

City University of New York (CUNY)

CUNY Academic Works

Theses and Dissertations

Hunter College

2-1-2019

Virginia Woolf and Gertrude Stein's Repurposing of Feminine Domestic Language through the Lens of Bakhtinian Heteroglossia and Dialogic Theory

Samantha Ortiz
CUNY Hunter College

[How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!](#)

More information about this work at: https://academicworks.cuny.edu/hc_sas_etds/391

Discover additional works at: <https://academicworks.cuny.edu>

This work is made publicly available by the City University of New York (CUNY).
Contact: AcademicWorks@cuny.edu

Virginia Woolf and Gertrude Stein's Repurposing of Feminine Domestic Language through the

Lens of Bakhtinian Heteroglossia and Dialogic Theory

by

Samantha Ortiz

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (English), Hunter College,
The City University of New York
2018

Thesis Sponsor:
Professor Amy Moorman Robbins

December 17, 2018

Amy Moorman Robbins
Signature of Thesis Sponsor

December 31, 2018

Kelvin C. Black
Signature of Second Reader

Authorial recapitulations of preexisting social narratives are a primary focus of sociolinguistic literary criticism. According to Mikhail Bakhtin in his essay, “Discourse in the Novel,” the prose writer “makes use of words that are already populated with the social intentions of others and compels them to serve his own new intentions, to serve a second master” (300). Though Bakhtin is arguing about the novel as a newly established form in opposition to the epic, Virginia Woolf’s hybrid fiction/nonfiction essay, *A Room of One’s Own*, and Gertrude Stein’s *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* and “The Good Anna” explore the absence of a single unitary language and recapitulate feminine domestic language, producing new forms of feminist heteroglossia. Bakhtin defines “heteroglossia” as, “another’s speech in another’s language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way” this speech, “serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author” (324). In the case of Woolf, her narrator in *A Room of One’s Own* is not alone as she peruses the books upon her shelf; she brings authors like Charlotte Brontë and Jane Austen into conversations with her own self in order to create two different voices: those of the female authors of the past and one that can articulate her refracted intentions as a female author in pursuit of uninhibited authorial agency that had been previously restricted by societal factors. In *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, Gertrude Stein – through the voice of Alice B. Toklas – also plays with multi-voiced narratives, as the narrator “Alice” tells the story of two people; the text employs two distinct voices to show how the narratives of each woman/character are inextricably embedded with one another. In other words, the living voice of the real Alice B. Toklas is present even as Stein the author writes her “autobiography.” The layered voices in Stein’s work warp Bakhtin’s

concept of “heteroglossia” because of the blended voices of the two women; these voices work in tandem to create one shared history.

Applying Bakhtin’s socio-linguistic literary analysis to her work in feminist criticism, Friederike Eigler maintains that the Bakhtinian approach to textual analysis can “be most productive in making the often difficult transition from feminist theory to the analysis of individual texts” (189). In “Feminist Criticism and Bakhtin’s Dialogic Principle: Making the Transition from Theory to Textual Analysis,” Eigler defines Bakhtin’s “heteroglossia” as meaning “[conceptualizing] the historical and social nature of language, as a multiplicity of languages shaped by different social, professional, ideological, and age factors,” and she defines Bakhtin’s notion of “voice” to mean representing “particular aspects of ‘heteroglossia’ in narratives” (191). Heteroglossia, therefore, as a concept of language that is socially and historically grounded lends itself to feminist criticism “that is concerned with the disruption of patriarchal language and the exploration of marginalized voices within dominant discourses” (Ibid.). For Eigler, Bakhtin’s theory is useful in feminist criticism because of its consideration of the historical factors of language that also allows for “an active response on the part of the subject to these various discourses” (Ibid.).

Diane Price Herndl does not champion Bakhtin’s sociolinguistic approach and instead points to a marked absence of women in his criticism. In her essay “The Dilemmas of a Feminine Dialogic,” Herndl argues that “Bakhtin, like almost all literary critics in the first half of [the 20th century] did not include women—as authors or speakers—in his discussion of literature” (7). Yet despite this exclusion of women, Herndl writes that “like Bakhtin’s theory of novelistic discourse, theories of feminine language describe a multivoiced or polyphonic resistance to hierarchies and laughter at authority” (8). Herndl aims to prove that, “rather than simply

asserting that the two theories [Bakhtin and feminism] support one another... [does] that seeming agreement not actually undercut both[?]" (8). Though Eigler and Herndl appear to disagree concerning the alignment of Bakhtinian theory and feminist criticism, they do agree that women authors writing novels foster a disruption of patriarchal language through feminist heteroglossia. Herndl's definition of heteroglossia varies slightly from Eigler's but both definitions will be of use for the purposes this essay. Herndl argues that "the novel, because it records ordinary speech...also participates in the interaction of voices...as long as there is conflict in the novel between character's voices or between the narrator's voice and the characters', there will be 'heteroglossia' multiple voices expressing multiple ideologies from different strata of language-in use" (9).

Eigler is not ignorant of the implicitly masculine slant of Bakhtinian dialogics and argues for a critical model of feminist dialogics that takes into consideration the social positionality of women as writers and characters. Referencing Bauer and McKinstry's 1991 volume, *Feminism, Bakhtin and the Dialogic*, Eigler introduces the term, "feminist dialogics" which, as Bauer and McKinstry note in their introduction, "promotes the disruption and critique of 'monolithic' views of feminism that are implicit in some feminist theories and explicit in the often stereotypical representation (and dismissal) of feminism in contemporary culture" (192). Eigler writes,

Rather than merely reversing patriarchal discourse and producing a "feminist monologic voice" that makes universal claims about "woman" in a patriarchal society, "feminist dialogics" supports critical approaches based on the concept of "positionality." Thus a "feminist dialogics" includes consideration of specific contexts and conditions of women (and men) in regard to literature, the recognition of narratives as inherently "multivocal," i.e., representing more than one (authorial) voice. (192)

In their respective works, Virginia Woolf and Gertrude Stein recapture the existing social intentions embedded in the language of their social strata in order to incorporate feminist

heteroglossia into the cultural canon. The feminist heteroglossia, evident in Woolf's and Stein's texts' challenges patriarchal language—the monologic voice—and instead celebrates the absence of “universal claims about ‘woman’” (Ibid.). To do this, Woolf and Stein work to reframe the feminine domestic language so often used against women prior to their emergence as authors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Woolf's 1931 essay, “Professions for Women,” carefully considers the existing contexts of women and thus works to assert her authorial intent: that is, the arguing for the liberation of women from the grasp of the established societal norms. The tangible manifestation of the oppressive force preventing women's agency is evident in the character of “The Angel in the House.” This figure is an allusion to a narrative poem published by Coventry Patmore in 1854, and in her essay Woolf explicitly calls for her murder and details this graphically. In “murdering” this Angel— that is, in dispelling the expectation that women should only be present in the house and in service to others— women writers attain the agency to write, therefore taking their proper place alongside male authors in the literary canon.

The societal intentions for women as they had been established in prior works of literature are laid bare in Woolf's introduction of the Angel and her entrance into the room where the author has sat down to write. “She, [the Angel], was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She scarified herself daily...Above all—I need not say it—she was pure” (278). With these short sentences, Woolf summarizes a myriad of tropes that are toxic for any hopes of agency on the part of the woman writer because these descriptors all limit women's authority to the interior of the domestic space.

