saw as the centrality of relationships in the autobiographies. But the metaphor of centrality logically entails the concept of margins, a center in opposition to margins. If others are central to de Beauvoir's life, life-writings, and philosophy, does that relegate her role as author to the margins? More importantly, does her autobiographies' ontogenetic explanation of her writings and her life as a writer, which foregrounds her relationships to others, argue for her marginalization in her own eyes?

My thesis throughout this chapter is that de Beauvoir's autobiographies disrupt the antipodes of center and margin, self and other in the critique of authorship they play out on both thematic and structural levels. This is to say that the otherness that pervades her autobiographies—in the innumerable "characters" included, in the wandering and proliferation of anecdotes, in the sustained criticism of bourgeois individualism, in the critical portrait of her protean self created from an equally protean because processive point of view—this otherness serves de Beauvoir as the means to question her authority as a self and an author. No criticism to date of these most favored works of de Beauvoir has remarked on what I see as their principal strength: their detailed attention to others and otherness combined with their investigation of one
woman's experience as an author. It is the dovetailing of these two issues in several of the autobiographies that I explore below.

Rather than interpret de Beauvoir's autobiographical project as a whole, I will limit my analysis to the critique of authorship evident most readily in the first three autobiographies--Memoirs d'une Fille Rangée, La Force de l'Age, and La Forces des Choses--and in their preface, The Second Sex. The conception and performance of these four works are united by their inquiry into the process of de Beauvoir's author-ization. Further, the first three autobiographies are set apart from Tout Compte Fait and the two epitaphic Une Mort Très Douce and Les Cérémonies des Adieux by their extended chronological form, by the historical proximity of their composition (1957-1963), and by their questioning preoccupation with their author's genesis and practice as a woman author. In fact, by the time she was writing Tout Compte Fait, de Beauvoir admits to having relinquished a sense of her life's directedness, so evident in the first four:

For me life was an undertaking that had a clear direction, and in giving an account of mine I had to follow its progress [chronologically]. The circumstances are not the same today. . . . I no longer feel that I am moving in the direction of a goal, but only that I am slipping inevitably towards my grave (All Said and Done, Prologue, not numbered).

De Beauvoir's interest in the aging process in these final autobiographies supplants her joie de vivre, an optimism about living thematized in the earlier works which fueled the best part of her inquiry into the why's and how's of her life as "une femme écrivain." In brief, limiting my analysis to The Second Sex and the first three memoirs has two advantages: it permits my exploration of de Beauvoir's autobiographical critique of authorship to consider its evolutionary aspect, while acknowledging that,
although the autobiographies go on, the critique is after all limited. Like all of the autobiographies represented in my project, de Beauvoir's is rooted in and conditioned by the author's history, in the history of herself she represents. It thus partakes of that history's particularity and its finitude.

In de Beauvoir's case, however, reference to finitude may seem mistaken. The questions her autobiographies pose and respond to are broad: for example, in *La Force de l'Age* she queries (among other things) why she writes, and why she writes what she writes. And her voluminous responses to her guiding questions similarly challenge the description of her autobiographical project as finite. In keeping with her changing relationship to her writings and their public, no one retrospective assessment will do for de Beauvoir. Her struggle for understanding is ongoing, beyond the scope of a single emplotted and artfully rendered volume; and it is historical, conditioned by the logic of chronological growth that her narratives imitate. In a fashion not unlike Sartre's habit of thinking against himself, de Beauvoir evidences in her autobiographies the need to ceaselessly question the structures of authority and the shibboleths of authorship by putting herself into question. But in a fashion wholly unlike Sartre's, de Beauvoir puts herself into question not just by studying her particular experiences as an early twentieth-century bourgeois-born woman writer who aspired to and attained authorial success; but also by directing her panoptic gaze at the world, at her relationships, at her contemporaries. She does not begin with a view of a centered self as author or the reverse. Rather, as Terry Keefe notes, "Broadly speaking, her interest is in the world rather
than herself, or rather in the world, with herself as one object in it” (45). The net effect of this self-world picture is to accent the importance of a context of experience wherein authority, even that brand of authority inscribed in the authorial production of texts, is seen as derivative, shared, cooperative.

Jacques Ehrmann has discussed how de Beauvoir's two main topics were the situation of women and the situation of the intellectual (writer). While Ehrmann does not provide more than a general, humanist connection between these two interests, he indirectly underscores the need to consider what isgendered in de Beauvoir's critique of authority: i.e., what hinges on her having "become" a woman who wrote and successfully. Stein declined to problematize her womanhood in her autobiographies, content rather to portray herself neutrally as a genius among other (male) geniuses. I argued in the last chapter that her lesbianism provides a context for understanding the ambivalence of her desire to be authorized; but gender does not receive explicit thematic attention in Stein's critique and can only be read into it inductively, speculatively. In contrast, Simone de Beauvoir's autobiographical enterprise grew out of her research and writing on the socialization of women around the world and across time. She contended in the 1979 film about her that she became a feminist through writing The Second Sex (Dayan 67-68). Only after that essay did her life-writings begin. Consequently, this chapter's examination of de Beauvoir's autobiographies looks closely at the ways in which questions regarding gender—raised either by de Beauvoir or by contemporary feminist theorists—are implicated in her thematic and structural critiques of
self-authorization and authorship. Beginning with analysis of *The Second Sex* and moving chronologically with de Beauvoir through *Memoirs d'une Fille Rangée*, *La Force de l'Age*, and *La Force des Choses* (in order to conserve the evolutionary aspect of her thought), I explore the feminist ramifications of de Beauvoir's critique of authorship. In so doing, I intend to contribute to the energetic efforts since de Beauvoir's death in 1985 to contextualize her writings within the field of contemporary feminist theory which she helped cultivate more than forty years ago.

I Woman as Other, Other as Author, Author as ... Man?: The Autobiographical Dimension of *The Second Sex*

The best place to begin an assessment of Simone de Beauvoir's *Le Deuxième Sexe* (*The Second Sex* 1949) is with a passage from *La Force des Choses*, a memoir de Beauvoir wrote seventeen years after she wrote her essay on women which describes the essay's autobiographical genesis.

This passage reveals how, from the start, self-reflection tempers de Beauvoir's thoughts about women. She says (my translation):

My essay [on women] was done and I asked myself: what to do? I seated myself at the Deux Magots, looking at the white sheets of paper. I felt the need to write at the tips of my fingers, and I had the taste of words in my throat, but I didn't know what to undertake. "What a fierce look you have!" Giacometti said to me one time. "It's because I would like to write, but I don't know what." "Write whatever," he replied. I loved Leiris' *L'Age d'homme*; I had a taste for martyr-essays where one explains oneself without pretext. I began to dream about it, to take some notes, and I spoke about it to Sartre. I saw that a primary question posed itself: what does it mean to me to be a woman? I first believed I could quickly rid myself of this question. I never had had a feeling of inferiority: no one had said to me: "You think this way because you are a woman"; my femininity hadn't bothered me at all. I said to Sartre, "For me, [femininity] doesn't count, so to speak." "All the same," he replied, "you haven't been raised in the same manner as a boy: it might be necessary to look at the issue more closely." I looked and I had a revelation. This world was a masculine world, my childhood had been nourished by myths forged
by men, and I hadn't at all reacted to these myths in the same manner as I would have done as a boy. I was so interested that I abandoned the project of a personal confession in order to occupy myself with the feminine condition in its generality (Choses I, 135).11

Many critics take these remarks as an invitation to find where in her observations about women de Beauvoir is "really" speaking of herself. Judith Okley amongst others has written of the "hidden subjectivity" of the narrator of The Second Sex to justify connections she draws between de Beauvoir's experience and that of capital "W" Woman (72). Identifying this subjectivity need not, however, simply support attempts to see de Beauvoir's Woman as her mirror reflection. Indeed, the above passage implicitly warns against making a simple equivalence. At a distance of seventeen years de Beauvoir owns up to the difference femininity (not being a boy) has had on her development; but she does not admit this difference in The Second Sex. What she does say there is, "But if I wish to define myself, I must first of all say: 'I am a woman'; on this truth must be based all further discussion" (xxvii).

Moreover, the passage above indicates de Beauvoir's persisting sense that femininity entails inferiority--which she says she has never felt--thus arguing against her sense of proximity to her subject.12 True, she reveals her understanding that her research would reflect the meaning of Woman for herself. But she equally emphasizes that composing The Second Sex meant abandoning her personal writing project. In short, the essay caused her to see herself in relation to Woman while at the same time seeing herself as other than women: other than the Other who by her famous definition is Woman (Second 267). The shift in genre, from
autobiography to theoretical treatise, underscores this affirmation of distance between herself and the topic she knew to be intimately her own.

For critics exploring de Beauvoir's vexed relationship to the Woman she authorized in *The Second Sex*, reckoning with the voice of the essay is the preeminent challenge. This voice has generated accusations of de Beauvoir's misogyny; it has grounded claims like Mary Lowenthal Felstiner's that the essay "uncovers the pervasion of sexism more than the potential of feminism." My general interest in de Beauvoir's voice in *The Second Sex* is to discover what makes it such an ambiguous but important lead for other women who write as women about gender. Specifically, I examine how the voice reveals the essay's autobiographical dimension: that dimension of the text where de Beauvoir's interest in authorship dovetails with the inscription of her subject position. How did writing and publishing the text help authorize de Beauvoir's voice, and authorize her in such a way as to make her both a feminist and a woman henceforth committed to the autobiographical narration of her life? How does this authorization of de Beauvoir's voice as a woman-advocate enact the "solution" to women's oppression which she details? How, in turn, do the ambiguities inherent in this "solution"--authorship--reflect back on the ambivalences and conflicts of this other-than-Other woman's narrative voice?

De Beauvoir recognizes that her authority to pose the question "What is a woman?" needs to be established early, so in her introduction she provides two bases. It is the tension between these two bases that accounts for the oscillations in tone and argument that feminist critics have heard. On the one hand, de Beauvoir asserts, "Man is at once judge
and party to the case; but so is woman" (xxxix). In an atypical jest, she
speculates that an angel or a hermaphrodite would be the ideal
interlocutor, but in their absence "we" must look to "certain women who
are best qualified to elucidate the situation of woman" (xxxix). Of
course, she means herself.

Many of today's women, fortunate in the restoration of all the
privileges pertaining to the estate of the human being, can afford
the luxury of impartiality—we even recognize its necessity. . . .
[A]lready some of us have never had to sense in our femininity an
inconvenience or an obstacle. Many problems appear to us to be
more pressing than those which concern us in particular, and this
detachment even allows us to hope that our attitude will be
objective. Still, we know the feminine world more intimately than do
the men because we have our roots in it, we grasp more immediately
than do men what it means to a human being to be feminine; and we
are more concerned with such knowledge. I have said that there
are more pressing problems, but this does not prevent us from
seeing some importance in asking how the fact of being women will
affect our lives (xxxix-xl).

De Beauvoir's language supports her point that she is an exceptional
woman, a human first, but nevertheless a woman with firsthand knowledge
of femininity. She speaks in several registers simultaneously: the
impersonal third-person plural, the collectivizing first-person plural, and
even the self-implicating first-person singular. Paradoxically, her
condition as a woman as well as her insulation from this condition
authorize her. It is an argument from subject-identification as well as
subject-demarcation. But the basis, source—or, authority—for de
Beauvoir's self-perceived difference from other, feminine females remains
obscure. I will return to this point.

On the other hand, de Beauvoir argues for the authority of her
analysis of women by affirming the authority of the "existentialist ethics"
she deploys. She explains:
Every subject plays his part as such specifically through exploits or projects that serve as a mode of transcendence; he achieves liberty only through a continual reaching out toward other liberties. There is no justification for present existence other than its expansion into an indefinitely open future. Every time transcendence falls back into immanence, stagnation, there is a degradation of existence into the "en-soi"--the brutish life of subjection to given conditions--and of liberty into constraint and contingency. This downfall represents a moral fault if the subject consents to it; if it is inflicted upon him, it spells frustration and oppression. In both cases it is an absolute evil. Every individual concerned to justify his existence feels that his existence involves an undefined need to transcend himself, to engage in freely chosen projects (xl-xl).

Recent criticism has both lauded and condemned de Beauvoir's analytical framework, a topic beyond the scope of this analysis. Of vital concern here, however, are the related biases of humanism and individualism which mark the above explanation. In this passage, subjectivity as such is not gendered; there are only humans. As de Beauvoir says, "For us woman is defined as a human being in quest of values in a world of values" (52). The operative duality within the category of humans is not masculine and feminine but rather transcendence and immanence, an antinomy that map onto those of free/enslaved, mind/body, active/passive, justified/unjustified, essential/inessential, growing/stagnant throughout the essay. De Beauvoir adopts the perspective of dualities in order to break up their historical bond with the duality of masculine/feminine (xxviii). But in so doing she apparently throws her values in with that of a humanism that perpetuates binary oppositions, a way of thinking heavily targeted in contemporary feminist theory as doomed to perpetuate a sexist logic.

Can Woman escape from the logic of these oppositions? Judging from the language of the passage above where de Beauvoir explains her existentialist premise, nothing could be less certain. The individualism
marking its vision of a being (or "existent") at liberty to "reach out toward other liberties" consigns the oppressed subject to the moral iniquity of a brutish life of her own making. Whether an oppressed subject can properly be said to consent to her situation is a question de Beauvoir here begs. As Carol Ascher has noted, "[D]e Beauvoir's requirement of determining oppression is a demanding one; if, and only if, one has tried to reach toward a goal, and that attempt has been definitively thwarted, can one speak of being oppressed" ("Women and Choice" 178; Ascher's emphasis). Sporadically, de Beauvoir insists that "the compulsions of a situation in which she is the inessential" inhibit or limit the exercise of Woman's liberty (xli). But the existential ethic framing her theoretical remarks in the essay makes no provision for these compulsions, nor apparently for their eradication. Indeed, the framework in itself disregards gendered differences between subjects, although that is de Beauvoir's topic, because in her conclusion the withering away of these differences is the utopian-socialist vision she entertains. 

The narrator's voice thus derives her authority from a gendered subject position de Beauvoir has purportedly transcended and from a humanist philosophy denying that position's pertinence. The theme scattered throughout The Second Sex which signals the tension between these two accounts of de Beauvoir's authority on Woman is that of Woman's complicity with her oppressors. "When man makes of woman the Other, he may, then, expect her to manifest deep-seated tendencies toward complicity. Thus woman may fail to lay claim to the status of subject because she lacks definite resources, because she feels the necessary bond that ties her to man regardless of reciprocity, and because she is
often very well pleased with her role as the Other" (xxxiii). In The Second Sex, the concept of women's complicity with the values that denigrate them reflects de Beauvoir's contention that what sets women apart from other historically oppressed groups is their widespread internalization of negative myths about Woman (481). The narrator's voice audibly bristles with the double bind this internalization places women in: females become women because they are socialized and and they stay socialized because they are feminine.

To offset the determinism of this internalizing process, de Beauvoir uses the language of failure and choice: "In truth, however, the nature of things is no more immutably given, once for all, than is historical reality. If woman seems to be the inessential which never becomes the essential, it is because she herself fails to bring about this change" (xxxii). A more sustained example of this language is found in the section on psychoanalysis. There de Beauvoir stresses her dissatisfaction with the lack of choice(s) psychoanalytic schemata hold out to women (46, passim). Choice undermines the fixed, transhistorical destiny that de Beauvoir--armed with her belief that "the individual defines himself by making his own choices through the world about him"--rejects (49). In general, women who internalize masculine values relegating them to Otherness suffer doubly in de Beauvoir's harshest theorizations in The Second Sex: they have their material "enslavement"--to their bodies, to their men, to their poverty--and they have their burden as moral transgressors, choosing against a life of liberty.

There is much to criticize in the theme of complicity as de Beauvoir elaborates it: principally, her blaming-the-victim rationale, but also her
blindness to the value of women's culture as it has evolved within oppressed and variegated conditions. But there is also much to appreciate, especially in de Beauvoir's unflagging attempt to address both the constructedness and the givenness of women's situation—that is, women enter into the Myth of Woman through a complex blend of circumstance and decision. Of greatest relevance to the autobiographical import of the essay is the way in which de Beauvoir vocalizes her position on women's complicity only by turning her attention away from the Myth of Woman. While it may be true, as Jane Flax notes that "none of us can speak for 'woman' because no such person exists except within a specific set of (already gendered) relations" (642), the myth of Woman can be critically studied. Indeed, de Beauvoir slyly employs the referent "Woman" throughout The Second Sex and describes her in highly contradictory if rich detail in order to call attention to the essentializing and mythic components of her subject. However, whereas this description affords de Beauvoir the comforts of objectification and representation—luxuries that she admits have been earmarked historically by men (143)—her discourse on women's complicity (re)turns her to contemplation of society, and contemporary society in particular, in which she is a woman among other women.

In other words, the issue of women's complicity closes the distance de Beauvoir has assumed between herself and her subject. Only real, historical women can be said to have wills, to be able to choose, to be counted as human individuals. But oddly enough, whereas de Beauvoir speaks with detailed concreteness in her analysis of physical and material circumstances illustrative of the Myth of Woman, she waxes poetic and
abstract in her pronouncements on complicitous real women, describing them in the terms of existential individualism. The methodological variety in *The Second Sex* is a commonplace; but no studies to date recognize those thematic junctures where methodological shifts transpire. When de Beauvoir most severely condemns women's culture, or most vehemently proposes an alternative to it, she is least specific. For example:

I shall pose the problem of feminine destiny quite otherwise [than psychoanalysts]: I shall place woman in a world of values and give her behavior a dimension of liberty. I believe that she has the power to choose between the assertion of her transcendence and her alienation as object; she is not the plaything of contradictory drives; she devises solutions of diverse ranking in the ethical scale (50).

What she notably does not specify are the kinds of choices she finds women failing to make for themselves, the kinds of decisions in which women do not assert themselves, with the result that they give up liberty and stagnate.

The "I" in the above citation--one of the rare uses of this pronoun by the narrator--gives an important clue about the kind of assertion de Beauvoir values. One of the autobiographically significant ironies of the essay is that while de Beauvoir critiques the ungrounded value system that sustains women's subjugation, she herself only indirectly divulges the values she recommends for women. An exception is the equitable friendship, very near in spirit to Plato's concept of philia, valorized with reverberative insistence as an alternative to the "religion of love" which she roundly condemns in "The Formative Years" section (140, 544, 692-695, passim). Much more covert is de Beauvoir's valorization of literary production, and the institution which sustains it: authorship.
Literature as a cultural production receives a good amount of attention in *The Second Sex* as the basis for many of de Beauvoir's examples about human life. Indeed, her section "Of Woman in Five Authors" indicates her belief that women's representation in literature can substitute for their situation in life. In other sections, it is through quoting Colette or Leiris or Aristophanes that de Beauvoir's valorization of literature manifests itself. By the time she was composing *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir herself had newly joined the ranks of known authors with the publication and success of *L'Invitée* (*She Came To Stay*, 1943). But writing, above all else, had for twenty-five years been her life's ambition and work. Published, this writing constituted an assertion of will, a transcendence of environment, a renunciation of those aspects of the Eternal Feminine (as she thematized it) which inculcate women's silence, and, most emphatically, an entrance into a public, male-dominated domain. When de Beauvoir inserts her "I" in the above citation, she discloses for a moment quite nakedly the choice that she most heartily advocates women make: authorship. It is this choice that sets her apart from Woman, both mythic and historical. Authorship entails the authorizing process that is both response and solution to women's oppression for de Beauvoir. The concreteness of her textual "I" and of her present writing project counterbalance the abstract imperatives of existentialism and affirm implicitly, as philosophy cannot, something to choose, some means to transcend. Asserting oneself in the public sphere through publishing a treatise like *The Second Sex* is an "other" response to women's lived otherness in de Beauvoir's earliest autobiogaphy. In the above citation, de Beauvoir demonstrates the strength accruing to the
"femme écrivain": "I will place woman . . ." (If only, lament so many contemporary readers of the essay, she had not so often "placed" Woman, particularly in a bourgeois context so nearly mirroring her own.)

Perhaps the weightiest evidence in the text that authorship assumes this preeminent if unarticulated value is found in the book's structure. The whole essay's critique tends towards the final section before the Conclusion, Part VII, in which de Beauvoir reflects on "Liberation: The Independent Woman." It is common for contemporary readers of The Second Sex to comment on the book's utopian Conclusion--that women may "unequivocally affirm their brotherhood" with men--while ignoring the socially sensitive analysis and ambiguous conclusions of the penultimate section. In keeping with the writer on women who informed her ideas on the connection between financial independence and intellectual freedom, de Beauvoir also adopts Virginia Woolf's equivalence between intellectual woman and emancipated woman in this section. It is not enough, she says, that women are employed: "working, today, is not enough" (680). Those women who work towards financial self-sufficiency through intellectual activities, especially literary endeavors, most nearly approach de Beauvoir's ideal of the "independent human individual" (682). The female intellectual in de Beauvoir's eyes "thinks about her situation" (critically, we may suppose) and so rejects the security of the feminine dependent for the risks attending the "masculine world" (684, 685). Thought, it seems, guarantees liberation as mere cash cannot. This conclusion reflects a slippage in de Beauvoir's rhetoric in this section between authorship of literature, intellectual activity, and extrication from feminine bonds. Such slippage may cause readers to come away with
the vexing sense that one and only one path towards liberation is open to women. More fruitfully, the "Liberation" section can be studied as the most autobiographically revealing section in *The Second Sex*, where de Beauvoir patently interweaves her queries about authorship with her very personal sense of the ambiguities of a bourgeois liberation of women's situation.

The liberation of women through writing--and specifically writing to publish--was a life pattern forty-year-old de Beauvoir believed in as tried and true. It was the pattern she had realized in her own life's experience, and what optimism one reads in *The Second Sex* is owing to de Beauvoir's deep pleasure in this experience. As Marks has pointed out, de Beauvoir supported to the end of her life women's writing and women's participation in authorship in contrast to the original position of *écriture féminine* practitioners, who "considered her activities complicitous with the reigning networks of power" (*Critical Essays* 4). In *La Force des Choses* de Beauvoir will articulate her sense of her own complicity, distinct from that which she critiques in *The Second Sex*. But that is seventeen years and 2000 pages of memoirs hence. In 1947 she had not yet begun to question the complex set of advantages and compromises entailed in women's entrance into the institution of authorship. Instead, she considers the obstacles thwarting their historical and contemporary literary production. In the "Liberation" section she abandons the abstract mandates that women choose liberty, as well as the existential framework underpinning those imperatives, and she addresses the "inner confusion" attending the woman intellectual/author's choice of a life *between* gender norms. It is not that de Beauvoir's subject position is
any more forthcoming than in earlier sections. Simply, the urgent and plaintive tone of this section indicates her infusion of self/authorial experience and observation of others into an ostensibly general description of female independence.

Throughout the writing of this section de Beauvoir thematizes the "temptations" and acculturated insecurities that "haunt" the aspiring woman intellectual (681, 686, 698-699). Deirdre Bair's biography of de Beauvoir provides a detailed history of her conflicted relationship with Nelson Algren, developing during the time of the composition of The Second Sex, which may help explain the degree to which haunting self-doubts appear as the necessary legacy of the authorizing woman. More to the point, Bair's research on the de Beauvoir-Algren transatlantic affair provides an autobiographical context for this thesis of "Liberation": "Thus the independent woman of today is torn between her professional interests and the problems of her sexual life; it is difficult for her to strike a balance between the two; if she does, it is at the price of concessions, sacrifices, acrobatics, which require her to be in a constant state of tension" (697). Even when the source of confusion is relationships with other women rather than with men, de Beauvoir expresses in this section a fund of sympathetic support for the woman who crosses with unsteady steps established gender boundaries. It is with a kind of gentleness that she laments the restless and wandering path of this aspiring woman (698-699). While this section repeats earlier sections' endorsement of a life of self-assertion, it mitigates the masculine bias of this pattern by suggesting the difficulties women have in discovering a self to assert. Indeed, she explains what she judges to be women's
"modest" successes in literature and art to have stemmed from their inability to forget themselves, from their preoccupying search for themselves (702).

It may seem ironic that de Beauvoir herself would turn soon after writing *The Second Sex* to a sixteen-year life-writing project searching for herself. But more than simple irony or self-deception are worth noting here. De Beauvoir's voice in "Liberation," less hortatory than in previous sections, evinces a kind of critique of her own writing position, a position that began with Sartre's challenge to her in 1939, "Well, why don't you put yourself personally into what you write?" (*Age* 360). She seems to be questioning here the thoroughness with which authorship solves women's problems when their lives as a whole are considered. Through her discontent with the Brontes' novels she registers her sense as an author in 1947 that women's relationships to the act and production of successful writing had been handicapped by their historical subjugation in their relationships with men. Men, de Beauvoir reflects, have had all the material, physical, and ideational freedom to become authors; thus authorship for her represents a virile human life project for which men are "naturally" only because socially groomed. At the time she was writing *The Second Sex*, then, de Beauvoir would not have denied the claim made by proponents of *écriture féminine* that hers was both a humanist and an accommodationist authorial position. She implicitly recognizes in the "Liberation" section that she was one woman writing among many men; one woman who was struggling to perceive the differences of her writing position without compromising the authority she
had begun to shore up in the heterosexual, if male-dominated Paris intellectual community.

Wandering and restless, the voice of the "Liberation" section reveals conflicts and opens questions which neither de Beauvoir nor any living woman author could answer. The betweenness of her own hidden subject position—gendered yet resiliently humanist—in turn created a similarly ambiguous position on female self-authorization through authorship. Cultivating ambiguity can be, as Flax points out, a strength in feminist theory, exposing as it does "our needs for imposing order and structure no matter how arbitrary and oppressive these needs may be" (643). But de Beauvoir's ambivalence had not yet come into the service of feminism—the writing of the essay and not the essay itself brought her to a feminist identification (Dayan 67-68). At its most ambivalent, de Beauvoir's voice in The Second Sex warily positions itself between the 1947 categories of feminist and antifeminist, giving her the freedom to assert both the power and the inner confusion experienced by the authoring woman.

Or by this authoring woman? The division between her and other women having grown so indistinct, it is impossible to set the book down without a sense that even the genre of this essay grows ambiguous as it progresses. Midway between autobiography and theoretical essay, The Second Sex constitutes de Beauvoir's first self-searching attempt to problematize her profession at the same time that she holds it out to other women as an authorizing lifestyle (or project) essentially about choosing. Or about indecision? She begins to demonstrate—despite her existentialist frame—that indecision and waywardness caused by
relationships with others may modify the masculine paradigm of the self-asserting subject in the case of aspiring women writers. It will take subsequent autobiographies, beginning with *Memoirs d'une Fille Rangée* and culminating in *La Force des Choses*, for de Beauvoir to explore this essential if not essentializing difference. But the subject will no longer be hidden; she will be in search of herself.

II An/other Idea of Authorship in *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*

The title of this section extends the ambivalence informing Simone de Beauvoir's advocacy of her profession in *The Second Sex* to the ideas about authorship that her memoirs develop. De Beauvoir composed *Memoirs d'une Fille Rangée* (*Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*) in eighteen months and published it in October of 1958, twelve years after she began her essay on Woman. And yet it seems in many ways an elaboration of the quandaries which that essay "concludes" with in the "Liberation" section. Did de Beauvoir come to be other than bourgeois women through commitment to intellectual labor? Did her commitment to intellectual labor, and specifically to the idea of (her own) authorship, grow out of her gendered class position? Can the answers to these questions be affirmative? And how does her current (1956) view of the authoring life resonate with, correct, or otherwise depart from her early visions of herself as a dutiful daughter bound for other and better things?

Criticism of *Memoirs* curiously divides itself into two categories: that which elaborates the young Simone's (as opposed to the author de Beauvoir's) "emancipation" from her class, and that which elaborates her relationships to mother, father, sister Helene, and childhood friend
Elizabeth (Zaza) Mabille. In the first case, de Beauvoir's liberation is often too quickly and too vaguely (re)affirmed. The role of authorship, and the specific kind of freedom the idea of this profession suggests to Simone are generally ignored. In the second case, while de Beauvoir's contextualization of her growth through relationships is certainly a hallmark of the narrative, in and of themselves these relationships do not account for de Beauvoir's formulations of her adolescent conflicts and aspirations. Occasionally, a critic will connect the ambiguity surrounding Memoirs' representation of the author's break from bourgeois Parisian society to her relationships with others, with the result that that emancipation is called into question from a gendered, relational viewpoint (see Portugues). While an exception to the rule, this kind of appraisal yet draws back from the significance of the fact that de Beauvoir at fifty undertook a retrospective inquiry of the process and project by which she came to be authorized. Judging from the criticism, one might well believe, despite de Beauvoir's emphasis on acculturation in The Second Sex, that her youthful attraction to the "vocation" of literary life was natural, or at least a culturally neutral solution to her quite gendered problems of autonomy within her family. Not only does this impression cripple the narrative's logic, but it also mutes its autobiographical dimension. At fifty, de Beauvoir prepared not just to expose the simultaneous beginnings of her authoring and autobiographical impulses but also to put them into question as ways of living she learned from her culture.

In the last section, I discussed how the narrator of The Second Sex subtly promoted authorship as both the means and the end to
independence for women; but obstacles to women's self-assertion challenged this solution, for self-assertion seems a prerequisite there to the literary or intellectual profession. In Memoirs de Beauvoir begins to investigate the ambiguities of her own self-assertion, of her own path to the life of a publishing intellectual woman, from an openly subject-oriented viewpoint. As author, narrator, and protagonist of this narrative, she traces roots for these ambiguities in relationships and patterns of thinking and feeling peculiar to her experience. In addition, the kind of emancipation that motivates her aspirations to authorship begins to be the subject of introspection which de Beauvoir shied away from twelve years earlier. Perhaps Okley is right to contend that this self-implication renders Memoirs less open to "blame" than The Second Sex (25); but it is not therefore insulated from analysis of the rhetorical dimension that informs its instructional value to others. As Keefe points out, de Beauvoir develops this, her most unified autobiography, around a "common" (and therefore not so peculiar) pattern of development that might be recognized as a path open to other girls of like background (31).

Such reader-recognition might seem thwarted by de Beauvoir's emphasis on Simone's solitude and isolation--from other girls, from her family, from "the world." While it is not accurate to say that de Beauvoir emplots--as Sartre and Wright do--this narrative of herself as a girl around a central conflict, she does design an important shift in Simone's development and self-perception: from being integrated in her family to feeling isolated from them. Book Two in particular describes this psychological distancing, in which solitude becomes for Simone a form of defensive self-protection against her mother's intrusive interest and her
father's betraying criticism. One key place in the text where solitude is dramatically thematized occurs shortly after Simone has renounced faith in God. As Cottrell has remarked, this loss of faith in a divine father is predicated on the loss of faith in her own father, whom Zaza has helped her see as lacking infallible judgment.²³ The consequence of this divine default is Simone's sense of existential solitude: "in the name of the absence of God, I resurrected the ideal of withdrawal from the world" (231). De Beauvoir describes the effect of this withdrawal with some overlaying of her adult philosophy:

Suddenly everything fell silent. And what a silence! The earth was rolling through space that was unseen by any eye, and lost on its immense surface, there I stood alone, in the midst of sightless regions of the air. Alone: for the first time I understood the terrible significance of that word. Alone: without a witness, without anyone to speak to, without refuge (138).

The bathetic repetition of the word "alone" suggests an exaggerated depth of feeling and perhaps desire. The very idea that Simone needs "refuge" indicates a vulnerability that to her passionately strong nature must have been unsupportable; feeling "alone" nullifies this weakness by bracketing the relationships which are troubling her. By cultivating a sense of her internal isolation, which de Beauvoir repeatedly returns to in books two, three, and four, Simone defends herself from the insecurity that being with others causes. The narrator explains,

So my relationships with my family had become much less simple than formerly. My sister no longer idolized me unreservedly, my father thought I was ugly and harboured a grievance against me because of it, and my mother was suspicious of the obscure change she sensed in me. If they had been able to read my thoughts, my parents would have condemned me; instead of protecting me as once it did, their gaze held all kinds of dangers for me. They themselves had come down from their empyrean; but I did not take advantage of this by challenging their judgment. On the contrary, I felt doubly insecure; I no longer occupied a privileged place, and
my perfection had been impaired; I was uncertain of myself, and vulnerable. All this was to modify my relationships with others (111).

