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WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

University College

Liberal Arts

**MEDIATING MOORE: UNCERTAIN ORIGINS AND  
INDETERMINATE IDENTITIES IN THE WORK OF C. L. MOORE**

by

Jennifer Lynn Jodell

A thesis presented to the  
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences  
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degree of Master of Liberal Arts

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## Introduction

C. (Catherine) L. (Lucille) Moore, one of the earliest female science fiction writers, is widely regarded by SF writers, editors, and fans as one of the field's most influential founding mothers. And yet, while one might expect several general studies of Moore's work, most Moore criticism consists of two very disparate feminist SF analyses, with one thread grounded firmly in her earliest work in the pulps and the other focusing solely on her mid-career short story, "No Woman Born" (1944). Interestingly, while the latter and more recent analytical thread seems to regard Moore as an insightful commentator on themes such as gender and identity, the former-- which deals mainly with Moore's work in the 30's--suggests that Moore's "voice" as a female author was compromised early on by the decade and medium in which she made her debut. Such criticism presumes that Moore began her career as an intimidated and imitative "female pulp writer," a presumption which is then used to challenge the authenticity of Moore's authorial (and female) "voice." Not only is it believed that female pulp writers such as Moore "learned" early on to "pass" as men (i.e., through the use of "male" pseudonyms and a male "point of view," content, and writing style), critics have also asserted that successful female SF writers unconsciously mimicked (or even internalized) the conventional expressions of misogyny that "marked their historical moment"<sup>1</sup> in order to please their presumably all-male pulp audiences. Moore, in particular, is often used to open discussions of both types of mimicry. For such critics Moore is emblematic of the "few female writers" who "dar[ed]" to write SF during a period "almost exclusively dominated by men" (Gamble 30); in fact, even among general SF historians, Moore's use of initials rather than an identifiably female byline is possibly the most widely cited example<sup>2</sup> of the "need" for female pulp SF authors to pass as men due to "commercial necessity."<sup>3</sup> When reviewing such criticism, teasing apart the two forms of alleged

mimicry (intentional and internalized) can be problematic, as the two are often conflated. Regardless, if at least one of these two forms of mimicry is taken as a given, one expects to find an “inauthentic” female “voice” in female-authored SF pulp fiction, one that presumably served patriarchal ends and one perhaps of no more value to feminist critics than that of a cautionary tale.

It is apparently with the goal of establishing such a cautionary tale that Moore’s early fiction was first examined by feminist critics such as Natalie Rosinsky in the late 70s. Although by this time Moore had been praised by feminist critics for her female warrior, Jirel of Joiry, a “strong heroine” she created in the 30’s (Rosinsky, “Alienated,” 68), Rosinsky argued that the rest of Moore’s early fiction was sexist and that it could no longer be “excused” simply because it was written during a period when the “male point of view...was a necessity for anyone who wished to publish” (68).<sup>4</sup> In order to explain Jirel’s existence as well as explore the origins and manifestations of Moore’s sexism, Rosinsky closely examined Moore’s first text, “Shambleau” (1933), a story involving a macho male hero and a Medusa-like villain (Shambleau). Rosinsky implied that since Moore had, in *The Best of C. L. Moore*, commented that both Jirel and Shambleau were “versions of the self” she would have liked to have been (Moore, “Best,” 308), an attempt to resolve the two disparate characters might provide insights into Moore’s psychology and, presumably, her sexism.

Finding that “Shambleau” presented gender-related “dilemmas” which are never “resolved” and a Medusa who is never embraced “completely,” Rosinsky argued that Moore’s writing betrayed an “uncertainty” that was evidence of “self-alienation” (Rosinsky, “Alienated,” 70, 72). A self-alienated woman, Rosinsky argued, has no positive image of Woman upon which to draw and is left to view herself through the models provided by misogyny; in Moore’s case, Rosinsky argued, Moore seemed to be drawn to the figures of the “good” and “bad” woman.

Rosinsky then “resolved” Jirel by suggesting that Jirel’s positive characteristics were a side effect of Moore’s internalization of these stereotypes, while Shambleau’s depiction supported equally “conventionally misogynist views” (72). Indeed, Shambleau—sexually aggressive, uncontained, unknowable—seemed to Rosinsky to embody the misogynistic stereotype of the “bad woman,” the terrifying and irresistible woman that patriarchal ideology can only interpret as monster--or, in this case, monster, alien, animal, and Medusa in one.

Although “Shambleau” did not fall “neatly” into the category of a text produced from the “male point of view” (68), as it betrayed an alienated woman’s uncertainty and hesitation (71), Rosinsky believed that it was a sexist text and one that embodied Moore’s inner conflict regarding the nature of Woman.<sup>5</sup> Thus, rather than use the “Jirel” series as a means to understand Moore’s early fiction, Rosinsky set the tone for future Moore criticism by implying that this role belonged to “Shambleau” (Rosinsky, “Alienated,” 70). The following year, Susan Gubar made this implication explicit when she suggested that “Shambleau” should serve as the “key” to all of Moore’s early fiction (Gubar, “Conventions,” 17). Since the 80s, then, Moore’s early work has been viewed by feminist critics as reflective of a number of frustrations and fears associated with the producers of early women’s science fiction, including resentful “gynocentric” fantasies (Gamble 37), fears of “defeat,” and fears of “lack of male acceptance” from fans, colleagues, and editors (Gamble 30).<sup>6</sup> Indeed, criticism from the 70s and 80s paints a rather unpleasant picture of Moore and her contemporaries. One is left with the impression of passive, imitative writers without agency, artistry, or self-knowledge--women unfairly denied commercial and artistic control over their work, and yet “female men” so inured to male rules that, for them, playing along with the boys was the equivalent of speaking in their own voices.<sup>7</sup>

Had Moore stopped writing at the onset of WW II, her identity might have remained neatly contained within this stereotype. However, in the last decade, Moore’s work has

received a second look from critics such as Veronica Hollinger, Raffaella Baccolini, Despina Kakoudaki, and Debra Benita Shaw who sought fictionalizations of “anti-essentialist” or “anti-naturalism” theories, such as Judith Butler’s performance theory or Donna Haraway’s cyborg theory. Perhaps fortunately for Moore, such critics found in “No Woman Born” (1944) a remarkably fruitful text. What is striking about these re-evaluations of “No Woman Born” is that each suggests that Moore was aware of the means and aims of certain mechanisms of patriarchal ideology. Even more remarkably, they suggest that Moore was capable of critiquing these mechanisms with a thoughtfulness and critical distance critics such as Rosinsky presumed the “self-alienated” Moore could not possess. Indeed, in “No Woman Born”—a story in which Deidre, a dancer, loses all but her brain to a fire and is refitted with the body of a robot—Moore seems conscious enough of the male “gaze” and its relationship to gender “constructions” to weave several metaphors (e.g., woman as “machine”); historical images of women (e.g., the “lost” Deidre of Irish folklore); generic conventions (e.g., the figure of Frankenstein’s monster); and contemporaneous images from television and film (e.g., dancers as “mechanical dolls” and “mass ornament”<sup>8</sup>)—into a critique of “constructed” notions of gender.

Further, while earlier critics asserted that Moore uncritically adopted the “male point of view,” these reevaluations suggested that Moore told this particular story from the point of view of Deidre’s “maker” (Maltzer) and her presumed lover (Harris), in order to undermine the male point of view. Such critics argued that, as unreliable narrators, Maltzer and Harris’s perceptions of Deidre expose how gender constructs (e.g., the “fragile woman”) function within the male imagination in order to contain and re-contain women as “known” entities. Moore frustrates such constructs by presenting both men with a female identity that, despite Maltzer’s belief that he “knows” Deidre because she is his “creation,” is unprecedented and partially “self-constructed.” Interestingly, Moore’s denunciation of Maltzer’s arrogance is also the climax of



the text. While Deidre feels less and less of a need to keep up appearances (such as pretending to be “female” or even pretending to be “Deidre”), and her growing strangeness fills her with a wonderful new sense of power and possibility, Maltzer’s belief that Deidre’s formerly “feminine” psyche will not be able to withstand her new, “unfeminine” existence eventually drives him to attempt suicide; ironically, the woman he is determined to regard as hysterical and fragile calmly saves his life in a demonstration of super-human strength.

Beyond simply weaving these themes of “construction” into an engrossing story, however, critics in 00’s noted that Moore had also created a unique female character who could be seen as an effective starting point for discussions of two branches of “anti-essentialist” feminist theory, a theoretical branch often concerned with questions of “naturalness,” “performance,” and organic “unity.” For example, due to the fact that Moore’s “female” cyborg demonstrates that the outward “signs” of “femininity” can be mimicked, Deidre and her irreverent “dance” engage Judith Butler’s theories that gender is not a “natural,” biological phenomenon but a “constructed” or “performed” behavior. At the same time, as part-woman, part-machine, Deidre also anticipates the hybridic and irreverent “cyborg” of Donna Haraway’s “Cyborg Manifesto” (1985). For example, Deidre’s ability to maintain psychic integrity after the loss of her “natural” body suggests that Deidre’s sense of self is not the result of or limited to a “natural” or “pure” identity derived from her body. Further, as a being of “no woman born,” Deidre is an example of a unique “cyborgian” identity that must orient itself in the world without the aid of “origin myths” founded upon notions of Edenic innocence, biology, or an original “unity” from which “natural” binaries of good/evil, natural/unnatural, and human/animal are derived and organized into hierarchies. Indeed, as will be discussed again in Chapter One, due to these and other resonances with Haraway, as well as the fact that

Haraway's manifesto seems to cite to the story's title,<sup>9</sup> certain such critics believe that Haraway may have even had "No Woman Born" in mind when composing her seminal manifesto.

And yet, while such an apparently purposeful critique of gender constructions could have invited challenges to Rosinsky's claims that Moore identified with and/or had internalized misogynistic stereotypes, when critiques of "No Woman Born" began to appear they did not attempt to draw comparisons between the texts of Moore's early and mid-career. Perhaps because "No Woman Born" was such an unexpectedly rich well for anti-essentialist theory, or perhaps due to the year in which it appeared, critics instead treated the story as a stand-alone text in order to mine its potential as a fictionalization of such theories or as a means to discuss gender relations in World War II.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, critics who hold the belief that Moore's career began with and was subsequently influenced by an internalized misogyny are silent regarding "No Woman Born" other than to suggest that its somewhat ominous ending is evidence of Moore's unwillingness to embrace her heroine's full potential; that the fictional use of the male point of view reveals Moore's psychological allegiance to the male point of view<sup>11</sup>; and that Deidre's metallic body is further evidence of Moore's "anxiety about female flesh."<sup>12</sup> Thus, the "alienation" and the "good/bad woman" division Rosinsky perceived in Moore's work seems real enough, at least, in the form of a philosophical split between the criticism of Moore's texts. In other words, whereas one camp employs a presumption of sexism and mimicry to the texts of the Bad Woman Author of "Shambleau," a second camp celebrates the somewhat mutually exclusive insights and innovations of the Good Woman Author of "No Woman Born."

Once again, Moore's "identity" as an author may have remained neatly contained had critics not taken a third look at Moore's fiction, as well as a closer look at the decade in which Moore made her debut. For example, recent research by Eric Leif Davin (discussed in Chapter One) suggests that the level of participation by women in early science fiction history has been

under- and even misrepresented by modern histories of the genre. Rather than a hegemony of absolute male control and hostility to women, Davin argues that the pre-WW II science fiction pulps were a much more vivacious “contested terrain,” one relatively welcoming to participation from minority writers, including women. In the environment Davin describes, female writers such as Moore would have had no need to conceal their gender and, thus, no conscious need to “pass” as men. If Davin is correct, the consequences would be significant for Moore criticism, if not for SF histories in general. Despite her protests that she was “not at all pretending to be a man” (Roark 27), Moore’s name has become almost metonymic for the “few women” who dared to venture into the field under the cover of “male-sounding” bylines. To give credence to Moore’s claims now would not only undermine portrayals of Moore as a (passive, fearful) female author who gave in to the “necessity” to pass as a man, it would require a re-writing of the introductions to nearly every genre history covering SF by women writers during this period.

While Davin’s research does not directly address whether or not Moore was subject to an unconscious pressure to incorporate aspects of patriarchal ideology into her writing, it does provide a starting point for such a discussion, as it offers to remove an assumption that, as mentioned, is often conflated with claims of unconscious mimicry. Thus, in conjunction with a discussion of Davin’s findings, Chapter One attempts to isolate and investigate the basis of claims of conscious imitation through a series of questions: Did C. L. Moore actually have a “commercial” need—created by either fans or editors—to pass as a male author? Was the climate in which she wrote as a “female SF author” “fearful” or “uncertain,” as some critics have characterized the pulp environment, or one which encouraged open female participation and rewarded innovation? Did Moore herself believe that she was a “female chameleon” (Pearson 11) who anxiously hid her “voice” within the “protective coloration” of “misogynistic

convention” (Pearson 13), or did she perceive herself as an innovative author whose unique “voice” (style, content, characterization, complexity) drew attention to itself and broke with convention? How did claims of imitation and intimidation originate, and what have been the consequences to the genre, other female authors, and Moore as a result?

Relying on Davin’s research and other sources, Chapter One concludes that the SF pulp environment was not hostile to female participation, nor was it the all-male environment modern critics have come to imagine that it must have been. Then, while following the evolution of Moore’s public identity from “Catherine the Great” to “invisible collaborator” to “female man,” Chapter One also attempts to provide the historical background necessary to appreciate what is lost when Moore’s presumed “status” as an “imitator” without her own “voice” is accepted as an uncomplicated fact. In fact, it is possible to “construct” a model of Moore’s career that leads one to the opposite conclusion. While Moore may have come to the genre with a sense of admiration and, like many young authors, felt the urge to imitate her predecessors, one can argue that Moore quickly stood out as an influential new voice in the field. Moore not only created two iconic science fiction and fantasy figures within a year of her professional debut, she became a flamboyant innovator willing to generate controversy and drive the genre forward by defying a number of genre- and gender-related conventions. Even without the contribution of the hundreds of stories she would later write in the 40s during her collaboration with her husband, Henry Kuttner, C. L. Moore’s early work would still qualify her as one of the genre’s most important early figures. Accordingly, Moore’s early innovations not only exist, the boldness and originality of Moore’s “voice” is critical to an understanding of the early history of the genre.

It is in then that Chapter Two addresses the question of whether or not Moore should be viewed as evidence of or as a stand-in for the unconscious misogyny and mimicry of male-

oriented genre conventions that is believed to mark the writing of early female SF authors. Here, as well, recent criticism affords an opportunity to re-visit this question from a different perspective. For example, as part of a larger argument that Moore should be viewed as an early example of Haraway's female "cyborg author,"<sup>13</sup> Thomas Bredehoft has argued that Moore's use of "indeterminacy" (incompleteness, ambiguity, open-endedness) in "Shambleau" is intentional rather than the result of unconscious "self-alienation." Indeed, Bredehoft challenges the legitimacy of using literary analysis to reverse-transcribe Moore's unconscious, particularly since the ambiguity and open-endedness it seeks as evidence of self-alienation can be seen as a valuable feature of any complex work of fiction. Further, rather than view Moore's reluctance to embrace "certainty" as a sign that she herself is psychologically "uncertain," one can instead argue that Moore shows a conscious preference as an author for the cyborgian values of the partial and incomplete, the uncertain and open-ended.

What Bredehoft accomplishes is more than a defense of the "indeterminacy" within "Shambleau." It also implies that if Moore's texts cannot—or should not—be used as a means to reverse-transcribe her unconscious, then there is no means for determining whether or not she is Rosinsky's "self-alienated" woman. This implication, combined with Davin's research suggesting that Moore had no conscious need to pass as a male author, would seem to render obsolete one of the two main concerns of existing Moore criticism—i.e., that Moore should serve as a symbol of the experience and presumably "inauthentic" voice of female SF authors during the pulp period. Once this strand falls away, one is left with a single text, "No Woman Born," as the focus of Moore criticism, a text which, unlike "Shambleau," has not been offered as a "key" to understanding Moore's other texts. While ultimately it is perhaps unnecessary to choose a single story as an cipher for Moore's work, such a strategy is a means to initiate a broader discussion of her texts. Thus, I offer an even earlier text, "Bright Illusion" (1934), as a

possible starting point. Besides being Moore's first science fiction piece, it is a text she alludes to twenty-three years later in her last science fiction novel, *Doomsday Morning* (1957) and thus may be seen as an opening and closing statement for her fiction--or, at the very least, a touchstone.

In selecting the aspects of the text on which to focus, I attempt to draw connections between the themes of Moore's early and late science fiction while at the same time connecting both to the most theoretically provocative aspects of her mid-career piece, "No Woman Born," themes which Bredehoft has already suggested appear in her first text, "Shambleau." In other words, I have borrowed Bredehoft's observations regarding Moore's cyborgian preferences (e.g., indeterminacy, the questioning of origin stories, hybridity), as well as Moore's apparent interest in Butlerian themes (e.g., "performance," "readability," and "construction") and attempted to connect them under a heading broad enough to include other examples of Moore's SF. The over-arching theme I have selected of "epistemological uncertainty" is admittedly somewhat general, but it has the advantage of being one that is familiar to mainstream SF. As Joanna Russ notes, science fiction "deals commonly, typically, and often insistently with epistemology" (Russ "Towards" 561); therefore, it is my intention in focusing on "Bright Illusion" to not only to trace a path for such themes throughout Moore's work, but also to create a basis for putting her work into dialogue with mainstream SF and its criticism.

Accordingly, Chapters Two and Three examine Moore's work in order to identify skepticism towards what is "known," particularly to locate those example which engage either Harawayan or Butlerian theories of how knowledge and meaning—as well as history and identity—are constructed, maintained, and sometimes irreverently disrupted. Chapter One focuses on "Bright Illusion" and *The Mask of Circe* to discover Harawayan connections, such as disruptive images of hybridity, the deconstruction of binaries, uncertainty/partiality, and

skepticism towards unities. Chapter Three then focuses on two of Moore's mid- and late-career pieces ("The Prisoner in the Skull" and *Doomsday Morning*) which reflect Moore's interest in themes of "performance," "readability" (which I am using to mean: what can be "known" regarding an identity, visually and conceptually), and "constructedness" (formalization, filtering, categorization) of both gender and identity.<sup>14</sup> These four pieces were selected for their ability to demonstrate Moore's tendency to carry such themes from work to work--thus suggesting a continuity to Moore's artistic statement--as well as for the fact that none of these texts remains neatly encapsulated within the categories I have assigned to them. Indeed, as the two chapters begin and end with sections on "Bright Illusion" and *Doomsday Morning*, respectively, these two sections are intended to speak to each other, and thus discussions of particular devices and specific images cross over from chapter to chapter.

In "re-constructing" Moore's identity and in positing an overall theme for her work, I am sensitive to concerns such as those raised by professor and writer Samuel R. Delany regarding the continual sense of historical "rupture" in SF studies, particularly when it concerns criticism of this period. In "Science Fiction and 'Literature'—or, the Conscience of the King" (1996), Delany argues that for some critics science fiction either "began precisely at the moment when they started to read it" (445) or began in the distant past in "utopias" (445). Others look nostalgically to the past for "the way they did back in the sixties/fifties/forties," which is essentially a cry for historical unity that does not exist (456). Criticism of this kind "strips science fiction of its history;...ignores it as a discourse, as a particular way of reading and responding to texts; and...obscures its values of historical, theoretical, stylistic, and valuative plurality..." (452). As a consequence, such critics employ anachronistic biases which lead them to ignore SF's early history altogether or to dismiss its unique character as irrelevant. "[Such] notions accomplish the same thing: they obviate the real lives, the real development, and finally the real

productions of real SF writers..." (445). While one can dispute whether or not the "real" lives of historical figures can ever be truly recovered or "known," Delany's point that much criticism within the genre operates according to a notion of the past that is often elided, distorted by modern bias, or highly selective is highly relevant to a discussion of Moore. I believe Moore has also been flattened and formalized in this manner, that the details of her life and work have become "irrelevant" so that she might serve as a symbol. Thus, I seek to confront this use of Moore's identity with an alternate model of her identity and her work, one which privileges details over categorization.

In constructing this model, it is important to note that I have left out a considerable amount of Moore's work; thus, there are in reality many possible "flights," to use a term Deleuze used in his analysis of identity, through her fiction. For example, I have excluded nearly all of the literature of "depersonalization" she produced with Henry Kuttner. I have also left out Moore's most highly-regarded work, "Vintage Season,"<sup>15</sup> as this text would require a thorough discussion of a number of Moore's sub-themes ("screens,"<sup>16</sup> time,<sup>17</sup> aesthetics,<sup>18</sup> "taste"/class,<sup>19</sup> genius, vampirism, sacrifice,<sup>20</sup> empathy,<sup>21</sup> colonialism,<sup>22</sup> consumerism (tourism), nuclear weaponry,<sup>23</sup> etc.) which space limitations do not permit. I have also not addressed how Moore's fiction might engage theories of the body and identity which post-date those of Haraway and Butler, such as post- or transhuman theories, which explore questions regarding the boundaries of the body, prosthetics, and the body's interactions with environments; however, for those seeking to study Moore using such theory, the short story "Heir Apparent" may prove a worthwhile starting point. Further, I have not provided an extensive analysis of either "Shambleau" or "No Woman Born," as my purpose is to suggest that other fields of vision exist beyond those within this Janus-like stalemate.



Thus, while I am using the theme of “epistemological uncertainty” to trace a path through Moore’s work, as mentioned, my analysis is only one of many flights or paths. Indeed, my analysis of Moore’s texts and her “identity” are similar in the respect that they are primarily intended to agitate against what is currently “known” about Moore rather than to assert a new certainty. In other words, I am asserting that neither Moore nor her “statement” can ever be fully reconstructed and thus neither can be “known” with certainty. However, as I believe Moore’s fiction itself argues (particularly through its images of tri-faced Hecate and the infinite faces of Clarissa), there is value in questioning what appear to be “fixed” identities. Further, it is possible to consider multiple possibilities at once when assessing both “identity” and history and here, too, Moore’s fiction advocates for such attempts. Through her re-writing of myth and origin stories, for example, Moore’s work seems to advocate for an awareness of how the past is both constructed and utilized by the present, a theme which is evident in the introductory framing she provides to her first text, “Shambleau,” in which she introduces the myth surrounding her Medusa in an ambiguous manner. Interestingly, mainstream SF is still aware of this aspect of Moore’s work on some level. When Kim Stanley Robinson’s character, John Boone, speaks on the topic of how the “present creates the past” in *Green Mars* (1993), Robinson revealed in an interview that he intended to create a “deliberate echo...of, and contrast to, the introduction to one of the best-known Mars stories...’Shambleau’” (Foote). Regardless, my point is that, while an attempt to re-create the truth of Moore’s work and life may be futile, if one is seeking “value” in Moore’s work, it may be that it argues for exactly this type of challenge to what is “known.”

Finally, in engaging in such an analysis, rather than approach Moore with a presumption of mimicry and intimidation, I seek to approach Moore with a presumption of her “authorship,” of her artistry and agency, in order to discover features of her work—e.g., strategic motifs and

devices—that presumptions of “imitation” and “intimidation” assume cannot exist. For this reason, I do not seek as some science fiction criticism does to analyze her fiction in order to determine what it “reflects” about the anxieties and concerns of its time period, an approach which would require both a psychological analysis of Moore as well as the belief that Moore could serve as a stand-in for several categories of persons. Indeed, the belief that the primary value of SF and its practitioners is to “reflect” their historical moments is a dangerous and truncated approach to SF criticism, one that has perhaps contributed to the easy reduction of Moore to a stereotype. Not only does such an approach require several stages of generalization and “flattening,” in a sense, it denies the agency, creativity, and individuality of SF authors, particularly feminist SF authors, thus erasing a form of female authorship.

SF has long been known to feminist theorists and writers as a venue in which they might experiment and “work out” their philosophies, with Joanna Russ and Ursula K. LeGuin being obvious examples. In essence, the idea that SF texts should be primarily be used as psychological snapshots of their time denies the intellectual and transformative possibilities that have resulted from such feminist experiments. It denies authors of feminist SF the status of authors—authors who are capable of creating metaphors, imagery, and commentary that agitate against contemporary attitudes or have intellectual value regardless of they may have been received or have reflected the concerns of any particular point in time. In fact, this approach reduces SF writers (both male and female) to a status similar to the status I will argue has been applied to Moore—that of passive and naïve imitators, unconscious vessels, or featureless symbols, whose voices and “value” are best understood when re-contextualized by the more knowledgeable modern critic.

Finally, such an approach denies the genre’s character as an extremely complex and self-referential intellectual and philosophical discourse, one which affords its writers, critics, and

readers much aesthetic pleasure. In examining Moore's texts rather than her psychology, I am asserting that Moore is participating in this discourse, specifically in its discussion of epistemology, and that her contributions in this regard are worth consideration. To insist instead on a focus on Moore's psychology or historical moment is not only to cut her off from this discourse—and to sequester a female author from this discourse—given that she returned to these themes again and again, it is perhaps an approach that isolates Moore from what she may have appreciated most about her chosen genre. My approach to a literary analysis of her texts, then, involves a close reading of these stories that "interested her," which is perhaps the only aspect of Moore's psychology that can be "known."

## Chapter One: Contested Origins, Contested Terrain: Re-visioning the Work of C. L. Moore

### 1.1 Significance to the Genre

In “An Open Letter to C. L. Moore,” a piece written for the program of the 1981 Worldcon at which Moore was a guest of honor, writer Robert Bloch<sup>24</sup> describes his first meeting with Moore, as well as her impact on the science fiction and science-fantasy<sup>25</sup> fields as they existed in 1933:

Do you remember a long-ago day in May, 1937, when you and your friend Marjorie paid your first visit to California? You were still working as a bank secretary back in Indianapolis, your home town, but already you'd become quite a famous lady. Or perhaps a famous young man. That's what the readers of *Weird Tales* thought when they read your tricky byline<sup>26</sup>—“C. L. Moore”—on your very first story, “Shambleau,” published back in '33...It catapulted you immediately into the front ranks of science-fantasy writers—the first gal who'd made it in the one hundred and seventeen years since the publication of *Frankenstein*...Those series of yours, Northwest Smith and Jirel of Joiry, were top favorites, and now you were writing legitimate science fiction for *Astounding Stories*. By this time [1937], of course, the secret was out. You were definitely feminine—and attractive. No wonder Henry Kuttner fell for you... (Bloch 7)<sup>27</sup>

After noting the importance of Moore's collaborations with Henry Kuttner, Bloch continues to observe of Moore's own work that “[n]o one ever did more to elevate the literary level of the field. The pieces which bear your stamp most clearly—work like “Judgment Night,” “Vintage Season”—are part of science fiction's history...” (Bloch 8). He somewhat bitter-sweetly mentions a trip to visit Moore at the Warner Brothers set, where Moore wrote scripts for westerns and detective series such as *Maverick*, *Sugarfoot*, and *77 Sunset Strip*<sup>28</sup> after she stopped writing science fiction,<sup>29</sup> then re-states Moore's importance to the genre, which he suggests was clear even in 1937.

[A]ll of us, trying to scrounge a living in the midst of the worst depression this country has ever known—each clinging to an identity that could be established only in the pages of the lowly and despised pulp magazine...Even then, like all your readers, fans and fellow-writers, we were ready to swear that you were going to make it. Your talent and imagination were already beginning to revolutionize the genre... (Bloch 8)

While high praise for a guest of honor is certainly expected, Bloch's claims are defensible. Over the last eight decades, a wide range of SF writers, fans, and historians have affirmed the importance of Moore's contributions—first to weird- and science-fantasy and then to science fiction--by virtue of her own merit and as a result of her work in the 40's and 50's with Henry Kuttner.

As professor and SF historian James Gunn notes in *The Science of Science Fiction Writing*, the Kuttners exerted a global influence on the field, such that they contributed significantly "to the evolution of science fiction during the formative early stages of the modern period" (Gunn 173). While *Astounding* editor John Campbell's regular "stable" of writers was abroad or otherwise occupied with the war effort, Gunn notes that the Kuttners "helped carry *Astounding* through the war years" (Gunn, "Science," 172). Not including their work before their marriage in 1940, during the years 1940-1958, inclusively, the Kuttners published over 229 short stories and twenty-one novels or anthologies in various markets, with the bulk appearing before 1947. Between 1942 and 1947, forty-one of those stories appeared in the premier science fiction magazine of the time, John Campbell's *Astounding*.<sup>30</sup> Thus, while the Kuttners' combined "voice" was not the only one in the field during the 40's, figuratively speaking, it was certainly the loudest, ensuring that the science fiction community was exposed to both writers' stylistic and thematic preoccupations. As Robert Silverberg attests, "everyone read their stories" (Silverberg, "Papers," 46) and younger writers, such as Philip K. Dick and Robert Sheckley, studied and imitated them.<sup>31</sup> Silverberg himself recalls: "There were no science-fiction writers I studied more closely, in that enormously formative period of my late teens, than C. L. Moore and Henry Kuttner."<sup>32</sup>

Kuttner and Moore's individual followings—gained when they wrote under their bylines or through work prior to their marriage—further compounded their collective influence.

Kuttner's influence in this respect is much more visible. Although his early career was overshadowed by claims of a "tarnished reputation,"<sup>33</sup> by the time of his death in 1958 at age 44, Kuttner would have a tremendous influence on both Leigh Brackett<sup>34</sup> and Ray Bradbury, who both considered Kuttner their mentor. In fact, by 1954, both Ray Bradbury and Richard Matheson had dedicated books to Kuttner (*Dark Carnival*, 1947, and *I Am Legend*, 1954, respectively). Upon his death, his memorial issue in *Etchings and Odysseys* would include tributes from Ray Bradbury, Leigh Brackett, Robert Bloch, Fritz Leiber, J. Vernon Shea, Mary Elizabeth Counselman, Edmond Hamilton, and Will F. Jenkins (Murray Leinster).

In contrast, Moore's individual influence is less easily identified, but was undoubtedly widespread. With the publication of her first story, "Shambleau" (1933), writers, editors, and fans immediately acknowledged that Moore had set a new standard for literary quality in the genre. Moore's contributions in this regard, particularly her use of literarily self-conscious language, would continue to have a visible effect in the genre as late as the 80's. For example, when Moore passed away in 1987, memorials would include praise such as that provided by 80's SF writer Poul Anderson: "...If I have managed here and there to use language a bit strikingly myself—that is for you, the reader, to decide—then a considerable part of the reason has been that I read her" (Anderson 5).<sup>35</sup> Moore's "No Woman Born" (Astounding 1944) was met with critical acclaim within the genre. Writer, editor, and anthologist Damon Knight cited the story in *In Search of Wonder* (1956) as a text that helped to establish SF's credibility as "respectable" literature, and Laurence M. Janifer's 1966 survey of writers and editors honored it as one of the field's top twenty most widely respected stories.<sup>36</sup> Her legacy to female authored SF is somewhat controversial, but her presence in the field clearly had an impact on the female writers to follow. As Marion Zimmer Bradley has stated: "[I]f it were not for this woman, I would not exist...I never would have done anything" (Bradley 69).<sup>37</sup> Indeed, Moore's work in

the pulps possibly affected the field more than that of any other female writer, as her work in the 40s and 50s is assumed to have influenced “canonical feminists” who read science fiction during this period.<sup>38</sup> Moore’s immediate literary descendents are difficult to identify—as, unlike Kuttner, she did not mentor or receive book dedications—but are assumed to be Anne McCaffrey,<sup>39</sup> Marion Zimmer Bradley,<sup>40</sup> and Leigh Brackett.<sup>41</sup> Specific indebtedness to Moore has been voiced by female science fiction and fantasy writers such as Brackett<sup>42</sup>, Bradley, C. L. Cherryh,<sup>43</sup> and Suzy McKee Charnas,<sup>44</sup> with Bradley claiming Moore as the “mother of all women who write science fiction” (Bradley 69).

And yet, as mentioned, with the exception of her early work in the 30’s and “No Woman Born,” the majority of Moore’s work, including her mid- and late-career collaborations with Kuttner, has received little in-depth critical or theoretical attention. In fact, her most highly regarded work, “Vintage Season,” has received virtually none.<sup>45</sup> Not only has Moore seemed to have been passed over as an appropriate topic for general SF criticism, feminist SF critics have yet to fully embrace Moore as an appropriate “mother.” While Chapters Two and Three will attempt to partially theorize Moore’s texts, before doing so it is first necessary to understand that existing criticism of Moore’s work is influenced by a thick filter. Whether positive or negative, criticism of Moore’s texts operates under the presumption that Moore—either consciously or unconsciously—began her career by attempting to pass as a “male” writer and, thus, her early work is that of an “imitator” rather than that of an “innovator.”

## **1.2 Innovator Versus Imitator**

### **1.2.1 Sex, Style, and “Shamleau”**

Addressing the claim that Moore consciously attempted to pass as a male author involves more than merely recounting her statements to the contrary, as such statements by Moore (and other female writers from this period) have largely been ignored. Therefore, one must examine the belief that at the time Moore was writing, the SF pulps were both male-dominated and hostile to female participation; thus, female SF writers such as Moore could be successful only if they attempted to “pass” as male authors. By passing, it is generally meant that they employed “male-sounding” bylines, adopted a male narrative voice, and wrote from a male point of view in order to meet expectations for “male” writing and, thus, escape discovery as female authors. In this fearful climate, female authors are generally portrayed as imitators of “male” conventions who were simply content to be allowed—by cover of a carefully maintained deception—to be able to participate in the field in some manner. And yet, evidence suggests that this was not at all the climate in which Moore wrote; in fact, one can argue that it was rather the opposite. For example, Moore maintained a relatively high profile among fellow authors, revealed her gender to her fans in 1935, and was received with acclaim by male fans, writers, and editors long after her gender became public. Most importantly, however, is the fact that Moore broke with—if not flaunted—convention; her innovations in areas such as content, style, characterization, and literary complexity represent a significant contribution to the early history of the genre.

Indeed, with the publication of her first story, “Shambleau” (*Weird Tales*, 1933), Moore became an instant celebrity. As Bloch suggests, “Shambleau,” the tale of Northwest Smith and a Medusa-like alien, was received with instant acclaim, beginning with a private celebration by *Weird Tales* editor Farnsworth Wright<sup>46</sup> and cascading through the science fiction public as a “rapturous” wave (Hillman 51). Lester Del Rey, in his introduction to *The Best of C. L. Moore*,



attempted to explain the furor through his own reaction to “[the] story with the provocative but meaningless” title:

[L]ife was never quite the same afterward. Up to that time, science-fiction readers had accepted the mechanistic and unemotional stories of other worlds and future times without question. After [Shambleau], however, the bleakness of such writing would never again be satisfactory... Here...we find mood, feeling, and color... (1)

He adds: “And—certainly for the first time that I can remember in the field—this story presents the sexual drive of humanity in some of its complexity” (2). With “Shambleau” Moore seemed to have restored “the senses” to SF, as Del Rey phrases it, as well as confronted SF with a shocking dose of female sexuality. “It is probably impossible to explain to modern readers how great an impact that first C. L. Moore story had...” Del Rey adds: “[T]he influences of that story were and are tremendous” (1).

Anthologist Karl Edward Wagner describes “Shambleau” in *Echoes of Valor II*:

‘Shambleau’ was the first in a series of thirteen stories about Northwest Smith, a hunted outlaw/adventurer who roamed the future spaceways ... Pure space opera, but with a difference. Moore welded elements of supernatural fantasy, intensely surreal imagery, and fully developed characterizations onto the framework of pulp-style adventure—and left her readers in awe... Moore’s interpretation of science-fantasy was a dark, moody vision—usually downbeat and nihilistic for all its atmospheric richness—far better suited to the weird/fantasy markets than to the science fiction pulps. (30)

The perception that “Shambleau” was “revolutionary” was not limited to editors and fans, however. Fellow writers such as H. P. Lovecraft, and Conan creator, R. E. Howard,<sup>47</sup> announced themselves as Moore enthusiasts, granting her access to other writers in the Lovecraft Circle, including her future husband, Henry Kuttner. Lovecraft immediately praised “Shambleau” for what he saw as an intrepid use of tone, imagery, and characterization.

Although he lamented the fact that the story took place “in space,” he noted that:

[Shambleau] begins magnificently, on just the right note of terror and with black intimations of the unknown...It has real atmosphere and tension—rare things amidst the pulp tradition of brisk, cheerful, staccato prose and lifeless stock characters and images. (Moskowitz, *Seekers*, 303-4)

Moore would continue to draw attention and garner fans with her next story, "Black Thirst" (1934), the second tale of the leather-clad outlaw with "no color" eyes. Perhaps even more remarkable than the reception of "Shambleau," however, was the response in 1934 to "Black God's Kiss," in which she introduced one of the first and most successful female heroines of sword and sorcery, Jirel of Joiry, "a Rambo-esque Joan of Arc" (Charnas 11). Readers in *Weird Tales* would award "Shambleau," along with "Black Thirst" (April 1934) and "Scarlet Dream" (May 1934), "best story" in their respective issues, beating out contributions by such veterans as "E. Hoffmann Price, Robert E. Howard, Jack Williamson, Edmond Hamilton, Frank Belknap Long, and Clark Ashton Smith" (Davin 112). However, soon even luminaries such as Clark Ashton Smith were themselves Moore fans. As he would write to Donald Wandrei in February 1935: "I wish Miss Moore would write a new story" (Bertonneau, "Aspect" 1). Indeed, Moore would collaborate for the first time in 1935 in the round-robin story, "The Challenge from Beyond" (*Fantasy Magazine*), with first position in the story, followed by A. Merritt, H. P. Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard, and Frank Belknap Long (Moskowitz, *Horrors*, 1). Although Moore's gender was known to *Astounding* readers as early as 1935, and Moore herself made her gender known to her *Weird Tales* readership in October 1935 when she signed a letter as "Miss Catherine Moore" (Davin 112), this fact apparently had no effect on her popularity among fans, editors, or peers. Moore's reputation was such that she would become known as "Catherine the Great, toast of *Weird Tales*" (Moskowitz, *Seekers*, 306) and her work would be translated into Greek, French, Spanish, German, Italian, and Danish (see Pastourmatzi's "Hellenic Magazines" and Virgil Utter's *Working Bibliography*).

Perhaps as a result of her popularity, *Weird Tales* was not able to keep Moore to itself. In 1934 Moore was asked by editor, F. Orlin Tremaine (Davin 112; Moskowitz, *Seekers*, 309)<sup>48</sup> to

produce a piece for the science fiction magazine *Astounding*.<sup>49</sup> Thus, Moore officially staked her claim in, as Bloch termed it, “legitimate science fiction.”<sup>50</sup> Significantly, Moore immediately defied SF convention. As Del Rey relates, Moore’s “Bright Illusion” (*Astounding*, 1934) had the fans “raving” for more at a time when the genre, still “groping for its beginnings,” could at least “generally agree in letters to the editor” that the “last thing it wanted was a love story” (Del Rey 2). Indeed, Davin notes that the reaction to Moore’s “Bright Illusion” demonstrates a measure of resistance to claims that the science fiction field at this time was adverse to the presence of women and a discussion of love within its fiction. As writer E. E. “Doc” Smith, wrote to *Astounding* in a letter to *Astounding* in 1935, Moore’s weird-fantasy—which could arguably be seen as a genre more appropriate for women—did not appeal to Smith. Yet, the “father of space opera” embraced Moore’s first involvement with science fiction:

I read five of her [weird-fantasy] stories without being impelled to rave. Good jobs, they all were, and done in a workmanlike fashion...Then ‘Bright Illusion’! Man, there is a job of work—adult fare, that...I have read it three times so far, and haven’t got it all yet...a truly remarkable and really masterful piece of writing. I have no idea whether Miss (or Mrs.) Moore is a young girl with an unusually powerful mind and a full store of unsullied idealism, or whether she is a woman whose long eventful life has shown her that real love is man’s supreme dower. But whoever or whatever she may be, I perceive in her ‘Bright Illusion’ a flame of sublimity. (*Astounding* January 1935, qtd. in Davin 113)

Along with her discussions of love, Moore’s style would seem to have been ill-suited to the science fiction pulps. Languorous, evocative, dark, it stood in sharp contrast to the brisk, no-nonsense prose of the science fiction of the time. Indeed, Moore’s style not only drew attention to itself, her serpentine passages of ambiguous imagery often had the effect of confounding the reader. As Robert Silverberg vividly recalls in the “Silverberg Papers,” Moore’s stories were “long and moody and slow,...[culminating] in a swirl of powerful but impenetrable strangeness that defied rational analysis” (Silverberg, “Silverberg Papers,” 46). And yet, despite the fact that

science fiction's project at the time was heavily invested in "rational analysis," (Attebery, *Decoding*, ch. 3), Moore's science fiction fans seem to have enjoyed their bewilderment.

It is important to linger here for a moment to confirm that part of the reason Moore was received with such approbation by genre audiences was due to the fact that each audience perceived her work to be "unique" in some manner. For example, when it seemed Moore was giving up weird-fantasy for science fiction, her weird-fantasy fans grew nostalgic for a distinct form of story-telling. In 1945, in a letter to *Sword & Fantasy* entitled, "Let's Have More from Miss Moore," A. F. Hillman implores Moore to return to the writing of the "weird." He identifies Moore as the "premier feminine fantasy writer in America" with a style "uniquely her own" (Hillman 51). Moore's style is free from the "ponderous[ness]" of Lovecraft, the "impetuous action of R. E. Howard," the "exotic extravaganza of Clark Ashton Smith," and the "Technicolour precision" of Merritt (51). "Miss Moore's words are equally telling, but arranged to give an effect much softer, even perhaps hypnotic...It is as though we see her weird imagery through a soft veil of gauzy draperies, or shimmering through the turbid depths of a slowly stirring pool" (51). Anticipating Silverberg's comments in 1987, he also characterizes Moore's imagery as "difficult to analyze" (51). He then reflects on the subject of Moore's marriage to Kuttner, whom he states has done some "good work for *Weird Tales*, but some appalling hackery," and hopes aloud that Kuttner will not have a "derogatory effect" on her output or "high standard" (52). He concludes that "her weird-story output has become negligible [since her marriage], and to encounter her name in a magazine is a rarity...How about it, Miss Moore?" (52).

Besides foreshadowing the eventual disappearance of Moore's byline, what is significant about Hillman's letter is his assertion that Moore's style is "uniquely her own" and, even more so, that it is distinctly "feminine." By itself, the latter comment is not surprising, as a review of the SF criticism covering this period trains one to expect a certain amount of chauvinism from

Moore's readers. However, when contrasted with the claim made decades later by feminist critics that Moore made a conscious attempt to impersonate the typical male author of the time, Hillman's letter stands as one of the contemporaneous texts that render such claims dubious. In addition, his comments indicate that Moore's fiction was consumed by audiences sensitive to subtle variations within genre literature--variations that may not be apparent to the modern or casual reader.

At the same time, Moore also perceived her stories as "unique." As Bloch suggested, Moore did "cling" to the "identity" she had established in the pulps, and this identity, for Moore at least, was tied to her perception that she was an innovator. For example, when asked by Jeffrey Elliot if she ever considered herself a "formula writer" due to the "huge number of stories [she] produced and the speed with which [she] produced them," she responded: "Only to the extent that I invented my own formula, which became the trademark of a C. L. Moore story."<sup>51</sup> Indeed, professor and historian James Gunn suggests that Moore was so protective of "her" name that she felt more comfortable using pseudonyms for any story which did not seem to fit the cast of a true "C.L.M" story.<sup>52</sup> Moore's comments would seem to support the idea that she regarded "C. L. Moore" as a valuable brand name, as there would have been no reason to discriminate with such care between pseudonyms if her byline were merely a cloak for gender.

### 1.2.2 Generic Experimentation and Characterization

Moore's willingness to defy generic convention has already been implied in connection with her use of a weird-fantasy style in the SF pulps, her emphasis on sex, and her creation of a "science fiction love story." However, in 1937 Moore violated a generic boundary that is still considered by some today to be sacrosanct. In other words, in "Quest of the Starstone,"<sup>53</sup>

Moore imported characters from enclosed, generic worlds across genres into other enclosed, generic worlds. In what was perhaps the first SF-fantasy crossover, Moore's science-fantasy hero, Northwest Smith, travels to medieval France to face off against Moore's fantasy heroine, Jirel of Joiry. Additionally, Moore also experimented with generic convention in terms of characterization, and these endeavors merit a more thorough explication, as they provide a possible explanation for how a relative neophyte created two now iconic figures in different genres within a year of her professional debut.