Woolf layers her description of the Angel in the House with attempts at dialogue between the Angel and the female writer that are ultimately thwarted by the female writer herself, thus demonstrating a feminine agency that is in opposition to the ideals emblemized in the Angel. These two authorial choices work together to demonstrate the Angel in the House as being in opposition to Woolf's narrator, a female author. As Woolf sits down to write her review of a male contemporary's novel, she recounts her visit from the Angel:

I encountered her with the very first words. The shadow of her wings fell upon my page; I heard the rustling of her skirts in the room...I took my pen in hand to review the novel by a famous man, she slipped behind me and whispered, "My dear you are a young woman. You are writing about a book that has been written by a man. Be sympathetic; be tender; flatter; deceive; use all the arts and wiles of our sex." (279)

Woolf uses language strategically, particularly focusing on specific modifiers to describe the Angel and her movements. The "rustling" of her skirts coupled with the angelic yet still "shadowing" wings and the action of "slipping" behind the author all demonstrate the diminutive movements expected of the Victorian woman, who is in fact the realistic, tangible Angel in the House. This point is reinforced by the Angel's words to the author; she begins by addressing the author as, "my dear"—an attempt to find commonality with the author. By beginning her interaction with the narrator using, "my dear" the Angel's entrance is one that is seemingly disarming. The Angel proceeds to instruct the author on how she should approach her review only after this strategic maneuver. Most tellingly, the Angel concludes her monologic exchange with the author by reminding her, when writing, to "use all the arts and wiles of our sex." The use of the first-person pronoun "our" is the Angel's second attempt to coalesce with the author, ultimately to no avail.

Woolf's narrator does not return an exchange with the Angel because the Angel is representative of a "monolithic" feminine view. Rather than engage in a dialogue, the author's

response is to reject the Angel entirely and respond with visceral rage. The notions put forth by the Angel are oppressive and a cultivation of the universal claims about “woman” in a patriarchal society. Woolf’s response is therefore a rejection of these claims and an unprecedented assertion of agency. The exchange between the Angel and Woolf, the writer, culminates in a violent, physical act: “I turned upon her and caught her by the throat. I did my best to kill her...Had I not killed her she would have killed me. She would have plucked the heart out of my writing...Killing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of the woman writer” (279). This violence on the part of the author is in contrast to the “rustling skirts” and the “slipping” movements of the Angel. The author “catches” the Angel by the throat, thus prohibiting her from speaking, and kills her. The hard, consonant sounds in both words are another way that Woolf contrasts the disarming nature of the Angel, who whispers and slips; these much softer sounding words had been, until this moment of rupture, synonymous with the behavioral expectations set forth for women. Although killing the Angel ultimately silences a tangible manifestation of patriarchal ideas about women, Woolf as the author still feels the need to defend her actions. In doing so Woolf notes that had she not killed the Angel, the latter would have “plucked” the writer’s heart from her writing. This word choice again speaks to the diminutive nature of the Angel. Unlike the action of catching the Angel by the throat and killing her, a violent and invasive move, the Angel’s method of deploying physical action would be to “pluck”—a much more delicate and accepted action reflecting the expectations of the nineteenth century woman.

The expectations of women in the nineteenth century are largely products of preexisting literature written by male authors. In Elaine Showalter’s *A Literature of Their Own*, Showalter focuses on John Ruskin’s 1865 essay, “Of Queen Gardens,” and the “chivalrous vision of the sacred influence of women” (183) that had been accepted as an articulation of the accepted

feminine ideal of the nineteenth century. Showalter notes that for Ruskin, the emphasis was on “the physical and psychological boundaries of ‘woman’s true place,’ the Home” (Ibid.) . Showalter continues explicating Ruskin’s argument: “while men laboring the outside world are ‘wounded’ and ‘hardened’ to use his sexually loaded rhetoric, women remain intact in the home—‘the place of Peace; the shelter, not only from injury but from all terror doubt and division’—are secure in themselves and havens of safety for the threatened male” (184). Less than a century after Ruskin’s essay is published, Virginia Woolf and Gertrude Stein will have produced works that redefine Ruskin’s language about the home and about women; they will prove that women are not to be perceived as “havens of safety” for the “threatened male,” but rather powerful forces with their own agency.

Though victorious at the end of “Professions for Women,” Woolf is cautiously optimistic about the future of women as authors. Woolf concludes her speech, not relishing over the vanquishing of her foe, but rather with trepidation: “she [the woman writer] has many ghosts to fight, many prejudices to overcome. Indeed it will be a long time still, I think, before a woman can sit down to write a book without finishing a phantom to be slain, a rock to be dashed against” (282). In the earlier published *A Room of One’s Own* (1929), Woolf grapples with the pervasive “ghosts” of female writers of the past and the oppressions of women as well as the woman writer’s attempt to supersede the expectations of women of the nineteenth century.

In *A Room of One’s Own*, Woolf employs examples of Bakhtinian dialogic exchanges much more explicitly. She does this through the inclusion of female authors of the past in conversation with her own narrator. Echoing Eigler’s claim from earlier in this essay, Bakhtin is linkable to feminist criticism because he takes into account the various determining sociolinguistic factors surrounding language and “allows for active response on the part of the

subject to these various discourses” (Bakhtin quoted in Eigler 191). Through the motif of books on a shelf, Woolf frames the social and historical factors affecting language and responds to them through the narrator of her text. As the narrator selects books off the shelf to read, she is enveloped in frame wherein she is given the opportunity to respond. The once marginalized, confined, feminine voice is given a platform through which her response may be articulated in conversation with female authors of the past as well as male interlocutors, all without having to leave the domestic space. Rather than create a space outside of the home where women’s ideas may be seen or heard, Woolf repurposes the domestic space so that it is not a prison governed by the oppressive Angel in the House, but rather a place where women can foster their creativity and discourse can flow freely.

To this point, in order to facilitate the forum through which Woolf’s female narrator can respond to the social and historical factors affecting language, Woolf reframes the feminine domestic space, in this instance a museum, and more abstractly, the interior of a building, to include resources for the female author as she begins to pen her own work. The first bookshelf Woolf comes across is one in the British Museum. Upon gazing at the shelf, Woolf begins to pose a number of questions: “Have you any notion how many books are written about women in the course of one year? Have you any notion how many are written by men? Are you aware that you are, perhaps, the most discussed animal in the universe?” (26). Here, Woolf attempts to start a dialogue with the reader. The use of the second person implores the reader to consider her questions at the same time the narrator is working through them herself. *A Room of One’s Own* reimagines the versatility of interior, household, objects—books on shelves, in order to attempt a conversation with the reader. This dialogue ultimately fails because Woolf’s narrator and the reader are unable to respond back to each other directly. Though Woolf’s narrator attempts to

reach out to the reader, a multi-voiced narrative cannot exist. Therefore, Woolf's narrator creates one using her imagination and preexisting expectations for women in order to push back against them with her own voice.

To achieve a multi-voiced narrative, Woolf supposes a character into existence. The fictional character that Woolf creates is Judith Shakespeare, William Shakespeare's sister: "I could not help thinking, as I looked at the works of Shakespeare on the shelf, that...it would have been impossible, completely and entirely, for any woman to have written the plays of Shakespeare in the age of Shakespeare" (48). Woolf's narrator comes to this conclusion after imagining a world, and thus creating a frame narrative within her own story, wherein Judith Shakespeare is ridiculed by men. In this framed projection of a fictional character, a manager, "a fat, loose lipped man—[guffaws] [at Judith]. He bellowed something about poodles dancing and women acting—no woman, he said, could possibly be an actress...at last—for she was very young, oddly like Shakespeare the poet in her face...[she] killed herself one winter's night and lies buried at some cross-roads where the omnibuses now stop outside the Elephant and Castle" (48). There are multi-voiced narratives in play within the frame that Woolf's narrator creates in telling this story. The voice of Woolf's narrator comments on the appearance of her imagined character, resembling that of her famous sibling and orchestrates the entire narrative as it unfolds, while the voice of the, manager laughs and forcibly asserts that a woman shall never become an actress.