In this way, de Beauvoir reveals how the solitude in question is a false one, not unlike Sartre's "orphanhood": Simone is, after all, surrounded by others, relationships with whom have become troubled. Catherine Portugues employs psychoanalytic theory to argue that the isolation de Beauvoir weaves around Simone is undermined by the ambiguity of her separation from her family. Although the substance of these relationships lies beyond the scope of this analysis, it is useful to take Portugues' cue that the theme of solitude intersects with that of de Beauvoir's thwarted individuation as a dutiful bourgeois daughter. If her solitude is assumed, it is not an imposture, as Sartre described his own in The Words. It is a posture or stance calculated--at least to start with--to release her from her sense of imprisonment, expressed in the abundant metaphors of prisons and cages in the narrative (e.g.'s, 169, 175, 227, 229, 268).

Since de Beauvoir's voice on this posture of isolation is as important as the posture's representation, I should observe here the irony which colors the development of this theme. De Beauvoir's irony is not disdainful, for the author shows herself everywhere sympathetic to the child she was. In the passage of La Force des Choses where de Beauvoir discusses the writing of Memoirs, she describe her writing motives:

The little girl for whom the future has become my past no longer exists. I want to believe, sometimes, that I carry her around in me, that it would be possible to tear her from my memory, unruffle her creased lashes, and make her sit, intact, at my side. That's false. She has disappeared without even a skinny skeleton to commemorate her departure. How to pull her out of nothingness? (II, 129; de Beauvoir's italics).
De Beauvoir of 1963 goes on to qualify that "this resurrection" was "a creation, because she appealed as much to my imagination and reflection as to my memory" (II, 129). The results of this creative remembrance are de Beauvoir's inimitable search for "real" details which mitigate narrative unity, as well as her ironic distancing of herself from Simone. Her ample and ironic commentary on this child she was-not-really receives justification from this creator's account. As a representation, Simone embodies ways of thinking that de Beauvoir herself has used to reach her authorial status but which she has moved beyond precisely in order to re-see them and communicate them to others. After the point in Memoirs when Simone begins her private diary, where self-dialogue supplants the communication with others that she so much desires (141), pieces of it appear in the narrative.26 These juvenilia provide the narrator with some evidence for commenting on her former voice. For example:

'I am alone. One is always alone. I shall always be alone.' I find this leitmotif running right through my diary. But I had never really believed it. I sometimes used to tell myself proudly: 'I am not as others are.' But I seemed to see in my difference the proof of a natural superiority which would one day be acknowledged by everybody. I was no rebel; I wanted to be someone, to do something, to go on progressing, ever onwards and upwards, as I had been doing since I was a little child; therefore I had to get out of the everyday rut I was in: but I believed it would be possible to rise above bourgeois mediocrity without stepping out of my own class (188).

Not only does irony towards the diary writer surface in this passage, but also a need to qualify the diarist's vision of the value of this isolation. Isolation, the solution to Simone's familial problems, has in turn become a source of self-aggrandizement. De Beauvoir subverts Simone's idea of her difference from her bourgeois friends and family by accenting the innocence of her equating the desire to be other than bourgeois with
being other than bourgeois. De Beauvoir makes this same point elsewhere in the narrative: "To tell the truth, her originality was very limited; fundamentally, Zaza, like myself, reflected her environment" (116). And her critique of the Cult of Disquiet members--novelists and their followers like her cousin Jacques--is similarly disillusioned: "In my view, Jacques was freeing himself from his class because he, too, was suffering from a deep disquiet; what I did not realize was that this deep disquiet was the means which that bourgeois generation was employing in order to effect its own cure" (218). De Beauvoir's ironic perspective provides her with the distance to show how Simone's assumed isolation serves ultimately more to align her with than to alienate her from her bourgeois class. In isolating herself Simone is more like others.

However, the theme of solitude as de Beauvoir plays it out in Simone's development cannot be studied simply from the perspective of class. The fact of Simone's sex contributes largely to the initial attractions and later liabilities of solitude for her; it must then alter the way that the posture of solitude is understood as a stepping stone in Simone's authorization. Book One of the narrative represents Simone as having become "the docile reflection of [her] parents' will" after passing a turbulent childhood (31). She assumes the role of complacent daughter in a bourgeois home, whose family provides her with support and encouragement in return for her conformity and devotion. Each member of her family rewards her with approbation for her intelligence and academic successes: for example, her father quips that she has a man's intelligence, while her sister, Helene, "endowed [her] with authority" by obeying her as teacher, leader, and mentor (121, 45).
However, this approbation—or authorization—in turn establishes Simone's dependence on her family members, in much the same way as Sartre's Poulou depends on his family's delight in him, but with an important difference. The ligatures of Simone's dependence are bound up in a complex set of conflicting expectations concerning her future in the world as a female. De Beauvoir asserts that she always conceived of her destiny as a woman; "I never dreamt that my fate might be different from what it was. Above all, I felt no disappointment at being a girl" (55). But Simone is nevertheless clear on the social hierarchies informing her culture's gender roles. Expectations concerning her future are predicated on her being female, but were modified by her father's financial ruin (which deprived her of a dowry and so of the prospect of marriage) and also by her intellectual inclinations. Ambivalence towards marriage runs throughout de Beauvoir's incarnation of Simone, in large part owing to the aversion to maternity, the handmaiden of marriage, that de Beauvoir instills in Simone at an early age. In contrast, no such ambivalence attaches to her intellectual aspirations; de Beauvoir portrays the foundations of this goal in complex ways, but the absolute value of the pursuit is never doubted. I should stress that she grounds this sense of destiny as much in Simone's relationships with her family—prior to her romance with solitude—as in Simone's manic and successful conquest of knowledge in her parochial education:

In my own case, too, my father's individualism and pagan ethical standards were in complete contrast to the rigidly moral conventionalism of my mother's teaching. This imbalance, which made my life a kind of endless disputation, is the main reason why I became an intellectual (41).

A quote more revealing of its author than of the girl she was, it accents
the self-division, the "disputation," that fueled and continues to fuel her intellectual project. But Simone's ultimate resistance to and mistrust of the devotion demanded of her as a daughter--her intellectual work--does not free her or her author's sense of vocation from its basis in that devotion. Importantly, de Beauvoir foregrounds in this early part of the narrative the derivative nature of her authorization.

When added to this gendered sense of vocation, the theme of solitude explained above takes on particular significance in the Memoirs' autobiographical dimension. De Beauvoir entwines Simone's cultivated solitude with Simone's relationship to books; a picture of enabling if erroneous illusions with respect to the idea of authorship, takes shape in this thematic blend. From an early age, Simone interested herself in books and the acquisition of knowledge. In this account of her youth, de Beauvoir is careful to insist from the start on the attractions that reading held for her, and the ways in which this "great passion of [her] life" helped shape her consciousness and her aspirations (70). While she disclaims that books represent "reality" to Simone, she shows how the girl depends on them for models of what could be imagined and written (51-52). Eventually books come to shape how she is able to imagine herself, the self she will be in the future: "I was living through the first chapter of a novel in which I was the heroine," and, "My life would be a beautiful story come true, a story I would make up as I went along" (90, 169). In general, de Beauvoir like Sartre is establishing how she is an inheritor of what Nancy Armstrong calls "novelistic culture" (6). But de Beauvoir expresses none of Sartre's belated distrust in her early learned "respect for print" (11). Her love of reading and her youthful decision to devote
herself to books—"to write them or sell them"—sets her apart from others, literally in the solitary act of reading, but figuratively as well in novels' amplification of her view of herself as an individual, a character with a particular destiny (53). In an environment which rewarded conformity amongst girls, this literary validation of her particularity was bound to spark gratitude, even if, again, the resultant isolation was imagined.

Importantly, books were and seemingly remain a point of connection between de Beauvoir and her father. In an important passage nearly following the description of Simone's cosmic loneliness, de Beauvoir's father figures prominently in her elaboration of her aspiration at fifteen, "To be a famous author" (141):

The main reason for this [certainty about my future profession] was the admiration I felt for writers: my father rated them far higher than scholars, philosophers, and professors. I, too, was convinced of their supremacy; even if his name was well-known, a specialist's monograph would be accessible to only a small number of people; but everyone read novels; they touched the imagination and the heart; they brought their authors universal and intimate fame. As a woman, these dizzy summits seemed to me much more accessible than the lowlier slopes; the most celebrated women had distinguished themselves in literature (141).

Here de Beauvoir establishes a causal relationship between her vocation and her filial love, juxtaposing her admiration for writers against her father's valuation of them. In this light, to be a writer is to be the ultimate daughter cum heroine, supreme in her father's eyes and, by force of reflection, in her own. The fact that Simone had already come to question her father's supremacy is more than an irony; it suggests de Beauvoir's tacit sense of the tenacity of patriarchal values even in women who have begun to question them. This passage also explains how the history of Western culture as she knows it supports Simone's authorial
dream; whereas her intellectual pursuits could touch only the few—and those few would not include her father, who held intellectuals in contempt—her fictional works would place her in the company of those women whose fame she respected as much as their works: George Eliot and Louisa May Alcott, for example. Not coincidentally, three paragraphs earlier de Beauvoir details at length Simone's identification with Eliot through her character Maggie Tulliver:

Maggie Tulliver, like myself, was torn between others and herself: I recognized myself in her. . . . The others condemned her because she was superior to them; I resembled her, and henceforward I saw my isolation not as a proof of infamy but as a sign of my uniqueness. I couldn't see myself dying of solitude. Through the heroine, I identified myself with the author: one day other adolescents would bathe with their tears a novel in which I would tell my own sad story (140).

With the exception of the last clause, this citation demonstrates an earnest identification that de Beauvoir will repeat in other autobiographies, while leaving out the emphasis on solitude: namely, the identity she wished to share with the novelist as heroine. 29 This identification sidesteps the demarcation between author and character, self and other, and places the point of interest at the intersection where author becomes a character in a cultural drama entailing—but not centered on—her own life. Although at the age of fifteen she had not yet begun to write about her experiences, Simone had attained the idea that those experiences could be authorized (publicly valorized) through her own author-ization (incarnating her idea of a woman author). Situating Simone in a well-tilled familial and cultural terrain, de Beauvoir smiles at her youthful re-incarnation in these two passages. Most intensively here, de Beauvoir's autobiographical representation of Simone explains, mirrors, and even
gently critiques her presently active status as the woman author she desired to become.

Before concluding this section I should state that the author of Memoirs does not, however, critique the gender identifications underlying her explanation of Simone's vocation. She explains Simone's identification with her father's individualism and her rejection of her mother's moral dogmatism as if they were normative gender alliances. In doing so she allows the implications of gender to piggyback on the ideology of authorship she sets in the foreground. I would like to clarify here some of the gender implications. Memoirs explains how Simone's choice of authorship comes at the expense of her mother: she pays for both her identification with her father and her identification with her favorite women authors with her mother. In La Force de l'Age de Beauvoir will show how Simone similarly arrives at authorial production only through dispensing (dépenser) with motherhood; I will develop this point in the next section. Here I want to stress that the figure of de Beauvoir's mother gradually recedes in the narrative of Memoirs as Simone picks her way towards an understanding of how she may authorize herself. Her decision to be a famous other is first conditioned by her refusal to identify with her mother; second by her intention to please and identify with her father; and only third by her projected identification, not with authors' heroines, but with heroines' authors. This last identification curiously returns Simone to a form of identification with her mother—a negative one. Eliot and Alcott appeal to the girl and to her creator as women who doubly thwarted the reproduction of motherhood, first in their production of books instead of babies, and second in their invented heroines' solitary
resistance to conventional maternal destinies; maternity rather than living for love is the object of Simone's disdain. (It is notable that Simone is enraged to discover in the sequel to *Little Women* that Jo sells out on romantic love and marries an unattractive old professor.) De Beauvoir thus begins to assess at fifty her relationship to her mother with a kind of negative ambivalence complementing that with which she treats the masculine solitude that Simone tries lucklessly to cultivate. De Beauvoir affirms a separation from the mother who threatened to influence her too much, but she affirms it mainly as desire—for solitude, for self-authorization—which in turn fuels Simone's strange identification with a father in whose authority she no longer believes.

All that Simone has at the end of *Memoirs* is devotion to an idea of authorship: "The fact is that I had not yet put my hand to the plough. Love, action, literary work: all I did was to roll these ideas round in my head; I was fighting in an abstract fashion against abstract possibilities and I had come to the conclusion that reality was of the most pitiful insignificance" (229). These abstractions about authorship increasingly fall under strain as the filial devotion that underpins them wanes. Simone becomes "a monster of incivility" out of resentment towards her parents, who no longer found her to their liking and disapproved of her unfeminine ways (182). "Literature . . . absorbed [her] entirely, and transfigured [her] life" as she attempts to render herself "impervious to her environment" (187, 182). Simone sets herself apart from family and schoolmates—with the exception of Zaza—as those people come to reproach her, not just for her "present attitude," but for "the future that lay ahead of [her]" as thinker/author (188).
A large portion of Book Three details the connection between Simone's private isolation, her intense individualism, and her immersion in books and in diary-writing. On the one hand, this connection appears fortuitous to de Beauvoir, for through her solitary intellectual endeavors she was "renouncing the hierarchies, the values, and the ceremonies which distinguish the elite," things prized by her father which de Beauvoir would continue to denounce throughout her life (-writings). On the other hand, the connection receives de Beauvoir's critical appraisal as a means for falsely alienating Simone from others in a vacuum of individualism. Prefacing her glorious introduction to the world of the Sorbonne and Sartre's clique is Simone's despairing sense that her distance from others has distanced her from life:

'I'm not like other people; I'll have to try to accept that,' I would keep telling myself; but I couldn't content myself. Cut off from every body, I no longer had any link with the world; it was becoming a spectacle that did not concern me personally. One after the other I had renounced fame, happiness, and the wish to serve others; now I was not even interested in living. . . . I didn't even want to write any more (260, 261).

Setting herself up as "the One and Only" led to a solitude that no longer protected but only bound Simone (59). Though busy with the excesses of her notoriously scheduled existence, de Beauvoir recalls that she was "outside life," making communication with others--the stated goal of her intended authorship--impossible (261). Her autobiography's theme of (the illusion of) solitude in this way comes full circle: once the means for creating psychological space in which to suspend familial pressures, then the basis for conceiving of a future that situates her with and against her bourgeois world, now Simone's assumption of solitude constitutes the barrier between her and any meaningful life of writing. It warps her
self-heroizing idea of authorship into a narcissistic, self-damning project. And importantly, it signifies something like regret, though unexpressed by de Beauvoir, for the connection to others that her severed rapport with her mother undoes.

Looking at the autobiographical dimension of Memoirs from the focal point of Simone's solitude permits readers to perceive the thematic configuration of selfhood/otherness, gender, and authorship as it has been transformed since The Second Sex. Memoirs dramatizes an idea of authorship which de Beauvoir's critical evaluation of her past shows she has outgrown if not discarded. In composing this autobiography, de Beauvoir divided the spotlight between her youthful self and the friend, Zaza, whose story represents a failed version of Simone's. Instead of emancipation through authorship, Zaza dies through gendered conformity to her mother's authority and to the fate of arranged marriages, an end which in turn qualifies Simone's emancipation: "We had fought together against the revolting fate that had lain ahead of us, and for a long time I believed that I had paid for my own freedom with her death" (360 [last line]). While important in itself, Zaza's story also serves the autobiographical dimension traced here. Re-creating Simone's and Zaza's lives together demonstrates how de Beauvoir avoids replicating Simone's error of seeing herself in isolation from others whom she loves, living in comparable situations. In a way, Zaza is the shared spirit, the Alice B. Toklas, of this book.

Like the dual-character focus, Book Four's stress on Simone's burgeoning romance with Sartre also complements the narrative's thematic rejection of solitude as the necessary (pre)disposition for an authoring
and authorized self. While de Beauvoir has been criticized for her frank avowal and appreciation of Sartre's superiority (340), she also records her (1956) awareness of his youthful illusions. And she begins to differentiate, as she will at length in La Force de L'Age, their respective ideas about authorship: "I had thought I was an exceptional person because I couldn't imagine living and not writing: but he only lived in order to write" (341). The narcissism that she has edged out in the development of the theme of solitude implicitly discredits Sartre's view of the authoring life which eclipses life beyond writing, inclusive of relationships. Memoirs thus concludes by relegating the goal of authorship to a place of honor in Simone's life; but this goal will depend on the daughter's conscious reintegration within the world of others as she works towards author-ization.

III The Competing Claims of Autonomy and Otherness in La Force de l'Age

La Force de l'Age equals The Second Sex in factual density and thematic depth. Consequently, I initially assumed I should restrict my attention, as in my reading of the earlier work, to the autobiographical dimension of this text rather than reflect on it as a whole. This qualified aim would still grant La Force de l'Age considerable analysis since it is the central text of de Beauvoir's autobiography. The representation of Simone's life between 1929 and 1944, La Force de l'Age provides a chronological record of de Beauvoir's evolution from aspirant to author, as well as a critique of the major ideological obstacle that retarded this evolution: namely, bourgeois individualism. While most critics acknowledge and sometimes examine de Beauvoir's critique of bourgeois
individualism here, none situates the place of this critique within the larger text or even attempts a holistic reading of the text at all. Books on de Beauvoir's published works cull "facts" from La Force de l'Age to support theories about de Beauvoir or Sartre; they will not examine it as a narrative. My guess is that the unruly narrative form daunts critics; for despite its conversion plot it is digressive and wayward, not unlike Rousseau's Confessions. I ultimately realized that I needed to confront the formal peculiarity of La Force de l'Age if I was going to avoid using it merely as a factual document.

My purpose in this section is to demonstrate how the formlessness of the text strengthens and complicates de Beauvoir's critical reflections on her apprenticeship as an author. After a brief discussion of the text's important Prologue, I first consider the form of de Beauvoir's narration and then relate the formal dynamic to the thematic contributions La Force de l'Age makes to de Beauvoir's autobiographical critique of (her) authorship. Among the questions I respond to are: Why is the representation of Simone's early attempts and failures at writing not the sole focus of the narrative? Why is there so much more: so many anecdotes that have no end/purpose and prepare for no end/conclusion? How does the excess of the experiences represented correspond to the theme which authorizes de Beauvoir in the early war years? What is gendered about the impediments to authorship that Simone experiences? What is gendered about de Beauvoir's inscription of these conflicts twenty years later? And how might de Beauvoir's language and anecdotal style mitigate her gender-neutral criticisms of individualism as the foundation of her authorship?
In her prologue to the text, de Beauvoir provides three distinct motivations for continuing her life-writings after Memoirs; the conflicts in and among these motivations suggest at the outset the importance of considering links between the text's form and themes. The first motivation directly relates to the text's formal endlessness. De Beauvoir states that although she intended to "undertake something else" after she published Memoirs, she could not: "In visible, underneath the last line, a question mark was drawn from which I could not turn my thoughts" (11). Her memoirs, it seems, generate other memoirs, in an endless generation of questions and responses: "one begins [to speak of oneself], one does not finish with it" (11). De Beauvoir suggests that the inconclusiveness of her last memoir corresponds to the (present) inconclusiveness of her life: "my existence is not finished" (11). And although she is sure that at fifty-one her existence possesses "a sense"—meaning both logic and direction—she does not yet know what kind of sense and hypothesizes that in the course of writing this memoir it will become clear. This text's direction, like her life's, is thus open in her eyes, and so is its telos or end: for she states her ignorance about who or what will be served by the truth of what she tries to express here (13). In this way, the prologue well prepares for the innovatively plotted form of La Force de l'Age.

De Beauvoir's second motivation for writing this memoir has primarily thematic ramifications. She remarks that the question that Memoirs framed for this next volume of memoirs is, "Liberty: to do what?" (11). She intended to take refuge behind her books, letting them symbolize and speak for the liberty she describes winning in Memoirs.
But no, they don't provide a response; it is they who find themselves in question. I had decided to write, I have written, all right: but why? Why these books, and nothing but them, only them? Did I want less or more? (11-12)

De Beauvoir maintains that answering these questions is as important for her as for her readership, who badger (harceler) writers with questions all the time:

Why do you write? How do you pass your days? Judging from anecdotes and gossip, it seems that a lot of people wish to understand what kind of life writing represents. Studying a particular case teaches better than giving abstract and general answers: that's what encourages me to examine mine (12).

Curiously, de Beauvoir here begins by insisting on her need to answer for her books and ends by insisting on her need to answer for her life, as an author. In sum, she intends to represent the situation or context of her writing: "a book only takes its true sense if one knows in what situation, from what perspective and by whom it has been written: I would like to explain mine in speaking to readers person to person (12). Thus de Beauvoir proposes for herself a project that current criticism would deem New Historicist in its emphasis on the embedding of her texts in her particular socio-cultural history.

Although de Beauvoir does not say it, her use of the term "situation," a shibboleth of The Second Sex, invokes the variable gender will play in this contextualizing process. From one point of view, this second motivation for writing La Force de l'Age is an implicitly feminist one: it is good feminist praxis for a woman to represent her embeddedness in social processes she is also trying to critique (Flax 638). However, since de Beauvoir mostly represses here and throughout the text the gendered dimension of her authorial history, she can only be said to have inadvertently produced a feminist piece of life-writing. I shall elaborate
this point more fully in a later part of this section: that much of what I call de Beauvoir's critique of authorship here is not intentionally hers. ³³ De Beauvoir's sublimation of the variable of gender is what makes the rapprochement of thematic ambiguities and formal ingenuities so necessary.

The last motivation for writing La Force de l'Age which de Beauvoir acknowledges in her prologue serves less to control the ensuing text than to prepare for its formal and thematic peculiarities. It is partly collapsed into the second motivation described above. When she asserts the need to situate her production as an author, she specifies that the explanation is for readers who risk misunderstanding either her or her books. She wants to inform them, "person to person," about her trajectory towards authorship, so as to "dissipate certain misunderstandings that always separate authors from their public (12). De Beauvoir evinces here her interest in being in relationship with her readers as well as her need to talk with them as if they were equals. ³⁴ However, her razing of differences between author and readers contradicts her motivation to see for herself the "sense" of her life as an author. The tension that this motivation creates between explaining for others and simply interrogating oneself is inscribed throughout the narrative. ³⁵ But if she feels able only to "se raconter," or to "se dire" as Béatrice Slama calls it (166), why then do Jean-Paul Sartre's life and thoughts and writings figure so prominently throughout the text? In the prologue she claims that she has left him to recount his own history (13); in fact, Sartre criticism draws ample biographical material from de Beauvoir's autobiographies. Here most acutely then, de Beauvoir's Prologue creates the expectation of
thematic inconsistencies supported by formal incoherence in the ensuing text. It prepares the reader for a host of paradoxes devolving from the interpenetration of selfhood and otherness that is central to the authorization de Beauvoir depicts and critiques in La Force de l'Age. It is a text about Simone only but about Sartre, too; for Simone only but for readers, too; written with an infinite, inconclusive vision of purpose for Simone but with a finite view to self-explication for her readers. Paradoxically, it makes central her role as author and decentralizes that role by revealing its derivation from others and from her consciousness of others.

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The text's ranginess notwithstanding, La Force de l'Age does attempt to relate a story of discovery: de Beauvoir recounts how Simone focuses her adolescent desire to say something by discovering something to say.36 At the end of Memoirs de Beauvoir left her textually resurrected self in the peculiar position of wanting to be an author without content: an author-to-be whose tightly circumscribed experience as a lapsed-Catholic, bourgeois schoolgirl did not yet even comprise a writing subject for her beyond private journal investigations. La Force de l'Age exposes the hollowness of this ambition and places it within the context of Simone's ten-year metamorphosis into a publishing writer. De Beauvoir shows herself fascinated by Simone's movement from silence to narration and, at the important end of the first part of this two-part narration, queries why her incubation as a writer took so long:

I don't believe that my inexperience suffices to explain such a persevering failure. I was hardly more artful when I began L'Invitée. Is it necessary to admit that at that moment I had "discovered a subject," while previously I had nothing to say? But there is always the world around one: what does nothing signify?
In what circumstances, why, how do things reveal themselves as things to say?

Literature appears when something in life becomes disordered [se déregle]; in order to write the first condition is that reality ceases to go along by itself; only then is one capable of seeing it and making it seen (416; de Beauvoir's emphasis).

This attempt to explain through a general principle how Simone came to realize her author-ization as a writer finally raises more questions than it resolves. In particular, the passage displays an uneasiness with the proximity between nothing (rien) and the something (les choses) that the nascent writer comes to see. De Beauvoir contends that while the world and one's place in the world remain static, a kind of existential shift must transpire so as to make things visible: the idea of things revealing themselves conveys that the shift is beyond the writer's control and volition. Between nothing and something, an event lived and an event to-be-narrated, lies an invisible frontier that de Beauvoir knows she has crossed, for she began publishing in 1944 and continued to do so until 1981. But she evinces perplexed awareness that she has not crossed the frontier once and for all both in her quick paragraph change and in the subsequent explanation that begs the question of frontiers. Her point about reality dis Ordering (déregler) itself simply posits the idea of a frontier between one complacent vision of reality and another vision that makes her question her perception of that reality. How might this deregulation of life occur? What would prevent it from happening?

It is possible to make an argument about how the above narrative fragment represents the whole of La Force de l'âge. Indeed, it might be useful to observe that the entire text counterbalances, as this passage does, de Beauvoir's discovery of something to say with the impression that that discovery is always yet to be made, and that the conversion of
life's nothings into literature's somethings is ongoing and yet mystifying to de Beauvoir. Its interrogativity, its suggestion of frontiers to be crossed and limits to be passed in the writing of literature, and its indication of the proximity between having nothing and everything to say: all these traits mark this passage as well as the text as a whole. As a result, one might well logically pass on to a discussion of these traits, leaving it an unacknowledged but nevertheless critically tenable assumption that the textual fragment begun with deserves to stand for the whole. But I want to quell the New Critical impulse to depict this important autobiographical text as an organically unified narrative. Such a picture would falsely represent it and undermine the method by which de Beauvoir makes her compelling re-vision of authorship.

Instead, it pays to follow de Beauvoir's logic-breaking lead and pass on to a very different kind of fragment in _La Force de l'Age_, one that occurs in Part II, well after the important end section of Part I. In that section, de Beauvoir attempts another existentialist explanation for Simone's late entrance into authorship: to wit, Simone acquires consciousness of her place as one-amongst-others in history and is authorized--becomes a productive author--by her accession into this consciousness. Cottrell, one critic who focuses on this mini-conversion account, remarks that Part II enfolds the workings of history more prominently into the description of Simone's life than Part I does (20). What might Cottrell make of the following anecdote? Related in two parts separated by eight pages, de Beauvoir describes a bicycle accident in which she lost a tooth only to have it surprisingly reappear some time later:
Little by little my face deflated, my scratches scarred over, but I didn't bother to replace the tooth that I had lost on the way to Grenoble. I had a rather nasty boil on my chin that wouldn't stop ripening and that was lightly festering; I didn't worry about it. One morning, however, it provoked me: I planted myself before the mirror, pressed it, and something whitish appeared; I pressed harder, and during a fraction of a second, I seemed to be living one of the surrealist nightmares where suddenly eyes sprout in the middle of a cheek; a tooth pierced my skin: the one that had broken during my fall [from the bicycle]; it had stayed incrusted there during the several weeks; when I recounted this story to my friends, they laughed about it immoderately (569, 577).

There may be nothing to make of this extraordinary "histoire" which is so very different from the "Histoire" of political realities that is supposed to have inundated Simone's consciousness. It obviously belongs with those other anecdotes in the text which treat the corporeal-in fairly frank terms. Nevertheless, it has no "point" to press; it is an anecdote without thematic proximity to de Beauvoir's account of her authorization; and it disrupts that narration. It cannot be compellingly worked into a thematic configuration extending throughout the "narrative" in the same way that I might succeed in draping the significance of the previous passage over the text as a whole.

Nor, for that matter, can any of the many travel anecdotes de Beauvoir relates in La Force de l'Age and its successor be made to coalesce into a traditional plot interpretation. De Beauvoir represents her wayward travels as evidence of her allegiance to life's details, contingencies, and excess--as a young woman and as the author of this text in 1959. Life--more accurately, living, in its totality--is the everything which, in its contingency, amounts to the nothing that de Beauvoir came to see can be converted into text. "Tout" and "totalité" are frequently repeated words in her texts--throwbacks, she believes, to the taste for absolutes her Catholic upbringing gave her; but these words
also insist on her limitless sensuous pleasures in experience.\textsuperscript{37} Her passion for long walking and cycling tours exemplifies these pleasures and the terrific energy with which she pursued them.\textsuperscript{38} Perhaps the clearest way an anecdote like the one about the boil can be said to help pattern this narration is by contributing to the text's imitation of de Beauvoir's feminine vigor. Throughout her autobiography, beginning with \textit{Memoirs}, de Beauvoir pronounces the superior value she places on the vigorous pursuit of life (happiness, for her): it is what basically distinguishes her writing and her devotion to writing from Sartre's--a point I will return to below.

De Beauvoir's conversion of life's unemplottable excess into the narrative of \textit{La Force de l'Age} is accomplished at the expense of a traditionally coherent plot. Terry Keefe remarks that the memoirs after \textit{Memoirs} "lack" its unity (34). I would counter that, at least in \textit{La Force de l'Age}, anecdotal dérèglement (chronology notwithstanding), far from constituting a "lack," enhances the book's significance by implicitly representing the tension between de Beauvoir's happiness in unrecordable life and her desire for recorded life. Importantly, this tension, which persisted long after her author-ization at thirty, figures strongly in her account of it. Elaine Marks has written brilliantly on the function of de Beauvoir's anecdotal "excess" in writing \textit{La Cérémonie des Adieux} (1981). In that book, according to Marks, de Beauvoir transgresses literary thematic limits by providing liberal details of Sartre's physical disease. Marks counters the common accusation that de Beauvoir's books are "too" whatever--long, detailed, anecdotal, crowded--by showing the transgressive daring of de Beauvoir's representation in "readable"
language of the body in decline (187-188, 200). De Beauvoir is likewise transgressive in *La Force de L'Age*, and what she transgresses again are phallocratic norms of formal rigor in narrative. But here her formal transgression breaks, not cultural taboos about the body, but less visible because more masculine/normative cultural definitions of authorial identity.

I showed in the last chapter how Stein's anecdotes helped figure two conflicting stories in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*; the anecdotes helped to pattern if not emplot that narrative. In contrast, de Beauvoir's proliferation of anecdotes in *La Force de l'Age* suggests no principal organizing patterns. Joel Fineman's history of the anecdote's use in history-writing helps me to define the unusual function of many of de Beauvoir's anecdotes. They create the expectation of a narrative with a beginning, middle, and end, but they frustrate that expectation by refusing to provide an end. They open a space in which history may be told by pointing to the "real," to a life-event, on the one hand, and to the event's place in a sequence of narrated events, on the other; but they undermine an account of this history by calling attention to the "excess": the life that escapes and exceeds textual representation (see Fineman 56-57). The formal irony of *La Force de l'Age* is that it requires the mimetic illusion of narration for its enthronement of life/the real. The anecdotal déréglement helps effect the narrative's celebration of experience in writing and, beyond writing, in life as it is lived: contingently, without coherence.

Two other formal factors help invigorate *La Force de l'Age*. The first is the book's incorporation of de Beauvoir's diary entries from the
war years. Those who might object that my argument for the subversiveness of de Beauvoir's form is stacked by the fact that it is a memoir (and so per force inattentive to formal constraints) might point to these diary entries as evidence. De Beauvoir herself says she will quote from these diaries because they seem to her "plus vivant" than any recit she could draw from them now: more living, more present to her than her present recollections of the period would be (433). But the preponderance of diary-entry block-transcriptions occurs in the text's second half, indicating that de Beauvoir's reliance on them is selective. In fact, they formally rupture the history-attentiveness Part II is supposed to reveal. According to Felicity Nussbaum, diary discourse "produces a crisis of attention to the present" while creating a repository of the past; diary-writing serializes current events without perspective, and in this way may suggest the writer's worry about the continuity of identity over time (133). In La Force de l'Age, the inclusion of long portions of Simone's diaries may suggest just this worry; they may also suggest the experience of continuity, fluidity between the present and an apparently mediated (because recollected in language) past. Her diary blocks raze the temporal divisions between de Beauvoir and Simone and argue for the proximity of the neophyte writer and prize-winning author in 1962. Life before author-ization is thus seen on a par with and inseparable from life afterward.