There are several frameworks in which to conduct such an examination, but perhaps the most useful when discussing both Northwest Smith and Jirel of Joiry at once are Brian Attebery's descriptions of "feminine" and "masculine" Gothic and the "ideal" masculine science fiction hero of the 30's. As Attebery describes the state of science fiction in the 20's and 30's in

*Decoding Gender in Science Fiction:*

[W]ithin a decade of Gernsback's first issue [1926-1936], editors, fans, and writers had reached a consensus...The evolving formula had to meet a number of criteria...[I]t had to generate heroes who were more attractive, more capable versions of the average reader...It had to compensate for the readers' insecurities by demonstrating that their technical know-how could, under the right circumstances, bring them riches, respect, and sexual gratification...[I]t had to suggest that these rewards were the natural result of scientific principles...and the hero was benefiting not only himself but humanity. (40)

Attebery goes on to describe the two basic male roles in this formula, that of the eager student and his scientist-mentor, both "idealizations" of the masculine. As if embodying later discussions of the anxieties of the "traditional liberal humanist subject," male characters were intensely concerned with maintaining physical "boundaries," and representations of the female were often connected with the fluid, the amorphous, and the "observed" (49). Like the writer's "style," which tended to be as unobtrusive as possible, gender relations were relatively uncomplicated, as a discussion of sex and love was unnecessary to--even a distraction from--the story's rapid but thorough explication of a "Neat Idea" (40). Besides serving as a means to

confirm the heterosexuality of the student and mentor, female characters had three roles: “being explained to,” “getting rescued,” and “marrying the hero” (45). Early versions of such stories might also conclude with the marriage of the student to the scientist’s daughter or a symbolically similar transfer of the “virgin lands” of Nature to the victorious student (24).

Moore also had access to the Gothic mode, which has been associated with the criticism of science fiction since Brian Aldiss argued that modern SF is linked to the mode of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* in *Trillion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction* (1986).<sup>54</sup> As Attebery observes, narratives in the Gothic tradition employed generic devices such as an “endangered young lady,” “the ancient and gloomy mansion,” “the enigmatic servant,” “a secret, subterranean communication,” “mirrors,”<sup>55</sup> and a “manuscript containing the ‘memoirs of wretched Matilda’” (20-21). While Attebery notes that the Gothic mode is capable of generating unexpected gender coding (24), female characters are “typically naïve, curious, beautiful, and powerless, while males are experienced, desirous, dangerous, and propertied, the ancestral mansion being essentially an extension of the man who owns it” (26). Further, Attebery sees two recognizable traditions: A “masculine Gothic” marked by “violence,” “abjection,” and a desire to transcend “the organic realm,” and a “feminine Gothic” that brings the narrative to a crisis hinging on “choosing the right mate” (26-7).

Northwest and Jirel both appear to be departures from and a mingling of these two popular generic models. An amoral and often intoxicated patron of seedy alien cafes, Smith has been described as a “flâneur” or a “proto-Bogart” (Bertonneau, “Aspect,” 8) while others see the wise-cracking outlaw with the “crooked grin” as the inspiration for Han Solo and Indiana Jones (Attebery, “Fifty,” 173; Bertonneau, “Monstrous,” 4). As for generic innovation, the half-starved Smith is hardly the attractive, ambitious “idealized” figure required by the science fiction pulps nor the dangerous “master” of the Gothic. Northwest has no prospects for earning

riches, property, or glory—certainly no interest in a wife--nor any ambition to advance the cause of anything other than his next drink. Also in contrast to the hero of SF convention, Smith does not appear to have a detailed knowledge of science or gadgetry, and he rarely manages to maintain his “boundaries.” In fact, despite frequent characterizations of Northwest as the epitome of the “macho” hero, the steely-eyed Smith often finds himself thrust through “portals” to female-dominated worlds where he is “penetrated” in moments of perceptual vertigo. Also interesting is the fact that he and his oddly “feminized” sidekick, Yarol,<sup>56</sup> must sometimes flee from a fight (as in “Yvala”), and Smith is further “feminized” in the sense that his naïveté is often the source of his trouble, a fact that would, according to Attebery’s model, associate him with the traditional female role in Gothic. Finally, unlike the hero of SF or masculine Gothic, Smith is unlikely to ever acquire property. Indeed, because Smith is a wanted outlaw, he is a perpetual nomad<sup>57</sup> who can never return safely to his “ancestral home” of “The Green Hills of Earth.”<sup>58</sup>

As Moore relates in her interview with *Chacal*, Jirel of Joiry’s popularity was also probably due to the fact that she “broke convention” (Roark 28). As indicated by her name, Jirel is clearly propertied,<sup>59</sup> the mistress of a castle, its territories, and “her men.” While she and Smith are similar in that they both lead somewhat hedonistic existences and possess cores of “violence,” in contrast to Northwest’s reluctant curiosity and naïveté, Jirel bounds into danger with sword drawn and “smoldering curses” to announce her intentions. A tall, muscular, and headstrong “tough girl,”<sup>60</sup> the foul-mouthed Jirel is certainly not the extraneous, background figure of the science fiction mode, nor is she the helpless female of the Gothic. Additionally, Jirel fails to meet the criteria of a heroine of Attebery’s “feminine Gothic” in the sense that while Jirel does possess limited ambitions such as maintaining Joiry’s treasury, similar to Smith, marriage is not one of them.



And, yet, as anthologist Karl Edward Wagner notes in his introduction to *Echoes of Valor*

//, Jirel is not simply “Conan” in a woman’s body:

As with Conan, the prototype is not easily surpassed...Like her creator, Jirel was a red-haired beauty and fiercely independent—arguably one of the genre’s first liberated heroines. Jirel was not simply Conan in a brass bra. Moore portrayed Jirel with a depth of characterization and a sure grasp of feminine feeling that placed Jirel generations beyond the rest of the pulp field. (31)

However, it is important to note that although Moore’s heroine seems to possess “feminine feeling,” as Wagner phrases it, Jirel does not find love. Indeed, Moore has been criticized for, as Sarah Gamble claims, never presenting a “single example of an uncomplicated, happy love affair, for love and death, just as much as sex and erotic annihilation, are irrevocably linked throughout her fiction” (Gamble 35). Although some might argue that “uncomplicated, happy love affairs” are rare in fiction, Gamble’s claims that Moore’s characters tend to be “loners” who experience a link between “sex and erotic annihilation” carry some weight. Regardless, Moore’s positioning of Jirel as an unrepentant loner also allows Moore to take liberties with traditional “romantic” conventions. For example, in “Black God’s Kiss,” when Jirel’s only male counterpart, Guillaume, injures her pride by overrunning her castle, Jirel travels to a Plutonian land to secure a weapon capable of defeating him. The weapon proves to be a supernatural “kiss” which, in a “parody of the classic fairy tale motif” (Gamble 43), she uses to kill Guillaume. Only after Guillaume falls dead at her feet does she admit to herself that a repressed sexual attraction was probably responsible for some portion of her fury. Nevertheless, Guillaume is dead, and in “Black God’s Shadow,” Jirel’s guilt will compel her to venture, Orpheus-like, to the underworld to silence his wails and free his soul. Similarly, in “The Dark Land,” the dark god Pav abducts Jirel’s dreaming mind and announces that she will rule with him as queen over the land of Romme; Jirel eventually defeats Pav—remarkably, and probably significantly, with the aid of a bridal gown. If nothing else, Jirel—like Smith—is a fascinating early experiment by an author

willing to flaunt convention and explore the creative possibilities of an interplay between different generic conventions.

As can be seen from Jirel's example, Moore's pulp heroines were also unconventionally "strong" female characters. Moore's willingness to empower her female creations is perhaps most clearly seen in one of her most irreverent pieces,<sup>61</sup> "Fruit of Knowledge" (*Unknown*, 1940). In this re-telling of one of Western Civilization's organizing narratives, Moore seizes on the figure of Lilith to create a female protagonist Michele Osherow calls "a worthy opponent for God himself" (68). Indeed, Moore's version of "Pulp Lilith" has the ability to keep secret "a power not even God can control" (73). The new "Queen of Air and Darkness" is an experienced, masterful, and dangerous being who (similar to the hero of the "masculine Gothic") desires both transcendence and the body of the opposite sex. Osherow notes that Moore's empowerment of Lilith is significant, as the refashioning of the mythic Lilith—the original "Bitch Goddess" (68)—"champions female empowerment and asserts the necessity of emboldened female characters..." (69) while at the same time reflecting "a diversification of women's roles in contemporary culture" (68).

However, while the story is told from Lilith's point of view and, as Osherow notes, "Moore clearly wants us to identify with Lilith" (72), it is important to note that Lilith is not an "idealization." Indeed, as Moore argues in "Lands of the Earthquake," "abstractions" and "extremes" are dangerous and inadequate methods for describing personhood; stated simply, "[a] man—a woman—is supposed to be a mixture of good and evil, if that's the way to put it" ("Earthquakes" 60). Thus, Osherow will conclude that Moore's intent is to show that Lilith is not entirely autonomous. Once she has been "confined" in a garment of flesh (73), Lilith is compromised by the all-too-human "burden of desire" (74)<sup>62</sup> and her passion draws her into a battle for Adam. If one accepts Osherow's reading, the fact that Lilith survives this battle

unrepentant is a departure from generic convention. Rather than allow Lilith to be “put in her place, subordinate to the male heroes,” Moore’s Lilith “remains active at the end of Moore’s story, present in all of her awesome mystery...Unlike her fellow pulp sci-fi aliens, Lilith does not sacrifice herself for male survival” (74). If nothing else, such a text confirms that Moore was willing to re-write male-authored mythologies for her own artistic purposes.

### 1.2.3 Allusion and the Restoration of Complexity

As implied by Bloch, Moore also broke with convention through attempts to weave literary complexity and a sense of culture into the genre’s warp and woof. In her early work, Moore referenced the Greek mythology, Scottish folklore, religion, and children’s literature she had consumed as a child; later, she would draw from Arnold, Blake, Chaucer, Chekov, Dickens, Housman, Keats, Longfellow, Milton, Poe, Tennyson, and Shakespeare.<sup>63</sup> In the late 40’s and 50’s she expanded her scope to include allusions to ballet, opera, sculpture, painting<sup>64</sup> and even styles of cinematography and theater direction. Thomas Bertonneau has also recently argued that, like Leigh Brackett,<sup>65</sup> Moore’s early imagery bears striking similarities to that used by the Decadent and Symbolist poets, with which Moore may have been familiar due to Clark Ashton Smith’s work in *Weird Tales* (Bertonneau, “Aspect,” 1).<sup>66</sup> Finally, Moore enhanced the complexity of her texts by making provocative allusions to her past work. One such reference occurs in her last novel, *Doomsday Morning* (1957), in which the movie, *Bright Illusion*, is an “old film” being used by a totalitarian government as nostalgic propaganda. While the meaning of this allusion is open to interpretation, it is clear that Moore intends for this reference to her “science fiction love story” to startle and thus engage an active reader.

However, Moore’s final area of innovation—that of “elevating” the literary level of science fiction, as Bloch phrases it—needs to be somewhat re-contextualized. As Gunn notes in

his retrospective on the style-conscious “New Wave” SF of the 60’s, in cultivating their own style and experimenting with complex webs of allusion, the Kuttners were twenty years ahead of their time: They “began using literary allusions and stylistic techniques that gave their work an unusual flavor and presaged the kind of writing that would not come into its own until the 1960s” (Gunn, “Retrospective,” 13). However, as Gunn points out, the Kuttners’ interest in literary complexity—e.g., style, theme, allusion, symbol, non-linear plotting—was not entirely unprecedented in the genre.

As Gunn describes the “official” beginning of the genre in 1926, the fiction of the type sought and published by Hugo Gernsback created a “science fiction ghetto” (Gunn, “Science,” 179) in which only the barest prose could flourish. This fiction, often written by authors with a technical rather than literary background, bore little relation thematically or stylistically to the richer proto-science fiction that had preceded it. As Gunn relates, such fiction instituted a new tradition of “action and adventure,” in which “many areas of human experience...were considered unimportant or inappropriate...as in the case of sexual relationships...” (179). The writers of early “science fiction” were also “uneasy” in areas such as “cultural traditions and stylistic methods” (179). The Kuttners, on the other hand, negotiated these areas with “skill and familiarity” (179) and served as a bridge<sup>67</sup> to the genre’s earlier roots, which included more sophisticated writers such as Hawthorne, Poe, Shelley, and Wells.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, the Kuttners even demonstrated an interest in bringing science fiction’s literary roots to the screen, as they were working on a screenplay for Hawthorne’s “Rappaccini’s Daughter” at the time of Kuttner’s death (Gunn, “Science,” 174). As a result, the pair had the effect of partially restoring to the science fiction field what a decade of BEM’s, rockets, and formulaic writing under the newly minted “scientifiction” and “science fiction” labels had undone:

What the Kuttners brought to science fiction, which broadened it and helped it evolve, was a concern for literary skill and culture. The Kuttners expanded the techniques of science fiction...[and] expanded its scope to include the vast cultural tradition available outside science fiction...The significance of the Kuttners' work rests in the fact that much of the development in science fiction over the past twenty years has come along the lines they pioneered. (179)

Finally, beyond evolution, revolution, and restoration, the value of Moore's work with Kuttner can also be seen in the fact that it expressed a certain sense of the times. As Gunn notes, "the Kuttners did not deal with such themes as 'the wonderful journey'...[They] concerned themselves principally with man and society: How is man going to function in the new worlds that will be created by changes in technology, science, and social restructuring?" (Gunn, "Science," 197-98). As Silverberg notes:

Fritz Leiber, in an essay written shortly after Kuttner's death [in 1958]...spoke of Kuttner's stories as 'now brilliantly romantic, now ironically realistic, now gay, now grim,' and pointed out that he (and by extension his invisible collaborator, C. L. Moore) were 'particularly successful in using the science-fiction story to express the mood of anxiety and dread of depersonalization<sup>69</sup> which we think of as peculiarly modern. (Silverberg, *Detour*, xv)

Such interests led them to generate a repository of SF that dramatizes or critiques phenomena associated with modernity, including over-rationalization and bureaucracy; the loss of privacy due to surveillance; the threat of nuclear warfare; a sense of unreality, often due to media saturation, drugs, or a loss of identity; and the fragmentation of society coupled with the increasing isolation of the individual. Due to the content of this body of work—along with its possible influence on later SF writers—Moore's work with Kuttner also seems to merit critical attention.

### **1.3 A Parenthetical Presence**

And yet, despite Moore's fame and following from the 30's, as well as the fact that the Moore-Kuttner "wave" was the result of a collaboration, Moore's "presence" in the 40's and

50's seems drastically diluted. As implied by Leiber, by this time Moore had become an "invisible collaborator." Ironically, the disappearance of Moore's byline is partially attributable to the couple's tremendous output. The Kuttners occasionally had as many as three stories in one issue of *Astounding*, a fact which they concealed using pseudonyms. As Moore was very "choosy" about what could be published under her name (Roark 29), their collaborations were most often published under Kuttner's byline<sup>70</sup> or one of seventeen pseudonyms, with Lawrence O'Donnell for stories that were "mostly Moore" (Gunn, "Science," 176) and Lewis Padgett<sup>71</sup> for those that were "mostly Kuttner" (Doyle, "Flavor," 43), although Moore explains that they both wrote under the "Padgett" and even the "Kuttner" byline in her interview with *Chacal* (29). However, once their pseudonyms were "outed," the field incorrectly assumed that their most popular pseudonyms were merely "more Kuttner" rather than Moore-Kuttner or simply Moore.<sup>72</sup> At the same time, the Moore-Kuttner partnership resulted in hundreds of stories spurred on "by that terrible thing called rent" (Doyle, "Flavor," 42) and the quality of their work was uneven. The result was that Kuttner's reputation was elevated by their best work and Moore's suffered from their worst (Moskowitz, *Seekers*, 315-6).

While Moore's authorship of such classics as "Vintage Season" (1946) and "The Children's Hour" (1944) is now generally acknowledged (Moskowitz, *Seekers*, 314-5), discussions of their collaboration is still sometimes reflective of the impression of the time—as mainly Kuttner's "remarkably versatile" work, with Moore as an ancillary "helper" figure in the background. Moore's parenthetical status has in fact led to extraordinary contortions on the part of anthologists. For example, *The Startling Worlds of Kuttner* consists of three novellas identified as Moore-Kuttner collaborations by the Utter *Working Bibliography: Portal in the Picture, Valley of the Flame, and The Dark World*. Yet, the introduction is entitled, "Henry Kuttner and *Startling Stories* (and C. L. Moore)" (i), a title in which Moore's name appears as an

afterthought. The introduction then attempts to simultaneously acknowledge and subordinate Moore's contribution:

But there is somehow always room for Kuttner (and Moore) to inject liberal amounts of colorful atmosphere. Curiously enough, there are few, if any contemporary writers whose work seems so cinematic, so close to the dazzling special effects that movies have developed. What visions Kuttner (and Moore) evoked in the mind's camera lens! So welcome to three of Henry Kuttner's (and C. L. Moore's) most startling worlds... (ii-iii)

Additionally, when Moore is actually portrayed as a co-contributor with Kuttner, their work is often delineated along stereotypically gendered lines, with Moore contributing the "drama" and "color" and Kuttner providing "intellectual rigor." While some suggest this refers to Kuttner's *plotting skills*, others leave this statement unqualified.<sup>73</sup>

Another obstacle to bringing Moore to the foreground during this period relates to the fact that Moore was amenable to collaboration.<sup>74</sup> Just as Moore would later write about "blended" minds and "hybridic" entities, Moore was not adverse to producing "composite" texts, nor did she ever seem very concerned about taking credit. As a result, determining with certainty what is specifically "Moore's work" (in the traditional authorial sense) during the period of her collaboration with Kuttner is nearly impossible save for those rare instances when she employed her byline.<sup>75</sup> Moore's enigmatic comments such as "everything we wrote between 1940 and 1958...was a collaboration. Well, almost everything..." (Gunn, "Henry Kuttner," 189) do not make for an easy analysis of her contributions to their considerable output. Further, as Gunn suggests, it is possible that their collaboration was so intimate Moore's contribution cannot be segregated, as the Moore-Kuttner partnership is somewhat legendary for the apparent "egoless" fluidity of its process. According to Gunn, one writer effortlessly picked up where the other left off,<sup>76</sup> creating a "fusion of writers into a series of *personas* that may represent a unique experience in collaboration." (Gunn, "Henry Kuttner," 189) Anthologist Karl Edward Wagner goes even further, referring to the writing team as a

“symbiotic artistic entity,”<sup>77</sup> and Silverberg states that they later suffered from what they termed the “who am I?” syndrome (Silverberg, “Papers,” 46). Thus, Moore has implied that, in some cases, even she cannot identify which portions of the texts are “hers.” Further, even if one could segregate their contributions, how does one apportion credit to the originator of the idea? The editor? The author of the ending?

As Gunn notes, “the Kuttners were professionally quiet and gentle; they never drove anyone. What they did was show the way...” (Gunn, “Science,” 199). However, beyond being “quiet,” Moore also seems to have had a somewhat evasive personality.<sup>78</sup> For example, when asked for an appraisal of her own work, other than her comment that she created “well-drawn characters”<sup>79</sup> and stories in contrast to the “formulaic” work of the time, she maintains that the significance of her work is for the readers to decide. As if parroting passages of her work which dealt with the human impulse to “label” and “classify,” she also resisted invitations to classify either herself or Kuttner, once remarking that Kuttner was “so unique that I hate to put a label on him” (Roark 29). Nor would Moore discuss politics. When asked by an interviewer if the rumor that “Bright Illusion” was, in fact, “a parable of racial tolerance,” Moore sidestepped the question, replying: “I’m sure that was lurking somewhere” (Roark 30). In fact, virtually nothing is known about Moore’s political beliefs, save that her correspondence with Lovecraft in the late 30’s involved the “left-leaning” Moore defending Marxism<sup>80</sup> and Lovecraft taking the position that doctrinaire Marxism had the character of a religion (Bertonneau, “Monstrous,” 4).<sup>81</sup> She also declined to claim her place, so to speak, in science fiction history or relate the writing of the 80’s to her own. When asked in 1978 what science fiction she was reading, she admitted that the writers of the time did not “interest” or “excite” her.<sup>82</sup> The most she would offer was that she wasn’t following anyone with the exception of Ursula K. Le Guin,<sup>83</sup> for whom she offered enthusiastic support (Elliot, “Tales of Drama,” 31).



Additionally, in contrast to later writers--such as the New Wave SF writers of the 60's, the feminist SF writers of the 70's, or the cyberpunks of the 80's--Moore refused to theorize her work; in fact, she in interviews that her work had no conscious structure (Moore, "Autobiographical," 38). While in some interviews she stated that she did a considerable amount of editing<sup>84</sup> of "C. L. Moore" stories, in other instances she maintained that most of her writing was a free-flowing product from her "unconscious,"<sup>85</sup> that it was nothing more than "escape,"<sup>86</sup> and that she wrote only to "interest her" (Elliot 46). While some, such as Sarah Lefanu, see Moore's desire to access her unconscious<sup>87</sup> as a strength, others have not. Indeed, due to her frequent repetition in her interviews of the word "escape," as well as the sexual overtone of her early writing, bibliography Eleanor Arnason's "The Warlord of Saturn's Moons" seems to invite the reader to cast Moore as the story's protagonist, a woman-writer engaged in an endless "escapist ritual" of writing space opera while lusting after a macho hero with "colorless eyes." As I will argue, Moore's fiction cannot be dismissed this easily. However, for a genre struggling to gain legitimacy, one can imagine that Moore's insistence on SF as a literature of "escape" did not sit well with SF community of the time.

Indeed, by the time of Moore's death in 1987, Moore appears to have become alienated from certain influential segments of the science fiction community. After Kuttner's death in 1958, besides attending a few conventions and awards dinners, Moore withdrew altogether from the science fiction scene in order to write for television, which some fans may have seen as an abandonment.<sup>88</sup> Additionally, before it was discovered that Moore was suffering from Alzheimer's disease, about which very little was known at the time, Moore entered into two highly publicized conflicts with "superfan" Forrest Ackerman and SF historian and anthologist Sam Moskowitz.<sup>89</sup> Both of these conflicts involved issues of Moore's memory. While Moskowitz

would later soften his remarks upon learning of Moore's illness, one wonders what effect such disputes had upon the perception of Moore's credibility.

#### 1.4 "Origins" in Masquerade

Which brings the discussion back to the "filter" mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, namely, what is believed to have been the status of early female SF writers and what is then presumed about them due to that status. While Moore has described her experiences during this period as positive, and--like Leigh (Douglass) Brackett, Miriam Allen deFord,<sup>90</sup> and Amelia Reynolds Long<sup>91</sup> (Davin 130-31)--claims never to have been "downed" or discriminated against by editors because she was a woman (Elliot 29), the conventional view that women could only enter early science fiction through gender concealment prevails. In fact, Moore responded in interviews that she was "not at all pretending to be a man" when she adopted an initialed byline (Roark 27). According to Moore, she was the sole source of support for her aging parents during the Depression. She maintained in interviews that she was concerned that her conservative employers at Fletcher Trust Company would fire her if they knew she had a second source of income.<sup>92</sup> Although Moore's obituary (*Locus* 68) and Pamela Sargent's *Women of Wonder* (1995) (Sargent 4) re-publicized Moore's explanation, presumably it is still not widely known or accepted. Remarkably, despite Moore's protests, Moore's name has become almost metonymic for the "few women" who "dared to venture" into the field under the cover of "male-sounding" bylines. In fact, along with Andre Norton, Moore is one of the two most often cited "examples" of gender concealment on the part of women writing SF during the 30's. Indeed, to give credence to Moore's claim now would require a literal *re-writing of the introductions to nearly every SF history covering SF by women writers during this period.*

And yet, there is circumstantial evidence to support Moore's claim that both she and her audience did not consider her gender an impediment and thus it did not require concealment. Such evidence has already been provided, such as the reception by editors, writers, and fans to Moore's early work, as well as the fact that her gender was known to readers of *Astounding* and *Weird Tales* as early as 1935. Possibly most significantly, Moore did not have to "break in" to science fiction under cover of her initials; as mentioned, Moore was invited to write for the science fiction magazine *Astounding* by editor F. Orlin Tremaine. Thus, no gender concealment in the science fiction market, at least as concerns her work for *Astounding* from 1934 on, was necessary. The argument, of course, can then be made that Moore might have needed to conceal her gender in order to break into the *science-fantasy* or *weird-fantasy* markets. However, a review of the contents of the November 1933 issue of *Weird Tales* reveals that at least one short story was published under an identifiably female byline ("The Accursed Isle," by Mary Elizabeth Counselman<sup>93</sup>), as were poems by the two female poets Brook Byrne and Cristel Hastings. Thus, if it was acceptable to publish one story and two poems under identifiably female bylines, one might assume Moore's story would also have been published in *Weird Tales* had she submitted it as "Catherine Lucille Moore" rather than as "C. L. Moore." However, this does not address the question of whether Moore *perceived* that she would need to conceal her gender in order to publish "Shambleau" in *Weird Tales* or elsewhere. Moore claims to have been collecting the SF pulps since 1931.<sup>94</sup> If true, might she have encountered any identifiably female bylines in the SF and weird-fantasy pulps before submitting "Shambleau" in 1933?

### 1.5 Weird Sisters: Female Participation in “Contested Territory”

Such data have recently become available as a result of Eric Leif Davin’s 2006 *Partners in Wonder* which, according to Davin, involved a physical examination of every issue of every science fiction magazine published in the United States from 1926 to 1960.<sup>95</sup> By relying on Davin’s indices, one finds that in the science fiction pulp *Amazing Stories*, for example, Moore might have encountered the following identifiably female bylines between 1927 and 1933: Clare Winger Harris,<sup>96</sup> Minna Irving (Minni Odell), Sophie Wenzel Ellis, Louise Rice, Amelia Reynolds Long, and Margaretta W. Rea. In fact, if Moore had looked at the publishing credits page of *Amazing Stories* during this time, she would have found that a female editor, Miriam Bourne, edited *Amazing Stories* from October 1928 to November 1932, first as associate and then as managing editor. In the science fiction magazine *Astounding*, Moore would have seen several of the same names between 1930 and 1933, as well as new names, including Lilith Lorraine.<sup>97</sup> If she had strayed beyond these magazines, she might have seen M. (Margaret) F. Rupert with her picture in *Science Wonder Quarterly* in Spring 1930 or Pansy E. Black’s fiction in *SF Series* No. 11, 1930. If she had sought other weird-fantasy markets more akin to *Weird Tales* than to *Astounding*, she might have encountered Bernice T. Banning, Grace Keon, Dorothy Quick,<sup>98</sup> and “Virginia Strait” (Winfred Brent Russell) publishing in *Oriental Stories* between 1930 and 1933.

But certainly Moore was aware of the women publishing short stories under identifiably female bylines in *Weird Tales*, the magazine to which she first submitted “Shambleau.” Far from monolithically male, Davin argues, the culture of *Weird Tales* was “ambisexual,” with Margaret Brundage painting sixty-six of its covers, a female readership that provided nearly a quarter of its letters to the editor, a club membership that was 26.33 percent female, and a female editor,

Dorothy McIlwraith, “for over half its existence” (64-65). In fact, a female author, Meredith Davis, appeared in the magazine’s first issue in 1923 under her byline and female authors were published under identifiably female bylines throughout the magazine’s history (66). Indeed, as Davin notes, “Moore was the 116<sup>th</sup> known female fiction author to appear in *Weird Tales* since it was founded a decade before” (68).

*Weird Tales* seems to have nurtured the careers of a fascinating collection of female writers, a group Davin has dubbed the “Weird Sisters.” Again, relying on Davin’s indices, the following women writers made their debuts, continued to publish, or were reprinted in *Weird Tales* from 1923 to 1933—1933 being the year Moore submitted “Shambleau”—under identifiably female bylines<sup>99</sup>: Vida Tyler Adams, Marguerite Lynch Addis, Edith M. Almedingen, Frances Arthur, Meredith Beyers, Annie M. Bilbro, Zealia B. (Reed) Bishop, Lady Anne Bonny, Edna Goit Brintnall, Mary S. Brown, Loretta G. Burrough, Grace M. Campbell, Lenore E. Chaney, Valma Clark, Martha May Cockrill, “Eli” (Elizabeth) Colter, Marjorie Darter, Meredith Davis, Elsie Ellis, Mollie Frank Ellis, Mary McEnnery Erhard, Effie W. Fifield, Alice T. Fuller, Louise Garwood, Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell, Myrtle Levy Gaylord, Sonia H. Greene, Anne H. Hadley, Lyllian Huntley Harris, Margaret M. Hass, Hazel Herald, Helen Rowe Henze, Terva Gaston Hubbard, Theda Kenyon, Lois Lane,<sup>100</sup> Genevieve Larsson, Greye La Spina,<sup>101</sup> Nadia Lavrova, Helen Liello, Maybelle McCalment, Laurie McClintock, Isa-Belle Manzer, Rachael Marshall, Kadra Maysi, Violet M. Methley, Maria Moravsky,<sup>102</sup> Sarah Newmeyer, Dorothy Norwich, Stella G. S. Perry,<sup>103</sup> Mearle Prout, Edith Lyle Ragsdale, Ellen M. Ramsay, Alicia Ramsey, Sybla Ramus, Helen M. Reid, Susan A. Rice, Eudora Ramsay Richardson, “Flavia Richardson” (Christine Campbell Thompson), Katherine Metcalf Roof, Mrs. Edgar Saltus, Sylvia B. Saltzberg, Jane Scales, Mary Scharon, Edna Bell Seward, Mary Sharon, Elizabeth Sheldon, Mrs. Chetwood Smith, Lady Eleanor Smith, Mrs. Harry Pugh Smith, Emma-Lindsay Squier, Edith Lichty Stewart, Gertrude Macaulay Sutton, Pearl

Norton Swet, Tessida Swinges, Signe Toksvig, Louise van de Verg, Isobel Walker, Elizabeth Adt Wenzler, Everil Worrell, Stella Wynne, and Katherine Yates. This list should also include the six identifiably female writers who made their debut in *Weird Tales* between 1934 and 1935, while Moore's gender may have still been unknown publicly and she is assumed by some to have been "passing" as a male author in the same magazine: Clara E. Chestnut, Ethel Helene Coen, Florence Crow, Fanny Kemble Johnson, Ida M. Kier, and "Mindret" (Mildred) (Loeb) Lord.<sup>104</sup>

While this is a small sample of Davin's research that is limited to markets that pertain to Moore during a specific period of time, a more global review of the data leads Davin to believe that the early SF pulps were not, as commonly believed, hostile to female participation. Indeed, Davin's research indicates that the early SF pulps were relatively open to minority participation, including women and Jewish and African-American writers. Thus, rather than view them as a homogenous environment of male-domination, Davin argues that the SF pulps should be viewed "contested terrain." Citing Gramsci and the Frankfurt School, he argues that the pulps should be viewed in the same manner in which Gramsci viewed culture, as "an eternal arena" (10). "[N]o hegemony is either absolute or permanent," Davin states, in reference to Gramsci's views, because "minorities advocating competing interpretations and worldviews [are]...forever expressing themselves through the same cultural forms used by the ruling class" (10). Due to its higher proportion of minorities, pulp science fiction, even more so that the culture at large, involved the kind of "constant back-and-forth struggle between forces, trends, developments, and ideologies" which characterizes "contested terrain" (13-14).<sup>105</sup>

In positing an SF past "with women," Davin acknowledges that there was a majority, and the majority was male, but it was not nearly as monolithic and intolerant and as is generally perceived. For example, his review of the primary sources indicates that there were instances of chauvinism in letters to the editor; however, such expressions of anti-female bias were usually

quickly condemned by male and female fans. Possibly more significantly, such comments were also condemned by editors. According to Davin, putting aside the evidence that editors actively recruited women writers because they were considered “good writers,” editors such as Gernsback, Tremaine, and Wright<sup>106</sup> could not discount half of the available reading population during the Depression, nor exclude the women writers who were perceived to attract and retain female readership. On the contrary, Davin claims instead that editors actively recruited female writers, instituted measures to increase female readership, and encouraged female letters to the editor and female fandom. As editor Hugo Gernsback wrote under the “bold-type headline, ‘No Discrimination Against Women’” (Davin 136) in the editorial column of the January 1930

*Science Wonder Stories:*

We have no discrimination against women. Perish the thought—we want them! As a matter of fact, there are almost as many women among our readers as there are men...We are always glad to hear from our feminine readers. (Davin, 136)

These and other measures contributed to the growing participation of women in SF, Davin argues, and from the late 20’s on the number of female science fiction writers nearly doubled every year. At the same time, women became heavily involved in fandom. He argues that female BNF’s (Big Name Fans) such as Myrtle R. Jones (“Morojo”) Douglas and Mary (“Pogo”) Gray were famous enough to be interviewed at the first Science Fiction World Convention in 1939 (86). Such fans exerted a tremendous influence on fandom, producing their own (sometimes all-female) fanzines and eventually running Worldcons. Indeed, in 1952 a female fan, Julian May, became the first woman to chair a Worldcon (Chicon II), which was the “largest Worldcon ever held before the 1960’s, with a paid membership of 1,000” (89). Contrary to popular belief, young girls also participated in fan clubs and produced fanzines; for example, Jan Sadler, age 15, produced one fanzine (*Slander*) that was so noteworthy Davin claims it was reviewed as “[o]ne of the best” by Rog Phillips in *Other Worlds* in 1955 (88). Perhaps more

importantly, along with being consumers, producers, marketers, and distributors of science fiction--as well as participating in related areas such as SF poetry, cover art, and film--women also served as editors of *Amazing Stories*, *Weird Tales*, and *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* during the 30's and as editors of over a dozen other weird-fantasy and science fiction magazines during the 40's and 50's (345-46). Far from absent, Davin argues, the women of early SF had established their own counter-culture.

Thus, most disturbing is Davin's claim that this counter-culture has been "lost," in the sense that it has not been anthologized, studied, or in some cases even preserved. Based on his examination of what remains in SF magazines, he has tentatively characterized this sub-genre as more "empathetic," more "humane," and interested in "conflict resolution" (213-14). He also claims that the tradition of feminist and socialist utopian novels which existed prior to the 20's found a new home—and its only home—in the women's science fiction of the pulps between 1920 and 1950.<sup>107</sup> What is lost by their "invisibility" are "feminist speculations" (229) regarding radically altered gender and economic relations. These speculations stand in contrast to the male science fiction of the time, which Davin claims typically present futures in which gender relations are essentially unchanged and "The Future is More of the Present" (213). Davin then attempts to quantify the female-authored texts during this period. At a minimum, there were 922 "known female-authored stories" between 1927-1960; if one adds the 365 stories from 127 female authors in *Weird Tales*, the number would rise to over a thousand (247). This number does not include the female-authored stories written under initialed bylines or androgynous names, and the number would further rise if the identity of those authors could be determined. Regardless, Davin has dubbed the 922 confirmed stories by 203 women the "Tales of Scheherazade" of science fiction and makes a call to SF historians to preserve and study this counter-culture.



Highly relevant to Moore is Davin's subsequent investigation of whether or not women were forced to conceal their gender in order to publish. He begins with an examination of "every case" of purported "gender concealment" in a science fiction magazine by a woman through use of initials or an androgynous pseudonym. Regarding initialed bylines, he concludes that a large number of these cases involve women writing under initials who already had public identities in fandom and as such there was no question within the field of their gender. The debuts of others included their photographs and biographies, which instantly confirmed their gender. As Davin points out, this is the type of knowledge that can only be gained by an actual examination of the primary source. He also argues that some women—like many men of the time—used initials to create a "writerly" identity in the tradition of writers such as O. Henry, E. T. A. Hoffmann, H. G. Wells, A. E. van Vogt, J. M. Barrie, and H. P. Lovecraft. Davin then discusses the practice of using initials in mainstream fiction where the use of initials actually was necessary to conceal gender, in contrast to the pulps. Finally, he notes that pulp writers did have a need to conceal their identity; however, he argues that this need had nothing to do with gender and everything to do with the stigma attached to the pulps. He produces evidence that women writers experienced discouragement from their spouses, who saw the pulps as "trashy"—indeed, Moore reports that both of her parents were of this opinion, particularly her mother (Elliot 29), such that she was not allowed to bring the pulps in the house (Roark 26). At the same time, male writers feared bringing shame on their employers should they be found out as pulp writers.<sup>108</sup> Thus, one cannot assume that "initialed" bylines are female writers masquerading as male. As Davin points out, the use of initials reveals nothing in isolation.

Regarding his investigation of "androgynous" bylines, Davin notes that some female SF writers were simply born with androgynous names; ironically, it is often these very same women who are held up as examples of "passing." Moore's friend, Leigh Brackett is often cited as such

as example, often in conjunction with Moore.<sup>109</sup> However, as Davin notes, “Leigh” was Brackett’s given name, not one she adopted (103). Further, neither Brackett nor editor John Campbell made an attempt to conceal her gender when she debuted in *Astounding* in February 1940. In fact, following the debut, enthusiastic letters poured in to praise Brackett’s story, one of which referred to Brackett as a “he.” Campbell corrected the reader’s mistake in the July, 1940 letter column “in a bold headline for the entire readership of *Astounding* to see: ‘The ‘Leigh’ in ‘Leigh Brackett’ Is Feminine’” (105). In conclusion, Davin claims he can only find one example during this period of a women intentionally concealing her gender, L. Taylor Hansen (118). However, Hansen did not conceal her gender in order to publish science fiction, of which she wrote little; rather, she identified herself as a writer of *science fact* in *Amazing Stories*, for which she produced “fifty-seven history and science fact articles” (118). As Davin argues, while science fiction might have been open to female participation, science scholarship itself was still widely perceived as a males-only endeavor. This, Davin claims, is probably the reason female authorship in the science fiction pulps was not even higher. Not only were women not encouraged by society to develop an interest in science—or, for that matter, science fiction-- they may have self-selected themselves out of the potential pool of writers due to the perception that a literature affiliated with science was strictly a man’s affair.<sup>110</sup>

## 1.6 The Erasure of Female Authorship and Agency

But if women were present in science fiction in the 30’s and 40’s, as Davin argues, what happened to them? Davin locates the beginning of the erasure with the publication of two anthologies in 1946 which purported to the bring science fiction to the “mainstream” audience. These anthologies were:

“the now-classic *Adventures in Time and Space* (Random House, 1946), edited by Raymond J. Healy and Francis McComas, and *The Best of Science Fiction* (Crown, 1946),

edited by Groff Conklin. The two anthologies reprinted stories from the old pulps which the editors claimed were 'representative' of the field. It is significant, however, that *none* of these three men had ever edited a science fiction magazine." (45, emphasis in original)

Out of the seventy-three stories reprinted by these two anthologies, only one was by a female science fiction writer,<sup>111</sup> Leslie F. Stone, and it is doubtful that mainstream audiences recognized her a female, particularly since no other female authors were included (45-46). "The two books had a pervasive and influential impact on post-World War II perception of early science fiction because they were issued by major publishers and were large hardcover overviews of the literature they [were] announcing...was now worth consideration" (45). Thus, mainstream fiction was introduced to an official SF "canon," a seemingly all-male club.

Davin also describes how SF writers in the 50's, for various reasons, had difficulty remembering the existence of their female counterparts from the 30's and 40's. He argues they simply did not remember female-authored fiction because they did not value it when it was published, rendering these women writers "invisible" in both their memories and their anthologies. In a private letter to Davin, writer Joanna Russ<sup>112</sup> echoes Davin's conclusion in this regard: "There they are," she says of women Davin discusses in Chapter 11, "and of course it's sexism that made them vanish in the first place!" (236). Indeed, such sexism seems evident in at least several key figures of the 50s science fiction community. One of the most influential and prolific of these writers and anthologists was Isaac Asimov, whose attitude towards the "fairer sex" is sometimes a minor spectacle in his own anthologies.<sup>113</sup> Davin suggests that such men (though, it is important to note, not all men) maintained a dismissive attitude toward women's creativity even—or especially—when it was "the little lady's" "trivial or irrelevant" artistic efforts (45). For example, when Frederik Pohl was asked in 1982 by *Pig Iron Science Fiction* whether there were any women publishing science fiction before the mid-1940's, he responds:

“Until the mid-40’s at the earliest, and maybe later than that...they either wrote under initials like C. L. Moore...or with a pen name like Andre Norton<sup>114</sup>...or with an androgynous name like Leslie F. Stone”<sup>115</sup> (45). This is despite the fact that Pohl was married to three female science fiction writers: “Lesli Perri” (Doris Baumgardt)<sup>116</sup> (published in 1941), Dorothy LesTina<sup>117</sup> (published in 1943), and Judith Merril<sup>118</sup> (published in 1948). Additionally, as Davin points out, Norton’s placement in SF publishing history is incorrect, as Norton did not even begin publishing science fiction until the 1950’s (45). Further, “Leslie” was Stone’s given name (102-3).

What would inspire such an “erasure?” Given the opportunity presented by a post-war stratification of gender roles, one might imagine that post-war sexism created an environment that privileged those who hoped that SF might become the all-male club anthologists such as Healy, McComas, and Conklin already believed it to be. And yet, discussions regarding the erasure of women writers from SF’s early history need not have the air of a conspiracy. As will be discussed shortly, similar erasures of female authorship have occurred on a much larger scale in mainstream fiction, and the mechanisms at work in such a process need not be sinister or even conscious. Indeed, some may even be the result of “good intentions.” For example, according to Davin, in the 70’s an unlikely and well-meaning source added a layer of legitimacy to the “official,” post-WW II history of women’s participation in science fiction. As SF writer Connie Willis described the “new” version of history in a 1992 guest editorial in *Isaac Asimov’s Science Fiction Magazine*:

The current version of women in science fiction before the 1960s (which I’ve heard several times lately), goes like this: There weren’t any. Only men wrote science fiction because the field was completely closed to women. Then, in the late ‘60s and early ‘70s, a group of feminist writers led by Joanna Russ and Ursula Le Guin stormed the barricades, and women began writing (and sometimes even editing) science fiction. Before that, nada. If there were any women in the field before that (which there weren’t), they had to slink around using male pseudonyms and hoping they wouldn’t get caught. And if they did write under their own names (which they didn’t), it doesn’t count anyway because they only wrote sweet little domestic stories. Babies. They

wrote mostly stories about babies. There's only one problem with this version of women in SF—it's not true." (qtd. in Davin 1-2)

She adds:

People are always asking me how I stormed the barricades and my answer is always that I didn't know there *were* any barricades. It never occurred to me that SF was a man's field that had to be broken into. How could it with all those women writers? How could it be when Judith Merrill was the one editing all those *Year's Best SF's*? I thought all I had to do was write good stories, and they'd let me in. And they did. (emphasis in original, qtd. in Davin 2)<sup>119</sup>

Nor did Willis's predecessor, Judith Merrill, perceive her gender to be an impediment to publishing in the SF pulps (131). Merrill's statement in this regard is significant, as her comments indicate that the SF pulps were surrounded by pulp markets that *did* require gender concealment. Thus, history has perhaps conflated early SF with these other genres:

I grew up in the radical thirties...My mother had been a suffragette. It never occurred to me that the Bad Old Days of Double Standard had anything to do with *me*. The first strong intimation, actually, was when the editors of the mystery, western, and sports 'pulp' magazines, where I did my apprentice writing, demanded masculine pen names. But, of course, they were the pulps, oriented to masculine readership, and the whole thing was only an irritation: as soon as I turned to SF, the problem disappeared. (emphasis in original, Merrill, 32)

As Davin notes, beginning in the late 20's, the absolute number of female science fiction writers would continue to rise every year. However, proportionally, the number of female science fiction writers publishing in the 1970's was actually less than or comparable to the proportion publishing SF in the 30's and 50's. For example:

According to Pamela Sargent, as late as 1974 only 10-15 percent of all science fiction writers were female, meaning that even in the mid-Seventies women were outnumbered perhaps nine to one by men. This ratio is even worse than the gender ratio in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* twenty years before. Joanna Russ calculated the female membership of the Science Fiction Writers of America (SFWA) for that same year at 18 percent (about the same as the percentage, 17 percent, of female fiction authors in *Weird Tales* from 1923-1954). (Davin 69-70)

However, feminist critics during the 70's and 80's perceived that Le Guin and Russ had initiated a "revolution" and that, for the first time ever, women were "allowed" to "freely" publish SF. In

the chapters “The Usual Suspects” and “Ecce Femina” Davin describes the effect and transmittal of the “new history,” and contrasts it with earlier descriptions of the genre, such as that given by Margaret St. Clair (Neeley).<sup>120</sup> This version of history has no “anchor in the past,” Davin argues, and is groundless as the claims of gender concealment which are passed, nearly verbatim, from generation to generation (Davin ch. 2). Regardless, the extreme picture of female absence in early SF presented such critics with an attractive binary for the female SF writers pre- and post-revolution—courageous and authentic for the 70’s, fearful and co-conspiratorial for the 30’s and 40’s—that appears to have endorsed the stereotyping of early female SF writers. This is particularly true concerning Moore, as will be discussed shortly.