Woolf, true to the Bakhtinian definition of heteroglossia, relies on the social intentions of language, as they existed during Shakespeare's time, to illustrate the oppression her imagined female protagonist. In the sixteenth century, it was unheard of for women to act on stage and so, Woolf is careful to maintain this societal norm when unraveling this elaborate story about

Shakespeare's imagined sister. Judith Shakespeare, equal to her brother in talent and genius leaves behind remarkably different legacy because she is a woman. Through this brief fictional history embedded within the larger narrative Woolf punctuates the argument she motioned to earlier in her attempt at dialogue with the reader; there is yet no place for women authors to establish themselves and this is due in large part to the established societal norms in place that prevented women with talent and genius—like the legendary Judith Shakespeare, from ever successfully producing works of their own.

Woolf uses warped heteroglossia; meaning, she facilitates a dialogue that transcends time and space, as well as the societal constructs and linguistic conventions that Bakhtin is interested in with respect to his own definition of heteroglossia, to project her own opinions through her narrator and, thusly, further deconstructs the notion of a “common unitary language” (Bakhtin 270). Woolf, through the vessel of her narrator, is able to project a refraction of her own ideologies. This is further explained when Woolf's narrator is in conversation with Charlotte Brontë. Multilayered dialogizations via frame narratives embedded in the larger work, like the dialogic between Woolf and Brontë, are continuously constructed through the motif of books on the shelf. This inclusion of multiple voices is addressed in Kathleen Wall's essay, “Frame Narratives and Unresolved Contradictions in Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*.” The nested structure of various frame narratives through the motif of books on the shelf, “performs two of the classic functions of frame narrative: it introduces ambiguity by placing contradictions in different textual layers and spaces and articulates the fictional text's problematic relationship to the real, material world outside *A Room of One's Own*, a problematic relationship that echoes between art and life” (190). This is especially present when Woolf employs the narratives of female novelists in order to perpetuate her argument but in doing so once again revealing her

own cautions in setting herself apart from all authors—not just male but also her female predecessors.

Woolf demonstrates her caution by offering conciliatory praise first, criticism after. In taking Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* off of the shelf, Woolf's narrator pays careful attention to praise the work as a good book but while also highlighting Austen's anxiety to show the early manuscripts to anyone. Woolf's voice as author permeates this moment through warped heteroglossia—Woolf's anxieties are manifested with the mentioning of this detail from Austen's history. Returning to the text, Woolf's narrator creates a frame once more, imagining that, as Austen was sitting in a room writing *Pride and Prejudice*, she, “was glad that a hinge creaked, so that she might hide her manuscript before anyone came in” (67). In imagining this moment, Woolf's narrator creates a frame which she can then use to, once more, layer her own commentary about women from Austen's time: “If Jane Austen suffered in any way from her circumstances it was in the narrowness of life that was imposed upon her. It was impossible for a woman to go about alone...But perhaps it was not the nature of Jane Austen not to want what she had not. Her gift and her circumstances matched each other completely” (68). Woolf is once more capitalizing on the societal intentions of language to punctuate her point. In using the words “narrowness” and “imposed,” Woolf's narrator highlights the societal norms under which Austen had to write. However, Woolf also notes that rather than have this inhibit her writing, her narrator concedes that these societal roadblocks were actually something Austen did not consider at all. Woolf's narrator comes to this conclusion without any evidence to suggest that this is true or if Austen would have felt this way. Instead, Woolf, capitalizing on the ideologies of Austen's time, projects a narrative frame that helps to further her own argument.

Woolf's narrator, when immersed in the frame that allows her to dialogize with Austen, notes the disparities plaguing women and Jane Austen as a female author; in doing so, Woolf's refracted ideologies as a female writer from the early twentieth century can be shown in opposition to Austen's beliefs refracted through her characters within her own novels. As Eigler notes in the same work referenced at the beginning of this essay, "based on the social nature of language, 'feminist dialogics' promote the disruption and critique of the dominant and oppressive ideologies" (192). Woolf's narrator's commentary concerning Jane Austen ultimately critiques Austen's success because of its conforming to oppressive ideologies of her time. Moreover, Woolf, in having three female voices in conversation with one another, disrupts the dominant and oppressive ideologies working against the three authors. The three women foster varied heteroglossia by not only coming from varied social strata and thus employing language that reflects this, but also because they come from different and distinct moments in time. Immediately following Woolf's narrator's conceit that Austen's talents and circumstances are matched, Woolf's narrator projects her own voice to make the claim, "I doubt whether that was true of Charlotte Brontë...opening *Jane Eyre* and laying it beside *Pride and Prejudice*" (68). To continue layering narrative frameworks on top of one another, Woolf forces her narrator to literally lay books next to each other so that they may be in conversation with one another, using the narrator as a mediator. Katherine Wall highlights the way that the various frames layered on top of one another in this work function together: "Frame narratives represent a structural manifestation of novelistic discourse, which 'lives as it were, on the boundary between its own context and another, 'alien context'" (186). Her mention of contexts is cited directly from Bakhtin's "Discourse in the Novel." The contexts of Austen and Brontë are alien to the context of Woolf's narrator since they are separated by nearly a century's amount of time. Wall argues

that, “the ambiguous status of frame narrative and framed text further complicates the dialogue, ensuring that no voice dominates, regardless of its formal placement” (186). Arguably, since Woolf’s narrator is able to move from frame to frame simply by moving her gaze on the bookshelf, hers is the dominant voice.

Woolf’s narrator moves her gaze to focus on Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and in doing so, introduces a frame within a frame. In the process of directly quoting passages from Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, Woolf’s narrator imagines Brontë’s imagining of Jane as her protagonist. Woolf’s narrator begins:

I opened [*Jane Eyre*] at chapter twelve and my eye was caught by the phrase, “Anybody may blame me who likes”...and I read how Jane Eyre used to go up on to the roof when Mrs. Fairfax was making jellies and looked over the fields at the distant view...*and it was for this that they blamed her...*”I desired more of a practical experience than I possessed; more of intercourse with my kind, of acquaintance with variety of character than was here within my reach.” (my emphasis; 68)

In reading this passage from *Jane Eyre*, Woolf’s narrator recognizes that the author is also projecting her own thoughts through the “I” employed by her character. Brontë, through voice of Jane Eyre, is recapturing the domestic space. As Jane literally climbs and mounts the roof of the house—a symbol of domesticity and thusly the oppression of women—she looks out over the fields, imagining what exists outside of the domestic space. While she sits a top of the domestic space, another woman, Mrs. Fairfax, remains inside “making jellies,” providing sustenance in anticipation of Rochester’s arrival to Thornfield and thus representing the ideologies that Jane, and by extension, Brontë seem to be rejecting and are being blamed for. In her essay “Flight into Androgyny,” Elaine Showalter argues that, for Brontë, the “Angel in the House” that must be murdered in order for her to be successful as a writer is Jane Austen (“Flight into Androgyny” 265), and this is evident in Woolf’s narrator’s commentary concerning both women later in this

essay. The blame that Brontë shoulders stems from the juxtaposition of the praise of Austen's ideas of women and the domestic space and Brontë's own rejection of these ideas. The sentence italicized in the quote above is Woolf's narrator realizing that the passage she has opened to is an example of the author's (Brontë's) voice projected through the voice of her character and thus explicating the double meaning in what Brontë is articulating when she writes the phrase "Anybody may blame me who likes."

Woolf's narrator concludes that Jane Austen is ultimately more successful than Charlotte Brontë in creating an environment within her novel wherein multiple voices can exist and be heard as separate from the voice of the author; this authorial discipline on the part of Jane Austen reinforces Bakhtin's assertion that the novel, unlike the epic, is a space that allows for multi-voiced narratives to occur. As Woolf's narrator "[laid] the book [*Jane Eyre*] down beside *Pride and Prejudice* [she realizes] that the woman who wrote those pages had more genius in her than Jane Austen; but if one reads them over and marks...that indignation...one sees that she will never get her genius expressed whole and entire" (69). Unlike Austen, Brontë is unable to divorce her own voice from the voices of her characters. Even though her characters engage in varying discourses, the projections of the author are very present in the pages of the text.

