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Literary Labor: Radclyffe Hall's Reproductive Futures

Calling for the suppression of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* in the August 19, 1928 edition of the *Sunday Express*, moralist-sensationalist James Douglas claimed that he "would rather give a healthy boy or a healthy girl a phial of prussic acid than this novel. Poison kills the body, but moral poison kills the soul."[1] This, of course, is not news. As Laura Doan has argued, the provocative "poison" passage has been quoted or misquoted in countless accounts of *The Well* and its trials, with Douglas's "resonant acid sound bite" generally and mistakenly taken as evidence of widespread homophobia and mainstream moral panic.[2] For Hall, however, the "poison" part of Douglas's comment may not have been as remarkable or as objectionable as the "healthy boy or a healthy girl." Responding to an enquiry from literary critic Gorham Munson in 1934, six years after *The Well*'s publication and UK ban, Hall made it quite clear that her novel had not been written for children, healthy or otherwise:

> Far be it from me to wish books to be banned, I stand or fall by literary freedom; I consider that the young should be guarded in their homes, that parents and guardians should be the only censors. I, personally, have never set out to write books that are suitable for the nursery.[3]

This acerbic (if belated) rejoinder to Douglas is followed by an unexpected leap from reality into metaphor. Having considered parental responsibilities toward real-life child readers, Hall goes on to denounce the irresponsible creation of "dirty, unloved, lewd" book-babies:

> But I do feel very sad when I read some of the books that have rushed through the door over my dead body, books giving a completely distorted idea of true congenital sexual invertion [sic]; books written with flippancy—funny, I admit, but ruthlessly ridiculing the whole subject; or, worse still, books written with an eye to sales, dirty, unloved, lewd little books that their authors should have strangled at birth.[4]

Hall's "General Remarks" on literary censorship, intended to inform Munson's (presumably aborted) *History of Contemporary English and American Fiction*, are revealing for two reasons. First, by focusing on "the young" and what she "set out" to do, Hall evokes the 1857 Obscene Publications Act rather than its 1868 revision in *Regina v. Hicklin*. The 1857 law, applying "exclusively to works written for the single purpose of corrupting the morals of youth," was famously amended by the "Hicklin test" and its emphasis on impact and reception rather than intention: from 29 April 1868, a book could be deemed obscene if it displayed a "tendency […] to deprave or corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences, and into whose hands a publication of this sort may fall."[5] Second, though the "nursery" line is clearly tongue-in-cheek, Hall's invocation of two types of offspring—impressionable young readers and indecent books—shows a readiness to take up exactly the kind of child-centred rhetoric that had long fuelled both sides of censorship debates.[6] Like Douglas, for whom prussic acid could be easily reimagined as "moral poison," Hall allowed the literal to slide into the figurative as she at once promoted propriety, acknowledged the vulnerability of young would-be readers, and criticized "dirty" books. *The Well of Loneliness*—and, by extension, its protagonist—was, to Hall's mind, a healthy boy or a healthy girl.

Taking its lead from the liberal, sometimes playful, often powerful deployment of the symbolic child in texts and paratexts both by and about Hall, this essay explores the various functions and implications of metaphors of reproduction, parturition, childhood, and parenthood in *The Well* and beyond. Michael Cobb's claim that "something about children—less as actual beings and more as what they are made to signify—livens up queer theory" applies equally to Hall's fiction, its notorious suppression, and the queer book-babies in its orbit.[7] While Douglas attempted to breathe new life into the tired Victorian figure of the innocent child in need of protection, queer women writers in the 1920s and 1930s were "livening up" their work by proposing alternative forms of heredity, procreation, and motherhood. These writers, commonly grouped together as "lesbian modernists"—a loosely applied label that has tended to insist neither on a fixed (or exclusive) sexual identity nor on radical formal experiment and innovation—offered new, productive, and far from normative ways of engaging with children and the traditional family.[8] Navigating a series of surprising associations and mixed metaphors around children and childbirth, the essay tugs on a thematic cord that twists and turns through lesbian modernism: textual progeny and queer means of creating them.

Although the metaphor of midwifery is well known to readers of canonical modernism—we might think of Ezra Pound, the "sage homme" of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), or the two lesbian couples who delivered James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922)—it goes without saying that the idea of a book as a child is neither unusual nor specifically modernist.[9] In Kevin Ohi's words, "the opposition between 'literal' reproduction (giving birth to babies) and a more impalpable form of it (creating knowledge and texts, idea-babies) goes back at least to Plato's *Symposium*."[10] But where the straightforward metaphor of a textual creation as an "idea-baby" has been taken up by writers and publishers across history, those clustered under the lesbian modernist umbrella engaged with this motif, both in published work and in private correspondence, in ways so similar as to suggest a common sensibility and purpose. Hannah Roche has shown how both Hall and Gertrude Stein produced creative "babies" only after being "impregnated" by their more feminine partners (in Hall's case, by her "extra-marital" lover Evguenia Souline), thus complicating the idea of rigid gender positions and fixed butch/femme roles.[11] Here, I read instances of queer textual procreation as fantastically fertile and future proof, going on to argue for censorship as a generative or reproductive force. Taking Hall's novel as a case study before turning to narratives both within and around it, I draw attention to alternative and emphatically queer ways of staking a claim on the future.

The Well of Loneliness and the Yet Unborn

It would be unusual for a discussion of reproductive futures not to begin with Lee Edelman's seemingly immortal *No Future* (2004).[12] Edelman's contentious yet enduring provocation, "that *queerness* names the side of those not 'fighting for the children,' the side outside the consensus by which all politics confirms the absolute value of reproductive futurism" is, as a range of critics have observed, both limited and limiting.[13] Despite some acknowledgment of the possibilities of LGBTQ+ parenthood, Edelman's male-centric thesis—which places the reproductive future of heterosexuality on one side and the death drive of queerness on the other—makes room for neither family-oriented nor future-driven queer lives.[14] While Hall and Edelman may be unlikely bedfellows, "the fatal lure of sterile, narcissistic enjoyments understood as inherently destructive of meaning" unites and defines certain queer communities in *The Well*.[15] Making their acquaintance with "the garish and tragic night life" of gay Paris, Stephen Gordon and her partner Mary Llewellyn encounter male inverts "of all degrees of despondency, all grades of mental and physical ill-being" who "must yet dance together in response to the band—and that dance seemed the Dance of Death to Stephen."[16] From the young female inverts at the Ideal Bar, whose defiant pleasure suggests a Gloria Gaynor gay-bar singalong ("We are as we are; what about it? We don't care a damn, in fact we're delighted!," *TWL*, 445) to the "miserable army" at the "merciless, drug-dealing, death-dealing haunt" (*TWL*, 452) of Alec's, via the amorous dancing couples at *Le Narcisse*, the inverts of Paris are united in sterile debauchery. Though devoid of Edelman's *jouissance*, the cocaine-fuelled death-dancing at Alec's provides a fictional representation of his queer death drive *par excellence*.