More than just formally intriguing, the inclusion of diary entries interacts curiously with the text's conversion plots—the last invigorating formal characteristic I will analyze. La Force de l'Age interweaves at least three incomplete conversion mini-plots. One belongs to that category of
conversions Geoffrey Harpham calls "epistemological" because it signifies "an awakening to essential being": Simone comes to re-enter History through a recognition of her bourgeois past and history (42-3). Another is an ontological conversion of Simone's place in History: from writing aspirant to publishing author. The third conversion is what Harpham terms "the literary act," a "constant, ceaseless process" of the "conversion of impulse into language" that grounds the other conversions and essentially destabilizes them (43, 48). Harpham posits that all autobiography organizes in "particular" ways the "conversional" aspects of language. De Beauvoir's text, however, shows the author to be peculiarly self-conscious of both the inscription and incompleteness of her conversions. The diary blocks accentuate the fragmentary, conflicting, and processive nature of de Beauvoir's conversions—in life, into writing—by insisting on past-time as present-time against the past-seeing current of her narration.

De Beauvoir knows herself to have moved (as I said earlier) over the invisible frontier from writer to author: from seeing nothing to seeing something, from living without history to living in and through history and its making. Yet author often slips back into neophyte valuing life over writing; converted bourgeois often revels in the bourgeois interests again; and narrative (the something) founders in the manifold impressions (the nothing) of life. Throughout the narrative de Beauvoir puns on the word dépasser, meaning to overcome something (pass a frontier) but also to be shorn of the past: for example, the phrase, "pour exprimer un passé que j'étais en train de dépasser" (423). This pun expresses neatly the paradox of the narration's shapelessness: overcoming the past is an
infinite enterprise that recollects and dismisses the past from an ever receding moment of present-time. In *La Force de l'Age*, de Beauvoir shows how her authorship depends on her bypassing the past, her bourgeois past, only to claim it again under a new guise; on bypassing her former self only to reclaim it through a memoir. She is critical of her assumed pastlessness but also delighted with the illusion of freedom it afforded her. This illusion validated her young inclination to set herself apart from (her vision of) dependent femininity so as to join the ranks of independent, empowered authority. In the last section I will show how this inclination is modified in the wandering and conflicted path to authorship de Beauvoir inscribes in *La Force de l'Age*.

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De Beauvoir recounts Simone's metamorphosis into an author primarily in the first half of *La Force de l'Age*. The foregoing remarks about the text's form notwithstanding, it is useful to recognize that a general conflict informs de Beauvoir's inscription of Simone's authorization: the claims of others versus the need for autonomy. Far from having settled this conflict, de Beauvoir shows herself to be wrestling with it still in her digressive account of Simone's authorization. Through the complex anecdotal twists of the narration, Simone's cultivation of a variety of autonomy is seen as both a condition and a liability of her becoming an author. Simone's awareness of and relationship with others competes with her—and de Beauvoir's—evaluation of autonomy and likewise develops into a condition of authorship which modifies the masculine paradigm of autonomy and separateness that Sartre—and she too, initially—considered necessary for authorial
production and success. Only overreading the text, however, reveals this modification, since de Beauvoir's narration suggests mainly ambivalence about individualism vis-a-vis relationships. It is precisely this dis-ease which signals what is gendered about the critique of authorship the text provides. De Beauvoir's nonlinear, anecdotal style, full of analytical asides, accommodates her persistent ambivalence concerning the autonomy-otherness conflict by enabling her to argue on all sides of the issue. While my examination of this conflict assumes linear lines, it is important to remember that within the textual fabric of La Force de l'Age ambivalence and contradiction prevail. The conversion of Simone into an autonomous self for the purposes of authorship remains incomplete in the narrative.

At the point where de Beauvoir picks up the thread of Simone's experiences, Simone is basking in the liberty that her break from her family affords her. Living in one of her grandmother's rooms in Paris, rarely in contact with either family or former friends, she begins her adult life pursuing the bonheur (happiness) to which she had aspired. De Beauvoir as narrator is critical, not of this egoistic happiness, but of the illusion of autonomous freedom that supports it. Time and again she refers to Simone's and Sartre's errors: their feckless optimism, their guiding belief that they lived at the center of the world, their aspiration to re-create modern humankind. "We were wrong," she concedes, "about almost everything" (21), but their primary fault lay in thinking that they arrived at their vision freely, as autonomous individuals unprejudiced by their respective subject positions in history. With gentle irony, de Beauvoir reveals their habit of supposing themselves dispossessed of
their bourgeois roots without recognizing that such dispossession was characteristically bourgeois (28). Thus, de Beauvoir provides a double vision: of the autonomy claimed and of the illusions of bourgeois individualism sustaining it.

The autonomy Simone claims is not, for all that, merely illusionary or pernicious. De Beauvoir indicates the difference between Simone's and Sartre's estimation of their adult freedom-as-individuals (as opposed to freedom in general) that reveals the necessity of considering autonomy from the perspective of gender difference.

On this point, there was a great difference between Sartre and me. It seemed miraculous to have been torn from my past, to be self-sufficient, to make up my own mind; I had conquered once and for all my autonomy: nothing would take it away from me. Sartre, for his part, only acceded to a stage of his existence as a man that he had long foreseen, with disgust; he came to lose the irresponsibility of his youth; he entered the detestable universe of adults. His independence was threatened (29-30).

De Beauvoir stresses here the gendered relativity of individual autonomy in one of the text's few nods to gender difference. Joel Myers makes a strong case for the impersonal, institutional forces that perpetuate the ideology of individualism, of which a sense of autonomous destiny is one manifestation (208). Nevertheless, an individual's gender affects both the experience and perception of that sense of autonomy (see Gilligan and Chodorow). It is true that de Beauvoir and Sartre were equally enmeshed in the bourgeois individualism they agreed to flee: that their "condition as young petits-bourgeois intellectuals . . . incited them to believe themselves to be unconditioned" (28). And de Beauvoir's almost ubiquitous use of "nous" (we) affirms, ironically, her belief in their equal subscription to individualism. For example, "We stayed fixed in our rationalist and voluntarist attitude: for a lucid individual, we thought,
liberty triumphs over traumas, complexes, memories, and influences" (29). Their perspectives on that individualism, however, especially on questions of autonomy, or distinctness of identity, were not identical precisely because of the gendered differences of their upbringing. While Sartre's narrative of childhood assumes the separateness if not the stability of his personal identity, de Beauvoir's autobiography interrogates—from The Second Sex through La Force des Choses—the possibility of separating self from others in representing Simone's frustrated search for psychic and physical separateness.

De Beauvoir's explanation for having felt elated with her so-called autonomy oddly insists on her gendered experience of autonomy by calling into question the very meaning of autonomy. Simone began her "entreprise de vivre," her pursuit of life's happiness, when she began her relationship with Sartre. In this book he replaces Zaza as her most significant other. Can one experience autonomy through relationship with an other? That is the question implicit in de Beauvoir's remarks below.

Although Simone and Sartre renounced marriage and remained single individuals,

I trusted in him so totally that he guaranteed me, like my parents formerly, like God, a definitive security. At the moment when I threw myself into liberty, I found above my head a sky without fail; I escaped all constraints, yet each of my moments possessed a sort of necessity. All of my wishes, deep and profound, were fulfilled; it left me nothing to wish for, except that this triumphant beatitude might never flag. . . . I belonged entirely in the present (35).

This description superimposes the experiences of liberty and love onto each other without equating them. The pleasure Simone felt through union with Sartre was distinguishable from the exercise of her new wings, and yet it is Sartre who provided the "sky" for her flight. There is some
debate about the degree to which Sartre represents Simone's "paternal successor" in this text; Okley, for one, faults de Beauvoir (the narrator) for failing to recognize (if not for accepting in the first place) Sartre's paternalism (127). Of course this accusation is closely allied to the claims of de Beauvoir's derivative authority with which this chapter began. My sense is that de Beauvoir's reflections here on her incipient liberty move beyond a gender-neutral understanding of autonomy and beyond autonomy as an absolute value. She directs her irony not at autonomy as she experienced it, but at the perception of autonomy as a fait accompli. A further irony signalled in the passage is that Simone only recognized the pleasure of present-time and thought herself to be literally dé-passé, while de Beauvoir demonstrates how Simone actually remains consistent with her past--with the parents and deity she had supposedly left behind her.

From a humanist perspective, de Beauvoir's criticisms of her own assumed autonomy constitute a limited critique of her milieu's individualism. While there may exist internal contradictions in an individual's war against individualism, this is in fact what de Beauvoir says she and Sartre did in their young adulthood, an activity she has de-passed but not without retaining an abiding distrust of the habit of individualist thinking ingrained in herself as a bourgeois daughter. As an alternative, the rhetoric of La Force de l'Age argues for a view of autonomy stripped of illusions. It calls into question the separation from others that autonomous action typically implies by numerous references to just how connected with others Simone's actions showed her to be. In fact, the first half of the narrative serves as a window to the Zeitgeist of
Paris 1929-1939 in its incessant attention to others in Simone's personal sphere and in its allusions to the congruence between Simone's habits and thoughts and those of her general contemporaries. Sartre's friend Mme. Lemaire, Simone's admirer Mme. Tourmelin, assorted students of both Sartre and de Beauvoir, writers and artists the couple knew, and some they didn't: all of these others crowd out the impression, easily reached in Sartre's autobiography, for example, that this author followed her path to authorship in solitude. Embedding the "cas particulier" of Simone de Beauvoir in her social sphere, the text identifies Simone with others in her class and profession. 41 In this light, de Beauvoir's ironic criticisms of Simone's assumed autonomy only reinforce what the other-oriented text demonstrates.

That said, the wayward description of Simone's struggles towards authorship offers an appreciative view of autonomy. If de Beauvoir ironizes Simone's illusions about her autonomy, she nevertheless demonstrates how critically necessary to Simone's author-ization is the assumption of some kind of internal independence, from Sartre in particular. Simone lived in close proximity to Sartre in Paris during the two years following university, reading mostly, but also trying to writing. Sartre as Simone's Other dominates the depiction of this period. De Beauvoir describes the friends of Sartre who became Simone's sole friends at this epoch; she describes (with some overlay of her "present" view of the relationship's success) Simone's agreement to Sartre's rejection of marriage and his proposal of "contingent relationships" to supplement their own "necessary" one; and she records haphazardly the voyeuristic habits, and the subjects viewed, that preoccupied Sartre and
Simone and reinforced their egoism. Sartre and Simone shared a voyeuristic lifestyle; and yet only Simone came to experience their imaginative observation of others—their actions, progress, peculiarities—as a risk. While de Beauvoir surely communicates the pleasures which others brought Simone (a kind of relish for voyeurism in fact can be seen in de Beauvoir's re-creation of the Parisian scene from Simone's viewpoint), she balances this pleasure against Simone's worries about her unproductive life.

Simone had, after all, believed in her destiny as a "famous author" for several years. Sartre had encouraged Simone to realize this life script; but her primary response to the liberty which being in relationship with Sartre affords her, is to pursue living, not writing. De Beauvoir explains:

At present, I no longer experienced at all the need to express myself. A book is, in one way or another, an appeal: whom should I appeal to, and for what? I was fulfilled. Without respite, my emotions, joys, and pleasures precipitated me towards the future, and their vehemence overwhelmed me. When facing things and people, I lacked the distance which permits one to take a point of view and speak of them; incapable of sacrificing anything, and therefore of choosing anything, I lost myself [me perdais] in a chaotic and delicious effervescence (71).

This passage foregrounds the pleasure of being lost (perdu) in pleasure; other passages emphasize rather the attendant lethargy. While continuing to record Simone's enjoyment of living and looking, de Beauvoir begins alluding to the depression and self-division which her uninspired work creates in her.

I worked without conviction; I had the impression sometimes of acquitting myself of extra work, sometimes of performing a parody. In any case, there was no rush. I was happy; for the moment, that sufficed. And then no, that did not suffice. There was something else that I had expected of myself. I no longer kept a private journal, but it still happened that I would throw a few words in a
notebook: "I cannot resign myself to living when my life doesn't serve any purpose," I wrote, in the spring of 1930; and a little later, in June: "I have lost my pride, and that means I have lost everything." . . . I was in the process of betraying myself and losing myself. I interpreted this conflict as tragic, at least at times. I think today that there was nothing in it except self-flagellation (73).

Viewed from her present position as a published author, de Beauvoir can be excused her final dismissive comment about the risks Simone ran. Actually there are few such comments in the text. For the most part de Beauvoir recounts Simone's conflict with sympathy and self-acceptance, successfully replicating Simone's ambivalence about her self-indulgent lifestyle (happiness suffices, happiness does not suffice). Simone appears to herself too happy in her relationship with Sartre; her former resolutions to write lose their urgency; she lives "freely" without sens or direction (just like this text), but her self-confidence erodes as a consequence.

Sartre's concern about Simone's "indolence" (her term) exacerbates her feeling of "mediocrity" relative to other women: "'But formerly, Castor [a pet name], you thought about a pile of things,' he said to me with astonishment. Take care that you don't become a housewife" (74). De Beauvoir shows herself largely in agreement with this patronizing and gender-focused (not to say, gender-biased) assessment of her situation. "I definitely abdicated," she says (74), a statement which recalls her Second Sex judgment against the collaboration of women in their own subjugation. The language of that essay also finds its way into this self-description: "[F]ascinated by the other, I forgot myself to the extent that there was no one to say: I am nothing. Nevertheless, in flashes this voice reawakened: then I ascertained that I had ceased to exist for my own
account, and that I was living as a parasite (74). This harsh self-assessment of her own nothingness reflects Simone's worry that her future as a writer requires that she imitate her other's individualistic pursuit of that career. In fact, de Beauvoir records that their mutual friend Herbaud faults her for betraying the individualism he had formerly admired in her, "and I had to say he was right" (74). Without recognizing the irony of this accusation--Simone and Sartre were after all committed to critiquing bourgeois individualism in everyone else--de Beauvoir suggests through her very insistence on Simone's other-oriented happiness the insufficiency of individualism's standards for "success." De Beauvoir's early remarks differentiating Simone's and Sartre's views about the relative value of life and literature also implicitly make this point:

Sartre had an unconditional faith in the Beauty that he did not separate from Art, while I attributed to Life a supreme value. Our vocations did not coincide exactly. I have indicated this difference in the notebook where I still from time to time consigned my perplexities; one day I noted: "I want to write; I want sentences on paper, things in my life put into sentences." But another day I specified: "I will never know how to love art as the guarantor of my life. I will never be a writer like Sartre."... In my eyes, Sartre, by the firmness of his attitude, surpassed me; I admired how he held his destiny between his hands alone; but far from feeling vexed by this, I found it comfortable to esteem him more than myself (34-35; my emphasis).

A mixture of ease and defensiveness about their relative devotion to literature characterizes this passage. De Beauvoir affirms her primary allegiance to life--here as elsewhere--with aplomb, but then owns up to admiring Sartre's purposefulness more than regretting her own purposelessness. Whether Simone will become an author despite or because of her valorization of life over literature is the question generally preoccupying de Beauvoir as she reconsiders her apprenticeship in this text. And she will flipflop in her replies. For example, the possibility of
holding one's destiny in one's own hands is a belief that de Beauvoir will discredit on account of its individualism by the end of Part I; and yet here she records uncritically Simone's favorable, deluded impression that Sartre single-handedly commands his own life. We should not disbelieve de Beauvoir's denial of vexation; but we should not ignore the stylistic uneasiness that comparisons between Sartre and Simone at this epoch engenders, precisely over the question of their literary ambitions. Considering that Sartre and Simone held the artist/writer in a position of solitary privilege over other humans helps explain why her lackluster scribblings began to worry them (56). But the issue is complicated by Simone's relationship to social codes of femininity which the text overwrites on the issue of autonomy. Simone's substitution of vigor for masculine rigor (Sartre's firmness [fermeté]) at this epoch began to strain the couple's relationship, primarily because Simone's variety of autonomy did not appear adequate for the author they intended her to be.

Seeking to restore her "equilibrium" through work which put herself "at the center of her life," Simone accepts a teaching post in Marseille. While de Beauvoir denies that Simone was really risking stagnation in her Parisian life, she nevertheless admits that she will retain all her life "a disturbing memory" of this period in which she feared to betray her youthful ambitions (95). In Marseille Simone's ambitions to be happy and a writer begin to coalesce. The year proves to be an "absolutely new" turning point in which Simone breaks the cycle of euphoric highs and depressed lows and is productive without any diminishment of vigor. Her activities outside of teaching are primarily solitary and this by choice: threatened by her dependence on others, she
takes as her model the "lone woman" patterned in Katherine Mansfield's Journal and lives for no one (104, 118). In keeping with the habits of her youth, she pursues her new-found happiness through excess: her marathon walking tours, planned and followed according to her own ambitious schedules, are the talk of the school and do not secure her many friends. Reacting against her other-oriented existence, Simone relies again on the antidote of her girlhood, solitude, to reaffirm the autonomy she believed necessary for her authorship. But de Beauvoir's claims notwithstanding, the solitude was as incomplete as the autonomy: Simone was cultivating autonomy within relationship.

It seems fitting that, sequestered in her café-brasserie of choice, Simone begins exploring in her new novel "the mirage of the Other." This topic bespeaks her insecurity and defensiveness about how relationships threaten autonomy. Viewing the Other as a mirage figurally dissolves it and the threat it poses to an autonomy which intrinsically opposes self to other. Her respite in Marseille from the competing attractions of personal ambition and a love relationship with an Other allowed Simone the perspective she needed to begin investigating this conflict. But the year in Marseille is only a beginning, and Simone's hold on the topic appears simplistic and naive by de Beauvoir's 1959 standards. Her relationship to others would become the preeminent subject of her writings, but she was not, as she said, yet dealing frankly with the topic (95, 146). Only when she returns to Paris, teaching, seeing Sartre on weekends, and working on her first published novel, L'Invitée, did she find herself writing with authenticity about "la conscience d'autrui" (360). She had first to accept the fact of the separateness of subjects from herself before she could see
herself as one among many and move out of a me-versus-them, self-versus-others mentality (147). In other words, only by affirming the autonomy of others could she move beyond autonomy as an ideology. Writing about "la conscience d'autrui" afforded Simone a chance to expand her youthful individualism enough to admit the limitations besetting any one individual, as well as classes of individuals in straitened circumstances. This point she makes particularly in Pyrrhus et Cineas. Undoubtedly, the topic of Otherness, which would literally authorize her as a writer of fiction (L'Invitée) and as a writer of feminist theory (The Second Sex), chose her insofar as she was writing out the questions embroiling her own subject position. And yet it is also true that she chose it and thus made it her own topic. This ambiguity is, I think, essential to an understanding of how de Beauvoir revises contemporary notions about authorship. In any event, the subject of Otherness was "more" hers than Sartre's since, as Margaret Simons has shown, de Beauvoir's writings on the Other influenced Sartre to incorporate it in his own writings and not the other way around (Simons 169).

What is the significance of the fact that Simone needed to restore the illusion of her separateness and autonomy from all others ("separated from my past and all that I loved") before she could examine how living with others renders purely autonomous action impossible? Read from a gender-neutral perspective, it is an irony of the text, or a contradiction of the logic which de Beauvoir considers her emancipator. Read from a gender-sensitive point of view, however, the breakdown in logic provides a salient contradiction. Lee Hewitt has written that those junctures where de Beauvoir's critique of bourgeois individualism fails in her
autobiographies reveal her troubled relationship to femininity as she conceives it. But contradiction, nonlinear anecdotal progression, and resistance to explanatory rigor do not constitute a "weakness" of the text. Beyond suggesting narrative innovation--Hewitt's point--they manifest the conflicts that occur when the masculine ideologies of authorship confront de Beauvoir's bourgeois feminine acculturation; and they open up the possibility of seeing critically what is masculine and what is not about de Beauvoir's participation in the institution of authorship. Admittedly, the topic of "la conscience d'autrui" provided de Beauvoir with a focus for effecting a rapprochement between self and others, between autonomy and being-in-relation, and to a certain extent La Force de l'Age demonstrates this rapprochement. De Beauvoir, after all, learns to discipline herself as a writer and publishes her writings, while still putting life and the others who are her world first. But the synthesis is imperfect, for the text does not perfectly synthesize author-ization and other-ization. It shows the rough edges of that authorization, exposing matters which continue to vex the understanding of the author now as autobiographer trying to situate herself and her writings.

If Miller is correct, de Beauvoir was aware that she was being read as a woman author and she inscribes this awareness in her autobiographical texts (Subject 50). De Beauvoir's autobiographies manifest this awareness in overt and covert ways. I argued earlier that in The Second Sex de Beauvoir began writing about her relationship to other women at the same time that she began problematizing the profession of authorship as a means of emancipation for women; but in that text her identification of women with herself overshadows her largely implicit
identification with other women. The fact of Simone's feminine acculturation is foregrounded in the very title of Memoirs, but in that text vestiges of de Beauvoir's individualism are still strong enough to distance her from the general lot of daughters. In La Force de l'Age de Beauvoir makes a few overt attempts to confront the question of her relationship to femininity, and then the predominant theme of these passages is Simone's desired autonomy. In a passage already cited, de Beauvoir distinguishes her sense of autonomy from Sartre's. Her reference there to gender difference insists upon the fact that for women oppressed by cultural imperatives recommending dependence, the illusion of individual autonomy is particularly enabling and should not be either assumed or debunked too quickly.

A more complicated, long passage connecting de Beauvoir with women-others occurs towards the end of Part I, after Simone has overcome (dépassée) the paralysis that her other-oriented existence created. In the course of summarizing her growth from youth to maturity, de Beauvoir rehearses her errors of bourgeois individualism and forgives them: "The imperfect culture that I acquired was necessary to its dépassement" (415). Specifically, her internalization of individualistic values was necessary to her goal to "make books," the goal on which her satisfaction in life depends (415). The implication is that she has shrugged off like an unnecessary garment her belief in individual autonomy; and indeed, her own infinite and imprecise ambitions as an individual were modified at the same time that, through her fiction, her philosophy, and her essays she began to explore the finitude of individual existence due to movement through history as or with others. But she chooses this textual moment to
consider her relationship to femininity as an author and backslides into maintaining the importance of autonomy. In a stylistically wandering digression, de Beauvoir defensively denies (in response to imaginary readers' accusations) that her authorization was accomplished at the expense of her femininity. Because of its importance, I will quote this passage at length:

My effort had been, to the contrary, to define in its particularity the feminine condition that is mine. I received an education as a young girl; after my studies were finished, my situation remained that of a woman in the heart of a society where the sexes constitute two distinct castes. In many circumstances, I reacted as the woman I was.* For reasons that I have precisely exposed in The Second Sex, women, more than men, experience the need to have a sky above their heads; they aren't given the tempering that makes adventurers . . . ; they hesitate to put the world in question from top to bottom and to take charge of it. Therefore it suited me to live in the manner of a man whom I esteemed as my superior; my ambitions, although stubborn, stayed timid and the course of the world, if it interested me, was not all the same my affair. However, it has been seen that I attached little importance to the real conditions of my life: I believed that nothing hindered my will. I did not deny my femininity, nor did I assume it; I didn't think about it. I had the same liberties and the same responsibilities as men. The malediction that weighs on the greater part of women--dependence--was spared me. To gain a living in itself is not a goal; but only by doing that does one attain a solid interior autonomy. If I recall with emotion my arrival in Marseille, it is because I felt, on the top of the great stairs, what power [force] I drew from my métier and even from the obstacles I was obliged to confront. To be materially self-sufficient, that is to experience life as a total individual; other than that I could refuse moral parasitism and its dangerous complacency. On the other hand, neither Sartre nor any of my friends ever manifested towards me a superior attitude. It therefore never appeared that I was disadvantaged. I know today that for me to write, I must first say: "I am a woman"; but my femininity has not constituted a bother or an alibi for me. In any case, femininity is one of the givens of my history, not an explication of it (417-418; my emphasis). *[In a footnote here she reaaffirms her thesis in The Second Sex that femininity is a situation rather than a natural essence.]

This passage is striking in the way de Beauvoir positions herself with and against a femininity whose influence on her character she cannot deny and will not, with any "rigor," explain. She calls her choice to
affiliate herself with a "superior" man who satisfies her need to feel a "sky overhead" (recall the earlier reference to Sartre as her sky [ciel]) as distinctly feminine: feminine because, by her own definition, femininity describes the state of women's inferiority to men. But she claims to have escaped the "parasitism" of her feminine situation through material self-sufficiency; the "interior autonomy" she gains in earning a living appears as a state of consciousness alien to femininity. And yet feminine she remains, in some fashion, for she says she will not deny it. There is in this passage an impatience with sorting out what is and what is not feminine in her existence: and perhaps this impatience is not entirely unreasonable since every aspect of a woman's life does not boil down to gender acculturation (Riley 96-114). Nevertheless, when de Beauvoir denies thinking about her femininity ("I didn't think about it"), she belies not just the text at hand but her entire investigation of Otherness as it has grown out of her gendered experience of inexact boundaries between self and others.45 By calling attention to her Marseille experience in this context and the obstacles to authorship she there confronted, she indicates one way in which she at least thinks against her femininity: namely, Women need to fight for autonomy to pursue vocations apart from their relationships with others. Given this passage's placement within the summary of Simone's authorization, the implication is that women seeking authorization/authorship like de Beauvoir may be called upon, not to deny their femininity, but to have recourse to the illusion of a masculine autonomy--which they may otherwise distrust--in order to compensate for femininity's impotence in a masculine work context.46
The passage cited above is the most extended—and most convoluted—deliberation on femininity in the text. There is another in which de Beauvoir signals with more categorical assurance her deviance from conventional feminine norms. Importantly, it occurs at the point in the narration when de Beauvoir steps up her references to Simone's fear of/desire for autonomy and solitude (90). De Beauvoir's nominal topic is marriage and children, but again, autonomy will figure predominantly. She explains that before Simone left for Marseille, Sartre mentioned the option of marriage to ease her separation anxiety. De Beauvoir declares that she was not tempted by this suggestion for an instant. She describes at length both the inherent problems of marriage and the danger of putting Sartre in a position which she knew he would detest. But her emphasis on avoiding compromising Sartre is unmistakable; as for herself, Simone appears to have been less repelled than not sufficiently attracted by the prospect of marriage. She lacked, they both lacked, what de Beauvoir considers "the only motive . . . weighty enough to convince us to inflict on ourselves the bonds that are called legitimate: the desire to have children; we did not experience this desire" (91). She insists here as she does in other writings and interviews that she never wanted to bear and raise children, although "a little older, children have often charmed me" (90). De Beauvoir attests to receiving continual questions and criticism for this absence of a maternal desire, as if she were refusing a "natural" lifescr ipt (Sartre, of course, was never similarly interrogated about his refusal of paternity). She knows herself to be beyond reproach in her decision not to have children, and indeed she is. Nevertheless, in another long paragraph she curiously defends her
decision to resist the feminine life-script of maternity. The reasons are varied, but two prominent themes are developed: 1) she has an aversion to family life, and 2) she values writing/production over child-bearing/reproduction.

De Beauvoir's aversion to family corresponds to the relative absence of family members in La Force de l'Age; and her mapping of the familial onto the maternal corresponds to the absence of her mother, Francoise, in this text. In Memoirs de Beauvoir explains how in her youth, Simone adored her mother, who played several essential roles at once: nurturer, spiritual role-model, assistant educator. But Simone's father ascended in importance during her adolescence, especially as Simone sought to confirm his estimation of her as a little man. She began at that time to loosen her identification with Francoise, whose clinging dependence, domesticity, and maternity contrasted unfavorably with the world of knowledge Simone hungered for. By young adulthood, Simone appears to have defused identification with either parent in her general dépassemment of her past. De Beauvoir says in La Force de l'Age: "I felt so little affinity with my parents that in advance the sons and daughters that I could have had appeared to me as strangers; I banked on their indifference or hostility so much that I had an aversion for the familial life" (91). The implication is that Simone anticipated reproducing in any children she might have her own indifference or hostility towards her parents--towards her mother, in particular, since imagining herself in her mother's shoes, as a primary parent, is what calls up the projected feelings.
Such a prediction suggests de Beauvoir's proleptic understanding of what Nancy Chodorow calls "the reproduction of mothering." Chodorow writes,

"Women's mothering includes the capacities for its own reproduction. This reproduction consists in the production of women with, and men without, the particular psychological capacities and stance which go into primary parenting (206)."

More specifically,

"Women's mothering, then, produces psychological self-definition and capacities appropriate to mothering in women, and curtails and inhibits these capacities and this self-definition in men. The early experience of being cared for by a woman produces a fundamental structure of expectations in women and men concerning mothers' lack of separate interests from their infants and total concern for their infants' welfare (208)."

Chodorow maintains that daughters grow up identifying with these mothers, but provides for cases like de Beauvoir's when the daughter critically resists this identification.

"Mother-daughter relationships in which the mother has no other adult support or meaningful work and remains ambivalently attached to her own mother produce ambivalent attachment and inability to separate in daughters. Those aspects of feminine personality which reproduce mothering become distorted (213)."

De Beauvoir's most sustained examination of her conflicted relationship with her mother is the narrative she wrote after Françoise's death in 1964, *Une Mort Très Douce*; it is the text that immediately follows de Beauvoir's autobiographical inquiry into her authorship. That autobiographical narrative represents De Beauvoir's ambivalent identification with Françoise: while she shares her mother's commitment to living (*vivre*), she rejects Françoise's self-containment and mistrust of critical inquiry which dogmatic subscription to orthodox Catholicism produced. 48 I would argue that de Beauvoir's silence on the topic of her first Other in *La Force de L'Age*, the text in which she shows herself wrestling against
the reproduction of mothering in order to become an author, has this
ambivalent identification with Francoise as an important subtext. De
Beauvoir understood her rejection of maternity as a rejection of her
mother's life script; and she uses this rejection as a vote of confidence
precisely when, in her reconstruction of her past, she recollects her
anxious search for individuation and autonomy.49

The vote against a maternal destiny generates in the passage a
concomitant vote for an authorial destiny:

> And, on the other hand, maternity did not appear to me compatible
> with the path I was committed to: I knew that in order to become a
> writer I needed a lot of time and liberty. I did not detest dealing
> with [jouer] difficulty; but a game was not at issue: the value, the
> very sense [sens] of my life was in question. For me to risk
> compromising them, a child would have had to represent in my eyes
> an accomplishment as essential as a work [oeuvre]: this was not the
> case (92).

De Beauvoir here creates the dichotomy between production and
reproduction that recent feminist criticism has discredited (see Jaggar
and McBride). Her dichotomy reflects a masculine bias against
reproduction and a corresponding privileging of public production which,
in Martha Noel Evans' words, makes her writing function like a "cultural
contraception" (67). In addition, there are rhetorical sleights of hand
which invite clarification. The very terms of the dichotomy defy
comparison because de Beauvoir balances the work of writing against the
natural bearing of children instead of against the work of child-rearing.
And de Beauvoir's claim to be committed to the path of authorship appears
specious since it is Simone's lack of promise and commitment in the
business of writing that leads de Beauvoir to represent her thoughts on
maternity. De Beauvoir, writing after the fact, curiously diffuses
Simone's doubts about her vocation when broaching this topic; or rather
she compensates for the nebulous quality of Simone's conflict between autonomy and being-in-relationship with others by construing the conflict in mathematical terms of plus or minus: to have or not to have a baby.

De Beauvoir presented authorial and maternal destinies as incompatible for her since the model of child-rearing she had inherited/internalized and the career she aspired to appeared mutually exclusive. Like Stein she came to view métier as a singular and life-consuming affair; only the eighties have attempted to heroize the Supermom figure, long the norm among working-class women who pulled off two shifts of work—in and out of the home—without fanfare. But de Beauvoir's vote against child-rearing notwithstanding, it is clear, since Une Mort Très Douce appeared a few years after La Force de l'Age, that de Beauvoir's preoccupation with maternity and her identification with her mother were hardly finished. More to the point, de Beauvoir's reconstruction of her authorization in La Force de l'Age demonstrates some salient, vestigial effects of Simone's maternal identification. The very fact that Simone's struggle for autonomy was resolved, not by a choice between autonomy and otherness, but by a sort of compromise between them in the predominant theme of her writing, should be understood as one such effect. Even if one accepts the current feminist view that the repression of the Mother ultimately helps perpetuate gender hierarchies, de Beauvoir's insistence on the Other can still be understood as mitigating the severity of that repression. "Conscience d'autrui" reintroduces the strengths of maternity, if not the maternal figure herself, back into authorial production.
The style and structure of *La Force de l'Age* reinforce this last point. I began discussing this autobiography with the remark that its narrative formlessness has everything to do with de Beauvoir's evolving critique of authorship. She begins the text by announcing an open-ended search for the *sens* of her life as an author and, far from arriving at firm conclusions about herself, provides a cultural landscape of Paris and indeed much of France during the thirties and early forties. The very fact that her text is regularly used as an evidentiary record about others' lives attests to its success in portraying the blurring of boundaries between Simone and her world during these critical years of her authorization. While solitude and autonomy is what de Beauvoir represents herself struggling for, this representation occurs in tandem with a representation of a crowd of others, the importance of whom mitigates what autonomy Simone achieves. Her primary valorization of life in history, and not just her isolated existence, greatly influenced the way in which her struggle to be an author was resolved and, in turn, influences the way de Beauvoir writes the story of her authorization. Her movement as an author is continually outward—into life and into the world, others' worlds: it has no single direction or *sens*. Indeed, she claims to have abandoned her illusory autonomy and discovered herself "scattered over the four corners of the earth, bound by all my fibers to each and all" (424). Her representation of herself is thus unstable since what she represents with all those anecdotes is the flux of her intercourse with the world. Only gradually, she posits, did she grow at ease with life's otherness and contingency—in a way that Sartre never would—and come to allow her writing to absorb this contingency. This and the last
autobiography are nothing if not the records of this reconciliation, imparting as they do a view of de Beauvoir, not directing her life, but caught in its flow, writing and responding to and challenging it.