While it may seem dubious to give this much weight to the power of anthologies, to the retroactive application of theory, or to the personal bias of genre insiders such as Pohl and Asimov, the same sort of erasure of female-authored fiction seems to have occurred in the related genre of supernatural fiction. For example, in “Two Centuries of Women’s Supernatural Stories,” Jessica Amanda Salmonson, in looking at the fiction of the Victorian period, notes that “I quickly noticed that as much of 70% of the supernatural fiction [in Victorian magazines] was the work of women, the majority never reprinted in any form, and poorly preserved. That women wrote over half the supernatural fiction tales of the 19th century is due to the larger environment of women as the dominant presence in magazines as poets, essayists, story writers, and often enough as editors” (1). Women dominated magazines because they were “the greatest proportion of the readership” (3). Indeed, women had their own culture within this genre: “The close environment of the magazinists’ trade meant that these women knew of one another’s writings, were supportive of one another’s careers, and were not individually ‘reinventing in the dark.’ A sizeable percentage were consciously feminist” (3). And yet, “The Yellow Wallpaper” is one of the few stories reprinted from this period and is regarded as the

only “feminist shocker” (3). Further, “definitive” anthologies from this period sometimes depict the ratio of women’s to men’s fiction as low as 1:18 (4). She then describes the growing impression that supernatural fantasy and horror are currently and have always been male interests, such that at “a World Fantasy Convention, I had the unpleasant comic experience of viewing from the audience a panel exclusively of men addressing the problem of ‘Why Women Don’t Write Horror’” (4). She concludes: “Supernatural literature has been predominantly a women’s literature. The problem has not so much getting published as staying in print. By attrition, women vanish” (4, emphasis in original).

Perhaps more persuasively, a dramatic precedent also exists in mainstream literature for the erasure of female-authored texts. For example, in “Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors,” Nina Baym relates her surprise and dismay when in 1977 she and three other critics charged with writing essays on “images of women in major British and American literature” examined their results regarding the period “covering literature written prior to World War II” (63). Although they had been working independently, all four critics made the same choices and “selected altogether only four women writers” (63), three of whom predated the novel: “the poet Anne Bradstreet and the two diarists Mary Rowlandson and Sarah Kemble Knight. The fourth was Emily Dickinson. For the period between 1865 and 1940 no women were cited at all” (63). This is despite the fact that, “women authors have been active since the earliest days of settlement” (64). Indeed, Baym notes that “[c]ommercially and numerically [women writers] have probably dominated American literature since the middle of the nineteenth century. As long ago as 1854, Nathaniel Hawthorne complained to his publisher about the ‘damned mob of scribbling women’ whose writings—he fondly imagined—were diverting the public from his own” (64). Baym explains that she and her colleagues excluded all but these four women from “excellence” due to the fact the reviewers

were not “undertaking to reread all American literature...we accepted the going canon of major authors. As late as 1977, that canon did not include any women novelists” (63-64). Baym then interrogates that canon. “How is it possible for a critic or historian of American literature to leave these books, and these authors, out of the picture?” (64).

In a remarkable parallel to Davin’s explanations for how women may have been excluded from the SF canon, Baym identifies three similar “partial explanations” (64). For example, the first factor contributing to the “critical invisibility” (64) of women in the canon is that “the critic does not like the idea of women as writers, does not believe that women can be writers, and hence does not see them even when they are right before his eyes” (64). This statement is uncannily similar to Davin’s claims that male SF writers and editors simply “forgot” that their female counterparts had existed, due to the fact that they devalued and thus did not “see” their fiction when it was published.

The second factor is a side-effect of women’s education combined with the cultural preferences of the time. For example, if a culture values “classical allusion” and women are not being educated in “classical allusion,” women will not be perceived to produce literature that is “excellent” (Baym 64). The parallel in science fiction, of course, is science. As Davin notes, women have long been trained to believe that they do not possess the intellectual rigor to excel in science and or science careers (Davin 42).<sup>121</sup> If women are not being educated in science and the ability to write “hard” (technically “accurate”) science fiction is a sign of excellence for the SF culture of the time, then women’s SF that does not demonstrate a fluency with “hard” science will not be termed “excellent” and thus worthy of critical attention and preservation. While this may or may not be true, even the presumption that it is perceived to be true has the ability to affect criticism of female science fiction. In other words, even if early SF writers did demonstrate a fluency and interest in science, they are sometimes assumed by modern critics to



either not possess such interests or ability or to have been unwelcome in and automatically excluded from the highly technical SF pulps.<sup>122</sup> Further, the pejorative characterization of late 40's and 50's female-authored SF as "domestic"—a term used by both male critics of the time and by later feminist critics—is also a possible consequence of the cultural belief that women are forced (or are trained by society to believe they are forced) by "deficiencies" to write about "domestic" issues because they cannot master "hard" science.<sup>123</sup> Thus, women's "domestic" science fiction receives attacks from two fronts, and the decision to write such SF by early female authors can be dismissed as inauthentic, passive, or "reflective" of the times.

The third factor Baym identifies is the filtering effect of later literary theory that "flows naturally from cultural realities pertinent" to its time but imposes its "concerns anachronistically" (65). She notes that "we never read American literature directly or freely, but always through the perspective allowed by theories" (63). Davin argues something similar, in that he claims that current theory, in an attempt to valorize the female SF writers of the 70's, has sacrificed the women of early SF; such theory requires one to believe that early female SF writers either did not "exist" or did not exist "freely," thus rendering these female authors either "invisible" or "inauthentic." Additionally, Baym notes that, traditionally, "women writers invariably represent[] the consensus, rather than the criticism of it" (69). Put another way, women writers produce formula fiction, the "flagrantly bad best-seller" against which men generating unique texts have to "struggle" (69). Although Davin does not argue it, a possible parallel in science fiction might exist in the stereotyping of early female SF writers as passive imitators who also seem eager to blend into the "consensus." Perhaps a modern bias exists in that some critics find it easy to believe that early SF authors were more than willing to give up their individual "voices" and become the creators of fiction that was substandard, uncritical, or unoriginal. Regardless, in the case of SF, this devalued women's literature exists within a sub-

genre that has traditionally been considered unworthy of critical attention. Thus, even if one gets past the biases of current feminist SF theory and accepts that women's SF existed in the 30's and 40's, literary theory in general suggests that it is not worth the effort.

If Davin's claims regarding the state of the genre in the 30's and 40's are true, the consequences for both Moore criticism and SF scholars would be significant. More than any other female SF author, Moore—as the most widely cited example of gender concealment, despite her protests—has suffered from the presumption that any woman writing science fiction in the 30's and 40's strove to write with a “male voice.” Not only does this presumption foreclose any possibility of viewing Moore's work as innovative or critical, it has also resulted in a wave of smarmy criticism that uses as its starting point the assumption that Moore either did not know, did not want to, or could not freely express her “self.” In such critiques, the possibility that Moore might have exerted conscious artistic control<sup>124</sup> over her work, or that her “voice” as an author can be derived from the intellectual content, creativity, and generic preoccupations inherent in her work--particularly in areas which do not focus solely on gender--is never considered.

Sarah Gamble's 1991 “Shamblau...and others” is perhaps the best example of how this presumption of intimidation and imitation—and the presumption that Moore should serve as a symbol of these phenomena--has directed, contorted, and impoverished an interpretation of Moore's work. Even as she attempts to praise Moore, she is brought back again and again to the idea that Moore wrote from a position of “fear”:

As I have seen from my own experience, many modern readers of Moore's work tend automatically to assume its male authorship. Although it may betray our own lingering chauvinist assumption that science fiction authors are 'normally' male, I think that such a judgment is justified by the content of her work, which dramatized the very 'fears of female defeat' commented on by Gilbert and Gubar. (31)

Such distortions become even more evident when she suggests that Moore's "fear" of a lack of "male acceptance" affected the portrayal of her heroines:

It is significant that the few women who did venture to explore the new genre, like Moore, often used names that were sexually ambiguous (Leigh Brackett or U. K. Le Guin,<sup>125</sup> for example), or adopted male pseudonyms (the most famous example of which is probably James Tiptree, Jr., who kept her identity secret for many years). Such evasions and deceptions stemming from a fear of male acceptance at either the editorial or marketing stages in a book's publication also indicate, consciously or not, female authors' own ambivalence about their peculiar position as *female* authors of science fiction. While women such as Moore were pioneers, daring to colonise a traditionally male artistic space, their literature often betrays an unsettling uncertainty about exactly what their role in this genre is to be—an insecurity which tends to be particularly noticeable in such authors' treatment of their female characters, which often tends to dramatise their own doubts and fears. (emphasis in original, 30)

Regarding Gamble's comments, it is important to note that, not only does she ignore the well-documented fact that Moore's fiction was overwhelmingly accepted by male editors, writers, and fans before and after her gender was made public, as Davin also noted of Pohl, Gamble also "distorts the publication histories" of the additional writers she cites in order to legitimize her claim of gender concealment during the 30's. For example, Ursula K. Le Guin only appeared as "U. K. Le Guin" once, and this was at the request of an editor for the non-genre magazine, *Playboy*, in which Le Guin published "Nine Lives," a critically acclaimed novelette exploring bisexuality among clones.<sup>126</sup> Additionally, neither Le Guin nor Tiptree wrote during the 30's or 40's and should hardly be included in a sentence describing women who "venture[d] to explore" the "new genre." Further, as previously mentioned, "Leigh" was Brackett's given name, not one she adopted. Most importantly, Gamble's comments reveal how Moore's use of initials is first used to signify gender concealment and then as a means to enter Moore's state-of-mind in order to interpret her fiction. Such criticism will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two in connection with Moore's texts; however it is essential to establish that this belittling attitude

towards Moore is still evident as recently as Brian Attebery's *Decoding Gender in Science Fiction* (2002).

Attebery's first two entries on Moore—the first on “Shambleau,” the second on “No Woman Born”—are generally positive and, like Gamble, Attebery attempts to praise Moore. However, Attebery's tone becomes increasingly patronizing as he nears the conclusion of his analysis. For example, in the chapter, entitled “Wonder Women,” after crediting Moore with the creation of three different types of “superwoman” (Shambleau, Deidre, and Clarissa), he notes of Moore's Clarissa:

The philosophical statement closest in spirit to Moore's vision of Clarissa is Luce Irigaray's 'This Sex Which is Not One' (1977)—not that Moore and Kuttner's original readers would have seen the story as anything resembling Irigaray's psychoanalytical-philosophical treatise...If the story had been included in Lester Del Rey's collection of *The Best of C. L. Moore*, it would blend right in with Moore-ish tales of psychic powers and thwarted love, like her 1936 reincarnation story, 'Tryst in Time.'

But if 'The Children's Hour' were included in a volume of feminist fables like those of Cixous, Irigaray, and Haraway, another dimension of Moore and Kuttner's narrative would emerge. Images...fall into place as an exploration of feminine power and identity paralleling those of...Irigaray. Choosing between these two readings of the story depends largely on whose voice one hears in it. Is it the masculine register C. L. Moore learned from reading the pulps, or is it the emerging voice of Catherine Lucille Moore? (99)

While wishing to take nothing away from Attebery's analyses of Moore's work—particularly his valuable commentary regarding “The Children's Hour”—this passage begs closer scrutiny. The most obvious weakness is a logical one: In other words, Attebery assigns authorship of the story both to “Moore” and to “Moore and Kuttner,” rendering an analysis of the origin of the “essential” “gender” of the “author's” voice impossible. While it is interesting that Attebery attributes their combined voice to Moore, thus making her voice dominant, theoretically speaking, how would Moore's “emerging voice” have been affected by an intrusion of Kuttner's “male” voice?<sup>127</sup>

More importantly for SF criticism, however, is Attebery's claim that "The Children's Hour" would have "blended" effortlessly into the tales of "psychic powers and thwarted love" in *The Best of C. L. Moore*<sup>128</sup>—an anthology that includes, among other stories, "Fruit of Knowledge," "Bright Illusion," "No Woman Born," and "Vintage Season." In a remarkably reductive gesture, Attebery renders every story in the volume thematically and aesthetically homogenous. However, more disturbing is Attebery's dismissive characterization of the collection as concerned with "psychic powers," as one of the primary features Davin ascribes to the "empathetic"<sup>129</sup> "lost subculture" of female pulp SF is its interest in "telepathy" as a metaphorical means to portray a desirable rapport between dissimilar beings. Thus, even if all of the stories in this collection were concerned with "psychic powers"<sup>130</sup>—which they are not, nor does "Vintage Season" contain this theme—Attebery's dismissal of these stories on such grounds would in effect be a further erasure of this subculture.

Attebery's approach to Moore is also clear in his use of the diminutive "Moore-ish," as well as his implication that Moore's development of a "voice" was a passive activity, one "learned from reading" rather than honed through the act of writing. Similarly demeaning—but also bewildering—is his suggestion that the value of Moore's work as a commentary on gender would not emerge unless it were placed next to feminist fables, such as those by Haraway. At the same time, he suggests that "No Woman Born"—which does appear in *The Best of C. L. Moore*—is an important feminist fable connected to Haraway—in fact, Attebery states in the same chapter: "Haraway's cyborg is so close to C. L. Moore's vision that I am always surprised, upon rereading the essay, that Haraway doesn't cite 'No Woman Born,' though Jane Donawerth has made the link" (96). Is "No Woman Born" also just another tale of "psychic powers" and "thwarted love?" If not, if "The Children's Hour" were then placed in Moore's collection next to this Harawayan fable, would that not be enough for its meaning to emerge? While this may

seem to be a minor point, it seems particularly demeaning to Moore (and the genre) to suggest that the most valuable aspects of this piece would only become clear if it were exported away from the rest of her work.

Attebery's patronizing attitude, however, reaches its climax in the conclusion of the passage. This is clear in his shift from Moore's public name, "C. L. Moore," to Moore's private, "gendered" name, "Catherine Lucille Moore." Not only does Attebery rename Moore for her own benefit, he enters into an intimate register which presumes to claim knowledge of Moore—knowledge that Attebery feels entitled to suggest Moore herself does not possess. In this respect, Attebery has actually *othered* Moore by adopting a paternalistic attitude towards her knowledge of her "self," as if Moore were a child in need of his instruction or correction. This othering of Moore taints an otherwise thoughtful critique of Moore's work. Due to such inconsistencies, one must conclude that Attebery's comments in this regard are the result of a sense of "permission" from current Moore criticism to adopt a certain rhetorical tone toward both Moore's work and her status as an author. As for his implication that Moore's voice as a female writer was still "emerging" in 1944, the same year Moore wrote "No Woman Born," Moore's work and interviews suggest that she would have endured these comments with good humor. Indeed, one can imagine Moore simply smiling at this last comment by Attebery and politely correcting him: "Is this the *ever* emerging voice of *every* Catherine Lucille Moore?"<sup>131</sup>

## Chapter Two: Partial Perceptions and Liminal Identities: “Indeterminacy” in the Work of C. L. Moore

### 2.1 C. L. Moore as Cyborg Author

As mentioned, at the moment, Moore’s identity, much like that of her many “liminal” characters, seems suspended on the dividing line between two apparently incompatible definitions. When we “choose” which “voice to hear” in Moore’s fiction, as Brian Attebery has phrased it, do we hear C. L. Moore the Good (Woman) Author of “No Woman Born” (1945), now a classic of feminist “cyborg” science fiction, or the Bad (Woman) Author who produced “Shambleau” (1933)—a story in which Gilbert and Gubar detect the “misogyny of her time[?]”<sup>132</sup> As one might expect, an unresolved answer to this question generates new questions that frustrate a definitive interpretation of her texts: Is the narrative filtered by a discriminating consciousness, or merely a transcription of the codes and conventions? Is the narrator reliable, or does the author intend us to resist the narrative?

It is difficult to determine from the criticism to-date which view of Moore predominates, although both views are clearly present. What is clear is that “Shambleau” was a polarizing and problematic text for feminist SF critics of the 70’s, as well as the first lens through which Moore’s fiction was viewed.<sup>133</sup> One of the problems in using “Shambleau” in this manner, however, was the distortion created by Jirel, Moore’s more well-received heroine. Writing in 1979, critics such as Natalie Rosinsky attempted to “reconcile” (72) the mutual existence of these two apparently antithetical heroines by drawing upon Cixous’s description of the “alienated woman” (72).<sup>134</sup> Suggesting that Moore was “dismayed” by her own heroine’s power once that power entered the sexual realm, Rosinsky cited “misunderstood or half-understood events and characters” (72) in “Shambleau” in which the “attentive reader” could read Moore’s

conflicted reaction to her “namelessly strange” Medusa (72). Pointing to the indeterminacy within Moore’s text, she concluded that Moore’s failure to definitively “embrace the Medusa” suggested that “Shambleau” reflected the “aesthetic statements of a woman writer alienated from herself, unable to explicitly declare her own self-allegiance” (72). Thus, Moore’s creation of Jirel, a character praised by 70’s feminist critics as a “strong heroine,” was able to be re-inscribed into the view of Moore as a victim of internalized misogyny. In other words, Jirel’s positive, perhaps “idealized” traits were merely evidence of Moore’s acceptance of a patriarchally-imposed bifurcation of Woman into either Good or Bad Girl.

Yet, while claims such as Rosinsky’s might explain Moore’s ability to create the occasional “adventurous” heroine, they do not seem to fully “reconcile” even the most tentative claims, such as those made in 1990 by Jacqueline Pearson, that Moore appeared to be doing something unusual in the pulps of the 30’s by subverting stereotypical gender constructs (Pearson 12-3).<sup>135</sup> In other words, how could Moore have critiqued such constructs if she had internalized the very “gaze” that sought to consume them? In investigating this apparent paradox, Thomas Bredehoft re-visited Rosinsky’s argument that “indeterminacy” within “Shambleau” is indicative of Moore’s conflicted attitude towards her heroines. Although his main argument concerns Moore’s “re-narration” of “origin stories” in both her work and her afterword in *The Best of C. L. Moore*,<sup>136</sup> Bredehoft first challenges the impulse of critics such as Rosinsky and others to use ambiguities within “Shambleau” to reverse-transcribe Moore’s psychological state rather than to “pay any attention at all to Moore’s work” (369). “These critics instead appear to either to read Moore’s fiction to illuminate her biography and psychology...or to judge it according to a standard (the degree of resolution of certain dilemmas) which may have no real relevance” (370).



Here Bredehoft seems to challenge Rosinsky's impulse to use Moore's texts in order to "construct" a "unified" author, an impulse that Michel Foucault describes in his essay "What is an Author?" As Foucault argues, modern literary criticism still seeks to construct and classify authors in terms of "unified level of value," "conceptual or theoretical unity," "stylistic unity," or a "historical unity and the crossroads of a limited number of events" (1625). As Foucault notes, there is a traditional impulse to construct an identity for an author which can then be associated with that author's name, which then becomes adjectival. In order to create this unity, all contradictions must be resolved even if this requires speculation regarding the author's psychology. "[U]sing the author's biography, the determination of his individual perspective, the analysis of his social position, and the revelation of his basic design: the author is...the principle of a certain unity of writing—all differences having to be resolved, at least in part, by the principle of evolution, maturation, or influence" (1625). He states further that "[g]overning this function is the belief that there must be—at a particular level of an author's thought, of his conscious or unconscious desire—a point where contradictions are resolved, where the incompatible elements can be shown to relate to one another or to cohere around a fundamental and originating contradiction..." (1631). Further frustrating the idea that the text can serve as means to reverse-transcribe the author, as Foucault notes, an author constructs a "second self" for herself within her text, a self whose similarity to the author is never fixed and undergoes considerable alteration within the course of a single book" (1631).

Due to the speed with which Moore produced her texts, her use of pseudonyms, her collaborations, the uneven quality of her work, and the fact that she experimented with styles, point of view, and often re-worked and re-contextualized her own material, the idea that one could "re-construct" Moore into a unity (at any given point in time) from her texts would seem ill-conceived. However, the fact that Moore is a science fiction writer further complicates an

attempt to apply these four long-standing categories of “unity” to Moore. Indeed, as Samuel R. Delany notes, science fiction may be the only genre in which all four of these unities—valuative, theoretical, stylistic, and historical—are irrelevant.<sup>137</sup>

However, perhaps more importantly in a discussion of Moore, Bredehoft’s comments also echo those of Shoshana Felman in her defense of “indeterminacy” in the writings of another writer of the fantastic, Edgar Allen Poe. In “The Case for Poe,” Felman argues that psychoanalytic criticism that regards Poe’s texts as a means to seek “answers” regarding Poe’s biography or psychology fails to treat his work as literature. Instead of regarding Poe’s texts as a means of resolving questions, Felman argues, perhaps it is more in keeping with the underlying ambiguity which psychoanalysis takes as a tenant<sup>138</sup> to regard the text as an opportunity to pose a rich set of questions. What is of “analytical relevance” is not necessarily “the unconsciousness of the poet” (681). Instead, “to situate in a text the analytical as such—to situate the object of analysis or the textual point of its implication—is not necessarily to recognize a *known*, to find an answer, but also, and perhaps more challengingly, to locate an *unknown*,<sup>139</sup> to find a question” (681, emphasis in original). While Bredehoft does not, like Felman, argue for a psychoanalytic reading of the structures of the text as an alternative to “reading” the author, he does similarly conclude that Moore’s work should be read as fiction and that “indeterminacy” is a privilege and valuable feature of the text.

Indeed, Bredehoft takes his defense of the “indeterminacy” within Moore’s texts a step further when he suggests that Moore’s use of ambiguity and open-endedness may be an intentional—even distinguishing--element of Moore’s fiction. Arguing that “resolution” is an inappropriate litmus-test for Moore’s work, Bredehoft rejects the arguments of Rosinsky, Gilbert, and Gubar, as well as Sarah Gamble’s related claim that “Moore may use ‘metaphors of female alienation [which] are potentially powerful and far-reaching’ but she is ultimately unable

to envisage how the dilemmas of her own metaphors ‘can satisfactorily be resolved’” (Gamble 48). He responds that a “desire for resolution” fails to “take Moore’s fiction on its own terms” (Bredehoft 370). Instead, he argues, Moore offers “critical commentary” on these dilemmas but leaves them “intentionally incomplete” (370). In this sense, he suggests that Moore seems to show a preference for the indeterminate and unresolved, the partial and open-ended.

It is then that Bredehoft appears to offer a way out of the dualism presented at the beginning of this chapter. In other words, Bredehoft draws a comparison between Moore and the “cyborg author” of Donna Haraway’s “Cyborg Manifesto.” Moore’s re-narration of the origin story of Medusa hints at the cyborg author’s inclination to retell “stories...[to] reverse and displace the hierarchical dualisms of naturalized identities. In retelling origin stories, cyborg authors subvert the central myths of origin of Western culture” (371). Thus, Bredehoft also regards Moore as engaged in an essential project of feminism. A writer’s “contesting of origin stories” through “revision and re-narration,” Bredehoft argues, is a “central feature of feminist SF in general, and so...Moore’s re-telling of the Medusa story...can be usefully read as a feminist (or proto-feminist) text...” (370). Noting that Moore’s choice to write was significant in itself,<sup>140</sup> as writing is the “preeminent tool of the cyborg” (370), he contends that Moore shows a cyborgic inclination to engage in “subjective refashioning” (371), not only in the sense of re-writing “origin stories” but also in the continual “writing” of herself (371). Thus, “what we gain from employing Haraway’s cyborg framework in a reading of ‘Shambléau’ is a metaphor for exploring the connections between Moore and her story which does not rely on simplistic biographical (even essentialist) assertions about the connection between the plot of the story and the subjectivity of the author: I hope to do more than conclude that Moore was ‘a woman alienated from herself’ (Rosinsky 72) merely because the Shambléau is depicted in ambiguous terms” (372).

Bredehoft's comments are valuable not simply for their defense of Moore's right to "re-write" herself throughout her career—and thus be freed from essentialist notions of what her first text (permanently) "reveals" about her psyche, and to allow for her growth as an author and human over time—but also for his insight that Moore's fiction shows for preference for "indeterminacy" and other cyborgian values, such as hybridity, incompleteness, and open-endedness. Thus, in the spirit of contesting origins, as previously mentioned, I offer Moore's first science fiction story, "Bright Illusion" as a starting point for such an examination. However, analyzing Moore's fiction in this manner also affords a second opportunity. In other words, as mentioned previously, there is a sense in some criticism that "No Woman Born" is a stand-alone text, particularly when one looks back to her early science-fantasy—as if the insights and concerns of this text were accidental rather than intentional. By re-viewing Moore's work from the starting point of her first science fiction story, exploring her work laterally, and tracing such themes to her last science fiction piece, one is able to regard "No Woman Born" as simply a more concentrated, carefully crafted expression of those themes—a true "C. L. Moore" story. As such, Chapters Two and Three seek to expose examples of two of the most important features of this piece—cyborgian preferences and the constructedness of gender and identity—in four of her other texts, while at the same time exploring Moore's connections to a larger, more mainstream theme of "epistemological uncertainty."

## **2.2. "The Bright Illusion" (1934) and *Earth's Last Citadel* (1943)**

One of the ways in which Moore interrogates the question of what can be "known"—and, thus, epistemology in general—is through her explorations of the reliability of "perception," and no other of Moore's pieces raises this issue as pointedly as her first science fiction story, "Bright Illusion" (1934), a story in which an unremarkable man finds himself stranded in the

desert and then conscripted into the service of a mysterious alien being. Once he agrees to become the alien's spy, he is sent to the land of IL, a world so alien that he requires a "veil of illusion" to comprehend it. While there, despite the fact that he knows that nothing he sees is "real," he falls in love with a coquettish alien "female." In "Bright Illusion," we also see Moore's interest in gender construction, as well as a fairly provocative use of the "coquette" figure. For example, by suggesting in this piece that the "coquette" is a construction that can be overlain on *any* body (even a phallic and/or non-human body), Moore in a sense "denaturalizes" the figure of the coquette. The piece also suggests that the male/female gender dualism, and possibly "love" itself, is a "bright illusion." However, this is a piece with a largely visual focus and does not reflect Moore's ability to incorporate critiques of the "incompleteness" of myth and language into a discussion of perception. For this reason, *The Mask of Circe* follows this section as a counterpoint, as an example of the complexity such interactions can generate.

The reader first encounters the main character, Dixon, stranded alone in an unidentified desert. As the opening paragraphs indicate through words that will become mainstays in Moore's texts ("blur," "shimmer," "haze," "waves," "mirage"), the central conflict will be generated by the question of whether or not Dixon's "perceptions" are affected by the interplay among sight, imagination, memory, and the body. Initially, the "haze" (or "veil") that obscures the Dixon's vision is two-fold: the (external, visual) sunshine along with the haze of "weakness" created by his body. Dixon then encounters a body—a thing, a presence—he cannot identify from past experience.

Through the blinding shimmer of sun upon sand, Dixon squinted painfully at the curious image ahead. He was reeling with thirst and heat and weariness, and about him the desert heaved in long, blurred waves, but through the haze of his own weakness, and through the sun haze upon the desert, he peered anxiously at the thing and could not make it out. (66)

As he staggers toward the unknown object, he assures himself repeatedly that “of course it [is] a mirage” (66). Upon its surface is movement that indicates both life and a reason for such animation, but he has no referent for this image nor its activities:

Nothing he had ever seen or heard of could cause such a mirage as this. It was a great oval of yellow light, bulging up convexly from the earth like some translucent golden egg half buried in the sand. And over its surface there seemed to be an immense busyness, as if it was covered with tiny, shimmering things that moved constantly. He had never seen anything remotely resembling it before. (66)

Although the great golden “egg” is never definitively gendered, one can see Moore constructing a representation of an “alien” “female” body. The gendering of the body as female is strengthened by use of archetypal images of mother and child. For example, the distance between Dixon and the “egg” suddenly disappears and Dixon finds himself “flat” against the dome, recalling the image of a child swept to its mother’s breast. Indeed, Dixon “relaxes” into its surface; while he sleeps, the alien feeds him, such that he awakens inside the dome with a “delicious sensation of rest and well-being” (67). As the alien directs their communication, a mother-child intimacy is created, as if the two beings are exchanging breath, warmth, and a pulse of “measured” thought-beats (68) in a pre-linguistic rapport. The alien also breaches the integrity of Dixon’s body with a golden “glow” that permeates “every atom of him” in “all-penetrating waves” (67), much as a child would be “penetrated” by warmth. The two beings exchange knowledge, the alien pulling from him “abstract memories of things he had learned in college and in afterlife. Snatches of literature, fragments of sciences. Mathematical problems....supplanted by chemical formulas that melted into bits of psychology” (67). Dixon then perceives “thoughts not his own [blowing] through his mind and [fading]” in waves (68). He struggles to integrate the alien’s thoughts, to “fuse them in a unit” in his “clutching mind” (68), but the “knowledge” is fragmentary, never reaching the level of linguistic coherence. Understanding only comes through wave after wave of exchange.

Eventually, Dixon's "straining brain" gleans the significance of the alien's thought-pulses (68). The mother/god/egg communicates that it requires Dixon as a sort of champion in order to overthrow "IL." The rival god, Dixon gleans, is the master of an unlimited population of willing sacrifices, and the golden egg, for reasons it cannot communicate, desires the same. In a moment of apparent machismo, Dixon suddenly "understands" that he has been "chosen" and that the alien has been waiting in "serene passivity" (68) for the "right man to come by" (68). Excited by the possibility of adventure (and fearing abandonment in the desert), Dixon agrees to be transported to IL's world as a "window" for the god's eyes (73). Dixon's purpose will be to find IL's temple and trigger a weapon to allow the egg-god to enter IL's domain (85). However, beyond this, Dixon cannot understand. The being cannot translate its personal experiences, nor its desires, due to their alienness. "After a few vain attempts to instill the reason for its purpose into his mind," the alien being dismisses the point as "unnecessary" (69).

Due to these factors—the being's shape, its womb-like interior, and Dixon's macho reaction to its plight—it is difficult not to view the egg-god as female. Once the reader learns that IL is represented by a colossal tower, it is perhaps equally difficult not to establish a male/female binary. For example, as suggested by Susan Gubar in "C. L. Moore and the Conventions of Women's SF," "Bright Illusion" can be seen as a confrontation between the "Great God's priestess and the Great Goddess's priest" (Gubar 20). In this story, Gubar sees Moore as dramatizing "the gulf between men and women," such that they "come from different worlds, with different cultures and languages and different physical forms" (20). However, as I will argue, both gods are more "hybridic" than Gubar suggests; Moore's presentation of the two gods calls the "perception" of gender to mind, but does not force a rigid delineation.

As such, it is perhaps possible to read this story as a dramatization of the gulf between the Imaginary and Symbolic orders, as theorized by Lacan. Read in this way, the two beings are

not two differently sexed gods, but two different stages of being, each of which happens to be associated with a gendered arena, but neither of which is itself a perfect analog for a biological “sex.” Viewed in this manner, while Dixon is in the embrace of the egg-god, he exists in the Imaginary Order--a solely experiential medium in which he enjoys a sense of connectedness with the all-encompassing being that surrounds him. He is in a womb in which Time has disappeared, in which language is unnecessary. However, once the egg-god sends him to the world of IL, he is “birthed.” At this point, the alien must provide a “veil” of “illusion” (the Symbolic Order) Dixon needs to place the objects and beings in IL’s world within his comprehension.

As Dixon discovers, without the veil, the “real” appearance of the city of IL would drive him mad. When the egg-god transports Dixon to IL’s city, his first glimpse reveals “colors that blaze[] and howl[] and agonize[] over...insane angles of the place” (71) and beings over which “living, unstable hues that writhe[] and crawl...” (71) However, once the egg-god drops the “veil of illusion,” “[i]n less time than it takes to tell,” a “metropolis of familiar aspect” comes into view. (73) Dixon suddenly perceives the beings of IL as humans “of noble stature and stately bearing, robed in garments of shining steel...” (73). Foreshadowing a persistent motif in Moore’s fiction—particularly when used in reference to the perceptions of males--once he is conceptually and visually oriented, the architecture beneath Dixon’s feet suddenly feels as if it were “solid ground” (73).

Significantly, while the alien beings have been “translated” for Dixon’s benefit and vice versa, their “true” biological “sex” does not survive the process, as it cannot be mapped to humanity’s male-female dualism:

To them, his form would seem one of their own...[H]is speech would be filtered and changed into their indescribable mode of communication. And to him they would have the appearance of humanity, their speech would be understandable, their curious



emotions transplanted into familiarity. Even their multiple sexes would be resolved arbitrarily into two. (72)

Although this passage can be seen simply as an example of a theme in Moore's work of "partial" or "filtered perception," if one follows a Lacanian analogy, one can also see this as a fictionalization of the process by which a familiar "Symbolic order" provides Dixon with "sanity."

However, it is at this point one might attempt to re-assess the gender of the "egg-god." For example, as Lacan explains, the Symbolic order is one that has been largely authored by patriarchy and thus is the "Word" of the "Father." As feminist philosophers such as Haraway point out, it has also evolved in such a way as to privilege the members of the patriarchy. Thus, the egg-god's effortless use of the Symbolic order in order to cloak its agent raises several questions, as the egg-god seems to be in a position of power traditionally designated as "male." Additionally, the egg-god's "gender" is confused by the fact that Moore assigns the egg-god the name of "light-being." By associating the egg-god with "light,"<sup>141</sup> Moore imbues the egg-god with a property from the "male" side of the type of binaries that have been identified as undergirding Western gender "distinctions." What then are we to make of the egg-god's "gender?" Is the egg-god an amalgam of male/female "properties," of uncertain gender (such as the "Venusian" Yarol of the Northwest Smith series), or is the egg-god not "meant" to be sexed at all?

An interesting possibility arises if we return to Haraway and the concept of the "cyborg author." The egg-god seems adept at manipulating various forms of information and technology; e.g., it uses technology (presumably incorporated into its body or "light"<sup>142</sup>) to siphon a very specific type of "knowledge" from Dixon—science, literature, psychology—in order to communicate with a male and "place" him in a "male" domain. Can we see the egg-god as "seizing" the "informatics of domination" (particularly, "simulation" and

“surface/boundary” (161)) in order to “author” an agent capable of accessing and undermining IL’s world? Given that even Moore’s harshest critics still find in her writing persistent metaphors for “female authorship,”<sup>143</sup> the question of whether or not the egg-god is engaged in some kind of authorship does not seem unreasonable. This is particularly true when one examines the potential irony inherent within the rest of the text. Is the egg-god a female author who authors/births “the right man,” such that he can masquerade in the “male” world of the pulps and, saturated with irony, enact a critique of the pulps’ “macho” hero?

While this last point invites comparison with the idea of Moore “masquerading” as a male author, a claim which I contest in Chapter One, my point in raising this possibility is to demonstrate what Moore’s texts are not. In other words, they are not easily reducible to one definitive interpretation. Even the claim that Moore was “masquerading” and writing from a “male point of view” is destabilized by a text such as “Bright Illusion.” In other words, even if Moore did see herself as masquerading as a male in a man’s world, “Bright Illusion” creates a new interpretative branch for that masquerade if we see it as evidence that Moore was simultaneously writing about that experience.

Additionally, the world of IL is so ostentatiously “phallic” that it itself generates two competing interpretive branches. At first, it tempts one to follow Gubar’s lead and create/perceive a sexual dichotomy between the world of IL and the body of the egg-god. In other words, the world of IL is so stridently phallic that it might seem—if one gives in to a phallogocentrist impulse—to guide the reader back through the text to the figure of the egg-god, such that the egg-god is then imbued with the “absence” of this spectacle (of the phallus). Thus, the egg-god is reverse-engineered from an “it” to a “her.” And, yet, at the same time, the world of IL is so extravagantly phallic that it also seems intended as a “gendered” spectacle that draws attention to its own “excessive” performance. For example, in contrast to the somewhat

obscured, unobtrusive “dome-like” body of the egg-god, the temple of IL is a “mighty column” that dominates the landscape and seems to survey its domain with an “eye” of flame. Further, the multi-sexed denizens of IL, like the “column” of IL, resemble serpents, traditional phallic symbols, and their constant motion and fantastic coloring seem designed to attract attention:

But the inhabitants!...They were sinuous and serpentine, and their motions were blurs of swiftness, poems of infinite grace. They were not men—they had never been men in any stage of their evolution...There was one standing just below the great black pillar...It was boneless and writhing, livid with creeping color. Its single eye, lucid and expressionless, stared from an unfeatured, mouthless face, half scarlet and half purple... (71)

Even the word “IL,” with its two vertical lines and a blank “column” of space between the two letters is somewhat phallic; it is also suggestive that the “female” god, against whom IL is opposed, “lacks” a proper name, just as the priest/ess will also go unnamed.

One might be tempted to dismiss this “spectacle” as a rather elaborate daydream of Moore’s subconscious (as she herself might have done), or as an accidental convergence of loaded imagery, and yet Moore’s more frankly “sexual” texts would argue that her portrayal of the beings as “phallic” is intentional. This possibility is drawn to the forefront by Moore’s insistence that they “were not men,” a repeated statement which asks to be examined.<sup>144</sup>

Perhaps more convincing is the fact that the residents of IL bear a striking resemblance to the archetypal “serpent,” Satan, who “thrills” Lilith and seduces Eve in “Fruit of Knowledge” (1940):

In the green gloom under the trees he was so handsome that even she, who had seen Adam, was aware of a little thrill of admiration. In those days the serpent went upright like a man, nor was he exactly non-human in shape, but his beauty was as different from man’s as day is from night. He was lithe and gorgeously scaled and by any standards a supremely handsome, supremely male creature. (186)

And yet, despite the fact that the beings’ “natural” appearance should signal to the reader that they are associated with the phallic, Dixon is curiously oblivious to this possibility. Instead, he views the beings as “sexless.” Once the “veil” is dropped, Dixon promptly falls in

“love,” possibly with the same “single-eyed” being “below the great black pillar” (71) that had revolted him earlier. “She” appears “slim as a sword blade in her steel robe, standing under the mighty tower of the black pillar...lovelier than a dream” (74). Despite the phallic temple looming behind her—or perhaps because of it, as it can then serve as a gendered contrast—and despite her association with another phallic symbol (a sword blade), Dixon will insist to IL later that he “first” saw her in the “image” of a “woman.” This impression persists even though Dixon continually reminds himself that the “girl” is actually “sexless,” that her alien sex is one of many and has only been “arbitrarily” rendered female. The initial “loveliness” of the illusion is too powerful and continually tugs him back, as it does in their initial encounter:

Her hair swung in black page-boy curls to her shoulders, and from under the darkness of it eyes as blue as steel met his unwaveringly. She was all bright metal to his first glance, steel-molded curves of her under the armored robe, steel lights upon her burnished hair, steel-bright eyes shining. All steel and brightness—but Dixon saw that her mouth was soft and colored like hot embers. And for an instant he wanted to burst into crazy song. It was an inexplicable feeling that he had never known before, a heady delight in being alive. But even through the exultation, he knew that he looked upon an illusion. He knew that she was a faceless, crawling thing, without sex, without any remotest kinship to anything he knew. And yet this illusion was very lovely and— (74)

Once she speaks, however, the enigmatic “woman” of “steel”<sup>145</sup> begins to take on stereotypically “feminine” attributes Dixon finds even more seductive.

She was looking up at him with startled eyes, and now she spoke, a little breathlessly, in a sweet tinkling voice. ‘You—you have come? Oh, whence have you come?’ And he thought that she was striving hard not to believe something that she wanted with all her soul to think true. (74)

Wonderfully for Dixon, the priest/ess takes him to be an emissary from IL and falls to her knees in obeisance. Although he claims to “resent” her “worship” of him, stating that he wants her to see him as a “man, not a divine messenger,” (75) he also comes to appreciate what he seems to interpret as flirtation and “feminine” helplessness. He is moved by the “exquisite bewilderment” in her eyes and the “incomprehension radiant in every line of her” (75). Her

mouth becomes a fetish, a pout of “hot embers,” such that he sometimes misses her as words he watches the movement of her lips (79). On their way to IL’s temple, she pauses to look at him over her shoulder in a gesture that appears both guileless and flirtatious; such gestures make his heart “quicken” (78). Throughout the rest of the story, she plays a supporting role to Dixon’s perceptions and actions. Unlike many of Moore’s strong female characters—Jirel, Deidre, Lilith, Clarissa, Shambleau, Hecate, Circe—in which names are laden with meaning, history, and power, the priest/ess is never named. Indeed, the fact that Dixon never asks for her name and the text does not provide one suggests that Moore is not interested in this character as a character, but as a phenomenon of perception or simply as an “unknown.”

Indeed, much of the narrative is concerned with Dixon’s “perceptions” of the priest/ess and the city of IL. As the text will suggest, the priest/ess’s “attributes” may exist in objective reality or Dixon’s imagination or both. For example, although the awe she experiences when she meets him fills her “eyes” with “dazzling...diffused tears” (75), initially he has enough presence of mind to realize that such images do not actually correspond with reality—in other words, the priest/ess does not have “eyes.” When she kneels, he notes that actual “kneeling” may not “denote homage” in her culture and wonders “in what alien way she was actually expressing her awe” (75). His sense of dissonance reaches a peak when he gives in to an impulse to carry out a conventionally “romantic” gesture. In other words, the “queerest madness” comes over him; he suddenly lifts her “chin” and delivers a passionate kiss to her “mouth.” While he initially “reels” at this “heady pleasure,” when reality stops spinning Dixon is “swept back” by “realization” (75) that he has kissed “a monstrosity” that has no “mouth” (75).

At that moment, the boundaries between subject and object seem to reverse, in that he suddenly wonders how the priest/ess’s gaze is consuming his own body. The fact that her “troubled blue gaze” (75) is actually the “gaze of a single pale eye” which “travels” over the

crawling limbs of a monster” (75)--meaning his own limbs--indicates that he is considering that his gendered appearance is artificial but is also anxious to ensure that his “maleness” is viewed through the priest/ess’s eyes as “authentic.” His sense of reality seems to waver. In fact, throughout his time in the city, he is haunted by an “uncanny feeling” (75) that what “he look[s] upon [i]s unreal” and is compelled to wonder what is “actually taking place behind the mask of humanity” (75). In such passages the texts suggest that Dixon’s notions of his own maleness and his sense of reality are undermined by the knowledge that notions of body and gender are artificial in this world, nothing more than a fiction of forced analogs. The text also suggests that these two grounding mechanisms (male identity, the “real” identity of objects) share a sensitivity to each other. It is as if, by having his sense of masculinity in the eyes of a “female” (and “male”) cast in doubt while at the same time losing his sense of the “identity” of objects (as confirmed by reliable visual signifiers), Dixon’s faith in the dimension of the logos that is communicated by sight is also shaken.

And yet, this is not the type of catastrophic threat to masculinity which undoes some of Moore’s lesser known characters. Due to the fact that “masculinity under threat” is a critical theme in Moore’s work, and due to the fact that the two texts share a pivotal scene, it may be helpful to pause for a moment to examine the example of “masculinity” provided by Mike Smith<sup>146</sup> of *Earth’s Last Citadel*. In this novel, Smith and three other humans stumble upon an alien ship in the desert and are transported to the far-future. While in an alien fortress, Smith is emasculated in public as part of a demonstration of power by Flande, a mysterious Oz-like figure. Smith’s first humiliation occurs when he is “penetrated” by a shower of “silver droplets” (49). Then the group panics as the floor suddenly “crumbles” like “rotten ice” beneath their feet (49). In a show of contempt, Flande laughs and withdraws his magic, restoring the group to a sense of safety. However, while the rest of Smith’s companions can accept “this magic for what

it [i]s—telepathy, perhaps, group hypnotism...to Mike it was personal humiliation and would demand a personal revenge..." (49). Later, Flande summons "blonde" barbarians to defend him, and one of the men picks Smith up by "the neck and crotch" and holds him in the air (54). Smith will not be able to let the insult pass. Even after the "demi-god" Flande has been reduced to a "terrified man," such that it is difficult for them to believe that "the giant visage which had awed them so in the doorway had any connection with the babbling creature in Mike's grip," Flande is still Mike's "enemy" (123).