But Hall's ostensibly bleak narrative does invest in a reproductive future—in a symbolic child born out of a sterile union. At the end of the novel, when Stephen has made the “mad” (*TWL*, 508) decision to sacrifice her happiness with Mary, the haunting host of inverts makes an unsettling return:

> The quick, the dead, and the yet unborn—all calling her, softly at first and then louder. […] And these terrible ones started pointing at her with their shaking, white-skinned, effeminate fingers: “You and your kind have stolen our birthright; you have taken our strength and have given us your weakness!” They were pointing at her with white, shaking fingers.
>
> Rockets of pain, burning rockets of pain—their pain, her pain, all welded together into one great consuming agony. Rockets of pain that shot up and burst, dropping scorching tears of fire on the spirit—her pain, their pain ... all the misery at Alec’s.
>
> […]
>
> They possessed her. Her barren womb became fruitful—it ached with its fearful and sterile burden. It ached with the fierce yet helpless children who would clamour in vain for their right to salvation. They would turn first to God, and then to the world, and then to her. […]
>
> And now there was only one voice, one demand; her own voice into which those millions had entered. A voice like the awful, deep rolling of thunder; a demand like the gathering together of great waters. A terrifying voice that made her ears throb, that made her brain throb, that shook her very entrails, until she must stagger and all but fall beneath this appalling burden of sound that strangled her in its will to be uttered.
>
> “God,” she gasped, “we believe; we have told You we believe ...We have not denied You, then rise up and defend us. Acknowledge us, oh God, before the whole world. Give us also the right to our existence!” (*TWL*, 511-12)

Stephen’s markedly queer symbolic and spiritual pregnancy will lead to labor in more than one sense, as she realizes that it is her duty to turn to her work as a novelist: she must write in order to achieve a future of acceptance and acknowledgement. We might argue that the novel’s closing scene presents an inversion of childbirth—or an instance of insemination rather than parturition—as the “fierce yet helpless children” enter Stephen’s barren womb, making it fruitful, and the agony is experienced at the moment of entry rather than delivery. The “rockets of pain” shoot upwards as the “great waters” gather and generations of inverts take hold of Stephen’s body. Yet Stephen’s final gasping exclamation is also a moment of release, as she at last gives voice—or birth—to the frightening product of her newly fertile womb. In an earlier draft, Stephen’s womb “dilated with” rather than “ached with” its burden, suggesting an imminent delivery.[17] The call for "the right to our existence" indicates a freshly acquired sense of purpose and determination: while the "normal" subjects of her first novel "had sucked at her breasts of inspiration, and drawn from them blood, waxing wonderfully strong" (*TWL*, 251), Stephen will go on to nurse fictional characters like herself.

The ending's metaphoric excess—and its "juxtaposition of Christian iconography and reproductive discourse," in Jane Garrity's words—has invited a diverse array of readings.[18] For Valerie Rohy, who rightly argues that Hall both "reflects the preoccupation of heteronormative culture with breeding and offers an alternative genealogy," the novel's insistence on inversion as inborn is contradicted by the suggestion that Stephen's "potential writing about the reality of queer life has the potential to create a new generation of gay men and lesbians."[19] But by invoking "the yet unborn," Hall is not suggesting that Stephen's writing will play a part in creating real-life sexual inverts. Hall's metaphors may be overdone, but the end of the novel simply proposes that Stephen's writing—a product not of the individual mind but of a female reproductive system made fruitful by queer kinship—will give voice to inverts past, present, and future, serving as an authoritative record and tool for self-definition.[20] Much earlier in the novel, Stephen's governess Puddle encourages her to recognize that the "curious double insight" afforded by inversion gives her both an advantage and a duty as a writer: "For the sake of all the others who are like you, but less strong and less gifted perhaps, many of them, it's up to you to have the courage to make good" (*TWL*, 244). By the final pages, this "burden," repeated in two consecutive paragraphs, will at last be birthed as a novel. Though Rohy notes the significance of the fact that Stephen "writes no *Well* of her own," and while we cannot conflate Hall's own experiences with those of her protagonist, the novel's closing lines are plainly metatextual: we are holding a plea for acknowledgment in our hands, and we can "rise up and defend" inverts like Stephen.[21] The end of the novel thus obviously marks a beginning: the book, like the infant Stephen as described by the housemaid Collins, will be a new kind of "queer kid" (*TWL*, 24) who will reach maturity among readers present and future.

Using the accommodating language of pregnancy and procreation, Hall transforms sterility and self-destruction into a future-driven narrative of progress and literary productivity. Though Rohy describes Hall's model of lesbian reproduction as "not the lineal transmission of genetic material to future generations, but the lateral sharing of queer identity across social and discursive networks," the direction of travel is not sideways but forward.[22] Hall's linear narrative has been propelled onward to this point, with the alliteration of Morton and the Martin-Mary-martyr triangle implying a predetermined and inescapable narrative pattern or path—a plot that Edelman might describe as future-negating ("Morton Hall," of course, is also curiously close to "Martin Hallam," reinforcing the novel's heteronormative assault). But with the release of her "burden," Stephen does anything but "insist that the future stop here."[23] She will not go forth and multiply—it is telling that the inverts' voices do not multiply but merge into one—but the fruit of her womb promises a queer future made visible through text. It is significant that the female inverts at the Ideal Bar embody generational change and a brighter future, representing a "younger, and therefore more reckless, more aggressive and self-assured generation; […] a generation that had come after war to wage a new war on a hostile creation."[24] The future promise of the modern and self-assured invert is even more apparent in Hall's draft, where an early version of gay playwright Jonathan Brockett is teased for admiring a Victorian portrait: "you belong to the century after next," exclaims Violet Antrim.[25] Through both "new" inverts and new books about them, *The Well* looks ahead to a queer future—perhaps not quite the utopia imagined by José Esteban Muñoz, but certainly "a horizon imbued with potentiality."[26]

The suggestion that "modern" homosexuality would be at home in the future is reiterated by *The Well*'s Valérie Seymour, a character based on sapphic salon hostess Natalie

Clifford Barney: “Nature was trying to do her bit; inverts were being born in increasing numbers, and after a while their numbers would tell” (*TWL*, 475). These “telling” numbers would indicate, count, and narrate. Valérie’s prediction offers a pleasing counternarrative to the story of queer doom and despair that so many have found at the end of Hall’s novel.[27] It also recalls the opening lines of Edward Carpenter’s *The Intermediate Sex* (1908), which formed part of Hall’s sexological research towards *The Well*:

> The subject dealt with in this book is one of great, and one may say growing, importance. Whether it is that the present period is one of large increase in the numbers of men and women of an intermediate or mixed temperament, or whether it merely is that it is a period in which more than usual attention happens to be accorded to them, the fact certainly remains that the subject has great actuality and is pressing upon us from all sides.[28]

Some sixty pages later, Carpenter introduces another means of queer increase:

> It certainly does not seem impossible to suppose that as the ordinary love has a special function in the propagation of the race, so the other has its special function in social and heroic work, and in the generation—not of bodily children—but of those children of the mind, the philosophical conceptions and ideals which transform our lives and those of society.[29]

Hall clearly took up Carpenter’s theory with enthusiasm, drawing readers’ attention to Stephen’s potential to fulfil more than one “special function” by conceiving of queer fiction not only as socially transformative but as providing a new genetic line. Though Carpenter’s sexological work tended mostly toward men, his widely influential presentation of homosexuality as superior to “ordinary love”—“Uranian [homosexual] men are superior to the normal men […] in respect of their love-feeling”—evidently appealed to Hall.[30] Stephen, superior on account of her “curious double insight,” is poised to carry out the heroic, transformative, and socially “special” work that Carpenter describes.