The insistence with which the contingency of life and circumstance disrupts narrative progress instantiates the vigor de Beauvoir knows is her mother's most enabling legacy to her; what she does not acknowledge but what is nevertheless true is that this legacy is her signature trait as an author. Her candid, peripatetic writing style expresses the falseness of a choice between self and others which the mini-conversion plot (and especially the discussion of maternity) seems to set up. Moreover, none of de Beauvoir's statements about her urgent joie de vivre evokes with the force of the text's form the way of thinking that led her as a writer towards her "own" feminine style of authorship. Her narrative evokes impressions of abundance and vigor, relationship to others and immersion in the world, but not without the exercise of reason and the studied pursuit of tangible, material goals. Others—who might be the extraneous nothing to a more self-oriented, origin-oriented author reviewing his authorship—appear through the flying focus of de Beauvoir's autobiography as having everything to do with her "entreprise d'écrire." Ambivalent attachment to Françoise means, alternatively, ambivalent detachment from the persons whose lives she touches as teacher, critic, writer, correspondent, and traveler in the years during and following her author-ization. In Greek, the ambi in "ambivalent" means "on both or all sides." Enabling the narrative to describe Simone's movement towards both autonomy and relationship in her authorization is the primary contribution de Beauvoir's style makes to her critique of
authorship in this text. And this is a radical revision of the author=self (author vs. other) paradigm that the male autobiographies in this study epitomize.

IV Conclusion: Relationships with Readers in *La Force des Choses*

Stylistically, *La Force des Choses* continues and intensifies the narrative diffusion of *La Force de l'Age*. In this culminating text of her autobiography, de Beauvoir represents her experiences as a popular and successful author with purposeful plurality of focus. At the end of the first volume, in the important Interlude where she reflects on her work, de Beauvoir concludes with a description of her autobiographical work:

> The background, tragic or serene, on which my experiences rise up gives them their true sense and constitutes unity: I have avoided binding them by transitions which would be univocal and therefore artificial (I, 375).

Forgoing thematic unity and univocality in favor of greater breadth and flexibility, de Beauvoir writes a text that asks not to be considered as art: "No; not a work of art, but my life in its impulses, its distresses, its jolts, my life which tries to speak for itself and not to serve as a pretext to elegance (I, 8). *La Force de l'Age* helps us make sense of this rejection of univocality and of artificial connectivity between the ensemble of experiences and reflections related in these texts. Having "scattered herself over the four quarters of the world," de Beauvoir adopts a narrative style that argues not just for her immersion in the world of others, but for that world's permeation of her life and consciousness. If it were solely her consciousness that organized the world she would have emplotted her text with her self as the star attraction. Instead, it is the reciprocity of her relations with the world, especially as a publishing
author, that organizes her re-created experience. She represents the fluidity of these relations in the fluidity of her prose: "I attempted to seize reality in its diversity and fluidity; to summarize my récit in definite words would be as aberrant as translating into prose a good poem" (I, 375). 51

De Beauvoir's use of the figure of the poem to signify her life indicates the central place which literature has had in her movement through time and the central place it has in her life-writing. Until now, her autobiograpy has focused primarily on her role as the author of literature; in La Force des Choses, she develops her ideas on the reader's role in authorizing her and validating her writing enterprise. 52 Occasionally she postulates some faceless, neuter reader, much as Wolfgang Iser's reader-response criticism did at its inception in the sixties. More typically, she posits specific readers, and lots of them. Sometimes the reader in question is de Beauvoir herself, reading others' texts but also her own, especially as she turns the autobiographical project back onto itself and discusses the genesis and writing of The Second Sex, Les Mandarins, Memoirs, La Force de l'Age, and the present text. The reader is sometimes Sartre, who in the important Epilogue to the text is reinforced as the primary other who reads, critiques and encourages her authorial production. And often the readers are women (rarely men) who respond to her works, with letters, reviews, and sometimes with their own writing. 53 In a text that takes as its subject the details of her life as it assumes a public dimension, the central place of readers of her life/writing is remarkable. De Beauvoir is a self-decentering author here. She broadens the role of others developed in La
Force de l'Age to include readers who assume a share in her work and authority as an author.

De Beauvoir's model of authorship, stressing communication with readers, provides the context for the concluding movement of her critique of authorship. La Force des Choses describes de Beauvoir's emergence into fame, first with the publication of The Second Sex and then with winning the 1954 Goncourt Prize for Les Mandarins. Continuing the metaphor of border-crossing from the last memoir, she says that her life overran its old boundaries" (I, 61). Print and publicity accelerated the transmission of her texts so that she was known to the world at large, at least publicly, in the way Gertrude Stein scorned. Like Stein, de Beauvoir found her authorial circulation exhilarating, and she particularly enjoyed the resultant blooming of her correspondence. Less like Stein, de Beauvoir's problem with her deep involvement with her readership stemmed from the political ramifications of her success as a public figure. In La Force des Choses she criticizes her identification as a representative author of the republic of France and her complicity in France's institutions of authority--especially its government and newspapers--which her circulation in print entailed. In returning to the subject of complicity, introduced in The Second Sex, de Beauvoir's autobiographical project comes full circle, but with a twist. Complicity with gender systems is no longer the issue; she actually represents herself as the kind of woman she took issue with in that first autobiography: an author steeped in her relationships with others. Now the compromise which she thematizes is that of a femme écrivain entangled in bourgeois capitalist economic and political hegemony by virtue of her
authorship. In what follows I will analyze how the feminine model of authorship in this last autobiobiography serves as de Beauvoir's response to her implication in systems of authority.

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In La Force des Choses de Beauvoir describes what pleases her as a reader and a writer of literature, and in each case, communication between author and reader is paramount. As a reader of literature she writes,

[With writers and artists] whose works please me, something always hooks my sympathy. I was nevertheless surprised to meet in some of them faults which limited this sympathy: like vanity and self-importance. Instead of living in a reciprocal relation to the reader, they turned towards themselves, seized in the dimension of the Other: that's vanity (I, 167).

What strikes her as false is the movement towards oneself as Other instead of a move beyond oneself. Her sympathy is hooked when she reads this move towards reciprocity with the reader; it is thwarted when authorial self-importance prevents this reciprocity. In fact, she predicts that one aspiring young writer she knows will never succeed because

she lacks heart; I think that she is not enough interested in others to have the long patience necessary to speak to them, page after page (I, 314).

For de Beauvoir, at least at this stage in her life-writing, authorship necessarily entails the positing of a reader to whom you speak, page after page. What might signal that an author lacks this readerly sense? De Beauvoir's comments on her differences with Nathalie Sarraute illuminate this point. Sarraute requires an author to explore "obscure spaces of psychohgy" which de Beauvoir takes as a denial of nonsubjective phenomena. The exterior world, she says, exists (I 369). This world, after all, is where the reader stands in relation to the writer. The way to
mitigate the interior/exterior split is to effect a rapprochement between author and reader: "It is necessary to invent the means to help the novelist better unveil the world, but not turning away from it and billeting it in a false and maniacal subjectivism" (I, 370). While "maniacal subjectivism" may not adequately characterize Sarraute's writing, the descriptor indicates the intensity of de Beauvoir's phenomenological impatience with authors who represent interiority as sealed off from others—including readers.34

If de Beauvoir's insistence that one person's writing achieve two-way communication with others seems ambiguous, this effect is consistent with her stated philosophy of literature. For her, she says, one of the essential roles of literature is to manifest ambiguous truths, separate and contradictory, that no moment can totalize either outside or within an individual (I, 358). The creation of ambiguity through representation of separate and contradictory subject positions was one of de Beauvoir's narratological specialities, and it resonates with her preference for authors who create intersubjective worlds. Only a novel, an "imaginary object," can in her eyes "release the multiple and whirling significations of the changing world" she lived in after 1944 (I, 358). Representing experience as intersubjective can never result in a totalization of that experiential whirl, since there are always more subjects to consider in unending combinations and proportions. Novels for de Beauvoir evoke the ambiguity of existence not its totality, and her pleasure in writing them comes in stretching bridges between subjects within and without texts (II, 62). Her novels are acts of self-passing: what she demands of
literature is "the impression of at once risking and exceeding [dépasser] herself" (I, 180).

These remarks of de Beauvoir's emerge in various contexts of remembering--indeed, it is important to stress that far from a manifesto on literature such as Sartre's What is Literature?, La Force des Choses is full of personal reminiscence. Reflections on literature are interspersed in a textual fabric including portraiture, political information, anecdotes, and meditations, and stories about her readers and readings between 1944 and 1962. I would stop short of calling this memoir a work of literature against de Beauvoir's claim that it is not an "objet d'art." Nevertheless, this and the previous autobiobiography show de Beauvoir theorizing towards a version of literary authorship which her own narratology supports. And she does not set her fictional works above this literary enterprise. While she sets categories of fiction and autobiography apart, she nevertheless maintains that the writing of both "absorb her" equally (I, 372), and that she works longer and harder at these kinds of projects than any other.

The subject of de Beauvoir's work threads throughout this text. Whereas La Force de l'Age expresses her dissatisfaction with Simone's work habits and production, La Force des Choses reveals her pleasure in her mature work. Almost all of the dozens of diary entries de Beauvoir includes in the text mention or describe her "travail" on those days. More broadly, no matter how far the text may spin away from the author into others' lives and the French political scene, it returns insistently to the various writing projects de Beauvoir undertakes between 1944 and 1962; while much more than a chronology of her work, La Force des Choses does
provide a work outline. The sustained discussion of the significance of work to de Beauvoir occurs in the Interlude already mentioned, which separates the two volumes of the text. De Beauvoir states that she does not want work to "go without saying," so she pauses—to say she digresses would be senseless since her writing has assumed an autotelic impulse—and calls attention to the role work has had in organizing her life and to the joy it has brought her (I, 371). The peculiarities of her writing methods and their connection with her valorization of work within her daily schedule are detailed so as to convey as directly as possible why writing is for her "a mania" (I, 372). While Sartre quotes an ancient dictum to convey his daily mandate to write—nulla dies sine linea (The Words 253)—de Beauvoir notes with imagistic force, "a day where I haven't written has the taste of ashes" (I, 373). When she writes nothing while traveling, however, she is content because her immersion in the world beyond connects with her writing: "my project of knowing the world stays narrowly linked to that of expressing it" (I, 374). Here, then, she provides an explicit justification for the abundance of voyages that fill the pages of this and the last memoir. Work, above all, has been the dominant activity of her life—not merely sitting before a table, but living in the midst of others. So it is that the highs and lows of her private life alternate with accounts of her writing and with experiences beyond her own.

It is easy to connect the other-oriented, intersubjective practice of writing described and enacted in this autobiography with the resolution of Simone's conflict in La Force de l'Age. As I concluded in the last section, that narrative depicted Simone's move away from the antinomies
of solitude and relationship through her writing, taking as she did the exploration of "conscience d'autrui" as her authorizing topic. In this text, de Beauvoir demonstrates how this thoroughly gendered approach to relationships and authorship works for her in the success of her life/writing project; and in her current life-writing project she demonstrates a way of thinking about existence and writing that further validates her practice of authorship. De Beauvoir would seem, then, precisely the kind of independent woman she lamented in the "Liberation" section of The Second Sex: one whose immersion in relationships and sense of proximity to others is a part of, instead of apart from, her creative and intellectual work. The recurrent attention she gives to her relationships with Sartre, Nelson Algren, and Claude Lanzmann in La Force des Choses supports this point.

De Beauvoir's emphasis on the importance and particularity of her work as a "femme écrivain" in the Interlude has a complex relationship to her view now of the possibility for change in the feminine condition as she knew it. In her discussion of the reception of The Second Sex, de Beauvoir denies that she was trying to transform the feminine condition. Instead of asserting that "illusory" goal, she advances the socialist opinion that the feminine condition "depends on the future of work [travail] in the world; it will change seriously only at the price of an overthrow of production" (I, 267).55 While she herself may have achieved a work practice that incorporates elements of femininity into it and so patterns a feminine practice of authorship, she would counter that that practice in itself cannot be considered transformative of society as a whole.
A paragraph later, however, de Beauvoir concedes that the increasingly tolerant reception of her work on women since its publication suggests that "The masculine myths have flaked off" (I, 267); the implication is that her work has contributed to a raising of consciousness which does have some power to transform the workforce. She knows herself to have helped, not women in general, but particular women who read The Second Sex and correspond with her about how it resonates with their experiences (I, 278). In short, her work has worked for women because she worked to understand their situation as it connects with her own. She reflects on her female audience:

I would have been surprised and even irritated at thirty if someone had told me that I would occupy myself with feminine problems and that my most serious public would be women. I do not regret it. Divided, torn apart, disadvantaged: for them more than for men there are stakes, victories, defeats. They interest me; and I prefer to have through them a limited take on the world than to float in the universal (I, 268).

What has come to be a commonplace amongst women theorists of literature and popular culture—–that cultivating a female audience is essentially valuable, and that focusing on one gender prevents one from replicating the errors of universalist visions of the world—–is something de Beauvoir helped her contemporaries discover. But she first had to discover it for herself. She first had to move beyond the humanism of her early education in order to identify to some extent with women, her primary readers.56

But the extent of that identification continues to be circumscribed in La Force des Choses. De Beauvoir makes this clear in her discussion of the characters of Anne and Henri in her award-winning novel Les Mandarins. In an explication of the text, which immediately precedes the
meditation on her work and fluid writing style in the Interlude, she describes her division of herself in the Anne and Henri characters. Whereas her own experience blends relationships and creative work, she parcels out a devotion to "the life of others" to Anne but to Henri a vocation to write. Her justification for creating a male writer instead of female one has useful logic: she wanted the writer to appear to the reader as "someone similar [un semblable] and not a curiosity; and more than a man, a woman who has a writing vocation and career is an exception" (I, 360). Her writing reinforces the division of labor along gender lines which she critiques as oppressive; but it corresponds to her contemporary reality: "I have described women such as I still see them in general: divided" (I 363). More precisely, the novel's representation of women's and men's roles corresponds to the experiences of gender which her readers will bring to the text. The decision, so her argument goes, was made in deference to readers' expectations of gender roles; de Beauvoir here avoids exploring why her imaginary vision of women should defer to a reality whose terms she personally defies.

A further complication of the Anne-Henri gender split is that Anne serves, according to de Beauvoir, to situate the conflicts of the intellectuals "in an other perspective" than that of the male characters (I, 360). Anne's otherness, in other words, provides the viewpoint of women on the dominant male intellectual culture--not so unlike de Beauvoir's own different viewpoint on this culture which the book, as a comment on French post-war intellectual life, generally intends. It is in this memoir that de Beauvoir openly recognizes the criticism that none of her female characters assumes professional responsibilities as she herself does (I,
365). In fact, while admitting that Anne's tastes and sentiments and reactions and memories are her own, de Beauvoir insists that Anne is not her double principally because she lacks "the autonomy that gives me a heartfelt métier" (I, 365). Thus, de Beauvoir continues to imply that she claims an autonomy from her creative/intellectual work which separates her from other women, even those of her own creation. If Anne incorporates "the negative aspects" of her own experience, Henri resembles her in the positive ones (or so it is implied): in his "joy in existing, his cheerful undertakings, and his pleasure in writing" (I, 365).

Reserving for herself as author a privilege of labor which she continues to regard in some way as masculine, de Beauvoir does not articulate a consciousness of what is nevertheless feminine and potentially transformative about her authorial practice. She even backpedals away from her *Second Sex* conclusions that the path to women's liberation is through authorship. Her retreat from the earlier position is due not just to her sense, even in 1962, that she is a "statistical" exception as a femme écrivain (I, 360). It is mainly due to her sense of complicity with dominant masculine culture through her production as a famous author, despite her feminine, other-oriented focus and reader-oriented style of work and living. In brief, she may as a woman's author help transform the feminine condition but not the condition of authorship. As an author for a primarily bourgeois audience she mistrusts her tacit contribution to the maintenance of a status quo of inequalities. De Beauvoir articulates this mistrust throughout *La Force des Choses*, in comments and brief ruminations, but in the Epilogue at the end of the second volume she
meditates at length on her vexed sense of complicity with "the system" as a bourgeois author.57 France's war on Algeria is the historical backdrop of the writing of La Force des Choses. In the text de Beauvoir discusses the political occurrences leading to the war; and she expresses her disgust for both the war and the bourgeois morality guiding the French government's policies. She cannot, however, pretend to unequivocally oppose the war because she herself has profited from the bourgeois system which underpins it as well as her authorial success. Anxiety about her class position pervades La Force des Choses. De Beauvoir discusses with atypical defensiveness the material perquisites which attend her fame: new clothes, new apartment, ample food, freedom to travel, even a car (I, 500). She is, she flatly states, economically "privileged" (I, 500). But what differentiates her from other privileged bourgeoisie in her eyes is her ongoing awareness of class struggles, felt internally and expressed in writing.

This doesn't mean that I adapt with allégresse to my situation. The annoyance that I experienced from it in 1946 has not dissipated. I know that I am one who profits, and first of all by the acculturation that I have received and the possibilities that it has furnished me with. I don't directly exploit anyone; but the people who buy my books are all the beneficiaries of an economy founded on exploitation. I am an accomplice of the privileged and compromised by them: that is why I have lived the Algerian War as a personal drama. When one inhabits an unjust world, it is useless to hope, by any process, to purify oneself of injustice; what is necessary is to change the world and I don't have the power to do this. Suffering these contradictions doesn't serve anything; but to forget them is to lie to oneself (II, 501).

Living complicitously yet in ethical opposition to her class and her country, she has cultivated an attitude of isolation, which she knows resolves nothing: "it is a big enough isolation; my objective condition cuts me off from the proletariat, and the manner in which I subjectively view it
opposes me to the bourgeois" (II, 501). While thus isolated, she has
nevertheless shown in the preceding text that she has physically remained
much in the world, and that in her public circulation she differs from
Sartre. In fact they began to lead different lives as he occupied himself
obsessively with his writing and politics while cutting himself off more or
less from the living world around him (II, 33; I, 348). According to de
Beauvoir's logic, such real isolation, away from the flow of life, is no
means to "to purify oneself of injustice."

As in La Force de l'Age, de Beauvoir's criticism of bourgeois
culture often serves as a mouthpiece for her less direct criticism of
current systems of gender. It was after all within a bourgeois context
that she learned and analyzed gender-role arrangements prevailing in
early twentieth-century Paris; her discontent with her gender heritage is
necessarily embedded within her less ambiguous intellectual distance from
her bourgeois roots. The Epilogue to La Force des Choses—to her entire
autobiographical project—however, narratologically insists that the
sexist judgments from her bourgeois readership contribute to her
vexation concerning her proximity to them. Indeed, the elision between
the Epilogue's opening, which discusses these judgments, and its middle
section, which discusses her class position, makes little sense unless it is
the case that the sexist vision of "La grande Sartreuse" or "Notre-Dame
de Sartre" fuels her desire to proclaim her ideological distance from her
detractors (I, 71).

From its opening pages the Epilogue problematizes the role of
readers in de Beauvoir's author-ization. De Beauvoir discusses her
"accord" with Sartre, and in particular, the ways in which he has served
as her primary reader since they first met. In the first paragraph alone, the word "l'autre" (other) occurs several times, a referent to either one of the pair. The dynamic of exchange between them is reciprocal and dialogic, and not that of tutor to tutee: "He helped me, I helped him as well. I didn't live through him" (II, 492). What differentiates them is, in her view, crucial to this reciprocal interchange: "Our temperaments, our orientations, our early choices remained different and our works hardly resemble each another. But they extend onto the same terrain" (II, 490). She chose him, she insists, and often followed him happily to go where she wanted, physically and intellectually. And she retained her independence through this relationship because she always exercised her critical judgment in their discussions (II, 491). In so doing she believes she has lived consistently with her vision of women's independence in The Second Sex. Her relationship with Sartre harmonizes with her work and values. Solitude and independence, she asserts, "are not synonyms" (II, 490).

The model of reciprocal reading with Sartre stressed here represents in miniature the model of reciprocal reading with the public discussed above. However, de Beauvoir can never relate to her readership with the kind of intimacy and duration characterizing her relations with Sartre, regardless of how hard she works at her bulging correspondence with individuals. So it is that misunderstanding between them arises--and de Beauvoir relies on it: a bourgeois readership without enemies would worry her (II, 497). Nevertheless, a certain strain of criticism from her enemies, that which views her in a secondary position to Sartre, provokes de Beauvoir beyond mere acceptance of differing viewpoints. She presents her dialogic vision of the de Beauvoir-Sartre
intellectual couple as a corrective to the view of her, promoted by her detractors, that Sartre wrote her books, that Sartre holds her by the hand, that if not Sartre another would have made her in his image, et cetera (II, 490-491). To return to this chapter's opening observation, de Beauvoir's authority as an author is in question, not just now, but even as she rode the waves of success.

De Beauvoir's response to this view of her and of her profession is instructive. While frankly identifying the "chiennerie" in readers' views of her "relativity" to Sartre, she affirms the role of relationships in permeating what authority she—or any individual, it is implied—possesses. She does not undo the last four books' interrogation of her experience and understanding of authorship; she does not fall back on the masculine posture of originality and self-sufficient autonomy whose falsity she has learned with pain. De Beauvoir instead points to the relationship which most clearly instantiates her view of what comprises authority in authorship. She points to her practice of authorship—feminine by her own definitions—founded on the notion that others have a principal role in the authorizing of authors. Not just the journalists and the publishers and the editors: but readers themselves, intimate and unknown alike, negotiate through dialogue shifting, multiple, even contradictory understandings of authors' works. De Beauvoir thus turns the accusation of lacking originality on its head. And she similarly overturns the sexist notion generating it: that the woman is what her male other makes her. She says about her father, but in indirect response to her sexist critics, "He was very wrong; he never cut a hair of [i.e., changed a whit] the young devotée fashioned by the convent des Oiseaux who became his wife"
In this context so alien to her own, Françoise appears suddenly and fittingly as her daughter's most influential guide within the patriarchal establishment of authorship.

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La Force des Choses concludes de Beauvoir's autobiograpy with its epilogual response to readers' views of this author's working relationship with Sartre. I have argued that de Beauvoir's response extends to her class-defensive explanation of her complicity with her bourgeois readership. Readers who misunderstand her show her she is being read as the bourgeois woman she has tried not to become; and yet both her bourgeois acculturation and her participation in authorship ensure this kind of reading. What is most profound in her response is that she does not cut off the relationship with readers which her vexed sense of complicity with their socio-political systems might make her want to do. Instead, she reads their responses to her against their grain, reinforcing the relational dimension of her work, which they mock, as one of its strengths.

De Beauvoir's complicity with the economic system that grounds authorship and authors' successes, however, remains an important source of her self-criticism which, as she shrewdly recognizes, no amount of self-interrogation can dispose of. While she was committed to stretching beyond the limits of her discrete subject position, she was too good a philosopher and cultural critic not to know when "conscience d'autrui" could become delusional. I do not think it is coincidental that her authorial production waned after her autobiographical project was complete. Her turn to political activism, which she always shunned as an
author, indicates an awareness she developed in writing her autobiography that while her work could promote an alternative ideology, it was bound (in books) to that of individualism which parcels out material rewards to certain educated, fortunate individuals while leaving, as she says, two-thirds of the world starving (II, 503). To be sure, her age and the general political climate must also have been factors in this shift. But 2700 pages (including The Second Sex) of inquiry into her life as an author provided the means and context for her evolution as a public figure towards less bourgeois-complicitous work.

What de Beauvoir could not conceive of—authorship cleansed of bourgeois taint—remains difficult to envision. It is debatable, for that matter, how desirable it would be. The influx of women and minority publications into mainstream American classrooms and bookstores means, among other things, an increase in these authors' remuneration as well as an increase in the authority of their vision of existence. In a sense, like Sartre, de Beauvoir had the class, so to speak, to be able to renounce her class position; like Sartre, too, she was true to her gender formation in her style of renunciation. But with the precocity that comes from speaking from the margins of gender arrangements, only de Beauvoir's critique of authorship opens a space for transforming our understanding of authority implicit within readers' expectations of what authors can and should do. It is understandable, as in the case of Richard Wright, why writers from disadvantaged, nonbourgeois backgrounds might gravitate towards the accession of masculine authority whose patterning de Beauvoir wrote against. But must authors' production, by virtue of their production and circulation, always end up reinforcing the status quo as
de Beauvoir feared, and so guarantee the perpetuation of a world of disadvantaged people?

The next chapter on the autobiography of Zora Neale Hurston, *Dust Tracks on a Road*, considers the bourgeois context of twentieth-century American authorship from the perspective of one who, in her lifetime, never assimilated herself into this class. Like Stein, Hurston communicates in her autobiography a deep distrust of her (white) readership (and her black critics) as well as the (white) publishing establishment that, for a while, patronized her. The account of authorship in *Dust Tracks* creates a "Zora Neale Hurston" who shares with "Gertrude Stein" a social betweenness that thwarts the identification of a "self," unified and knowable. But Hurston's betweenness, constructed across race, gender, and class lines, serves an authorial critique much nearer in purpose to de Beauvoir's. Hurston's highly controversial autobiography voices apparent contentment with the status quo as the narrator canvasses it while, at the same time, it deconstructs the ideological system of black authorship and replaces it with a deeply class-conscious, female-centered view of author-ization.
Notes

1. In her astute introductory essay to Critical Essays on Simone de Beauvoir, ed. Elaine Marks (Boston, MA: G. K. Hall), 1987, Elaine Marks foregrounds the lightness of de Beauvoir's authority with her critics: "At least half of the critical essays I have included in this volume are, whether discreetly or obtrusively, sarcastic. They present Simone de Beauvoir as a slightly ridiculous figure, naive in her passions, sloppy in her scholarship, inaccurate in her documentation, generally out of her depth and inferior as a writer. Indeed, the tone of superiority that many critics, of both sexes, adopt when writing about Simone de Beauvoir deserves special attention" (2).


4. De Beauvoir uses expressions of self-questioning in the prefatory section to La Force des Choses which apply to her autobiographical project as a whole while becoming increasingly urgent to her with time's passage: e.g., "I wanted my blood to circulate in this récit; I wanted to throw myself into it alive and to put myself in question before all the questions were extinguished. Maybe it is too early; but tomorrow will surely be too late" (7).

5. In Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter trans. James Kirkup (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), de Beauvoir explains, "On my nineteenth birthday, I wrote in the library at the Sorbonne a long dialogue between two voices, both of which were mine; one spoke of the vanity of all things, of disgust and weariness; the other affirmed that life, even a sterile existence, was beautiful" (231). Of course, her acclaimed philosophical essay Pyrrhus et Cinéas likewise makes use of the dialogue format.

6. For a discussion of "the emergence into adulthood" to which de Beauvoir's published self-inquiry attests, see Francis Jeanson, "Autobiographism,' 'Narcissism,' and Images of the Self," Critical Essays on Simone de Beauvoir 101-109.
7. See, for example, Elizabeth Hardwick's mixture of complaint and bedazzlement before "the bewildering inclusiveness" of The Second Sex, in "The Subjection of Women," Critical Essays on Simone de Beauvoir 50. The most probing and ingenious critical voice on the subject of de Beauvoir's excess, however, is Elaine Marks in "Transgressing the (In)cont(in)ent Boundaries: The Body in Decline," Yale French Studies 72: 181-200. Marks's remarks helped me clarify my own thoughts on the subject of excess in the autobiographies (see section III below).

8. Roy observes, "It seems to me that in her novels and essays Simone de Beauvoir dealt with one theme only: relations between human beings. Such a statement seems trite: is there any other topic? Yet when I think of other great works, a personality comes forth, a face, silhouette, detached from all others, and one might say, sufficient unto themselves emerging out of an apparent solitude. In contrast, what I remember of Simone de Beauvoir's books are not essentially characters, types, or personalities. The world she describes is a universe of relations" (78-79); "Simone de Beauvoir," trans. Germaine Brée, Critical Essays on Simone de Beauvoir.

9. Janson suggests why de Beauvoir wrote (of herself) in this way: "one undertakes to disclose the world by disclosing oneself within it" (105). This view, like Keefe's remark, blurs the distinction between subject and object, self and other.


11. For the ease of my readers, I will translate passages from the original French texts of La Force de l'Age and La Force des Choses I and II. I do not know of any reliable translations of these underread volumes of de Beauvoir's autobiographical project (H. M. Parshley's version of La Force de l'Age contains many distorting passages). Unfortunately, there is no translation of Le Deuxième Sexe other than Parshley's, the errors and shortcomings of which have been chronicled by Deirdre Bair, Judith Okley, and others. I must, however, use Parshley's translation of this last work since the original in its entirety is unavailable. In the next section I will use James Kirkup's faithful and fluent translation of Memoirs d'une Fille Rangée.

12. In the introduction to The Second Sex de Beauvoir contends that "when an individual (or a group of individuals) is kept in a situation of inferiority, the fact is that he is inferior, ... Yes, women on the whole are today inferior to men; that is, their situation affords them fewer possibilities. The question is: should that state of affairs continue?" (xxxvi; de Beauvoir's emphasis).
13. Deirdre Bair's introduction to the Vintage Edition of Parshley's translation of The Second Sex cites several examples of critics fuming about de Beauvoir's disservice to women in writing this essay. See The Second Sex xix-xx; and also Naomi Greene, "Sartre, Sexuality, and The Second Sex," Philosophy and Literature 4 (1980): 199-211. More typical, though, are assertions of the book's pessimism as a record of sexism against women, such as in Mary Lowenthal Felstiner, "Seeing The Second Sex Through the Second Wave," Feminist Studies 6 (1980): 247-276; Jean Leighton, Simone de Beauvoir on Woman 38-45, where the pessimism is explored with reference to de Beauvoir's autobiography; and Carol Ascher, "'On Clearing the Air' 84-103, especially p. 87. Many of these critical assessments employ the terms "ambivalence" and "ambiguity" which I also find useful, especially given de Beauvoir's Ethics of Ambiguity. But oddly, the ambiguity, too, is typically held against her, as if it were imponderable that inconsistencies would arise from being for women but against their situation(s).

14. For a discussion of the predominance of autobiographical narratives in de Beauvoir's corpus after she turns fifty, see Marks, "Transgressing the (In)cont(in)ent Boundaries" 184.

15. Michele Le Doeuff's essay, cited n. 2 above, has particularly influenced my view that de Beauvoir's existentialist framework revises Sartrean existentialism in important ways. De Beauvoir's existentialist ideology functions as a nonsystem of thought, ill-equipped to deal with the systemic oppression of sexism she was studying. In this way, it betokens the derivative authority generally at issue in de Beauvoir's autobiographical project. Here it is important to stress that de Beauvoir's existentialist framework disrupts simple notions of originality in favor of original uses of ideas.

16. For a discussion of the differences between humanist feminism and gynocentric feminism, and the relative weaknesses of these two positions, see Iris Marion Young, "Humanism, Gynocentrism and Feminist Politics," Women's Studies International Forum, 8.3 (1985): 173-183. De Beauvoir's voice in The Second Sex epitomizes the humanist feminist's in her revolt against, and concomitant denigration of, femininity and women's culture.


19. See chapters twenty-seven through twenty-nine of Deirdre Bair, Simone de Beauvoir (New York: Summit Books, 1990). Providing contextual information of this kind is this biography's greatest use; on certain matters, as critics have long noted, de Beauvoir is silent, her pretensions to honest and total self-revelation notwithstanding. But the biography's usefulness is severely curtailed because de Beauvoir did provide so much information about herself. Bair seems to me, as she
feared, to "end up simply rehashing [de Beauvoir's] own version of her life," only with fewer scruples than de Beauvoir had about the historicity of her autobiographical accounts (12). Bair frequently melds together snippets from writings and interviews separated by decades to draw her conclusions, without considering the attachments of de Beauvoir's autobiographies to their narrative contexts. This practice rendered her impressively researched biography of little value to my inquiry.

