Remarkable for its sexual themes—marriage, lesbianism, fetishism, male homoeroticism, masturbation, impotence, reproduction, birth control, free love, and gender inversion, to name but a few—early twentieth-century Anglo-U.S. literature demands its readers’ devotion. Like lovers, these texts ask that readers let go of old habits and adopt new ones. Like lovers, these texts require a high degree of attentiveness, sensitivity to nuances of tone, a certain self-consciousness, the willingness to enjoy someone else’s playfulness, and openness to new and daring ideas. These books invade and possess you; to resist them is to miss the point. Sometimes they talk dirty; many of them were banned for obscenity. They can be euphemistic, suggestive, discreet. An extraordinary number of them are portraits, concerned with portraiture, and—as the theme of portraiture suggests—interested in the sexual, gender, and racial aspects of character, personality, and personal identity. Yet it took most of the twentieth century for critical work to appear that explored their themes of gender and sexuality. The reasons for this are many, but they chiefly have to do with the complexity of modernist-era gender politics, the academic fashioning of literary “modernism” as a movement composed primarily of white heterosexual male writers, the identity-based forms that characterize most feminist and gay and lesbian literary criticism, and the sexual closet of artistic “impersonality” that still informs accounts of early twentieth-century aesthetics.

In her landmark book on expatriate women writers, artists, and publishers in Paris between 1900 and 1940, *Women of the Left Bank*, Shari Benstock points out: “The attempt to define and describe a literary movement as complex as Modernism exposes the divisions and differences among its practitioners even as it plasters over the cracks in the walls in an attempt to create a smooth façade.” Benstock goes on to argue that despite the role that gender often played in some of these
divisions, “the assumption that gender alone can explain differences in social behavior and literary practice of male and female Modernists requires rigorous inspection.” 2 Benstock’s feminist work of attribution and reclamation was part of the wave of feminist work in modernism that brought such writers as Virginia Woolf, H. D., Gertrude Stein, and Djuna Barnes, among others, back into the literary critical mainstream as individual figures, but *Women of the Left Bank* made a compelling case for the central role of women in modernist movements in a way that had not been done before. Other work in the “Gender of Modernism” (to cite Bonnie Kime Scott’s important anthology) soon followed. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar went so far as to argue: “the literary phenomenon ordinarily called ‘modernism’ is . . . a product of the sexual battle that we are describing here, as are the linguistic experiments usually attributed to the revolutionary poetics of the so-called avant-garde.” 3 Gilbert and Gubar’s essentializing analysis exemplified the ways in which gender criticism relied on identity in order to redress what Lisa Rado calls the “selective canonization” in modernist studies of male authors at the expense of female ones. Because gender and sexuality were linked concerns for the many lesbian women who figured in this era, work on the sexuality of modernism followed this identity model, with individual bodies and their desires reflected in the aesthetics of “lesbian modernism,” “sapphic modernism,” or “Sapphistries.”

Though work such as Peter Nicholls’s *Modernisms* illustrates the tension between the critical project of accentuating a lack of aesthetic cohesion in the field, on the one hand, and the continued demand in scholarship and teaching that it somehow remain periodized and coherent, on the other, the sustained attention paid to women writers, lesbian writers, and gay male writers, including writers of color, in the 1980s and 1990s helped consolidate a much richer catalogue of experimental writing than had previously been available, and “modernism” eventually came to seem less homogenous and more diverse. Harlem Renaissance writing became (somewhat) desegregated from the rest of Anglo-U.S. literary experimentalism. Work on queer modernisms such as Deborah MacDowell’s important critical essays on—and edition of—Nella Larsen’s *Quicksand* and *Passing*, Marianne DeKoven’s *Rich and Strange*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s landmark *Epistemology of the Closet*, Joseph Boone’s *Libidinal Currents*, Judith Roof’s *A Lure of Knowledge*, and Colleen Lamos’s *Deviant Modernism* extended the feminist project of reading race, gender, and sexuality in the texts of this era. These primary and secondary texts helped break down the exclusions that lent an artificial coherence to “modernism” at the price of its stylistic heterogeneity.
and particularly gendered, classed, racialized, and queer voices. However, when queer theorists such as Judith Butler and Judith Halberstam began to use modernist texts such as Larsen’s *Passing* and Radclyffe Hall’s *The Well of Loneliness* to theorize more generally about gender as performance and performative, they abstracted twentieth-century gender from the art and literature that helped formulate it. This approach gave us an art of sexuality reduced to individual performance and individual identity, or groups of individuals performing the repetitive gestures of coherent identity. The “art” of sexual and gender identity began to seem separate, for the most part, from its older and more dynamic context as a modernist textual concern constitutive of group identity and queer culture.