It may be unsurprising that while Hall and her fellow inverts or “intermediates” relished the idea of a higher order, “ordinary” novelists scoffed at queer proliferation and supremacy. In Compton Mackenzie’s *Extraordinary Women* (1928), no doubt one of the "books written with flippancy" that so appalled Hall, bulldog-like poet Rory Freemantle anticipates a queer future:

> "Why, if I thought my love was nothing but a perverted vice I should fling myself off a cliff. It is because I believe my love is something beyond ordinary love, being creation not procreation, that I regard myself to be privileged to be constituted as I am. I regard myself as the evidence of progress, not as a freak. I maintain that in the future all love will be homosexual."
>
> "It would be one way of bringing the world to an end," Madame Sarbécoff whispered to herself. "Which of course is not an entirely displeasing notion."
>
> "Oh, by that time humanity will have found a better way of procreation," said Rory optimistically.[31]

Rory's exaggerated claim that all future love will be homosexual offers a hyperbolic extension of Carpenter's introduction and Valérie's prediction. Though presented mockingly, the idea that "creation" may be a viable or even superior surrogate for procreation chimes with Hall's repurposing of Stephen's "barren womb" at the end of *The Well*. Indeed, Marylu Hill's claim that "Stephen's substitutes are clearly demarcated as second-rate and feeble attempts at fertility" is surely misleading.[32] For fictional inverts and writers like Stephen and Rory, in the grip of "Creation's terrific urge to create; the urge that will sometimes sweep forward blindly alike into fruitful and sterile channels" (*TWL*, 366), textual children offered what real children could not: a queerer—and by extension better—future.

Descending into *The Well*

From Stephen's queer offspring at the end of *The Well*, I now turn to the birth and development of the child-as-book metaphor earlier in the novel. Rohy argues that "queer scenes of reading often make queer people what they are," but few critics have paid attention to Stephen's reading beyond the Bible and Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886).[33] In this part of the essay, I show not only the plot-driving power of other narratives in *The Well* but also the symbolic reproductive potential of the novel's intertexts.

Hall could not have been clearer, to adopt Douglas's phrasing, that her protagonist was "doomed from the beginning."[34] Named (before her birth) after St. Stephen because her father, Sir Philip, "admired the pluck of that Saint" (*TWL*, 14), and born a day before Christmas Day and two days before St. Stephen's Day, Hall's congenital invert is destined for biblical martyrdom from *The Well*'s opening chapter. The novel's second significant father-daughter naming scene—where the presence of Stephen's name in the margins of Sir Philip's copy of a book by sexologist Krafft-Ebing, clearly *Psychopathia Sexualis*, allows her to identify who she is—has been well studied.[35] However, critics have missed an important detail. Stephen may be of a kind who "are destined from birth to be writers" (*TWL*, 250), but she is also destined from birth to embody Krafft-Ebing's work: as she turns 27 in 1913 (*TWL*, 296), we know that Stephen was born in 1886—the same year as the first publication of *Psychopathia Sexualis*. In other words, Stephen, like the novel that she will write at the end of *The Well*, is an "idea-baby"—quite literally a textbook invert.

Books, broadly defined, serve in the novel as both a key to self-definition and an alternative form of inheritance. When Stephen leaves her family home, she takes "nothing with her from Morton but the hidden books found in her father's study; these she had taken, as though in a way they were hers by some intolerable birthright" (*TWL*, 274). Stephen will not continue the long line of Gordons, "lusty breeders of sons that they had been" (*TWL*, 130), but she will inherit and give new life to her father's queer texts—*Psychopathia Sexualis* and a "slim volume" by Karl Heinrich Ulrichs that he "had taken to reading half the night" (*TWL*, 31) when the seven-year-old Stephen's sexual difference had first become apparent. The birth of an invert, in *The Well*, is bound up in books, and Hall's book is bound up in birth. Stephen's masculine name and its biblical implications, her sexological identity, and her vocation as a writer are predetermined from (or before) birth, and it is only through established narratives that she can articulate her sexual otherness. When Stephen first experiences a sense of both innate masculinity and desire for a woman, the housemaid Collins, the books on the nursery shelves allow her to express who she is: "At one time she had very much liked being read to, especially from books that were all about heroes; but now such stories so stirred her ambition, that she longed intensely to live them" (*TWL*, 23). Dressing up as Nelson enables Stephen to demonstrate her identification as a boy (*TWL*, 23-4), while Jesus's suffering in *The Child's Book of Scripture Stories* provides a means of showing love for Collins (through the incident of the "housemaid's knee," *TWL*, 25-8). Though Hall did not set out to write books that were suitable for the nursery, both aspects of Stephen's inversion—gender difference and same-sex attraction—are made legible through children's stories.

In a critically neglected moment in the fifth and final volume, the transformative power of reading (aloud) is reintroduced. As Stephen enjoys a summer at home in Paris with her younger partner Mary, to whom she might offer "such a love as would be complete in itself without children" (*TWL*, 350), Hall directly names a past narrative of childlessness in which both a future and a legacy could be achieved:

> On those evenings when they did not go out, Stephen would now read aloud to Mary, leading the girl's adaptable mind into new and hitherto unexplored channels; teaching her the joy that can lie in books, even as Sir Philip had once taught his daughter. Mary had read so little in her life that the choice of books seemed practically endless, but Stephen must make a start by reading that immortal classic of their own Paris, *Peter Ibbetson*, and Mary said:
>
> "Stephen—if we were ever parted, do you think that you and I could dream true?"
>
> And Stephen answered: "I often wonder whether we're not dreaming true all the time—whether the only truth isn't in dreaming." Then they talked for a while of such nebulous things as dreams, which will seem very concrete to lovers. (*TWL*, 383)

Both shared reading experiences and du Maurier's *Peter Ibbetson* had long been among Hall's evening enjoyments. A 1917 entry in Hall's long-term partner Una Troubridge's diary reads "Dined with John [Hall] in her bedroom and read *Peter Ibbetson* to her until I finished it past 1 o'clock."[36] It is easy to see why Hall would have found the escapism of du Maurier's "immortal classic" difficult to resist. The possibility of "dreaming true" is introduced two hundred pages into du Maurier's novel, as the "singular autobiography" takes a sharp turn into childlike fantasy.[37] Having fallen asleep in his hotel room in the Rue de la Michodière, hero Ibbetson awakes to a new state of consciousness with his adored Mary Seraskier. Mary guides Ibbetson into the past, where he will reencounter his long-dead mother, and trains him in the technique of "dreaming true," a skill that she learned from her father. What follows is a series of nighttime excursions in which Ibbetson and Mary not only revisit scenes from their shared childhood but also find that they can access and inhabit "antenatal memories" (*PI*, 356), even succeeding in occupying and revivifying the mind of a distant common ancestress. Though Ibbetson is imprisoned for murder and subsequently removed to a criminal lunatic asylum, his nightly wanderings allow him to range freely over the personal and historical past and to *do time* in a thrilling and liberating way. "It is a singularly new, piquant, and exciting sensation," reflects Ibbetson, "to stare in person, and as in the present, at bygone actualities, and be able to foretell the past and remember the future all in one!" (*PI*, 364). Just as Ibbetson is about to begin the task of deciphering, editing, and illustrating Mary's voluminous diaries, his memoir ends abruptly. We learn that he has been found dead, "with his pen still in his hand, and his head bowed down on the unfinished manuscript" (*PI*, 417). The illustrated book that we hold in our hands, intended as "but an introduction" (*PI*, 367) to a future publication, is the only surviving record of, and manual for, "dreaming true."