When an even more powerful Alien arrives, however, Mike's reaction is "shocking" (126). He seems to "fall in upon himself, like an old man" and "a palsy of terror" turns his face into a "mask of imbecile fear" (126). At this point, Flande escapes from Mike's "flaccid grip" (126). While the main character, Alan, had previously characterized Smith as an "Americanized German," Alan now sees Mike the "Nazi" move into action:

[Flande's] motion had an almost hypnotic effect on Mike as he whirled away from the terror above them. Here was a soft, frightened, fleeing thing—a thing that had offended the man's pride and must be punished. Mike redeemed his terror of a moment ago in headlong pursuit of this creature which feared him. He flung himself after Flande with a hoarse shout. (126)

Flande flees down a mirrored hall of light so intense that the "great waves of brilliance beat *through* him" (127, emphasis in original). The group, pursued by the Alien, chase after Smith, who overtakes Flande in the room of "The Source," a blinding pool of light that re-instills Flande's demi-god status (127-128). Similar to the pool in "Bright Illusion," hovering above is a dark entity that "[drinks] in the swirling tides of energy" (127). But Smith is running with "head down," "blind to everything except the presence of his quarry" (128). Squinting against the light, Alan can see Smith's silhouette reaching "heedlessly" for Flande (128). In a scene which both inverts and provides a parallel to the conclusion of "Bright Illusion," Smith barrels into Flande and, "locked in an embrace of rage and terror," they fall into the "boiling maelstrom that

was the Source" (128). Alan's last glimpse is of "shadows against the light" (128). Once they have been consumed Alan, much like IL at the conclusion of "Bright Illusion," "[stands] alone in the golden cavern..." (129). Along with its parallels to "Bright Illusion," this is one of several vivid examples in which Moore shows a "macho" masculinity being threatened by "penetration" and the loss of "solid ground." In Smith's case, such a humiliation precedes an explosion of murderous violence.

Dixon of "Bright Illusion," however, is not such a man. Despite the fact that he has been rendered helpless and penetrated (e.g., by "light" and "thoughts"), for the most part he maintains self-control. Perhaps this is due to the fact that although he has been "penetrated" by a more powerful force, the process is framed as "education" by a mother, rather than "domination" by a triumphant, mocking male (father). Or, it could be that Dixon is simply one of Moore's more "flexible" male characters, along the lines of Harding of "Heir Apparent" (1950). Harding is not only comfortable "blending" his mind with his Integrator Team, his post-human identity effortlessly exceeds its organic boundaries and mingles with that of machinery, such that he can remark of the ship that is transporting him: "*I am the boat*" (297, emphasis in original). However, a third explanation for Dixon's relative ease in surviving a challenge to his masculinity is the fact that the one time he does lose control is when he impulsively kisses the priest/ess. In other words, Dixon's threatened masculinity does not result in violence because he forces his anxiety to resolve itself in the image of his fantasy. Thomas Bertonneau has already identified the theme of "self-delusion" in connection with an analysis of Moore's Northwest Smith series; however, in that series, characters such as Smith serve the function of disturbing a "deluded" community willing to "sacrifice" itself to an authority figure ("Monstrous" 4-8), or how "violence deludes its practitioners into false notions of causality"



("Aspect" 15).<sup>147</sup> In the case of "Bright Illusion," as in much of her later "media" pieces, the pleasure of "self-delusion" is connected with the belief that the "image" is "reality."

Moore's use of words such as "veil," "mirage," and "illusion" suggest both perceptual interference and the pleasure of (self-)seduction, a "sweetness" that accompanies the consumption of an enticing image. Dixon alludes to the possibility that he has been seduced by an "image" through his constant attempts to "reassure" himself that his "love" is not a "hallucination"; in fact, in moments of doubt, he looks to the priest/ess's "loveliness" for reassurance or embraces her: "[H]e felt the sweet firmness of her body against his and knew helplessly that he loved the illusion that was herself and would always love it" (81). Yet, Moore undermines the objectivity of Dixon's perceptions with subtle allusions to the "real" nature of his love's body, allusions which Dixon does not notice consciously but which the attentive reader cannot ignore. For example, when Dixon first looks out upon the "breathtaking" "multitudes" (77), the priest/ess genuflects before him and is then described by the narrator as a "poem of grace" (77). This, of course, is the same image used to describe the initial appearance of the beings. In the same passage, Moore again alludes to the original description of the aliens when the crowd kneels it is "as if a wind had blown across a field of sword blades" (77). In this case, Moore is also alluding to the aliens' coding as phallic symbols. Even though Dixon is prone to pointing out in wildly graphic terms that the priest/ess is "sexless," these more subtle allusions by the narrator to the true shape of the priest/ess's body pass by without his comment.

Moore further confuses the "gendering" of bodies when the "true" shape of IL's temple is revealed. Dixon discovers that the temple of IL is not simply a column but a pillar on top of a dome marked by a "huge dark portal" (78). Suggestions of layering, deception, and hidden structures are embodied by the temple of IL. The vastness of the dome is stunning, occupying the "interior of the terraces" above it; the city is "tiered," a mere "shell" about the dome (78). If

“domes” are indeed meant to be interpreted as “female” in this text, then the residents of IL are essentially living atop an “obscured” female body that only appears phallic due to the visibility of the pillars. Which raises the question, is IL (perhaps like Dixon, or the egg-god) masquerading as male? Or is IL an amalgam of “gendered” codes, as the light-being appears to be?

Moore then connects IL with its own kind of “light.” In the temple’s center is a “pool of pale radiance” which gives the impression that it “[seethes] and [boils]” (78). Above the pool, a “burning lens” (78) gathers the radiance rising from the pool; the apex of the roof is a “dazzle of light” that is centered just beneath the pillar of IL (78). As Dixon watches, a steel-robed figure eagerly approaches the pool and is “swallowed” by a “haze of light” (79). In keeping with the theme of gender confusion, he cannot tell at that “distance” whether the robed figure is “male or female” (79). Remembering his “role” both as imposter and spy, Dixon commands the priest/ess to prove that she “interprets” this correctly. Through her answer, he gleans from her that the world of IL is a kind of sacrificial machine. The priest/ess explains that when the residents of IL complete their life “cycle,” they end their immortal lives, one by one, at the “beat of the signal” (79). “[T]he stream of voluntary sacrifices” never falters; thus they “nourish IL’s flame and keep it burning” (79). Dixon then receives his own “measured beats” (79) of information from the egg-god. It informs him that IL’s power derives from the “dissolving lives” of its followers and that IL is not in the pool but in the flame atop the pillar. IL “[feeds] on the reflection from below” (80). In other words, IL’s system is a “reflection” “machine” that depends on the willing sacrifices of its followers.

The remaining scenes of the story are a tangle of declarations of love and simultaneous undercutting by Moore. First, Dixon is pressured by the light-being to speak the “word whose very sounds [are] unlike those of any language man speaks” so that the “cadences of sound” can make way for the light-being to enter (80). Interestingly, if one were to pursue the Lacanian

analogy, the weapon that will make IL's world "penetrable" to the egg-god is not actually a word from the social and visual realm, as it is not one "to be set down in any written characters" (85). Initially, Dixon refuses on the grounds that he does not want to betray the priest/ess's "faith" in him. But the "veil" is weakening. The room "trembles" as if it were a reflection in the pool and a "ripple [passes] blurringly over its surface" (81). As the two aliens declare "love" for each other, Dixon knows that the "illusory veil through which they [know] love" cannot be maintained indefinitely (82). He asks himself "desperately" if the "deep and sincere" love he feels for her could be so "transient a thing that he could not endure the sight of her in another form" or she the sight of the real him (82). With the priest/ess still struggling to comprehend both the situation and the meaning of love, Dixon realizes that it is "not her body he [loves]" and a "great relief" floods him that what he feels is not an "infatuation" or a "mirage" (83).

Yet, due to this very anxiety and great "relief," his conclusion is somewhat unconvincing, particularly since he describes the priest/ess in increasingly ambivalent terms. For example, even as he declares that he loves her "essential self" despite her "nameless sex," he is increasingly repulsed by the "creature's" "terrible guise" (84). Her true form is "revolting"; it makes his "flesh crawl" and the "ground heave[] underfoot" (84). If this were one of Moore's later works, such as "The Code," "No Woman Born," or "The Children's Hour," this might be the moment when the main male character becomes "hysterical," as the loss of "solid ground" usually signals in Moore's fiction that a male character has lost confidence in reality. Yet Dixon persists. He grips the "dreadful thing that house[s] the being he love[s]," (85) and releases "the word" that summons the light-being.

For reasons that are not explained in the text, after a battle between the "powers of darkness" (85) (which apparently refers to both gods), the coup by the light-being fails. Again, the ground seems to "dissolve" and Dixon is conscious of "neither up nor down" (85). After an

anxious silence, IL speaks and demands to know what “spell”<sup>148</sup> Dixon has cast over its “chosen priestess” (86). But Dixon cannot “define” love for IL, nor can the priest/ess. Even though the priest/ess “love[s], she could not know the meaning of love, or what it meant to him” (86). All the priest/ess knows is that if Dixon left she would feel as if she were always “waiting” for him (83). IL agrees that “love” may be the “reigning principle” of Dixon’s “system,” but it insists there is no such thing in its domain (85). Nonetheless, Dixon persists that he loves the “terrible burden” (85) in his arms. While Dixon’s final arguments may be taken as a sincere defense of “love,” ambiguity exists. This is particularly true if one regards IL as voicing Moore’s (extra-textual) skepticism towards “the image.” For example, the disbelieving IL responds:

‘...Love is a thing between the two sexes of your own race. This priestess of mine is of another sex than those you understand. There can be no such thing as love between you.’

‘Yet I saw her first in the form of a woman,’ said Dixon. ‘And I love her.’

‘You love the image.’ (86-87)

In fact, this passage can be read in several ways, depending on whom one believes to be more reliable. Dixon’s credibility is undermined by the fact that Dixon may *not* have first seen “her” in the “form of a woman,” as “she” may be the same creature he saw by the pillar before the veil was dropped, and thus one might believe IL. If IL is correct that Dixon loves the “image” (of femininity), then the image itself is independent of the priest/ess’s being. Thus, Moore has either decoupled femininity from the “female” body or cleaved it from a “phallic” or “sexless” body. If from a phallic body, then the implication is that a (male) masquerade as “female” was, in fact, a “successful” one, as it resulted in both Dixon’s “love” and sexual attraction. If the body was a “sexless” one, however, then the implication is that bodies are neither male nor female but “performing” surfaces, i.e. the un/willing recipients of projection by the observer or a symbolic overlay by a pre-existing order.

However, if IL is incorrect, and Dixon does love the “being” rather than the “image,” Moore reinforces an equally persistent theme in her fiction: “Being” is a commonality, and possibly the only commonality, among all sentient life. In other words, Dixon’s passionate belief in a commonality between himself and the Other privileges “being” over constructed (“surface”) notions of gender:

‘At first it may be that I did. But now—no; there’s much more of it than that. We may be alien to the very atoms. Our minds may be alien, and all our thoughts, and even our souls. But, after all, alien though we are, that alienage is of superficial things. Stripped down to the barest elemental beginning, we have one kinship—we share life. We are individually alive, animate, free-willed, which in the last analysis is *self*, and with that one spark we love each other.’ (86-87, emphasis in original)

Dixon then attempts to reassure his “love” using “brain to brain” communication (87), suggesting that language (and thus the Symbolic Order) has indeed been bypassed and they are communicating successfully without the distortion of “perception.” In this speech he uses terminology that resonates with “No Woman Born,” in which Deidre refers to “humanity” as a “garment” to be “worn” (performed):

‘The shape you wear and the shape you seemed to wear before I saw you in reality are both illusions, both no more than garments that clothe that...that living vital, entity which is yourself—the real you. And your body does not matter to me now, for I know that it is no more than a mirage.’ (87)

And yet, Dixon’s use of the word “mirage” recalls the story’s opening scene, in which Dixon confidently but incorrectly labels the light-being as a “mirage.” In other words, Dixon begins the story by insisting that the egg-god’s very “being” is “of course” a “mirage.” He concludes the story by insisting even more forcefully that the priest/ess’s body is a “mirage” and that her “being” is the only thing that truly exists. Given the fact that the text continually undermines Dixon’s perceptions throughout the story, Moore’s use of this parallel leaves yet another interpretive avenue “open.”

Indeed, it is possible that Moore wanted to keep several interpretations plausible but “uncertain,” which returns the discussion to Moore’s use of “uncertainty.” Is Moore’s use of “uncertainty” in this piece strategic? Or is it the result of “fears of defeat” and “uncertainty regarding her status as a “female author?” Due to its strategic use of intra-textual allusion, enigmatic structural parallels, and the layers of uncertainty created by Dixon’s dubious perceptions and statements, I would argue that Moore seems to be playing with “uncertainty” in this text, or at the very least consciously exploring the limits of “certainty.” Indeed, to attribute the indeterminacies within this text to Moore’s “unconscious” “conflict” would essentially empty this text of its meaning.

One might even see the conclusion of the story as a tribute to “uncertainty,” a tribute which is itself ambiguous. In other words, the two lovers, acknowledging that they can never be “united” now that the protective “veil” is gone, chose the “unknown” of death. While this strategy seems unlikely to allow them to be rejoined in the future, even IL admits that it does not know what lies beyond death. IL agrees to let his priestess die and the pair are consumed in his golden “refection” pool. While this recalls the romantic image of a “lover’s leap,” since such “reflection” pools appear in Moore’s other work as sites of punishment (*Earth’s Last Citadel*) or needless sacrifice (the Northwest Smith series), the fact that they chose to die in this manner creates an additional subtext; in other words, one could interpret this death as a (deluded) “sacrifice” to the concept of “love” which the indifferent IL then consumes. Indeed, once the pair is gone, the story itself abruptly ceases to “perform” in the romantic mode, as if there were no longer any need to keep up the pretense once the couple is gone. Unlike Alan of *Earth’s Last Citadel*, who is shaken by Flande and Smith’s “embrace” of death, IL’s reaction does not provide the reader with the sense that the couple’s death is any great loss. Instead, IL’s words conclude the story with a “passionless” calm (88).

'Die then,' said IL. And IL was alone (88).

### 2.3 *The Mask of Circe* (1948) and "The Children's Hour" (1944)

"Bright Illusion" and *The Mask of Circe*<sup>149</sup> share several features in common, including the theme of "filtered" perception. However, while "Bright Illusion" makes a general connection between "translation" of "being"/gender into intelligibility and does so in almost laboratory-like isolation, *The Mask of Circe* situates the problem of "translation" within the interactions of history, language, and social relations. Thus, one of the "filters" under examination is history, specifically, history as translated through myth. As the narrator, Jay Seward observes, *The Mask of Circe* is a story "seen through the lens of legend..." (16), a lens Moore will suggest is compromised. A second filter is that of "masculine" identity, which the text will also seek to expose as constructed. In a clever twist, these two critiques are entwined. In other words, at the same time the story is viewed through the "lens" of legend, a "legendary" misogynist—Jason of the Argonauts—literally "sees" through Seward's eyes. Other interesting features of the text include the frustration of binaries (light/dark, male/female, human/animal) and the examination of a patriarchal culture that depends heavily upon "blind faith" in the logos.

Jay Seward is an otherwise nondescript man whom the reader first encounters at a campsite with an equally anonymous camper, Talbot. Seward opens the story by relating to Talbot how his mind has been co-opted by the spirit of the Jason of the Argonauts. Due to this possession, Seward recently answered the call of the *Argo*, a ship trapped on an "Ocean-Stream" in a world very different from our own. As Seward will later describe the difference:

Our world trends toward a norm; this one trended away from it. Perhaps the old Greek maps of their known world were more accurate than we think today, though they showed it flat and malformed, surrounded by an Ocean-Stream that poured constantly over the brink into infinity. Perhaps *Argo* sails an Ocean-Stream like that, inexplicable to human minds. (106)

In such passages, Moore connects the idea of the “norm” with a conceptual flattening, as well as suggests that what is “inexplicable to human minds” exists as an “infinity” outside the edges of understanding. This is an important motif in Moore’s fiction, as the idea that an “inexplicable” “world” (being, subjectivity, life) exceeds the limits of a “flat” “map” (concepts, norms, matrices, images—i.e., any artificial “unity”) recurs in her fiction. At the conclusion of this text, one of the final images will include Circe’s enigmatic, green “being” exceeding (“nimbusing”) the edges of her “mask.” However, before the narrative offers this image, it will more directly engage another of Moore’s recurring themes, i.e., binaries and the construction of difference.

As Seward relates to Talbot, long ago, Circe’s mother, Hecate, tasked the *Argo* with bringing Jason back to the island so that he might keep his promise to reunite with Circe. The narrative is essentially a flashback describing Seward’s experiences on the Aea, Island of the Enchantress, a forested island ruled by Hecate and Circe, and his time in the city of Helios, a gilded city overseen by Apollo’s scientist-priests. As Seward relates, when the *Argo* attempts to deliver him to Aea, it is destroyed by a “golden ship” and Seward is washed ashore (18). Seward then finds himself in a world that, due to its female ruler, could be seen as a separate, “female” world in opposition to that of Apollo’s “male” city of Helios. As Susan Gubar suggested in connection with “Bright Illusion,” such a dichotomy could be interpreted as an attempt by Moore to create separate “male” and “female” cultures. This is a claim worth examining: Is Moore endorsing or deconstructing such binaries?

For example, Sarah Gamble in “Shamblau...and others” argues that Moore uses binaries to advance a gynocentric point of view. In this article, Gamble claims that in early work such as the Northwest Smith series Moore expresses “extreme pessimism concerning relations between the sexes...” (35). Forming the “absolute basis of Moore’s pessimism concerning the



sexes—men and women are fundamentally alien to one another, possessed of completely different attributes and talents” (46). Thus, Gamble notes, “[a]ndrogyny, with its emphasis on the importance of shared characteristics, has no place in Moore’s portrayal of sexuality” (36). Gamble concludes that although Moore gives female attributes “new value, thus endowing her female characters with a voice and an active role in the narrative,” she preserves dichotomies, due to “gynocentric attitudes” due to her belief that men and women are “fundamentally different beings” (35).

Since this particular text seems to question the authority of both the logos and the rigid binaries and essentialist thinking upon which it depends, it may be helpful to discuss the claim of “gynocentricism” in more detail. Specifically, Gamble claims that “Moore both conforms to and subverts a social system identified by the French theorist Hélène Cixous as ‘patriarchal binary thought’, which splits up human characteristics and concepts into male/female oppositions” (Gamble 36). Gamble claims that Moore has simply inverted the assignments of the properties, such that she seeks to promote “the female ethic at the expense of the male” (37)—thus, Moore’s writing is “gynocentric.” As noted in *The Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition*, a gynocentric model “switches” binaries such that the “female is privileged”; while this may seem to be a critique of phallogocentrism, it cannot be more than a “pseudocritique” as it is still a “validation” of the “binary structure of thought,” a structure that legitimizes the “unity and totality symbolized by the phallus. Thus...there may be no separating the logos from the phallus” (408).

In other words, while Moore is critiqued by some for writing in a “male voice” from a “male point of view” and by others for writing from a position of “self-alienation,” such that she sabotages her female heroines once they become too powerful, Gamble’s critique finds fault with Moore for inverting power-laden binaries in order to “privilege” women. What is

fascinating about these portrayals of Moore as an “essentialist” and a preserver of “binaries” is that if one fast forwards less than a decade later to the mid-40’s, Moore is producing texts that celebrate the “missing third,” so to speak, as well as “center-less,” “non-unified” female identities. Such characters, by their very “multiplicity” or “hybridity” seem to embody arguments against both binaries and “naturalized” gender identities. “No Woman Born,” with its hybridic, androgynous cyborg and apparent attempts to deconstruct gender, has already been discussed in this regard. However, another means by which Moore seems to undermine essentialist thinking is in her attack on the arrogance of the “unified” “center,” as well as her promotion of the possibilities of the “centerless.” Indeed, “The Children’s Hour” (1944) provides a sustained critique of both “the grid” and “the center” demanded by patriarchal identity categories. As this text also contains a scene similar to one in *The Mask of Circe*, it is worth discussing briefly.

When Moore first explored the idea of the “center” in her work, she appears to have done so in the context of a political critique. The idea that a unified “center” is “artificial” and thus requires “maintenance” appears in her discussions of “imperial” cultures that appear to be modeled after Rome. For example, the idea that “the center will not hold” is discussed in works such as *Judgment Night*, “There Shall Be Darkness,” and “Promised Land.” While these texts are highly “ambiguous” in the delivery of their individual statements, together they seem to argue that the pursuit of unity in the body/(machine) of the state is futile, even delusional, and wisdom is to be found in those communities that celebrate heterogeneity, flexibility, and inclusion.

In “The Children’s Hour,” however, Moore moves the concept of “centerlessness” to an actual body. Moore’s Clarissa is a joyous but enigmatic figure, as much a delight to her new boyfriend, Lessing, as she is a mystery. Little is known about Clarissa, particularly since the story

opens with Lessing visiting a psychiatrist in order to determine why there is a “blank” in his memory; as the psychiatrist works with Lessing, they discover that he has entirely forgotten his experiences with his most recent girlfriend, Clarissa. The memories eventually return and Lessing seeks out his forgotten love, as well as a resolution to the mystery.

One of Clarissa’s most irksome qualities is that she seems to be involved in private communion with her own universe. Indeed, Clarissa is not only continually “discovering” the mundane world around her, she seems to be in the process of naming or learning, as if she lacks a basic acculturation to Earth. Although it becomes increasingly clear to Lessing that Clarissa is different, he has no “name” or point of reference for Clarissa’s difference, despite his attempts to “rename” her through a linguistic similarity (*clarissima*, Latin for luminous or bright) and associate her activities with the Longfellow poem, “The Children’s Hour.” To Lessing’s dismay, Clarissa cannot be bounded, labeled, or fixed in “rational” system; indeed, she appears to be outside his conceptual limits. As a response to his sense of helplessness, he desperately fictionalizes her life to the extent that he (possibly) imagines non-existent supporting characters (e.g., a forbidding aunt) in order to explain her behavior in more conventional terms. Eventually, he relies on myth as a “frame” to understand her; he “translates” her mysterious meetings with a “golden haze” into the closest analog at his disposal—i.e. the seduction of Danae by Zeus. This allows him to view himself as Clarissa’s protector, the golden haze as a rival lover, and her “penetration” by the “golden rain” (reminiscent of the “silver rain” in *Earth’s Last Citadel*) as rape. His perception is so distorted by the presence of Clarissa and her true “protectors” that it affects his perception of material reality; e.g. he loses the city “grid”<sup>150</sup> while driving.

However, Lessing gradually begins to suspect the truth. In a moment of intuition, an unbidden memory comes to him of Alice and the Fawn from *Through the Looking Glass*. This

particular passage is worth quoting before discussing *The Mask of Circe*, as they both contain a version of the “fawn”:

Alice, walking with the Fawn in the enchanted woods where nothing had a name, walking in friendship with her arm about the Fawn’s neck. And the Fawn’s words when they came to the edge of the woods and memory returned to them both. How it started away from her, shaking off the arm, wildness returning to the eyes that had looked as serenely into Alice’s as Clarissa had looked into his. ‘Why—I’m a Fawn,’ it said in astonishment. ‘And you’re a Human Child!’ (279)

Lessing then has his first glimpse of the truth: “Alien species,” he thinks (279).

In the final passages, Clarissa has moved on from Earth, having learned everything she needed to from her experience with Lessing, but Lessing’s “sanity” requires closure. His male friend convinces him to abandon the mythical thesis and instead they concoct a mathematical explanation for Clarissa’s apparent “superiority,” concluding that she must be an immature “battery” that will eventually charge a fourth-dimensional super-being “matrix.” Lessing seems to accept this answer until he suddenly dashes out of the house in the hope that the “facet” of the Clarissa Pattern that exists in this dimension might still be “waiting” for him (much like Dixon’s coquette, in “Bright Illusion”) at her home. However, upon arriving, the truth—or some fraction of it—is revealed to him. There are more than four dimensions, he realizes. The narrator then explains that the Clarissa Pattern exists in an infinity of dimensions, in an infinity of Clarissas. The “facets” are individuals until complete. They have their own names, languages, and “limitations,” and thus possess an infinite linguistic and conceptual heterogeneity. They also have an infinity of embodied, multi-temporal perspectives, as their “childhood” consists of “learning” from different cultures, forms, and historical periods. But, eventually, the infinite versions of the “scattered organism” (286) will unite:

Upon each face of that unimaginable geometric shape, a form of Clarissa moved and had independent being, and gradually developed. Learned and was taught. Reached out toward the center of the geometric shape that was—or one day would be—the complete Clarissa. One day, when the last mirrorfacet sent inward to the center its

matured reflection of the whole, when the many Clarissas, so to speak, clasped hands with themselves and fused into perfection. (286-7)

The very last scene, while perhaps “pessimistic,” is in keeping with Moore’s sense of irony toward the limits of the “masculine” imagination. In other words, Lessing, having found that Clarissa is not “waiting for him” after all, and having realized that his true place in her life was that of an educational toy, experiences a complete memory block, presumably at the direction of Clarissa’s alien companion—who has been revealed by now as her “mentor” (286) rather than her ravisher. Content and oblivious, Lessing hails a cab and asks the cabbie for the name of a good “floorshow” (287). He relaxes into the cushions of the cab and lights a cigar. “He would go on living out his cycle, complacent and happy as any human ever is, enjoying life to his capacity for enjoyment, using the toys of the earth with profound satisfaction” (287).

Brian Attebery’s critique of “The Children’s Hour” identifies parallels between the text and the writings of French philosopher Luce Irigaray in *This Sex Which Is Not One*. In this piece, women are “the sex that is not one” “because the Freudian paradigm for gender allows for only one pattern of sexual development: the masculine” (Attebery, *Decoding*, 99). However, rather than viewing women as “not one” and therefore “less than,” Irigaray celebrates images of multiplicity such that woman can be “greater than” one. Irigaray’s proposition that women’s pleasure can be seen as “not divisible into ones” but as multiple, distributed erogenous zones that “embrace continually” and “stimulate each other” is reminiscent of the pleasure-seeking multiplicity that is Clarissa (99). As Attebery notes, the story is “from first to last a story of desire...The center of gravity shifts from Lessing as lover to Clarissa as self-desiring self-discoverer” (99). Attebery sees this pleasure as extending beyond the limits of Clarissa’s body to “every image of herself scattered across the universe” (100). Indeed, specific images within the

text, such as an infinity of mirrors and a “personal” god of pleasure and discovery, “uncannily echo images by Moore” (100):

That ‘elsewhere’ of feminine pleasure can be found only at the price of *crossing back through the mirror that subtends all speculation*...A playful crossing, and an unsettling one, which would allow woman to rediscover the place of her ‘self-affection.’ Of her ‘god,’ we might say. (Irigaray 77)

Although Attebery does not mention it, due to its dramatization of a multitude of shifting, evolving identity “mirrorfacets”—of a multiplicity of co-existing, valid identities—“The Children’s Hour” also suggests the theories of Gilles Deleuze and Pierre-Félix Guattari. As David Fancy describes them, such theories reject “normative notions of bounded identity and subjectivity in favour of something more expansive, multiple and, ultimately, more playful” (93) and Clarissa can be seen as embodying all of these characteristics. Clarissa is also a subjectivity that is not a “normative individual bourgeois subject” nor a “self-contained object of scrutiny” (93)—indeed, since she escapes the fate of the women Lessing will “enjoy” at the floorshow, she is also not an object of scrutiny *for* the bourgeoisie, much less reduced to the status of its object (“toy”).

In fact, Clarissa’s “being,” as well as her multi-temporal “education,” seem to enact certain of Deleuze’s theories involving difference, identity, and “unbounded becoming.”<sup>151</sup> As mentioned earlier, Clarissa appears to be “outside” of Lessing’s conceptual “limits” or ability to “name.” However, Deleuze would seem to take issue with my phrasing the problem in this manner, as it implies that there is a stable “Clarissa” “identity” for which Lessing simply has no name or concept. In other words, in contrast to traditional philosophies which seek to “represent” “being,” Deleuze argues, there is no “being” or “identity” waiting patiently in the background to be conceptualized; to think of being in this manner ossifies it and limits our understanding to what we already think we know about the potential of “being.” Instead, we should view “being” as evolving and moving through time, potent with generative potential.

Only in the moment of perceiving “difference” does one create something new in one’s “thoughts” and approach a transient perception of “being.” Thus, one might look at Clarissa’s multiple “being” as it interacts with her multi-temporal “educational” process as a site of a vast intersection of thoughts with experience and time. In other words, Clarissa’s “education” generates an infinite celebration of the act of perceiving “difference” in her thoughts; this, perhaps, is why Clarissa seems to embody the pleasure of discovering the “new.”

At the same time, Clarissa is a non-hierarchical infinitude of thoughts which form a non-linear webwork through time; put another way, she is a conglomeration of constantly moving, multiple perspectives which form “intensities” but which prevent her “flight through time” from having a “center.” In this sense, she seems to embody Deleuze’s concept of the “rhizome”—although, perhaps appropriately, she is not perfectly encapsulated by this concept. For example, will Clarissa’s “rhizomic” identity be destroyed once she “clasps hands” with herself and “fuses” into “perfection?” Or is the rhizome actually created in that moment of connection, such that the Clarissas “fuse” in a manner which does not require a “loss” of her knowledge or a loss of her desire for “non-unity”? The text does not indicate either way. What it does indicate is that “The Children’s Hour” is yet another Moore text which seems to resonate with those theories arguing for the de-privileging of “origins,” “unities,” “binaries,” “hierarchies,” and “centers.” As it relates to *The Mask of Circe*, it is yet another Moore text which undermines the authenticity of myth and the objectivity of those who apply it, particularly in a context in which something must be “known” about a gendered identity.

Which returns this discussion to the dualism presented at the beginning of Chapter Two. How is it possible that Moore’s texts reveal a deep belief in essentialism and patriarchal codes, as suggested by critics such as Gamble and Rosinsky, yet less than a decade later seem to champion fictional identities which delight in attacking those very concepts? This paradox will

be re-addressed at the conclusion of this thesis. For now, however, it is sufficient to note that if ever there were a figure in science fiction who embodied the possibility of a “missing third,” Moore might be that figure. With the “missing third” in mind, we will now return to a discussion of *The Mask of Circe*, which seems to exemplify its plight.

As mentioned, while the structure of the novel might suggest that Moore is positing two “gendered” cities in binary opposition, a closer examination of the text reveals that, like “Bright Illusion,” the cities are not that clearly delineated. Indeed, this is a story which delights in the “confusion of boundaries” (Haraway, 165), particularly through figures which hold a liminal status between the two (apparent) opposites. The main character, Seward, will be confronted by these borderland figures, both male and female, in a test of the flexibility of his identity. As noted, Seward possesses a “double mind”—yet another resonance with Haraway<sup>152</sup>--and it is suggested that this non-unitary identity ultimately informs his experience. By the end of the novel, he will be placed in contrast to Phrontis, a male character whose allegiance to “cold logic” results in a dangerous inflexibility. Thus, the real conflict of the text is not between male and female but between male figures who rely upon clear delineations of “difference” (the hero, the scientist) and the characters who embody a kind of hybridity, “double,” or liminal status.

The first such test for Seward occurs when he encounters “tri-faced Hecate.”<sup>153</sup> A figure who resists rigid dualisms, she is “intrinsically ambivalent and polymorphous, [as] she straddles conventional boundaries and eludes definition” (Hornblower 671).<sup>154</sup> The goddess of doorways and liminal spaces, as well as an “educator of young men,” Hecate is an appropriate figure to introduce Seward to a world that will guide him to a new understanding of “partiality.” However, Seward’s first encounter with Hecate is a terrifying one, exacerbated by his “knowledge” of her from myth. As he recalls:



Goddess of the dark of the moon, as Diana was the bright goddess of the light of the moon. Hecate: She-Who-Works-From-Afar, mysterious patroness of sorcery about whom only half-truths have ever been known. Goddess of the crossways and the dark deeds, tri-formed to face three ways at her sacred crossroads. Hellhounds follow her abroad by night, and when the dogs bay, Hellenes see her passing. Hecate, dark and alien mother of Circe the Enchantress. (24-25)

By presenting this image of Hecate early in the text, Moore foregrounds the “filters” that operate in the “traditional” description of Hecate. For example, a clear binary is set up between the “bright” goddess Diana and “dark” Hecate, apparently dividing woman into “good” and “bad.” However, by the conclusion of the narrative, the text will radically re-valence the term “bright” and Hecate will be revealed to be the protector of humanity. Additionally, by suggesting that Hecate is only known through “half-truths,” the text undermines the authority of myth and history at the same time that it suggests that language is “incomplete.” Hecate is also someone who “works from afar,” implying a “defining” subject who views her futilely from an indefinite position of “not afar.” Hecate is then described by a series of relations (i.e., her effect on animals), imagery, and affinities until the very last sentence, when she is placed into a taxonomy (dark, alien, female/mother), thus mimicking a kind of empiricism. But the most powerful image embedded in this description is that of Hecate as “tri-formed,” an image which suggests both multiple perspectives of “viewing” and a plurality of “faces” or identities which cannot be looked at “directly.” Interestingly, Seward devalues this knowledge, calling it “legend,” but, having no other “information,” relies upon it.

Hecate was a dark goddess, one of the underworld deities, queen of sorceries and black magic. Apollo, at least, is the sun-god—bright daylight against enchantments and night time. You can’t judge them on those merits—it’s pure legend and may mean nothing. But what else have I to judge them by? (76)

However, it is gradually revealed to Seward that both Hecate and Apollo’s “properties,” as well as their origins, have been artificially formalized by myth. For example, Hecate is not a goddess, but an alien without a common origin with Apollo. She admits that she is not a god,

although her powers may seem “necromantic” to humans, just as Apollo’s “science” seems “magical” (86). In fact, Hecate is one of the creators of Apollo, which disrupts her “lateral” place as his opposite. In contrast, Apollo is indeed both “beautiful” and “logical” as related in legend, but the context of his beautiful logic renders him terrifying. He possesses a “terribly sanity” without any emotions or desires to temper his actions towards living beings (150). In fact, Hecate has charged herself with preventing Apollo from destroying this dimension, which he will do if he does not receive proper “worship” from his scientist-priests. Moore suggests that, regardless of their real properties, history has carved two gendered identities for these aliens through binaries of light and dark, beautiful and terrifying, “necromantic” and “magical” (86). Seward’s faith in the dualism presented by legend will lead him to a dangerous misplacement of trust in Apollo. Eventually, he will find himself nearly killed by Apollo’s priests, Phrontis and Ophion. Ironically, the method of his assassination is to be death by “light.”

Before examining Seward’s experiences in Helios, however, it is first useful to examine Moore’s treatment of a figure midway between the two cities, the man-animal-god Panyr. Like Hecate, Panyr is not human, but neither is he of Hecate’s race. Panyr, it is revealed, is a “failed experiment,” one of the many products of the aliens’ “vanity” that led to the creation of beings such as Apollo. Panyr is a mingling of several forms of Earth life, including human, but he is also a demi-god, as he has inherited the aliens’ apparent immortality. As a liminal figure that moves between the two camps, Panyr is also a figure of mystery. He fights for Hecate, but engages in commerce with Apollo; he appears to betray Seward and then saves him for his own reasons. He is described as habitually “evasive” (95), anticipating another human-animal, Evaya, of *Earth’s Last Citadel*, who will be discussed in Chapter Three. He hints that he may have his own plan for humanity and the aliens, but does not explain what the plan might be.

What he does confirm is that his dual position as both “god” and “outcast” allows him to move “freely” among both human and demi-god camps, as “not even the priests of Apollo would dare harm a faun” (94-95). And yet, he is subject to ridicule, as the “humans laugh at [him]” (94). Indeed, Panyr is an interesting figure due to the fact that he is a male who has been forced by his “mixed” origins to view himself as a survivor, an outsider living among two communities. Normally, this status would be held by a female in Moore’s fiction. Regardless, Panyr’s status as a god/human/animal “survivor” and a “failed experiment” also recall Haraway in the sense that he appears to be the “illegitimate offspring” of a violent, technological elite:

The main trouble with cyborgs, of course, is that they are the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention state socialism. But illegitimate offspring are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origins. Their fathers, after all, are inessential. (151)

Indeed, with his mysterious “plans,” Panyr is at least “unfaithful” to his origins in thought if not in deed, and Panyr’s father(s) are noticeably absent, as violence has destroyed all but one of his “parents.”

In human territory, his status as an “unknown” generates a kind of “excessive” fear among “normal” humans. Moore explores the nature of this fear in Seward’s first encounter with Panyr, which occurs just after Seward beholds Hecate for the first time. As with other Moore characters who experience a challenge to their conceptual foundations, when Seward is confronted by Hecate, he suddenly feels that “nothing is solid. Nothing is real” (29). Following the history of the “original” Jason as imagined by Moore, he also runs from Hecate through the forest toward the shore. As Seward relates later, he is possessed by “a terror only primitive peoples know, assailed by the vastness of the unknown” (29). Yet, there is something gratuitous about this fear, as it seems to contain a bliss. “A fear like an ecstasy that used to fall upon men in the old days, when Pan himself peered out at them, horned and grinning, from the trees.

Panic, they called it, because they knew that horned head by name" (29). In this passage, Moore connects the concepts of Others, names, and "patterns" of behavior. In other words, the original Pan was once an "unknown" that has now been partially formalized through "naming"; once recognized, those who "know" him also know to respond with fear. This formulaic reaction has been preserved through language as the word "panic."

Seward eventually is overtaken by Panyr (Pan), at whom he is able to look once he mocks his own lack of courage. Although they will come to know each other "very well" (31), the faun will never "seem less strange" (31) than he did in their first meeting.

The barrier of his alienage always had power to make me pause a little in sheer disbelief. Yet most of him was—human. I think if he had been less nearly human he would have been easier to accept. Goat-horns and goat-legs—that was the measure of his difference from mankind. Everything else was normal enough on the surface. (31)

It is in this scene of confrontation between Seward and Panyr, the Faun, that the text alludes to the reference to Alice and the Fawn in "The Children's Hour." In other words, in the scene in *Through the Looking Glass*, human and animal walk in friendship until they exit the area without "names" (concepts, taxonomies). The fawn then realizes with alarm that it is an animal and that Alice is a "Human Child." At this perception of difference—concretized by the labels of language—the fawn breaks away from Alice in fear. Here, the situation is reversed and somewhat altered. Language remains in the background, but the visual aspect is foregrounded. It is the sight of difference in the body of Panyr, specifically its simultaneous resemblance to and difference from the human, which inspires terror in the "Human."

Panyr seems to understand the depth and source of Seward's terror, recognizing it as connected to his "alienage," his "difference." An immortal outsider, he understands that it will fall to him to "humanize" himself, that it is his (unfair) burden as the Other to reassure Seward that his "difference" from the "norm" is permissible. Once Seward is calm, Panyr asks Seward,

“So now the fear has gone?” (31). After making a joke, he asks again: “Is the fear gone now?” (32). As Seward will come to understand, there is reason to respect Panyr’s power, but “his difference” is not a legitimate source of terror. Indeed, by suggesting that such terror manufactures its own kind of pleasure, Moore suggests that the act of Othering Panyr is an opportunistic and self-deceiving form of “pleasure” consumption.

However, the means by which Panyr first gains Seward’s “trust” is significant, as it engages Moore’s deconstruction of masculinity. The joke Panyr makes relates to Seward’s cowardice—specifically, that Seward would fly from a “dryad” (32)—and Seward begins to “trust” Panyr “from that moment” (32). Whether this is due to Panyr’s use of humor or his use of humor at the expense of a woman—i.e., chauvinistic male bonding—is not made immediately clear. In fact, Panyr’s presence is a destabilizing one, in terms of Seward’s masculinity. In one sense, it heightens the conflict within Seward regarding the authenticity of his identity. For example, in speaking with Panyr, Seward suddenly begins to speak fluently in a Greek accent “quite different from the one [he] had learned at university” (34). Not only does this observation undercut the authority of Seward’s institutional, traditional knowledge, it also forces him to face the possibility that Jason is speaking *through* him—a metaphor for “penetration” and “submission.” “Jason’s memories, couched in Jason’s tongue and flowing from my lips?” (34). In this sense Seward serves as a foil for Circe, who is comfortable both as a conduit for Hecate and as an identity that inhabits multiple bodies. In contrast, Seward will test his thoughts against those of the misogynistic, mercurial Jason with increasing anxiety.

However, Panyr also points out to Seward that he has the legacy of the “hero” with which to contend. Can Seward live up to the “model” of hero that Jason provides? As Panyr jokingly interrogates Seward, he both lures Seward into a familiar enactment of male bonding, while at the same time dancing around the borders of Seward’s concept of masculinity. Possibly

because it is a sign of “flexibility,” Seward’s ability to laugh at himself pleases Panyr, but it makes him wonder aloud if Seward is actually a “hero” (35). Seward quickly interrupts him to claim that once he gets a “sword” and more “information” “others may do the running” (35). Panyr is amused; then, like the Devil from Faust,<sup>155</sup> Panyr appears to grant Seward’s wish for more “information.” Seward is suddenly ambushed by a rush of “golden armor” and taken to Helios, where he is questioned by the scientist-priests of Apollo (40-42).

At first, the city of Helios does seem to present Seward with a “male” city that could be set in opposition to Hecate’s “female” island. However, the text undermines the “unity” of Helios, suggesting that while it may possess a certain order on the “surface,” like the surface of Panyr’s body, the surface is deceptive. In fact, Helios’s very organizing principle generates a tremendous substratum of diversity. In other words, it is not a “male” world in the sense that it possesses unified customs, languages, and forms, as Gamble suggests. As a “crossroads” of commerce, it is itself far too “mixed.” Even the city’s architecture is a deviation from traditional or “natural” lines, as the golden city has blended “classic foundations” with “hints of strange and fascinating newness” (43). Although Apollo’s priests are sequestered away in a machine-like existence, outside their temple it is an animated city with “thronging” streets that channel the traffic of every race and occupation, “every age and condition of humanity” (45).

In fact, it is this multitude of identities which allows the “new Circe” to hide in plain sight. Cyane, the young woman who is next in line to wear the Mask of Circe and channel Circe’s spirit, is masquerading as a Nubian slave girl in Apollo’s temple (45). As Seward notes later, the “best hiding-place is the most dangerous” (67); in other words, Cyane’s choice to adopt the identity of one of the most powerless people—young, female, black, slave—in the house of her enemy defies conventional (male) logic and thus makes her invisible. However, her successful masquerade also hints at an ability to play upon the “blindness” of those who maintain rigid,

“naturalized” identity categories. The text also suggests through Cyane’s use of a black “paint” that the priests of Helios accept the outward appearance of her body as her “identity,” linking this text to other Moore texts in which “body paint” indicates a surface identity. Regardless, Moore’s presentation of Helios would seem to be that of a male-*dominated* world, rather than an inherently “male” one, in which women like Cyane exist as survivors.

Another interesting resonance with “Bright Illusion” is Helios’s resemblance to the body of the “egg-god.” For example, Helios is entirely a city of glittering “surface.” As the transmutation of gold is one of its secrets, it is literally gilded. The “citadel” of Apollo recalls the “column” of IL, but Helios’s tower is “dazzling, impossible to look at except obliquely.”<sup>156</sup> Three hundred feet high those glittering walls loomed, straight and unadorned except by their own brilliance” (43). And yet, despite its alien, “unreadable” surface the city contains a male-dominated microcosm in which Seward will find himself remarkably comfortable. As he is led to the temple, Seward instantly knows either from the splendor or the shape that this must be a “god’s house—Apollo the Sun” (43). Upon meeting Apollo’s priest, Phrontis,<sup>157</sup> he is relieved to find him “rational” and willing to engage in commerce. He observes that Phrontis is “so much closer to my own civilization than anyone else” (57). Like Seward and Panyr, the two seem to use the female body/image/concept as a means of inter-personal commerce. For example, Phrontis seeks Seward’s help in destroying the Mask of Circe, they negotiate, and Phrontis concludes negotiations by offering Seward an “accomplished” (56) slave girl to pass the time. However, Seward refuses. Whether this is due to a genuine desire not to “use” the girl in this manner or due to a misogynistic fear (from Jason) of contact with women, the text does not indicate. However, Seward rejects this “gift” in terms that Phrontis is able to accept; i.e., he refuses on the grounds that she may attempt to gain information from (i.e., “penetrate”) him by “spying...” (56).