The problem with this gender trouble is that the individualizing of sexual desire is itself part of the cultural tendency to reduce homosexuality to an aspect of individuality and individual taste, and this in turn has long colluded with conservative theories of artistic sublimation—disseminated by many of the writers of the era themselves—that sought to escape personality and the personal. Because heterosexual desire enjoys the status of a universal human attribute, its yearnings have rarely been seen as too personal, whereas homosexuality was viewed by European and U.S. culture as an unusual and specific pathology for most of the twentieth century, what Eve Sedgwick calls “an issue of active importance primarily for a small, distinct, relatively fixed homosexual minority.” This partly explains the ascendancy in the decades after the Second World War of certain strains of modernist writing and modernist interpretation—Irving Babbit’s hypermasculine aesthetics, Ezra Pound’s vilification of Imagism’s feminine and lesbian poetics, T. S. Eliot’s insistence on artistic impersonality—as official versions of modernism that helped marginalize the queerer modernisms of the effete Oscar Wilde, the lesbian Imagist Amy Lowell, the queer apologist Radclyffe Hall, and the sexually reticent Eliot himself.

This closeting of modernism’s queerness that began with the canonization of some of its writers at the expense of most of its writers went hand in hand with contemporary and later critical rejection of modernism’s feminine aspects. Homosexuality, lesbianism, femininity, effeminacy, and the personal served as linked terms defining a decadent perversity that a more virile, normal, and heterosexual “modernist” impersonality could position itself against. For a time a lot of modernist-era writing simply did not qualify as modernist at all, and most of the best and most intriguing literary voices of the era were particularized, dismissed as too popular, or relegated to other literary categories by
mid-century literary critics. Oscar Wilde was a decadent; Langston Hughes mostly concerned with race; Mrs. Woolf (as Hugh Kenner calls her in *The Pound Era*) female yet, thank goodness, married; Amy Lowell too democratic; Radclyffe Hall middlebrow and sentimental. All of these writers were also gay, lesbian, or bisexual, and all of them either openly or suggestively explored the aesthetics of homoerotic desire.

The fear of effeminacy that stigmatized fin-de-siècle modernisms continued to shape critical work on the literature of the era a hundred years later. As recently as 1988, Hugh Kenner felt perfectly comfortable skewering female pulp novelist Marie Corelli, the popular Wilde imitator, as representative of her culture’s intellectual and moral decay. In *A Sinking Island: The Modern English Writers*, double entendres suffice as argument: “Marie Corelli’s way was the pornographer’s: spin out, spin out, find empty emphatic words, but keep it up.” Kenner’s leering, suggestive homophobia a few sentences later invites readers to chuckle with him at the indignity of Corelli’s lesbianism: “She had her rewards, costly summers on Lac Leman and a friend from whom, like Gertrude Stein, she was never parted.”