Nina Auerbach has identified a queer kinship of sorts between du Maurier and Hall: "the author of *Peter Ibbetson* is as much a spiritual exile as Radclyffe Hall's half-women."[38] But the presence of *Peter Ibbetson* in Stephen and Mary's Paris home points to much more than a sense of connection with its author. On the face of it, a novel that instructs its readers to "go forth and multiply exceedingly, to marry early and much and often, and to select the very best of your kind in the opposite sex" (*PI*, 360) may appear to have little in common with Hall's narrative of gender difference, same-sex love, and sorry self-sacrifice. Yet by sharing *Peter Ibbetson* with the girlish Mary, passing on the pleasure of reading that she learned from her father via a novel about another skill passed from father to daughter to lover, Stephen demonstrates a creative way of securing both an inheritance and a legacy. In du Maurier's novel, Ibbetson and Mary—who has lost the only son from her failed marriage, a "cripple" who was "born without a mind" (*PI*, 282)—are unable to procreate together: "Never could we hope for son or daughter of our own. […] Our only children were Mimsey [Mary] and Gogo [Ibbetson]" (*PI*, 337). Making offspring of their childhood selves, Ibbetson and Mary form an alternative family that endures across and against time. But after the real-life Mary dies attempting to rescue a child (and as Ibbetson continues to visit his parents in their youth to find that he loves his mother as a daughter), she returns to Ibbetson seven times, and each time she is carrying not a child but a book. While the ability to dream true has led Ibbetson to ponder whether there may be "some survival of the past, of the race, of our own childhood even" that may be embedded in the flesh, to be "developed into a future source of bliss and consolation for our descendants" (*PI*, 218), it is text rather than flesh that endures. Tellingly, after Ibbetson's death, a note from a cousin informs readers that Ibbetson had illustrated his unfinished manuscript with a sketch of a boy wheeling a wheelbarrow of stones from an open door labelled "*Passé*" (Past) to another labelled "*Avenir*" (Future) (*PI*, 417).

Despite Ibbetson's death and Stephen's symbolic "mort" (*TWL*, 509), both novels end in assured expectation of a future. Du Maurier and Hall encourage readers to recognize that they are holding a version of the book that exists just beyond the text—Ibbetson's account of Mary's revelations, and Stephen's novel of inversion—and that fictional characters might reproduce across narratives.[39] Though Ibbetson's antenatal memories are heard "clamoring for recognition" (*PI*, 356) and Stephen's inverts "clamour in vain for their right to salvation"

(*TWL*, 512), it is only through writing that recognition and salvation can be sought. Celia Marshik is right that Hall's Mary is precisely the kind of young female reader for whom Douglas and his ilk feared.[40] It is clearly significant that Stephen introduces her younger lover—whom she would later effectively marry off, potentially to produce a queer family with the "queer, sensitive" Martin who feels "strange" stirrings not for women but for trees—to another adored Mary in Paris whose narrative is one of alternative kinship and romantic otherness. While Norman Haire, Hall's "star witness" in the UK trial, claimed that "homosexuality ran in families and a person could no more become it by reading books than he (if not she) could become syphilitic by reading about syphilis," Hall and du Maurier both propose that books provide a different kind of genealogy—a line of literary inheritance and influence that extends far into the future.[41]

Censorship's Reproductive Futures

The Well's trial provides just one example of how the act of banning a book ignites interest, leading to republication, regeneration, and the promise of a future readership. What Marshik identifies as the "structural irony of censorship"—the way in which "authorities create a larger readership for the books under prohibition"[42]—was recognized by a diverse range of journalists in the week after Douglas's attack:

> "The Sunday Express" […] in publishing this article appears to have surpassed itself in ridiculous stunt journalism. From the public point of view we suspect that beyond the free publicity the article has given to the novel, the editor has achieved little except in making himself a laughing stock to every intelligent reader of his paper. To our minds there is not the least likelihood of this book being suppressed. (*Wembley News*, August 24, 1928)
>
> It is a misfortune that, in the present unhealthy state of much of the public appetite for light reading, the strong censure of a novel on moral grounds immediately increases its sale. (*Catholic Times*, August 24, 1928)

> [W]hat happens when a tirade against it appears in a popular daily like the *Express*! There is a mystery about what really is the objectionable theme. It is discussed in offices, in trains, in all places where people meet together, with the result that a great interest is aroused and everybody wants to read the book. (*The Newsagent*, August 25, 1928)

> Anyhow, the stunt press has stunted the book into enormous popularity. A friend asked for it at Hatchard's and another Piccadilly bookshop, and at each was told that the book was out of stock, and no copies would be available until next week. Which all goes to show that if a book is pronounced unfit to read people will buy it to see what makes it so. ("The Well of Loneliness: A Sequel." *Sporting Times*, August 25, 1928)

Journalists were not alone in pointing out that public outbursts generate new readerships. In her 1940 autobiography, Faith Compton Mackenzie, writer and wife of the author of *Extraordinary Women*, considers the impact of Douglas's article and the subsequent withdrawal of Hall's novel. Commenting on the novel's immediate republication in Paris and availability on "all Continental bookstalls," Mackenzie goes so far as to question the motive behind Douglas's attack: "It could not have been a friendly gesture in the interests of Miss Hall's circulation [… but] why in the world didn't he write a private letter to the Censor[?]"[43] Elizabeth English has uncovered Home Office minutes from 1933 in which the *Daily Mail* reports a request from the Mitre Press to demand the suppression, *à la* Douglas, of one of its own publications—a novel of a similar "type" to *The Well*.[44] Mackenzie's speculation and English's discovery prompt further questions, not only about the gains to be made by falling prey to the censors but also about the potential for deliberate strategies to ensure rather than avoid (bad) publicity. Doan has questioned Hall's publisher Jonathan Cape's decision to respond to Douglas by "naively or unwisely" forwarding a copy of *The Well* to Home Secretary William Joynson-Hicks, the infamous "Jix": did Cape, Doan asks, believe that "controversy could only stimulate interest and improve sales"?[45] Hall's immediate "literary mission," in Jodie Medd's words, was "short-circuited" by scandal: in the weeks and months around the trial, sensational journalism distracted and detracted from "the novel's sincerity."[46] A longer view, however, might reveal a more positive picture. In this part of the essay, I show how censorship itself can beget a reproductive future, arguing that writers including Hall were well aware of—and prepared to exploit—the "structural irony" to which Marshik refers. Establishing that notoriety secured a future for Hall's book-baby, I go on to read the publication of Norah James's *Sleeveless Errand* (1929) as an attempt to reproduce Hall's *succès de scandale*.

Whatever Cape's intention, it is clear that the censorship of Hall's novel should not be interpreted straightforwardly as a defeat. In her work on interfering censors' inadvertent yet inevitable boost to literary reputations, Katherine Mullin has argued that writers including Hall were "responsible for a narrative of creative martyrdom, struggle, and rebellion which does not do full justice to a more ambiguous, compromised reality."[47] *The Well*'s St Stephen narrative shows that Hall had martyrdom in mind from the start, and her later reflections on the novel and its trials indicate an eagerness to maintain a public image of a war-weary literary freedom fighter prepared to risk all for her cause:

> Have I suffered through the writing of 'The Well of Loneliness'? Yes and no.
>
> […] I do not like notoriety, it embarrasses me and makes me feel shy, but I realise that it is the price I must pay for having intentionally come out in the open, and no price could ever be too great in my eyes.[48]

The campaign against *The Well* clearly had negative effects on its author: Hall was infuriated by both Douglas's article and Cape's delivery of the novel to the Home Office, and the legal proceedings were "highly detrimental" to her finances.[49] However, Hall's anger during and around the trial centred not on a sense of professional failure but rather on the magistrate's misinterpretation of her work and the feeling that other writers and potential supporters had betrayed her.[50] Hall's "mission of public martyrdom," to quote Medd, clearly succeeded; in biographer Sally Cline's words, though her case was lost, "John had won on honour."[51]