Seward then discovers that the priests inside the temple maintain a highly patriarchal, almost mechanical, environment under the governance of an extremely rigid hierarchy. Phrontis's power is so absolute that he even has power over the other priests' sense of time, as he "keeps the sacred hours and minutes" (97). Priests who do not maintain a state of "perfection" risk death. In fact, the priest Ophion will change sides after he becomes "crippled," as Apollo accepts no "imperfect priests" (96). It is also an environment of violence, despite its pristine veneer, as the priests engage in human sacrifice in order to appease their "god," Apollo. However, the environment is so "rational" that Phrontis openly reveals to Seward that, unlike other priests, he does not believe in superstitions such as "gods." He is content to pretend to belief in order to use the system to his advantage. In fact, the "logical priest of Apollo" (100) maintains a functionalist attitude toward human life. He later relates that despite his promise to aid Seward, all along he has regarded Seward and Cyane as "tools" to be smashed preemptively so that they cannot be used by his opponent, Hecate. (100)

Eventually, Hecate's forces will "rout" those of "cold logic," but not before Seward is led by his anxieties over his "double mind" to trust Ophion's<sup>158</sup> offer to let him enter the "Eye of Apollo," the god's "holiest sanctum." Addressing him in an avuncular tone as "Son of Jason," Ophion assures him that once he looks at the Face of Apollo "[t]he memories you hate will drop from you as you look" (77). Seward is then led into a "star-shaped room" that opens outward like a "comet's tail" and lined by an "infinity of interreflecting silver walls" (77-78). The god's "Face" appears, too inhumanly beautiful to behold, and he looks away. Like Hecate, Apollo possesses an identity that cannot be looked at "directly." But Apollo's light penetrates the "barrier" of his closed eyes (81). He then remembers his life as Jason, when Hecate appeared as an amorphous being, just out of sight. "We three stood on a hilltop—Circe and Jason and a great, strange shadowy figure at our backs" (82). He remembers Jason's promise to fight for



Hecate in battle, as well as Hecate's promise to release Jason from a life of mysterious, "predestined patterns" (86).

However, even as he remembers, he realizes that the process by which he is receiving such "knowledge" is dangerous, one that is certain to drain memory from him as it is provided, perhaps even paralyze and kill him. As Panyr observes after rescuing him, "When a man looks into Apollo's Eye, his own eyes are darkened forever" (95). If Apollo is functioning as a metaphor for the logos in this situation, this might suggest that as the logos permeates Seward, its logic overwrites that of personal experience. Regardless, the small dose of strange light that had "bathed" his brain brings him a "clarity" of the type that accompanies waking from a dream (98). He tells Panyr that he knows "many of the answers that were veiled before. I no longer walk[] blind in the shadows" (98). He promises to break the "deadlock" between the two gods. Panyr approves of his support of Hecate, telling him he speaks like a "hero" (98).

The final chapters repudiate the rigid functionalism and arrogant logic embodied by Phrontis. As Phrontis is unable to provide Apollo with the sacrifice of Cyane, "Dark Apollo"—who has now taken on both light and dark characteristics--will destroy Helios with an "eclipse." While Hecate's forces assault the temple, a black "sun" appears, and Phrontis's sense of reality collapses. Similar to Seward's reaction to Panyr, Phrontis experiences pure "terror" at the sight of a threat to his conceptual system; however, unlike Seward, he is not flexible enough to adapt. As Seward observes:

I saw incredulous horror there, pure terror convulsing that clever face. He had not shared the superstitions of his fellows. Cold logic had solved his problems—until now. But logic and science had failed him alike in this moment and I thought I could see the shattering apart of the whole fabric that had been Phrontis's mind. (141)

When Apollo finally arrives, Phrontis dares to look in his face, and he falls to his knees, "groveling in utter abnegation before the god he had scorned. All logic and intellect stripped

away..." (145). He desperately chants the ritual phrase: "Turn thy dark face from Helios...Look not upon us—in the Hour—of thine Eclipse" (145). But his chant is unsuccessful. Apollo has been unleashed and he descends upon Helios with an unstoppable momentum.

It is at this point that Apollo, the inhuman Face of cold logic, is portrayed not only as the godhead of the patriarchy, but as the embodiment of the atomic bomb. The earth shivers "in the pouring energy that must be violent enough, almost, to smash the atom asunder" (145). In a series of images that recall a nuclear explosion, first Phrontis and then the city are destroyed. Phrontis's "sun-mask" is burned away and his body reduced to cinders. Meanwhile, all of Helios screams beneath the god's fatal, "lightless heat" (radiation) (146). Seward and Hecate's forces watch the destruction of the city from the temple.

When a people die, the voice of their agonies is a sound no brain that hears it could ever forget. We heard those cries as Apollo's people fell before the violence of his power. But when a city dies—no language spoken by human creatures could tell of the death-roar of its passing. Stone and steel screamed in their dissolution... (146)

Perhaps in keeping with a respect for experience and the limits of language, the text notes that while the "sound" will not be forgotten, "no language" is capable of conveying the reality of this scene. At the same time, by pointing out that such an attempt will fail, the text anticipates that this catastrophe will eventually be translated into myth.

In a remarkable conceptual turnabout, the machine-like perfection of Apollo (the logos, or the bomb) is then described in terms that recall descriptions of Kristeva's "abject":

I looked through the heart of that golden blaze and saw Apollo's Face.

It was supernally beautiful. It was supernally horrible.

My flesh crawled upon my bones again with the same sort of revulsion that many men feel, in infinitely less degree, in the presence of certain Earth-things—snakes or spiders—that mysteriously outrage some instinct deep within us all...

Apollo was such an outrage. To the eye he was godlike, beautiful, superhumanly glorious. But something in the very soul rejected him. Something in my brain

shuddered away from him, cried voicelessly that he should not be, should not exist or walk the same world as I or share the same life. (149-150)

It is then that Hecate reveals to Seward Apollo's true nature. While the "inhuman beauty of Circe's Mask...nimbused with green flame, alive, enigmatic" (141) seems to possess an ineffable organic beauty, Apollo is inhumanly beautiful, terrifyingly and seductively perfect, because he is not alive—he is a machine. He is the ultimate abstraction made manifest, the *telos* of unchecked artifice, arrogance, and vanity. Upon learning the truth, Seward symbolically rejects the logos and the patriarchy. He accepts his role as Hecate's agent and uses a (non-phallic) "machine"—the Golden Fleece—to cancel out and thus destroy Apollo. Contact between the two machines causes a blinding explosion which returns Seward to his dimension and time. The novel then shifts from Seward's point of view to that of Talbot, the listener at the campfire. Seward reveals to Talbot that he possesses a deep longing to return to the island, but he does not know how to return unless Hecate sends for him. The two retire and Talbot goes to sleep musing over the "origins of names and men" (157), the same species of question that had opened the novel. "Seward," he muses. "[S]ea-ward" or "Warden of the Seas" (157). While he is sleeping, Seward disappears, presumably into the nearby sea.

In texts such as *The Mask of Circe* Moore demonstrates that binaries are created and passed down through the "priests" or "scientists" of myth as a type of "information" to enunciate the differences between male/female (Apollo/Hecate) or between good and bad woman (Diana/Hecate). However, these enunciations prove to be as empty and self-contradicting as any other "chant" against the "unknown." Such hierarchal systems are propelled by their own relentless logic, are ravenous for "worship," and are indifferent to the destruction of the bodies in their path. In contrast, those who do not fit into their ruthless schema of efficiency and logic are cast to the margins. Once at the margins, the text suggests

that such figures are capable of inspiring terror in those who require clear boundaries.

However, like Panyr, they may weather their marginalization more successfully if they adopt the ironic perspective of the cyborg. Eventually, they may band together to disrupt the sacrificial system of the patriarchy and watch it collapse before the Face of its own god.

## Chapter Three: Mediating the Gendered Subject: “Blank Beings” and Constructed Identities

### 3.1 “Readability” and Mediated “Being”

Chapter Three will attempt to focus on Moore’s explorations of the “constructedness” and “performance” of gender and identity in two of her mid- and late-career texts, particularly through their use of images of mediation, formalization, and artificial unities. However, before discussing two of these texts, it may be helpful to briefly discuss the traditional view of the “female image” as it appears in Moore’s fiction. In other words: Who is being “seen” in Moore’s fiction? Those critics who see Moore as an advocate for female “survivors” might respond “determined women,” “Amazons,” or “cyborgs.” However, for those who maintain that Moore wrote from a “male point of view,” the answer is likely to be the “unreadable Other.” As discussed in Chapter One, the pulps of the 20’s, 30’s, and 40’s are generally accepted as having been male-dominated, both in terms of authorship and readership. Even if one accepts Eric Leif Davin’s claim that female participation in these areas is under-represented in more recent histories, Davin does not dispute that a male hegemony existed, only that it was not nearly as absolute as some critics suggest. Thus, one would expect to find “distortions” of the female image in the pulps, particularly Woman presented as the radically different “Other.”

Woman as the Other was asserted by Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1949) and has been elaborated upon by more recent critics, such as Luce Irigaray in *This Sex Which is Not One* (1977). Beauvoir noted that in Western culture, Man is assumed to be the universal, the standard, and that Man’s status is privileged to the extent that it is reflected in fundamental concepts of language. Thus, there is no “I” for Woman, only “She,” and She is defined in terms of what She lacks in relation to men, rather than what She might possibly “be.” In other words, Woman is understood solely as a means to establish the “norm” of Man—to limn the unity and

center of “his” traits. At the same time, Woman is not allowed to “explain herself,” as she is not the “definer.” Thus, she is understood not for her own properties, but as an inevitable mystery.

Understandably, philosophers and critics such as Beauvoir sought a means to posit a “female self.” As Brian Attebery notes in *Decoding Gender*: “Feminist philosophers looked for woman-centered texts, terms, and ideas but found only silence, disorder, or distorted reflections of the masculine” (90). Such distortions produced one-dimensional views of Woman, including the Good Woman who quietly supports the values of the patriarchy—the dutiful wife, the virginal daughter, the idealized beauty object. However, as Attebery notes, when Woman becomes sexualized, another possible “reading” of Woman emerges from within patriarchy, one that capitalizes on t

The view of Woman as the “dangerous, alien, fundamentally unknowable being” that is the Other (90). In his review of images of Woman in early science fiction, Attebery notes that when women actually appear as characters in the pulps, they are often presented as figures of dangerous, exotic mystery, of “illusion, ambiguity, unreadable surface...” (91). In this configuration, Woman is not only Other, a non-being, but an unknowable alien—a mixture of danger and mystery that is rendered even more sexually desirable for her conveniently “unreadable” surface which, among other things, raises no messy questions of depth.

As Moore’s critics note, with the obvious exception of her foul-mouthed, “light loving” Amazon Jirel,<sup>159</sup> a sizeable number of Moore’s female characters can be seen as coquettish, bright with glamour and flirty “unreadable” surface. While Moore seems to avoid types such as “the virginal daughter” or the “dutiful wife,” figures such as the “beauty object,” the “coquette,” and the “vixen” make frequent appearances in her fiction. For example, Moore’s first heroine, Shambleau, can be seen in exactly these terms. Brian Attebery describes Moore’s first story as “written in a register that was readable at the time as masculine, especially when reinforced by

a male viewpoint character and an unmarked byline” (Attebery, *Decoding Gender* 91). First imagined by Moore as a “witch,” she is first seen running from a mob for reasons that are never revealed; even more enigmatic is her name, which appears to denote “both individual and species” (Attebery, “Fifty Key Figures,” 173), much like the Gorgons or lamia of Greek myth. Once rescued by Smith, she is revealed to be a Medusa-like figure with “brown skin, feline green eyes, writhing scarlet hair...everything that is Other” (173). Approached in this manner, Shambleau is often “read” as “the eroticized racial outsider, the dominatrix in red leather, and the source of both danger and forbidden pleasure...” (173).

And yet, in keeping with the theme of indeterminacy, it is important that Attebery also notes that “[p]art of Moore’s strength as a writer...is her ability to convey more than one message with the same images” (Attebery, “Fifty Key Figures,” 173). Thus Shambleau may also be seen as an “independent woman, a trader in illusion and pleasure, a tough gal getting by on her own in a hostile universe...Most subversively, Shambleau finds the whole situation, including Smith’s conflicted response, highly entertaining” (173). Thus, Shambleau is “reminiscent of the laughing Medusa invoked by the feminist philosopher Helene Cixous as an emblem of women’s elusive and unconquerable selfhood” (173). Indeed, other critics argue that Shambleau’s very image as an “Other” is strategic, one used to generate commentary rather than offered for unthinking consumption. For example, Thomas Bertonneau sees Shambleau’s “outsider” function as central to larger themes within Moore’s early work, particularly in the Northwest Series. Smith is a “Parclitic hero who intervenes on behalf of the despised and persecuted” (“Aspect” 8). In this interpretation, Shambleau is the Other to whom Smith, a scarred “shaman” in search of spiritual knowledge, must submit and join in suffering (“Aspect” 9).

In another reading, Thomas Bredehoft sees the hybridic Shambleau—who is at once male/female, as well as animal, human, and alien—not as the “female alien” of Gilbert and

Gubar's reading, but as the abject<sup>160</sup> who offends "sensitive cultural boundaries" (380), a being which "circulates along the boundaries of the social (and symbolic) order, defining the terms of these orders," who can never be "eliminated (or else its power to define is lost)" and so must be expelled from time to time. Indeed, *Shamblau* opens with this very conflict, with the image of an abject figure who has gotten "loose" of society's mastery; thus when Northwest saves her, he interrupts and exposes Kristeva's "ritual of defilement" (380). To Bredehoft, *Shamblau*—who is described as "beyond words"—is also "the embodiment of a presymbolic, prelinguistic entity" to whom the villagers assert a perfect "signified/signifier relationship" (Bredehoft 379), which highlights *Shamblau*'s status as an Other to the mob, as well as her distance from the "masculine community" in general (379). In the conclusion, Smith's masculinity and "linguistic patterns" (380) are "retooled" as a result of his encounter with her. Ultimately the "symbolic order" is only revitalized for his sidekick, Yarol, and the mob (380), as dramatized by a concluding speech by Yarol which attempts both to interpret events through "the legend of Medusa" and rationalize (and thus dehumanize) *Shamblau* as pure "animal" or "plant" rather than "human-animal" hybrid (382).<sup>161</sup> Smith's hesitation to accept Yarol's explanation is a "powerful brand of resistance" to "Yarol's definitions" and "the lure of all monologic definitions" (384). This conclusion, Bredehoft asserts, establishes that the story is a "context for meaning" (383) which is only made possible by *Shamblau*'s marginal status, her power as the "alien or madwoman" who "rejects language" (382)—i.e., because she is "unreadable." Regardless, due to the variety of provocative readings *Shamblau* is able to generate, Moore seems to have provided *Shamblau* with more texture and depth than a stereotype such as the "unreadable Other" would seem to warrant.

And yet, is it Moore's intent for *Shamblau* to be "read?" Put another way, while Moore clearly endeavored to produce "well-drawn characters" as opposed to the "stock



characters” of the pulps, was she aware of the limits of her own characterizations? Bertonneau, in his analysis of Smith’s role as a shaman, suggests that Moore was sensitive to the limits of language, as he points out that the shaman is only able to gain knowledge of the Other by establishing a rapport so complete that the shaman is nearly killed—or dissolved—in the process. Such a joining bypasses the limitations of sight and language and requires a transfer of both sensation and memory. If Bertonneau is correct then we as readers are limited to an imperfect “knowledge” of Shambleau, as Smith’s thoughts and sensory data can only be re-related back to us through the reductive filter of language. Thus, while we may believe we are “reading” Shambleau, Moore’s text emphasizes that we are, in one sense, *only* reading Shambleau.

Indeed, the concept of “readability” is very much in play in Moore’s fiction, both in the sense of how she approaches “readability” and in the fact that it has been used, both in and out of Moore’s favor, to test the “success” of her female heroines. For example, Attebery identifies Moore as a science fiction writer of Beauvoir’s generation who “found in the trope of the superbeing a way to posit a female self” (91). He then notes with approval that with each of her three heroines (Shambleau, Deidre, and Clarissa<sup>162</sup>) Moore took “the feminine character farther from the role of seductive, unreadable Other” (91). The potential problem with this statement is Attebery’s implication that Moore either intentionally or unintentionally moved her characters “farther” from the status of “unreadability.”<sup>163</sup> However, does Moore believe that the goal of “readability” exists? Or—in keeping with Moore’s preference for indeterminacy—is perhaps “unreadability” a given?

As will be discussed in Chapter Three, Moore’s texts seem to suggest that “readability” is nothing more than linguistic and visual opportunism. As I have already argued to some extent, Moore’s texts suggest that all perceptions of “reality,” particularly those concerning

gender, are mediated or framed by something—whether it be habit, language, history, memory, or technology—and that these “translations” are inherently incomplete. Sight in particular initiates a translation; in that moment when any object (or Other) crystallizes into a “form,”<sup>164</sup> *something*—such as memory—is required to render “it” intelligible, to translate the nameless into the named, the formless into the comprehensible. At the same time, while perception is arbitrary and subjective—constructed, mediated, situational—*being exists*, not only at the level of conscious awareness, but also as a primal, non- or pre-linguistic “core.”<sup>165</sup> This “spark” of life cannot be perfectly “translated,” nor can the cluster of desires, perceptions, and emotions which surround it. Indeed, such translations are “illusions” that inevitably favor the observer. Thus, Moore’s texts suggest that some other goal besides “readability” must be elaborated in order to provide an alternative to the unthinking pleasure that accompanies the practice of “reducing” “being” to “intelligibility.” As I will argue at the conclusion of the section concerning *Doomsday Morning*, rather than pursue the “sweetness” of “knowing,” so to speak, Moore’s texts seem to echo those of Judith Butler’s, in those moments when Butler calls for strategies that allow humans to live in the “midst of the unknown,” free of the need for simplistic “identity categories” (Salih 2).<sup>166</sup>

### **3.2 “The Prisoner in the Skull” (1949)**

In “Bright Illusion” and *The Mask of Circe* Moore presents a variety of “gazes” and problems of “translation.” One such gaze is a “male gaze” that seeks “feminine” images it can fetishize, “trade” among men, or contrast with a male ideal. Another “gaze” is simply a “conceptual gaze” (or Symbolic Order), one that is necessary to render “reality” and “humanity” intelligible through the use of familiar images, concepts, and language. As the history of Western thought—and therefore its concepts—has been a “male” history, these two gazes can

be thought of as existing in tandem, closely entwined in methods and motives (if not the same gaze). "The Prisoner in the Skull" can be thought of as a fictionalization of the opportunistic symbiosis of these two gazes. In this story, the main character, Fowler (possibly a play on "foul"), is an otherwise unremarkable man who has become obsessed with marrying the beautiful model, Veronica. Shortly before Veronica dumps him for another man, a mysterious "blank man" appears on Fowler's doorstep. Fowler nicknames the blank man "Norman" and conscripts him as his "man servant," although the man—who is something of a technical genius—quickly becomes Fowler's slave. Once empowered with Norman's creations, Fowler uses invasive technology to stalk Veronica and sabotage her new marriage, such that Veronica ultimately seeks revenge. Through his abuse of Norman and Veronica, Fowler is seen utilizing his power as a male, as an owner of technology, and as an "observer" and "definer" in order to dehumanize Others.

Before engaging this text, it may be helpful to return to the question of how "difference" from the "norm" is determined. The problem of assessing difference has already been posed by Seward in *The Mask of Circe* in response to the "measure" of Panyr's "difference" from the "human" norm. In other words, *would* Panyr have been less terrifying if he had looked less like a man and more like an animal? Moore explores this possibility in *Earth's Last Citadel* (1943), a novel in which four people find themselves in Earth's far-future. Once in this future, the four humans realize their special status as "the last humans" on Earth and react with revulsion to the giant, amorphous creatures they assume to be humanity's "degenerate" descendents. Among these degenerates are smaller "bird-people" flying in the mists above their heads. In response to the sight of their human-animal bodies, the group cycles through a set of reactions which seek to classify, "use," or "judge" the bird-people based on the

appearance of their bodies. Their reactions are interesting as they represent several conceptual techniques used to reduce both human and animal “beings” to the level of object.

For example, the scientist, Sir Colin, seeks to place the bird-people in a taxonomy, which he then conflates with morality. Before they capture the bird-woman Evaya, Sir Colin has already concluded that her race is that of a “mindless man-bird,” a “twisted abortion of evil” (27). Other reactions are more practical. The Americanized German, Mike Smith, sees more “animal” than “human” in their bodies and suggests that the man-birds be eaten for food. He attempts to shoot a nearby creature but is stopped by Alan because Alan’s “basic difference” from Smith is a desire to “prevent slaughter” (22). In other words, Alan prevents the killing out of a desire to stop any kind of slaughter, not because this killing would be any different than killing an animal. The next reaction is economic; Karin, a mercenary working for the Nazis, warns against shooting the bird-people, as they might “be someone’s property,” thus equating them with tamed animals or slaves (22). As Karin argues, the sound of a shot might draw the attention of angry “owners” (22).

Due to the sense of superiority and disgust inherent in these reactions, along with the group’s horror upon learning that they are the only remaining “humans,” one might detect some of the urgency described by Karl Steel in “How to Make a Human” to “draw the boundaries” between human and animal through the process of “subjugation” (7).

Subjugation resolves the various, shifting boundaries between humans and nonhumans into a single line separating humans from all other living things. Among these acts of boundary-making are not only eating, taming, and killing, but also the power to categorize. (7-8)

The final filter is gendered and is delivered by the most sympathetic member of the group, Alan. When Evaya is finally captured, Alan “knows” from the shape of the form pressed against his body that she is a “girl” (33). Her “bird-like” (animal) qualities are then quickly reinscribed into his notion of the “feminine.” His first impression is one of “incredibly

fragility...so inhumanly fragile that he thought her frantic struggles to escape might shatter [her] delicate bones by their very frenzy" (33). In Alan's reaction, one might see the same desire to draw "boundaries" but, because he responds to her as a "girl," he draws boundaries along gendered lines in order to assert his masculinity. Suddenly, although he has just seen Evaya flying in the sky, he cannot accept her relation to the rugged environment. "This delicate, hothouse creature could have no conceivable relation with the dead desert around them" (34). Shortly afterward, infused with protective feelings toward Evaya, he thinks of the Alien that has been following them and adds: "And the Alien could have no possible connection with this exquisitely fragile thing" (34). Of course, both of these statements are not quite true, as this future Earth possesses a history and a complex of relationships Alan cannot imagine.

Once the group has a closer look at her human "form," they too attempt to translate Evaya from alien to human. Sir Colin rasps joyously, "She's human!...That means we're not alone in this dead world" (34). Evaya is just human enough for Sir Colin to see what he most desires: possible allies and the continuation of the human legacy. And yet, just as quickly, Sir Colin realizes that his statement is meaningless: "We no longer have any gauge to know what's human and what is not" (35). However, Evaya is protected from reinscription into the category of animal (or non-human) when she begins to demonstrate even more reassuring, "human-like" qualities. Not only can Evaya speak Alan's name and be understood through pantomime, once they are able to communicate telepathically, she is revealed to be highly articulate. She is able to "evade" the first three degradations—slaughtered for food, sold as property, classified as unnatural/evil—due to her ability to make herself "intelligible" as a "human" subject through language. And yet, Evaya never quite transcends Alan's "image" of her as a "girl" in need of his protection despite the fact that she is revealed to be "a figure of tempered steel" (59), full of "latent strength" (104).

“The Prisoner in the Skull”<sup>167</sup> asks two related questions, the first being: What if there are “forms” that are too easily “recognized?” This question will be addressed in a discussion of Veronica Wood who, similar to Evaya, will not escape classification as a female stereotype. The second is, What if a being looks like a human on the outside but does not appear to have an interior? In other words, what if a being demonstrates “life” but does not appear “individually” alive, “animate,” and “free-willed”--the very things Dixon in “Bright Illusion” claims constitute “self?” How would such a being be “read?”

Regarding the latter question this text answers: as “blank.” Significantly, Moore began exploring depictions of the “blank”<sup>168</sup> in “Bright Illusion”; however, in that context, the discussion is limited to the city of IL itself, which is only metaphorically “animate.” In other words, the only thing that cannot be “translated” into an Earth equivalent in the world of IL is its “spirit of daily life,” the desires that motivate and animate the aliens’ social and economic activity. One might think of this “spirit” as the society’s animation or “being” (78). Due to this failure of translation, the city looks both “dead” and “artificial.” Thus, the:

...[M]arble pillars and walls rose as blankly as stage sets along the streets. A mask had been set for him over the realities of the place, but it was not a living mask. There were no shops, no markets, no residences. Rows of noncommittal pillars faced him blankly, betraying no secrets. Apparently the light-being had been unable to do more than mask the strangeness of this world. It could not infuse into it the spirit of a daily life so utterly alien as man’s. They went on through the dead-faced streets, down another ramp, and always the people dropped to their knees, perfectly the illusion of humanity. (78)

In other words, Dixon is able to acknowledge that the city is “present,” but the conceptual overlay is not able to explain the city’s “being”—its desires, activities, social organization. It is alive, but blank—a mass of formal elements that are recognized but not accepted as “living.” By describing such an image as both familiar and unfamiliar, as well as “dead-faced” and a “mask,” Moore has also associated this particular “mis-translation” with the uncanny. As Judith B. Kerman relates in “Masks as Liminal Objects: Fantastic Aspects of Personality,” “The mask as

artifact is uncanny because it is a face that is not alive, a face whose expression is frozen as only dead people's faces are frozen..." (12). Indeed, it is as if the city is both alive and dead, both concealing and trying to communicate with a frozen expression.

Such is the case with the "blank man" of "The Prisoner in the Skull" (1949). As the reader will learn, the blank man has been traumatized to the extent where he has lost his affect, memories, and ability to speak. The protagonist, John Fowler, discovers the blank man on his doorstep:

But it wasn't Veronica Wood on the doorstep. It was a blank man...Now he stood staring at that strange emptiness of the face that returned his stare without really seeming to see him. The man's features were so typical that they might have been a matrix, without the variations that combine to make up the recognizable individual. But Fowler thought that even if he known those features, it would be hard to recognize a man behind such utter emptiness. You can't recognize a man who isn't there. And there was nothing there. Some erasure, some expunging, had wiped out all trace of character and personality. *Empty*. (100-101)

Unable to "recognize" him or "read" his strangely "normal" "appearance," Fowler nicknames him "Norman" and defines him by his mysterious "lack":

Moreover, there was something indefinably disturbing about the—*lack* in his appearance. There was no other word that fitted so neatly. Village idiots are popularly termed 'wanting,' and, while there was no question of idiocy here, the man did seem—What? (102, emphasis in original)

Fowler's characterization of Norman as "lacking" is interesting because, as mentioned earlier, women have also been traditionally defined in terms of a "lack" from the human (male) norm. However, Fowler's characterization of Norman in terms of "lack" also suggests that he might regard the "unreadable" Norman as an animal. As Karl Steel notes, the definition of "human" is one that exists in a binary relationship with "animal." Citing Derrida's "The Animal," he quotes that "the human subject...exclusively claims 'speech or reason, the logos, history, laughing, mourning...'" (9). This "exclusion of the animal" has led to a denial of animal subjectivity "throughout human history" and is of "paramount importance to the formation of

the human" (9). Human beings identify themselves as uniquely in possession of "reason and self-awareness" and, as Derrida notes, this is a belief humanity must be "careful to guard" in order to justify its "violent relationship to animals" (9). In "L'animal que donc je suis," Derrida notes that any non-human thing is forced by "violence" into the category of the animal. As Steel explains Derrida views this as a "crime" because it dooms any "non-human living creature into a monolithic category condemned to pre-determined servitude to, dependence on, or, more generally, inferiority before humans" (9). Indeed, this passage resonates strongly with this text, in the sense that Fowler will come to see Norman as a creature fit for servitude. In fact, Fowler will eventually regard Norman as a "thing" he is free to work to the point of death.

And yet, there may be a second reason Norman appears "blank" and thus a second rationalization for Fowler's abuse of Norman. When Fowler first encounters Norman, he "reads" from Norman's face a typicality so void of "individuality" that Fowler associates him immediately with "the norm." His face is a basic "matrix"<sup>169</sup> which bears no individuality. The configuration that might simultaneously embody a presence, emptiness, and typicality is that of the replicated image. And, indeed, the narrative will confirm that Norman is a replication. As Fowler will learn too late, Norman is a duplicate of himself, without his memories.

However, before Fowler is able to "recognize" Norman as himself, Fowler's indifference to the "being" he knows exists within Norman but is not pressed to recognize as "human" allows him to regard him as a non-human Other. Norman is unable to speak and thus cannot combat the momentum of Fowler's gradual reduction of his status. Even if he could speak, Norman does not have access to his memory, and thus cannot identify himself or his desires. Taking advantage of Norman's helplessness, Fowler eagerly reduces Norman (and, in a parallel thread, his ex-girlfriend, Veronica Wood) to the level of object or abstraction. Norman's status oscillates from blank man, to paper weight (102), to automaton (106), to a "colorless"



“figurative symbol” (the norm) (106), to golden goose (109), to shadow (109), and finally to plant, imbued with an “ego-consciousness” that is little more than “tropism” (109).

Additionally, while Fowler also refers to Norman as his “house-boy,” Norman is clearly portrayed as Fowler’s “slave.”

As Fowler discovers, Norman can solve problems upon request and is capable of making profitable inventions, such as televisions that can project the unconscious. He also discovers that Norman is unable to resist his commands. Thus, he keeps his “house-boy” in a state of permanent exhaustion, reasoning that if Norman ever has time to rest, he might gain the initiative to “[walk] out of the house, or—Or even worse” (114). As Norman grows weaker and weaker, the narrator reflects that “[c]ertainly Norman suffered. But because he was seldom able to show it plainly, Fowler could tell himself that perhaps he imagined the worst part of it” (117). The narrator adds: “Casuistry, used to good purpose, helped him ignore what he preferred not to see” (117). Here, Fowler justifies his abuse of Norman by the same criteria used to categorize Norman as non-human. In other words, Norman is a non-human who can be treated like an animal because he cannot express himself using language; at the same time, Norman cannot draw attention to the fact that he is suffering (like a human) because he cannot use language. The text demonstrates that the cycle of exploitation has a momentum of its own, as such tautologies favor the “definer” and create their own justification for “blindness.”

Fowler’s exploitation of Norman is eventually interrupted when Fowler travels out of town to defend a patent on one of Norman’s inventions. In order to change the design slightly, he finds he must introduce Veronica to Norman so that she might relay instructions to Norman over the telephone. However, Fowler is relatively certain Veronica will not notice his abuse of Norman because Veronica is not “over-bright” (112). Although Veronica is initially startled by Norman’s inexplicable panic when he sees her, she develops a concern for the “miserable

house-boy" (115) and insists that Fowler take him to a doctor (115). Fowler begins to worry that she is showing too much concern for Norman and the two begin quarreling. "She had been blowing hot and cold, so far as Fowler was concerned, ever since the day she had met Norman" (115). Shortly afterward, Veronica states that she will not marry Fowler. He insists, his voice "confident": "'You'll marry me'" (116). Veronica responds hotly that Fowler does not "own" her (116) and leaves him to stew in an "icy rage" (116). However, as the narrator will note later, "...obsession still ruled him, and he was determined that no one but himself should marry Veronica" (117).

And yet, the narrative calls into question whether or not Veronica's ambivalence towards Fowler can truly be "blamed" on Norman. Indeed, rather than demonstrate love for Veronica, Fowler seems obsessed with "possessing" Veronica. The concept of manufactured value is already on Fowler's mind, as he is living in a world of "artificial shortages" meant to drive up the "appetite" of consumers, and he seems to approach Veronica with the skepticism of a "consumer" looking for the woman of the highest value (102). When he initially describes her, there is the suggestion that she has the status of valuable commodity in his eyes, as Veronica is a beautiful "Korys" model who is very much "in demand" (104). Beyond that, Veronica appears to him as nothing more than a collection of misogynistic stereotypes (stupid, greedy, vain) that he claims to tolerate due to her "gorgeousness" (104). The fact that Fowler possesses the ability to harm Veronica is also made clear early in the narrative. When she tours his new home he remarks that he has a "touch of claustrophobia" (104). She responds that he should "face these fears," a bit of advice he assumes she "read somewhere," and he tells himself that only her beauty prevents him from slapping her (104). The text then calls into question whether or not they have an exclusive relationship as, after the tour, she leaves to go on a "date" (104), as she phrases it.

Indeed, Veronica is revealed to be keeping Fowler at a distance because she suspects he is not what he seems. When he proposes, she responds with ambivalence: "Sometimes I think I love you. But sometimes I'm not even sure I like you" (104). She adds that he might be either a very "nice" or very "nasty" man, and she would like to be "certain" first (104). It is Veronica's rejection of Fowler on these grounds which sets off a chain reaction that reveals Fowler's true character to the reader. Due to Fowler's impression that Veronica can be "bought," he goes to her apartment to bribe her. Before Fowler is kicked out by her "stupid[]," "non-entity" (117) new boyfriend, Barnaby, he waves diamonds at Veronica and imagines that "pure greed" makes her face "hard as diamonds" (118). After this encounter, the narrator reveals that Fowler's "ego" has been "damaged" and that he "displaces" his injured pride onto Norman as his "scapegoat" (108). In other words, Fowler hatches a plan to put Norman to work so that he can regain his pride through "commercial possibilities" (108). As the narrator notes, from that moment on, Norman is "doomed" (108).

Fowler then embarks on a plan to sabotage Veronica's marriage by giving the couple a gift of a television set—a "projective screen" he dubs "the magic window" (108)—that will make their thoughts "visible." He reasons that once the ugliness he assumes exists "within" them is brought to light, the couple will begin to dislike each other. While this causes the couple to squabble, it fails to bring them to divorce. Thus, he directs Norman to invent a lighting device that will transform Veronica into an "ugly" woman whenever she is inside "her own home" (123). Meanwhile, Fowler uses the "magic window" (124) to show him Veronica's image on command. The entire sabotage takes three years, but with the addition of the lighting device, it works; indeed, the narrator relates, Barnaby begins to wonder why he "ever thought the girl attractive" (123). The success of this plan suggests that while Fowler is incorrect about what is "invisible" within the couple, he understands that in his society "surface" matters.

Soon afterward, Veronica calls Fowler in a rage. A television screen in a bar shows her looking haggard; the cords stand out in her neck as she shouts at him (124). He notes that he had not seen that “phenomenon” before as he has not seen much of her “face to face” lately. Indeed, it has been “safer and pleasanter” to “create her” in the magic window whenever he feels “the need of seeing her” (124). He is startled to realize that she is not in her home, that “[t]his is real, not illusory” (124). He tells himself that she is now “a Veronica he and Norman had, in effect created” (124). Despite her new appearance, which “repulse[s] him,” (124) Fowler rejoices to hear that Barnaby has left her. The narrator notes: “You don’t argue with an obsession” (124). At first, Veronica appears furious and accuses Fowler of tampering with her marriage. He thinks to himself that she is “raving” and “hysterical” and dismisses her anger to “her normal conviction that no unpleasant thing that happened to her could possibly be her own fault” (124)—a statement evocative of the same type of “casuistry” Fowler uses to rationalize his abuse of Norman. However, Veronica suddenly pleads for Fowler to bring her money, a sudden change of heart Fowler accepts due to his faith in Veronica’s greed and helplessness. Excited, he promises to join her at the bar (125).

“Curiously,” he tells himself, he still wants to marry her, as he has “worked three years toward this moment” (124). Yet, even as he gloats and imagines himself marrying Veronica, he wonders if Veronica is a threat because she has “seen too much” of Norman. He admits that she is not as “stupid” as he had once believed her to be (125). Unlike Norman, she “remembers,” “sees,” and “deduces” and therefore might be “dangerous” (125). He may need to “silence” her, in “one way or another” (125). He arrives at the bar, but Veronica is not there. After waiting an hour, he returns home to learn that Veronica has “used” Norman in his absence to do a little “job,” i.e. invent something of her own (126). Then, it is Veronica’s turn to gloat. Fowler admits to himself: “She had reasoned extremely well...” (126) and that, in reality, “he

knew nothing of her mind,” (126) as it had never really interested him before. Fowler’s realization regarding Veronica then extends to Norman: “He had no idea what sort of being crouched there behind her forehead as the prisoner crouched behind Norman’s” (127). He only knows that the being within Veronica has a “thin smile” and that “it hate[s] him” (127).

Although he has taken a step toward recognizing Norman’s “being” and also admitted that Veronica exceeds the stereotypes he had previously used to make sense of her, he cannot detour from his parallel paths of exploitation and revenge. Veronica’s defiance, her possible knowledge of his abuse of Norman, and her unauthorized, mysterious “use” of Norman to make a “weapon” (127) threaten to drive him mad. Not “knowing” what Veronica invented creates a metaphorical “magic window” in Fowler’s imagination, upon which he projects his worst fears. A “nameless threat” (128) plagues him, and he is alarmed to notice that his body is betraying him, making “slips of the tongue” (127); he also begins stumbling and dropping glasses in public. He blames Veronica for making his deepest fear of “ridicule” (127) come true. Even though he considers himself an intelligent man who should be able to outwit Veronica, he cannot seem to identify what she has done. He demands that Norman’s “blank, speechless face” (127) tell him what Veronica invented, “but Norman [cannot] tell him” (127). His injured pride demands that he defeat Veronica’s “invention” with his own, but Norman is “no use” to him now; he cannot or will not invent a counter-device to protect him from Veronica’s “weapon” (128). Fowler realizes he is now as much a prisoner in a “cell” as Norman is (128). He concludes that he has “depended” too heavily on Norman. Ironically, he then instructs Norman to invent a device that will make him “self-sufficient” unto himself (120). Norman dutifully constructs a large helmet, a “crown of wire” (120) with a blue “headlight” (120), which Fowler reaches for “like Charlemagne” (120) and places on his head (120).

However, Fowler's first attempt to use the machine sputters to nothing, and Norman's only response is the enigmatic statement that Fowler "think (sic) wrong" (130).

It didn't make sense. He looked at himself in the television screen, which was a mirror when not in use, fingered the red line of the turban's pressure, and murmured, 'Thinking, something to do with thinking. What?' Apparently the turban was designed to alter his patterns of thought, to open up some dazzling door through which he could perceive the new causalities that guided Norman's mind. (130)

He concludes that he is too tired from the "menace" hanging over him, and that it is Norman's job to "reason" for him anyway. As if on cue, Norman re-appears with an altered helmet.

Norman approaches him with a "firm step" and manages to repeat that he "think wrong," adding that Fowler is "too old" (130). Fowler begins to understand and asks if he means his mind is no longer "flexible" enough for the machine to work (131). Norman assures him it will.

The narrator explains that Fowler is not too old in years, but that his thoughts are caught in deep "grooves" (patterns) of "self-indulgence" (131); for this reason, he will not be able to accept the "sidewise" thoughts the wire turban offers as an "answer" (131). Without explaining why, Norman confidently reverses the turban before placing it on Fowler's head (131).

As Fowler stares into the mirror of the television screen, the machine begins to do its work, and Fowler suddenly realizes that everything is beginning to "blur[]" in the reflection (132). Images are moving so quickly he has no time to "comprehend light or dark for what they [are]" (132). Unlike the images of the "magic window," these images are able to move like a film running "backward" in a "blinding flicker," and he wonders if Norman is making him younger, which he knows to be impossible (132). As he goes backward he is caught in a "spiral" no human mind can "comprehend" (132). For one "timeless moment" he stares into the mirror and the "blending of time" and realizes who Norman must be (132). He stares at the white face, appalled, and realizes what "corroding irony has made his punishment of Norman just" (132).

However, he is neither able to alter the past or future (132), nor to stop the cycle that transforms him into the next version of the “blank man”:

The face he had seen in the mirror. His own face? But even then it had been changing, as a cloud before the sun drains life and color and soul from a landscape. The expunging amnesia wiped across its mind had had its parallel physically, too; the traumatic shock of moving through time—*the dark wings flapping*—had sponged the recognizable characteristics from his face, leaving the matrix, the characterless basic. This was not his face. He had no face; he had no memory. (134)

In a text such as “The Prisoner in the Skull,” Moore demonstrates the vulnerable subject position occupied by those who fail to “translate” into human, whether due to an inability to communicate or due to a “lack” of individuality. Such a body can be viewed as an animal, automaton, or slave due to its failure to announce its own humanity in the dominant lexicon. At the same time, Moore suggests that the “humanizing” mechanisms of language and individuality are sometimes not sufficient to prevent one from dehumanization. If one’s body seems to fit a pre-existing pattern (e.g., female; Korys model), readily available stereotypes can be projected upon the body, such that they then block one’s attempt to assert one’s “individuality” through “language.” Such a human is not dehumanized due to a “lack,” but rather because he or she is evocative of a pre-existing pattern—a similarly “basic” “matrix” that is then “read” and equated with “being.”

Fowler, in contrast, is a stand-in for the opportunistic, exploitative “master” who will not recognize the “being” of others unless it can be “seen” or “heard” on his terms within his system. His is the reductive gaze of the “capitalist,” who exploits the migrant worker who cannot speak English; he is the slave master who views the non-white human as “animal.” Through a reference to Charlemagne, Moore also connects him with the violent, exploitative cycle of imperialism which relies upon domination and Othering to justify its own ends. At the same time, he is the “possessive” male who “translates” women using stereotypes, thus

rendering them as devoid of human interiors as the “blank man.” However, it is his very willingness to dehumanize Others in this manner that allows the text to conclude that Fowler is less than human. It is Fowler who lacks a certain fundamental agency and self-knowledge, as he is as locked in a cycle of exploitation of others as he is trapped in his obsession to possess Veronica. Additionally, by suggesting that Fowler’s abuse of Norman is actually an abuse of “himself,” the text suggests that Fowler’s treatment of Norman is as much against Fowler’s “being” as it is against Norman’s. Although it would seem that he will never consciously realize it, Fowler’s dehumanization of Norman diminishes Fowler’s own humanity.

### **3.3 *Doomsday Morning* (1957)**

Through the story of a washed-up former actor and director, Howard Rohan, who has recently lost his wife, his fame, and his place in high society, Moore adds to a body of work that explores the distancing effect of “screens” and returns her focus to the idea that all perceptions (and, thus, all “readings” of identity) are mediated. The image of the main character, Rohan,<sup>170</sup> is continually subject to manipulation, for example, and the unstable identity that is “reflected” back to him undermines his already weakened sense of self. At the same time, Moore equips Rohan with the “filter” of the “male gaze,” a distortion which is further exacerbated by Rohan’s tendency to make sense of other human beings through his experiences with the theater. Similarly, Rohan will discover that even his memories of his late wife are compromised due to their resemblance to the malleable medium of “film.” Through a series of trials that will provide him with radically altered perspectives, Rohan eventually is “re-grounded” in a sense of his “being,” both as a human and a man. However, Rohan’s most significant realization is that his perceptions of all human beings—both male and female—are filtered.



The novel opens with the thoughts of an unidentified man on a transport bus of “Croppers” on their way to an orchard in Illinois. The men on the bus stink of sweat and insecticide, and the bus is lurching wildly, but the narrator explains that he has “adjusted” to the rhythm (1). Actually, he no longer cares about any of it—the dust, the insects, the dirt under his fingernails. He is in “mourning for [his] life” (1). “Ask me why I wear black?” He muses. He pauses to place the reference; “Oh, yes, Masha in *The Sea Gull*” (1). As the bus rattles down the road, the men suddenly riot at the sight of an actress on an outdoor movie screen. The woman is Miranda (“What a dish!” (2)) performing with her husband, Rohan, in “Bright Illusion” (4). The narrator notes that the man had “heavy shoulders,” a “thick neck,” and an “intolerant way of moving” (2). His hair is cut so short it looks like a “skullcap” (2). “Too bad there was nothing inside it,” he thinks, although he notes that the critics thought his head “had a very fine shape” (2-3). A man in the crowd shouts, “Hey, Rohan, that looks like you!” (3) but the narrator, now “identified” by the film as Rohan, ignores him. Rohan closes his eyes to avoid watching the two actors embrace and kiss, but he knows the film well. The actors are “larger-than-life” (2), like “gods” making love (3), “untouched by time or change” (3). More “vivid than life,” they seem to exist in a “magical room” on the screen (2).