Yet despite continuing efforts such as these to consolidate late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writing as a rejection of the feminine, queer, and personal, the moderns themselves were hardly in agreement when it came to impersonality as a defining ideal of “modernist” aesthetics. Maude Ellmann has convincingly argued that T. S. Eliot’s impersonality, as well as that of his contemporary Ezra Pound, was far more ambivalent than either they or many of their subsequent critics have allowed; Ellmann notes the slippage in Eliot’s sense of personality, which ranges from the notion of soul, to the philosophical and psychological subject, to the first-person speaker. Virginia Woolf, of course, had an interest in personality; hers is one of the most famous lines in modernism: “in or about December, 1910, human character changed.” But while this statement, and the essay on character and invention that it comes from, is often read as a manifesto of literary impersonality, Woolf elsewhere stresses her disagreement with such a notion. In “Personalities” she uses the example of Keats to mount a refusal of impersonality that depends—as does most of her work—on the reader recognizing Woolf’s signature sarcasm, the trademark of her authorial personality: “how difficult it is to be certain that a sense of the physical presence of the writer, with all which that implies, is not colouring our judgment of his work. Yet the critics tell us that we should be impersonal when we write, and therefore impersonal when we read.”
Is it any coincidence that the notion of artistic impersonality, of a particular subject struggling to make itself universal, arises in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras as a rejection of romantic and impressionist effeminacy at the same time that the term “homosexual” comes into being, and at the same time, too, that Freud is developing his theory of sexual sublimation, using the figure of the homosexual painter Leonardo da Vinci to suggest the necessity of repressing or transforming unacceptable desires? Joseph Bristow argues that “effeminacy became the main stigma attached to male homosexuality in the eyes of English society” in this era, largely due to the scandalous revelations of homosexual sodomy brought to light by the Wilde trials. In Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the artist Basil Hallward espouses the ideal of impersonality in a vain attempt to keep his homoerotic tendencies under wraps; his tragedy is that his best painting, the picture of Dorian Gray, is brilliant precisely because it is too personal, yet too full of his own desire for his young sitter, he fears, to be given the public viewing so fine a painting deserves.

This book argues that modern writing is obsessed with personality as well as impersonality, that “personality” and the personal often served as a euphemism for the sexual particularity of homoerotic desire, and that the (mostly) literary portrait—one of the more prominent forms of experimentalism in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writing—functioned as a dynamic aesthetic mechanism that formulated the homoerotic, the lesbian, and the perversely gendered as attributes of particular individual personalities and of communal, cultural group identities. The queerly modern experimental literature of this era uses the self-reflective dynamics of portraiture to invent queer moderns as sexually perverse subjects who circulate style, personality, self-invention, and impersonation as diversionary, playful elements that also undermine the moral and aesthetic rules of normal society and normal culture. The literary portraits of this era range from overtly fictional presentations of character, such as Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* or T. S. Eliot’s “The Love-Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” to stylized renditions of recognizable real people, such as Compton Mackenzie’s *Extraordinary Women* and Djuna Barnes’s *Ladies Almanack*, to portraits of actual personages, such as Gertrude Stein’s *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* and Ernest Hemingway’s *A Moveable Feast*. In these, writing is primarily enamored of its own self-consciousness, of the pleasures of looking at itself seeing itself, and is far less concerned with how it is seen, or judged, by conventional readers and critics.

* A Thousand Words explores the ways in which these “modernist”
literary portraits enact this perverse, self-conscious, and stylish aesthetic. Instead of responding to the social demand, theorized by psychoanalysis as the fear of castration, that one take up normal gender and sexuality under a watchful gaze, the “queer” characters and narrators in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literary, film, and song portraits refuse to be normal, turning the look back on itself by dramatizing it, distracting it, and soliciting it. To do this is to act perversely, write perversely, and read perversely. Even more extraordinary, however, is the insistence one finds in these portraits on dynamic, group subjects. Because of the framing and narrative devices of literary portraiture, desire, self-consciousness, artistic inventiveness, and artistic and erotic appreciation circulate within and among a group defined by its insistence that this affirmative circuit of desire is pleasurable. Self-consciousness in literary portraiture is an aesthetic strategy, a dynamic and structural poetics that deploys sexuality as a figure of a larger twisting of relationships—those between the viewer and the viewed, the subject looking at himself, readers watching the subject look at himself being looked at. “Modernism”’s modes of rendering the relations between the subjects and the look constitute a self-conscious style that reproduces the self-consciousness of the characters it describes. Indeed, self-consciousness and sexually perverse subjectivities are central to what we have come to recognize as the signature innovations that characterize modernist styles.

