O To Be A Dragon

By the end of the nineteenth century, New York City was the accepted cultural and artistic capital of the United States. The country's largest, wealthiest, and most successful city and a growing international community, by 1900 New York was home to an increasing number of world-class cultural institutions. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, formed in 1870, was immediately recognized as a leading museum, housing a remarkable collection of international art; Carnegie Hall, opened in 1891, was to become one of the most celebrated concert halls in the world. The New York Public Library, formed in 1895, opened the city's temple to knowledge, the library's Fifth Avenue Branch, in 1911.

In the decades following the turn of the century, New York welcomed artistic innovation, supporting new and sometimes radical arts projects that would certainly have failed in smaller, less diverse cities. In the fine and literary arts, as well as the theater, New York City became a center of the avant-garde. In 1920, Scofield Thayer published the first number of his influential literary journal, *The Dial*, including work by Ezra Pound, Marianne Moore, Hart Crane, and Djuna Barnes. The socialist magazine *The Masses* issued its first number in 1911 and, in its six years of publication, the journal included literary work and art by Amy Lowell, Sherwood Anderson, Rockwell Kent, Mabel Dodge, and Robert Henri. Michael Gold and John Sloan revived the journal's spirit in 1926 when they began publishing the *New Masses*; the radical political and arts magazine would publish the period's most important writers, from Langston Hughes to Ernest Hemingway, Eugene O'Neill to Upton Sinclair.

The International Exhibition of Modern Art of 1913 was the first exhibition of its kind anywhere in the world; with the Armory Show, as it was called, and its exhibition of Cubist, Futurist, and Postimpressionist art, the city embraced modern art with enthusiasm. In 1929, Miss Lillie P. Bliss, Mrs. Cornelius J. Sullivan, and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., founded the Museum of Modern Art; the following year, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney founded the city's Whitney Museum of American Art.

The embodiment of the mythic American land of opportunity, New York welcomed many women whose pursuit of a career in the arts might have been unrealistic elsewhere. "New York was largely run by women," Mabel Dodge Luhan wrote of the period, "there was a woman behind every man in every publisher's office, in all the editorial circles, and in Wall Street offices, and it was the judgment and intuition of these that determined many policies, but they were anonymous women."[1] In the arts community, women were involved with every aspect of the radically changing cultural landscape. At "evenings" hosted by influential women artists and patrons, art and politics, literature and social action were fused. Though Mabel Dodge's salon was perhaps the best known of these gatherings, her friend Muriel Draper was also an avid supporter of the arts who brought artists and activists together in her home. Actress Fania Marinoff, with her husband Carl Van Vechten, hosted outrageous all-night parties

famous for gathering together the finest artists and intellectuals of the New Negro Movement with white artists, publishers, and patrons. The Stettheimer sisters—Carrie, Ettie, and Florine—all artists in their own rights, were hostesses to an international group of writers, critics, and painters that included Man Ray and Marcel Duchamp.

In collaboration with Duchamp, painter and art collector Katherine Dreier, a New York native, helped to create an audience for modern art in the United States by establishing the Société Anonyme, an organization dedicated to exhibiting and promoting modern and contemporary art. Another New York artist, painter and colorist Pamela Coleman Smith first exhibited her work in the city at 291, the famous gallery run by photographer Alfred Stieglitz. Smith's work explored a variety of subjects, including the occult, music, and theater.

The city's thriving theater movement matched the innovation of its art scene; women were central to all aspects of the movement—as playwrights, actresses, set designers, directors, producers, and promoters. In 1916, the Provincetown Players, one of the most significant noncommercial theater groups of the twentieth century, performed their first play in Greenwich Village; their first season included new plays by Eugene O'Neill, Louise Bryant, Susan Glaspell and George Cram Cook, and Neith Boyce. Just a few years later, in 1919, the groundbreaking theater company known as the Theatre Guild produced its first show; in the years that followed, the company would become famous for outstanding original plays unlike anything ever seen on the New York stage. Playwright and novelist Neith Boyce Hapgood, a founder of the Provincetown Players, helped to begin a revolution in noncommercial theater devoted to performing the highest quality plays, regardless of popular trends. Women like Adele Gutman Nathan and Eva Le Gallienne headed small theater companies that performed new plays for eager, if sometimes small audiences in Greenwich Village and other city neighborhoods. Theresa Helburn, a producer with the famed Theatre Guild, helped to establish the period's most important playwrights and actors with groundbreaking shows that in some cases literally changed American theater.

A center of publishing and literary development, the city was a natural home for writers and editors. Poet Elinor Wylie, who lived in Washington and Europe before settling in New York, found in the city a community of writers and editors that included her future husband, William Rose Benét, and his sister, poet and critic Laura Benét. As managing editor of *The Dial*, Alyse Gregory was in a position to direct contemporary literary tastes and help determine the character of twentieth-century American poetry. Marianne Moore was perhaps the most important and influential member of this literary circle. An innovative poet and visionary editor, Moore was among the most significant forces in Modernist

literature internationally; a widely read and visible figure in New York's literary scene for half a century, she played a defining role in twentieth-century American literature.