The screen “turns sidewise” and thins to a “dazzling vertical line” as the bus rattles away (3). “They were gone” (3). He corrects himself. Miranda is gone, “[b]ut not me” (3). He then addresses himself in the second person: “It happened three years ago and nobody remembers now. Not even you...” (3). Before he can sink deeper into a reverie he claims he cannot have, someone in the close-packed bus falls against his chest. He strikes the man as hard as possible, and the “numbing jolt” is like a “spotlight flashing out suddenly on a dark stage” (3). There is a “bright, clear certainty” in his mind that makes him feel “very eager, very good. We’ll fight now. This is the easy way” (4). But the man refuses to fight. Another man, noting that Rohan is

making trouble “again,” asks Rohan why he does not “cut [his] throat” (4). Rohan shrugs and then breaks the seal on a bottle. The man “[gives] up” (4). He thinks, “You don’t stay excited very long if you’re a Cropper. You don’t have the energy. Or the interest” (4). For croppers, “life is a closed circle” (4).

As the reader will learn, similar to the way in which “myth” can frame “knowledge” and the “gaze” can filter perception, the theater frames and filters Rohan’s experience. As this passage indicates, Rohan uses references from the theater (*The Sea Gull*) to understand his experience of the “now”; even a physical blow is translated into a “spotlight.” Although he attempts to make sense of reality using personal experience, Rohan’s experience is largely linguistic, as slippery and inter-referential as language itself; the other half of his experience is entirely representational. He lives in a world—and understands the world—without the touchstone of referents. In essence, he is a body without a real history of its own, an actor perpetually waiting for the next script.

In fact, the reader will come to understand that Rohan is the embodiment of “animation” without “purpose”—a vessel for the will of others, human “clockwork.” Even in his former life as a golden boy of the stage, he and his co-star/wife Miranda “played their parts” as representatives of the “good life” and followed the tempo set by the ruling elite. Now that Miranda is gone, the illusion of real “will” and “desire” that provided Rohan’s life with “direction” have collapsed. As will be shown, his new life of crop picking is merely an attempt to cede his agency to someone else, to exhaust himself past the point of caring about his life. At the very best, violence provides moments of clarity, moments when his body—and, perhaps, his identity as a man—can run even more smoothly on auto-pilot.

As the novel gradually establishes, not only is Rohan’s identity in danger of dissolution, his “image” is also vulnerable to manipulation. Through references to the film “Bright Illusion,”

the reader learns that Rohan's image is being altered by the totalitarian government, Comus.<sup>171</sup> Comus has embarked upon a "revival" of Rohan's old films, which it believes create nostalgia for the height of the regime of President Raleigh, who is now ailing. His old films also happen to contain values Comus now wishes to promote—"loyalty to old friends," "the value of tried and true experience" (32), the very things Rohan will learn neither he nor Comus possess—to counter a rebel movement in California. Through this process, Rohan notes that Comus is "quietly turn[ing] [him] into someone else" (8). His late wife's image is equally vulnerable. As Rohan sips on a bottle of booze, someone turns on a television at the front of the bus:

A cops-and-robbers film came on, all the cops noble in red Comus coats, and the heroine wearing her hair in a wide halo of curls imitating the way Miranda had worn hers in *Bright Illusion*. Slowly the Croppers calmed down. (4)

Through such passages, the reader also learns that death does not provide a release from such appropriation. Even now, Miranda's image is useful to Comus as a model for female behavior and a means to pacify men.

For Rohan, Miranda's "image" is first presented as a source of pain. He closes his eyes as the bus picks up speed and the "nameless little town [goes] away, taking Miranda's lovely and incorruptible image with it into a small dot on the horizon and then into oblivion" (8). However, the reader also learns that Miranda's "image" was essential to Rohan as a literal "partner" who validated his reality and his identity as her "director." Indeed, her sudden loss has driven him to completely abandon his former identity. However, the means by which Rohan establishes Miranda's importance is immediately suspect, as it betrays his willingness or need to "direct" his memories of Miranda. As he describes the night of her death:

Scene, backstage at the Andrew Raleigh Theater, New York's best and newest. Characters, the cast and crews that were staging *Beautiful Dreamer* for a rerun, starring, of course, Howard and Miranda Rohan. Lead character, Rohan himself, husband, director, and co-star of the beautiful dreamer. Curtain rises on Rohan projecting frenzy

better than Stanislavsky could have done it. Louder, anyhow. Absent from stage, Miranda. (13)

He is in the middle of directing the performance when the call comes in. "Finish," he thinks.

"The police have found—them. Them? Them?" (13). Still narrating his memories from a distance, with dramatic irony he adds, "There must be some mistake." (13) Even though he has driven the cast to work towards "impossible perfection" (13), he forgets about the last act and suddenly leaves. He mocks himself—"never-do-anything-by-halves-Rohan" (13). He explains that he was "all husband, desperate and bewildered" (13), as if he is reviewing an actor's "performance" as husband. Indeed, he notes he never was as good an "actor, director, or husband" as he had thought if he could "turn in a performance like that" (13). Then he remembers arriving on the scene before "the photographers" (14). She is lying "half out of the smashed car...hardly a mark on her," wearing nothing but a "Japanese kimono" he has never seen before (14). He confirms that he never learns why "she had gone out that way...what unknown apartment they had left" (14). The police fail to identify her lover, the second victim in the car, but he was of no special importance to "anyone except—perhaps—Miranda" (14).

While this scene should generate sympathy for Rohan, his memories of Miranda call the foundation of his "love" into question. Similar to Fowler in "The Prisoner in the Skull," for Rohan, Miranda's primary trait is her beauty. While this is a familiar theme in Moore's work, Rohan's hyperbolic descriptions of Miranda as the embodiment of beauty also evoke figures from Moore's Northwest Smith series. For example, he later notes that there was something about Miranda, about how perfectly her "name" matched her "luster," that made one say, "oh, how wonderful!" (41). Such descriptions of Miranda as equivalent with the concept of beauty and a word (her name) recall Moore's early work, in which several female characters are described as abstractions/extremes given form against their will (e.g., the tortured Irate/Oracle

of “Land of the Earthquakes,” an allusion to Galatea); pathetic women who erase their own individuality in order to become “beautiful” (e.g., Lorna<sup>172</sup> in *The Portal in the Picture*); or inhuman and terrifying incarnations of Beauty (e.g., Circe of “Yvala” or the Minga girls of “Black Thirst”). This warning against the desire to seek “transcendence” will be made more explicit through depictions of the dictator President Raleigh and Ted Nye as examples of those who seek god-like power by merging with an “image,” “word,” or “abstraction.” However, the related idea that it is folly to attempt to encapsulate “identity” in an image or a word also engages a sub-theme in the text regarding the use of “stereotypes.” Much like Rohan’s use of “allusion,” such devices are both reductive and attempt to unite a “being” with an image/word/narrative with no real or original “referent,” as well as further prevent Rohan from relating to “reality” and “being.”

Also similar to Fowler of “The Prisoner in the Skull,” Rohan seems to regard Miranda an object with sign-exchange value that can be evaluated against other competing objects. For example, he often describes Miranda in terms of how she and other women fit within a hierarchy of “beauty” and “class.” For example, when Rohan meets Cressy, a young actress, he dubs her the “second-rate Miranda” (41), indicating that Miranda exists on a scale of value. He also calls Cressy the “poor man’s Miranda” (49), which suggests that Miranda was an accessory befitting a “rich man.” Recalling Fowler’s description of Norman as a “basic matrix,” Miranda is also a pattern that can be replicated, as every “girl” in the nation “copies” her. Finally, he speaks of Miranda as if she were a specialty object from a boutique, noting that you “don’t find many Mirandas” among the “second-rate” (41).

Perhaps most disturbing is Rohan’s conflation of Miranda with the glamorous life of excess, luxury, and power surrounding the military dictatorship of President Raleigh. Indeed, while they were together they existed at “the very center of the world,” in the company of

President Raleigh, his clique, and his “creaseless uniforms” (23). While in such company, they enjoyed the top products of every hierarchy of value: the “finest wits” of the nation, the music of the “finest orchestras,” and women in “magnificent gowns” (23). At the same time, there is a sense that Rohan’s idyllic memories of his life with Miranda as a “movie star” are as much a display of the “good life” for the population as are his now-nostalgic movies, as if the two have no clear boundaries. Because such descriptions stand in sharp contrast to the lives lived by the impoverished crop pickers and those inhabiting the rebel towns, a Depression-era disparity is suggested. Indeed, this would be in keeping with the naming of the government as Comus, as Comus was the Greek god of excess. Also suggested is the possibility that Rohan and Miranda are “profiteering” by lending their images (and lives) to a dictatorship in exchange for the privileges of the “center.”

However, as mentioned, the text first stresses Miranda’s status as an “idealization” of beauty. Even in death Miranda is an aesthetic object. As Rohan remembers thinking when he arrived at the scene of the car accident:

Even when there was nothing remaining any more to control her body and arrange her gestures, she lay against the hillside in her flowery kimono as if a portrait painter had arranged her to show her beauty best. (14)

He even fancies that, before dissipating, her “ghost” must have paused to stage her “beauty” for the reporters, thus implying that Miranda (like Veronica) was a vain woman (14). Interestingly, her status as a body and as a “painting” that is trying to communicate after death shares an eerie resonance with the uncanny dead/alive “blank-faced” and “masked” buildings of “Bright Illusion” discussed in the previous section. It is as if in death, Miranda’s image retains a semantic impulse even though her “being” is now gone.

Regardless, despite Rohan’s protestations of love, the text suggests that not only does Rohan regard his wife as a beauty object, a status symbol, and a symbol of the spoils of Comus,

he has also treated her like a subordinate employee. As he sees his mistake, he regarded her as a “beautiful puppet to act as [he] wanted” on stage and never thought of her “as a woman.” By treating her like a “woman,” he implies that he never “listened when she wanted to talk” (12). As for her treatment as a “puppet,” the reader gets a taste of what this may have been like when Rohan later takes control of the Swann Players, the theater troupe in California that Comus assigns to him. As Rohan tells the Players:

You’ll never have a chance like this again. I can’t make you work with me. But if you do, you’ll jump when I crack the whip. I’ll drive you like slaves. And you’ll learn more in a week from me than you’ll ever learn in the rest of your stupid lives. (47)

Although he may have been less brutal with his beauty object, the fact that he admits to treating her like a puppet suggests she endured a similar form of “domination.” Due to the fact that Rohan is shown objectifying a beautiful woman and abusing his employees like “slaves,” Rohan’s behavior echoes that of Fowler in “The Prisoner in the Skull.” Indeed, his use of the word “puppet”—a figure that seems to possess the image and animation of a human, yet has no free-willed “interior”—recalls Fowler’s approach to his “slave,” Norman, who also has the image of a human but seems to lack “individuality” and “will.” However, the text will show that Rohan is a tempered version of Fowler. Where Fowler admits that he “knows nothing” of the being of others and yet continues to relate to them using opportunistic identity categories, this same admission will humble Rohan and allow him to admit that such categories are “illusions” generated by the observer.

Before Rohan reaches this point, however, he is first “officially” recruited to the ranks of Comus by a former acquaintance, Ted Nye, now the Secretary of Communications. Significantly, just before he is taken to Nye, Rohan’s identity is revealed to be remarkably unstable, a fact which later proves fortunate but initially appears ominous. For example, Rohan refers to himself as an automaton or machine when he decides to “turn [himself] off” with a “warm and

pleasant buzz” (5). At the same time, his image is everywhere and nowhere, as impersonal as the scenery. It is also intangible, penetrable: He gazes “through [his] own reflection” in the window, “ignoring it, watching the summer night go by” (5). Things begin to blur, and he fails to recognize himself. “I looked at the window and it turned into a TV screen with my reflection on it, my head with the uncut hair making the outline unfamiliar” (5). Perhaps most alarming, heavy drinking is causing him to hallucinate. Pleasantly buzzed in the “magic room” of alcohol—a reference which resonates with the “magic window” of “The Prisoner in the Skull”—he watches the red, teardrop-shaped Prowlers of Comus go by and visualizes “[b]ig crimson teardrops running down Liberty’s face” (5). He notes that the only other thing to “look at” are the Raleigh posters, which fly by like the frames of a film:

Raleigh posters, one to a mile, regular as clockwork, fluorescing in full color when the headlights hit them. It’s irritating, having them come so fast. The image hasn’t had time to fade before the next image hits you... But Comus never does anything by halves.  
(5)<sup>173</sup>

By describing Comus as an organization that “never does anything by halves,” Rohan also links Comus to his earlier description of himself as “never-do-anything-by-halves-Rohan.” Thus, Moore reinforces the idea that both Rohan and Comus are “absolutists.”

Suddenly, the bus is stopped by a road block. Comus agents take Rohan’s “finger and retina prints” (11) to confirm his identity and eventually put him on a plane. He lets the agents take him without a fight, reasoning that whatever is happening, it is not their fault. As he travels “back to civilization,” he sits “a couple of seats” away from the other passengers, where he has been placed so that he will not “contaminate” anyone (12). Again, Rohan’s thoughts indicate that he associates Miranda with this world that he now understands he has tried to escape (12). He notes, “in this clean-smelling , gently humming plane, in the flowered plush seats, is it possible not to think of Miranda?” (12). Similar to when he was sitting on the transport bus, his



attention is caught by his reflection in the window. He imagines himself flying alongside the plane, “transparent” enough that the stars shine “through” him (12). He continues to drink until the world blurs. He thinks of Miranda and that he could have “saved” her had he only “listened” (14). She was on the verge of saying something, he thinks, but he was too busy with his work and “[t]he curtain never rose again” (14). At the same time, he appears to blame her, recalling Fowler’s use of “casuistry.” “But she put it off too long,” he thinks (14). He then drinks the rest of his pint.

For the first time in the narrative, his identity will split into three selves:

The Rohan who stood on the grassy bank above Miranda and the Rohan who floated easily along outside the plane window and the Rohan inside on the deep plush seat all got blurry together. They all passed out at the same moment. (15)

Later, Rohan’s disoriented sense of speed and space will also separate him into “thirds”:

All the way from the landing field I’d had that unreal feeling you get when you’ve come too far too fast. Part of me was still back in New York among the tall buildings, part of me jolted along the highway through the redwoods. Somewhere in between, the rest of me, maybe the essential part, felt drawn out thin and long like a thread between east and west, not sure yet which end of the line was the real Rohan. Maybe neither. (34)

It is significant that these moments of “multiplicity” are not allusions to the theater but instead involve Rohan viewing himself as a non-unitary being from three different perspectives. In a sense, he is gaining a perspective similar to that of tri-faced Hecate from *The Mask of Circe*.

When he wakes up, he is in Nye’s compound. He feels “sober” and “terrible,” with a “clarity too explicit to endure without... buzzing walls to filter out reality” (15). Perhaps due to the fact that Nye is another male against which he can define himself, or perhaps simply because he is sober, Rohan seems to regain some of his wherewithal. When Rohan thinks of Nye, his thoughts are dominated by the suggestion of male-male competition within a hierarchy. Rohan rose “high” but Nye went even “higher”: “Ted topped me by a long shot..” (17). When Nye finally visits him in the room where they put him to sleep off his binge, he is surprised that

he feels a sudden “surge of bitter resentment” at the sight of Nye (18). “We started out level. Look at us now” (18). He asks in his thoughts, “What right has Ted Nye to stand here clean and happy and powerful, while I—” (18-19). He manages to calm himself with the reminder that he chose this life. However, Nye’s presence also allows him to project his inner conflict onto Nye, as indicated by his references to Nye as “Brutus, with himself at war” (25). While this description might legitimately apply to Nye, Rohan is also clearly describing himself.

Although Nye might represent a competing figure against which Rohan can “position” himself, Nye also unsettles Rohan’s concept of what can be “known” about other people. This begins when thoughts of Nye lead Rohan to think of the people he “knew” in his old life; significantly, he begins to mix first and third person: “[T]he Howard Rohan of three years ago had known a lot of important people. None of whom would remember me now” (16-17). In talking to Nye, he studies his face and eyes. “He was clean, all right...” But there was “something...badly wrong somewhere in the back of his face. Trouble. Ted Nye had his problems too” (19). At the sight of Nye’s weakness—or at the threat of “trouble”—he distances himself from Nye. He tells Nye coldly: “I don’t know you” (19). The two begin to negotiate, with Rohan in a position of relative power, until Nye tells Rohan that he should not “try him too far” (21). While Rohan was “out” last night, he “spilled [his] guts under Pentothal” (22). Nye produces his file and reveals that they also have his psychograph. Nye assures Rohan that he “knows what makes [him] tick” (22).

Indeed, Rohan is wise not to provoke Nye, as Nye is now second-in-command beneath the ailing President Raleigh. Raleigh, a former reformer, now personifies the power and reach of Comus, and the text implies that Nye intends to take over that role as soon as Raleigh is dead. Raleigh’s power is such that he is identified with the body of the nation on a conceptual and visual level. Rohan explains:

If you were born, as I was, after 1960 you have, as I do, a strange sort of image in your mind. When you think of the United States you see it in the shape of Andrew Raleigh. You see the map and the nation standing up on two legs with the outlines of a man containing it, vast, diaphanous, towering, all the states in place, all the borders outlining the figure of Andrew Raleigh. It doesn't make sense and it doesn't have to. That's just the way you grew up thinking if you went to school with my generation.

And Raleigh and Comus mean the same thing. You can't imagine life without Comus. Comus is everybody. It's the newspapers, the schools, the entertainment. It's the communications-theory boys who quantify language, the public-relations people, the psychologists, the artists in all the media who take the prescriptions the computers feed them and build sugar-coated truths that will cure any social bellyache before society knows it had one. (29)

Later the text will reveal that Raleigh, nature, and history can also become one signifying unit.

When Rohan later visits a public campground, metal tags indicate important dates on the growth rings of a redwood: Socrates' birth, the founding of Rome, Columbus discovers America, and the date Raleigh saved the nation (36).

A foil for Rohan, Nye will voluntarily merge with the image of "the nation" by taking Raleigh's place as the figurehead of Comus. Like Moore's other portrayals of "artificial unities," this will require the loss of Nye's more human qualities. Comus requires tremendous "energy" in order to remain the "spiderweb" network that "touches" every "mind" (2). Accordingly, Comus's greatest fear is "change" (26)--as Rohan notes earlier in the text, "Good old stiff-jointed, paternalistic Comus" (7). However, while Raleigh's goal was "stasis," i.e. to "maintain" the country in a perpetual, unchanging "image" of itself, Nye's goal will be to bomb all rebellion into "oblivion." The narrative will demonstrate that such a goal—and thus such a man--must be ruthless and unyielding in his elimination of the anarchy of "life." Indeed, by the end of the novel, Rohan will associate Nye with a bare and violent rhyme: "Ted—Dead. Nye—Die" (235). But even at Nye's current level of power, Nye is not someone who is easily refused, as Nye is the man "who bosse[s] the god" (29). Nye has sought out Rohan to direct a propaganda piece—a play that is itself a semantic "surveillance device"—because he remembers that Rohan has an

“iron hand” (33). He offers Rohan salvation (economic prosperity), if he will use that iron hand for the state. Facing Nye, Rohan realizes he cannot go into his “magic room. It was no refuge now” (33). Rohan backs down and agrees to take the mysterious “job” Nye offers. Essentially, Rohan has agreed to let Comus “officially” “script” his life, and he obediently travels to California to take command of the Swann Players.

Rohan will eventually find an identity outside of the “theater,” ironically, as a side-effect of joining the theater troupe. However, when he first meets the Swann Players, they give him the “freeze-out” (38). “I see you’ve heard of me,” he jokes, but there is “still silence” (38). In the silence, he relates to his surroundings in terms of theater and violence. “Somewhere off-stage the river made its brawling noises” (38). He notes that they are a “closed group” and he feels an intense “loneliness,” as he sees in them “every cast” he has ever worked with (38-39). His memories take over and suddenly he feels Miranda’s presence “in the wings” (39). “The old feeling” comes over him and “for a moment” he is glad that it comes (39). Memories of who he used to be, of how he used to relate to those under his power, allow him to see the unwelcoming troupe in a more palatable manner:

These aren’t real people, they’re clockwork figures among cardboard trees and nobody on earth is alive since Miranda died. So if they close up into a unit and shut me out, it doesn’t matter. They’re only clockwork. And like clockwork, I looked them over appraisingly. (39)

His use of the word “clockwork” is significant, as this is the same word he has used to describe the Raleigh posters on the side of the road. It is also a suggestion of “animation” without “will” that recalls his description of Miranda as a puppet; at the same time, his use of the word “appraisingly” suggests that he views the players, like Miranda, as commodities.

He then assigns “identities” to each member of the troupe, based on the intersection of their appearance with his imagination and knowledge of the theater. He begins with “[his]

friend in the checked shirt" (39). He [Guthrie] does not "look like an actor," Rohan thinks. More like a "cracker-barrel philosopher" (39). He then decides that a youngish man of thirty-five [Roy] looks like an "ill-natured ape" (39). When he "appraises" the women, there is the suggestion that he views them as objects when he notes that "[t]hree women and a coffee pot" make up the "rest of the group" (39). The theater assists in characterizing one of the women: The "old woman" [Eileen] has "white curls, wrinkles, and the mild, mad look of an aging Ophelia" (39).

However, as he studies "Ophelia"—for the Players will not be "named" for some time—he notices that she is staring at a "cheap playbox for canned opera" (39) that is "plugged into a socket set in the nearest tree," which Rohan admits has a "touch of the fantastic" (40). Suddenly, nothing in the clearing seems quite "real." He feels that if he turns his head he might see Miranda "moving always just beyond the periphery of vision" (40). Then he notices the youngest member of the troupe, who is partially obscured by an "object," i.e. the "middle-aged one obscure[s] her" (40). The middle-aged woman [Polly] has a "plump, pretty, hourglass figure and a haggard face" (40). He notes that her blue eyes "bulge" a little and that she has "bright red hair combed slickly back to a knot high up on her head" (40). He instantly associates the color of her hair with the artificiality of Comus. It is "red like blood," the kind of color you only get from a "plastic dip job, because only a plastic coating will take color like that" (40). He then assumes that her hair is grey underneath and his imagination attempts to enter her state of mind. What he "reads" there seems to echo his earlier descriptions of "stiff-jointed" Comus, but also could be the result of misogynistic thinking: "Whoever she [is]," she looks tired and "a little embittered, as if somehow she had never really expected age would catch up with her" (40). However, her plight (as he imagines it) is not something he needs to concern himself with; he has his "own problems" (40).

But when he gets a look at the formerly obscured “girl” [Cressy] “fully in the face,” he wonders if she is a “miracle” (40). He thinks in a “wild, ridiculous, joyful moment” that recalls Dixon’s elation in “Bright Illusion” at his first sight of the priest/ess: “She’s comes back—she’s here—it was all a nightmare and I’ve waked up again...” (40). But just as quickly he rejects this thought. Only in “heaven” might one encounter the dead again. “Never here and now” (40). He begins to compare the two women and he concludes that she is “no Miranda” (40). Her hairstyle is the one “Miranda invented and every girl in the country copied three years ago” (40).<sup>174</sup> Something in the tilt of her head and her poise also reminds him of Miranda. But Miranda’s hair was a “very rich chestnut, and this girl’s was bleached to a corn-silk pallor” (41). He feels like “walking away”; the reminder of Miranda is too painful (41). These people are “second-rate,” the “barrel bottom,” he reasons, and the “audience will be yokels anyway” (41). He tells himself that all he wants is a drink so that he can “go back to being clockwork and live in a dead world” (41). Instead, he takes a swig of liquor and tells them that he will be back in ten minutes to “start work” (41).

However, as Rohan walks away, he notices that the troupe has its own “magic room” (41). This description recalls Rohan’s earlier description of the theater as his magic room with Miranda, as well as his equation of alcoholic stupor with a magic room.<sup>175</sup> He feels a “tinge of regret” (41). Nature, smells, and sounds “define” their “magic room”:

The tall, still trees, the smell of coffee, the small distant singing defined their circle, shutting me out. But the part of my life that touched the theater world was over and gone. And Miranda with it. And I wanted nothing to do with it anymore. (42)

Moore then uses a technique that appears in “No Woman Born.” By placing Rohan’s thoughts in parentheses, she suggests a confession as well as the possibility that the text is mediated by a selective subjectivity that is capable of “lying” to the reader: “(It wasn’t entirely true. Miranda might be gone, but she was always with me. Everywhere. Waking and sleeping, wherever I

went I never went alone)" (42). Here, Moore may also be suggesting that Rohan has something of a "double mind." He has already suggested earlier that Nye is "Brutus, at war with himself." Brutus, of course, is a betrayer, as is Miranda. Thus, one can see Miranda's as Rohan's "Brutus" or double mind; while she is part of him, she is also a figure with which he is "at war." However, the influence of Rohan's double mind is different than that of Seward, from *The Mask of Circe*, who is aware that his thoughts are being influenced by a misogynist. Instead, Rohan projects this image of the "woman as betrayer" with whom he is "at war" on Cressy, whose name is similar to that of "false Cressida" from legend. In this sense, Cressy is a combination of the blank man and Veronica from "The Prisoner in the Skull"—she is both a "blank" and an evocative matrix. Significantly, the novel never reveals Cressy's true thoughts and the reader, like Rohan, has nothing with which to judge her except her actions, which turn out to be extraordinary.

When Rohan encounters the rebel group, Anti-Com, in a nearby town, he also tries to "cast" them. Rather ordinary people, with no "notable" features (75), they fail to meet his expectations of backwoods rebels. He asks himself what he expected: "Lean Leatherstockings with flintlock rifles?" (75). He realizes that he does not look the part of the rebel either and begins to question the difference between "appearance" and "identity." "I was as revolutionary as any of them. Or was I? I didn't know" (75). Eventually, he will meet rebels such as Dr. Elaine Thomas, leader of the rebel cell, whom he comes to find very attractive and challenging. Elaine will offer him the opportunity to assist the rebels in their fight against Comus.

And yet, Rohan's initial experiences with the rebels reveal the extent to which his identity has become a non-stop performance. In one interaction, he notes that their "facial creases" are too deep, and he admits he had been studying them unconsciously in case he had to play the "role of a rebel" later in a scene (60). Then he realizes that their faces are "blackened"

and he states that now they really “seem” like rebels, i.e. from another world (60). When he is beaten up by a group of men in town, he checks his face and he thinks, “I [don’t] look too menacing for the TV screen” (66). Interestingly, when the rebels first interrogate him, his first instinct is to lie about his age (72), an indication of the very vanity he attributes to Miranda and Cressy. Further, when he compares his life with Comus to the life of “a rebel,” it is clear he still cannot separate film from reality. As he sits on a rail near the highway thinking of the Comus “power lines that knit the nation tight” (79), he thinks that the rebel activities seem “wild and unreal and in a way romantic, like a movie. Life isn’t like that here under Comus. People die of old age or accident or disease. Not in battle” (79). He finds that he likes the “clearer colors and sweeter smells and purer sounds” (79) that exist within this atmosphere of tension (79). However, while this may appear to be a genuine interaction with “reality,” such an ode to distinctness recalls Rohan’s earlier descriptions of the actors on the outdoor movie screen as “more vivid than life.”

In order to separate “reality” from the “theater,” Rohan experiences alcoholic hallucinations and other trials which remind him of his own core of “being.” While his first experiences in “Nature” are described as the staging for his future film-biography (37), as well as have the air of a Disney film, complete with chipmunks (37), nature eventually plays a significant role in his transformation. For example, it is through communion with nature that Rohan is first able to confront the fact that he has no knowledge of Miranda’s “being,” just as Fowler has no knowledge of Veronica in “The Prisoner in the Skull.” This re-assessment of the woman who played “opposite” to him on and off the stage allows him to partially re-assess himself. Interestingly, this reassessment is forced by Cressy’s simultaneous resemblance to and difference from Miranda.



Having abandoned the Swann Players at this point, Rohan watches the troupe petulantly from the bleachers as they prepare for a performance. He notices the flaws in their appearance, such as the part in Cressy's hair that needs "touch[ing] up" (177). Roy, he notes, has used too much "eye shadow" (177). With contempt, he then imagines that Cressy is putting more "intimacy" into her part than usual as she plays opposite "the man who [is] playing [his] part" (177). Apparently projecting his own opportunism on Cressy, he watches the "little opportunist" play up all her "sparkle," because "who knows, there might be something in it for Cressy Kellogg" (177). Cressy tips her head sideways and her hair swings. Rohan experiences a "shudder of anxiety without any cause [he can] name" (177). "She was Miranda suddenly" and "death" was in the air (177-78). He notes that "something strange" was happening in his mind, a clash between the thing he has to "remember" and the thing he "could not endure to know" (178). He then begins to examine the feelings that Cressy elicited from him in a recent dream:

Why did I hate to see Cressy in the role I had cast for Miranda in last night's dream? Because Cressy and Miranda were women at opposite poles in my mind and I didn't want them confused? Cressy wasn't Miranda. Miranda was light and life, loyalty, security, love. (178)

Here, Rohan appears to realize that he has separated Cressy and Miranda into a binary, as well as equated Miranda with the abstract, although the significance of this formalization is not yet clear.

Suddenly, he repeats Miranda's name as a question: "*Miranda?*" Posing Miranda's identity (proper name) as a question seems to unlock his mind. "[M]any things fell neatly into pattern with a series of soundless clicks...Cressy imitating Miranda, and my mind rejecting their likeness..." (178). For a moment he lets the repressed image of Miranda's dead body "float to the surface" (178). He sees her "cheek upon the grass," "her hair stirring in the breeze, the only thing about her that moved at all" (178). Miranda's body is no longer speaking to him, it seems;

her image is no longer a semantic object. Instead, he focuses on her lifelessness, her lack of “being.” Lying nearby is the man he “never knew...had never guessed existed” (178). Rohan then again separates the connection between “name” and “identity.” Miranda’s lover’s name does not matter, “not as a name” (178). His real identity is that of the man Miranda had “died with and went away with into infinity” (178). In other words, his identity is something much more than a simple signifying word. It is then that Rohan separates Miranda’s identity from the abstract categories which he had assigned to her:

Miranda was *not* loyalty and love and security.

How strangely the mind works to deceive itself. How totally I had shut off that unbearable thought, walling it securely behind the memory of Miranda as I wanted to remember her. A Miranda who never existed. How fully I had convinced myself of the lie. (178)

In a moment which recalls Moore’s use of portals and doorways in other works, he understands that some “gate” has opened in his mind to allow this truth to come through (179). He goes in search of solitude to examine things “too private and too shattering to share the same enclosure with any other human being” (179). He finds a grassy place to sit and asks himself, “What was the real Miranda?” (179). Significantly, with his use of the word “what,” he is still referring to Miranda as if she were an object. He gets up without realizing why and leans against a tree. In moment which seems to echo Haraway when she states that she would “rather be a cyborg than a goddess,” Rohan realizes that Miranda is not “the goddess [he] had made her into” (179). Instead, she was “[o]nly a woman of beauty and talent and no faith” (179). He then imagines that Miranda was a woman who smiled as easily at him as “Cressy had smiled at [him]” (179). If Rohan’s epiphany had ended here, it could be seen as a validation of misogynistic stereotypes of the type Fowler entertains, but Rohan’s education contains a second phase. A few moments later, he thinks, “*There let your sweetheart lie, untrue forever*” (179).

The line is a reference to A. E. Housman's "Diffugere Nives Horace. Odes IV. 7" in *More Poems*, but Rohan cannot place it. He suddenly resists the impulse to refer to literary images of women. "Never mind. Never mind" (179). At that moment, he feels the tree, "rough against his cheek."

I hugged the hard trunk to keep my arm from trembling and felt the tears slip down my face between me and the insensate bark. The night was infinitely still. Without opening my eyes I could feel its quiet presence. I heard the water...I heard the leaves...I thought I could feel the tremor of their motion transmitting downward through the solid trunk I clung to, tugging at the deep roots spread out and clenched solidly far underground...I felt the life of the tree against me...The water and the wind, the living tree, the earth and I were all knit together in a single unit that breathed and was one. (180)

Rohan's use of the word "knit" echoes that of his earlier description of Comus's power grid, which "knits" the nation together through power lines. Here, however, is an image of unity outside the human system, one that is perhaps truly "natural" or "real" in some respect that cannot be "gridded" by humans. The text suggests that Rohan's communion with the natural world has provided him with a sense of life and connection that is not dependent on reductive human systems—such as language—to render itself intelligible. In a sense, Rohan embraces an alternative to the "solid ground" usually sought by Moore's male characters.

It is then that Rohan completes his realization.

And I wasn't alone. Miranda wasn't lost. Nothing is lost. Miranda was no goddess, but neither had she betrayed me—not in any way that mattered now. She did what she had to do. There is a term set on marriage, and beyond that I had no claim on her or she on me. I had to let her go...I had been trying all this while to hold her closer in death than I had ever been able to hold her in life. But now I could accept what she was and wasn't and love her, and let her go. (180)

He repeats that he is not alone; he is the tree, the pool, the "wind in the dark" (181). "It was all right now. She could wake or sleep. I didn't need her anymore. I was myself again" (181). He no longer needs to hold her "in death," in the sense of reducing her to an "incorruptible" abstraction, as well as in the sense of using her memory as nostalgic propaganda. Then, unlike Fowler, Rohan is able to let go.

In a sense, Rohan has come to understand the limitations of “naming” and “stereotypes” discussed by critics such as Roland Barthes, Richard Dryer, Jacques Derrida, and Tom Tyler. As Tom Tyler notes in his *Quia Ego Nominor Leo: Barthes, Stereotypes, and Aesop’s Animals*, Dryer argued that “[t]he danger with stereotypes...lies in allowing them to hide their limitations and partiality, in failing to appreciate that it is in incomplete picture they paint” (47). Tyler also notes that proper names serve similar reductive functions. Dryer’s characterization of stereotypes and names as false unities which attempt to hide their partiality resonates strongly with this text, as with other Moore works. However, what is perhaps most interesting about Tyler’s discussion of stereotypes is that he provides insight into how Moore’s later interest in stereotypes relates to her interest in myth in earlier work, such as *The Mask of Circe*. Tyler adds that Barthes considered stereotypes “a type of “mythical speech” (45), as “[s]ocieties produce stereotypes as “triumphs of artifice” which are perceived as “innate meanings, i.e. triumphs of Nature” (Barthes 471). It is in this sense that we can see a connection among Moore’s thematic interests, as both myth and stereotypes are attempts to empty or ignore “history” to make way for artificial and formal “meanings” which are then “naturalized.”

Regardless, once Rohan is able to break with Miranda, he is able to break with the world she represents, which includes his life as an agent of Comus (181). It is then that he decides to change his own identity. He is an “actor” no longer. “When I went out of that dark garden into the lights again I knew I was a rebel. And I knew the work I had to do” (181). The last phase of his education comes in connection with this “work.” Anti-Com believes that it can destroy Comus’s surveillance network with a “counter-bomb” and Rohan and the troupe must eventually transport the bomb. In a scene that recalls the description of the god Comus as always poised to drop his “torch,” the troupe will carry the counter-bomb to the rebel leaders while being shot at by Comus forces. Interesting, as if yet another metaphor for “authorship,”

the reader learns that the counter-bomb is carried in a case “about the size of a portable typewriter box” (207).

The group runs through the streets of Corby, with Roy and Polly (the redhead), carrying the case between them. Eileen, the older woman, is the first to be shot (229). She urges them on just as Rohan, who has been delayed, catches up to the group. In a gesture that recalls the priest/ess in “Bright Illusion,” Cressy “look[s] back” for Rohan and pauses. Rather than the gesture of a coquette, Cressy’s action is one of bravery and camaraderie. Rohan is injured and exhausted and she takes his arm. Rohan realizes that it “felt good and reassuring to let myself lean for a moment on her resilient young shoulder. I hadn’t realized how weak I was until I touched strength” (230). Like Alan of *Earth’s Last Citadel*, Rohan recognizes Cressy’s strength. However, unlike Alan, Rohan will cede the role of hero to Cressy. Polly is the next to be shot and Roy stays behind with her. Rohan and Cressy take the two handles of the box. Cressy “heave[s] the box off the ground.” She tells Rohan that “it isn’t so heavy...I can handle it” (232). They run as if in a dream, when Rohan hears a “sharp, crackling sound” and feels an “impact.” He stumbles. He shouts to Cressy, “Go on, go on!” (232). She takes the box “without a word” and runs (232). They both know that “the whole United States of America was inside that box” (232). Rohan thinks, “I was in there too” (232). Even though she must hear the shots behind her, she does not look back (234). She makes it to the church and to her “rendezvous with history” (234).

When Rohan observes Cressy performing a heroic act which is “out of character,” his belief in his “construction” of Cressy seems to weaken. In fact, from the moment the Swann Players join Anti-Com, Rohan begins to reassess their identities in a process parallel to his examination of his own identity. One of the most significant transformations—for this text, as well as for a re-assessment of Moore’s early work, such as “Shambleau”—is that of Polly, the red

head. Earlier, Rohan had been repulsed by Polly's red hair, noting that when it is "loosened from its knot," it swings "Medusa-like over her convulsed face" (47). Such a reaction to a woman's hair indicates a misogynistic disgust for the uncontained sexuality of the female Other; indeed, Moore's Medusa-like "Shambleau" is criticized for appearing to endorse this very "gaze" as Northwest responds with revulsion to Shambleau's long, red tresses. Here, Medusa is not the exotic, seductive other, but the aging woman who dares to betray traces of sexuality outside the parameters of Rohan's view of "acceptable" sexuality. Like Shambleau, she is also compared to an animal, as Rohan calls her a "tigress" (47). However, while "Shambleau" is "indeterminate" with regard to a denunciation of this "gaze," this text indicates that Moore is aware of the fact that Rohan's reaction to Polly's sexuality (red hair) is misogynistic and that she engaged in a deconstruction of this reaction. In other words, the project of this novel is not to endorse Rohan's initial appraisals of characters such as Polly, but to expose and divest Rohan of an opportunistic and dehumanizing "gaze." Indeed, during the rebellion, Polly proves herself brave and determined, and Rohan sees her with new eyes. He notes with wonder that her face is "strangely not haggard at all anymore, but bright with a flamboyant freshness of excitement" (227).

Roy, another troupe member, enhances Rohan's new "perspective" by challenging Rohan's upper-class assumption that what it "sees" of the working-class is "reality." In other words, Rohan assumes that working-class people are who they appear to be because they possess the same kind of agency that he does when it comes to their lives and their outward appearance. Thus, whatever they are "displaying" or "choosing" is "them." For example, Roy attacks Rohan's assumption that his "acting" is tied to something inherent within himself, arguing that it is instead the result of an economic necessity. Significantly, he wipes make-up from his face to make his point, recalling other Moore texts where face paint is used to indicate

“surface” identity, as well as Rohan’s earlier interpretation of the rebels’ “blackened” faces as “romantic”:

He wiped the back of his hand across his cheek with a violent motion, smearing the make-up.

With a sort of savage contempt he held out the streaked hand.

‘You think I like being an actor? You think I want to act? I hate it. I always did hate it. But under Comus I act or I starve. I want out of this rat race.’ (215)

However, Rohan humbles himself even further when he re-assesses Pod. To Rohan, Pod, the hen-pecked husband, “lacks” the sort of agency that also seems to be missing from Fowler’s “blank man” in “The Prisoner in the Skull.” However, by the end of the novel, Rohan realizes that he [Rohan] is responsible for “reading” Pod in such a manner. Indeed, Rohan finally realizes that he is the “director” of his own perceptions: “He [Pod] had come a long way from the red-faced nonentity I’d met back there in the redwoods. Or maybe I’d come a long way. Maybe it was I who had changed” (220). Rohan’s characterization of Pod as a “non-entity” again invokes Tom Tyler’s discussion of stereotypes, in that he defines a “cipher” as the basic form of stereotype, a “person or thing that fills a place but is of no importance” (47); it is a “nonentity, a mere nothing, employed for the benefit of others” (47). Although Tyler’s discussion is focused on how animals are used as ciphers, it reinforces the idea that Rohan has, up to this point, acted in a similarly opportunistic manner towards this “blank man.” However, as his new “perceptions” indicate, Rohan is not Fowler. In fact, Rohan seems to have achieved a type of knowledge that resonates with Judith Butler’s call for strategies that allow humans to live comfortably in the “midst of the unknown” (Salih 2). Such an attitude is an “ethical response to otherness that aims to bring about a transcendence of simple, simplistic identity categories” (Salih 2). Indeed, it is in these scenes at the conclusion of the novel when the outcome of the

rebellion is still unknown that Rohan seems to embrace uncertainty and such “identity categories” evaporate before his eyes.

Once the Anti-Com detonates the weapon, “Comus is dead” (235). Rohan feels “anguish” for the “beautiful thing” that had “saved the nation from anarchy in its day, before corruption touched it” (235). Despite its initial beauty, however, once it became too “static,” too violent in its quest for the “absolute,” it had to be destroyed. As in other Moore texts, the “center” has failed to hold and rebels have destroyed “civilization.” The price is that the world will grow “dimmer” in this moment, but a “new world lay ahead” (235). Rohan also seems to have found a way to relate to the theater without the need for extremes. He no longer needs the theater to “mediate” a present he does not want to live, nor does he need to use the theater to mourn the loss of his past. However, he does not reject the theater altogether. Instead, his life lays before him as an unknown, and his knowledge of the theater helps him greet it as a period of creativity that will incorporate elements of the past into a new cycle. As with “Bright Illusion,” the conclusion appears to be a tribute to “uncertainty.” It would be a “harsh” and chaotic world, Rohan thinks, “full of sweat and bloodshed and uncertainty. But a real world, breathing and alive” (236). He sits on the grass, “dizzy,” but “very happy. Calm” (236). “What’s past is prologue,” he thinks. “Wait and see” (236).

## **Conclusion**

Once we admit the possibility that, as Bredehoft suggests, Moore’s fiction shows a preference for “indeterminacy,” it is possible to re-view her texts, including her early work, through a different critical lens. One of the first reassessments might involve Moore’s use of indeterminacy with regard to her early heroines. Rather than a misogynistic desire to sabotage a powerful woman, or the result of an inner uncertainty regarding the nature of Woman, one



can then see the “indeterminacy” with which she approaches her heroines as related to a larger theme—one that is neither gender-specific nor indicative of an attempt to arrest their potential. Instead, the unresolved dilemmas experienced by Moore’s heroines can be seen as the result of her desire to avoid “idealizations” in favor of “mixtures” that learn to accept, even celebrate, their human limitations and “imperfections.” In this same vein, one could then re-view Moore’s female “villains.” As has been discussed, Moore offers a critique of those who attempt to merge with some aspect of the abstract, such as a word or image. Thus, I would argue that certain of Moore’s early female “villains” (such as Yvala, the embodiment of Beauty) have been misread; rather than denunciations of powerful females, characters such as Yvala are warnings against the absolutism Moore observes in “goddesses of Beauty,” dictators, and any others who seek to transcend the “imperfections” of individuality through reification.

In this same spirit, one can then turn to the question of Moore’s identity and ask if it, too, should be regarded with a bit more “epistemological uncertainty.” As a purely “historical” identity at this point—a matter of language, image, and our own agendas and principles-- Moore, like her characters, occupies a somewhat vulnerable position, one that we are reminded by Moore’s fiction that we can only engage with at this point by “reading.” It is clear that Moore’s identity has been artificially formalized in several senses through such translations. The most obvious is the “typification” of Moore, in the sense that she has been included in a category and then further refined as an emblem for that type and has become something of a featureless abstract. It is in the hope of frustrating such reductions that I provide the historical detail and biographical topography in Chapter One. However, Moore has also been formalized in the sense that her early work—and even, to a large extent, her work in the 40’s—is seen as a means to focus solely on issues of gender rather than a statement within the larger generic discourse. While well-meaning and certainly valuable, employing only this one approach

isolates and truncates an interpretation of Moore's work. As I hope this thesis demonstrates, Moore's critique of gender constructions cannot be separated from her examination of perception (of which only part relates to the male gaze), and both of these are contained within an over-arching engagement with epistemology that is replete with its own devices, observations, and allusions.

In reality, Moore's identity seems to have been as enigmatic, hybridic, and multiple as some of her characters. From her artistic "symbiosis" with Kuttner to her multiple, pseudonymic identities, Moore's "identity" is anything but "certain," particularly since she re-invented herself even after she left science fiction. It is perhaps these aspects of Moore's real life identity that informed her sensitivity to the need for "uncertainty" with regard to identity and, thus, helped constitute her artistic statement. As for the content of that statement, I would argue that consists of two related planes. The underlying plane examines how "knowledge" is constructed and then naturalized in order maintain various power relations. Whether one is dealing with words, myths, taxonomies, names, or stereotypes, such structuring devices are portrayed as artificially formalized "information" that inevitably favors the "perceiver" or "definer." At the same time, Moore offers explanations for the inevitability of such attempts to organize reality. Not only does human "sanity" require reality to be filtered by a familiar, conceptual overlay, there is a seductiveness to the perception of conceptual "integrity" and "unity," as well as an ancient urge to create borders based on "difference."