Unlike their less self-conscious Victorian precursors, modernist-era portraitists emphasize the personas, imagoes, and personalities produced by perverse subjects to escape the rules of normal gender, sexuality, speech, looking, and social comportment more generally. In doing this, these portraits perversely circulate the particularity, strangeness, or unique “personality” produced by the art of portraiture as a quality more indicative of style than it is a signifier of a person’s true essence or “real” nature. Personality style can thus be appreciated by performers, audiences, spectators, and readers as an act of artistry and invention, an aesthetic that is all about participation in a shared social world. Many of these portraits are directly concerned with a variety of perversities, including sexual and gender queerness, homosexuality, or lesbianism; however, these emphasize personality as self-presentation, as a series of aesthetic gestures that bring normative assumptions into question, rather than as indicative of innate abnormality, pathology, or freakishness.

These queerly modern portraits reveal different modernisms than those laboriously constructed from more “high art” performances.
queer modern literary portraits capture the intersubjective dynamic of the look in painted portraits. This allows literary portraits to explore relations between narrators, subjects, readers, and style. The subjective crisis engendered by and presented in the fin-de-siècle and early twentieth-century scene of looking—a crisis that is both catalyzed and remedied by a kind of self-conscious self-invention—suggests that something about the look in modernity dislocates characters from their normal everyday subject positions and “forward-stretching” (to use D. H. Lawrence’s term) narratives, producing instead subjects whose particular talent lies in the ability to solicit looking. At the same time, the surface style that enables these subjects to solicit the look is also capable of arresting the look when subjects take pleasure in their own performance, and then take added pleasure in the pleasure they are already taking. This self-amusement, consisting of a self-conscious pleasure that takes additional pleasure in self-consciousness, wards off scrutiny and censure by staging its self-sufficiency as a pose, a performance, and a pleasurable act of self-creation.

Second, queer modernist portraits focus on dynamic aspects of style and personality, presenting both the sitter’s style and personality and the personality of the artist who renders her. The style of the sitter is the sense of herself, of the invented and elaborated personality she produces in response to the look, as she presents this self to the world. In the same way, the portrait as work of art relies not only on this personality produced by the sitter, but on the artist’s interpretation of this personality, an interpretation that creates the particular style or signature of the artist’s look. Thus we recognize a Sigmund Freud “portrait” or case study, a Stein portrait, a Modigliani portrait, a Barnes portrait, a Vanessa Bell portrait, by the style with which the artist or writer represents the dynamic interaction between the personalities of viewer, reader, artist, and sitter, a style produced to arrest the eye of the world that views it.

Third, psychoanalytic texts produced within this modernist zeitgeist understand this emphasis on style and personality as something produced by repressing or otherwise evading sexual difference and heterosexuality. In Freud’s essay on the painter Leonardo da Vinci, Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood, the distinctive smile of the Mona Lisa, John the Baptist, and various other figures in Leonardo’s portraits, such as the Virgin and St. Anne, marks the site of Leonardo’s repressed heterosexuality. Style—the Leonardsque smile—marks Leonardo’s refusal of normative sexuality. Working through Freud’s insights, Jacques Lacan suggests that seeing works both ways. More specifically,
Lacan develops the notion of reflexive, self-conscious personality, of seeing yourself seeing yourself, to suggest personality as a stylized performance that represses the knowledge that one is also seen. This elaborated, stylized personality defends the subject and evades the Other’s normative gaze through affectation, gesture, talking too much, satirizing others and one’s self, and impersonation.

These three tendencies together produce a portrait of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century “modernisms” as concerned with the refusals, resistances, and perverse aesthetics of a self-consciously queer art. This is not simply an effect of centering different texts as typical, but is also an effect of looking seriously, as this study does, at how queer modernisms render the aesthetics of looking at themselves. Considering the range of modernist portraits together, the odd texts of modernism such as the portraits of Gertrude Stein, Colette, Djuna Barnes, and Hemingway; other portraits or texts about portraiture considered outside of modernism, such as Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray or Nella Larsen’s Passing; and the texts of high modernism usually read as character studies or dramatic monologues, such as Eliot’s “The Love-Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” produces this alternate version of modernism, one more squarely concerned with subversive renderings of talking, reading, and desiring subjects.