Woolf's frustration at Brontë's inability to separate herself from her writing is telling of Woolf's continuing to fight against her own anxieties as an author and her ability to suppress her own projections. Later in *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf returns to Brontë and *Jane Eyre*: "Now, in the passages I have quoted from *Jane Eyre*, it is clear that anger was tampering with the integrity of Charlotte Brontë the novelist. She left her story, to which her entire devotion was due, to attend some personal grievance" (73). Though Woolf is critiquing Brontë for her deviation from the narrative to project her own pain, this is precisely what Woolf is doing in this

very passage. Woolf deviates from her objective; her argument—the domestic space, when reframed to suit the needs of the woman as an author and not as the subservient Angel in the House, can help provide women the autonomy necessary to produce quality writing—is derailed by her returning to Brontë and *Jane Eyre* despite having already put the book back on the shelf. In doing so, Woolf shows her frustrations concerning women projecting their personal emotions in fiction while simultaneously having emotion seep through her own narrator's voice in the essay. Just as Woolf fosters heteroglossia between herself as an essayist and the reader of the essay through the use of second person pronouns, Brontë addresses the reader directly throughout *Jane Eyre*.

To keep the multi-voiced frame narrative in place, Woolf once again invites Jane Austen into the conversation, thus exerting her authorial agency; by supplementing Austen's theoretical words and actions in the instances that follow, Woolf highlights two feminine voices in conversation with one another—something that would otherwise be impossible given the two different moments in time in which these women are writing in, and the societal restraints that would have likely prevented them from meeting. Woolf's narrator, in her most brazen analysis of Brontë begins, "Charlotte Brontë, with all her splendid gifts for prose, stumbled and fell with that clumsy weapon in her hands ... Jane Austen looked at it and laughed at it and devised a perfectly natural, shapely sentence proper for her own use and never departed from it" (77). In this image of Austen laughing as Brontë stumbles with her pen, her "clumsy weapon," Woolf suggests that Jane Austen never deviated from the contexts surrounding her own existence because she is a woman writer. This is in contrast to Brontë, who through her characters projects dissatisfaction with her status. Diane Herndl suggests a reason for this occurrence: "The novel is able to resist hierarchy...because of its 'double-voicedness' its 'dialogism'" (9). Therefore, from a Woolfian

perspective, because Austen is able to write prose despite the confines of the societal constraints of her time and also succeed in selling her work, she is able to be more successful than Brontë. From a Bakhtinian perspective, Brontë is more successful because she is able to integrate dialogized voices, her own included, that are in opposition to a unitary voice that can be read as on par with the social intentions of the period.

Woolf's narrator rationalizes that Austen is successful and Brontë fails because Austen writes the way women are "supposed" to write based on the societal constructs imposed at the time she is writing. Herndl suggests that "[feminist criticism] assumes that women's exclusion from the dominant society has made a systematic and fundamental difference in the kind of art women make, the ways women think, and the ways women use language" (10). While Austen subscribes to this definition, Brontë challenges the notion of feminist criticism through the actions and thoughts of her characters. Woolf makes this point in her essay for the two authors who are ostensibly not able to make the argument themselves: "Thus, with less genius for writing than Charlotte Brontë [Jane Austen] got infinitely more said" (*A Room of One's Own* 77). In conforming to the societal expectations of language, Jane Austen is able to articulate more than Brontë. With this last statement, Woolf concludes her departure from her main narrative thread and returns to the discourse between Woolf as an essayist and the reader of the essay. To make this transition, Woolf returns to her bookshelf.

Woolf moves her gaze on her bookshelf to the section containing books by living authors, both male and female, in order to move the direction of her argument. These books notably veer away from the stylistic choices of Austen and Brontë and instead focus on the "new novel." The "new novel" moves from fiction to autobiography and criticism. Mary Carmichael's first novel, *Life's Adventure*, is the book pulled from the shelf to conceptualize this shift. As with previous

texts pulled from the shelves, Woolf situates Carmichael's dialogic in contrast with the others by literally placing her book next to the books opened in previous chapters. As Woolf reads through Carmichael's text it is evident that Carmichael is "no 'genius'... but nevertheless she had certain advantages which women of far greater gift lacked even half a century ago...men were no longer to her 'the opposing faction'; she need not waste her time railing against them; she need not...ruin her peace of mind longing for travel, experience, and a knowledge of the world and character that were denied to her" (*A Room of One's Own* 92). The voices Woolf's narrator grapples with when reading Carmichael is not as infuriating as Brontë's because rather than have her characters, "ruin their peace of mind" Carmichael ignores the opposite sex altogether.

Throughout *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf is preoccupied with the prohibition of speech; the main narrative thread of her argument calls for women to be allowed to have a room of their own for writing and enough finances to sustain her living as a writer, thus removing the mystery of writing in secret or having written works that are never read. In adding a financial caveat to her demand, the idea of women writing moves from an activity done in leisure, to a space where writing is comparably as sustainable as a man's profession working outside of the home. Woolf's careful curating of her books on the shelf demonstrates the fractured nature of female identity. All three female authors, Brontë, Austen, and Woolf's narrator and, by extension, Woolf, are reimagining the domestic space through the reframing of established language but with varying degrees of success and competition. The shattered dialogizations demonstrate the lack of a "single unitary language" (Bakhtin 47). Though Bakhtin argues that the novel and the shift from a "single unitary language" to a heteroglossic language is largely positive, Woolf's identification of the drastically different dialogizations via each of the books she pulls from her shelf suggest that some semblance of organization is needed.

Citing the work of Karen Hohne and Helen Wussow, Friederike Eigler argues that these two literary critics “problematize the very notion of a ‘female voice.’ If each voice contains the voice of others, then, they argue, ‘the singularity of the female voice is at best an illusion, at worst a silencing of the many experiences and contexts about which and within which women have spoken through the ages’” (193). This seems to be where Woolf is also aligned. The configuration of the motif of books on the shelf represents the varied and distinct female voices that cannot be reconciled into one distinct voice. Woolf comes to this realization when engaging in a dialogic with Carmichael. According to Woolf, “[Carmichael] wrote as a woman, but as a woman who has forgotten that she is a woman, so that her pages were full of that curious sexual quality which comes only when sex is unconscious of itself” (93). This, in contrast with Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, creates another multi-voiced exchange. Jane Eyre, in longing for more than what she is given and her desire to leave the house concedes that she does not have the agency to acquire these things because she is a woman. Being a woman means conceding to societal limitations, and therefore Brontë’s protagonist can only long for more. Mary Carmichael’s characters are written in a way that suggests that Carmichael has no realization of these limitations because she hardly writes about men in her novel at all. Woolf concludes her argument punctuating this idea: “considering that Mary Carmichael was no genius, but an unknown girl writing her first novel in a bed-sitting room, without enough of those desirable things, time, money, and idleness, she did not do so badly, [she] thought” (94). Despite the praise for Carmichael, Woolf’s repetition of Carmichael’s lack of genius suggests a sort of delineation from Austen or Brontë but uses this moment in literary history to demonstrate the potential of the female writer. Carmichael, an amateur female writer, is able to suppress the oppression of man in her debut novel and she is able to do so without a room of her own.