20. McCall makes nearly this same point when she says, in response to Jean Leighton's accusation of de Beauvoir's misogyny, "Beauvoir's critique of what she calls woman's complicity with her situation is in part a critique of herself" (221). I rather perceive that de Beauvoir's rapprochement with the women from whom she distances herself in her complicity theme comes mainly at the essay's end in the "Liberation" section.


22. Throughout this section and the following ones I will make a distinction between de Beauvoir, the author/narrator composing the memoirs, and Simone, the protagonist whose life is being authorized in and by the text. In part, de Beauvoir's own distant objectification of her textual self calls for my shuttling back and forth between the two. My aim is to explore how these memoirs constitute writing events in which de Beauvoir at the time of writing critically investigates the origins and practice of her authorship. Her various authorial personae, gleaned from her narrative strategies, are thus as important to this analysis as the girl, woman, and "femme écrivain" her autobiographies represent.

23. Cottrell exaggerates Simone's break with her father (10). MacKeefe first suggested to me the failed symmetry that obtains between Zaza's campaign against Simone's father and Simone's campaign against Zaza's mother (208).

24. In "Attachment and Separation in Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter," Yale French Studies 72: 107-118, Portugal writes, "The overall movement of the book may indeed be seen as working toward the writer's detachment from her early relationship perceived as both omnipotent and symbiotic, and as a struggle to come to terms with the double, paradoxical impulse of attachment and individuation" (114). I like Portugal's emphasis on de Beauvoir's working out of a problem or quandary. MacKeefe lays stress on de Beauvoir's claim in La Force de l'Age about the "debt" that Memoirs helps her discharge—to Zaza, MacKeefe contends, but arguably to the family members who first authorized her, despite subsequent conflicts (215-216).
25. For other observations concerning de Beauvoir's irony in *Memoirs* see Keefe 32-33, and Cottrell 8-9.

26. Jeanson makes the interesting point that the private diary writing—and by extension, the inclusion of the diary-writing in the published narrative—distinguishes de Beauvoir's adolescent preoccupation with putting herself into question from her adult, authorial practice of self-dialogue: "[H]er ways of putting herself into question, of laying herself open to our most stringent contestations, define her real emergence into adulthood: this, by decisively outstripping an adolescent pose (fairly typical of the "petite bourgeoisie") manifested by extreme reticence toward her close friends and by the complete secrecy in which she wraps her own dialogue with herself" (104-105).

27. De Beauvoir's concerns with maternity will return in the next section, for the choice between (as she saw it) production and reproduction is more relevant to the older Simone of *La Force de l'Age* than to the child that *Memoirs* re-creates.

28. In the introduction to *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Policial History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), Armstrong discusses her aim to defamiliarize the political relationship between domestic fiction and its middle-class readership in eighteenth-century England. Her point is that bourgeois readers now, like Simone, are inheritors of the "novelistic culture" begun two centuries ago and thus tend not to question the class values and gender arrangements that domestic fiction helped to shape and empower.

29. For a historical grounding of the heroic figure of the woman author, see Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist, from Aphra Behn to Jane Austen* (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1986), especially chapter 1. The fact that female authorship had a place within Simone's (and de Beauvoir's) ideology of femininity helps to mitigate the "emancipation" claimed for Simone at the book's end. In aspiring to what was already a cultural construct within her received notions about feminine achievement, Simone does not have to rebel against her class's total picture of right womanhood. In this connection it is useful to heed Debra R. Kaufman and Barbara L. Richardson's observations about female achievement being predicated first on current "constraints" of gender: "A fundamental premise of this book is that women are forced to relate to the educational and occupational world (the arenas of public achievement) first as members of a subordinate sex and only secondarily as individuals" (x); "That achievement process is related to all the rules of social change, especially those concerning power differentials. In examining female achievement and the achievement process, we must always keep in mind that culture influences our values; history, our reference points; and social structure, our options and boundaries" (xii). In *Achievement and Women: Challenging the Assumptions* (New York: The Free Press, 1982).
30. Although I will be translating into English cited passages from La Force de l'Age and La Force des Choses I and II, I will refer to these memoirs with the original French titles (or an abbreviation of them) since the suggested English titles (The Prime of Life and The Force of Circumstance, respectively) are such poor translations.

31. The "use" made of La Force de l'Age is an interesting subject, growing more interesting all the time thanks to ongoing research in female narratology. I say female and not feminine deliberately, taking my cue from feminist narratologists such as Susan Winnett, who argues that the connection between female sexuality and female textuality is a specifically female pleasure which remains alien and (canonically) subordinate to a hegemonic male paradigm of textual pleasure. Winnett's most basic point is that we--women and men--have been trained not to even hear or feel let alone valorize female rhythms in narrative. See "Coming Unstrung: Women, Men, Narrative, and Principles of Pleasure," PMLA 105 (1990): 505-518. Critics of de Beauvoir as diverse as Terry Keefe and Robert Cottrell read La Force de l'Age by hugging the safe walls of its predominant themes--life, writing, war, death--without venturing into the rolling waters of its form, expressive of de Beauvoir's subject position as a writer. Indeed, this text, like many of Gertrude Stein's, provides a case study for critical inattention to "disorderly" or "unruly" narrative forms by women. In this connection, see my discussion below on the dérèglement of her perception of reality which de Beauvoir deems necessary to her writing project.

32. In her Prologue de Beauvoir invokes two male literary figures as examples of autobiographers whose accounts of themselves as individuals serve to "éclairer" the lives of others: Samuel Pepys and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. This text's comparison with Rousseau's Confessions is especially interesting. Both narrations wander, as both authors were physically fond of walking from place to place. Rousseau's account, however, took seven years to write, and its second half is progressively paranoid. De Beauvoir's takes little more than a year to write, and its diffusion in Part II signifies the narrator's strength and new-found purpose as a writer. Moreover, Rousseau was fond of excusing, justifying, and above all, exposing himself; de Beauvoir excuses and justifies little--her explanations explain without the aim to expose all. De Beauvoir appears to recast the Rousseauian narrative in a feminine mode, where digressions from the conversion and mini-plots move the focus of text beyond the unitary interests of an individual and beyond the boundaries of the linearly developed form.

33. The fact that de Beauvoir is not consciously wrestling with the influence of gender on what she has to say about authorship weights the role of interpretation in my analysis. This weight suits me, however, since all the chapters intend to demonstrate acts of critical overreading in order to expose what the autobiographies say about authorship. Moreover, the freedom from arguments of intentionality frees me from insisting on the exclusive relevance of de Beauvoir's critique to her individual life, a result wholly in keeping with her late-in-life sense of herself as one-among-many.
34. Most students of de Beauvoir draw attention to her emphasis on communication with readers, which became more pronounced as she aged and, coincidentally, as she turned from literature to feminist activism. In fact, her last autobiography, Tout Compte Fait, closes with this affirmation, "I wanted to make myself exist for others by conveying, as directly as I could, the taste of my own life: I have more or less succeeded. I have some thorough-going enemies, but I have also made many friends among my readers. I asked no more" (463). In Simone de Beauvoir and the Limits of Commitment (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) Anne Whitmarsh considers de Beauvoir's reader-consciousness with particular subtlety. Whitmarsh cites de Beauvoir as saying that literature can accomplish its function in culture when the writer "reveals himself to other individuals who are at one and the same time bound up with each other and entirely separate" (my emphasis). Whitmarsh implies that the individualism of this theory is revisionary: it occludes the idea of the autonomous author. De Beauvoir conceives of "many one-to-one relationships" between herself and readers; she insists on a plane of equal connection and responsiveness with readers wholly alien to Sartre's preferred vision of "a one-to-many relationship" between himself and readers en masse. "The result," says Whitmarsh, "is to make literature the epitome of the communication of [hu]man with l'autre" (92-93). The next section will investigate intensively the role of readers in de Beauvoir's re-vision of authorship.

35. See, for example, the end to part I: "Yet again, this account in no way presents itself as an explanation. And even if I undertook it, it is in great part because I know that one can never know oneself but can only recount oneself (418).

36. In truth, this discovery is a false one, more sought after the fact of de Beauvoir's authorization than pursued before it. I would suggest that the discovery of something to say overwrites the issue of the discovery of a voice to say something, which is really at issue in La Force de l'Age. I will return to the question of Simone's/de Beauvoir's voice(s) in the second half of this analysis when considering Simone's paralysis owing to her (gender) confused sense of autonomy. Late in life, de Beauvoir seems to have erased all memory of her search for a topic or a voice, as these remarks in her interview with Helene Wenzel show: "You write because there is something you want to express, not so much in order to compete with men--at least in my case I never felt that. And I think that for most women, when they write important books, they don't do it in order to support a cause but to express what they have to say. The desire to communicate experience, that is something in itself; they do it well--or badly--as they can, but I don't see at all that there is any question of power there, and I don't believe that there is" (11).

37. A tension obtains from thematizing totality in a text which works through fragments and dissociated anecdotes. I have replicated this tension in my analysis by calling my assessment of the text's form a reading of the whole while accenting its piecemeal, non-totalizable
totality. It is as if de Beauvoir's rush to say all were intended to underscore the impossibility of saying all by calling attention to the profusion of words which, as she well knew, could never more than approximate the experience they represent.

38. De Beauvoir frankly acknowledges her "manie" concerning her tours, which in turn bear on her mania for detailing them to excess in her narration. In an extraordinary passage where the body and art connect in her penchant for excess, she writes: "I took all the more pleasure in utilizing my body up to the limits of its forces, and in the most ingenious ways possible; on the road, to economize, I stopped cars and trucks; in the mountains, scrambling across rocks, rushing down fallen rocks, I invented shortcuts; each walk was an object of art" (108-9).

39. Another author who makes ample use of diary entries in a memoir is Lillian Hellman in An Unfinished Woman. Hellman shows a sensitivity like de Beauvoir's to the fluidity connecting past and present in that autobiography, and to the fluidity of identity as well--both hers "in itself" and the identity she felt with her closest friends about whom she writes. Just as critics turn to de Beauvoir for information on Sartre, so too they turn to Hellman for information on Dashiell Hammett, less generously provided. Hellman's memoir is about connections with others, but she resists the appellation of biography: "I will never write that biography [of Hammett] because I cannot write about my closest, my most beloved friend. And maybe, too, because all those questions through all the thirty-one on and off years, and the sometime answers, got muddled, and life changed for both of us and the questions and answers became one in the end, flowing together from the days when I was young to the days when I was middle-aged. And so this will be no attempt at a biography of Samuel Dashiell Hammett . . ." (224). Hellman's use of a flowing, boundary-passing sentence to express this idea is analogous to the formal significance of de Beauvoir's anecdotally excessive and digressive treatment of her authorization in La Force de l'Age.

40. While there is an obvious contradiction in authors turning against the ideology of individualism that supports their profession--primarily through safe-guarding the uniqueness and originality of works in the integrity of the signature--critics of de Beauvoir occasionally assume that her individual revolt against bourgeois individualism is complete and then reproach her for it. Rene Girard, for example, says, "Mme. de Beauvoir constantly points out how much idealism . . . how much of the bourgeois was still present in her revolt against the bourgeoisie. We never quite manage to understand when and how the author finally rid herself of the disease but we know that the cure must have been successful and complete" (88; Girard's emphasis). The possibility that as a female de Beauvoir never began with a sense of her distinct and solitary individuality apparently never occurs to Girard.

41. In Bair's 1982 interview of de Beauvoir published in The Female Autograph, de Beauvoir indicates that what makes her life pertinent to her readers is precisely her attention to her place within society: "In my autobiography, I tried to give meaning to my life, to make sense of it not
only for myself but for my readers, and then to show the meaning it had in relationship to the larger world. To show, for example, its relationship to others of my class. To show—I don't know—relationships to many things, to do more than just give a day-by-day account. To do more than to say, 'I did this, my father did that, my mother was like this, etc.' I tried to go beyond my own particular case and to speak for myself as one within my class and my society. I think that is the reason these Memoirs have been of such interest to so many people, particularly in France" (242).

42. The full quotation about Simone's need to be at the center of her life comes well before the euphoric account of the Marseille sojourn. It reads, "My morale required that I live at the center of my life while spontaneously I preferred an/other existence to my own: in order to restore without trickery my equilibrium, it was necessary for me, I realized, to undertake a long work" (78). De Beauvoir will discuss at length in La Force des Choses how essential her work (travail) is to her equilibrium. At this juncture, however, she recounts Simone's inability to work at writing, and the implication is that such work depends on being at the center of her life. The use of the word "spontanément" is interesting in that de Beauvoir does not probe for the gendered context of her preference for an other (autre) existence. I am drawing attention to the conditioning behind this preference, but not in an effort to totally discredit it. When in Marseille, Simone indeed lives at the center of her life, and is quite literally in another existence there. But the fact that what she accomplishes there is autonomy within relationship rather than written work should show that a balance between the two extremes—living for herself, living for others—was necessary before she found a voice to work at and authorize.

43. In Une Mort Très Douce (A Very Easy Death) de Beauvoir emphasizes the liberating role of reason and logical explanation in her life. While her "woolly-minded" mother adhered to "the general opinion," Simone took "the road of argument, disputation," which led her to confidence in herself and to perspective on the paralysis of women within bourgeois culture. De Beauvoir laments her mother's lack of "doctrine," "concepts," even "words" with which to reason through her situation (42). Jean Bethke Elshtain discusses the relative merits and liabilities of this accent on rational speech within "a [feminist] movement toward social clarity and self-comprehension" (605). While herself deviating from this kind of objectifying speech, accenting its limitations, and even positioning herself against rigorous self-comprehension in La Force de l'Age, de Beauvoir never withdraws her support for women's use of traditionally masculine argumentation for their own ends.

44. I was pleased to read Hewitt's articulation of a problematic I had long been puzzled by but had not yet generally formulated. Hewitt's aim in her de Beauvoir chapter is to examine in the memoirs "the moments when . . . order breaks down, when the trace of a 'feminine' process ruptures her ('masculine') autobiographical project. Her ambivalence toward the bourgeoisie will be read not only as a class issue but as a displacement of gender questions" (7). I suspect, however, that Hewitt overestimates de
Beauvoir's intentions when she identifies in the "ruptures" "the sign of the ironic, literary, feminine workings of a text that weaves and unravels its own necessary constructions. Feminine is to be read here as the trace of a problematic interference in the text, as de Beauvoir's scandalous undoing of her own masculine vision" (16-17). I rather think that de Beauvoir's vigor—physically, textually—inadvertently deconstructs the rhetorical scaffolding of her life-explanations. Moreover, I hope to make clear in my analysis the undesirability of totally wishing away the masculine vision of autonomy de Beauvoir felt she needed to be authorized in a literary world committed to authorizing only "original" talents.

45. Leighton calls this claim of de Beauvoir's "disingenuous," which is not merely an understatement but a misstatement of the problems de Beauvoir is grappling with here. Attacks on de Beauvoir's sincerity ignore the rhetoric of evasion that serves a protective function; for de Beauvoir cannot precisely reason through her proximity to the feminine, her desire to escape its traps, and her recognition of the strengths of a feminine identification—in particular, the resistance to individualistic autonomy with which it provides her.

46. This is a valuable clarification, answering as it does Miller's troubling question about exceptional women who take masculine paradigms of self-definition (including autonomous agency) as their own: "The question one must now ask is whether the story of a woman who sees conventional female self-definition as a text to be rewritten, who refuses the inscription of her body as the ultimate truth of her self, to become, if not a man, an exceptional woman (hence like a man), is a story significantly different from that of a man who becomes an exceptional man? (Particularly in this instance of figures who became exceptional by virtue of their writing)" (266-67).

47. De Beauvoir is annoyed by the sexism inherent in the perpetual interest in her choice to be an author without children in Josee Dayan's film of her: "I have often been reproached for not having had children, while no one has dreamed of reproaching you [Sartre] for not having had any, although it is as normal for a man as for a woman to have children and one can love them as much as a father as one can as a mother. But the reproach has been leveled uniquely at me because it is thought that a woman writer [femme écrivain] is first of all a woman, who amuses herself by writing, which is not true... (79-80).

48. In Une Mort Très Douce de Beauvoir's analysis of her mother's self-containment insists that Françoise's emotional insularity from others devolves from her intellectual close-mindedness: "In actual doing she made every sacrifice, but her feelings did not take her out of herself. Besides, how could she have tried to understand me since she avoided looking into her own heart? As for discovering an attitude that would not have set us apart, nothing in her life had ever prepared her for such a thing: the unexpected sent her into a panic, because she had been taught never to think, act or feel except in a ready-made framework" (68). While the intellectual bias of these claims is clear, it strengthens the impression given that what separated de Beauvoir from her mother was an attitude, a
disposition, and not something essential, like the "vitality" that she knows they share. This revelation gives the entire narrative a poignancy found nowhere else in her autobiographies.

49. For a thorough assessment of de Beauvoir's resistance to the ideology of motherhood, see Yolanda Patterson's Simone de Beauvoir and the Demystification of Motherhood, especially the last two chapters. Patterson affirms that de Beauvoir was interested in overthrowing the patriarchal gender system which depends on women's entrapment not just in the practice of mothering but in the ethic of mothering as well. But Patterson's choice of a picture of mother Françoise and baby Simone on the dust cover of her book indicates her largely subtextual awareness that de Beauvoir's theories form in reaction to ambivalence about her primary model of motherhood. Cannily, Patterson acknowledges that de Beauvoir raised the question of reconciling feminism and motherhood (and her own feminism and her own relationship with her mother) without offering any solutions, and quotes de Beauvoir saying, "It's not up to me to provide solutions for people and people should not expect solutions from me" (Patterson 299).

50. Importantly, the reconciliation of public ambition and motherhood in the Supermom figure of the eighties has not proceeded smoothly. This fact endows de Beauvoir's wary personal belief in the necessity of choosing between work and home with a certain prescience. See Hochschild with Machung on the subject of the second shift of work at home that women in even the most "politically correct" relationships find themselves doing. The Utne Reader even devoted an issue to exploring this subject of fervent interest to women across economic and racial lines in North America (No. 38, 1990).

51. In stressing the self-styled fluidity of de Beauvoir's prose in this and the last autobiography, I am implicitly countering those critics—including de Beauvoir herself—who oppose her style and its message to those of écriture féminine (see Irene Pagès). Just as de Beauvoir's conflict between autonomy and relationship in La Force de l'Age can be "feminized" by accounting for a persistent if transmuted identification with her mother, so too her writing in the text can be seen as "feminized" in its rejection of linear patterning and plot resolution that typify masculine narratives. This statement, of course, contradicts de Beauvoir's own unwavering position that there is nothing essentially different between women's and men's writing. To the end of her life she denied the credibility and desirability of écriture féminine as French women theorists in the 1970s and '80s promulgated it. In the interview with Wenzel de Beauvoir said, "Oh, I am not in sympathy with [écriture féminine] at all. We need to steal the tools, women have to take back the tool that is language, but women cannot remake language. No more than the proletariat who wants the state to wither away can remake our consciousness. . . . Of course a woman will mark her work with her femaleness, because she's a woman and because when one writes one writes with one's entire being. So a woman will write with her whole being, and therefore with her femaleness too. But to feel the need to play games, to cut words up, for example, I don't like that at all, I don't find
it the slightest bit interesting" (11). Nevertheless, in this same interview de Beauvoir affirms her preference for her autobiographies among all her books. And her comments about this preference suggest that it is owing to the acute "femaleness" of the writing. She says, "And then I really like my autobiography, because I feel that the ensemble of my autobiographical works wholly complements and completes my position on women" (10-11). Béatrice Slama accents precisely this "femaleness" in de Beauvoir's project of "se dire," describing its style as being marked by feminine rhythms: "[I]t is often in the rhythm of a phrase, of a page, that the moment is torn from its 'contingence' and the trembling of desire, the unsayable jouissance of a woman, the incommunicable of the rapport with the other, the inaccessible of dereliction, of absence are modulated" (167; my translation). De Beauvoir's self-consciously fluid style in La Force de l'Age and La Force des Choses—to which there has been so much resistance--lends support to Slama's minority position.

52. De Beauvoir's focus on the reader should be differentiated from Barthes's proposed reader in "The Death of the Author" whose text-making purportedly supplants the author's role as work-maker. While both sacrifice the unifying function of the author, de Beauvoir yet indicates her interestedness in authoring by her emphasis throughout La Force des Choses on her work (travail), discussed below. Peggy Kamuf, amongst others, has called attention to the tendency within the Barthes essay to reassert authorial control over textual interpretation just when that author is presenting his vision of readerly writing (Signature 6-12). De Beauvoir much more honestly envisions a cooperative venture between author and reader: "A book is a collective object: readers contribute as much as the author to its creation" (II, 60). Such negotiation typifies the feminine model of problem-resolution Carol Gilligan has investigated and documented in In a Different Voice.

53. In this connection, see the extraordinary account in the diary excerpts about de Beauvoir's correspondence with Joan, a young university student (II, 171-179).

54. Although Sartre introduced de Beauvoir to Heideggerian phenomenology, judging from their respective questions about authorship in their autobiographies it appears that de Beauvoir processed that philosophy's critique of subjectivity more fully than Sartre. I can hear the echo of Heidegger in de Beauvoir's emphasis on the co-creation of texts with readers and on textual representation of a world unconstrained by subjectivism. To the extent that she remains a devotee of representation, however, and committed to the intellectual life of the mind, de Beauvoir shows herself to be not completely converted.

55. De Beauvoir's reputation as a rationalist derives from the emancipatory effect of her speech in The Second Sex, very different in style from that in her later autobiographies. It is most common to view her as committed to the project of rational speech, as defined here by Jean Bethke Elshtain: "an eyes-open, truth-telling passion against 'the powers that be' and 'the censors within' [which serves as] one emancipatory
window into the future" (605). De Beauvoir's discomfort in 1962 with viewing her speech acts as transformative may have stemmed from her sense of her entrapment as an author in the current political arrangements. She was uncertain whether or not she could, as Elshtain theorizes, "move . . . the subject into the world without locking her into the terms of ongoing social arrangements" (616; Elshtain's emphasis). One way I believe her authobiography does transform the world is in transforming the discourse through which we construct the world: specifically, altering the meaning of authority as a concept as it informs an individualist ideology of authorship.

56. Here I am refuting the conclusions of Young about de Beauvoir's humanist feminism which are based strictly on her reading of The Second Sex. Overreading de Beauvoir's total authobiography leads to the recognition of her crucial involvement in gynocentric feminism at its inception.

57. In a fascinating 1979 interview with Alice Jardine, de Beauvoir articulates her late-in-life sense of the comparative advantages and disadvantages of women's "accomodation" in systems and institutions of authority. Her words here are all the more interesting in light of the common tendency to categorize her theories and practice as accommodastionist. I excerpt at length relevant parts of de Beauvoir's extended comment because it shows how the theme of complicity, as she expressed it as a practicing author in La Force des Choses, evolved once she moved beyond authorship in her work:

S.B.: . . . . Do you have to join the system or not? On the one hand, if you don't, you risk being ineffectual. But if you do, from that moment on, you place feminism at the service of a system which you want to take apart; because for me and my friends at least, feminism is one way of attacking society as it now exists. Therefore, it's a revolutionary movement . . . which is different from the class struggle movement, the proletarian movement, but which is a movement which must be leftist. . . . Besides, if women really did have complete equality with men, society would be completely overturned. For instance, there is the problem of unpaid labor, such as housework, which represents millions and millions of unsalaried work hours and on which masculine society is firmly based. To put an end to this would be to send the present-day capitalist system flying in a single blow. Only we can't do it by ourselves; there have to be other kinds of attacks on the system. So a certain alliance with revolutionary systems is necessary, even masculine ones. But this is very hard, because most feminists in France came to feminism after '68 as a result of the hypocrisy they experienced in leftist movements. . . . [E]ven there they noticed that the leftists, the militants, kept them "in their place." . . . And about accepting positions? . . . Sometimes you can accept an important post, on condition that it really puts you in a position to help women. Unfortunately, women who have important posts very often adopt masculine standards--power, ambition, personal success--and cut themselves off from other women. On the other hand, to refuse everything, to say, even when there is something
which really should be done, "Ah, that's no longer feminist," is a pessimistic, even masochistic tendency in women, the result of having been habituated to inertia, to pessimism. To be feminist doesn't mean simply to do nothing, to reduce yourself to total impotence under the pretext of refusing masculine values. There is a problematic, a very difficult dialectic between accepting power and refusing it, accepting certain masculine values, and wanting to transform them. I think it's worth a try (227-228; my emphasis).
Chapter 5  Zora Neale Hurston's Dust Tracks on a Road towards Noncanonical Authorship

Why did Zora Neale Hurston write Dust Tracks on a Road (1942), while staying with her friend Katharane Edson Mershon in California in 1941? An attempt to interpret this autobiography does well to reckon with the material circumstances which sparked and helped to shape it. Many critics of the text in fact foreground these circumstances. Claudine Raynaud even goes so far as to begin and end with them, framing textual evaluation with assertions about the importance of Hurston's straitened finances to the text's genesis. While relevant to the significance of Dust Tracks, however, this contextual focus often straitjackets criticism of the narrative, leading readers--both black and white, women and men--to make excuses for it. What gets excused in the process is the uneasiness which this autobiography generates: uneasiness in readers sensitive to Hurston's breaching of just about every gender, race, and class code associated with being a black/woman/author in 1942.

Indeed, Hurston's autobiography makes readers about as uncomfortable as Stein's autobiographies--or more so, since Hurston's place in the construction of a black women's canon is so much more critical these days than Stein's place is in the construction of a modernist women's canon. Although Stein portrayed herself as the exceptional writer--never mind woman--of Paris in the early twentieth century, she was actually working in concert with dozens of women contemporaries in America and Europe.¹ Hurston, in contrast, has assumed the status of literary "mother" (much like Simone de Beauvoir for white feminists) in criticism of contemporary black American women's writing for being the first black
women to write with "racial health" and self-acceptance as a black woman. Her *Dust Tracks* is a difficult text to read, and it occasionally shows her difficulty in writing it. To some critics it looks like a strange autobiography for a literary "mother," so they seek to excuse it.

Why did Zora Neale Hurston have to write *Dust Tracks on a Road* is the way two of Hurston's most interested critics, Alice Walker and Mary Helen Washington, might prefer to phrase the question. While Walker claims the text "rings false," Washington finds it "strangely disoriented." In her essay "Zora Neale Hurston: A Cautionary Tale and a Partisan View," Alice Walker stresses the well-known fact that Zora was broke and warns that "Being broke made all the difference" (In Search 90; Walker's emphasis). The poverty that pursued Hurston throughout her life and her careers as anthropologist, folklorist, novelist, and essayist also serves in Washington's evaluation of *Dust Tracks* as an apology for a text that was merely a "commercial success" and "a sign of the growing evisceration of [Hurston's] work" (20). Washington retells the story, first stressed by Robert Hemenway, that Hurston did not write the text merely at the request of her publisher, Lippincott, although the publisher did pressure her. Rather, she had to write it, against her own inclination, because it was a sound money-making scheme and she needed money badly. Such an apology can work towards explaining much about *Dust Tracks*: its evasion of "personal" feelings, its tonal discontinuities, its severely edited first edition. My fear, however, is that this apology works too well, explains too much. Hurston's autobiography does not require apology. The critique of authorship which *Dust Tracks* inscribes is smart and prescient.
While acknowledging with Walker and Washington the deeply influential factor of financial dependency in Hurston's life and literary production in general, I propose to analyze with appreciation the autobiographical dimension of Hurston's career-capping *Dust Tracks*. The fact that this text does cap Hurston's career is worth noting. What went into the writing of the text that turned Hurston towards essay-writing and gradually away from, not just her literary public, but from just about everyone she knew? And what went into the reception of the text that moved Hurston into an increasingly isolated position, both ideologically and socially? In the analysis of *Dust Tracks* that follows this introduction I address the first question with an analysis of the authorizations which Hurston respectively creates and defies in recollecting her life's lessons and stories. I will show how Hurston discredits her author-ization by white male publishers and sets up a model of women-centered authorization highly critical of the race, class, and gender divisions which her status as author (and currently, canonized author) in male-dominated Harlem presupposed. Before thematizing the counter-ideology thematized in *Dust Tracks*, I need to contextualize the text's reception, especially as it relates to the history of Hurston's reception as an author. As a prelude to a reading of *Dust Tracks* I will thus start, not with the material conditions of its composition, but with the conceptual currents informing Hurston's readership in her lifetime and, as importantly, right now.

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Hurston's literary reputation has had three phases: 1) acceptance from some white readers and spotty acceptance from black writers
general acceptance and intensifying interest from (literate) black women and men (1970-1980), and 3) general canonization by academic women and (many) men with particular canonization by black women (1981-present). The turning point in her reputation is really 1977, when Robert Hemenway's biography of her was published. Since that time, critics of the Harlem Renaissance, American literature, and of African-American women's literature have eagerly inducted Hurston into the canon of classroom-taught and journal-friendly authors. In large part, the presently warm reception of Hurston reacts against and so depends upon the criticism she received during the 1920s, '30s, and '40s. Like Stein and de Beauvoir, Hurston was more often the subject of study than her texts. Her flamboyance and "contrariness" jarred with the era's conventional visions of both the "New Negro" and Black Womanhood (adapted from white bourgeois conventions of "the lady"). It is difficult to find an account of Hurston that does not somewhere include the word "outrageous." In today's parlance "outrageous" possesses positive connotations in suggesting indifference to normative behavior; current cultural criticism valorizes norm-defiance. But playful attitudes to social codes, like Hurston's, have not always been prized, especially in an African-American woman.

The Middle French root of "outrageous"--*outr*--indicates that crossing beyond boundaries is typical of the outrageous person or event. In general, the Harlem Renaissance names an event of boundary-crossing: representation of folk culture and "primitivism" crossing over into "high" art; black authors, poets, and artists crossing media boundaries that previously barred them from publication and show; white patrons of the
arts fleeing the boundaries of nineteenth-century Western civilization they inherited; southern blacks moving north of the Mason-Dixon line to settle in cities with northern blacks bent on exceeding historical boundaries of racial identity. But the Harlem Renaissance, like any movement, also contained within it a programmatic, boundary-defining tendency evidenced in the numerous manifestolike essays written in the twenties and thirties. Within the climate of race-definition her male peers were creating, Zora Neale Hurston appeared--then as now--a nonconforming, outrageous figure who inspired mistrust.

But what were the boundaries of thinking, the ideologies, which could not contain Hurston? To rehearse some of them and to acknowledge their inherent contradictions and ironies helps us appreciate the definitions that she moved beyond after she arrived in New York in 1925. Though the scene of a Negro movement, Harlem also moved to the rhythms of "Negrotarians," Hurston's word for "whites who specialized in Afro-American uplift" (Lewis 98). As Bruce Kellner writes, the Harlem Renaissance would never have progressed beyond Harlem without the intervention and support of white patrons (93). But their patronage often looks, in retrospect, patronizing. The mockery one hears in Hurston's term "Negrotarians" is aimed at the self-interest of white patronage of black artists. David Levering Lewis explains how white patrons responded to Harlem "because it seemed to answer a need for personal nourishment and to confirm their vision of cultural salvation coming from the margins of civilization" (99). They did not encourage "primitivism" in the Negro arts of Harlem simply in appreciation of African and African-American culture. Robert Coles and Diane Isaacs write that
"primitivism is a concept rooted historically in the development of Western culture" after World War I; from white people's perspective it "functions as a critique of what it [its proponents] views as essential weaknesses and injustices" in that culture. "It disavows, for example, materialism, scientific thinking, faith and progress, and colonialism over other more human modes of thought and feeling" (4). In short, valorizing "primitivism" served both blacks and whites. It is not possible to isolate and purify the primitivism that black artists were representing from that which their white patrons and publishers were promoting. All of the Harlemites patronized by rich white people grew to realize this painful truth.

Other contradictions complicate the ideologies current in the black arts community when Hurston was writing. In Alain Locke's programmatic essay "The New Negro" a tension surfaces between a call for Negro community and a call for Negro self-determination. James Weldon Johnson echoes the valorization of "group consciousness and community feeling" early on, but comes to doubt the social independence possible for the "city Negro" who sociologist Charles Johnson knew was experiencing "social disorientation." Harlem, after all, is a community within a northern, industrial city. Gunter Lenz succinctly formulates this contradiction implicit in the programmatic statements issued by Harlem's men: "The black American's transformation was to lead to an integration into modern urban society and at the same time to a self-conscious, socially and culturally independent 'Negro capital' in Harlem" (86). Moreover, what cultural independence the Harlemites envisioned was qualified along gender lines. Coles and Isaacs explain how, with the
exception of Hurston, black women writers of the Harlem Renaissance largely subscribed to the cult of Negro Womanhood replacing the inherited stereotypes from slavery like the mammy and the exotic loose woman (6-7). Barbara Christian, similarly making Hurston an exception to the rule, elaborates how black women's literature in the Renaissance evolved new stereotypes of black women which served to argue for their respectability by white middle-class standards. In short, neither the individualism underlying the value that Locke and his male peers placed on self-determination nor the independence underlying the value they placed on group-consciousness was intended to apply to black women.