Take, for example, this scene from Marcel Proust’s Swann’s Way, the 1913 novel that is the first installment of Proust’s Remembrance of Things Past. Considered one of the masterpieces of European literary modernism because of its stream-of-consciousness technique and painstaking attention to sensual detail, Remembrance of Things Past chronicles the oedipal passions and voyeuristic impulses of its young narrator who in this scene watches through a window as a woman awaits her lesbian lover in a room as carefully arranged as a stage set, in which she assumes an attitude calculated to produce herself as she wishes to be seen. The most important feature of this production is the careful placement of her father’s photograph on the table beside her:

Presently she rose and came to the window, where she pretended to be trying to close the shutters and not succeeding.

“Leave them open,” said her friend. “I am hot.”

“But it’s too tiresome! People will see us,” Mlle Vinteuil answered.

But then she must have guessed that her friend would think that she had uttered these words simply in order to provoke a reply in certain other words, which she did indeed wish to hear but, from discretion, would have preferred her friend to be the first to speak. And so her
face, which I could not see very clearly, must have assumed the expression which my grandmother had once found so delightful, when she hastily went on: “When I say ‘see us’ I mean, of course, see us reading. It’s so dreadful to think that in every trivial little thing you do someone may be overlooking you.”

The boy watches unobserved as the two women kiss and chase each other around the room:

At last Mlle Vinteuil collapsed exhausted on the sofa, with her friend on top of her. The latter now had her back turned to the little table on which the old music-master’s portrait had been arranged. Mlle Vinteuil realised that her friend would not see it unless her attention were drawn to it, and so exclaimed, as if she herself had just noticed it for the first time: “Oh! There’s my father’s picture looking at us; I can’t think who can have put it there; I’m sure I’ve told them a dozen times that it isn’t the proper place for it.”

I remembered the words that M. Vinteuil had used to my parents in apologising for an obtrusive sheet of music. This photograph was evidently in regular use for ritual profanations, for the friend replied in words which were clearly a liturgical response: “Let him stay there. He can’t bother us any longer.” (177)

Mlle Vinteuil seems aware of her subjectivity as it takes shape in the field of vision, securing her lover’s attentions by performing for the audience of the photograph, calling her lover’s attention to her father’s picture watching them, suggesting that others outside the window might be watching them together. Her stilted theatricality helps her invent herself as a creature who both expresses and reflects a style of being modern, a style characterized by its self-consciousness, its awareness of seeing itself seeing itself. She postures as a “bad” girl in order to appear naughty and modern to her girlfriend, but the narrator sees this as more proof of a virtuous nature than its opposite. By insisting on the public status of their lesbian caresses, both of these women construct themselves as modern, self-conscious, and perverse.

This self-consciously modern style helps Mlle Vinteuil and her lover diminish, parody, reformulate, and neutralize the censoring look of convention, here served by the stiffly bourgeois photograph of the father, whose gaze is framed, contained, and controlled in the seduction scenario. Looking at her looking at herself looking at herself, the narrator reads the desperation of a self struggling for a style:
Far more than his photograph what she really desecrated, what she sub-
orrelated to her pleasures though it remained between them and her
and prevented her from any direct enjoyment of them, was the likeness
between her face and his, his mother’s blue eyes which he had handed
down to her like a family jewel, those gestures of courtesy and kindness
which interposed between her vice and herself a phraseology, a mental-
ity which were not designed for vice and which prevented her from rec-
ognizing it as something very different from the numberless little social
duties and courtesies to which she must devote herself every day.
(179–80)

The first thing Mlle Vinteuil’s arrangement of her father’s photograph
shows is how self-consciousness is necessary for erotic play. Mlle Vin-
teuil struggles for an individual style, one which will differentiate her
from her father, whom she resembles, and differentiate her gaze from
his. Resisting the father’s gaze and playing to other gazes makes for
play, pleasure, display. At the same time that she resists it, however, she
needs the father’s gaze to get things going, and to create herself as a sub-
ject who is read, seen, observed.