Woolf continues to play with the concept of the unity of language in the final chapter of *A Room of One's Own*. The sixth chapter focuses on Woolf's narrator, the essayist, peering through un-curtained windows. This image is not a departure from the house but it is also a change from standing in front of a bookshelf. While looking through the window Woolf's narrator veers from engaging in dialogizations and rather prefers to engage with herself: "Perhaps to think, as I had been thinking these two days of one sex as distinct from the other is an effort. It interferes with the unity of the mind...What does one mean by 'the unity of the mind'" (97). This is a complication to an argument that has spanned nearly one hundred years. Kathleen Wall argues that this complication is, "the primary purpose of Woolf's doubly framed, fictionalized essay...to effect a balanced, unresolved dialogue between the contradictions inherent in her text and her task" (191). This irresolution is one that mirrors the inability to reconcile one singular female voice.

For Bakhtin, the epic was the origin for the novel as a form. The novel deviates from the epic because of the lack of a unitary language instead opting for a language of various dialogizations within a narrative frame. Virginia Woolf in her hybrid nonfiction-fictionalized essay manipulates the novel as a form: putting various dialogizations in conversation with one another in an attempt to frame her own narrative agenda. Virginia Woolf marries the language of the author with the language of the novel, inserting her own voice when appropriate and separating it when necessary. As outlined, this is not a perfect compilation of the two; when critiquing Brontë, Woolf falls victim to the same narrative conceits that she is identifying as problematic. Though there are many unresolved complications and loose threads throughout Woolf's argument in *A Room of One's Own*, they function within their own narrative frames. Woolf's use of heteroglossia and dialogic are layered in various narrative frames so that readers

of the text must work to deconstruct them all. Each unveiling of a narrative frame is a recapitulation of what seemed to be an established idea.

While *A Room of One's Own* is a conversation between a narrator and fictionalized dialogics of female writers of the past, Gertrude Stein's 1909 "The Good Anna" employs various frame narratives to demonstrate the multiple dialogics in conversation with Anna, the protagonist. Throughout the text Anna is in conversation with varied heteroglossia existing within her own world, the world Stein creates and is maintained within the work itself. Like Woolf's, Stein's text demonstrates the author's attempt at achieving authorial –and therefore cultural – power through recapturing and reframing feminine domestic language. And yet, whereas Woolf employs historical figures, in "The Good Anna" Stein creates realist-fictional characters.

Throughout *Three Lives*, which was published in 1909, nearly two decades before Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, Gertrude Stein is focused on recapturing female domestic language to demonstrate the ways that women can be exposed to outlets for agency and can achieve power. As Woolf will do later, Stein employs the frame narrative and is concerned with "the disruption of patriarchal language and the exploration of marginalized voices within dominant discourses" (Eigler 191). In Stein's case, the marginalized voice is that of the female protagonist. As noted in Marianne DeKoven's essay, "Anti-Patriarchal Writing and *Three Lives*," the full text represents [Stein's] first concerted break with conventional modes of writing. [This] is crucial to her experimental career, both as the source of her subsequent stylistic techniques and as a clue to the source of her rebellion against patriarchal structures" (323). The narrative voice in *Three Lives*, unlike the narrative voice that has been noted in Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, is "not only straightforward, factual, reassuring; it is also childish, whimsical,

consciously naïve...this childish language heightens the discrepancy between narrative voice and content...by masking the sophisticated complexity and somber implications of Stein's 'imagined reality'" (326). Here, DeKevon juxtaposes two concepts: the "factual" and the "imagined." The narrator in *Three Lives* is factual in tone but, like Woolf does, Stein employs warped heteroglossia to facilitate a reality wherein her characters can exist. Through this experimental writing style, Stein's work disrupts preexisting patriarchal constructs.

Bakhtin defines the novel as "a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized" (263). In "The Good Anna," Stein organizes the frame narrative to first detail Anna's "high ideals for canine chastity and discipline" (8). In Anna's house lived "the three regular dogs, the three that always lived with Anna, Peter, and old Baby, and fluffy little Rags...together along with the transients, the many stray ones that Anna always kept...[who] were under strict orders never to be bad one with the other" (8). She is devastated when "a sad disgrace once [happened] in the family. A transient terrier for whom Anna has found a home suddenly produced a crop of pups...[Anna] would never let [Foxy's owners] know that Peter was so bad" (8). This moment is introduced to readers before subsequent actions in the story to suggest Anna's pious nature. Stein lays this as the foundation upon which she will layer Anna's other life experiences. She is embarrassed that the dogs had "[been] bad" and will deny her dog's involvement in the incident rather than admit to the truth. In organizing the story this way, Stein is careful in revealing Anna's demeanor in order to juxtapose this behavior with others, setting up heteroglossia by identifying her protagonist and her manner so that she can be in opposition to those she will meet as she goes through the rest of the story.

In the second part of “The Good Anna,” the narrator’s cavalier style of delivery introduces a character that will be in opposition to Anna’s character. The character of Mrs. Lehtman thus is introduced; later, the narrator matter-of-factly refers to her as the “romance in Anna’s life” (22):

Mrs. Lehtman in her work loved best to deliver young girls who were in trouble. She would take these into her own house and care for them in secret, till they could guiltlessly go home or back to work, and then slowly pay her the money for their care. And so through this new friend Anna led a wider and more entertaining life, and often she used up her savings in helping Mrs. Lehtman through those times when she was giving very much more than she got. (20)

Following this introduction, it is revealed that in the future Anna and Mrs. Lehtman work together to help women obtain abortions in exchange for a fee. In “[making] use of words that are already populated with the social intentions of others” (Bakhtin 300), Stein’s framing of Mrs. Lehtman and Anna’s future work with the story of the “bad dogs” functions as a way to reinforce Anna’s commitment to service others. Anna services the “transient” dogs by housing them in her home until she can find a new place for them, and later she will help service women “who were in trouble.” In the context of the home or domestic space, Stein links the descriptors “transient” and “in trouble.” Both the transient dogs and the pregnant women are invited into the home, a domestic space Showalter describes as the “haven of safety for the threatened male,” thus recapturing the language of female domesticity to serve the needs of women over men (184).

Though Stein recaptures the domestic space to serve women, the women are ultimately defined within the parameters of social expectations for female subjects. DeKoven argues that despite her use of framing techniques, “Stein’s [use] of obtuse narration to distance language ironically from content to avoid forcing on the reader any judgment of the story seems intentional...her use of narrative tone and temporal structure as a defense against her own anger

and despair appears unconscious” (328). DeKoven continues, “Throughout the novellas, Stein seems primarily interested in the comic manifestations of her heroine’s psychologies...one has no sense that Stein recognizes what is clear in each pot: the defeat of a woman by dominant personality traits which are culturally defined as female” (328). DeKoven’s argument is supported in a close reading of the final pages of “The Good Anna.” Stein’s narrator closes the frame narrative with Anna’s return to servitude in a house that is more than just a space in service to men. In the third section of the story, “The Death of the Good Anna,” Anna chooses to “[stay] on in the house where they had lived, and she found some men, she would not take in women, who took her rooms and who were her boarders...she was very popular with her few boarders. They loved her scoldings and the good things she made for them to eat” (49). Like the dogs that Anna cared for at the start of the story, the men appreciate Anna’s services and Anna takes pride in her ability to serve.

One complication with DeKoven’s argument, however, is that in their appreciation for Anna the men do ultimately end up “[doing] whatever Anna wanted” (49), yet Stein’s narrator does not explain what this means. In fact, Anna dies as a result of working too hard; although she enjoys the work that she does, it is ultimately her return to domesticity and the service of others that destroys her. Anna, “lets go” only after “a woman came and said she would take care of the boarders” (52), thus cementing the return to the female domestic language that had been culturally defined in the early twentieth century. Stein’s heteroglossia works to recapture the language of feminine domesticity in an attempt to radicalize it, but ultimately, at the end of “The Good Anna” that language returns to its original form.