Readers have missed the wryness of both Hall's and her partner Troubridge's later comments on the novel's ban, where expressions of apparent lament or regret are followed by reminders of *The Well*'s remarkable international reach. Shortly before sharing her thoughts on censorship and the nursery in the letter to Munson, Hall writes of *The Well*:

> I still deeply regret its banning in England, nor can I derive complete consolation from the fact that it has been translated into many languages and received in all the principal countries of Europe with appreciation and understanding. Until my book is permitted to come home I shall feel that I have a blot on my escutcheon. Then again, I undoubtedly opened the door to a flood of literature on the same subject.[52]

Troubridge delivers a similar message in her *Life and Death of Radclyffe Hall* (1961):

> What nobody foresaw was that the re-publication in Paris would be followed by translation into eleven languages, by the triumph of the book in the United States of America and the sale of more than a million copies. The author herself would probably have felt less tired had she been able to look ahead, to read in advance some of the many thousands of letters that came to her later from men and women in every walk of life, of every age and every nationality in all parts of the world. […] She would have felt less tired had she known that fourteen years after publication *The Well of Loneliness* in America alone would have a steady annual sale of over one hundred thousand copies.[53]

We might smile at Troubridge's claim that "nobody foresaw" the novel's success. Hall achieved exactly the kind of future that Stephen anticipates at the end of *The Well*, with the "gathering together of great waters" bursting into "a flood of literature on the same subject." Along with this "flood" and the many letters of support generated by *The Well*, the novel's republication and eventual repatriation—the Falcon Press would publish an edition in 1949, six years after Hall's death—demonstrates precisely the type of textual reproduction of which Hall had conceived. It is clear that Hall played up the martyrdom narrative to maximum effect while benefiting from, in Faith Compton Mackenzie's words, a level of fame "granted to few books."[54] "Persecution," advised Hall in a 1933 lecture, "is very often the road by which a goal is ultimately reached."[55] While Stephen's third novel is described as "one of those books that intend to get born, and that go on maturing in spite of their authors" (*TWL*, 400), *The Well* had gone on maturing in spite—or because—of its ban.

Another narrative of sexual otherness and (literal) childlessness, strikingly different in style and tone from Hall's middlebrow modernism, followed *The Well* into print and into controversy. On February 20, 1929, just three months after *The Well*'s UK trial and two months after Hall's unsuccessful appeal, Norah James's *Sleeveless Errand* was targeted by the Metropolitan Police.[56] The novel was set to be published by Eric Partridge's Scholartis Press the following day, but officers—armed with a list of booksellers taken from the Scholartis offices—went to extraordinary measures to seize as many copies as they could find: bookshops were raided, a Scotland Yard guard was ordered to watch over one copy in a window display for two nights, and a reviewer was visited at home and ordered to hand over her copy.[57] The book was tried at the Bow Street Police Court and, on March 4, judged to be obscene. All 517 copies seized by police were to be destroyed. A booze-soaked narrative of debauchery, depression, infidelity, sexual promiscuity, and suicide, James's straight-talking first novel offended with its apparent indulgence in immorality, profanity, and blasphemy. In the words of the prosecution, Percival Clarke, "filthy language and indecent situations appear to be the keynote."[58] The *Londonderry Sentinel* paraphrased Clarke: "It was amazing that such a collection of degrading muck should be printed by any firm. The name of God or Christ was taken in vain in a way which shocked one."[59] Others were not so shocked. In a letter to Vita Sackville-West on February 23, 1929, Woolf expressed support for *Sleeveless Errand* despite the Hogarth Press's decision to reject it: "A novel that I refused to publish has been seized by the police: a vulgar book, but nothing in it to raise a hair."[60] More recently, Angela Ingram has admitted to finding the novel "rather 'decent,' actually," Neil Pearson has described its prosecution as "baffling and bizarre," and both Marshik and Bill Harrison have drawn convincing parallels with unchallenged novels from the same period.[61]

Yet the novel's ban was not quite so bizarre as readers have made out. From the opening scene onward—the narrative begins with "bloody little fool" Paula losing her grip on her lover—*Sleeveless Errand* presents a catalogue of vices and curses, reading as a sustained attempt to attract or even goad the censors.[62] Among the novel's sorry parties of drunks and prostitutes are those who are “all more or less promiscuous unless they’re homos” and a woman who “likes men and women equally well.”[63] While some might assume that first-time novelist James was simply unaware of the risks involved in writing openly about adultery and alcoholism, sex and suicide, her autobiography tells a different story. A member of the socialist 1917 Club, an active Trade Unionist who had worked eighteen-hour days organizing transport for the 1926 National Strike, and assistant to suffragist and Labour politician Barbara Ayrton Gould, James was no stranger to political protest and provocation. In 1926, James had taken a job at Jonathan Cape, where she would “do the publicity work,” designing press jackets and laying out advertisements for the press.[64] The first submission on which James’s employer asked her to share her personal opinion was *The Well of Loneliness*; finding it “a fine and sincere piece of work,” James went on to attend Hall’s trial.[65] At Cape’s, James quickly grew familiar with the workings of the publishing industry and developed a keen eye for scandal. “I believe that a book sells if people talk about it,” she observed. “If a reviewer gets violent enough, however damning his criticism is, the public may think ‘well, there must be something in this book to annoy him so much,’ and they read the book.”[66] In *Sleeveless Errand*, Paula’s bookshelf reads like a roll call of controversial writers—Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, and H. G. Wells—suggesting that James just might have been writing with Douglas’s breed of “officious and overbearing smut-hound” in mind.[67]

In this context, *Sleeveless Errand*’s ban appears far from baffling. Having gained an insider’s insight into the phenomenal demand for Hall’s “world-known” novel, not to mention its immediate republication by the Pegasus Press of Paris, James’s claim that she “could not understand” why her book was censored does not quite ring true.[68] Like Hall, James received letters of support and sympathy from “people [she] had never heard of”; like *The Well*, *Sleeveless Errand* attracted the attention of Parisian publisher Jack Kahane and soon enjoyed international renown.[69] Pearson records how the ban of James's novel led Kahane to found the Obelisk Press, heralding a new future for banned British books: "financed by what he saw as inevitable profits from potboilers such as *Sleeveless Errand*, he would publish the next generation of unpublishable geniuses."[70] By November 1929, with a second (safer) Scholartis novel already under her belt, James was celebrating her success in the *Daily Mail Atlantic Edition*. In the reporter's words, the authoress was "daily making further discoveries of how excellent an advertiser the Censor can be."[71] With *Sleeveless Errand* profiting from "an extraordinary sale" in the US and having been translated into four languages, James—who would go on to write more than 70 books, a number of them with her partner Barbara Beauchamp—was at the very top of her game. "It's astonishing," she declared, "how being banned in England can boost a book in every other country." An earlier *Yorkshire Post* review of James's second novel, *Hail! All Hail!*, had rightly described censorship as "a species of canonisation."[72]