The second flows from the first and is more generative of gender-related readings. For all of our attempts to "tame" the image of reality, to encapsulate being within language, Moore repeatedly suggests that something—whether it be unruly sexuality, or the enigmatic green glow exceeding Circe's mask—exists beneath the "bright illusion." Like others, Moore locates the "true identity" of Woman and other "beings" within this territory; however, Moore

sidesteps the impulse to lead Woman back to the center and thus towards translation. Instead, much like Jirel, we are encouraged to journey into the unknowable in search of enigmas, towards heroines who exceed simplistic identity categories, who *are* the enigmatic green glow, the soft, golden rain. Such women are hybridic, multiple, centerless—aware of their irreducibility to unities and thus indifferent to a “need” for readability. Rather than serving as the Other to provide definition to the norm, to limn the edges of the artificial concept of Man, heroines such as Deidre and Clarissa embrace their conceptual amorphousness. In this liberation, they are joyous, curious, expectant of the new and the possible. Ironically, through fluidity, such heroines gain a stability that stands in contrast to the “integrity” of Moore’s male characters, whose identities are easily shattered by challenges to their not-so-solid ground of delineated artificialities.

And, finally, it is through the recognition of this statement that one might also collapse the dualism between Moore’s texts and argue for the continuity—the very existence—of her “authentic” “voice” as a (female) science fiction writer. I would argue that, not only does Moore’s “voice” exist within her early work as a cluster of related themes, it anticipates her later fiction just as her last work of fiction reaches back for its beginnings. Thus, while Moore may have evolved and emerged many times along the line between these two points, there appears to be a “path” through her fiction that may be the wake of Moore’s own journey. While we can then imagine that we have discovered the “missing third” and, thus, an opportunity to define Moore—to truly acknowledge Moore’s statement, perhaps it is best if we consider this possibility and then hold it in suspension, with humility and a healthy dose of uncertainty, as one of infinite perspectives.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see Gubar's article on Moore, "C. L. Moore and the Conventions of Women's Science Fiction." While this article attempts to praise Moore and notes that Moore "deserves readers" (Gubar 17), she concludes that the value of Moore's fiction is as a "sourcebook" for images of "female secondariness" (Gubar 25). In *No Man's Land*, Gilbert and Gubar also describe "Shamblau" as "a recapitulation of male anxieties" about the vagina, and "Moore is said to share the 'socially induced dread of female sexuality and the intense misogyny that marked her historical moment'" (qtd. in Pearson 12).

<sup>2</sup> Leigh Brackett, Andre Norton, and Leslie Stone are the other three most often cited examples of gender concealment. A typical statement is that by Jane Donawerth in "Teaching Science Fiction by Women" (1990): "[After the Depression] women writers returned to the genre almost entirely under male pseudonyms: Leslie F. Stone in the 1930s and C. L. Moore in the 1930s and 1940s published many short stories in the pulps; in the 1940s Leigh Brackett and in the 1950s Andre Norton and J. Hunter Holly published many novels. These writers specialized in adventure stories with strong, young, male heroes. After World War II, occasional women returned to the pulps under their own names: Margaret St. Clair in fantasy science fiction and Judith Merrill in near-future fiction are examples. Frederick Pohl (1984), editor of *Galaxy* and *If* during the 1950s and 1960s, thinks that editors superstitiously believed that women's names on stories lowered sales to their adolescent male audience" (40). Besides giving the reader the false impression that Moore wrote adventure fiction targeted to adolescent males, as will be discussed further in Chapter One, Pohl's credibility in this regard has come under question.

<sup>3</sup> For example, see Jacqueline Pearson's ambivalent praise of Moore in "Sexual Politics and Women's Science Fiction," in which she states that "female writers show their usual chameleon ability to accommodate themselves to traditional androcentric models, and yet simultaneously subvert these modes from within...The most interesting of early female chameleons is C. L. Moore, one of the few women writers for the thirties pulp market. Despite her use of a male-identified narrative voice, her stories reveal peculiarly female preoccupations as well as a sharp awareness of what was going on in the real world" (Pearson 11). She continues that, despite these female preoccupations, Moore was "from a commercial necessity" "'adept at writing from the male point of view'" (Pearson 11). (Pearson's quote is from Pamela Sargent's *Women of Wonder* (1974).)

<sup>4</sup> See the conclusion of Rosinsky's 1981 article on Moore in *Twentieth Century Science Fiction Writers* and her SFRA conference paper 1978, "Moore's 'Shamblau': Woman as Alien or Alienated Woman?"

<sup>5</sup> Susan Gubar then made this explicit when she stated in "Conventions" that "Shamblau" should serve as the "key" to Moore's early fiction.

<sup>6</sup> Gamble quotes Gilbert and Gubar's *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*: "[They] have identified the female participation, from the 1930s, in such marginal literary genres as science fiction, as women's way of both confronting and evading the politics of sexual conflict by translating it 'into the more openly theatrical terms of species and racial struggle', thus enabling them to feel free 'to express their fantasies about the inexorability of sexual battle as well as their fears of female defeat'" (Gamble 30). Gamble then draws a connection between this 'fear of defeat' and female science fiction writers, characterizing early female SF writers as particularly marked by a fear of male acceptance to the extent that they evince uncertainty regarding their "position as female science fiction writers" (Gamble 30-31).

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<sup>7</sup> Although general overviews of Moore's fiction exist, including Susan Gubar's "C. L. Moore and the Conventions of Women's SF" and Patricia Mathew's "C. L. Moore's Classic Science Fiction." Moskowitz and Gunn also provide reviews of her work and reviews of her collaborations with Kuttner in *Seekers of Tomorrow* and *The Science of Science Fiction Writing*, respectively. Other overviews are available in encyclopedias and compilations of biographical information concerning SF writers during this period.

<sup>8</sup> See Linda Howell's "'Wartime Inventions with Peaceful Intentions': Television and the Media Cyborg in C.L. Moore's 'No Woman Born,'" which analyzes the story's portrayal of Deidre as a post-war body that "need not be mourned," as well as discusses the re-configuration of the female image by film and television as dehumanized machine part.

<sup>9</sup> "It passes through women and other present-tense, illegitimate cyborgs, not of Woman born, who refuse the ideological resources of victimization so as to have a real life" (177).

<sup>10</sup> For the various readings of "No Woman Born," see Attebery's synopsis in "Fifty Key Figures," in which he provides the following list: "Different readings of this story emphasize its Frankenstein-like elements, with Deidre as the Creature (Gubar 1980); its pioneering investigation of human-machine hybridity (Gunn 1976); its skeptical treatment of femininity as performance (Hollinger 1999); and its use of the superhuman theme to investigate gender coding (Attebery 2002)" (174). Additional readings include: Susan Gubar's "C. L. Moore and the Conventions of Women's SF," which briefly compares Deidre, the warrior in "armor," to the warrior, Jirel of Joiry, and to Lester Del Rey's Helen O'Loy (1980); Andrew Gordon's "Human, More or Less" which focuses on the narrative's attitude toward Deidre as machine/sculpture (1982); Anne Hudson Jones's "The Cyborg (R)evolution," which examines alienation in "No Woman Born," "Masks," "The Ship Who Sang," and other stories (1982); Jane Donawerth's reading in *Frankenstein's Daughters*, which explores the "contradictory meanings of woman as machine" (1997); Raffaella Baccolini's "In-Between Subjects..." which discusses the story's attempt to break down traditional dichotomies delineating male and female subjects (2000); Despina Kakoudaki's "Pinup and Cyborg," which discusses the story's exploration of an "exaggerated" gendered body and the existing beauty culture (2000); Gunn's reading of the story in *The Science of Science Fiction Writing*, which notes it as an example of "technical excellence," particularly in its use of Henry's James's concept of "the central intelligence" (2000); Debra Benita Shaw's "Dancing Cyborg," which sees Deidre's dance as a dramatization of how technology is perceived and a means to break down the distinction between art and science (2000); Carol McGuirk's "Science Fiction's Renegade Becomings," which briefly mentions "No Woman Born" as an example of SF that advances Deleuze-Guattari's discussion of "becoming" (2002); Thomas Wymer's analysis of Moore's references to myth (e.g., Galatea), art, and architecture in "Feminism, Technology, and Art..." (2006); and Melissa Stevenson's "Trying to Plug In..." a comparison of post-human alienation in "No Woman Born" and Tiptree's "The Girl Who Was Plugged In" (2007).

<sup>11</sup> Although, those critics employing Butler to read these texts argue that Harris and Maltzer are obviously intended to serve as unreliable narrators. This interpretation is strengthened by the fact that both characters imagine that they possess knowledge they cannot have and that one becomes hysterical at the conclusion (in contrast to Deidre's poise and good humor), attempts suicide, and is rescued by the woman they both believed too delicate to withstand her new identity.

<sup>12</sup> See Gubar's "C. L. Moore and the Conventions of Women's Science Fiction." Although Gubar notes that Moore's portrayal of Deidre as a powerful, self-interested outsider, capable of transforming and mastering her new identity as Frankenstein's monster, a woman who—like Moore's other creation, Jirel of Joiry—chooses "armor over amour" (22), she concludes that this text fits in with other Moore texts that reveal Moore's "anxiety about female flesh" (21), which she argues "informs" Moore's writing. "The only good female body turns out to be this metallic one" (21).

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<sup>13</sup> Bredehoft argues that Moore was continually occupied with the challenging of origin stories, as well as with a re-writing of herself and her own origin story. Additional links to Haraway are discussed in the introduction to Chapter Two.

<sup>14</sup> For a possible origin for Moore's interest in "epistemological drama," see Bertonneau's "The Aspect of an Old Pattern," which suggests that "Shambleau" is modeled on the Lovecraft model of "wherein an investigator discovers an underlying historical-empirical **basis** for a religious or theological idea..." ("Aspect" 1). For the origins of Moore's interest in the status of personhood within such a drama, one might look to *The Wizard of Oz* series. Moore spent a large part of her youth confined to her bed, as she was chronically ill as a child. As Del Rey notes in his introduction to *The Best of C. L. Moore*, she "turned to fiction as an escape" (3), particularly Greek myth, Burroughs, *Alice in Wonderland*, and *The Wizard of Oz* novels, which became her "bible" (Roark 26). As noted in an article by Margaret P. Esmonde, *The Wizard of Oz* series featured three human-machine figures (a robot, cyborg, and android), whose right to "exist" was continually analyzed, threatened, or defended by Dorothy's companions.

<sup>15</sup> In 1966, Laurence M. Janifer asked twenty major authors and editors in the field to pick five stories for inclusion in an honor roll anthology. Moore and Kuttner together ranked as the fourth "most often cited" author, below Heinlein, Sturgeon, and Fritz Leiber, but above twenty-eight other authors, including Isaac Asimov, Ray Bradbury, Arthur C. Clarke, and H. G. Wells. Moore was the only author to have each of her stories nominated more than once. Of the three tiers created by number of votes, "Vintage Season" ranked in the top, "No Woman Born" in the second, and "Bright Illusion" in the third (despite not being reprinted since 1934). "The Twonky," "Mimsy Were the Borogroves," and "Don't Look Now" also ranked in the second and third tiers (Janifer 227, 309-10). While the last three stories are usually regarded as collaborations, Kuttner later stated that "Don't Look Now" was also written by entirely by Moore (Greenberg, *Golden Years*, 367).

<sup>16</sup> Moore's interest in "blank screens" as metaphors for both mirrors and mediated or flattened perception cannot be treated thoroughly in this thesis. However, interested readers are referred to "Heir Apparent," *The Portal in the Picture*, *The Dark World* (specifically, the "eye" at the conclusion), "Private Eye," and other works she produced before and after she began collaborating with Kuttner. It may also be possible to view "Vintage Season" as a commentary on the distancing effect of television (screens) and/or theater, as the callous tourists from the future are accustomed to "moving" paintings and relate to the past as if it were a stage set.

<sup>17</sup> Attebery provides a short review of "Vintage Season" in his entry on Moore in "Fifty Key Figures" (175-6), in which he claims that it was a "full collaboration," as it combines "both writers' frequent concerns in an elegantly written and powerful exploration of art, eros, time, and death" (175). He continues that this "touchstone of sf" (176) is a "perfect blend of Kuttner's logic, Moore's emotional depth, and their combined irony and stylistic sophistication (175)." However, it is not clear why the "logic" of the story should be accredited to Kuttner; further, while the fact that the most common themes of both writers appear in the story may suggest that they shared interests, it is not evidence of a collaboration.

<sup>18</sup> Mark Rose in *Alien Encounters* provides a short description of "Vintage Season" in the chapter "Time": the story is "built upon an analogy between temporal and aesthetic distance...[it] becomes a parable of engagement and disengagement, a suggestive exploration of the processes that transform the immediacy of human experience into material for contemplation" (Rose 107-8).

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<sup>19</sup> Although I would argue that Reider misreads “Vintage Season” overall, he does offer the valuable observation that Moore uses the metaphor of “taste” (culinary and cultural) to accentuate the social divide created by the “colonial gaze” (151-2).

<sup>20</sup> Bertonneau adds that this story dramatizes “the sacrificial power of snobbery” created by a work of art that certain members of the community cannot comprehend. Accordingly, Wilson is regarded as a “barbaric outsider” who intrudes upon their “esthetic projects.” Ultimately, Wilson is sacrificed to maintain the borders of art (“Monstrous” 4).

<sup>21</sup> Gubar also notes briefly in “C. L. Moore and the Conventions of Women’s Science Fiction” that it is the story of “aesthetes whose physical perfection and sensitivity lead to a narcissistic quest for sensation: time-travelling to spectacular disasters in history, this race of beautiful people has lost all sense of responsibility or sympathy” (20).

<sup>22</sup> Moore’s critique of the “colonial gaze” reaches its culmination in the appropriation of Wilson’s “death mask” by a tourist/composer.

<sup>23</sup> In his introduction to *The World Treasury of Science Fiction*, David G. Hartwell calls “Vintage Season” “one of the earliest and most poignant reactions in literature to the dismaying potential of nuclear weaponry” (Hartwell 980).

<sup>24</sup> The author of *Psycho*, Bloch began his career as a science fiction, fantasy, and horror writer.

<sup>25</sup> Although Moore’s Northwest Smith stories contained science fiction elements (e.g., heat guns, space ships, aliens) that would have been recognized as part of the science fiction code of the time, her fiction was still distinguishable from “science fiction,” which required an attempt to explain the scientific plausibility of certain events. (A frequent violation of this rule would be Northwest Smith’s ability to slip into other dimensions by entering a patch of ruins or by examining the pattern on a piece of cloth.) The series was seen as belonging to the hybridic genre known as “science-fantasy,” but is sometimes labeled “science fiction,” “planetary romance” (in which an alien planet is the backdrop for the exploration of an alien culture, e.g., the stories of Edgar Rice Burroughs) or “space cowboy” (a story in which an alien planet is equated with a frontier and/or contains other elements associated with westerns). The series is also sometimes referred to as “space opera,” a subgenre of science-fantasy marked by a reliance on melodramatic action and far-flying adventure between the stars (e.g., the stories of E. E. “Doc” Smith, or *Star Wars*). This last classification would seem to be inappropriate, as most of Moore’s Northwest Smith stories remain limited to one planet. Moore’s Jirel of Joiry stories, however, contain numerous supernatural and no science fictional elements and are more easily classified as fantasy or weird-fantasy.

<sup>26</sup> Moore’s “tricky byline” is discussed in greater detail in this chapter. However, it is important to note that while some readers may have assumed that Moore was male, this does not mean that Moore concealed her gender.

<sup>27</sup> *Denvention Two Program Book*, p. 7. In 1936, Kuttner returned a package of books to Moore on Lovecraft’s behalf. Inside, he included a fan letter addressed to “Mr. C. L. Moore,” and he quickly received a reply from “Miss Catherine Moore.” The two writers met in person in 1937, continued a courtship by correspondence, and were married in 1940. (See Harold Bloom on Moore in *Science Fiction Writers of the Golden Age*, p. 142-3 and Robert Silverberg’s introduction to *Detour to Otherness*.) While this story reveals that not all fans, including Kuttner, knew Moore’s gender as of 1936, Moore—unlike James Tiptree Jr. (Alice Sheldon), who would masquerade as a male decades later—immediately informed her correspondents of her gender.

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<sup>28</sup> Attebery notes in “Fifty Key Figures” that Moore’s scripts for television (*Maverick* (1961), *77 Sunset Strip* (1960, 1962), and the “unconventional western *Sugarfoot* (1958-59) “are available in the Warner Brothers collection at the University of Southern California but have not yet received critical attention” (172). Moore also wrote for the short-lived series, *The Alaskans* (Roark 29). As Moore notes in her interview with Chacal, she was usually the only female writer on these writing teams.

<sup>29</sup> When Kuttner passed away from a heart attack in 1958 at age 44, Moore gave up science fiction. However, she continued to write for television and taught Kuttner’s writing class at U.S.C. for four years. She stopped writing entirely after her marriage to Thomas Reggie in 1963 (Gunn 189). Not long before Kuttner’s death, both were occupied with their university studies, with Kuttner working toward his goal of becoming a clinical psychologist and nearly having completed his Master’s, and Moore having completed her undergraduate degree *magna cum laude* in 1956 (Moskowitz, *Seekers*, 317). For this and other reasons, such as the lure of more lucrative markets, neither was writing much science fiction as of 1958.

<sup>30</sup> For data relating to their publishing histories, see Virgil Utter and Gordon Benson Jr’s bibliography, *Catherine Lucille Moore & Henry Kuttner: A Marriage of Souls and Talent*, published by Galactic Central (1996).

<sup>31</sup> Robert Silverberg states in his introduction to *Detour to Otherness*, “Kuttner, Moore, and Kuttner & Moore”: “The kind of lean, efficient story they perfected in the 1940’s, beginning with a quick statement of a complex and often paradoxical plot situation, followed by a few paragraphs of exposition to resolve enough of the paradox to keep the reader from utter bewilderment, and culminating in a satisfying and often dark and disturbing plot resolution, was closely studied by such young and prolific writers of the 1950s as Philip K. Dick, Robert Sheckley, and—I have never made a secret of this—Robert Silverberg. I know that my own way of telling stories was indelibly marked by my reading of Kuttner and Moore; I think it very probable that Sheckley would say the same thing, and I’m certain that Dick, if he were still among us, would add his own concurrence” (Silverberg, *Detour*, xv).

<sup>32</sup> “The Silverberg Papers” (46). In the Introduction to *In Another Country*, Silverberg’s sequel to Moore’s “Vintage Season,” Silverberg admits that he is not entirely objective when it concerns Moore: “And though I made no real attempt to write in Moore’s style, I adapted my own as well I could to match the grace and elegance of her tone. There is an aspect of real *lèse-majeste* in all of this, or perhaps the word I want is *hubris*. Readers...know that C. L. Moore is one of the writers I most revere in our field, and that I have studied her work with respect verging on awe...I hope that the result justifies the effort and that I will be forgiven for having dared to tinker with a masterpiece in this way” (*In Another Country* vii-iii).

<sup>33</sup> At the beginning of Kuttner’s career, some considered him a hack. Kuttner’s reputation has improved over time and it has been argued that he was a highly versatile stylist, a talented humorist, and a master of non-linear plotting (see James Blish’s article on Kuttner in *The Mirror of Infinity*).

<sup>34</sup> Leigh Brackett began writing in the 40s and was a discovery of John Campbell, editor of *Astounding*, in 1940. She was known as the “Queen of the Space Opera” and also wrote “hard-boiled” detective stories. This style drew the attention of Hollywood director, Howard Hawks, “who recruited her to work for him. She then wrote many Hollywood screenplays, including co-authorship with William Faulkner of Raymond Chandler’s classic, *The Big Sleep* (1946)...She also wrote John Wayne’s *Rio Bravo* (1958). Both of these were directed by Howard Hawks. Her other notable screenplays included Chandler’s *The Long Goodbye* (1973) and *The Empire Strikes Back* (1979), the latter for George Lucas...She died before the film was released, but was posthumously awarded a 1980 Hugo for the screenplay” (Davin 372). Brackett and her husband, Edmond Hamilton, also a SF writer, were friends with Moore and Kuttner and the four



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sometimes traveled together. Brackett and Moore are often discussed in conjunction as two female writers from this period who adopted “male” narrative voices; however, Brackett was the only one of the two to utilize a terse, “hard boiled” narrative voice.

<sup>35</sup> Poul Anderson states in his introduction to *Pulp Voices*: “My first C. L. Moore story, ‘There Shall Be Darkness,’ was a revelation...It was gorgeously romantic, evocative, emotional, and poetic...I will never forget the awesomeness of ‘Judgment Night’ or the poignancy of ‘No Woman Born’...If I have managed here and there to use language a bit strikingly myself—that is for you, the reader, to decide—then a considerable part of the reason has been that I read her” (Anderson 7).

<sup>36</sup> See the prior note describing this survey.

<sup>37</sup> Bradley recalls seeing Moore for the first time at a Worldcon in Los Angeles: “...I stood there, as speechless as a ten-year-old fan meeting Leonard Nimoy at a Star Trek convention. Because it suddenly hit me that if it were not for this woman, I wouldn’t exist; the woman people knew as Marion Zimmer Bradley would be teaching 7<sup>th</sup> grade somewhere, and I never would have done anything...” (Bradley 69).

<sup>38</sup> Thomas Bredehoft states in “Origin Stories”: “Although she was not the first woman to publish sf in the pulps, as Jane Donawerth’s recent essay on ‘Science Fiction by Women in the Early Pulp’ reminds us, Moore’s writing certainly influenced the field to a greater degree than did the female-authored pulp stories which preceded ‘Shambleau.’ Also unlike those earlier women, Moore continued to be a prominent and prolific contributor to the field well into the 1950s. And since, as Robin Roberts points out, many of the ‘canonical’ feminist sf authors (e.g., Butler, Tiptree, Le Guin) have admitted to reading and being influenced by sf during this very period (Roberts 45), Moore’s influential role argues forcefully for a contemporary critical interest in her work” (Bredehoft 369).

<sup>39</sup> Davin notes: McCaffrey “graduated from Radcliffe College, Harvard University in 1947 with a B.A. (cum laude) in Slavonic languages and literature. She studied voice and drama and directed opera before turning to writing...” She was a copywriter for Helena Rubenstein before her first science fiction story was published in 1953 by Sam Moskowitz and Hugo Gernsback. Davin notes that she continued writing science fiction, despite discouragement from her husband. She is most well-known for her *Dragonriders of Pern* series. She is also the author of the short story, “The Ship Who Sang,” a story that has been critiqued in tandem with Moore’s “No Woman Born” (Davin 392).

<sup>40</sup> As Davin relates: “Bradley...studied at the N.Y. State College for Teachers before graduating from Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas, in 1964...She was a prolific fantasy and science fiction writer who also dabbled in other genres, such as the romance field and lesbian literature.” Her *Darkover* series and *The Mists of Avalon*, which re-told the King Arthur legend “from the point of view of Morgan le Fay and other women,” are her two most significant works. She also produced her “own fantasy magazine (*Marion Zimmer Bradley’s Fantasy Magazine*, 1988-2000),” which “resulted in a 2001 TV mini-series” (Davin 372).

<sup>41</sup> In her review of Rosemarie Arbur’s *Leigh Brackett, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Anne McCaffrey: A Primary and Secondary Bibliography*. Boston, G.K. Hall, 1982, Linda Leith of John Abbott College states: “Three thorough and painstaking bibliographies are here collected in one volume. Rosemarie Arbur argues that the” works of Leigh Brackett, Marion Zimmer Bradley, and Anne McCaffrey belong “together because they are the most prominent literary descendants of C.L. Moore; but her concern really is not so much to make connections among these writers as to provide a good primary and secondary bibliography of each of them” (Leith).

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<sup>42</sup> “C. L. Moore always did write like a being from another world. Her stories are a unique blend of poetry, beauty, terror, and the sheerly strange that no one else has ever come close to. But neither are they mere gossamer fabrics of fantasy. They carry a powerful impact—and once read, they are not soon forgotten” (Brackett qtd. in Elliot, “Poet,” 45).

<sup>43</sup> C. J. Cherryh is a writer of science fiction and fantasy. The recipient of numerous awards, including the Hugo and the Locus, she also had the honor of having an asteroid named after her by NASA (77185 Cherryh). Her essay, “Teaching the World to Dream,” introduces *Northwest of Earth*, an anthology of Moore’s Northwest Smith series.

<sup>44</sup> Suzy McKee Charnas is a novelist and short story writer of SF and fantasy who has won Hugo, Nebula, and James Tiptree, Jr. awards. Her essay “Where No Man Had Gone Before” introduces an anthology of Moore’s Jirel of Joiry series entitled *Black God’s Kiss*.

<sup>45</sup> The criticism (in excess of a few paragraphs) that “Vintage Season” has received is basically limited to Thomas Bertonneau’s “Aspect of an Old Pattern” (16), his “Monstrous Theologies” (8-9), and John Reider’s analysis in *Colonialism and the Emergence of Science Fiction* (Wesleyan University Press, 2008). I would argue that Reider’s analysis is a misread, as he fails to read Cenbe’s speech at the conclusion as that of an unreliable narrator. In fact, the very passage Reider cites includes Cenbe’s admission that, contrary to Cenbe’s claim, the past can be altered by the future civilization (thus the need to prevent dissidents from access to time travel). Additionally, Moore’s use of inoculation scars, which the tourists attempt to hide, is an undercutting of the “naturalness” of their presumed superiority. Patricia Matthews in “C. L. Moore’s Classic Science Fiction” would seem to agree that it is Moore’s intent to suggest that the tourists possess the ability to alter the past; she states that the point of the story concerns what the tourists “refrain from doing,” as one of Moore’s central themes is that “people’s actions matter” (21).

<sup>46</sup> Upon finding the 22-year old writer’s first submission, “Shambleau,” in the slush pile, Farnsworth Wright “was so pleased he closed the shop and declared it C. L. Moore Day” (Server 192). E. Hoffman Price, who was present at the time, recalls Wright’s reaction. “Who is C. L. Moore? He, she, or it is colossal!” (qtd. in Moskowitz, *Seekers*, 303). If true, such anecdotes indicate that Wright did not assume that Moore’s story was authored by a man when he first received it, nor does the possibility that the story was female-authored appear to have deterred him from embracing it, which suggests that women were welcome to submit stories to *Weird Tales*.

<sup>47</sup> In fact, Howard once shared an unpublished manuscript with Moore, indicating that “he knew and trusted Moore, and accepted her as an equal” (Davin 111). Indeed, in a letter to Lovecraft in December 1935, Howard states that: “I was highly honored to be asked to contribute to ‘The Challenge from Beyond’...along with you, Miss Moore, Merritt, and Long...Appearing in such company will probably remain my chief claim to fame” (qtd. in Harron, “Queen of Swords”).

<sup>48</sup> As Davin notes, Moore was “wooded away” from *Weird Tales* by *Astounding* editor F. Orlin Tremaine, who was aware of Moore’s science-fantasy fan base (112). Moskowitz also describes Tremaine’s attempt to recruit *Weird Tales* writers to his fold and notes that Tremaine’s acquisition of Moore’s “Bright Illusion” was “quite a coup” (309).

<sup>49</sup> Tremaine was not the only editor of *Astounding* to embrace Moore. When John Campbell took over as *Astounding*’s editor, he would include Moore’s “Greater than Gods” in the July 1939 issue, an issue that is believed to have defined his philosophy as an editor. (See the essays in the 1981 facsimile reprint by So. IL Univ. Press.)

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<sup>50</sup> Moore has stated that all of her stories are “fantasy” and that she never had a strong desire to write SF, particularly “hard” science fiction. “If I could have received [the technical knowledge] by injections, I would have refused it” (Roark 28). And yet, “Vintage Season,” “No Woman Born” and many of Moore’s individual and collaborative works were published in *Astounding* and appear regularly in SF anthologies. This discrepancy may be due in part to Moore’s perception of science fiction as requiring “technical knowledge” rather than knowledge of “soft” sciences, such as psychology or sociology, or of media technology.

<sup>51</sup> She continues: “But I was never a formula writer, certainly not in the sense that the term is commonly understood. That would have been much too boring for me. I don’t think I could have written that way for any period of time. I tried to vary my approach from story to story just to keep myself from going crazy” (Elliot 30).

<sup>52</sup> “Henry Kuttner, C. L. Moore, et al.” Of the O’Donnell pseudonym, she states: “And gradually it became the one we used for those which were mostly mine. I didn’t use C. L. Moore except in very rare cases, because I just didn’t feel these were C. L. M. stories we were writing, but I could feel comfortable as Lawrence O’D” (176).

<sup>53</sup> Although Jirel and Northwest do not have sex, “Quest of the Starstone” is laden with sexual imagery. Even Smith’s sidekick, Yarol, who is merely near the couple, appears to come to orgasm. This may be one the pieces Thomas Bertonneau refers to when he characterizes Moore’s work as prone to “lurid sexuality” (Bertonneau, “Aspect,” 1). However, it should be noted that Moore and Kuttner were not married at the time and were engaged in a courtship by correspondence. This was the first collaboration by the two young writers, and it is perhaps expected to bear signs of clumsy craftsmanship, as well as virtual love-making. Moore states in her interview with CHACAL that this story is not one of her favorites, as it was their first collaboration and they had not yet worked out how to collaborate most effectively (28).

<sup>54</sup> SF is the “search for a definition of mankind and his status in the universe which will stand in our advanced but confused state of knowledge (science), and is characteristically cast in the Gothic or post-Gothic mode” (Aldiss 25).

<sup>55</sup> Mirrors figure heavily in Moore’s work, particularly as a means to suggest infinite replication. For one of her earliest references to an “infinity of mirrors,” see “Jirel Meets Magic” (1935).

<sup>56</sup> While Moore does follow convention by providing Smith with a male partner, Yarol is a partner-in-crime, not one in science. If anything, the mysterious Venusian resembles the “enigmatic servant” of Gothic tradition or the hunch-backed assistant to the mad scientist sans hunch-back, as Yarol is quite attractive. In fact, critics have argued that the “seraphic” alien with blonde curls is clearly feminized and can be seen as an object of desire by Smith.

<sup>57</sup> Due to his nomadic lifestyle, as well as his quest-like adventures, comparisons with Smith could also be made to the heroes of the Western, fantasy and the heroic modes.

<sup>58</sup> Heinlein borrowed the name of his short story, “The Green Hills of Earth” (1947), from a song Smith hums when nostalgic for Earth. For the full lyrics, see *Quest for the Green Hills of Earth*.

<sup>59</sup> The fact that Jirel is propertied becomes more interesting when one realizes that Moore takes pains to ensure that figures such as Deidre of “No Woman Born” are also portrayed as propertied. This may be a response to Gothic conventions or, perhaps, to social factors, such as the Depression or the women’s movement.

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60 For a general history of “tough girls” in science fiction, see Sherri Inness’s *Tough Girls: Women Warriors and Wonder Women in Popular Culture*. While this text does not mention Jirel or Moore, they are briefly mentioned in the introduction to *Action Chicks: New Images of Tough Women in Popular Culture*. As for Moore’s portrayal of tough girls, as will be noted, Moore seems to emphasize that certain female characters are reservoirs of hidden “strength.” Moore also portrayed women such as Jirel as physically strong; for example, see “Promised Land,” in which a genetically engineered woman’s arm is described as particularly muscular (possibly an allusion to Rosie the Riveter).

<sup>61</sup> Moore notes in her interview in *Chacal* that she enjoyed “writing a walk-on by God” (Roark 30).

<sup>62</sup> As Lilith observes, “this flesh [is] a treacherous thing” (179). The fact that love or the flesh are “treacherous” to one’s integrity is a persistent motif throughout Moore’s fiction. In the introduction to *Fury*, she identifies Kuttner’s “basic statement” as “[a]uthority is dangerous and I will never submit to it” and her own as the “most treacherous thing in life is love” (*Fury* 5-6). This story is also significant in that it anticipates portrayals of the body in “No Woman Born” as a garment to be worn.

<sup>63</sup> Moore was forced to leave college after three semesters due to the economic pressure of the Depression; however, her introductory English course seems to have guided her future reading. In “Aspect,” Bertonneau suggests that she read widely and was something of an autodidact.

<sup>64</sup> Moore revealed in her interview with *Chacal* that she illustrated some of her own stories (30). She explains in her “Autobiographical Sketch” that she went to art school in “summer vacations” before the Depression forced her to leave college (36). These courses may have informed her allusions to sculpture and painting.

<sup>65</sup> A discussion of Brackett’s use of allusion is available in Bertonneau’s “Red Mist and Ruins: The Symbolist Prose of Leigh Brackett,” in which he analyzes Brackett’s use of Rimbaud and other poets.

<sup>66</sup> Bertonneau has offered an analysis of Moore’s allusions in “Aspect of an Old Pattern.” Moore may have referenced Baudelaire’s “The Flowers of Evil” in “The Tree of Life” (10) and the Symbolists’ “landscapes,” “pre-Biblical sacred,” and “synesthesia” in other work (11). He also suggests that Moore’s imagery in “The Black Thirst” may have been influenced by the Academic Painters (12); that the conclusion of “Dust of Gods” alludes to Richard Wagner’s *Ring der Nibelungen* (12); that the flute scene in “Jirel Meets Magic” references the story of Pan and Syrinx (13); and that the “Dark Land” alludes to the satanic imagery of Milton’s “Paradise Lost” (14).

<sup>67</sup> Along with the Kuttners, SF author Miles J. Breuer may have also served as a “bridge” to the richer themes of proto-science fiction, particularly through his clever piece on perception and semantics, “The Gostak and the Doshes” (*Amazing Stories*, March 1930), and his early cyborg story, “The Man with the Strange Head” (*Amazing Stories*, January 1927). Breuer is an interesting figure to discuss in connection with Moore, as he may have influenced Moore or drawn from the same sources. In particular, the “action-less” plot of the latter Breuer story—in which two men examine a cybernetic body and a psychologist attempts to reverse-engineer its “interior” using (normative) demographical data—is similar in some respects to the concluding scenes of “No Woman Born,” “The Code,” and “The Children’s Hour.” In this case, both writers could also be seen as serving as a bridge to texts such as *Frankenstein*.

<sup>68</sup> One might add to Gunn’s list of proto-science fiction writers Fitz-James O’Brien, with his surrealistic “From Hand to Mouth” (1858) and hallucinatory dream fantasies, which could have influenced the Kuttners’ *Chessboard Planet*.

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<sup>69</sup> A few examples follow: *Chessboard Planet*, a Moore-Kuttner novel that calls to mind William Burroughs, ends with a military leader choosing to punish himself by remaining in a state of surreal psychosis. The companion novel, *Tomorrow and Tomorrow*, is the story of a man charged with protecting a nuclear stockpile. Moore's "Call Him Demon"—an inversion of fairy tale and a "doppelganger" piece which recalls Kuttner's prodigy, Ray Bradbury, as well as perhaps anticipates Philip K. Dick's "The Father-Thing"—concludes with a young boy boasting that he has tricked his "wrong uncle" into eating his grandmother. "The Sky is Falling," another tale that may have influenced Dick, finds the protagonist trapped in a delusion that the Earth has been turned into a star by atomic war. A sampling of the endings of some of their most sophisticated work includes: The protagonist of "Rite of Passage" gives in to social ostracism and becomes the living dead; in "Year Day," Irene (the goddess of "peace" in Greek mythology) returns to a state of infancy to escape the identity-destroying media saturation of her time; the protagonist of "Private Eye" commits murder to defy a literal panopticon of cameras that record all aspects of his life; the insurance companies of "Margin for Error" reduce the anxieties of the populace by selling policies covering every eventuality; the protagonist of "The Little Things" escapes from prison to find that uncanny differences prevent re-acclimation; and the anti-hero of "Home is the Hunter" believes his suicide is a "triumph" because his head will be preserved in plastic by a ruthlessly competitive, absurdly ritualized "modern" society. Supplementing their collaborative work in this regard is Kuttner's individual work, such as "Mimsy Were the Borogoves" which takes the concept of depersonalization in another direction by focusing on the generation gap; in this classic, technology from the future alienates a father from his children. (See the new Moore-Kuttner compilation, *Detour to Otherness*, from Haffner Press (2010), for many of the stories listed above.)

<sup>70</sup> Moore claimed in interviews that Kuttner's byline commanded a higher price. However, this does not mean women were barred from participation in science fiction, or even unwelcome, only that they were paid less for their work. Such gender inequities still exist today and can be seen in institutions where women are present and hold leadership positions and yet do not receive equal pay compared to their male counterparts. Thus, one motivation female writers may have had for publishing under initials or male bylines may have been to command a higher price. And yet, as Davin's data indicate, many women still chose to write under identifiably female bylines.

<sup>71</sup> Attebery suggests in "Fifty Key Figures" that the pseudonym "Lewis Padgett" was used because it rhymed with "gadget" (174). However, "Lewis" was the maiden name of Kuttner's mother and "Padgett" was the name of Moore's grandmother (19). See the Virgil Utter *Working Bibliography* for more information on their pseudonyms.

<sup>72</sup> When Jack Vance and James Blish entered the field in the 40's, they both received fan mail addressed: "Dear Mr. Kuttner." See Blish's "Moskowitz on Kuttner" and Pinto's introduction to *Clash by Night and Other Stories* (vii).

<sup>73</sup> E.g.: "To this collaboration, Ms. Moore contributed the powerful characterization and dramatic color that had long typified her work. Kuttner, on the other hand, provided intellectual rigor and plot structure" (Elliot 28).

<sup>74</sup> Moore's first experience with collaboration appears to have been "The Challenge From Beyond," a round-robin fantasy story that *Fantasy Magazine* commissioned in 1935 to serve as a companion piece to a science fiction story by the same title (reprinted in Moskowitz's *Horrors Unknown* in 1971.) This type of "round-robin" would serve her well in her hundreds of collaborations with Henry Kuttner. After his death, she entered the collaborative environment of television writing: "...TV writing spoils you for any other type of writing...You come to depend heavily on the people around you. You're never really allowed to

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write as a person. Instead, you're part of a team. You're part of a machine. It proved to be an intoxicating experience" (Elliot, "Poet," 50).

<sup>75</sup> Moore stated in her interview with Elliot ("Poet") that work under her byline was strictly her own.

<sup>76</sup> George O. Smith (as quoted by Robert Silverberg) describes the disorienting experience of spending a weekend at the Kuttner's home in 1945 or 1946: "[W]e'd had our morning coffee, and Hank said something about going upstairs and getting dressed. He disappeared. They didn't pass each other on the stairs, but Catherine turned up very shortly afterward...and I had my second wake up [coffee] with her—with the typewriter going on at the same rate upstairs...[T]hree-quarters of an hour passed, and Catherine said something about getting into day clothes, and disappeared. Hank came down, dressed, and said something cheerful about breakfast—with the typewriter going on as usual. This went on. They worked at it in shifts, in relays, continuously, until about two o'clock that Saturday afternoon, when the one downstairs did not go upstairs when the one upstairs came down. This time the typing stopped" (Silverberg, *Detour*, xiv-xv).

<sup>77</sup> "[T]heir marriage was one of those rare and marvelous successes wherein two writers merge both their mutual talents and their love for each other." He goes on: "After their marriage, the couple lived in New York, where Kuttner's career continued to zoom and, slowly, to gain the respect of his peers. Moore now wrote very little under her solo byline, and, while she and Kuttner shared bylines on some of their work, the fact is that virtually everything that appeared under Kuttner's name (or pseudonym) alone following their marriage was to some degree a collaboration. Reportedly one writer simply took over for the other as needed—fatigue, writer's block, time for lunch, whatever—so that there was a total fusion of their dissimilar talents into a sort of symbiotic artistic entity...Then, on February 3, 1958, Kuttner died of a sudden heart attack. Moore effectively vanished from the science fiction field and, indeed, ceased writing fiction altogether" (Wagner, *Echoes II*, 35).

<sup>78</sup> Care needs to be taken in the analysis of Moore's interviews, as it is unknown as to when Moore first developed symptoms of Alzheimer's. Questions regarding the integrity of Moore's memory appear as early as her somewhat defensive comment in the afterward to *The Best of C. L. Moore* that her own "perfectly clear memory" (309) confirms that "Shambleau" was not rejected by the entire field before being accepted by *Weird Tales* (a claim advanced by Sam Moskowitz).

<sup>79</sup> Elliot: "What explains 'Shambleau's' tremendous success in the science-fiction world?" Moore: "I really don't know, except, perhaps, that science-fiction readers enjoyed the ways in which my characters were drawn. So many of the stories then were written by technicians and scientifically-trained people who were content merely to convey the bare bones of action and character development. I suppose my story provided a sharp contrast to most of the stories of the period, and that it appealed to those readers who bemoaned the lack of personal identification with the characters" (Elliot, "Tales of Drama," 28).

<sup>80</sup> It is unclear to what extent Moore's interest in Marxism influenced her fiction, as it has not yet been analyzed in this respect. However, Moore's interest in labor and capitalism are touched upon briefly in Chapter Three, which focuses on two pieces from her mid- and late-career. As for her early work, Jacqueline Pearson makes the provocative comment that the shadowy, hungry Thing hovering in the background of many of Moore's Northwest Smith stories may represent the "devouring power of capital" (Pearson 11).

<sup>81</sup> As noted by Thomas Bertonneau, only Lovecraft's side of the exchange has been preserved ("Aspect" 16).

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<sup>82</sup> Elliot: "Finally, do you still read much science fiction? If so, which writers do you most enjoy reading?" Moore: "Actually, I read very little science fiction. I don't find much of it interesting...There are some writers, though, who impress me. I'm a big fan of Ursula Le Guin...Generally speaking, though, I find that science fiction doesn't have much to say to me. I wish that weren't so, but it is" (Elliot, "Tales of Drama," 31).

<sup>83</sup> One wonders if Moore's interest in Le Guin was related to Le Guin's use of binaries in *The Left Hand of Darkness*, now a classic of feminist science fiction.

<sup>84</sup> Although Moore has admitted in interviews that she "edited" C. L. Moore stories "until she liked them," usually through a third or fourth draft (Elliot, "Poet," 48). However, she considered editing a luxury, as they had to "produce a certain amount of work in order to pay the bills," and there wasn't much time to "labor" over a story. "After the first year or so, Hank never touched a thing he had written" (Elliot, "Poet," 48). "We had to keep writing" (Elliot, "Tales of Drama," 30).

<sup>85</sup> See her afterward to *The Best of C. L. Moore*, in which she personifies her "Unconscious" as a black cat (308).

<sup>86</sup> Moore also states in her interview with *Chacal* that there was no "message" to her writing, but that anyone who writes that much copy unconsciously focuses it around a set of values (27).

<sup>87</sup> Sarah Lefanu sees Moore's desire to tap into her unconscious as a strength: "But what is striking in her insistence on the importance of the unconscious as a means of providing the writer with the wealth of fiction she has herself read and enjoyed. It seems to me that the power of 'Shambleau' and 'No Woman Born,' perhaps reside in this openness to the process of the unconscious" (Lefanu 17-8).

<sup>88</sup> Anthologist Karl Edward Wagner describes Moore's distance from fandom in the years leading up to her death: "For years Moore seemed to have disappeared. In the early 1970s she made a few guest appearances at conventions, granted a few interviews, received a few belated awards. Still a beautiful and gracious lady, she appeared increasingly frail and confused. The horrendous truth soon became apparent: C. L. Moore was suffering from Alzheimer's disease—a slow and incurable deterioration of the brain, resulting in loss of memory and cognitive function. In her last years she lay in a coma, until death mercifully came on April 4, 1987. So detached had she become from the science fiction/fantasy field, that it was not until February 1988 that her fans learned of her death" (Wagner, *Echoes II*, 35). Moore's obituary appeared in the March 1988 issue of *Locus* magazine.

<sup>89</sup> Accusations regarding Moore's memory appear in her dispute with Moskowitz over his reprinting of "Werewoman" and her disputes with Forrest Ackerman over "Yvala" and "Nyusa." See Moskowitz's "Thoughts about C. L. Moore"; Moskowitz's comments in *Horrors Unknown* (56-8); and Ackerman's allegations in *Ackermanthology* in which he calls Moore's memory a "blank book" (267).