The presence of the young boy as voyeur (a presence libidinally
charged by the further layering of the adult voyeuristic narrator on the
persona of the remembering child) and Mlle Vinteuil’s coy reference to
reading in the scene with the picture both serve to project the dynamic
web of desire mobilized by all these mirroring looks out into the world
and implicate readers in the narrator’s voyeurism. “Reading” juxta-
poses voyeurism and reading, visual and literary, and makes the photo-
graph operate in a manner similar to the artistic visual conceit of the
portrait in Oscar Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray, which also parallels
the relationship of artist, subject, and spectator to that of author, char-
acters, and readers. “Reading” as a euphemism for perverse sexual dis-
play suggests that the self-consciousness of reading—as dramatized by
Mlle Vinteuil’s “reading”—fashions a mask, a playful self, a double, a
distraction to ward off the gaze, comprising some aspect of personal
style, character traits, or the “being seen-ness” defined through the
dynamics of the gaze.

Finally, however, and most importantly, reading framed here as
both performance and dynamic spectatorship gestures toward an ethics
of seeing, one that does not merely witness but identifies compassion-
ately with being seen as well as seeing, with the bravado of imperson-
ation and self-fashioned personality as well as the abjection of resem-
blance. “And yet I have since reflected,” the narrator muses, allowing all
the time between to enter the frame of the scene he remembers, “that if M. Vinteuil had been able to be present at this scene, he might still, in spite of everything, have continued to believe in his daughter’s goodness of heart, and perhaps in so doing he would not have been altogether wrong” (178). Proust’s framing of theatrical self-fashioning through this sympathetic identificatory eye intervenes in the terrifying field of the gaze, employing the diffuse polymorphous connectedness that desire makes possible in order to mobilize kindness, evoke pleasure and its loss, or pleasure as its loss, and allow language all its resonant play on the page. At the same time, this sympathetic social eye that remembers models reading for the reader—a reading that insists on the generative and generous possibilities of desire, of remembering, and of all the pleasures of self-fashioning.

This theatrical style, a sympathy with the necessity for the screen of posturing, appropriates the voyeuristic into the literary as the scene of posing, and thus the strategic personality of theatrical self-presentation becomes the rhythmic, posturing, performative language of modernist style. It suspends plot and character in its expert rhetorical display and stream-of-consciousness emotional and aesthetic digressions, delighting in its own deferrals. Watching, being watched, self-consciousness rises and takes wing, as if to say, “You want to watch? I’ll give you something to watch.” With this excess, and the way such display in literary portraiture foregrounds its medium of words, modernism becomes enamored with rendering itself seeing itself.

If Proust illustrates the dynamism of a sexual and gendered self-consciousness at the scene of portraiture, D. H. Lawrence interprets the scene of art as one of crisis, of modern self-consciousness as an erosion of colonial masculine self-confidence. In one memorable scene in *Women in Love*, a group of men lolling about naked after a wild party gather around a Pacific Island statue of a woman laboring in childbirth:

They all drew near to look. Gerald looked at the group of men, the Russian golden and like a water-plant, Halliday tall and heavily, brokenly beautiful, Birkin very white and indefinite, not to be assigned, as he looked closely at the carven woman. Strangely elated, Gerald also lifted his eyes to the face of the wooden figure. And his heart contracted.

He saw vividly with his spirit the grey, forward-stretching face of the savage woman, dark and tense, abstracted almost into meaninglessness by the weight of sensation beneath. He saw Minette in it. As in a dream, he knew her.

“Why is it art?” Gerald asked, shocked, resentful.
Gerald’s question is crucial, for although he seems to be questioning the status of the primitive artifact in culture, he is actually challenging the artistic validity of representations of heterosexuality and reproduction. For Gerald, the gaze of the statue suggests a story he finds repulsive, a narrative that cycles through birth and death but always moves forward as her “forward-stretching face” looks forward. If her look is heterosexual and reproductive, his is queer, homoerotic, lingering on the timeless and the indefinite. The statue’s gaze commences time, whereas Gerald’s look stops time. Where the representation of a woman is to him all definition, all body and reproductive story, men’s bodies are primitive and beautiful, like plants.