In Stein’s *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* female domestic language is recaptured through the use of complex, warped dialogisms between the author and Alice Toklas—two

separate entities whose voices blend to tell one collective history. In Stein's 1933 text, Stein, like Woolf, creates dialogism through the creation and use of two different voices in conversation with one another. The complication occurs as the reader comes to realize that these voices are, respectively, that of Stein the author and that of an imagined speaker created by the author to function as an interlocutor. While Stein is writing the *Autobiography*, she is living with Alice Toklas in their Paris apartment. Alice Toklas, who largely dictates the narrative, is in fact Stein writing as Alice, but it is difficult to discern the real from the imagined. The anecdotes that Stein as Alice provides throughout the text could very well come from Alice's history, or they could also be recapitulations of moments as perceived by Stein the author, and thus Alice is narrating an experience so that it works with the overall arguments made in her [Stein's] text.

Stein announces this complex dialogism in the title of her work, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. In giving her work the title of *Autobiography*, Stein suggests to her readers that Alice Toklas, Stein's partner and assistant, penned the work. The language employed throughout the work itself reinforces this notion; the "I" in the narrative is assumed to be Alice and the same "I" mentions Gertrude Stein in the third person. This implies that the narrative voice is writing about Stein based on their own observations rather than it being the author writing about them. Though it is revealed in its final moments that Stein was actually the author of the *Autobiography*, this fact does not constitute a full clarification.

The text is devoid of speech punctuation, despite a considerable amount of dialogue throughout. This helps Stein blend the voices of herself as author, speaking as Alice, and of Stein the literary figure whom Alice describes in the retelling of their shared history. Through this warped dialogic, Stein revolutionizes the culturally established female domestic language. In fact, *The Autobiography* constitutes the writing of a shared life as Stein intertwines the voices of

the two women, blending their voices in the telling of a shared history. In her work, “Mirrored Image: Gertrude Stein and Autobiography,” Cynthia Merrill notes that “with the final and surprising disclosure that Stein is the book’s author, the text that follows might well be considered an autobiography of two: of Toklas, her persona given voice, as her life was given fullness by Stein; and of Stein, as described, celebrated, and doted on by Toklas” (11). The female domestic language works to champion Stein as a successful author in concert with her contemporaries, while also demonstrating Toklas’ domesticated “doting” upon the artist. Bakhtin’s caution against the “single unitary language” of the epic is reimagined in Stein’s work to exist only after a successful blend of two voices have worked together towards the same goal: the retelling of Stein and Toklas’ arrival in Paris, the events that led up to that point in time, and the animation of their shared experience once settled into 27 rue de Fleurus.

First establishing a traditional narrative framework, Stein begins the *Autobiography* by showing Alice’s conformity to the social conventions imparted by her father; these are the same conventions that Virginia Woolf opposes. The account of Toklas’ childhood upbringing resonates with a moment early in *A Room of One’s Own*, wherein Woolf makes an observation about the home and the role of the hostess. Woolf notes, “It is a curious fact that novelists have a way of making us believe that luncheon parties are invariably memorable for something very witty that was said, or for something very wise that was done. But they seldom spare a word for what was eaten” (10). Woolf seems to be suggesting that novelists often ignore details that a female hostess would have spent tireless hours preparing, thus punctuating the triviality of the labors done within the female domestic space. It is this convention that Stein subverts entirely in the *Autobiography*, creating a blended dialogism of the author and of Alice Toklas herself to reframe domestic language. Woolf continues her point concerning domesticity by noting that “it

is part of the novelist's convention not to mention soup and salmon and ducklings, as if soup and salmon and ducklings were of no importance whatsoever, as if nobody ever smoked a cigar or drank a glass of wine" (10). All of these items are details and arrangements that the hostess would toil over as she ensures that the setting is conducive to lively conversation and spirited debate.

Stein's *Autobiography* fosters varied dialogic exchanges by taking on Alice Toklas' voice and placing it in conversation with her own thus foregrounding her authorial agency as a female author interested in writing about the ways women interact with one another in the domestic space. Through the deployment of this technique, Stein outlines her own list of complications troubling a female author. In the voice of Alice, Stein notes the convoluted relationship that Stein had with male authors as they filtered through their shared home. Stein is careful to include Alice's opinions on the matter, blending the women's concerns and thus implying the potential multiplicity of any single female voice. Though two women are in conversation with one another in the text, their opinions are not whittled down to a "single unitary language" that is entirely representative of the female voice. The varied dialogisms demonstrate the ways women can complicate and disagree with one other, thus highlighting the tension felt by female Modernist writers breaking from formerly established conventions, specifically those that are in line with the concept of the Angel in the House.

Gertrude Stein's uneasy relationship with feminism and modernity results in her separating her conflicted attitude into two separate voices in *The Autobiography*—Alice's voice and her own respectively; Stein intentionally separates the voices to illustrate the modes of operation available to women of the early twentieth century—those who conform to societal expectations and those who act contrarily to the accepted norms of the time. Harriet Scott

Chessman notes Stein's complicated relationship with both feminism and modernity as it is represented through Stein's dialogues in various works. In her essay, "The Public is Invited to Dance: Representation, the Body and Dialogue in Gertrude Stein," Chessman highlights:

These configurations of voices engaged in dialogue offer a central paradigm for Gertrude Stein's modernist and feminist project...[Stein] infuses her modernist form with concern for the exposure and transformation of all hierarchies, particularly those for gender. Central to this revision of hierarchy is poetics of dialogue, where dialogue presents an alternative to the possibility of patriarchal authoritarianism implicit in monologue, reliant upon the privileging of one voice, one narrator, or one significance. (3)

Chessman equates these multiple dialogisms with Stein's commitment to a feminist project, and she links monologue to implicitly male authoritarian ideals. Though Chessman does not reference Bakhtin directly, her language suggests knowledge of his work as well as the most common critique shared by Diane Price Herndl: that is, Bakhtin's lack of attention to female authors.

In the opening chapter of the *Autobiography*, Stein evokes a male dialogic through the voice of Alice Toklas – who is retelling of a story from childhood – in order to foreground the text's point of opposition: the patriarchal conventions that produce the Angel in the House. Providing necessary context, Alice has decided to pen her autobiography, and she recalls a harrowing scene from her time in San Francisco,

I remember that once when my brother and a comrade had gone horse-back riding, one of the horses returned riderless to the hotel, the mother of the other boy began to make a terrible scene. Be calm madam, said my father, perhaps it is my son who has been killed. One of his axioms I always remember, if you must do a thing, you must do so graciously. He also told me that a hostess should never apologise for any failure in her household arraignments.... (4)

Stein layers voices here: Alice's voice, as she recalls the visceral nature of the woman's reaction to her son's possible death, as well as the voice of Toklas' father, who muses that it could in fact be his own son who has died, a point that gives way to Toklas' application to her own idea of

hostessing. Here Stein uses blended voices to recount a simple anecdote, which then becomes pretext for demonstrating how a lesson in female domestic protocol can be derived from a male-centered story of action and adventure.

The fact that this jarring resolution is one surmised by Alice's father demonstrates the tension between past ideals of social expectations and a new wave of modern thought. Alice's father, a generation removed from Alice, instills in his daughter the idea that acting graciously and playing the part of the hostess supersedes displays of emotion and is critical for maintaining the status quo—an idea in concert with those surrounding Woolf's *The Angel in the House*, outlined in "Professions for Women."