<sup>90</sup> As Davin relates, deFord published her first story at age twelve and in 1942 described herself as a born "feminist" and a "free-thinker" since the age of thirteen. "She was educated at Wellesley College and Temple University, from which she received her Bachelor's in 1911. She received a scholarship to the University of Pennsylvania, where she did graduate work in English and Latin..." She held various positions, including insurance claims adjustor, stenographer, and freelance journalist. She was active in the suffragist and other radical movements and was jailed for her activities. While working in Chicago, she noted that she knew half of the Wobblies recently imprisoned there for protesting the U.S. involvement in WW I. In 1921, she married Maynard Shipley who was founder and president of the Science League of America, which provided most of the expert defense witnesses in the Scopes "Monkey

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Trial.” Both Shipley and deFord were members of the Socialist Party, but left in 1922 because they claimed it was too conservative. She would explain: “I’ve always been for complete revolution, not reform. I suppose you’d say we were good Marxists.” She became a biographer and a well-known reporter in leftist and labor circles. Her poetry was regarded highly, appearing in many magazines of the time, and she was known by peers for being able to translate Lucretius, Juvenal, and Catullus from the Latin. Her fiction was also highly regarded; her 1930 story, “White Knight,” was chosen for that year’s O. Henry anthology. She published thirty-one SF stories in *Galaxy* from 1950 to 1960, was included in pioneering SF anthologies such as Harlan Ellison’s *Dangerous Visions*, and also became an award-winning mystery writer (Davin 378-79).

<sup>91</sup> Long wrote detective stories (as “Peter Reynolds”), fantasy, and science fiction. She was a frequent contributor to *Weird Tales* from 1928-1936. “Her story, ‘The Thought-Monster’ (*Weird Tales*, March 1930), became the 1957 British film, *Fiend Without a Face*. Similar in theme to *Forbidden Planet* (1956), a scientist perfected the ability to physically project his thoughts, which then carried out dirty deeds” (Davin 391).

<sup>92</sup> “Moore: [I]n those days, jobs were very hard to come by—it is hard for anybody today to remember or realize, but it was a very grim sort of financial situation everybody was locked into. The place where I worked was a very paternalistic organization and they were keeping people on for whom they really didn’t have any work. I had a very uncanny feeling that if they knew I had extra income, I might be the next to get the axe!...[I]t was a fairly remote chance that anyone in the office read *WT*—but I didn’t want to take the chance. I got cautious, took my first two initials and put them on the story” (Roark 27). Roark then asks how Moore informed her readers of her gender. “Moore: I didn’t feel it was any of their business—besides, nobody asked” (27).

<sup>93</sup> Counselman began publishing in 1931 and eventually published thirty stories in *Weird Tales*. She also published in mainstream magazines such as *Collier’s*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Ladies’ Home Journal*. She was one of the most popular writers in *Weird Tales*; her story, “Three Marked Pennies,” was ranked by readers as one of the most popular in *Weird Tales* history (Davin 375).

<sup>94</sup> By a coincidence, the first cover that attracted Moore to science fiction illustrated the first SF story Nils Frome ever remembers reading: the September 1931 issue of *Amazing Stories*, with a cover illustration of “Awlo of Ulm” (Moskowitz, “Nils Frome”). Moore claims that since her first encounter with this issue, she read every magazine of its type, as she was an instant “convert” (Gunn, “Henry Kuttner,” 173).

<sup>95</sup> Davin’s indices also contain a women’s SF filmography and a bibliography of British female-authored SF.

<sup>96</sup> As Davin notes, Clare Winger Harris was the first woman to publish in a science fiction magazine. Her first story, “The Fate of the Poseidonia,” appeared in *Amazing Stories* in June 1927 and “won third prize in Hugo Gernsback’s first story contest” (385), to which 360 stories were submitted (134). “Thereafter Harris became a regular contributor to Gernsback’s magazine and one of his most popular writers” (385). Harris submitted an original story as a favor to fan Jerome (“Jerry”) Siegel to the first amateur science fiction magazine, *Cosmic Stories*, in 1930. (Siegel later went on to co-create Superman with Joseph Schuster. He also founded the second amateur SF magazine, to which Harris—one of his favorite writers--was a regular contributor.) As Davin notes, while there is an award to honor James Tiptree Jr., a woman who wrote as a male, there is no award honoring Harris, who was the first to “write as a woman...forty years earlier....This is illustrative of the amnesia even women in the field suffer when it comes to the history of women in science fiction” (Davin 385).



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<sup>97</sup> As Davin relates, Lorraine made a variety of contributions to science fiction. She was discovered by Hugo Gernsback in 1929 and he subsequently published her two “feminist socialist utopias” “The Brain of the Planet” (1929) and “Into the 28<sup>th</sup> Century” (1930). Educated at the University of Texas in Austin and the University of Arizona in Tucson, she was a journalist and a poet. “She also founded the Avalon World’s Arts Academy and edited its journal, *Different*, as well as other poetry magazines, such as *Challenge*.” While an editor, she discovered Robert Silverberg and published his first story. Although she was a “champion of SF verse,” her efforts in this regard have been forgotten. Despite her “pioneering work in the field of science fiction poetry,” the genre’s poetry award—the Rhysling—is named after a “completely fictional Robert A. Heinlein character” (Davin 392).

<sup>98</sup> Dorothy Quick met Mark Twain when she was eleven and the two were friends for the last three years of his life. The memoir of their friendship was published in 1961 as *Enchanted: A Little Girl’s Friendship With Mark Twain* (University of Oklahoma Press, *Mark Twain and Me*). Twain encouraged Quick to write, and she eventually wrote for John Campbell’s *Unknown*, *Weird Tales*, and *Oriental Stories*. Her first story for *Oriental Stories* “had the honor of being illustrated on the cover by Margaret Brundage, in her own debut as a cover artist” (Davin 399).

<sup>99</sup> Like Davin, I list these names individually rather than as a number to re-instantiate their presence. Certain biographies are also worth noting, as they reflect significant authorial accomplishments and careers of activism. Further, the fact that these women openly wrote for *WT* under identifiably female bylines—and in some cases were highly visible and popular—lends credence to Moore’s claim that she felt no need to hide her gender while writing for *Weird Tales*.

<sup>100</sup> The name of *WT* writer, Lois Lane, was borrowed by Superman’s creators for Superman’s girlfriend (Davin 171).

<sup>101</sup> Wikipedia: “Greya La Spina (1880 – 1969) was an American writer of over 100 published serials, novelettes, one-act plays and short stories. La Spina was born Fanny Greya Bragg on July 10, 1880 in Wakefield, Massachusetts. Her father was a Methodist clergyman. She was married to Ralph Geissler in 1898 and gave birth to a daughter, Celia, two years later. The following year, her husband died. In 1910 she married Baron Robert La Spina, an Italian aristocrat.”

Her first supernatural story, “The Wolf on the Steppes” was sold to Thrill Book in 1919. She won second place in Photoplay magazine’s 1921 short story contest gaining her a \$2,500 prize. Her first book, *Invaders from the Dark*, was published by Arkham House in 1960.

Her stories appeared in *Metropolitan*, *Black Mask*, *Action Stories*, *Ten-Story Book*, *The Thrill Book*, *Weird Tales*, *Modern Marriage*, *Top-Notch Magazine*, *All-Story*, *Photoplay*, and many other magazines.

<sup>102</sup> Moravsky was a noted Russian Jewish poet who testified in support of the woman suffrage leader Alice Paul and others after they were imprisoned in January 1917 for picketing in front of the White House. “Moravsky was visiting America on a speaking tour at that time” and learned of the brutal treatment of the suffragists while in prison. “In October she testified before Congress in support of the incarcerated women. She told the Congressmen that she had been imprisoned in Siberia twice by the Czar’s government for her writings. Neither time, however, was her treatment as harsh as what the jailed suffragists were then suffering.” Eventually she would go into permanent exile in England, where she “made the transition to publishing in English.” Her byline became familiar in various fantasy magazines in America, including *Weird Tales* (Davin 397).

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<sup>103</sup> Perry's story, "Old Roses," is a ghost story involving a little girl named "Johnny" and her loving grandfather, who pines for his lost love after death. The story is perhaps interesting for its repeated emphasis on the fact that Johnny is named after her father, who wanted a son, and for the fact that the little girl resembles a boy. Perry herself is also interesting, as she was one of the four co-founders of Alpha Omicron Pi women's fraternity (founded 1897). She is described as the fraternity's website as having been "well-known for her literary talents" and "artistic, dramatic, and idealistic" ("The Founders"). She wrote the fraternity's ritual, which has remained unchanged since 1897.

<sup>104</sup> As Davin relates, Lord was "a respected Hollywood and TV screenwriter from the end of World War II until her suicide in 1955 at age fifty-two. In addition, she published much fantasy fiction in *Weird Tales* from 1934-1943." Lord wrote the original story for *Alias Nick Beal* (1949); other screen credits include *Strange Impersonation* (1946), a noir film about a female research scientist; *the Glass Alibi* (1946), *Yankee Fakir* (1947), *The Sainted Sisters* (1948), and *The Big Bluff* (1955) (Davin 391).

<sup>105</sup> Such claims are perhaps strengthened by Darko Suvin's assertion in *Metamorphoses* "that science fiction is 'historically part of the submerged or plebian 'lower literature' expressing the yearnings of previously repressed or at any rate non-hegemonic social groups'" (qtd. in Pearson 2).

<sup>106</sup> For a detailed discussion of the relationship between early SF editors and female SF writers, as well as the measures editors took to increase female readership, see Davin's chapter, "The Usual Suspects."

<sup>107</sup> Here Davin is echoing Jane Donawerth in her article, "Science Fiction by Women in the Early Pulp, 1926-1930." Donawerth differs slightly from Davin in that she believes that the Depression forced women out of the pulp market rather than created a reason for editors to court female authors/readership. She asserts that female writers returned after WW II, the very period that Davin seems to believe initiated the erasure. However, Donawerth agrees with Davin in the sense that they both characterize the female-authored SF of the (late 20's) pulps as having a more "empathetic" view towards aliens (Donawerth 138). Her article details how many of these "utopian" pulp stories involved a re-visioning of labor, home design, war, government, reproduction, education, marriage, and male-female roles. While some stories tended to present exceptional women "as exceptions" or preserve separate spheres for men and women, these stories sometimes also offered fascinating technological and socialist utopias (143) from a female point of view. Other authors, such as Leslie F. Stone, Louise Rice, and Clare Winger Harris emphasized "suffrage" and "equality of the sexes" (144), with Stone presenting a female astronaut in a world in which "sex made no difference" (144). Donawerth identifies the weakness of such stories as being that the "androgyny threatens at every crisis to disintegrate" and that they usually used first- or third-person male narrators (145). She argues that the male narrator was retained so that the author could pass as "one of the boys," but also because such characters' transgressive actions (e.g., outside of the home) were more believable. She concludes that, while women SF writers during this time did not experiment with "female voices," they "made a place in their stories for the resisting reader" through various narrative techniques (146).

<sup>108</sup> One dramatic example involves Isaac Asimov's tendering of his resignation to Boston University when he learned that his publisher had listed his university affiliation on his first novel. "Asimov wanted to spare Boston University the disgrace of association with a despicable science fiction writer. The dean was less embarrassed about Asimov's novel...and he refused to accept Asimov's resignation" (Davin 115).

<sup>109</sup> Another example includes Sarah Lefanu's introduction to *In the Chinks of the World Machine*, in which she states: "Science fiction is popularly conceived as male territory, boys' action adventure stories with little to interest a female readership. This is true of the heyday of magazine science fiction, the 1930s and 1940s, but even then there were women writers, like C. L. Moore and Leigh Brackett, who may have assumed a male voice and non gender specific (sic) names to avoid prejudice on the part of editors and

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readers alike, but who were none the less there" (2). However, Lefanu is more open to the idea that Moore and Brackett were not the only women in SF's past, at least in the sense that there were women "readers." "There have always been women readers of science fiction, as Susan Wood pointed out in her article 'Women and Science Fiction'. It would be simplistic to assume that a lack of female characters in the science fiction of the time automatically excluded a female readership (just as the obverse, that female characters guarantee women's interest, is patently untrue): why and how we read books is a more complicated business" (2).

<sup>110</sup> Interestingly, editor Hugo Gernsback instituted measures in order to combat the "image of science as being purely for men" (Davin 135). For example, his magazine, *The Electrical Engineer* (1913-1920), "seemed to try to attract a female audience, for there were articles on women engineers and inventors and women who operated radios or the wireless as careers" (135).

<sup>111</sup> Three of the stories in the Healy-McComas anthology were published under a Moore-Kuttner pseudonym, Lewis Padgett: "The Proud Robot," "Time Locker," and "The Twonky." All three are thought to be "mostly Kuttner."

<sup>112</sup> As Davin notes: Joanna Russ (1937- ) "comes from a family of Russian Jews who fled Russia around the time of the 1905 Revolution...She earned a Bachelor's in English from Cornell University in 1937, where she also won both the Browning and the Shakespeare Essay Prizes. She then earned a Master of Fine Arts in playwriting from the Yale University Drama School in 1960" (406). Several of her plays have been produced. "In 1974 she also won a Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities and in 1975 won the O. Henry Award for 'The Autobiography of My Mother'" (406). She debuted in science fiction in 1970 with the short story "Nor Custom Stale" in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. Stories such as "When It Changed" in 1972 and her novels of the female adventurer Alyx are considered feminist SF classics. Her novella "Souls" won the Best Novella Hugo, Nebula, and Locus awards. Russ also wrote science fiction criticism in journals such as *Science Fiction Studies*. As Davin notes, she also won the Pilgrim Award for best SF criticism (406). She is also the author of classics of feminist literary criticism, including *How to Suppress Women's Writing* (1983), and taught as a professor at several universities before retiring in the 1990s (406).

<sup>113</sup> For example, a review of anthologies in which Asimov has included Moore shows that his comments introducing Moore's work sometimes consist of a description of how she looked when he last saw her. See his entries in *Isaac Asimov Presents the Golden Years*, which vacillate between praise for Moore, nostalgia for her partnership with Kuttner, and comments such as "she had aged well" (219), which he notes again in his introduction to "No Woman Born" (584). No other authors are described in terms of their physical appearance, except for Leigh Brackett, whom Asimov suggests was not a "light-weight" (30)-as he once tried to pick her up and, in the process, threw out her back--but for whom he offers high praise (352). Also of note are comments such as: "Long before the feminist revolution had brought women authors by the dozen into science fiction, C. L. Moore was one of the few who invaded what had been an almost purely masculine realm. What's more, her stories seemed 'masculine' because they didn't deal with the petty fripperies that readers expected of women authors and that women authors were therefore forced to deal with if they expected to sell" (219). He also states in *Great Science Fiction Stories of 1939* that Moore and Leslie Stone were two women who "dared to compete" and used "initials and epicene given names" to hide their "fatal feminism" during the "male-Chauvinist Thirties" (194).

<sup>114</sup> Andre Norton was born Alice Mary Norton in 1912. She began writing early in life; she wrote a novel while in high school called *Ralestone Luck*, which became her second published novel. She would go on to write 130 novels and almost 100 short stories. Like C. L. Moore, she entered university but was forced to leave due to the Depression. She began writing historical adventures for the young adults market at

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twenty-two. "Because she envisioned a career writing juvenile historical adventures, that same year she legally changed her name to 'Andre Norton.' She would not make her professional science fiction debut for another twenty years" (397). She was honored by the Boys Clubs of America 1965 for her juvenile fiction, was awarded Grand Master of Fantasy by the World Fantasy Convention in 1977, and in 1978 became the first female author to receive the Gandalf Award from the World Science Fiction Society. In 1983 she became the first woman to receive the Grand Master Nebula Award. In 1998, the World Fantasy Convention presented her with a Lifetime Achievement Award. After her death in 2005, the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America (SFWA) established the Andre Norton Award for young adult novels (Davin 397-8).

<sup>115</sup> With her debut in 1929, Leslie F. Stone was one of the first women to publish science fiction in the pulps. Like Norton, she began writing early. "She began selling fairy tales to newspapers at age fifteen" and eventually studied journalism. Her science fiction was popular in the thirties and she also wrote for *Weird Tales* between 1935 and 1938 (Davin, 410). Contrary to Pohl's claim that she felt the need to "tinker with her name," Stone was born with the name "Leslie." Also, she made no attempt to conceal her gender. For example, early in her career, "a Frank Paul drawing of her accompanied her story about a race of powerful alien females, 'Women with Wings' (*Air Wonder Stories*, May, 1930)...That same month...*Amazing Stories* editor T. O'Connor Sloane published Stone's, 'Through the Veil,' and, in his blurb, also referred to her as 'Miss Stone.'" Her picture also accompanied three of her stories in *Wonder Stories* in 1931, 1932, and 1933 (Davin 102).

<sup>116</sup> As Davin relates, "Lesli Perri" was Doris Baumgardt's name in fandom. She became a member of the influential SF fan club the "Futurians" in 1938, along with Brooklynite Rosalind Cohen. "They are thus thought to be the earliest female members of this famous New York club" (398). "Perri wrote prolifically for the Futurian fanzines. She was also a founding member of the Fantasy Amateur Press Association (FAPA), created by Donald Wollheim for fans to exchange fanzines" (398). "In the early 1940's she edited (and mostly wrote) a short-lived romance pulp entitled *Movie Love Stories*...As an artist, she also contributed to *Astonishing Stories*, a short-lived SF magazine Pohl edited from its founding in 1940..." (399). After Pohl and Perri divorced—and Pohl married Dorothy LesTina, a science fiction artist—Perri married an artist and writer, Tom Owns. However, her third marriage was to the science fiction writer Richard Wilson, "who had previously married Perri's good friend and fellow Futurian, Jessica Gould" (Davin, 399). As can be seen, this was a rather incestuous community of male and female fans, artists, and writers engaged in building networks (e.g., the FAPA). At the very least, in New York SF was not an all-male community in which women could only participate by sending in manuscripts under cover of their initials.

<sup>117</sup> LesTina met Pohl while working as an artist for *Astonishing Stories*, which Pohl edited. They were engaged in 1943, the same year LesTina published her first science fiction story. "Then both went into the Army, with LesTina quickly becoming a first lieutenant in the Women's Army Corps (WACs)" (390). Upon her return, she studied drama at New York's New School and wrote "endless scripts" according to Pohl (390). In 1949, she published the novel, *Occupation: Housewife*. Pohl said in his memoir that she was "'more career-minded' than he was willing to accept in a wife. Also, 'She was deathly opposed to having children, and...I didn't like having the option foreclosed...we got along quite well most of the time, but somewhat to my surprise she went to California in 1948 and I got a letter from her saying, 'The weather is very nice here and my mother is fine, and by the way, I've filed suit for divorce'" (Davin 390).

<sup>118</sup> The erasure of Judith Merrill, one of the most influential female figures in science fiction, is attempted in every assertion that there were "no women" in late 40s and 50s SF. Thus a more detailed biography seems warranted. As Davin notes, Judith Merrill (Josephine Juliet Grossman) was born in 1923 in New York City to "two Zionist socialists and attended City College of New York from 1939-40" (395). "A

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member of the Futurians during and after World War II, she was discovered and first published by John W. Campbell in 1948. Throughout the 1950s she prolifically published short fiction" (395). Her first novel, *Shadow on the Hearth* (1950), was dramatized in 1954 on television as "Atomic Attack," starring Walter Matthau. She collaborated with fellow Futurian C. M. Kornbluth on three novels under the joint pseudonym "Cyril Judd." Her fiction was also recognized in the mainstream; i.e., "Dead Center" (1954) was chosen for the "prestigious anthology *The Best American Short Stories: 1955*" (395). She began as editor of Bantam Books in 1947, where she created an influential SF series, *Shot in the Dark*, in 1950. "With Damon Knight she organized and from 1956-1961 she was the Director of the Milford Science Fiction Writers Conference. From 1965-1969 she was the book reviewer for *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. After 1960 she concentrated more on editing and reviewing and less on writing. From 1956 to 1968 she helped shape the literature with her annual 'year's best' collections. In these and in her book review column...she attempted to broaden the field by looking at similar literature published outside genre magazines" (395). She also supported the movement to change the SF label from "science fiction" to "speculative fiction" (which was unsuccessful) and championed the British "New Wave" science fiction of the 60s in *England Swings SF*. "Appalled by the police riot at the 1968 Democratic Party convention in Chicago, which she attended, Merrill self-exiled herself to Toronto, Canada, for the rest of her life. There she worked as a radio and television documentary scriptwriter...was affiliated with Rochedale, an experimental counter-cultural school in Toronto, and was involved in the American community of draft exiles in Canada. She also performed in...*Dr. Who*" (395). Her auto-biography won the non-fiction Hugo Award in 2003. However, Davin warns that the "entry on her in...*Twentieth-Century Science-Fiction Writers* (St. Martin's Press, 1981) is written by Elizabeth Anne Hull, Frederik Pohl's current wife, and contains misleading information about Pohl's marriage to Merrill" (396). Merrill was also involved in the English-Japanese translations of SF. See *Speculative Japan: Outstanding Tales of Japanese Science Fiction and Fantasy* (Kurodahan Press, 2007), which is dedicated to Merrill and Yano Tetsu. Besides her influence as a writer, due to her efforts to bring Canadian, British, and Japanese science fiction to the U.S., and due to her work as an anthologist of American science fiction and as co-founder/Director of the Milford Conference, Merrill can be seen as having a tremendous domestic and international influence on the genre.

<sup>119</sup> Helen Merrick's article in *Speaking Science Fiction* (2000) notes that Willis argues that writers such as Mildred Clingerman, Zenna Henderson, Margaret St. Clair, and Judith Merrill should be reclaimed based on "literary merit alone" and not simply for their "historical importance" (54). She also notes that Willis claims that such fiction has not reprinted and that "analyses of sf based in literary criticism have continued to show antipathy toward earlier female-authored works," devaluing them as "domestic" sf (55).

<sup>120</sup> Davin states that St. Clair earned an M.A. (Phi Beta Kappa) from the University of California in 1933. After the war in 1945, she wrote primarily detective fiction. She began writing science fiction in 1946 with the story "Rocket to Limbo," published in *Fantastic Adventures*. Editor Ray Palmer publicized the story and introduced her to his readers by publishing her photo and an autobiographical mini-essay on the inside of the cover. She also published eight science fiction novels, the first being *Agent of the Unknown* (1952), which featured an android protagonist. Other works are *The Dolphins of Altair* (1967), which is centered on ecological issues, and "*The Dancers of Noyo* (1973)...a heady mix of political oppression, androids, Native Americans, and post-holocaust California." Davin also notes that "[f]rom 1946-1960...she published 91 science fiction stories, 70 under her own name and another 21 under the name of 'Idris Seabright.'...The first story under the Seabright pseudonym, 'The Listening Child' (December, 1950), was chosen by Martha Foley for *Short Story* magazine as one of the distinguished short stories of the year." St. Clair is one of the female writers whom Davin argues changed their opinion of the early pulps in response to claims in the 70's regarding the "new history" of early SF. For his investigation of this change of opinion, see the chapter "Ecce Femina."

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<sup>121</sup> See also Donawerth's "Teaching Science Fiction," which provides statistics in this regard, as well as suggests that teaching young girls about female science fiction writers may encourage girls' interest in science, as well as make them aware of issues relating to women and science which would otherwise "not be available for discussion" (41). Moore's "No Woman Born" is one of the five stories she recommends be taught to high school students. The other four she selects are Merrill's "That Only a Mother" (1960), Anne McCaffrey's "The Ship Who Sang" (1961), Pamela Zoline's "Heat Death of the Universe" (1967), and Tiptree's "The Women Men Don't See" (1975).

<sup>122</sup> For example, see Sarah Gamble's comments in "Shambleau...and others," in which she states that: "Based as it was around technological themes, a topic in which women were assumed to have little interest and certainly no knowledge, science fiction almost automatically assumed their exclusion" (Gamble 30).

<sup>123</sup> Both Moore and Brackett have escaped this designation; Judith Merrill, however, has not, as noted by Newell and Lamont in "Daughter of Earth": "Writers such as C. L. Moore and Leigh Brackett, although innovative space-travel authors in their own right, did not write so brazenly about topics—such as families, children, marriage, home, and everyday life—that were conventionally marked as 'feminine' and 'domestic' and eschewed by advocates of a more 'manly' science fiction. In its day, a leading critic and colleague, Damon Knight, dismissed some of Merrill's later fiction as sentimental, romantic, and, in the extreme view, 'sweat-and-tears-and-baby-urine variety,' 'kitchen-sink' science fiction" (qtd. in Newell and Lamont).

<sup>124</sup> The type of control that is not foreclosed, for example, in Thomas Bertonneau's analysis of Moore. Thus, Bertonneau is able to look outside the genre (and gender-focused criticism) for possible source material to which Moore may be making conscious, artistic allusions.

<sup>125</sup> Le Guin debuted in 1962 and has said "that she never experienced any resistance toward her as a female writer, at any time, from any editor in the science fiction field. Indeed, 'the first (and...only) time I met with anything I understood as sexual prejudice, prejudice against me as a woman writer, from any editor or publisher,' came in 1968 from the men's magazine *Playboy*. When it bought her science fiction story, 'Nine Lives,' the editors asked if they could publish it using only her first initial, so it appeared as by 'U. K. Le Guin.' And this non-genre appearance as the only time 'Ursula' did not appear in her by-line on any story" (Davin 131).

<sup>126</sup> Note, however, that when *Playboy* reprinted the story in 1998, Le Guin's name appeared as "Ursula K. Le Guin." I.e., later reprints do not necessarily reflect how such names originally appeared.

<sup>127</sup> This is a frequent problem in analyzing Moore-Kuttner stories. For example, in "Margin of Error," when the narrator states that child-rearing has been phased out of society so that half the human race can be freed from "enslavement," who is speaking? (See the story as reprinted in *Classic Book*, 152).

<sup>128</sup> It also includes: "Shambleau," "Black Thirst," "Black God's Kiss," "Greater Than Gods," and "Daemon."

<sup>129</sup> In order to build upon primary source data, Attebery reviewed pulp magazines for the year of 1937. He is aware that women such as Merrill, Katherine MacLean, Norton, St. Clair, de Ford, and Zenna Henderson "quietly challenged assumptions about which sex is rational, which aligned with nature, which capable of empathy, and which prepared for violence" (6). He is also aware of the "indeterminacy" in Moore's fiction, which I will discuss in Chapter Two, as he states: Moore "kept the indeterminacy but rewrote it as possibility or multiplicity" (13).

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<sup>130</sup> Joanna Russ, in *Science Fiction Studies* #21, Vol. 7, Part 2, July 1980, Notes and Correspondence, states that “Marge Piercy (in an unpublished essay) maintains that fantasies about telepathy and psionic powers are extremely seductive to women. They represent our skills in communication, trained into us and out of men, and our furnishing—in patriarchy—the emotional support that men need. They also (fictionally) provide power that such activities do not give women in the real world...”

<sup>131</sup> As Moore related to Roark in response to the questions of how her fiction would compare if she began writing SF again: “I’d like to think that it would be more mature, more anchored in reality, though not, I hope, at the expense of the fantasy element. After all the experiences of all these years no doubt the old C. L. Moore is a different person, though I’d like to think the original is a basic element which hasn’t really changed, just been added to” (Roark 31).

<sup>132</sup> For example, see Gubar’s article on Moore, “C. L. Moore and the Conventions of Women’s Science Fiction.” While this article attempts to praise Moore and notes that Moore “deserves readers” (Gubar 17), she concludes that the value of Moore’s fiction is as a “sourcebook” for images of “female secondariness” (Gubar 25). In *No Man’s Land*, Gilbert and Gubar also describe “Shambleau” as “a recapitulation of male anxieties” about the vagina, and “Moore is said to share the ‘socially induced dread of female sexuality and the intense misogyny that marked her historical moment” (qtd. in Pearson 12).

<sup>133</sup> Gubar also states that “[h]er first story, ‘Shambleau’ (1933), deserves to remain her most famous providing—as it does—a key to understanding all her early work” (“Conventions” 17).

<sup>134</sup> Rosinsky asks: “How may we reconcile this character’s [Shambleau’s] depiction with the creation of adventurous Jirel? Is the answer finally that the two are not reconcilable but are instead—as is Shambleau herself—the aesthetic statements of a woman writer alienated from herself, unable to explicitly declare her own self-allegiance?” (Rosinsky 72). Sarah Gamble echoes this argument in 1991 in “Shambleau...and others” stating: “Any feminist critique of Moore’s work, however, must necessarily reconcile these two figures; if we praise her creation of Jirel, for example, we must also attempt to justify the seemingly inherent sexism in the stories involving Northwest Smith” (Gamble 31).

<sup>135</sup> See Pearson’s comments that Smith is an “oddly ineffectual hero” that often finds himself in situations of submission that have been previously defined as “womanish” (12). In this sense, Moore appears to be undermining the “stereotypes of the damsel in distress and of the macho hero” (12). She continues: “In this tale [“Shambleau”], and in others, there is a discernible tension between Moore’s male-identified narrative voice and a delight in powerful women and sexual role-reversal” (12). After a critique of “Yvala,” Pearson then states that: “Moore assumes the protective coloration of misogynistic convention in order to enter a male-dominated literary market, but behind this she covertly offers subversive images of gender which mock the male hero and are potentially liberating for the female reader” (13).

<sup>136</sup> Although his analysis remains limited to “Shambleau,” Bredehoff’s use of Moore as an exemplar in this regard seems particularly appropriate. While her use of certain female figures may be controversial, the fact remains that Moore re-envisioned the origin stories of biblical figures such as Lilith; revised the roles and attributes of Circe, Hecate, and Medea; and radically updated and altered folkloric and medieval figures such as Deidre, Branwen, and Cressida. Further, Moore not only re-wrote the origin stories of mythological figures, she also created “origin stories” for imaginary civilizations, only to then contest or dismantle them. The best example is perhaps “Lost Paradise,” in which the Seles civilization has a “Secret” (262) analogous to “Sight” (267)—an origin myth of “perfection”—which Northwest discovers is far more problematic than its descendants suspect. Moore also connects the phenomena of “origin stories” with language in this piece, as the Seles civilization’s word for “origin” is the same as the word for

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“peak.” “Lost Paradise” can thus be seen as a story that delights in a kind of skepticism toward claims of original unity and perfection.

<sup>137</sup> Samuel R. Delany asks, “Are these unities part of SF discourse? Should they be applied to science fiction?” (Delany 450). He argues that with all four values, “whether clustered around the ‘author’ or not, we will find absolutely diametric values” (451). SF denies “historical unity...at the outset,” suggesting that a plurality of histories exist at once, both looking backwards and forwards (451). Due to its origins in the pulps, SF writers adopt “different styles for different stories,” particularly since the “stylistic plurality of the 60’s”, and there is an equal commitment to “theoretical plurality” (451), as for there to be any value to it, “science fiction *must* deal with conflicting theories” (452). SF authors are involved in adopting conflicting theories from “tale to tale” or contesting “political, sociological, or scientific” theories expressed within the genre’s discourse, and thus engaged in endless dialectic; therefore there is no stylistic or conceptual unity (451). Finally, in discussing the unity of value, the same factors that create other pluralities ensure that SF strives for a plurality of value, with different markets and different levels of readers; there is an “innate” plurality of value, as when we say SF we do not automatically mean it has value as we do when we say “literature” (452).

<sup>138</sup> Perhaps in another parallel to Moore—whose fiction has been called “difficult to analyze” and thus most valuable for its effect—Felman describes the enigmatic nature of what Poe called his “analysis” and the poetic “effect” he attempted to produce. “The enigma it presents us with is the enigma of the analytical par excellence, as stated by Poe himself, whose amazing intuitions of the nature of what he calls ‘analysis’ are strikingly similar to the later findings of psychoanalysis: ‘The mental features discoursed of as the analytical are, in themselves, but little susceptible of analysis. We appreciate them only in their effects’” (Felman 667, quoting Poe’s *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*).

<sup>139</sup> In an interesting parallel to the discussion of “unreadability” in Chapter Three, Felman notes that what Lacan finds “analytical par excellence is not (as is the case for Bonaparte) the readable but the unreadable and the effects of the unreadable. What calls for analysis is the insistence of the unreadable in the text” (Felman 678). Thus, the value of a text, its essential character, might be seen as similar to the unreadable, unknowable aspect of personhood.

<sup>140</sup> Bredehoft draws several connections between the material circumstances of Moore’s production of texts and the Harawayan cyborg, including Moore’s use of names and equipment from her workplace in the construction of her texts. For example, “Yarol” of the Northwest Smith series is an anagram of Royal, the typewriter Moore used to practice her typing at work, and “Northwest” was inspired by a business letter she typed to a “Mr. N.W. Smith.” In this sense, Bredehoft traces Moore’s path from reproducer of texts (typist) to producer of texts (cyborg-writer). He also compares Lester Del Rey’s introduction to *The Best of C. L. Moore* and Moore’s afterword and sees in these two texts a provocative battle between “origin stories.”

<sup>141</sup> The next piece, *The Mask of Circe*, demonstrates that Moore is well-aware of the gendered implications of the light/dark binary, as the novel first appears to be a conflict between the god of light, Apollo, and dark Hecate.

<sup>142</sup> A coincidental connection with Haraway, as she discusses the phenomenon of the miniaturization of technology to the point where it becomes “machines of light.” Additionally, Apollo from *The Mask of Circe* is a “machine” of “light.”

<sup>143</sup> Such that Sarah Gamble in “Shambleau...and others” sees Moore’s non-linguistic female “worlds” as *écriture féminine* and detects in “Julhi” the figure of the frustrated female artist (38). Additionally,



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Jacqueline Pearson suggests that in the story “Yvala” “Moore as creator covertly identifies with Yvala as creator” (13), another possible metaphor for authorship.

<sup>144</sup> Moore uses the device of a “denial” which is actually a “confirmation” in several of her texts. For example, see Cenbe’s speech at the close of “Vintage Season,” or the male “denials” in “The Code,” “The Children’s Hour,” and “No Woman Born.” Here, the narrator may be playing such a role.

<sup>145</sup> The fact that she is covered in “glinting steel” may be significant, given that in “No Woman Born” Deidre can be thought of as being covered in “armor.” The fact that she is “glinting” also recalls Attebery’s descriptions of the unreadable female Other as all “shimmer.”

<sup>146</sup> Mike Smith’s name, of course, is similar to that of Moore’s first “macho” hero, “Northwest Smith.”

<sup>147</sup> It is difficult not to connect the power-mad figures of Moore’s early work with the fact that she began writing in 1933, the year Hitler came to power. Indeed, “Bright Illusion” (1934), “Dust of Gods” (1934), and “Greater Than Gods” (1939) (also a discussion of eugenics) are several texts in which various figures crave power and worship.

<sup>148</sup> Here Dixon is cast in a traditionally female role in Moore’s fiction, i.e., as the witch.

<sup>149</sup> *The Mask of Circe* is thought to be a collaboration by Moore and Kuttner and may very well be. However, in “C. L. Moore: An Appreciation by Marion Zimmer Bradley” Bradley claims to have confronted Moore: “‘Catherine, you wrote those stories in *Startling* by yourself, didn’t you? *Dark World*, *The Mask of Circe*, and so forth?’ She laughed a little and then—Henry Kuttner, after all, had been dead for years—admitted it. ‘Yes,’ she said, ‘all those streams of adjectives were mine’” (Bradley, 69). If true, the title of the compilation *The Startling Worlds of Henry Kuttner (and C. L. Moore)*, which collects these pieces, gains further irony.

<sup>150</sup> A Moore-Kuttner text dealing more directly with “grids” is *Chessboard Planet*, whose main image is of a planet “gridded” by the control of dominant ideologies and power structures. This is another image which coincidentally resonates with Haraway’s “Cyborg Manifesto” in her description of a future that is the *telos* of Star Wars.

<sup>151</sup> The structure of the story seems to embody Gilles Deleuze’s concept of “unbounded becoming” as it mutates through three possible resolutions (a mythical explanation, a scientific explanation, a new science fiction trope) and three genres/subgenres (fantasy, science fiction, feminist science fiction).

<sup>152</sup> As Haraway states, “Single vision produces worse illusions than double vision or many-headed monsters” (“Cyborg Manifesto” 154).

<sup>153</sup> Hecate is a prominent figure in Moore’s fiction, both directly and indirectly. As the goddess of gates and doorways, she is perhaps responsible for Moore’s frequent use of the “portal,” “threshold,” and “doorway” in such pieces as “Doorway into Time,” *The Portal in the Picture*, *The Dark World*, “Threshold,” and the Thresholders of “Lost Paradise.” Hecate may also relate to her general interest in the metaphorical “portal” created by mirrors and blank screens. Hecate as goddess of wolves may have also influenced Moore’s “Werewoman.” Finally, Hecate as witch/foreigner corresponds with Moore’s presentations of Shambleau, Yvala, and other female sorceresses. Moore’s pairing of Hecate and Circe in this novel links Hecate to other figures through Circe, such as Lilith and Medea, who are equated with Circe in “Yvala.”

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<sup>154</sup> "[S]he is more at home on the fringes than in the center of Greek polytheism. Intrinsically ambivalent and polymorphous, she straddles conventional boundaries and eludes definition" (Hornblower 671).

<sup>155</sup> The Faust scenario is used by both Moore and Kuttner, e.g., it appears in Moore's "The Code" as well as in pieces by Kuttner.

<sup>156</sup> An early story in which a female ruler commands "worshippers of the light" is Jarisme in "Jirel Meets Magic" (1935); significantly, Jarisme, like Apollo, can be found in a room with an infinity of mirrors and surfaces. This is one of several examples in which Moore assigns key characteristics to both male and female characters; another such example discussed in this thesis is Panyr of *The Mask of Circe*.

<sup>157</sup> Phrontis is a savior of merchants in Greek mythology, as well as connected to the legend of the Golden Fleece (Wikipedia "Phrontis").

<sup>158</sup> Ophion, "the serpent," was the god who ruled alongside Eurynome, Queen of the Titans. They were deposed by Chronus and Rhea, who threw them into the earth-encircling river Oceanus. They were associated with Uranus (Heaven) and Gaia (Earth) (Wikipedia "Ophion").

<sup>159</sup> Contrary to the suggestion by Gamble, as noted by Betty King, Jirel is neither a virgin nor asexual; rather, Jirel enjoys casual sex provided that it does not accompany degradation or fear (King, 49). For example, her complaint against Guillaume in "Black God's Kiss" is not the result of a repulsion towards sex but the humiliation of being subjected to a "practiced gaze" (23), particularly Guillaume's, as well as the danger of being in his power. As she explains rather baldly to her priest, "Can't you see? Oh, God knows I'm not innocent of the ways of light loving—but to be any man's fancy, for a night or two, before he snaps my neck or sells me into slavery—and above all, if that man were Guillaume! Can't you understand?" (25-26). While her later admission of a sexual attraction to Guillaume can be read as an attraction to this type of dangerous masculinity, thus reinforcing the idea that Moore's heroines are conflicted regarding sex, this passage argues against such a view. The text suggests that lovers are available to Jirel, but that Guillaume is unacceptable. In other words, Jirel desires him physically and respects his strength, and yet, subconsciously, she laments the fact that he is not emotionally or ideologically desirable; rather than submit to her physical desire, which is overpowered by her sense of dignity and pride, or allow herself to be "used," she kills him. However, when she delivers the "black kiss" to Guillaume, he is possessed by an "alien" emotion (50) that drains him of his former "masculine" vitality and he moans vulnerably. He is emasculated, transformed into a suffering being that can evoke her pity, and only at this point does Jirel admit how deeply she feels for him. The conflict, it would seem, is not between Jirel and sexual relationships, but between Jirel and degrading, dangerous sexual relationships with a "macho" male.

<sup>160</sup> In line with Bredehoff's statement, I would add that Shambleau can also be seen as Derrida's *pharmakos* in her role as the scapegoat/witch; similarly, she could also be interpreted as the embodiment of Derrida's *aporia*, an incarnation of an elusive linguistic "trace" from a long-forgotten past.

<sup>161</sup> Thus, Moore's first text portrays a situation in which a male character concludes the story with a somewhat suspect rationalization of events. Due to its repeated use in her fiction, this may be a conscious inversion of the conventional SF model described in Chapter One, in which a wrap up relying on "rational analysis" concludes the story. This scene also establishes an image invoked in later work, i.e., that of the Other who cannot speak and thus is reduced to the status of plant or animal (see Chapter Three, "The Prisoner in the Skull"). It is also her first text in which an Other is understood through fiction or legend (i.e., Clarissa and Hecate) or a word (i.e., Panyr/Pan/panic).

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<sup>162</sup> Attebery excludes Jirel from this analysis, as Amazonian figures tend to be associated more with the “feminist utopian tradition than with the idea of a superwoman” (86-87).

<sup>163</sup> It is possible that Attebery simply means that Moore took figures such as Clarissa farther away from the *seductive*, unreadable Other. In other words, Clarissa can be seen as less of a coquette than Deidre or Shambleau, while still retaining a fundamental “unknowability” as a positive trait.

<sup>164</sup> Moore’s early texts—particularly those intended to elicit a sense of “horror”—reveal her awareness of the “need” of most humans for the “formless” and the “nameless” to be translated into familiar analogs.

<sup>165</sup> This “core” is repeatedly mentioned in Moore’s Northwest Smith and Jirel of Joiry series.

<sup>166</sup> As discussed by editor Sara Salih in the introduction to *The Judith Butler Reader*.

<sup>167</sup> “The Prisoner in the Skull” is listed as a collaboration between Moore and Kuttner by the Utter *Working Bibliography*. However, it contains many of Moore’s themes and seems acceptable for analysis in this context.

<sup>168</sup> Although, Bertonneau in “Monstrous Theologies” contends that the use of the word “blankly” refers to something that is “protected by an unimaginably strong taboo” (7), I believe the two interpretations are complementary.

<sup>169</sup> The idea that Norman is a replication is strengthened by the fact that Moore uses this same phrase “matrix” in *Judgment Night* (1943) to describe the environment/assembly line that produces the “fabulous androids of Cyrille, endowed with a compelling charm stronger than the charm of humans” (24). This matrix is discussed in a conversation between Juille and her companion on the pleasure planet. He asks her: “[I]f you were born yesterday out of a matrix just to sit there and be beautiful, I wonder what we’d talk about?” (24). Juille responds that of course they would talk about life outside of Cyrille; failing that, they would talk about him.

<sup>170</sup> Possible origins for this name: Rohan may be meant as a foil for “Howard Roark” of *The Fountainhead*, as Rohan does not possess “motive power” and his eventual realization that Cressy is not “second-rate” would seem to oppose Roark’s speech against “second-handers.” Other sources may be “Roman,” a recurring theme in Moore’s fiction, or the territory from Tolkien’s Middle-earth.

<sup>171</sup> Comus was originally the Greek god of: “festivity, revels and nocturnal dalliances. He is a son and a cup-bearer of the god Bacchus. Comus represents anarchy and chaos....During his festivals in Ancient Greece, men and women exchanged clothes. He was depicted as a young man on the point of unconsciousness from drink [with]...a wreath of flowers on his head and...a torch that was in the process of being dropped. Unlike the purely carnal Pan or purely intoxicated Bacchus, Comus was a god of excess” (Wikipedia, “Comus”).

<sup>172</sup> Lorna, from *The Portal in the Picture*, is a “wannabe” singer who falls through the surface of a Henry Rousseau painting and into the territory of a repressive government. Once “captured,” Lorna is then delighted to be remade into a beauty object (a product of “visual semantics” (67)) by priests who wish her to serve as a spokesperson for the government. Unlike Deidre of “No Woman Born,” there is no indication in the text that Lorna resents or resists becoming a puppet or a beauty object. Indeed, Lorna embraces becoming an “idealized and beautified” thing (67); once her identity has been altered by plastic surgery, she cannot even appreciate the fact that her face is now a “collection of clichés” (99). Despite the power she thinks her beauty affords her, she literally opens and closes the novel in the act of

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“chasing” after a man, a clear sign of Moore’s contempt for this figure. This text is also notable in that it may have served as a proto-text for *Doomsday Morning*, due to numerous similarities.

<sup>173</sup> The “persistence of vision” is a concept that is discussed to some extent in Moore’s work; e.g., it has been identified by Linda Howell as a possible metaphor for memory in “No Woman Born.”

<sup>174</sup> Here, Moore might be alluding to Deidre of “No Woman Born,” as Deidre also set fashions, or simply to an artificial image of Beauty that others attempt to reproduce.

<sup>175</sup> It also recalls the virtual reality boxes in *Chessboard Planet*.

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