Bridging the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, novelist Edith Wharton was no less important in shaping American literature. Wharton was born Edith Newbold Jones in New York in 1862 and was raised among the city's highest society; the elegance, decadence, and strict unwritten rules of behavior of this American aristocracy were to become a central subject of her fiction. One of the fabled Four Hundred—the city's most elite residents as determined by Caroline Astor and Ward McAllister based on the number that could comfortably fit in Astor's ballroom—Wharton knew firsthand that "moving in high society at this time meant moving but little indeed."[2] With a shrewd eye toward the hypocrisy, cruelty, and corruption sometimes evident in the conduct of her social class, Wharton explored and critiqued the accepted social mores of New York City's wealthy and privileged in novels that were both widely read and critically admired.

As a child and young woman, Wharton's education consisted mainly of study with tutors and frequent trips to Europe where she learned to speak German, French, and Italian fluently. Shy and uninterested in parties, she read widely, hiding in her father's library instead of joining social gatherings. She was already interested in writing as a child and often wrote poems and stories; when she was sixteen, her mother collected some of her poems and had them printed for friends in a volume entitled *Verses*. Her family did not otherwise encourage her writing, considering it an inappropriate pastime for a woman of her social position. This opinion was shared by members of Wharton's social circle; "my literary success puzzled and embarrassed my old friends far more than it impressed them," Wharton wrote in her memoir *A Backward Glance*. "And in my own family it created a kind of constraint which increased with the years. None of my relations ever spoke to me of my books, either to praise or blame—they simply ignored them."[3]

After a broken engagement at age nineteen, she married Edward Wharton, a man who was thirteen years older than his bride. A Boston banker from a prominent family, "Teddy," as he was known, was a close friend of her brother. The couple settled in New York and kept a home in Newport, Rhode Island. Redecorating Land's End, their Newport home, with the assistance of architect Ogden Codman, Jr., became the subject of Wharton's first book, *The Decoration of Houses* (1897). In contrast to the common practice among the *nouveaux riches* of mimicking fashionable styles, Wharton advocated decorating to suit one's own taste and personality. The book was quite popular and its success encouraged Wharton to pursue writing more seriously.

In 1902, the Whartons gave up summers in Newport, replacing Land's End with The Mount, a grand home in Lenox, Massachusetts, where Wharton developed friendships with other writers living in the region. At The Mount, Wharton wrote *The House of Mirth* (1905), a novel that gained her wide readership and critical acclaim. "The smallest details of the picture are recognizable as facts of the life that is pulsing around us in this very hour," one reviewer wrote. "The personages are so lifelike," he continued, "that, though it may be doubted if the living original of any one of them can be positively identified, yet there will surely be many plausible identifications by readers of the book who are proud of their familiarity with Society."[4]

The novel, and its indictment of rigid New York society, generated considerable discussion among readers, especially members of the polite society it depicted. Some members of Wharton's caste did not welcome her disclosures; one *New York Times* reader criticized Wharton's representation of New York society:

> Confessing that society has its spotted sheep, its scandals, its divorcees, why not leave its skeletons in the closet when addressing a larger audience? Society embraces but a very small portion of the American people. Why mislead the masses by bearing before them the soiled linen of the Four Hundred?[5]

The Whartons' marriage, never on a firm foundation, began to crumble under the weight of Teddy's mental illness and poor management of their finances; after living apart for several years, the couple divorced in 1913. They had been married nearly thirty years. In the years before the divorce, Wharton had moved to Paris; she never gave up her United States citizenship and returned to the States with some regularity, but for the rest of her life, France was her home. The majority of Wharton's more than twenty novels, including *Ethan Frome* (1911), *The Custom of the Country* (1913), and *A Son at the Front* (1923) were written in France, after Wharton had fled the repressive culture of her New York circle. In spite of her distance from the city and its high society, however, Wharton continued to write about it, making it the subject of some of her best writing, including her well-respected novel *The Age of Innocence* (1920) and a collection of four short novels, *Old New York* (1924).

In France during World War I, Wharton left Paris and moved to the countryside where she worked with the Volunteer Ambulance Corps, supported various war charities, and started an organization to provide aid and assistance to war orphans. In *An American in Paris*, Janet Flanner described the novelist's commitment to her adopted country; in Wharton's villa on the French countryside, Flanner wrote:

> [She] collected her half-dozen adopted war orphans, left from the six hundred she housed during the war when she gave her property to the government and devoted herself to France and little Belgian refugees with a patriotism of which only an expatriated American who dislikes children is capable.[6]

Wharton was seventy-five years old when she died in 1937; by that time, she was already widely considered to be among the most important American writers of the era. Though she is best remembered for her novels, Wharton was also the author of two volumes of poetry, more than ten collections of short stories, and a number of nonfiction books, including autobiographical works, travel narratives, and decorating studies.