Stein's decision to include this anecdote from Alice's childhood demonstrates the way that this moment in time helped to shape Alice's identity—one that seems to be largely in line with the societal expectations of women of the early twentieth century. Stein makes the choice to have Alice's voice hardly waiver from using language that mirrors the language used to describe women in this time period. Instead, Stein's own character within the narrative in *The Autobiography* plays the part of the defiant voice in opposition to the feminine ideals of the early twentieth century. Stein's mixed attitudes concerning the notions of "identity" and "expectation" is highlighted in Cynthia Merrill's work, "Mirrored Image: Gertrude Stein and Autobiography": "Identity, for Stein, is thus an awareness of self as mediated by the retrospection of memory or the recognition of others. And because identity is relational—contingent upon time, memory, and others—rather than immediate, Stein claims it interferes with the pure subjectivity needed for artistic creation" (11). Though this memory that Alice's voice provides at the start of *The Autobiography* helps to define Alice's childhood associations with the female domestic space and, further, how those associations will eventually grow to shape her experience as an adult

living with Stein, it is difficult to discern whether the recounted anecdote is historically true. Merrill's work seems to suggest that this moment is an imagined memory, since Stein argues that memory interfered with the subjectivity necessary when creating art. In her article, "Getting Modern: 'The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas'" Carolyn A. Barros argues that "contemporaries who knew Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas may have recognized Miss Toklas' conversational style in the *Autobiography*. Today's readers have no such recollections upon which to draw. And yet, whether or not the narrator of this text sounds like Alice, in the *Autobiography* Alice is always talking" (178). The success of Stein's *Autobiography* lies in her ability to simulate Toklas' voice, perhaps even ventriloquize it well enough so that it is recognizable to those familiar with the couple while still using it to work in conversation with her own perspectives as an artist. Through the dialogic exchanges pervading the text, the role of women and the permeability of the domestic space are explored.

Stein's retelling of Alice's move into their Paris apartment, in the chapter titled "My Arrival in Paris," demonstrates her anxieties regarding the societal expectations of women in the early twentieth century and hers and Alice's maneuvering around this unease as they begin exploring a new, shared life together. The move is a markedly tumultuous time for Stein. As "Alice" sits with the wives and lovers of the artists that Stein entertained in their salon, she notes the flitting topics of conversations she has while Stein is engaged with the gentlemen invited into their home. Though both Stein and Toklas are women sharing the same domestic space, there is a clear delineation regarding those whom Alice associates with and speaks to, and whom Stein entertains in a separate room. Stein's signature interest in classification is noted here. Stein as Alice motions to a conversation that she has with Miss Mars. She notes that Miss Mars is interested in types, therefore she compartmentalizes women into three categorical groups:

“femme décorative, femme d’intérieur, and femme intrigante” (13) meaning “the decorative woman, the woman comfortable in an interior space, and the intriguing woman” respectively.

In establishing these categories, Stein brings into focus present narrative representations of women. It is difficult to discern whether this exchange between Alice and Miss Mars actually happened; Mars’ interest in typing and categorization seems to be more in line with Stein’s personal interests. Stein, as it is often noted in criticism about her work, was fascinated with grouping. In this moment in the text she is gesturing to a dialogic exchange between two women, neither of which are Stein herself; yet, in fact, it is Stein orchestrating both roles by incorporating this moment into the *Autobiography*.

Stein’s inclusion of these moments of dialogue in her work demonstrate her interest in using varied voices in order aesthetically present the interplay of the societal expectations of women and the ways in which women push against these constructs. In an interview cited by Merrill, Stein declares her interest in seamlessly blending her own and Alice’s voice, saying she merged the two voices as a “tour de force” that accomplishes her aesthetic goals. Adding to this point about aesthetics, Merrill argues that in doing so, Stein also recaptures the feminine domestic space:

‘...the narrative in itself is not what is in your mind but what is in somebody else’s...And so I did a tour de force with *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* [sic], and when I sent the first half to the agent, they sent back a telegram to see which one of us had written it! But I still had done what I *saw*, what you do in translation or in a narrative. I had recreated the point of view of somebody else. Therefore the words ran with a certain smoothness.’ (14)

The “smoothness” of the narrative created in *The Autobiography* is what makes Stein’s execution of warped heteroglossia so complex. It is hard to pinpoint where Stein’s voice ends and Toklas’ begins. It is also difficult to know for certain whether or not the stories that have been embedded in the overall narratives are coming from memory, a place Stein seems to not want to dwell in, as

previously noted, and what Stein *saw*, and therefore writes, as she reflects on her life with Toklas.

Stein's meditations on writing found within the narrative of *The Autobiography* highlight her vested interest in the overall aesthetic quality of the work as a whole; the voices she embeds in her narrative are artfully woven together to recapture language so that it works to describe the shared histories of the two women the way that Stein intended the story to be told. The "smoothness" of the blended voices is a triumph for Stein and her ability to also articulate the varied differences between women inhabiting the same domestic space through the manipulation of voice is a testament to her success. In the same chapter of the text, only a paragraph removed from the moment outlined above concerning the categorization of women, Stein as Alice meditates on the writing process. She begins the paragraph, "Before I decided to write this book my twenty-five years with Gertrude Stein, I had often said that I would write, The wives of the geniuses I have sat with" (13). This conceit is complicated by the fact that Alice actually never wrote the stories of the wives of the geniuses and rather that, "this book, [her] twenty five-years with Stein" (*ibid.*) is Stein's project. Alice, unable to break from the societal expectations of women of the time, is left "often [saying] that [she] would write..." while Stein actually realizes this wish. Stein's penning of this work, acting as Alice, adds a layer of heteroglossia to the text that allows for it to exist as a multilayered multi-voiced dialogic feat. The difference between the two women becomes, one is able to write what she wants to write about while the other is left wanting more—wanting the ability to write her own story. With this difference noted, it would seem that Stein, through Alice, would categorize Toklas as a "femme d'intérieur" while Stein would, perhaps, categorize herself as a "femme intrigante." Toklas' interactions noted in the narrative are only with the wives of the men invited into their home.

Moreover, Alice is seemingly more interested in the feminine; her interest in writing about her experiences is often centered on the wives that she meets. Alice notes, “I have sat with wives who were not wives of geniuses, who were real geniuses. I have sat with real wives of geniuses who were not real geniuses. I have sat with wives of geniuses, of near geniuses, of would be geniuses, in short I have sat very often and very long with many wives and wives of many geniuses” (13). The repetition and lack of definitive punctuation produces two contradictory reads of these three sentences, particularly with respect to her categorization of would-be geniuses, near-geniuses, and non-geniuses. It is unclear if the distinct sentences, “I have sat with wives who were not wives of geniuses, who were real geniuses” and “I have sat with real wives of geniuses who were not real geniuses” are Stein’s way of gesturing to the intelligence of the men and in order to call it into question, or whether the women themselves, despite their husbands’ abilities, are also geniuses in their own right. One read empowers men while the other suggests Stein’s interest in the prowess of the women who sit alongside Toklas.

This ambiguity suggests Stein’s unclear stance concerning the role of women. While she aims to become as well recognized as her male contemporaries, her partner sits in their home space and socializes with the wives, often about trivialities like “a subject then entirely new, how to make up your face” (13). Stein’s Alice – as noted earlier with the decision to include the anecdote about her father and the female hostess – seems to be preoccupied with the observation of Stein’s interactions with the “geniuses” as well as with being a good hostess and as such, entertaining conversations that appear otherwise banal. Miller notes that even in life, “all along, it is Toklas—as lover, as typist, as publisher, as delegate, who provides Stein with an audience, helps her gain recognition, and enables her to be understood...By joining with Stein, Toklas begins a ‘new full life’; by writing *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, Gertrude Stein

becomes a celebrity” (14). It would appear that, as with the narrative as a whole, Stein and Toklas are complements of each other; one would not be able to exist without the other. Stein and Toklas integrate the interior and domestic space with the outside world; Stein is able to achieve the celebrity status found in the outside world by matching and outdoing her male contemporaries, while Toklas facilitates Stein’s rise to fame by acting as audience, editor, and publisher of Stein’s work. Indeed, the “femme d’interieur” and “femme intrigante” exist within the same household and arguably within the same person, Toklas. And although Alice is interested in maintaining the domestic space, she is undoubtedly an asset to Stein throughout the writing process.