But unlike *The Well*, *Sleeveless Errand* was not reprinted in the UK, and it has not stood the test of time. As is the case here, if discussed at all, James's novel is read in relation to—or in the shadow of—*The Well.* An illustrated pamphlet written by journalist P.R. Stephensen and published by Scholartis, *The Well of Sleevelessness: A Tale for the Least of these Little Ones* (1929), adopted the style of a nursery rhyme to poke fun at Hall and James: "Instead of being good little girls / Well-behaved and coy / One of them used to put on trousers / And masquerade as a boy."[73] More recent readers have shown how women's failure or refusal to procreate is at the heart of both novels: Ingram has suggested that "the ultimate obscenity is to attack, nay, to set aside, patriarchy and paternity," while Marshik has argued that both novels were censored because they "implied that young women were liable to have their sexuality perverted as a result of the freedoms provided by war work."[74] Both claims are compelling. At a time when "Jix" was warning young readers about the "flood of filth" from the Continent, naming "birth control novels" as a particular threat, these women-authored narratives of apparently anti-patriotic childlessness could not be allowed to circulate.[75] Hall's novel is by far the queerer of the two, and it is significant that Stephen's radical repurposing of her own barren womb has birthed a much more fruitful future. Though "Jimmy" to Hall's John, James was not read as lesbian, and her work has not quite secured a place in queer literary history. Perhaps befitting the title of her novel—the phrase "sleeveless errand" refers to a fruitless endeavor—James's focus on immediate scandal and international sales did not translate into long-term success. But Hall, by contrast, was a canny strategist with "yet unborn" readers in mind. Acknowledging the legacy and longevity of Hall's banned book allows us to revise Hall's (and Stephen's) story of self-sacrifice and apparent queer failure into a narrative of literary fertility and forward-driven queer fortitude.[76]

Conclusion: Reproductive Loving

The idea of a text as a child may be familiar, but the extent to which jointly produced textual offspring populate and shape lesbian modernism is remarkable. Some literary progeny, like Stephen Gordon's book-baby, are born out of ideology rather than intimacy. Virginia Woolf's discussion of masterpieces in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) is strikingly apt here: "masterpieces are not single and solitary births; they are the outcome of many years of thinking in common, of thinking by the body of the people, so that the experience of the mass is behind the single voice."[77] The fantastical birth of the first lesbian in Djuna Barnes's *Ladies Almanack* (1928) fits Woolf's description of a masterpiece: the "Woman born with a Difference" who hatches from the egg is, as Kathryn R. Kent has observed, produced by "literal mass (re)production."[78] In such scenes of impossible procreation, where a fullyformed lesbian is born to “all the Angels” or a queer text is birthed from a “barren womb” inhabited by inverts, the m/other gives birth to a representative other.[79]

Garrity’s convincing claim that Stephen’s “mediating function is to be the ‘mother of the race’ for homosexuals” becomes yet more compelling when read against and around other novels of the immediate period.[80] In Nella Larsen’s *Passing* (1929), Irene Redfield’s husband Brian argues that “[a]bsolutely everything” can be explained by the “[i]nstinct of the race to survive and expand”: “Look at the so-called whites. Leaving bastards all over the known earth.”[81] The “instinct of the race to survive and expand” provides one way of interpreting the drive to produce queer idea-babies across the predominantly white, upper-class, conservative category of lesbian modernism.[82] Significantly, the entanglement of sexuality, race, and nationality that Garrity has identified in Hall’s “mother of the race” narrative is apparent elsewhere. Woolf joked that *Orlando* (1928), born out of her love for Vita Sackville-West, had led to proliferation of the lesbian “race” through influence: “A woman writes that she has to stop and kiss the page when she reads *O*: —Your race I imagine,” she wrote to Sackville-West in 1929. “The percentage of Lesbians is rising in the States, all because of you.”[83] Though playful in tone, Woolf’s reading of lesbianism as a race that can be expanded, which introduces precisely the kind of paradox between determinism and transmission that Rohy finds in *The Well*, represents lesbian reproduction as a form of sexual conquest and colonization.[84] A tonally similar moment in Hall’s drafts clearly aligns lesbianism with national identity. In response to a direct question from Humphrey Brock (later Jonathan Brockett), “Are you a Lesbian?,” Stephen responds with a smile, “No—I’m English on my father[’]s side and Irish on my mother[’]s.”[85] Shifting the discussion away from sexuality (and Sappho’s Lesbos) and towards the Gordons’ nationality, Hall presents Stephen as both a product of inheritance and a place where the colonizer and the “the colonial other” meet.[86]

Yet some book-babies were, quite simply, expressions of love. Having met and "quite lost [her] heart" to Woolf in December 1922, Sackville-West published *Seducers in Ecuador* (1924) with the Woolfs' Hogarth Press.[87] In a letter to Woolf, Sackville-West flirtatiously asks "whether any copies of our joint progeny had been sold."[88] Where Woolf's hands put Sackville-West's words to paper, other "joint progeny" placed both lovers between the covers. Writing to her life partner Sylvia Townsend Warner, Valentine Ackland reflects on the pleasure of being together in the co-authored poetry collection *Whether a Dove or a Seagull* (1933): "It is most extraordinarily pleasant to me to think of this child of our love. A neat, tidy, quiet child—but a child of truth, and, I believe, of sturdy life."[89] When Stein writes in a lullaby-like love note to Toklas that she is "specializing in baby splendid | baby rested darling baby," her expertise in "baby" refers to both her love for her partner and the experimental texts that Toklas's love would allow her to create: "I made so many babies [...] and loved my baby."[90] An apparent reliance on familiar familial structures should not be interpreted as anti-queer assimilation or homonormativity: these writers bypassed biological limitations in order to produce queer children out of queer love. Rory Freemantle's "better way of procreation" may not have been a reality, but lesbian modernists and their partners discovered, created, and articulated alternative—and superior—modes of birthing and raising their young. Significantly, as she introduces the hero (later the heroine) of *Orlando*, Woolf presents life writing as preferable to and more rewarding than having children: "Happy the mother who bears, happier still the biographer who records the life of such a one!"[91]

Carla Freccero's claim that the queer time of lesbian literature is "not the heteronormative reproductivity of time, conceived as generations succeeding generations culminating in the present and on its way to a future that will be time's fruition" is not quite true of lesbian modernism, where loving creates babies and even the bleakest of novels imagines a new generation of queer readers.[92] Elizabeth Freeman's suggestion that to write is "only to hazard the possibility that there will be a future of some sort, a 'Queer Time' off the battlefield of everyday existence, in which the act of reading might take place somehow, somewhere" is perhaps more apposite here.[93] As we have seen, Hall and other queer pioneers took a bet on the future through the imaginative co-creation of textual children whom they were certain would thrive and multiply. Some of these children led their parents down unexpected paths. Almost six years after *The Well*'s ban, Hall wrote to Evguenia Souline:

> And today comes a request that I will open a [foyer?] or something for Barnardos [sic] Homes—you know, that charity for waifs and strays—not dogs or cats but children, my sweet, and very excellent work they do, and for my sins I accept the invitation. I only tell you this dull news because I am an invert, and all the world knows precisely what I am—and all the world is accepting the fact we people have got our nitch [sic] in nature, and my book: The Well of Loneliness, has helped this on by bringing about a better understanding.[94]

An apparently "unnatural" novel that posed a danger to healthy boys and healthy girls led to a celebrity endorsement from Barnardo's children's charity—something that *The Well*'s suppressors could not possibly have imagined. Against the odds, Hall's queerly procreative novel had found its "nitch" in nature. Her bet on a reproductive future was already paying off.

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[1] James Douglas, "A Book That Must Be Suppressed," *The Sunday Express*, August 19, 1928, 10.

[2] Laura Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism: The Origins of a Modern English Lesbian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 4.