At the same time, these bodies are white and vague, in contrast to the racially other woman, whose body seems to mean to him one thing and one thing only. The prose of the text lingers in its own pleasant indefiniteness when Gerald looks at the men, a description of lovely and suggestive sounds that elude meaning. What exactly does Halliday’s “heavily, brokenly beautiful” body look like? How can a man look “golden and like a water-plant,” or “white and indefinite, not to be assigned”? Here the voice takes pleasure in its own circling narrative texture, conscious of itself. At the same time, unlike Proust’s happily voyeuristic narrator, Gerald finds his self denied, his sensibilities unrepresented, and his aesthetics overwhelmed. The demand of the statue’s look castrates him when he agrees to take up a “normal” position around it rather than look at the men; the two meanings of “contracted” suggest his impotence at the very moment he agrees—contracts—to participate in the bargain of male conquest, Western appropriation, and heterosexual reproduction. It is significant that Gerald recoils from the scene of looking that the statue engenders, and that he does not see the statue with his eyes, which he reserves for the men, but with his spirit, which seems instinctively to recognize white masculine heterosexuality as a terrible machine that threatens to overtake his individual will.

Lawrence’s text suggests the lingering aesthetic of Gerald’s queer look, one where gazing at naked men results in words that have no meaning or referent outside of their own beauty, one whose pleasing sounds and startling images stop the flow of narrative and the transparency of description to offer the pleasure of language itself. Gerald’s description of what he loves about Birkin could just as accurately summarize readers’ response to Lawrence’s writing: “It was the quick-changing warmth and vitality and brilliant warm utterance he loved in his friend. It was the rich play of words and quick interchange of feeling he enjoyed. The real content of the words he never considered: he him-
self knew better” (51). The backward look or the look that stops time also engenders a kind of pleasure in language, a pleasure that stops the forward roll of the story with an elaboration of style, a performance and a relishing of performance.

The most important result of this kind of reading, of this consideration of what it is these portraits are actually doing, is that the non-normative project of modernist textual innovation is revealed as one sustained by many writers regardless of and apart from sexual identity or sexual content. This study extends three recent threads of work on literary modernisms: (1) the recent interest in issues of visual culture and modernism, as represented by Karen Jacobs in *The Mind’s Eye*; (2) a tradition of studies of queer modernisms, such as Colleen Lamos’s *Deviant Modernism* or Anne Herrmann’s *Queering the Moderns*; and (3) psychoanalytic explorations of modernist preoccupations, such as Joseph Boone’s *Libidinal Currents* and Judith Roof’s *A Lure of Knowledge*. *A Thousand Words* turns from the more literal tracings of histories or identities to modernism’s conceptions of itself and the way it renders those conceptions in the most symptomatic site: the portrait. This opens into an analysis of the ways self-consciousness and its inherent perversity are central to modernist innovation.

*A Thousand Words* explores facets of modernist self-consciousness by addressing four ways in which queer self-consciousness uses style to undermine normal and conventional expectations about the relationship of gender and sexuality to social behavior and artistic expression. The first chapter, “Picturing Yourself,” reads Oscar Wilde’s novel about a portrait, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and his short story on a similar theme, “The Portrait of Mr. W. H.,” to explore how self-conscious self-observation—seeing one’s self seeing one’s self—perversely constitutes queer subjects as a group, rather than as particular and pathologized individuals. Just as the portrait of Dorian helps establish a series of circulating looks and circulating desires around the portrait, the artist, the sitter, and observers, so the framing trope of a portrait within a portrait reproduces Wilde’s own loquacious theatricality, inviting audiences and spectators to share in the pleasures of queer looking.

Extending the self-consciousness of looking explored in the first chapter to a consciousness of talking, the second chapter, “Talking Pictures,” explores how logorrhea, or too much talking, helps create exuberant and theatrical portraits. Focusing on how modernist style emerges from the pleasure of characters hearing themselves talking, this chapter looks at the 1927 film *The Jazz Singer*, T. S. Eliot’s poem “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” Langston Hughes’s “Madam” poems, Cole Porter’s
song lyrics, and Radclyffe Hall’s *The Well of Loneliness*. Talking too much—chattering, prattling—is linked to femininity and sexual deviance. Women chatter; gay men chatter. By insisting on the pleasure of talking, logorrheic modernism creates a community of not only talkers but also listeners who share the pleasure of talking and who talk back—to sexual normativity, social propriety, and economic injustice.