Zora Neale Hurston attracted critical attention for many reasons: for her unladylike sense of humor and relish for folkloric humor; for her unladylike interest in primitivism; for her unladylike self-interest and opportunism; for her unladylike appropriation of an authoritative speaking and writing voice. The common denominator in my formulation of these criticisms of Hurston is her breach of gender codes: her way of being a woman. It might be precisely her challenge to the gender arrangement of her writing community that appeals most to today's feminist-minded critics of black women's writing. It is a simple task to trace the current prominence of the "contrary" woman in contemporary black women's fiction (Alice Walker and her heroines are only the best examples) to the unconventional gender codes which Mother Zora personifies. Hurston's challenge to Black Womanhood, however, was not the express target of her male peers; rather it seems to have been latent in their complaints against her as an author, as a "race" representative. I emphasize in this chapter Hurston's awareness of the
gender systems she lived in because her shortcomings as a black author in her male critics' eyes dovetail with the sexism they brought to their judgments, both about her and about Negro authorship. Many of Hurston's "faults" and contradictions were of a piece with those of her male peers but were made insupportable by the fact of her womanhood.

Although Hurston was contemporary with Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps, she is usually contrasted as an author with Richard Wright, whose antagonism toward her writing is now a commonplace of literary criticism. Indeed, Hurston and Wright have become a sort of dyad of literary polarities, not unlike de Beauvoir and Sartre but without the personal relationship (see Lenz). Historically speaking, the comparison of Hurston and Wright is skewed; it is also thematically confused. Richard Wright entered the black literary scene around the time Hurston's writing career was peaking in the late thirties. The publication of his early manifesto, "Blueprint for Negro Writing," in fact coincides with that of Hurston's career high-watermark, Their Eyes Were Watching God (1937). And it is after this date that Hurston's life and writing became eclipsed, not just by Wright's works, but by the kind of writing his works epitomize: literature of social protest--fiction which appeals for societal change by portraying characters oppressed by people and circumstances governed by entrenched systemic forces.

Wright first heralded the spirit of his novels of social protest in his "Blueprint," calling upon the Negro writer to "do no less than create values by which his race is to struggle, live and die" (43). "Struggle" is the operative word of this blueprint. Folklore, for example, is promoted as a form of culture "which embodies the memories and hopes of [the
Negro's] struggle for freedom" (41). The most important aspect of Wright's "Blueprint" for my purposes is the value it ascribes to folklore as a source for Negro writing. This valorization indeed links him to the Harlem Renaissance and to Hurston. Hurston personified the epoch's celebration of black folk culture, the chief trait of her writing being affirmation: of herself, of her protagonists' realities, of the folk culture which she was raised in and studied. June Jordan, writing in 1974, had the insight then that Wright and Hurston ought not to be polarized such that the one represented social protest, the other social affirmation. Jordan saw that black nationalism required the kind of cultural affirmation Hurston personifies. Affirmation, Jordan affirms, is a form of protest (5). I would further assert that, on the subject of black culture, a blend of protest and affirmation characterizes both Hurston's and Wright's view, and that many of Wright's concerns in "Blueprint" are shared by the author of Dust Tracks: class differences between blacks, (ill)literacy and the black audience, the value of lived life as opposed to life-in-art, and the integrity of black culture for those who live it.

More than critically "contrary," it may appear contradictory to suggest an ideological proximity between Hurston and Wright. Hurston's recent canonization among black women writers depends so much on Hurston's being a woman-centered author, which Wright surely was not. After all, my own analysis of Wright's Black Boy stresses the self-fathering theme of his story of self-authorization, while the figure of the mother, as I show, dominates the authorization Hurston champions in Dust Tracks. Furthermore, it may appear critically suspect to make a revisionary comparison of Wright and Hurston in the process of
explicating Hurston's most unpopular bestseller. It is far easier to contrast Black Boy with Their Eyes Were Watching God, calling the latter Hurston's "real" autobiography and keeping the literary traditions of black men and women separate--affirming women on one side, protesting men on the other--separate if, to judge from Hurston's decades of suppression, somewhat unequal. But Their Eyes Were Watching God is not the story of a struggling black woman author, and it details a love story that Hurston never lived. Dust Tracks, although altered by editors and written under duress, is Hurston's autobiography; and like Wright's Black Boy, it is a work of affirmation and social protest.

Dust Tracks is, moreover, Hurston's autobiography, a critical inquiry of the ideologies and institution of authorship which she lived and worked through. It expresses many of the contradictions of being a Harlem Renaissance author, and then again many of the quandaries of being a woman from the rural South trying to work within the customs of personal and literary authorization then circulating. Like Stein's autobiographies, Dust Tracks does not offer up a unified self to be consumed by an unknown readership. Like Stein, Hurston frustrates the convention of self-representation in autobiography to question the conventions of authorship. Addressing alternately white and black audiences, Hurston's Dust Tracks affirms her life and authority while protesting many of the tacit rules of authorship she had to work by.

What phases of reception has Dust Tracks undergone? Only two, each rife with conflicting opinion. Initially, the book's ideas about "race" inspired controversy. Phil Stong (apparently white) reviewed the book with praise that "the race consciousness that spoils so much Negro
literature is completely absent here" (7), while Arna Bontemps, missing precisely this consciousness, mocks, "Miss Hurston deals very simply with the more serious aspects of Negro life in America--she ignores them" (3). 15 Meanwhile The Saturday Review of Literature decided that there was just the right amount of race consciousness and awarded Dust Tracks one of the annual Anisfield-Wolf Awards for works treating race relations. This confusing critical legacy has been followed by more critical confusion among present-day critics of the text influenced by the debates about selfhood and self-representation within autobiography studies.

Detractors like Walker and Washington lament the lack of self-revelation in Hurston's autobiography, while certain proponents like James Krasner praise Hurston's postmodern snub to narrativizing selfhood. 16 Still other proponents of the text discover a self after all. 17 I suggest that questions about the text's difficult because inconsistent representations of the narrator's "I" and the narrator's views on race are best subsumed under the question of the narrator's representation of the authorizations of her "I."

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., has remarked that Hurston may have "lost the battle but won the war." The victory Gates is claiming for Hurston in his New York Times Book Review of a 1985 edition of Dust Tracks is that Hurston's mode of representing Negro life, once deemed "counterrevolutionary" by her male peers, may prove to be most powerful and progressive. Gates, struck by "how conscious" Hurston's choices were in representing her "writer's life," remarks that Hurston was "more political' than we believed" (43; Gates's emphasis). Indeed, the woman author's life represented in Dust Tracks--the unabridged version--is
political without being merely "conservative," as several critics have charged.18

Dust Tracks is most appropriately called countertraditional. Hazel Carby has noted that the function of tradition in the creation of the black literary canon has been "to create unity out of disunity and to resolve the social contradiction, or differences, between texts" (127). According to Hortense J. Spillers, black women's writing accentuates a countertradition, speaking from a centerless locus of "radical dissent" (251). Certainly these words apply to Hurston's Dust Tracks. Spillers argues that "the work of black women's writing community not only redefines tradition, but also disarms it by suggesting that the term itself is a critical fable" (251). Writing always in isolation from other writers let alone other black women writers, Hurston is the prototype of the countertraditional revolutionary thematized by Spillers. Dust Tracks helps to explain how Hurston positioned herself in a discontinuous relationship with received black literary tradition inherited and evolving during the Harlem Renaissance.19 Bereft of a black woman's writing community, Hurston nevertheless elaborates in Dust Tracks her difference from "black authors" based on a woman-centered discontinuity with male traditions. In this way, the countertraditional critique of authorship in Dust Tracks is also rightly considered "womanist," in Alice Walker's sense of the term.20

I The Voice of Mama's Child

By the end of the last chapter of the 1942 edition of Dust Tracks, Hurston's narrator has opened an array of questions bearing on her
practice and recognition as an author. These questions include: What kind of education does a black writer need? What happens to folk language under the pressure of education? What happens to a writer's sense of identity with her folk under the pressure of education? What should black writers write about? In what ways should race consciousness affect and not affect black writing? What is the significance of white patronage to black writers and their work? How does writing for a white publishing and reading world affect black writing? How does a black writer's work relate to her loves, her friendships, her near and distant enemies? Who does a black writer listen to and answer? . . . The list could stretch on. The point to be made is that in this narrative, called "conversational" by at least two deep critics of Hurston's writing (Howard 161, Christian, Black Feminist 8), much more than an innocuous chat with friendly readers is taking place). The questions that shape and are shaped by the narrative flow are often piquant, though deployed with irony and anecdotal humor. Hurston's perceived status as a black, folk-loving author, the raison d'etre of this narrative she was asked to write, is everywhere at issue in her recollections and meditations.

Why then are Hurston's serious questions not bolted to the cathedral door as in her male counterparts' manifestos, but instead often hiding in narrative play? Why at her most contrary is Hurston most seemingly tame? The question of Hurston's voice is crucial to her critique of authorship since the voice's strategies both shape and are shaped by Hurston's stories of author-ization. As Barbara Johnson has said, focusing on the "strategies" of this voice helps critics come to terms with the problems of address out of which the text was made ("Thresholds"
Johnson herself, trying to grapple with the voice of *Dust Tracks*, discovers illumination in the preface to *Mules and Men* (1938) where Hurston gives her famous "featherbed resistance" theory:

And the Negro, in spite of his open-faced laughter, his seeming acquiescence, is particularly evasive. You see we are a polite people and we do not say to our questioner, "Get out of here!" We smile and tell him or her something that satisfies the white person because, knowing so little about us, he doesn't know what he is missing. The Indian resists curiosity by a stony silence. The Negro offers a featherbed resistance. That is, we let the probe enter, but it never comes out. It gets smothered under a lot of laughter and pleasantries.

The theory behind our tactics: "The white man is always trying to know into somebody else's business. All right, I'll set something outside the door of my mind for him to play with and handle. He can read my writing but he sho' can't read my mind. I'll put this play toy in his hand, and he will seize it and go away. Then I'll say my say and sing my song" (83).

Although this "resistance" sounds like the phenomenon of masking, it is different. Hurston stresses the Negro's power over her interlocutor whereas masking, as Donald Petesch defines it, accents the power of the interlocutor: "the composing of one's features for the benefit of the other when that other has the power to require only those appearances he desires" (74). Hurston's resistance here conveys the power of solidarity amongst black speakers--by the mixture of rural dialect and standard English. The blurring of perspective in the above paragraphs, the shifting from "his" to "we" to "I," is a signature rhetorical device of Hurston's and intimates that what holds true for the subject of her folklore holds true for her, its writer. The reference to "writing" in the second paragraph, when ostensibly the oral culture is at issue, underscores how Hurston weaves her own position into that of "the Negro." The additional fact that the "white man" as audience (with his colonizing "probe") creates the defensive laughter thematized makes this
passage that much more relevant to the speaking situation of *Dust Tracks*. Conceived of by a white man, edited by white men for predicted consumption by white people, *Dust Tracks* might well borrow from its writer's people the strategy of featherbed resistance.

But a theory of resistance too narrowly limits the question of Hurston's voice in *Dust Tracks*. It helps tell only part of the story: the answering part, in which Zora Neale Hurston was merely answering her publisher's request in providing this narrative. It does not account for the questioning part of the narrative which my list of questions affirms. The *Mules and Men* passage above presupposes a dialogic situation in which white agency operates on black and because of which black withholds her "say." Imposing such a paradigm on *Dust Tracks* erroneously presupposes that Hurston does not take hold of her autobiographical project and direct it along lines of inquiry that suited her. Even when assuming some degree of self-censoring, which editorial intrusion would have occasioned, readers cannot rule out Hurston's "conscious" (to use Gates's word) craft in writing, her creative agency in shaping a text which "sings her song."

A more generous angle from which to explore the voice Hurston employs to question her authorization is similar to the one I chose when examining the issue of Stein's voice in her autobiographies. In those narratives, the "betweenness" of the speaker gives rise to a frequently muted, ambivalent, and even contradictory voice. As a narrative autobiography of childhood, *Dust Tracks* represents the process by which its speaker's voice is authorized, from childhood through publication; circularly, this authorization of voice is the text's *sine qua non*.
But the processes of authorization thematized in *Dust Tracks* show Hurston bridging several speaking positions simultaneously instead of one: feminine and masculine, folk and educated, black rural and black educated, white educated and black educated, rural southern and industrial northern. The "betweenness" of her text's voice is manifold; it should not be reduced to a simplistic black versus white situation. Like Stein, Hurston critiques her authorization from her complex speaking position of "betweenness" with the result that an issue—that of lying, for example—is written about from a radically multiple viewpoint. Hurston's voice in *Dust Tracks* is not passively marginal. It acts to upset notions of margin and center, decentralizing the very context of authority in which it depicts Hurston's authorization.

Although the voice is Hurston's—or Hurston's creation, which may be the same thing—*Dust Tracks* provides a story for readers to understand where it came from, in all of its wayward irreverence. One of the tenacious myths about Hurston is that she embraced a simple individualism and sought to promote her solo voice and interests in isolation from others. The story of the voice of *Dust Tracks* debunks this idea by showing how, far from being a self-mothering child with an original or origin-denying voice, Hurston develops her voice through her relationship to her mother. The voice she affirms in the text is a gift from her mother, nurtured and thus authorized by her mother, and in some moments inseparable from her mother's voice. Understanding the voice of *Dust Tracks* requires an understanding of the peculiar maternal legacy it constitutes. Far from depending on some essentialist notion of "women's" discourse, my focus on Huston's maternal authorization reveals how her
voice is "womanist": an open, unstable feminine identity that in turn destabilizes other categories of identification, including class and race. The voice of "Mama's child" does not, in this way, invoke a stable plane of difference—gender or otherwise. In the remainder of this section I will analyze the betweenness of Hurston's gender identification in *Dust Tracks* and relate it to other dimensions of betweenness or doubleness in Hurston's role as storyteller. Ultimately, I will show that the womanist voice she affirms in the early retrospective chapters enables her to critique in the late polemical chapters both the white establishment rituals of authorship and the edicts of black male authors which totalize, univocally, the position of the Negro author.

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Three paragraphs from the end of the 1942 edition of *Dust Tracks*, Hurston's narrator deploys an apparent non sequitur. She has just dismissed the relevance of her grandmother's prerogatives in shaping her (Hurston's) agenda: "if somebody were to consider my grandmother's ungranted wishes, and give me what she wanted, I would be too put out for words" (208; Hurston's emphasis). This mother of Zora's mother, who never forgave her daughter for marrying a low-class black man from "over the creek," had never been an ally to Zora, always berating her for "lying," i.e., storytelling. Following this pronouncement, the narrator abruptly opens a new paragraph with the question, "What do I want, then?" without seeming to continue the issue of foremothers. In answer to her question she offers "a parable":

A Negro deacon was down on his knees praying at a wake held for a sister who had died that day. He had his eyes closed and was going great guns, when he noticed that he was not getting any more "amens" from the rest. He opened his eyes and saw that everybody
else was gone except himself and the dead woman. Then he saw the reason. The supposedly dead woman was trying to sit up. He bolted for the door himself, but it slammed shut so quickly that it caught his flying coat-tails and held him sort of static. "Oh, no Gabriel!" the deacon shouted, "dat aint no way for you to do. I can do my own running, but you got to 'low me the same chance as the rest" (208).

The narrator then passes on to speculate about her future without explicating the significance of this enigmatic parable. Who is this dead woman that Hurston wants raised and setting the preacher and all the people on the run? Although the parable is never explicated, the entire foregoing text suggests that the resurrection of Mama (and not Grandmother) through storytelling is Hurston's "want," her desire as an author.

Hurston actually records the appearance of Mama's ghost eight chapters earlier at the end of "Wandering." Nine-year-old Hurston, grieving for her mother's death, is walking the streets of Jacksonville shouldering the burdens of sudden orphanhood as well as sudden displacement from her hometown of Eatonville, Florida. She looks at a house and has an experience that

set my heart to fluttering. I saw a woman sitting on a porch who looked at a distance like Mama. Maybe it was Mama! Maybe she was not dead at all. They made some mistake. Mama had gone off to Jacksonville and they thought she was dead. The woman was sitting in a rocking-chair just like Mama always did. It must be Mama! (69; Hurston's emphasis)

This sighting of the ghost is frustrated, however, because the woman leaves her porch and enters the dwelling. Hurston, abandoning the perspective of nine-year-old Zora, comments,

I didn't even breathe my hope to anyone. I made up my mind to run away someday and find the house and let Mama know where I was. But before I did, the hope that the woman really was my mother passed. I accepted my bereavement (69).
Hurston acknowledges both her "hope" of Mama's return and that hope's passing into acceptance of loss. But the intention to find the house someday where Mama abides is importantly not retracted. In story form, at the narrative's end, Hurston's narrator discovers Mama, the resurrected "dead woman," but keeps her identity as secret as she kept her nine-year-old hope in Mama's existence.

The wish Hurston grants herself in *Dust Tracks* is Mama's return; such a wish is appropriately granted in story form. Throughout Hurston's first nine years, Mama accepted Zora's practice of storytelling: "Mama never tried to break me. She'd listen sometimes, and sometimes she wouldn't. But she never seemed displeased" (52). While Grandmother berated Zora for "lying," recommending a whipping, Mama supports her daughter's "playing" (52). Although Zora does not share the half of her imaginings with Mama, keeping her drama of Miss Corn-Cob, Mr. Sweet Smell (soap), Reverend Door-Knob, and the Spool People to herself, Hurston intimates Mama's complicity in providing Zora with her talking objects. While not entering into the play herself--"I suppose if Mama had been asked, she would have said that it was the company soap," not Mr. Sweet Smell (54)--Mama champions Zora when Zora's questions and antics get her in trouble, especially with Papa. Whereas "Mama exHORTed her children at every opportunity to "jump at de sun," Papa believed that "It did not do for Negroes to have too much spirit. He was always threatening to break mine or kill me in the attempt" (13). Brazenly challenging her husband's threats to break Zora's spirit "or kill me in the attempt," Mama refused to let Papa "squinch my spirit," even when she conceded her daughter's impudence. In a passage supporting
Hurston's tendency to call herself "Mama's child," the narrator has Mama remark to Papa,

"Zora is my young'un, and Sarah is yours. I'll be bound mine will come out more than conquer. You leave her alone. I'll tend to her when I figger she needs it." She meant by that that Sarah [Hurston's sister] had a disposition like Papa's, while mine was like hers (13-14).

As Lucy Potts Hurston claims Zora for her own in this anecdote, Zora claims Mama as the source, not of her storytelling, but of the spirit behind her storytelling. Mama authorizes Zora's exercise of voice, and through the narrative of Dust Tracks Zora credits this authorization as primary. The nostalgia that the ghost stories in the narrative reveal is countered by the celebratory insistence on her mother as the source of her own creativity. Anticipating by some thirty years Alice Walker's gesture to the maternal roots of creativity, Hurston was perhaps the first black woman to suggest the necessity of looking to "all our mothers who were not famous" (Walker In Search 238-239).

The ghost story at the narrative's close does more than resurrect Mama as Hurston's muse. In that parable, the "supposedly dead woman" sends all the people running, amazed by the power of the returned woman. Hurston has prefigured this trope of the power of the returned woman much as she prefigured the trope of Mama's ghost, in a much earlier chapter. In the fourth chapter, Hurston has the story of the returned woman serve young Zora's accession to power in school on the occasion of a visit by two white women. Zora reads with exuberant fluidity the difficult myth of Demeter ("Dame Ceres" in the narrative) and Persephone, a story which reverses the situation of mother returning to daughter. Zora distinguishes herself in her reading skills in this
anecdote, so it may seem logical to understand that the point of the anecdote lies in this distinction. But anecdotal storytelling is loaded in *Dust Tracks*. Just as the power of the returned woman in the ghost parable reflects back onto Hurston and the storyteller's desire, in the narration of the Persephone/Demeter myth Hurston's power reflects back onto "this Greco-Roman myth [that] was one of my favorites" (36). The myth of the daughter's return to her mother "exalted" Zora; "that is the way I read my paragraph," she says, and the rest of the story as well (36). Exalted by this myth about the power of mother/daughter love, Hurston very subtly makes it the ground of her success while as subtly satirizing the approval of the appreciative white women in the succeeding paragraphs. It is only the cylinder of one hundred pennies and the books that they give her which spark Zora's interest and joy (38). Hurston admits to her play-acting for their approval when she says, "They asked me if I loved school, and I lied that I did" (37).

Although Mama is the authorizing ghost throughout *Dust Tracks*, she is alive and well as a character during the narrative's first eight chapters as the primary figure in Zora's childhood. Deborah Plant has argued persuasively that Hurston patterns the overall structure of *Dust Tracks* on the movement of folk sermons she learned from her father, a Baptist preacher. The first eleven chapters provide the context of Hurston's life, understood as a text, while the last four (plus the unpublished) chapters constitute the doctrine derived from the life-context (Plant 9). Importantly, much of the context for her own life-text which Hurston provides in the early chapters are stories she learns from Mama. The entire third chapter "I Get Born," for example, has the
implied perspective of Mama, telling the stories of Zora's birth and first steps. Hurston's narrator rarely footnotes Mama's voice in telling stories that could only have come from her. She simply tells their story—"My mother was going to have collard greens for dinner," or "My mother heard my screams" (22)—so that her and her mother's stories at times read inseparably.

Of course, the juncture in the text where the unity of Hurston's voice with her mother's is dramatically at issue is in the deathbed scene in the "Wandering" chapter. Mama gives Zora instructions regarding her deathbed: "I was not to let them take the pillow from under her head until she was dead. The clock was not to be covered, nor the looking-glass. She trusted me to see to it that these things were not done. I promised her as solemnly as nine years could do, that I would see to it" (62). On the same day, Zora was called upon to carry out these instructions and, in so doing, "to set my will against my father, the village dames and village custom" (63). While the enormity of the challenge precluded her success, Hurston insists on the importance of her trying: "But she looked at me, or so I felt, to speak for her. She depended on me for a voice" (63). When Zora articulates her mother's wishes, it is her father who holds her back, thus squelching mother's and daughter's voices together at once. In this way Hurston shows that she is not able to uphold Mama's voice in the way Mama had succeeded so often in protecting hers. The narrator relates Zora's anguish at this mutual mother-daughter "failure" with a poignancy that shows its continuing importance to Hurston: "Mama was still rasping out the last morsel of her life. I think she was trying to say something, and I think she was trying to speak to me. What was she trying to tell me?
What wouldn't I give to know! . . . I shall never know" (64). Hurston
discloses that she would "agonize over that moment for years to come,"
suggesting that it haunts her in much the same way that Mama's voice
haunts this narrative and the very act of writing for Hurston.
Significantly, the exercise of her own voice henceforth would be without
Mama's actual protection, and perhaps her agony partly lies in this sense
of isolation, in speaking out alone "against the world" and all of its
patriarchs. The critique of black "race conscious" writing in Dust Tracks
evokes just this sense of Hurston's contrary isolation from the black male
writing community, even as it insists upon her place within that
community as "Mama's child" (66, 124).

The contradiction revealed in Hurston's account of her mother's
death is that although Mama authorizes Zora to exercise her voice, Zora's
speaking additionally relies on her father's authority; he does, after all,
successfully silence her. In general, however, Dust Tracks demonstrates
Hurston's appropriation of her father's authoritative speaking position.
Hurston stresses that it was the "menfolks" in Eatonville who held the
"lying" sessions that gave her so much pleasure. Her own folklore
accents the dominance of men in telling tales, and in Their Eyes Were
Watching God, she endows Janie with her own yearning to participate in
the porchtalk, widely recognized as a male prerogative. Claire Crabtree
points out that in the latter narrative, authentic communication between
the women takes place on the back porch (63). And Bell Hooks's essay
"Talking Back" stresses that this relegation of women's voices to the
inside or private places typifies black folk culture. In Dust Tracks
Hurston dramatizes her right to talk back, to participate in public speech,
by adopting the trope of the "call" from the preaching discourse Papa had taught her and then "signifying" on it. 23 Although Papa berates his youngest daughter's habit of questioning, he cannot prevent her from stealing his authority as preacher for her own devices.

The twelve prophetic visions Hurston describes in the fourth chapter, "The Inside Search," constitute, not a structuring device for the narrative, as Hemenway surmises, but rather a basis for little Zora's right to "sermonize" and tell her "lies" (Hemenway 278, Plant 8). Claiming the "call" gives her storytelling the patriarchal God's stamp of approval; in a later chapter called "Religion," Hurston will call into question the religious authority she has borrowed in an important instance of narrative decentering. After Hurston narrates in chapter four the visions Zora experiences as evidence of her "difference" from other children, she proceeds in subsequent chapters, beginning with the very next one, "Figure and Fancy," to develop the difference of her storytelling "call" from her father's religious one by recounting stories from her childhood, both learned and imagined. Her authority as a storyteller is thus shown to be patently derivative, a quality, as de Beauvoir's critique of authorship implies, endemic to the author-ization process. But while Hurston's authority to voice her stories and those of her culture derives from her culture's patriarchal religion, it is Mama's voice that informs and affirms Zora's understanding of voice: who gets to speak, when, how, and about what.

Identifying the dual authorization of Hurston's voice—supported by Mama and borrowed from Papa—opens the way to viewing other dimensions of doubleness and/or betweenness in Hurston's story of the authorization
of her voice in *Dust Tracks*. Importantly, the gender identity implied in the proposition that Mama roots Hurston's voice is made ambiguous by the gender instability of her character as Hurston portrays it. In the first two chapters of the narrative, before Hurston has established her own birth—which comes later, in chapter three, in one of many significant deviations from the male slave narrative tradition and from narratives of origin in general—she recounts the story of her parents' meeting and marriage. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese argues that in unstable social conditions such as those experienced in the post-Reconstruction African-American culture, "it is possible for gender as a normative model of being male or female to come unstuck from sexuality" (168). So it is that in the absence of stable relations between men and women in this culture, individual women may not have lived with a ready-made, tried and true, internal sense of femininity; femininity was a changing story always definitively to-be-told. In Hurston's story of her mother, overlaid with the latter's own perspective, Lucy demonstrates the penchant for outrageous behavior for which her daughter will later be famous. Against the wishes of both parents she married John Hurston, "one of dem niggers from over de creek" (8). In one of many explanatory comments intended for the uninitiated white reader, Hurston's narrator explains, "Over-the-creek niggers lived from one white man's plantation to the other. Regular hand-to-mouth folks. Didn't own pots to pee in nor beds to push 'em under" (8). In this early use of the folk perspective and dialect against which Hurston defines her own perspective, and here her mother's as well, Hurston ventriloquates the classist opinions Lucy defied in marrying John Hurston. This assertiveness, which left her in "violent opposition to
her family," moved her into a marriage her mother would not even attend. The marriage which Lucy agreed to, however, is not radical in itself, for in marrying John she yet conformed to convention; what is radical is rather her exercise of masculine autonomy in decision-making, first within her parents' home and then within the community of Eatonville. It is precisely her mother's over-the-creek decision which constitutes heroism for Hurston: she "believed that individual black women could base their personal autonomy on communal traditions" (Wall 379), individualizing themselves within the limited scope that masculine models of community afforded them. The several strong black women portrayed in Dust Tracks all share Lucy Potts Hurston's individuated strength of character within their communities: Aunt Caroline, Big Sweet, and Ethel Waters. The womanist dimension of the narrative asserts the importance of a woman's being "outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful" within and sometimes against her black community (Walker, In Search xi).

Hurston devotes quite a bit of narrative to describing female/male relations in Dust Tracks and, in particular, to describing women who successfully challenge their husbands or lovers' dictates. As Fox-Genovese notes, white models of gender relations are irrelevant to readers interpreting such accounts (168). In her chapter on "Love," often faulted for being so self-evasive, Hurston discusses the gender role-conflict in the principal love relationship of her life to date. Her lover's need to be "a man" and to have her choose between him and her work made the relationship ultimately insupportable to her: "That very manliness, sweet as it was, made us both suffer. My career balked the completeness of his ideal. I really wanted to conform, but it was impossible" (184). It
is his masculinity--defined with reference to his need to control the direction of her life--that Hurston challenges and faults, not the fact that he uses force on her on more than one occasion to vent his anger with her. The ambiguity of Hurston's view here, providing for both female autonomy and male violence against women, is prepared for earlier by the story of gender relations in Eatonville as displayed by her parents and her aunt and uncle. The town teases Papa over the fact his ninety-pound wife is "the boss," intrepidly standing up to her husband with a mental agility that her daughter later prizes in herself. Lucy apparently continues to act "over-the-creek" after marrying her husband, dismissing gender role distinctions just as she dismissed class distinctions. While never discrediting Nanny's thesis in Their Eyes that the black woman is the "mule of de world," Hurston in Dust Tracks showcases black women's rebellion against oppressive gender conventions.

The anecdote most emphasized by the text to exemplify a woman's domestic rebellion features Hurston's Aunt Caroline. While Papa refuses to beat his wife into submission, saying, "you got to submit yourself to 'em, so there ain't no use in beating on 'em and then have to go back and beg 'em pardon," Uncle Jim advocates the use of force (14). But Hurston narrates at length a story about Caroline's retaliation to Jim's forceful dominance which unsettles the balance of power between the sexes, even within a social context permissive of violence against women. The humor which the bystanders on the porch find in Caroline's boldness is notable as a form of appreciation for her, or at least for the drama of rebellion she catalyzes. Hurston's own humor in relating this story supports women's countertraditional contrariness, even when this attitude involves violence
by women, as when Caroline literally kicks out of town a rival woman in
order to repossess her husband. Most of the many women featured in
*Dust Tracks* are strong women, representative of an unstable, "between"
form of feminine identity akin to the "femininity" (necessarily in quotes)
which Hurston herself claims as her cultural inheritance. In brief, being
a self-assertive woman within though perhaps against the community is in
accord with being "Mama's child."

As represented in *Dust Tracks*, the doubleness of gender in the
authorization of Hurston's voice arguably constitutes the primary
spectrum of its betweenness. But other dimensions of the voice's
betweenness should be noted in order to grasp the radical positioning of
Hurston's critique of authorship. Out of her identity as "Mama's child,'"
the most unequivocal identification the text provides, Hurston unravels
other ways in which her voice moves in her mother's style over creeks and
towards the sun. For example, Hurston situates herself ambivalently
between the interrelated polarities of black and white, folk-educated and
school-educated. Although Hurston's narrator notes that it was only in
Jacksonville after her mother's death that Zora learned she was black, the
narrator's early emphasis on the black township she calls home indicates
the importance of racial identity to the adult Hurston writing (68). Folk
stories and family lore narrated in black folk dialect all underscore
Hurston's rootedness in the rural South black community of Eatonville,
Florida. And yet, as Alice Walker crankily notes, there are a lot of white
men and women on the pages of *Dust Tracks* receiving a lot of gratitude
for having "helped" Hurston on her path to authorship ([1983] 91). It is
part of the contrary betweenness of Hurston's speaking position in *Dust*. 
Tracks to decline to damn whites and praise blacks unequivocally.24 Her anecdotes (such as the one of her birth--by Mama, with the help of the white man), mixed language (standard and black vernacular English), and character portraits situate her authorization between black and white worlds whose hierarchy she refuses to acknowledge.

As I explained above, this ambiguous position is consistent with that held by her male peers writing in the Harlem Renaissance. The image Hurston portrays of herself as a child on the gate-post of Eatonville, taking rides out of town with passing white folks and telling them stories, is emblematic of her later role as a herald of black folk culture for predominantly white audiences (33). The "travel dust" sprinkled on the doorstep the day of her birth likewise ties her at once to her black natal community and to the larger world, including whites, which she must move into in order to return to the black folk community (23). While the image of "travel dust" derives from folklore and connects Hurston's wanderlust to that of her father, it also represents the elasticity of her bond to Eatonville, itself imaged as a "frontier" land with close ties to white Maitland. Crossing borders comes easily to one who grew up in a border (frontier) town, of parents who themselves were outrageous.