[3] Radclyffe Hall, "General Remarks," in *Radclyffe Hall's 1934 Letter About The Well of Loneliness* (New York: Lesbian Herstory Educational Foundation, 1994), 10. Though we cannot be sure how Hall would identify today (she adopted the nickname John but used she/her pronouns), for the purposes of historical accuracy and consistency I refer to her as she/her throughout this essay.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Hansard HL, vol. 146, col. 329 (June 25, 1857); Regina v. Hicklin, *Law Reports 3: Queen's Bench Division* (1868), 371. See Katherine Mullin, "Unmasking *The Confessional Unmasked*: The 1868 Hicklin Test and the Toleration of Obscenity," *ELH*, 85.2 (Summer 2018): 471-99.

[6] Over forty years before Douglas's outburst, George Moore had launched his polemic against the circulating libraries' censorship of novels deemed unsuitable for the "school-room," using the metaphor of the book as infant to describe how Mr. Mudie and his Select Library were insulting adult readers' intelligence. See *Literature at Nurse, or Circulating Morals* (London: Vizetelly and Co., 1885). *Literature at Nurse* expands on Moore's open letter to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, published on December 10, 1884.

[7] Michael Cobb, "Childlike: Queer Theory and its Children," *Criticism*, 47.1 (Winter 2005): 119–130 (120). The many mothers and children at play across lesbian modernism have been well acknowledged and analysed. See, for instance, Marylu Hill, *Mothering Modernity: Feminism, Modernism, and the Maternal Muse* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1999), and chapter two of Kathryn Bond Stockton, *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009), 89-116. Themes of

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failed motherhood and unhappy mother-child relationships abound in Hall's fiction: see Inez Martinez, "The Lesbian Hero Bound: Radclyffe Hall's Portrait of Sapphic Daughters and Their Mothers," *Journal of Homosexuality*, 8.34 (Spring/Summer 1983): 127-38.

[8] In the introduction to *The Outside Thing: Modernist Lesbian Romance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 1-20, Hannah Roche argues for "lesbian" not as an essentialist, fixed, or exclusive term, but as a productive, inclusive descriptor of queer women's sexuality. In different ways, Roche and Elizabeth English have sought to expand the genre of lesbian modernism, calling for the inclusion of more accessible and stylistically conservative works. See English, *Lesbian Modernism: Censorship, Sexuality and Genre Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015). See also Jodie Medd, *Lesbian Scandal and the Culture of Modernism* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), and Diana Souhami, *No Modernism Without Lesbians* (London: Head of Zeus, 2020).

[9] See Aimee Armande Wilson, "Was Ezra Pound the 'midwife' of *The Waste Land*? Surgeons, Midwives, and 'Sage Homme,'" *Feminist Modernist Studies*, 2.2 (2019): 212-231. Two thirds of *Ulysses* were serialized in Jane Heap and Margaret Anderson's *The Little Review* before the novel was published, with the assistance of partner Adrienne Monnier, by Sylvia Beach's Shakespeare and Company. Beach famously said of *Ulysses*, "A baby belongs to its mother, not to the midwife, doesn't it?" See *Shakespeare and Company* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 205.

[10] Kevin Ohi, *Dead Letters Sent: Queer Literary Transmission* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 2. Susan Stanford Friedman has also explored a range of ways in which writers have "taken female anatomy as a model for human creativity in sharp contrast with the equally common phallic analogy." See "Creativity and the Childbirth Metaphor: Gender Difference in Literary Discourse," *Feminist Studies*, 13.1 (Spring 1987): 49–82 (49).

[11] See Roche, 62-68, 114-8.

[12] Aaron Matz points out that "Edelman's argument has been durable and influential, but one comes to regret the sense that his is the first book many people name when they hear about the subject of procreation and the novel." See *The Novel and the Problem of New Life* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021), xiv-xv (xiv).

[13] Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 3. For direct challenges to Edelman, see Susan Fraiman, *Cool Men and the Second Sex* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 130-7; Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts* (London: Melville House, 2015), 94-5); Anca Parvulescu, "Reproduction and Queer Theory: Between Lee Edelman's *No Future* and J. M. Coetzee's *Slow Man*," *PMLA*, 132.1 (January 2017): 86-100; and Matz, xiv-xv.

[14] "It is true that the ranks of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, and transgendered parents grow larger every day[. …] I am not for a moment assuming that queers […] are not themselves also psychically invested in preserving the familiar familial narrativity of reproductive futurism" (Edelman, 17).

[15] Edelman, 13.

[16] Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness* (Paris: The Pegasus Press, 1928), 442, 453. Hereafter abbreviated *TWL* and cited parenthetically by page number.

[17] Radclyffe Hall and Una Troubridge Papers, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin, 12.5.

[18] Jane Garrity, *Step-daughters of England: British Women Modernists and the National Imaginary* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 71. Garrity argues that Hall "endorses Britain's national and racial ideals" by aligning the lesbian body with reproductive aims. Richard Dellamora interprets the novel's ending as apocalyptic and aggressive; Emily S. Hill observes that "[o]utside of the christological framing of the narrative, this scene is easily read as one of total hopelessness"; and Kathryn Bond Stockton sees the novel's ending as "an almost gothic depiction of the impossibilities of queer love and invert childhood in Hall's time." See Dellamora, *Radclyffe Hall: A Life in the Writing* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 183-4; Hill, "God's Miserable Army: Love, Suffering, and Queer Faith in Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*," *Literature and Theology*, 30.3 (2016): 359–374 (369); Stockton, 102.

[19] Valerie Rohy, *Lost Causes: Narrative, Etiology, and Queer Theory* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 130, 129.

[20] We might think here of Hélène Cixous' claim that women "must write through their bodies." See "The Laugh of the Medusa," trans Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs*, 4 (Summer, 1976): 875-93 (886).

[21] Rohy, 126.

[22] Ibid., 127.

[23] Edelman, 31.

[24] *TWL*, 445. We encounter these "new" female inverts towards the end of Hall's first published novel, *The Unlit Lamp* (1924): "Active, aggressively intelligent women, not at all self-conscious in their tailor-made clothes, not ashamed of their cropped hair; women who did things well, important things; women who counted and would

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go on counting; smart, neatly put together women, looking like well-bred young men" (London: Virago, 1981), 284.

[25] Hall and Troubridge Papers, 13.4.

[26] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 1.

[27] See, for example, Terry Castle's hilarious afterward to *Palatable Poison: Critical Perspectives on The Well of Loneliness*, ed. Laura Doan and Jay Prosser (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 394-402.

[28] Edward Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women* (London: Sonnenschein & Co, 1908), 9. Hall's notes on sexology are in the Hall and Troubridge Papers, 12.5.

[29] Carpenter, 70.

[30] Ibid., 128. In Doan's words, "lesbian writers [including Hall] found in Carpenter's 'intermediate' a powerful model of a superior specimen" (153).

[31] Compton Mackenzie, *Extraordinary Women* (London: Martin Secker, 1928), 167-8.

[32] Hill, 162. As Terry Castle writes in an early essay on neoclassical and Romantic uses of reproductive metaphors, "[t]he spiritual 'offspring,' the poem, is superior to the human offspring because it is truly immortal, and its immortality is transferred to the poet himself." See "Lab'ring Bards: Birth 'Topoi' and English Poetics 1660-1820," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 78.2 (1979): 193–208 (195).

[33] Rohy, 130.