The third chapter, “Caricature Studies,” considers the proliferation of queer satire—satiric portraits of lesbians and gay men—in the modernist period. Satire functions by exaggerating the split between seeing and being looked at, a split that emphasizes the normative and controlling look and, in psychoanalysis, functions as a limitation or circumscription that signifies castration. But satire also takes great pleasure in playing with this split, attenuating or compressing it for its comic effects, and thus, satire circulates and even parodies the controlling look it uses to make its critique. Satire that emphasizes this split without deconstructing it, such as Wyndham Lewis’s *Apes of God* and Compton Mackenzie’s *Extraordinary Women*, denies the ways in which satire is always implicated in its own critique and ultimately upholds a kind of normativity. By contrast, Djuna Barnes’s *Ladies Almanack* and Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando* take great pleasure in turning the satiric look back on both hetero- and homonormativity.

Chapter 4, “Forgery, or, Faking It,” argues that the theme of faking sexual pleasure in portraits of lesbian modernism is linked to the pleasures, perversities, and evasions of faking identity. Faking it, as seen in Colette’s *The Pure and the Impure*, Nella Larsen’s *Passing*, and Gertrude Stein’s *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, circulates an enjoyment of invented particularities, peculiarities, and persons, and revels in how elaborated queer personas play with normative notions of fixed identity and individuality. The form and structure of this subversion of identity cannot be misunderstood to be individuality, as can be seen by Ernest Hemingway’s defensive imitation of Stein’s *Autobiography*—a defensiveness that shuts down the playfulness of faking it and causes the self he tries to buttress in his memoir to collapse. By revising his past and trying to fashion an irreprouachable authentic younger self, one enmeshed in but better than and independent of the social community of artists and intellectuals who mentored him, he takes refuge in a static individuality that cannot exploit the pleasures of a shifting, interpersonal and impersonating modernism, and cannot enjoy particularity as a pose, an aesthetic, an impersonation freed from individualism.
In 1907 Alice B. Toklas came to Paris and met Gertrude Stein at a gathering of artists and intellectuals at Stein’s house, 27 rue de Fleurus. At one point, as recollected by Stein in The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, the narrative persona “Alice” tells Pablo Picasso that she likes his portrait of Gertrude Stein and relates his surprising answer, one of the most oft-repeated anecdotes in modernism: “Yes, he said, everybody says that she does not look like it but that does not make any difference, she will, he said.” Picasso’s remark—or Stein’s rendering of Picasso’s remark—reveals a keen sense of modernist aesthetics as rooted in spectatorship, in readers, in an aesthetic response to a work that fashions subjects in the movement between sitters and those who observe them, and in the way history will understand them, their personalities, and the dynamism of art itself. Today we see Picasso’s portrait as a likeness of Stein, just as we read the young Marcel in Swann’s Way as a likeness of Proust, or identify the characters in Djuna Barnes’s Ladies Almanack as likenesses of the women of Natalie Barney’s circle, or associate Hemingway with the narrator of A Moveable Feast. But self-conscious, self-inventive “modernism” is also the shimmer of character outlines that do not fit the template of the personalities upon which they are modeled, the movement between self and self-invention that modernist style marks and elaborates in its playful circularity, indirection, and perversity. The invented personas and personalities of modernism are perhaps its most public face, its enduring legacy that has somehow remained such an elusive part of its project. Through these self-invented imagoes, personas, characters, and personalities, the stifling conventions of sexual comportment and social norms, the castrating demands of the look, the overwhelming imperative to be conventional, are sent up and perverted, circulated as part of a playful costume party where individuality, normativity, social status, and social stigma are poses. Here it is possible for readers, regardless of how normal they aren’t, to enjoy themselves immensely.
The youthful Dorian (Hurd Hatfield) contemplates his aging and misshapen portrait in the 1945 MGM film version of *The Picture of Dorian Gray.*