Hurston's story of her pursuit of education—in Eatonville, at Howard University, and then finally at Barnard—also places the authorization of her voice between distinct poles of black and white cultures. Folk myths jostle with Greek and biblical myths in her text; black professors share laurels with white professors. Hurston not only insists on her equal appreciation for porchtalk and classroom education, she places her sense of her destiny or "call" above the pressures from
either group to make their values hers. Moreover, she gives black Howard and white Barnard equal shrift in her formation, and insists, "I had the same feeling at Barnard that I did at Howard, only more so. I felt that I was highly privileged and determined to make the most of it" (122). Having said that, she is careful to show her resistance to patronage at Barnard or to the collective approval of the school. She satirically notes, "I became Barnard's sacred black cow. If you had not had lunch with me, you had not shot from taw" (122)—revealing her awareness of the tokenism of her celebrity status and translating that awareness into her peculiar between-worlds language to regain the speaking position of power. With the same sense of righteousness, she notes with frank impatience, "I did not resolve to be a grind [at Barnard], however, to show the white folks that I had brains. I took it for granted that they knew that. Else why was I at Barnard?" (123). The frequent tonal breaks Hurston manages, from impatience to gratitude to mockery to factual report: they represent the seams of culture in Hurston's authorizing story, as she moves fluently in and between black and white cultures.

Reading Dust Tracks with attention to these seams discloses the ironies of situation which the narrator strings across her narration. Irony is precisely the doubleness of voice and perspective at issue here: the shock of seeing something from two, three, four sides. Hurston's subtlety in weaving black/white, folk/school ironies throughout her text indicates her facility as a gate-post author; her method is indubitably conscious. At Howard University, for example, Hurston imagines a career studying white eighteenth-century poets, only to exchange this ambition
at Barnard, with the help of her mentor in anthropology, for a career studying black folk culture: "I . . . had a term paper called to the attention of Dr. Franz Boas and thereby gave up my dream of leaning over a desk and explaining Addison and Steele to the sprouting generations" (123). Hurston's story of her authorization patterns an arc of return, much like the Greek epics she loved, to her home culture, but her return to Eatonville, not for porchtalk but for collecting "material," evidences the change in her wrought by education. The chapter on "Research," which importantly precedes and outweighs the brief chapter on her novel-writing, opens with an ironic account of the anthropologist returning to her hometown to inquire "in carefully accented Barnardese, "Pardon me, but do you know any folk-tales or folk-songs?"" (128). Hurston recalls the failure of this her first "material"-collecting expedition in order to show that she was not always so adept in moving between cultures. The account's ironic doubling perspective of Hurston talking to herself through her townspeople--"No they had never heard of anything like that around there. Maybe it was over in the next county. Why didn't I try over there?"--demonstrates how the voice of betweenness she has since cultivated in her successful expeditions and writing is intrinsic to her author-ization.

To focus on the irony of the narrative is to focus on the doubleness of the language constructing Hurston's peculiarly authorized voice. My word "doubleness" in fact falsely reduces the multiplicity of meanings Hurston's narrative generates at the level of the paragraph, sentence and word. But "doubleness" at least connotes several relevant ideas about the language Hurston employs. Her language is double in the sense of being
literal and figurative: when Hurston portrays herself on the gatepost she points to a fact of personal history as well as to a metaphorical truth about herself. But even this doubleness breaks down further when the inherent doubleness of figurative language for an Afro-American speaker is considered. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., has written extensively on the dual functions that figurative language has served for black speakers. It is both a form of play, a beautiful "Negro way of saying" in Hurston's words, and a survival strategy (19). Gates remarks, "Black people have always been masters of the figurative: saying one thing to mean something quite other has been basic to black survival in oppressive Western cultures," a comment which recalls Hurston's theory of "featherbed resistance" (Black 6). Hurston accents both roles of figuration in her speech throughout the narrative; indeed, her very career as anthropologist, studying the beauty of her culture in order to write books for her own survival, is a parallel instance of this doubleness. One important example of an anecdote which stresses the double uses of Hurston's figurative powers is that of her job as maid to the opera singer during her pre-college, wandering years. For eighteen months Hurston amused the opera troupe with her black folk speech, winning their affection and the use of their books as well as ensuring her employment and hence her survival.

The doubleness of Hurston's language at the level of the word, the metaphor, can also signify duplicity in the context of her life-writing, a possibility that certain readers, without analyzing specific cases, have recently admitted.²⁵ The way in which Hurston develops the metaphor of "lying" throughout the narrative exemplifies the brilliant duplicity of her
language, as well as the dimension of cultural betweenness earlier discussed. With the brevity characteristic of black folk speech, Hurston develops a constellation of significations around "lying" and positions herself above them all, the consummate "liar," as her grandmother heatedly foretold. In the notorious anecdote in which the white man (who helped deliver her) takes Zora fishing, Hurston records in direct discourse his counsel to her against "lying." "Niggers," he says, "lie and lie! Any time you catch folks lying, they are skeered of something. Lying is dodging. People with guts don't lie. They tell the truth and then if they have to, they fight it out. You lay yourself open by lying" (30-31). Hurston does not discredit the speaker; to the contrary, several paragraphs later she gives him something of a eulogy when narrating the story of his death. But she does identify him as one who "told the truth," and it is his polarization of truth and lies on which she later playfully signifies.

Never recording Zora's response to the white man's mandate for unequivocal truth, Hurston allows his identification of "niggers" as lying people to stand then proceeds in the text to portray herself lying unabashedly (to the white women who reward her for reading at school) and to portray the fun and the truth-telling functions of lying in Eatonville social life: "But what I really loved to hear was the menfolks holding a 'lying' session. That is, straining against each other in telling folk tales" (47). Then, assuming the purportedly male role of "lying," she authorizes in the text a version of the "lie" about "Sis' Snail" leaving her husband, thus demonstrating her independence from both the white man's version of lying and the black culture's strictures on who may lie.
The subversion of "lying" as a cultural practice seems complete when Hurston provides a folk explanation—a "lie"—which "told the why and how of races that pleased me more than what I learned about race derivations later on in Ethnology" (49). Valorizing folk tales above science in this instance, Hurston slyly overrides the set of values and meanings for lying initiated in the fishing anecdote with a set from black cultural experience without nay-saying and protest. But then, in a much later chapter, she further destabilizes the relationship between truth, falsity, and "lying" by calling into question the "known and settled" truths that religious folk rituals and stories pretend to express (193). "Lying" for Hurston always takes on provisional truth even within black folk culture. With Husserlian flair her text calls up the duplicity of language in shaping apparent truths when objects are seen from a series of one-sided perspectives.

A consummate storyteller and role-player, Hurston portrays herself like Mama, feeling free to cross over all kinds of creeks in pursuing her "call." The corollary to this idea is that Hurston's "call" is to authorize a creek-crossing voice, a voice that insists on questioning cultural demarcations—between class, gender, and race—but which paradoxically also acknowledges its own historical and geographical specificity. So it is that her authorizing text above all celebrates black folk culture as well as her ability to translate that culture as anthropological and fictional book-bound "material." There are dozens of instances in Dust Tracks where Hurston, conscious of the white people over the creek who primarily compose her audience, translates for them the figures of dialect speech which abound in the text. The explanatory asides in the text only irritate
Readers who read *Dust Tracks* with hopes of hearing a unified, one-side-of-the-creek voice, inattentive to what the acts of translation signify: Hurston's cultural bilingualism put at the service of the folk culture.

Zora Neale Hurston put her verbal gifts at the service of folk culture, but she could not—not in 1926, or 1937, or 1942—put the resultant books in the hands of folk culture; not yet. Literacy amongst Afro-Americans would not begin to be common-place until more than a decade later. Fox-Genovese remarks, "There is little evidence that black women autobiographers assumed that any significant number of other black women would read their work" (167). What black readers *Dust Tracks* had were no doubt Hurston's male literary peers, working out their own compromises with a white dominant culture interested in the "primitive" black American experience. While the voices of her male peers responded to a tradition of black American writing, however, Hurston does not exhibit a sense of belonging to this tradition.

She also lacked a model for helping her to answer the questions she learned to ask as Mama's child about demarcations of value based on socially-constructed borders. Alice Walker writes about the importance of literary models to her own writing in an essay entitled "Saving the Life That Is Your Own": "To take Toni Morrison's statement further, if that is possible, in my own work I write not only what I want to read—understanding fully and indelibly that if I don't do it no one else is so vitally interested, or capable of doing it to my satisfaction—I write all the things I should have been able to read" (In Search 13; Walker's emphasis). Hurston is Walker's first cited model in the list following this remark. What kind of model of literary authorship did Hurston provide
with Dust Tracks? One which anticipates Walker's deep sense of having to write what she should have been able to read but could not, owing to racial and literary conventions beyond her control. In her critique of white and black male authorship conventions in Dust Tracks, Hurston slips past the repressive eyes of her editors (sometimes) a dual satire of ideologies from her perspective as Mama's child, situated at the borders of race, class, and gender.

II Fighting/Writing Against "Race" and Class Lines

Hurston's authorization from her Mama to question, tell "lies," and jump at the sun of her over-the-creek ambitions provides her with the speaking position from which to critique her author-ization by the white publishing institution and by the black literary establishment. The "doctrine" chapters, as Plant calls them, ten through sixteen (plus two that never made it into the 1942 edition) are the site of this critique (9). 26 They are a land mine of ideas, exploding the racial or literary pieties they discuss, or more precisely, deconstructing any basis for generalization about "race," authorial practice, or political correctness for black thinkers and artists. More disorienting than "disoriented," as Mary Helen Washington calls them, Hurston's concluding essays in Dust Tracks alternately address an assumed white audience and an assumed black literary audience as well. The reader, black or white, must flex with the prose and turn her vision to and fro, perched atop the gatepost with Hurston. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese contends, "Nothing in Dust Tracks suggests that Hurston trusted her readers. Nothing precisely identifies them" (173). The very difficulty of identifying a single
audience in the last seven chapters suggests that in thinking about her authorship Hurston experienced a crisis of audience: who to write to? This crisis is reflective of the problematic reception she had received from white and black men alike. Conversely, I surmise that in thinking about her autobiography's audience Hurston experienced a crisis in authorship: what to write about? The blurring of audience definition in these chapters is not, however, an inadvertence. It derives from Mama's outrageous, creek-crossing style which authorizes Hurston's critique of racist and classist values informing contemporary standards of black authorship.

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In the chapter "Books and Things" Hurston's narrator begins to address the epoch of her life as an author. The brevity of the chapter—six pages in the Harper/Perennial edition—only disappoints critics who wish Hurston would strut her stuff when discussing her literary authorization. I interpret the chapter's brevity as purposeful. Both narrative style and content indicate Hurston's ambivalence in celebrating her status as an author. In this chapter she mocks the trappings and conditions of "high art" at the same time that she describes her author-ization in this art world. The word "things" in the title identifies and denigrates the perquisites of authorship, even as Hurston provides a clear picture of her financial distress which these perquisites relieve. The signal use of the word occurs in the only sentence in the chapter—perhaps in the whole narrative—where Hurston lists the startling facts of her success: "But I had had five books accepted then, been a Guggenheim Fellow twice, spoken at three book fairs, with all the literary greats of America and
some from abroad, and so I was a little more used to things" (155; my emphasis). It is precisely the "things" part of authorship, the economic and material dimension, which Hurston identifies with white middle-class standards of success adopted all too readily by her black male peers.

Hurston precedes her account of the composition of Jonah's Gourd Vine by reinforcing her speaking position as over-the-creek from the camp of official "high art." She narrates that, while the idea for this first book developed in her head, she pursued research in black work-songs, blues, and spirituals and put on shows featuring this music. The productions were not particularly lucrative: she borrowed money to do them and made little profit. But Hurston says, "I am satisfied that I proved my point. I have seen the effects of that concert in all Negro singing groups since [the first performance]" (152). Sounding something like Stein, Hurston claims a pioneer role in promoting a new art form--new to the senses of the "white audience" she intended to educate. Her purpose, however, was not to please this audience by giving them something canned. Two Negro composers rejected her production idea "on the ground that white audiences would not listen to anything but highly arranged spirituals" (152). Hurston wanted to present the authentic music of "untrained singers," such as that heard in black churches, thus devaluing the institutional, white (but supported by Negroes) stamp of approval. Her later comments in "Two Women," about Ethel Water's resistance to "concertized versions of spirituals," echoes this vote against "composed," white-world art (177). Hurston's narrator suggests that profits, meager or otherwise, are not the real reward for the uncomposed
art—the culture—of her people: "Rather I am glad if I have called any
beauty to the attention of those who can use it" (155).

But the onset of the Great Depression caused Hurston—and almost
everybody else—to obsess about making money, and the narrator links
this search for money—if not profits—with Hurston's need for a
publisher's authorization. She writes, "So I took my nerve in my hand
and decided to try to write the story I had been carrying around in me"
(155). The result was Mules and Men, published after Jonah, followed by
her short story "The Gilded Six-Bits." Story magazine published the last
and spoke to publishers on Hurston's behalf, the end result of which was
a letter from an editor at J. B. Lippincott Company asking for a
manuscript. Hurston, true to her material, brazenly lies: "I wrote him
and said that I was writing a book. Mind you, not the first word was on
paper when I wrote him that letter" (153). The "you" in the latter
sentence may address a black or white audience; but in either case,
Hurston's irreverence for the white man's variety of truth is again
exemplified.

More equivocal irreverence towards the opportunity granted her by
"the man" follows. After the letter, Hurston moves back to Eatonville to
rent a house and write Jonah. Nothing about the content of the novel
appears in the narrator's description of its drafting. Instead monetary
facts abound. Hurston rented a tiny house for $1.50 per week; she
received 50 cents per week from her cousin Willie for groceries; she had to
wait for money to have her manuscript typed; a municipal judge and his
secretary bought the paper and carbon for the typing job; the manuscript
cost $1.83 to mail which Hurston got from a woman attorney who in turn
"borrowed" it from the treasurer of the Daughter Elks; Hurston owed $18.00 in back rent at the time she sent her manuscript to her editor; and so on. The material conditions of her writing this book were oppressive, and yet Hurston calls attention to her lack of money only to undercut the importance of the author-ization she receives from her publisher. On the day the wire of acceptance arrived, she was evicted by her landlady yet went out to the business district of Sanford in Seminole County in order to entertain the streets with a mobile concert group. Having been paid $25.00 for the concert, she was at a shoe store buying much needed footwear when she opened the wire offering her $200 advance for her novel. She "tore out of" the store and sent her response, "Terms accepted," back to Lippincott. She calls her thrill at the moment the greatest she expects to experience, but then comments, "You know the feeling when you found your first pubic hair. Greater than that" (155).

The joy little Zora was said to have experienced in receiving her canister of 100 pennies from the two white women at school neatly parallels the adult Hurston's thrill at this reprieve from poverty. And yet the fact of the reprieve is passed over entirely; in its place the earthy comparison of a natural gift, one's first pubic hair, occurs. The sentence following this comparison is the one already cited which summarizes Hurston's honors; the effect of this juxtaposition is to flash the narrative forward to a time distant from that day of eviction when racking up literary honors was a thing of ease to be minimized. Subsequently, Hurston resumes the folk humorist perspective launched in her pubic hair comparison by explaining painstakingly to an implied white audience that the accepting editor at Lippincott's is "Colonel" to her, indicating her respect for him.
Ironically, then, the paragraph finishes with Hurston in the position of doling out the meaningful honors.

While insisting on her need for cash as a struggling writer, Hurston ultimately supports the point she makes at the end of the "Research" chapter in recounting the story of Cudjo Lewis, the oldest living native African in America when she met him. She explains that Lewis's story forces upon her a realization of the profit motive behind African natives' sale of rival tribesmen to white traders (145). Hurston's disparagement for the allure of profits and the "universal nature of greed and glory" which Lewis's narrative demonstrates helps readers of the "Books and Things" chapter understand why, just when she might have gloried in her sudden comparative "wealth," Hurston reels back at the moment of her author-ization and makes the measure of glory a pubescent bodily phenomenon. Anecdotes in earlier chapters--such as the story of her own passive role in ousting a protesting black man from an all-white barber shop in Washington, D.C.--serve to illuminate Hurston's unabashed awareness of the role of self-interest in her history. But her doctrine chapters insist on her ambivalent, over-the-creek evaluation of dollar awards to writers of authentic folk art who publish.

Despite its brevity and ambivalence, the "Books and Things" chapter does posit Hurston's author-ization by the white and male literary establishment which is requisite for the critique of black authorship which follows it. In essence, she accounts for the birth of Hurston-the-author so as to be in position to tear at the roots of her authority in the race ideologies of the time. Indeed, the very next chapter, "My People! My People!" takes as its subject the narrator's impatience with the mandates
for correct Negro writing current in the thirties and after. Since Hurston wrote the first draft of this chapter in 1937, we know that she was developing her thoughts on the topic well before she went to California in 1941 and began her autobiography. It may be, then, that *Dust Tracks* merely provided Hurston with the best place to register her criticisms of what she was "supposed" to write as a "Black Author" since the fact of her authorship was the basis for her autobiography.

Hurston's impatience with having to demonstrate "Race Consciousness" in her writing is the basic topic of the chapter "My People! My People!" but it is first introduced in "Books and Things." There the narrator describes her anxiety about writing the story she tells in *Jonah* since it "seemed off-key" from mainstream black writing: "from what I had read and heard, Negroes were supposed to write about the Race Problem" (151). Then she makes one of her characteristically outrageous statements: "I was and am thoroughly sick of the subject" (151). The accusations of betrayal to her race heaped upon Hurston as a consequence of statements like this one suggest more than the terrific sensitivity of "the subject" amongst black artists and thinkers. This abuse also conveys the attackers' blindness to the breadth of Hurston's critique of race politics informing and interacting with black writing.

Nick Aaron Ford, for instance, who accused Hurston of "lack of vision" and "loyalty" to her people for reinforcing the "prevalent doctrine of race inferiority," reveals the insecurities underlying his critique of Hurston's writing when he proposes that black writers write about a black man's "normal activities as an ordinary American citizen" (10). Suspecting Hurston of representing black culture "at its worst," Ford fantasizes a
safe, colorless, homogeneous vision of black (male) life that, evidenced in
art, would prove blacks' humanity. Hurston rejects such prescriptive
writing as well as the race ideology behind it. In so doing she anticipates
Henry Louis Gates's critique in *Figures in Black* of the "received idea"
that there was a relationship between racial progress and art and that
blacks had to write themselves into the "human community" (xxiii). The
author of *Dust Tracks* not only assumes the humanity of all blacks, but
declares the inherent falsity and classism of the prescriptions for black
writing in her day.

Hurston questions the ways that difference--between races,
between sexes, and amongst blacks--is perceived such that "race" can
function as a category of group-definition and literary definition. In
"Books and Things" she rejects the naturalism underlying racial
generalizations when she says: "It seemed to me that the human beings I
met reacted pretty much the same to the same stimuli. Different idioms,
yes. Circumstances and conditions having power to influence, yes.
Inherent difference, no" (151). With these comments Hurston refutes
what Kwame Anthony Appiah calls "racialism": the nineteenth-century
idea that "there are heritable characteristics, possessed by members of
our species, which allow us to divide them into a small set of races in such
a way that all the members of these races share certain traits and
tendencies with each other that they do not share with members of any
other race" (44). Hurston does not, however, belabor her denial of racial
essence. Instead she turns her attention to what Appiah terms "intrinsic
racists": "people who differentiate morally between members of different
races, because they believe that each race has a different moral status,
quite independent of the moral characteristics entailed by its racial
essence" (45). Appiah contends that intrinsic racism explains both the
phenomenon of racial prejudice against members of another group and the
phenomenon of racial solidarity amongst the members of one's own group.
"The bare fact," Appiah explains, "of being of the same race is a reason
for preferring one person to another" (45).

Hurston undermines the intrinsic racism behind mandates of Racial
Solidarity in her chapter "My People!" but she does so, ingeniously, by
examining the differences blacks themselves manifest and call attention to
among themselves. She begins the chapter satirizing the differences
blacks perceive amongst themselves at the level of class. The title
phrase, in fact, "My people! My people!" is the oft-repeated, scornful
response "one class of Negro" makes to "the doings of another branch of
the brother in black" (157). Those who murmur it by way of
distinguishing themselves from their embarrassing skin-folks receive the
brunt of Hurston's wit. One might argue that Hurston's deep
ambivalence about her own acquired manners, education, and dress
underlies her disdain for the "well-mannered" or "well-bred" or "well-
dressed Negro." But these trappings are not the focus of her reproach;
rather, the bearers' race-conscious classism is. More precisely, it is the
borrowed vision of middle-class white America that Hurston scorns,
deriding "the well-bred Negro" for having "set himself to measure up to
what he thinks of as the white standard of living" (157-158). Having
"conformed" to this standard of living, the well-bred Negro whom she
depicts shuns "the lowlier members of his race" for "tearing down what he
is trying to build up" (158). The distinction between "upper" and
"lower" class made by blacks themselves is at once affirmed as existing and critiqued by Hurston. She satirizes the lines of culture that the upper-class blacks draw around their ranks because she sees how a rift in race identification attends a shift in class identification.

The closest the narrator comes to aligning herself with anyone in this chapter on race discourse occurs when Hurston considers the verbal differences displayed by blacks of difference classes. Hurston endows those upper-class blacks groaning "My people! My people!" with little else to say when they are confronted by their lower-class brothers and their storytelling skills. Staging a hypothetical verbal duel between an upper-class black and a lower-class black, Hurston champions the latter, punning on the word "class" to mean both economic status and level of verbal facility:

The educated Negro may know all about differential calculus and the theory of evolution, but he is fighting entirely out of his class when he tries to quip with the underprivileged. The bookless may have difficulty in reading a paragraph in a newspaper, but when they get down to 'playing the dozens' they have no equal in America, and, I'd risk a sizable bet, in the whole world (158; my emphasis).

Although illiteracy amongst blacks concerned Hurston—her equivalence of the "underprivileged" and the "bookless" shows her awareness of literacy's power—she nevertheless assigns supreme value to the power of "lying" or storytelling that the "bookless" possess. Her previous work's focus on the "signifyin'" practices of rural blacks prepares the Dust Tracks reader for her siding with these folks (see Gates, Signifying 170-216). But this partisanship has a special significance in Dust Tracks' critique of black authorship. Here Hurston risks eclipsing the literary (book) dimension of her own writing in order to accent the fundamental importance of oral story-telling--folklore--to the transmission of culture.
In turn, the lower-classes' understanding of race through the "lies" they tell one another serves her argument against intrinsic racism. The upper-class blacks err in her view by accepting the racial awareness and standards of their white compatriots, while the lower-class blacks demonstrate the constructedness of racial ideology in their patent mythologizing of race differences.

But Hurston does not confront the construction of "race" from one side of the creek only. Several pages into the chapter she satirizes the intrinsic racism manifest in the tendency of the lower classes to tell stories which mockingly represent blacks' social inferiority at the same time that they extol blacks' superior virtues and achievements. The 1937 version of "My people!" in fact is comprised almost wholly of stories that rural black folks tell about themselves, which Hurston marshals to explain to the implied white inquisitor of race difference what a black person is. In the published version of this chapter, whose implied audience is racially mixed, Hurston includes only several choice "monkey stories" in which black folks tell stories about themselves that represent their mimicry of whites and the inanities that ensue from these imitations. Hurston emphasizes the humor intended by these stories: "This always was, and is still, good for a raucous burst of laughter," she says about one (165). But she depicts her own reaction as one of bemusement and "confusion," recreating her viewpoint as a girl who had taken seriously the messages of "Race Pride" and "Race Solidarity" she heard at church functions and school graduations. What to make of the group-deprecating monkey stories told continually on the porch front? "I was asking myself
questions," she says, and in so doing, isolating her perspective from her natal community.

The particular isolation of her woman's perspective is evidenced in the acute sensitivity of Hurston's narrator to the stories black menfolk tell which malign the "blackest" women, "the butt of all jokes" (164). Anticipating by some thirty years Alice Walker's essay on colorism in black communities (In Search 290-312), Hurston recounts several stories in men's voices which thematize the "evil" of "black gals" (164). Her purpose is to challenge the intrinsic racism in the stories' logic: "If it was so honorable and glorious to be black, why was it the yellow-skinned people among us had so much prestige?" (165) In this way, Hurston avoids siding with the storytellers of the lower classes whose sexism is buttressed by skin-color prejudice. Here she withdraws her earlier, tacit support for the storytellers, becoming the tale-analyst working through the ideological ramifications of the "lies" she hears.32 The sexist/colorist lies she reports in "My People!" thus insist on the point made above: that Hurston views "race" as a constructed ideology, a means for group identification and differentiation accomplished by stories, i.e., "lies." The subject she is "sick of" is not the storytelling, which dramatizes the drawing of inter- and intra-racial lines, but rather the deployment of "race" as a reality apart from the "lies" and cultures that shape it as an idea.

Constantly crossing every "line" on which difference is created, both to show the differences and to debunk them as fictions, Hurston again proves herself Mama's child--with this difference. As she assembles the divisions of race (and the stories that thematize them) that preclude a
meaningful rhetoric of Race Solidarity and Pride, Hurston not only
crosses creeks, like her mother, but demolishes them. The climactic
denial of race as a phenomenal reality in the conclusions of both versions
of "My People!" best demonstrates this point. In the 1937 version
Hurston summarily announces, "We are no race" (224). In the 1942
version she elaborates:

Still, if you have received no clear cut impression of what the Negro
in America is like, then you are in the same place with me. There is
no The Negro here. Our lives are so diversified, internal attitudes
so varied, appearances and capabilities so different, that there is
no possible classification so catholic that it will cover us all, except
My People! My people! (172; Hurston's emphasis).

As difference (race, gender, and class) becomes a function of fictions,
the locus of Hurston's identity within the black folk community becomes
destabilized, in contrast to her mother's solidly black folk position.

Hurston complains that the "better-thinking" blacks posing as Race
Champions "drew color lines within the race" even as they rejected "any
definitely Negroid thing" (169; Hurston's emphasis). Their hypocritical
position is the mirror-reverse of her own: she will not pose as a Race
Champion but she does celebrate in her writing the "definitely Negroid"
culture of the rural American South. But Hurston's rhetoric against the
pieties of black authorship risks making the category of "definitely
Negroid" things unmeaningful. By exposing the process by which "race"
is fictionally constructed, she eradicates a definition of race, although
she herself tries to hold onto some indefinite idea of it.

Another approach to this rhetorical problem is to recognize that
Hurston's strategy against her male peers' drive to define Negro art, as
witnessed in their manifestoes and literary criticism, is to launch a
campaign against definition. Her campaign contains echoes of
individualism, using some of the same terms, but it does not fully disavow—as Hurston will not—some degree of group consciousness. It is the "Negro way of saying" that defines the black community, and not the other way around. Hurston's individualistic remarks at the end of "My People!" urge the right for self-definition amongst blacks—as well as the right not to be defined, especially by somebody's idea of social or political correctness. She rejects the "party line"—and the lines which that party draws with racial cliches—in favor of viewing people "duck by duck" (171). What happens to blacks, she says, "is up to the individual" (172). The vision of social change which she advances in this chapter thus seems to hinge on individual motivation. While editorial censorship probably precluded the possibility of calling for more programmatic change, such calls, by presupposing the existence of biological race (i.e., not constructed), would not have served Hurston's rhetorical purposes here. She was endeavoring to ensure her right to be and write differently as a black woman, and a smattering of individualism was guaranteed to work as an antidote to constraining group politics.

In any event, it is clear that in this chapter—and in other places where notions of the Black Experience intersect with her consideration of her writing—Hurston's apparent individualism is purposefully exaggerated. In the first place, the early chapters' insistence upon her maternal identification as Mama's child causes her autonomy to signify also her attachment to another. In addition, throughout the text Hurston openly acknowledges her feeling of debt to others for having helped her—"merely" an individual with dubious autonomy—on her road. And she emphasizes in more than one place the value she places on friendship. As
she says at the close of "Two Women," the chapter following and thus qualifying "My People!": "It seems to me that trying to live without friends is like milking a bear to get cream for your morning coffee. It is a whole lot of trouble, and then not worth much after you get it" (180).

In "My People" Hurston's role as a cross-creek writer necessitates that she accent the autonomy of individual destiny in order to combat an ideology compromising what autonomy she believes individual artists should have. The reality of that ideology she turns imagistically into air: the definers were "pacing a cage that wasn't there" (170). Here the imaginary cage constitutes a new image in her repertoire of images that she uses to transgress boundaries and say the "outrageous." The cage stands in antonymous relation to the imaginary line of the horizon--Hurston's favored image both in this book and in Their Eyes--that symbolizes the undefined status of destiny, always yet to be reached by the seeking individual. In brief, Hurston suggests that the "race" she knows has not even begun to reach its horizon, since the people she knows, including herself, are still individually imagining their own. Her very reluctance to define a unified, consistent self in Dust Tracks indicates, not just her defensive stance before her public, as Judith Robey contends (677), but a deep conviction that self-authorization is always provisional, a function of story.33

The final two chapters of Dust Tracks implicitly continue Hurston's accent on a writer's autonomy and self-defining prerogative by developing the theme of her work's primary place in her life. In the chapter on "Love," following "Two Women," Hurston focuses as much on her commitment to her writing as on her relationships. Whereas in the chapter
"My People!" she balks the group expectations of white and black men who would restrict her writing, in "Love" she writes against the restrictions that her lover's self-proclaimed masculinity would make on her freedom to work. The issue here is not what she writes but whether she writes. Importantly, she represents the ascendance of work over love considerations: "He begged me to give up my career, marry him and live outside of New York City. I really wanted to do anything he wanted me to do, but that one thing I could not do. It was not just my contract with my publishers, it was that I had things clawing inside of me that must be said" (186). Explaining that her own internal imperatives, and not those of a contract with white men, control her decision, Hurston again shows herself "contrary" towards contemporary white ideologies of femininity: specifically, with respect to the devaluation of the professional before the personal. And in the concluding chapter, "Looking Things Over," Hurston repeats this engagement to work, reflective of her autonomy. At the narrative's end, Hurston's single unquestioned affirmation is her desire for a future full of work, because I have come to know by experience that work is the nearest thing to happiness that I can find. No matter what else I have among the things that humans want, I go to pieces in a short while if I do not work. What all my work shall be, I don't know that either, every hour being a stranger to you until you live it. I want a busy life, a just mind and a timely death (208).

With these remarks, Hurston sounds very near to de Beauvoir in prizing work above all else in her life.

**Dust Tracks**, however, helps explain why in her final years, Hurston's principal work entailed not writing but survival, cleaning others' houses and returning to that pre-authorization epoch of odd jobs. There is no reason to suspect that the exercise of her/Mama's voice ever
became unimportant to her, since she kept writing in snatches through the fifties. But the crisis of audience out of which she spun her critique of authorship in Dust Tracks put Hurston in an isolated position in relation to the black (male) literary community and won her short-lived acceptance from the white one, of dubious value to her anyway. Speaking against and across myriad lines separating speaking positions in subsequent essays, Hurston never would undo her distance from mainstream culture--black and white--controlling artistic production. At the time of her death in 1961 she was writing in isolation, uncanonized--an eerie fulfillment of her comments following her valorization of work: "When I get old, and my joints and bones tell me about it, I can sit around and write for myself, if for nobody else . . ." (209).

III Conclusion

Alice Walker has called optimism Hurston's signature trait (Wilson 44). Despite the end it sights, Dust Tracks conveys Hurston's optimism both about the view of "race" she argues for and about the kind of authorization--personal and literary--she advocates. It is justifiable to qualify Hurston's expression of unembittered optimism by calling it one of her many reader-defying masks, as Judith Robey and others do (678). Given the anonymity Hurston fell into shortly after writing her autobiograpy, hindsight can make her optimism seem like a failed act. And no one loving her writing now would celebrate the poverty that succeeded the halcyon days of her publishing career. But Hurston's ornery optimism--perhaps another way of saying "protesting affirmation," discussed earlier--probably lies at the heart of her "rediscovery" and
current canonization. One misses the rhetorical significance of Hurston's boldness, before her black and white male audience, by ignoring or explaining away the optimism she summoned in resurrecting Mama's ghost in Dust Tracks.