[34] Douglas targeted the novel's model of inborn and therefore unavoidable same-sex desire: "These moral derelicts are not cursed from their birth. Their downfall is caused by their own act and their own will. They are damned because they choose to be damned, not because they are doomed from the beginning" (10). Rohy's *Lost Causes* explores the tension between biological determinism and homophobic fears of "homosexual reproduction," i.e. proliferation through seduction and influence.

[35] See Heike Bauer, "Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* as Sexual Sourcebook for Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*," *Critical Survey*, 15.3 (2003): 23-38.

[36] Una Troubridge, *Diaries*, February 28, 1917, quoted in Sally Cline, *Radclyffe Hall: A Woman Called John* (London: John Murray Publishers, 1997), 133.

[37] George du Maurier, *Peter Ibbetson* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1891), 202. Hereafter abbreviated *PI* and cited parenthetically by page number.

[38] Nina Auerbach, *Daphne du Maurier, Haunted Heiress* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 45.

[39] Nat Hurley's *Circulating Queerness: Before the Gay and Lesbian Novel* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018) argues that "one way of understanding what is literary about queer history is to track the force of literary objects and representations as accumulated, interactive, side-by-side engagements of texts with other texts" (xi).

[40] Celia Marshik, "History's 'Abrupt Revenges': Censoring War's Perversions in *The Well of Loneliness* and *Sleeveless Errand*," *Journal of Modern Literature*, 26.2 (2003): 145-59 (153); *TWL*, 113. See also Marshik's *British Modernism and Censorship* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[41] Diana Souhami, *The Trials of Radclyffe Hall* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1998), 197.

[42] Marshik, 159.

[43] Faith Compton Mackenzie, *More than I Should* (London: Collins, 1940), 209.

[44] English, 11-12.

[45] Doan, 21.

[46] Medd, 163.

[47] Katherine Mullin, "Pernicious Literature: Vigilance in the Age of Zola (1886-1899)," in *Prudes on the Prowl: Fiction and Obscenity in England, 1850 to the Present Day*, ed. David Bradshaw and Rachel Potter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 30-51 (50). Mullin's forthcoming *Provocateurs* promises to provide "a literary and cultural history of the myth of Victorian censorship and its modernist exploitation."

[48] Hall, "General Remarks," 6-7.

[49] Cline, 266.

[50] Ibid., 263, 265. As Cline writes, "The PEN club on whose executive committee [Hall] had sat lamentably failed to send her a letter of support signed by every member" (265).

[51] Medd, 162; Cline, 263.

[52] Hall, "General Remarks," 6-7.

[53] Una, Lady Troubridge, *The Life and Death of Radclyffe Hall* (London: Hammond, Hammond and Co., 1961), 94.

[54] Cline, 229; Mackenzie, *More than I Should*, 209.

[55] Hall, "The Writing of Novels." Read for the English Club, Oxford, February 24, 1933 and the Literary Society, University College, University of London, March 2, 1933. Hall and Troubridge Papers, 22.3.

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[56] The judgment against *The Well* was made on November 16 and upheld on December 14.

[57] See Bill Harrison, "Censors, Critics, and the Suppression of Norah James's *Sleeveless Errand*," *Atenea*, 33 (2013): 23-41 (25).

[58] "Seized Novel Condemned," *The Times*, March 5, 1929, 13.

[59] "'The Sleeveless Errand': 517 Copies to be Destroyed," *Londonderry Sentinel*, March 5, 1929, 6.

[60] Virginia Woolf to Vita Sackville-West, February 23, 1929, in *A Reflection of the Other Person: The Letters of Virginia Woolf, Volume IV, 1929-1931,* ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann Banks (London: The Hogarth Press, 1978), 29.

[61] Ingram, 347; Neil Pearson, *Obelisk: A History of Jack Kahane and the Obelisk Press* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 65; Marshik, 155; Harrison, 26, note 5.

[62] Norah James, *Sleeveless Errand* (Paris: Henry Babou and Jack Kahane, 1929), 9.

[63] Ibid., 91, 47.

[64] Norah James, *I Lived in a Democracy* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1939), 188.

[65] Ibid., 211.

[66] Ibid., 197-8.

[67] James, *Sleeveless Errand*, 72; David Bradshaw, "James Douglas: The Sanitary Inspector of Literature," in *Prudes on the Prowl*, 90-110 (92).

[68] James; *I Lived,* 211, 230.

[69] Ibid., 231.

[70] Pearson, 67. The Obelisk Press went on to publish *The Well* in 1933.

[71] "The 'Sleeveless Errand' in Five Languages—The Authoress on the Censor," *Daily Mail Atlantic Edition*, November 5, 1929, 9. James's second novel, *Hail! All Hail!*, was published in June 1929.

[72] "Hail! All Hail," *The Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, June 26, 1929, 8.

[73] Percy Reginald Stephensen, *The Well of Sleevelessness: A Tale for the Least of these Little Ones* (London: Scholartis Press, 1929), 5.

[74] Ingram, 350; Marshik, 155.

[75] "'Jix' on 'Flood of Obscene Literature,'" *Daily Herald*, March 6, 1929, 1. For a discussion of the "ideological effects of wartime conflations of gender, sexuality, and nationalism in relation to emergent interwar lesbian representations," see chapter five of Deborah Cohler, *Citizen, Invert, Queer: Lesbianism and War in Early Twentieth-Century Britain* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 151-96 (153).

[76] See Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011) and Benjamin Bateman, *The Modernist Art of Queer Survival* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[77] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1929), 98.

[78] Djuna Barnes, *Ladies Almanack* (Paris: Edward W. Titus, 1928), 26; Kathryn R. Kent, *Making Girls into Women: American Women's Writing and the Rise of Lesbian Identity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 129.

[79] Barnes, 26.

[80] Garrity, 71.

[81] Nella Larsen, *Passing* (London: Penguin, 1997), 56.

[82] "The very structure of this abstraction we call *homosexuality* is, we have long known, saturated by the cultural logic of racism" (Hurley, 15).

[83] Virginia Woolf to Vita Sackville-West, February 4, 1929, in *A Reflection of the Other Person*, 14.

[84] Rohy, 129.

[85] Hall and Troubridge Papers, 13.4.

[86] See Margot Gayle Backus, "Sexual Orientation in the (Post)Imperial Nation: Celticism and Inversion Theory in Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 15.2 (Autumn 1996): 253-266 (253).

[87] Vita Sackville-West to Harold Nicolson, December 19, 1922, quoted in Nigel Nicolson*, Portrait of a Marriage* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1992), 185.

[88] Vita Sackville-West to Virginia Woolf, November 6, 1924, in *The Letters of Vita Sackville-West to Virginia Woolf*, ed. Louise DeSalvo and Mitchell A. Leaska (London: Virago, 1992), 57.

[89] Valentine Ackland to Sylvia Townsend Warner, April 12, 1934, in *I'll Stand by You: The Letters of Sylvia Townsend Warner and Valentine Ackland*, ed. Susanna Pinney (London: Pimlico, 1998), 120.

[90] Gertrude Stein to Alice B. Toklas, undated, in *Baby Precious Always Shines: Selected Love Notes Between Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas*, ed. Kay Turner (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 52, 119.

[91] Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography* (London: Penguin, 1993), 12.

[92] Carla Freccero, "The Queer Time of Lesbian Literature: History and Temporality," in *The Cambridge Companion to Lesbian Literature*, ed. Jodie Medd (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 19-31 (19).

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[93] Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), xxiv.

[94] Radclyffe Hall to Evguenia Souline, August 20, 1934, in Hall and Troubridge Papers, 46.5.