Though there is synchronicity within the domestic space, competition is something that is very familiar territory for Gertrude Stein. In the *Autobiography*, Alice immediately separates Stein, the artist, from her contemporaries. This is seen in another one of “Alice’s” memories. When retelling a story about visitors to their apartment, Alice notes,

I may say that only three times in my life have I met a genius and each time a bell within me rang and I was not mistaken, and I may say in each case it was before there was any general recognition of the quality of genius in them. The three geniuses of whom I wish to speak are Gertrude Stein, Pablo Picasso, and Alfred Whitehead. (5)

As noted earlier in this essay, the multi-voiced dialogism in place in Stein’s work is of Stein’s own creation. She imagines Alice’s voice in conversation with her own and the voices of the other famous characters that appear throughout the work.

Stein’s authorial decisions, with respect to the way the voices in her narrative interact with one another, serve to constantly foreground her own self with respect to other people that she comes into contact with, despite the piece being Alice’s “autobiography.” When Alice is labeling the three geniuses that she had encountered, Stein’s name is notably billed first.

Gertrude Stein is pointedly valuing her genius ahead of the genius of her contemporaries. As the voice of Alice continues narrating the first chapter, Stein concludes with Alice articulating the point, “In no one of the three cases [of identifying genius] have I been mistaken. In this way my new full life began” (5). Here, Stein asserts that Alice, having met the three geniuses, can begin living her own full life. This suggests that she would not have been as fortunate had she not had the opportunity to meet these people. Stein’s manipulation of Toklas’ voice is notably present here. Barros, cited earlier, highlights this moment in her own criticism: “The [Alice] voice is the least complex of Stein’s vocal configurations, but that is not to say it is a simple construction. As the present narrating voice of Alice, this doubled voice provides the narrative continuity of the text; it tells the ‘what happens’ of the *Autobiography*” (179). As previously mentioned, Toklas is integral to Stein’s success. The narrative itself, with the embedded nature of the two voices working as one to retell a shared history, cannot work as an experimental text without the voice of Alice Toklas mainstreaming the story so that it works as a cohesive piece. As Stein’s lover and assistant, Toklas facilitates Stein’s success, and this role also allows Toklas to be in the company of geniuses. While Stein aims to make a name for herself as a successful woman writer in the wake of her contemporaries’ successes, Alice can only begin to live her full life after having met Gertrude Stein. Barros continues, “to draw on the modernist image...Alice sits on Gertrude’s lap, and Gertrude puts words into her mouth and causes her to speak in unassuming, humorous, and trustworthy tones. Alice is not ‘standing in’ for Gertrude; Gertrude is making Alice perform Gertrude” (180). Though this analogy may seem to undercut any progress made by Virginia Woolf and Stein herself with respect to the autonomy of the woman writer, Stein actually is manipulating the concept of Bakhtinian dialogism to exist within one person. Yet this is not to be confused the “single unitary language” of the epic, which Bakhtin cautioned against.

In Stein's work, the woman has agency to permeate the domestic space and the exterior and achieve success in both places. The geniuses, Stein among them, are invited into Stein and Toklas' salon in Paris where invaluable dialogue is exchanged and later catalogued in *The Autobiography*.

Like Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein does not see the domestic space as a place where a woman exists merely as the Angel in the House. Rather, both women reimagine the feminine domestic space to be a place where writing and creativity can be fostered and publishable work can be produced. These works created within the domestic space reimagine feminine language in order to demonstrate the multi-dimensionality of the female voice. Through the frame narrative of *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf is able to place various voices, separated by generations, in conversation with one another through the complex frame narrative facilitated through the books on the shelf motif employed throughout the text. Stein in "The Good Anna" revisits the concept of the frame narrative to demonstrate the complexity of the protagonist, Anna, and how, ultimately, her indecision and regression back into the domestic space proved to be a perilous decision. And yet in Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, the frame narrative does not serve. Instead, Stein blends her voice with that of a narrator still living, thus complicating the technique employed by Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*. Since the narrator of *The Autobiography* is an amalgamation of Stein as the writer and Stein as Alice Toklas, and because Alice Toklas is alive and helping to edit the text even as Stein is writing it, *The Autobiography* becomes a work that is uniquely modern in its manipulation of the Bakhtinian concept of dialogism.

Whereas both Gertrude Stein and Virginia Woolf pioneered experimental techniques that liberated women from the confines of the domestic space while still allowing them to exist

within it, Stein's texts demonstrate fewer inhibitions than Virginia Woolf's. As referenced earlier in this essay, Woolf concludes "Professions for Women" with cautious optimism about the future of female authors, and in *A Room of One's Own* she makes the argument that women should be allowed a room in the house to write—not necessarily the entirety of the domestic space. In sharp contrast, Gertrude Stein's shared apartment with Alice Toklas as depicted in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* allows for creativity to overtake the entire space; the women invited people into their salon and wrote and edited work all throughout their home. By doing this and articulating it in her writing, Stein and Toklas demonstrate the versatility of the entire domestic space. Woolf's anxieties, as previously highlighted, stem from her preoccupation with the female authors of the past. Stein, favoring the present, does not make reference to female authors that preceded her, but rather championed her own work as stand-alone masterpieces. Though Woolf and Stein differ with respect to how they viewed their art, both of the women's groundbreaking work repurposing feminine domestic language has continued to inspire authors to expand the dimensionality of voice and reinvigorate the novel form.

Works Cited

- Bakhtin, M. M. *The Dialogical Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.
- Barros, Carolyn A. "Getting Modern: 'The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas.'" *Biography*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1999, pp. iv-208. *JSTOR*, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/23540006.
- DeKoven, Marianne. "Anti-patriarchal Writing and *Three Lives*." *Three Lives and Q.E.D.* edited by Marianne DeKoven, W.W. Norton and Company, 2006, pp. 317-338.
- Eigler, Friederike. "Feminist Criticism and Bakhtin's Dialogic Principle: Making the Transition from Theory to Textual Analysis." *Women in German Yearbook*. vol. 11, 1995, pp. 198-203. <http://www.jstor.org/www.library.manhattan.edu/stable/20688824>. Accessed 2 Nov 2018.
- Herndl, Diane Price. "The Dilemmas of a Feminine Dialogic." *Feminism, Bakhtin, and the Dialogic*, edited by Dale M. Bauer and S. Jaret McKinstry. State University of New York Press, 1991, pp. 7-24.
- Merrill, Cynthia. "Mirrored Image: Gertrude Stein and Autobiography." *Pacific Coast Philology*, vol. 20, no. 1/2, 1985, pp. 11-17. *JSTOR*, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1316510.
- Showalter, Elaine. "Virginia Woolf and the Flight into Androgyny," *A Literature of their Own*. Princeton University Press, 1977, pp. 263-297.
- -- -- . "The Feminist Novelists," *A Literature of their Own*. Princeton University Press, 1977, pp. 182-215.
- Stein, Gertrude. "The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas." *Selected Writings of Gertrude Stein*, edited by Carl Van Vechten, Vintage Books, 1990, pp. 459-509.
- -- -- . "The Good Anna." *Three Lives and Q.E.D.* edited by Marianne DeKoven, W.W. Norton and Company, 2006, pp. 7-52.
- Wall, Kathleen. "Frame Narratives and Unresolved Contradictions in Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*." *Journal of Narrative Theory*, vol. 29, no. 2, 1999, pp. 184-207. <http://muse.jhu.edu/www.library.manhattan.edu/article/375825/pdf>. Accessed 2 Nov 2018.
- Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. Harcourt Inc, 1929.
- -- -- . "Professions for Women." *The Virginia Woolf Reader*. Edited by Mitchell A. Leaska. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989, pp. 276-282.