In exercising her mother's voice to exorcise the ghost of nineteenth-century race ideology from literary discourse, Hurston offers an optimistic view of a world of changed literary politics. She does not, as Robert Hemenway points out, provide readers with a political agenda (334). Hurston does not meditate revolution, such as one finds in Wole Soyinka's Ake: The Years of Childhood, which represents the double maturation of artistic and political consciousness as young Soyinka witnesses the women's uprising in his Nigerian hometown. However, much of her unpublished chapter "Seeing the World As It Is" vehemently critiques the political situation of the World War II years during which she wrote Dust Tracks. Obviously too hot for her editors, this essay targets the persistent colonialist foreign policies of western countries then at war as well as the shortcomings of democracy in Roosevelt's America. Against Blyden Jackson's view that Hurston "was no social visionary" I would suggest that her very mode of thinking throughout Dust Tracks was--and continues to be--profoundly visionary (153). Thinking across social and ideological creks, she deconstructs the basis for power structures separating people unequally on the basis of color, class, and gender differences. Though her prescience was labeled merely "conservative" in her time, her autobiograpahy offers an alternative to traditional American race ideology which still looks radical in the context of American politics in the nineties, since eradicating race as an a priori condition of
difference continues to be the utopian goal toward which American social policy tends. In making race just one of many stories of difference, Hurston put her finger on a fundamental dilemma of perception and social definition that has continuing relevance today—seeing and simultaneously eradicating racial distinctions—as universities coordinate Black Studies programs and as the United States as a whole debates the destiny of Affirmative Action programs.

In one contrary act of autobiography, Hurston counters the black (male) autobiographical tradition and the black male literary tradition. The tradition of Afro-American autobiography, theorized as beginning with narratives of former slaves who wrote themselves into American personhood, grounds the Afro-American literary tradition in which the progress of a black self represents the political progress of the Afro-American group. Codified by Stephen Butterfield, William Andrews, James Olney, and others, the Afro-American tradition of autobiography is, as Olney admits, "exclusively male" (21). But so, too, have been its codifiers, until a very short time ago.35 Olney suggests the existence of another, female Afro-American autobiography and literary tradition whose unifying theme is not "race" but sex, and his example is Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God, another signal instance of the novel's displacement of the autobiography. Hurston's Dust Tracks, however, occupies itself with race issues, not sexual relationships, and its point in doing so is what makes it so relevant to the masculine tradition. It, and not Their Eyes, is the best example of black American women's autobiography and writing in its countertraditional method and themes: intensively arguing across and beyond set parameters of difference to
dislocate a tradition that makes paramount the "ties and responsibilities" of the black self to one configuration of the black race (Butterfield 3).

Today's literary world begins to welcome the contrariness of black women writers who "talk back," as Bell Hooks says and does, and who reserve the right to ask questions addressing problems within the black community. They may, like Deborah McDowell, still catalyze accusations of race betrayal in a manner not dissimilar to Hurston's, but then there are many publishing black women now who support one another's womanist backtalk. Today a Toni Morrison can justify her reticence to personal disclosure by saying: "There is a conflict between public and private life, and it's a conflict that I think ought to remain a conflict. Not a problem, just a conflict (341). She can go even further and propose that the "look at me" variety of black autobiography about the solitary though representative individual, is "inimical" to some of the characteristics of Black artistic expression (340). But then today black women writers have a readership of men and women who have passed through and beyond the heady decades of Black Aestheticism representing the univocal Black Experience. Today a black woman writer can make a living writing books, not just that she wants to write, but which she and others like to read. She can be a Zora Neale Hurston, writing against class and color lines, writing in search of her mother's garden, writing in celebration of Hoodoo mysticism--and she can do more than make a living. She may receive national awards, enter the canon of must-reads in university classrooms, and be authorized by publishers and readers alike to keep writing her contrary, countertraditional narratives and poetry.
In a sense, the crisis of audience fueling Hurston's critique of audience historicizes her authobiography. But the importance of its critique of processes of authorization cannot yet be relegated to history. Hurston wrote herself out of the canon of literature for several decades, and university critics admitting her now would do well to see that fact as more than a tragic incidental of her personal history. Like her own representation of Mama, Hurston "was the one to dare all" in *Dust Tracks*, to question the creation of a canon based on stories of race and to insist on her outsider status in this field of difference. As Barbara Johnson says, she "can be read not just as an *example* of the 'noncanonical' writer but as a commentator on the dynamics of any encounter between an inside and an outside, any attempt to make a statement about difference" (279; Johnson's emphasis). Tracing Hurston's resurrection of Mama and their joint crossing of creeks which constrict their sphere of action, the reader of *Dust Tracks* earns a double look at Hurston the author---inside and outside the canon and canon-making establishment, posing as the canonical author in order to implode from the inside the game rules that put her in that position. But maybe there is a third look as well: the postmodern, canonized author laughing at the position she is landing in again, despite everything.

To discuss canon-making is to discuss a writer's relationship to empowering institutions of literary circulation which make meaningful the title "author." One of the social realities that makes *Dust Tracks* such a difficult read is that, at this point in time, the empowerment of Afro-American people as a collectivity remains as important as their representation in some canon of American literature. Hurston only helps
put in view a future time when "race" can be bracketed and canons
vaporized without incurring increased invisibility of a people with a
shared and continuing history of oppression. Hurston's unmarked grave,
found after much toil by Alice Walker, symbolizes the risks which attend
taking her counsel too soon. But where is the sense in posthumous
laurels if they entail ignoring the critique she risked her (literary) life
for? Dust Tracks reminds Hurston readers that the power she has come to
represent as canonized author in Afro-American Literature is not the kind
of power she endowed her most memorable characters with—including
"Zora Neale Hurston" in Dust Tracks.

In the closing paragraph of Dust Tracks, addressing both her white
and black audiences, the narrator outrageously states:

I have no race prejudice of any kind. My kinfolks, and my "skin-
folks" are dearly loved. My own circumference of everyday life is
there. But I see their same virtues and vices everywhere I look.
So I give you all my right hand of fellowship and love, and hope for
the same from you. In my eyesight, you lose nothing by not looking
just like me. I will remember you all in my good thoughts, and I ask
you kindly to do the same for me. Not only just me. You, who play
the zig-zag lightning of power over the world, with the grumbling
thunder in your wake, think kindly of those who walk in the dust.
And you who walk in humble places, think kindly too, of others.
There has been no proof in the world so far that you would be less
arrogant if you held the lever of power in your hands... (209).

The title of Hurston's autobiography suggests that this author
positioned herself with "those who walk in the dust"—in literary terms,
the uncanonized. But this last paragraph complicates that "outsider"
position. Why does Hurston invoke the symbol of lightning, her own self-
proclaimed symbol of power received at her hoodoo initiation (140), to
describe the actions of those in positions of public power? Her narrative
alignment with them is as implicit—and as incomplete—as her alignment
with those walking "in humble places." At this end of the narrative,
Hurston's narrator crosses her last creek, thematizing through metaphorical play of dust and lightning her profound distrust of power—of universities, governments, publishing houses—and of those who aspire to power. Siding with neither, she signals her identity with her Mama once more, making her own vision the center of her horizon-seeking perspective: "In my eyesight, you lose nothing . . ." Fifty years after writing this paragraph, Hurston wields the power of both dust-walkers and lightning-throwers. The very ambivalence of her canon position makes the conclusion of Dust Tracks as appropriate now as then.

The first time it appeared, these dust tracks trailed off into the Lethe of Authors. Rescued from this oblivion, Hurston now represents a still-new model for the black woman author, discontinuous with the models of authorship, black authorship, and black women's authorship which she received. Her Dust Tracks show the cost to her of this discontinuity, but also the play, the fun of her challenge to the black and white literary establishment of her time. For critics today Hurston's dust tracks are the persistent signs of her uncontainability within a canon which we, not she, insist on constructing. To read Hurston's critique of authorship is to follow these tracks into the brilliant web of jokes, reproaches, double talk, and silences of the noncanonical woman writer.
Notes


2. Alice Walker says, "This was my first indication of the quality I feel is most characteristic of Zora's work: racial health; a sense of black people as complete, complex, undiminished human beings, a sense that is lacking in so much black writing and literature"; "Zora Neale Hurston: A Cautionary Tale and a Partisan View," *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983) 85 (author's emphasis). No woman has worked with as much zeal and brilliance on promoting Hurston as a literary "mother" for black women writers than Alice Walker. For a discussion of this "mother-daughter" dyad see Dianne F. Sadoff, "Black Matrilines: The Case of Alice Walker and Zora Neale Hurston," *Signs* 11 (1985): 4-26.

3. Walker, *In Search* 91: "For me, the most unfortunate thing Zora ever wrote is her autobiography. After the first several chapters, it rings false." Mary Helen Washington, "Zora Neale Hurston: A Woman Half in Shadow," intro. to Zora Neale Hurston, *I Love Myself When I Am Laughing... And then Again When I Am Looking Mean and Impressive* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1979) 20.

4. Robert Hemenway first documented Hurston's unwillingness to write her autobiography. He quotes her as saying that "it is too hard to reveal one's inner self," in *Zora Neale Hurston, A Literary Biography* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1977) 278. Significantly, what follows this explanation is a discussion of how Hurston departs with Dust Tracks from the black American male tradition of autobiography. With this discussion Hemenway is not emphasizing Hurston's originality but rather providing a context from which to judge her autobiography's shortcomings.

5. As important a critic of Hurston as Henry Louis Gates, Jr., expresses uncritical glee about Hurston's late but sure entrance into modern canons of literature. Gates is not alone in marvelling: "Zora Neale Hurston is the first writer that our generation of black and feminist critics has brought into the canon, or perhaps I should say the canons. For Hurston is now a cardinal figure in the Afro-American canon, the feminist canon, and the canon of American fiction, especially as our readings of her work become increasingly close readings, which Hurston's texts sustain delightfully"; in *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) 180.

6. Washington laments, "To a large extent, the attention focused on Zora Hurston's controversial personality and lifestyle has inhibited any objective critical analysis of her work. Few male critics have been able to resist sly innuendoes and outright attacks on Hurston's personal life,
even when the work in question was not affected by her disposition of her private affairs" (8). Two good examples of such ad feminam criticism are found in Nathan Irvin Huggins' Harlem Renaissance (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971) 130-133, which cites Langston Hughes's famous mockery of Hurston in The Big Sea, excerpted in Zora Neale Hurston, ed. Harold Bloom (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986) 13-14.


8. Christian canvasses these stereotypes in "Images of Black Women in Afro-American Literature: From Stereotype to Character," Black Feminist Criticism: Perspectives on Black Women's Writers (New York: Pergamon Press, 1985) 1-30. In this essay Christian writes, "Zora Neale Hurston, in her life and in her work, moved the image of the black woman beyond the stereotype, as she sought the ever-evolving ways of the folk" (11; my emphasis).


10. See Barbara Christian, "Alice Walker: The Black Woman Artist as Wayward," Black Women Writers (1950-1980): A Critical Evaluation, ed. Mari Evans (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, Doubleday, 1984) 455-477. Christian creates generative ambiguity in giving Walker a representative contrary role among black women and in making that role essentially nonrepresentative. She says, "Walker does not choose Southern Black women to be her major protagonists only because she is one, but also, I believe, because she has discovered in the tradition and history they collectively experience an understanding of oppression which has elicited from them a willingness to reject convention and to hold to what is difficult" (465). And then, "In refusing to elevate sex above race, on insisting on the Black woman's responsibility to herself and to other women of color, Walker aligns herself neither with prevailing white feminist groups nor with Blacks who refuse to acknowledge male dominance in the world. Because her analysis does not yield to easy generalizations and nicely package cliches, she continues to resist the trends of the times without discarding the truths upon which they are based" (467). Walker's contrariness is precisely this betweenness, a way of speaking also characteristic of Hurston.

11. References to the criticism Hurston received from her black male peers is legion in the literature on her. It is relevant to my analysis that in discussing Hurston's work even her most appreciative critics dredge up
the dirt her male critics slung at her. The implication is that her work responds in some fashion to these attacks. Gates summarizes the spirit of these remarks in his own very positive review of the 1985 edition of Dust Tracks: "In reviews of Mules and Men (1935), Their Eyes Were Watching God (1937) and Moses: Man of the Mountain (1939), Sterling A. Brown, Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison condemned her work as 'socially unconscious' and derided her 'minstrel technique.' Of Moses, Ellison concluded, 'for Negro fiction, it did nothing'; "A Negro Way of Saying," New York Times Book Review 21 (1985): 43. See also Washington, especially 8-11. Washington expresses the lament of many feminists that Hurston's "entire career output was subjected to the judgment of critics, both white and black, who were all men" (11). By desiring that she better represent her race (hence the term "race representative"), her male peers seemed to have wished that she mute her womanist orientation and concerns.

12. See Peter Bruck's introduction to The Afro-American Novel Since 1960, ed. by Peter Bruck and Wolfgang Karrer (Amsterdam: B.R. Gruner, 1982) 1-27. Bruck outlines the historical development of the art versus propaganda debate in which Wright played an important role as "father" of the black protest novel. Hurston does not figure at all in the literary genealogy Bruck develops, implicitly relegated to the "art" side of the debate. But interestingly, Bruck documents criticism of James Baldwin and Ralph Ellison by leftist social critics which echoes the attacks Ellison and Wright made on Hurston for soft-peddling social protest in her works (7). As Bruck says, "The relation between color and aesthetics, between ethnicity and universality" remained at the heart of literary criticism of black writing for several decades (8).

13. This comparison is precisely the one James Olney draws in "The Founding Fathers--Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington," Slavery and the Literary Imagination, ed. Deborah E. McDowell and Arnold Rampersad (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989) 22-23. Olney is not alone in treating Their Eyes Were Watching God as Hurston's "real" autobiography. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese calls the autobiography and the novel two of three "triptychs" in Hurston's larger autobiography in "To Write Myself: The Autobiographies of Afro-American Women," in Feminist Issues in Literary Scholarship, ed. Shari Benstock (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987) 174. Lowe makes the related but more interesting point with regards to the inscription of gender identity in Their Eyes that "although Janie is Hurston's surrogate in the novel, so is Tea Cake" (308).

14. It is important to note that while, as Barbara Christian argues, Hurston moved black women's literature into an era where self-definition for black women was possible and plausibly free of stereotypes of women, white and black, she did so with her novel, Their Eyes Were Watching God, and not with the narrative whose generic conventions mandated self-disclosure. My comparison with Stein needs to be qualified, however, since both sexism and racism may have contributed to Hurston's self-protective posture before her readership. Before celebrating postmodernist strategies against the unified self, a critic of Dust Tracks


16. See Nellie Y. McKay, "Race, Gender, and Cultural Context in Zora Neale Hurston's Dust Tracks On a Road," Life/Lines, ed. Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988) 175-188. McKay's evaluation of Dust Tracks shows McKay's own ambivalence about the creation of selfhood in Afro-American women's autobiography, congratulating Hurston on producing a "trickster" self while excusing the text for "lack[ing] self-disclosure" (182, 188). For an evaluation of the text that unequivocally congratulates Hurston for not constructing a unified self, see James Krasner, "The Life of Women: Zora Neale Hurston and Female Autobiography," Black American Literature Forum 23 (1989): 113-126. Krasner shares my own suspicions about the critical tendency to assign Their Eyes Were Watching God autobiographical status in lieu of Dust Tracks: "Janie's story in Their Eyes Were Watching God is a good deal more literary, a good deal more consistent, and a good deal more critically acceptable than Hurston's" (117). With some insensitivity to the importance of the act of self-definition to black women, however, Krasner says, "To accept Janie's self-portrayal unequivocally is to accept a model of autobiography which is politically as well as aesthetically romanticized" (117).


18. Blyden Jackson tags Hurston a "conservative" in "Moses, Man of the Mountain: A Study of Power," Zora Neale Hurston 153; Ann L. Rayson more broadly says that Hurston "avoids politics and social issues" in "Dust Tracks on a Road: Zora Neale Hurston and the Form of Black Autobiography," Negro American Literature Forum 7.2: 40. Hurston herself eschewed the political correctness of calling herself "liberal" rather than "conservative." In a letter to Countee Cullen dated March 5, 1943, she associates liberalism with "white association," writing, "Personally, I have no desire for white association except where I am sought and the pleasure is mutual. That feeling grows out of my own self-respect. However blue the eye or yellow the hair, I see no glory to myself in the contact unless there is something more than the accident of race. Any other viewpoint would be giving too much value to a mere white hide. I have offended several 'liberals' among the whites by saying this bluntly. I have been infuriated by having them ask me outright, or by strong
implication, if I am not happy over the white left-wing associating with Negroes. I always say no. Then I invariably ask why the association should give a Negro so much pleasure? Why any more pleasure than association with a black 'liberal'?... So I shall probably never become a 'liberal.' Neither shall I ever let myself be persuaded to have my mind made up for me by a political job. I mean to live and die by my own mind." In Florence Edward Borders, "Zora Neale Hurston: Hidden Woman," Callaloo 2.2 (1979): 91.

19. Spillers further remarks that for a black women's writing community, "tradition" comes to mean "a matrix of literary discontinuities that partially articulate various periods of consciousness in the history of an African-American people" (251); Conjuring: Black Women, Fiction, and Literary Tradition, ed. Marjorie Pryse and Hortense J. Spillers (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985).

20. Alice Walker places her definition of "womanist" in the opening pages of In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens:

**Womanist**

1. From womanish (Opp. of "girlish," i.e., frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, "You acting womanish," i.e., like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful behavior... (xi; Walker's emphasis).

21. For a provocative discussion of the complications involved in assessing Hurston's individualism, especially as her variety reflects the difficulties faced by contemporary black feminists who promote both self-empowerment and communal values, see Jennifer Jordan, "Feminist Fantasies: Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God," Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature 7 (1988): especially 105-108. See also Elliott Butler-Evans, Race, Gender, and Desire: Narrative Strategies in the Fiction of Toni Cade Bambara, Toni Morrison, and Alice Walker (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1989), especially chapter two, "Enabling Discourse for Afro-American Women Writers." Although I came upon this book late in my writing, I found very useful its exploration of the history behind black feminism's advocacy of a politics of self-assertion, especially following the Black Power movement of the 1960s. Butler-Evans rings many of the same bells as Hortense Spillers, as when he says, "One might expect, then, that the narratives of Black women are almost always driven by ideological positions that are essentially dissonant and at times even contradictory" (40).

22. In an essay that calls Hurston the first Afro-American woman "to create language and imagery that reflected the reality of black women's lives," Cheryl Wall speculates: "The relative scarcity of woman-centered tales in the oral tradition must have been one of the revelations of Hurston's fieldwork. Although tales created by men about women, many of them virulently antifemale, exist in some quantity, tales about women told from a female point of view are rare": "Zora Neale Hurston: Changing Her Own Words," American Novelists Revisited: Essays in Feminist Criticism, ed. Fritz Fleishmann (Boston, MA: G. K. Hall, 1982) 371, 375.

24. Hurston's inscription of her betweenness with respect to rural black and northern white cultures will appear less ambivalent in the next section, when I discuss its special place within her critique of authorship. Here it is important to stress that while censoring, self- or external, may have contributed to her softpedaling criticisms of white culture, she nowhere in the narrative defers to or even acknowledges that culture's hegemony (as Raymond Williams via Gramsci defines that term [144-145]) over Afro-American culture. More than merely avoiding a "direct" critique, Hurston's speaking position insists on her perhaps ephemeral transcendence of a cultural hierarchy that she knew in very basic and material ways had shaped her life.

25. McKay's reference to Hurston as "trickster," noted above, only echoes Gates's hypothesis that, "for protection, [Hurston] made up significant parts of herself, like a masquerader putting on a disguise for the ball" ("A Negro Way" 43).

26. Judith Robey also makes a distinction between chapters one through eleven and twelve through fifteen (plus the unpublished essays), arguing that the latter are "essay" chapters in which Hurston takes on "questions of the day" in the persona of "author"--the persona necessary, as I contend, for a critique of her literary authorization; in "Generic Strategies in Zora Neale Hurston's Dust Tracks on a Road," Black American Literature Forum 24 (1990): 677.

27. It is important to stress that Hurston's crisis in audience was not simply conditioned by her response to her white readership, as Robey contends (678). The criticisms Hurston received from her black male literary peers must also be factored into her conflict with her audience, especially since it was from them that she received the most heat.

28. Miriam DeCosta Willis provides this explanation for Hurston's "tampering" with the folklore she collected--changing perspectives, injecting herself into it: participating in the ceremonies and rituals of the communities she visited during her field trips persuaded her that "black art was a living, breathing thing that could not be reduced to a collection of field notes"--or song notes for that matter; "Folklore and the Creative Artist," College Language Association Journal 27 (1983): 87.

29. African-American cultural critics after the sixties' Black Power movement have exhibited more tolerance than Hurston could or would have about the class differences that separated blacks, especially as these differences mapped onto color differences between them. In This Was Harlem (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1981), Jervis Anderson exhibits such tolerance--and the long perspective it requires--in
discussing the class tensions occasioned by the white, middle-class conventionality of the "colored elite": "The experience of blacks like Jessie Fauset was surely deserving of attention. Their predicament, though on a higher social plane, was not unrelated to that of most blacks, who, because of social barriers, were not free to aspire and achieve, to make of themselves whatever they were equipped by talent and imagination to be. Many among the colored elite who sought these forms of liberation did so as much from a wish to realize their own potential as from a desire to differentiate themselves from those of their race who were blacker, poorer, and less cultivated than they. But however understandable that desire was, it tended--when viewed by the masses--to inhibit sympathy for what was most human about their plight" (198).

30. In Their Eyes Were Watching God (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois, 1978), Hurston enfolds some of the same internal criticism of black folk culture into the story Janie shares with Phoebe: criticism of classism and its white roots as reflected in Jody Starks, who needs to dominate others with his "big voice," and as valorized by Nanny, who marries young Janie off to Logan Killicks for security; criticism of colorism as personified by Mrs. Turner; criticism of masculine ideologies of dominance over women as articulated by Janie to Jody. Importantly, however, in Dust Tracks the connection between social criticism and authorship is forged in the story of Hurston's own personal and literary authorizations.

31. In detailing Hurston's argument about classism and race, I preserve her categories of "lower class" and "upper class" since the very comprehensibility of the terms to her readers supported her point that differences in material prosperity and education deeply divided the black population and created conflicts in their perceptions about the value and meaning of Afro-American identity.

32. Hurston's woman-centered criticism of black colorism is a good place to consider the boldness and complexity of her pro-women, pro-folk community stance. Although he does not explicitly take her to task for this feminism, Nick Aaron Ford shows his contempt for Hurston's womanist sensibility in accusing her of disloyalty to blacks--and black men in particular--in her characterization of Jonah in Jonah's Gourd Vine. The logic goes that you cannot be true to your race if you are truer to your sex. This pattern of criticism and response engendered by Hurston's creek-crossing critiques continues in contemporary Afro-American theory and criticism. A good example of it is found in Michael Awkward's criticism of Deborah McDowell's vision of black women's poetry in the 1990s, in "Boundaries: Or Distant Relations and Close Kin" and "Response," Afro-American Literary Study in the 1990s, ed. Houston A. Baker, Jr., and Patricia Redmond (University of Chicago Press: 1989). McDowell, stressing that "black women's lives are not uniform," expresses Hurston-like defiance to prescriptively "race conscious" writing and the forced unity it endows The Afro-American Experience (54). Awkward, in response, echoes Ford's complaint that McDowell advocates a critical practice manifesting "an apparent rejection of race" (74).
33. See James Krasner's development of the thesis that for Hurston selfhood is always a function of provisional stories, changing and incomplete.


35. One of the earliest critics of Afro-American women's autobiography as a genre apart from Afro-American men's autobiography is Regina Blackburn. "In Search of the Black Female Self: African-American Women's Autobiographies and Ethnicity," Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism, ed. Estelle C. Jelinek (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1980) 131-48, shows Blackburn's early attempt to canvas the differences between individual black women's self-writings and to tentatively suggest some of the differences these texts manifest from the male tradition of autobiography as codified by Butterfield.

36. It is possible that public authorization to be contrary currently attenuates readers' perceptions of what is countertraditional in writings by contemporary womanist authors like Walker and Morrison. Nevertheless, my purpose in this project is to undermine just this sort of ennui with radical authors by attending to the spaces that they create for themselves to question, with varying degrees of contrariety, the public authorization they undergo.
Coda

The purpose of this coda is to consider briefly the theme of "betweenness" variously developed in the last three chapters and to resituate it within a broad, contemporary view of women and authorship. This coda is not a substitute for the preceding chapters. The specific arguments of Gertrude Stein, Simone de Beauvoir, and Zora Neale Hurston's autobiographical projects, clarified through overreading their texts, will not receive summary review or assessment here. Instead, some general reflections on the relevance of their autobiographies to feminist literary studies conclude this dissertation. The ambivalence toward the ideology and institution of authorship inscribed in their autobiographies serves as a focus for my reflections while at the same time permitting me to generate some ambiguity of my own. I do not propose to determine whether or not authorship is good for women, since women who write require some authorization to be read. It is the transformation rather than the mere existence of authorship as an institution that is at issue. I offer here a limited overview of how Stein, de Beauvoir, and Hurston responded to authorship, challenging its boundaries and its very ground, in ways still meaningful for women authors today. In the same way that strategies of self-definition are intimately bound up with their questions about authorship, so too attitudes of contemporary feminist critics towards authorship are linked to our (working) definitions of ourselves as feminists. The "betweenness" of the three women read in this project towards the relationship between self and author within their respective
cultures supplies the space necessary for us to rethink our relationship to an institution supporting critical practice.

My readings of the autobiographies of Stein, de Beauvoir, and Hurston have represented the ways in which these women's narratives queried the ideology and the practice of modern authorship in America and France. Embedded in narratives of the self, their plots of author-ization represent three very different women who nevertheless have in common the fact that they grappled with difficulties in self-definition and ambiguities in their experiences of authorship. Stein, de Beauvoir, and Hurston all lived in the heart of their literary worlds but paradoxically wrote themselves out of the center, eccentrically, as maverick authors discontent with the received scripts of authorship. Most emphatically in de Beauvoir's and Hurston's projects, this discontent dovetailed with the fact of the author's sex, complicating her self-understanding as a woman author. Artfully, and yet with the artless intensity of personal investigations of ideas and memory, all three of the women authors in my project wrote narratives nontraditional by masculine standards of employment--which sanction stories that progress with rigorous logic from cause to effect--to communicate nontraditional, feminine authorial identities.

In the simplest terms, Stein, de Beauvoir, and Hurston belie the masculine plot of authorship which maintains, "...and I did it all by myself." Stein spoke through the voice of her lover, Alice Toklas; de Beauvoir represented the synchrony of her childhood with Zaza and her adult life with Sartre (and everyone else); and Hurston insisted on the maternal authorization of her voice. In the place of linear, masculine
fictions of self-authorization, these women describe wayward trajectories of authorization that disrupt neat boundaries between themselves and others and that foreground the pursuit of authorization within the contexts of relationships. These relationships are not relationships of opposition in the way that Sartre is opposed to his grandfather and Wright is opposed to his father. A reciprocity, as Carol C. Gould terms it (6), between the self and others informs the relationships patterned in the women's narratives. In place of a dualistic ontology of the person/author as defined against others, Stein, de Beauvoir, and Hurston collectively suggest the contours of a feminist ontology of the person similar to the one theorized by Caroline Whitbeck in which the history of the self/author coincides with a history of relationships (77).

Importantly, this reciprocity between self and others, between the female author-to-be and her significant others, serves alternately to enable and to thwart the woman writers' authorization. Stein oscillates between desiring to be authorized and desiring to maintain her private, marginal lifestyle with Alice; de Beauvoir oscillates between devoting herself to her relationship and committing herself to her writing; and Hurston cultivates a voice that oscillates between promoting her literary interests and promoting community interests that occlude the significance of her literary author-ization. A common denominator among these women's autobiographies is that each author has some difficulty in reconciling her relational being with her professional aspirations within literary cultures biased towards masculine notions of definable, isolable, autonomous selfhood. While none can accurately be called "other-oriented" in the sense of living for others, each woman portrays herself
"oriented to the welfare of relational complexes within which the welfare of 'self' and 'other' are mutually dependent" (Harding 60). Importantly, processes of author-ization and not her relationships are what each author calls into question. All three autobiographies suggest that in complicating the experience of authorship, a relational orientation catalyzes questions about ideologies of authorship which assume stable definitions of selfhood apart from or in opposition to others.

By arguing for the insufficiency of dualistic, masculine definitions of the self, Stein, de Beauvoir, and Hurston destabilized some ideological roots of authorship. Stein called into question the epistemology of self-knowledge; de Beauvoir called into question the concepts of originality and autonomy; Hurston called into question the polarizing social boundaries constructed around selfhood. Each autobiographical account testifies to the risks that these women took in expressing their unconventional ideas about authorial identity. Adrienne Rich, acknowledging the psychic and material risks women take in evolving personal and professional visions alien to patriarchal conventions, says: "Sometimes [the risk] involves tiny acts of immense courage; sometimes public acts which can cost a woman her job or her life; often it involves moments, or long periods, of thinking the unthinkable, being labeled, or feeling crazy; always a loss of traditional securities" (215). In their critiques of authorship, Hurston certainly risked her life, Stein tried to think the unthinkable and felt a little crazy, and de Beauvoir discarded the security that rewarded bourgeois femininity; all three women authors were "labeled," as Rich says, in derogatory terms. In themselves the risks that they ran are not desirable or noble; but they do indicate the
seriousness of each woman's impulsion to write critically about her author-
ization.

Overreading the autobiographies of these and other women thus
reveals the strain authorized women may live with, but also the courage of
their challenge to authorial ideologies and practices. Neither the strain
nor the courage may be easy for feminists to reckon with as we work out
theories of literature and culture within writing that we also want (to be)
authorized. A willingness to encounter the problematic relationship
between individualism and authorship may be the hardest attitude to
cultivate, but also the most necessary. In the last decade, several
studies, feminist and neohumanist, have appeared which investigate the
ideological legacy of individualism in the late twentieth century (see Heller
et al.). Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's *Feminism Without Illusions: A Critique
of Individualism*, in particular, explores modern feminism as both an
outgrowth and a revision of individualism. If individualism is, as
Whitbeck contends, an ideology derived from patriarchy that replaces the
rule of the fathers with the "rule of the sons" (68), feminism then has the
challenge of deciphering the ways in which its critique of culture
advocates something different from the sons' rule. Fox-Genovese speaks
of the "edge" that feminist knowledge (as witnessed in the women's
autobiographies in this project) carries in conceiving of the self "as 'one'
and as 'many'"; and she also tentatively suggests feminists' special
understanding of a politics of difference operative within collectivities
(*Feminism* 231, 241). On the whole, however, Fox-Genovese, Carol
Gilligan, and other feminists committed to a reevaluation of masculine
individualism in speech, ethics, and canon formation pass over its
rootedness in authorial ideology and practice. It is worth wondering why an individual's pursuit of power and authority through the medium of print might escape feminist analysis. The question is not sufficiently answered by the argument that in confronting authorship's links with masculine individualism, women may jeopardize their survival in a male-organized academy and their success in the literary/critical marketplace. My sense is that women's deep investments in literary institutions as a means for gaining collective power suppress the impulse to examine how authorship always also effects an individual's authority and empowerment.

In any case, questioning—opening spaces for reflection without positing hard-and-fast answers—rather than confronting authorship has been the focus of this project, and questioning lies behind the spirit of betweenness characterizing the voices in Stein's, de Beauvoir's, Hurston's (and Wright's, to some extent) autobiographical projects. Perhaps the critiques of authorship I have read in the foregoing chapters have not been documented before precisely because of their ambivalence and equivocality. Reading literary autobiography with a view to the distinctions between writer and author and between female self and female author has entailed my cultivating a questioning attitude towards the individualism underlying authorship. Such an attitude trades in the satisfaction of conclusiveness for the surprising truths of ambiguity: the meanings of selfhood, originality, authority, autonomy—components of individuality and authorship—shift and change in the women's autobiographies. One great satisfaction in writing this project has come from generating this ambiguity from the diversely gendered perspectives of the autobiographers I have studied.
Another satisfaction has come from defamiliarizing literary autobiography and the plots of author-ization it contains as a genre. By interpreting authors' own questioning stories about their authorizations, I hope to have demonstrated how literary autobiography offers feminists critical opportunities to exercise the betweenness of our relationship to authorship and, by extension, to literary institutions which confer authority. The study of difference in autobiographies can contribute to the current academic movement to transform the social organization for teaching and writing about minority and women authors. For teachers, at stake is the development of specifically feminist tactics for presenting the authorial enterprise in literature and writing classes as a historical phenomenon and as a career that students, male and female, might pursue themselves. For critics and theorists, at stake is the development of strategies for discussing specifically feminist definitions and processes of empowerment through authorship. Stein, de Beauvoir, and Hurston's autobiographies all suggest that authorship as an institution challenges but is also challenged by women who write not necessarily as self-proclaimed feminists. Their equivocal plots of author-ization likewise challenge feminist authors, critics, and theorists of literature to derive from our investments in literary institutions the authority to question authorship.
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Vita

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