Though of another generation, poet and novelist Elinor Wylie was also a member of the wealthy, elite society of the Northeast. Born Elinor Morton, hers was an affluent New Jersey family who were popular members of the upper-class society outside Philadelphia. Her father was a successful and ambitious lawyer; when he was named Assistant Attorney General in 1897 the family moved to Washington, where Elinor attended exclusive private schools. In spite of their prosperity, the family was not a happy one; one of her brothers committed suicide as a young man and another unsuccessfully attempted to kill himself. For her part, throughout her life the poet suffered crippling migraine headaches as a result of dangerously high blood pressure.

She was twenty when she married her first husband, Philip Hichborn. The couple had one son. The marriage lasted only five years; the poet abandoned her family to run off to Europe with her lover, Horace Wylie, a married man who was nearly twenty years her senior. Horace Wylie's wife would not grant him a divorce, but the couple lived together regardless; the situation was considered scandalous by their friends and acquaintances, even after Horace Wylie was finally divorced and the couple married. "It is difficult . . . to understand," one Wylie biographer wrote, "how tremendously such an action disturbed three or four families and, temporarily, several cities."[7] The gossip generated by her relationship with Horace Wylie helped the poet develop a reputation as a wild and passionate woman who would not bend to satisfy societal expectations. This reputation was confirmed when her first husband committed suicide and Wylie ceded custody of her son to the Hichborn family, an improbable action for a woman of the period.

In 1912, the same year Hichborn killed himself, Wylie's first book of poems was published. The volume, which appeared anonymously, was published in England at her mother's expense. It would be ten years before Wylie published another book; in the meantime, she and her husband returned to the United States and settled in New York City. The poems in her second book, *Nets to Catch the Wind*, were more

accomplished than her earlier work, and the book gained Wylie the attention of the New York literary community. William Rose Benét, a poet and the editor of the *Saturday Review of Literature*, encouraged her work and the two became friends. Just two years later, in 1923, Wylie published her first novel and another book of poetry. Her third collection of poems, *Black Armour*, was well reviewed and thought to be Wylie's finest work to date. "There is not a misplaced word or cadence in it," one reviewer wrote. "There is not an extra syllable."[8]

It was also in 1923 that Wylie divorced her husband and married William Rose Benét. The couple shared an unconventional marriage; Wylie kept her own apartment in the city and she frequently traveled without her husband. Benét and Wylie were central figures in New York's elite literary circles; their friends included Sinclair Lewis, Carl Van Vechten and Fania Marinoff, Benét's siblings Laura and Stephen Vincent Benét, Scofield Thayer, Alyse Gregory, Marianne Moore, and Edna St. Vincent Millay. The uniformly glowing reviews that Wylie's sometimes uneven work received are often attributed, at least in part, to her membership in this influential group; contemporary critics may have been reluctant to criticize even her weaker work considering her position among the city's most honored literati.

Wylie published three novels in the following years, all of which were popular with readers. Alyse Gregory wrote of her 1928 novel *Mr. Hodge and Mr. Hazard* that it was "the most satisfactory" of her books and remarked "here is the pathos pinioned with a glancing stroke and displayed with the light and grace of an ironic princess whose insight has been nurtured in studious isolation."[9] Another highly praised novel, *The Orphan Angel* (1926), explores Wylie's fascination with Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley and imagines his later life if he hadn't drowned as a young man. She shared her interest in Shelley with her sister-in-law, Laura Benét.

Though Laura Benét spent her career in the shadows of her famous brothers, she was herself a poet, journalist, and biographer. She wrote accounts of the lives of Shelley, Edgar Allan Poe, and of her own brothers, and she wrote a biographical novel about poet Emily Dickinson. Though her biographies were often intended for young readers, Benét's meticulous research allowed her to create thoroughly accurate and persuasive portraits of the writers and their eras. Benét was also a novelist and a well-published poet; her work appeared in respected literary magazines, and she collaborated with artist Prentiss Taylor on a number of illustrated poetry broadsides. Along with Wylie's *Nets to Catch the Wind*, Benét's *Fairy Bread* was named "among the best" poetry books of 1921 by *New York Times* critic Herbert S. Gorman.[10] In addition, Benét frequently reviewed books for newspapers and literary magazines, and worked for a time as a newspaper editor.

In 1928, Elinor Wylie's last book of poetry was published; a collection of sonnets, *One Person*, it is often said to be her best work. Wylie died the year the book was published, after a series of strokes. Her husband remained committed to Wylie's work and saw to it that much of the poetry left unpublished was collected in posthumous editions. Benét also memorialized his wife in a poetic tribute, entitled simply "Elinor Wylie." In this poem, Benét laments his wife's death and praises her beauty, strength, and talent, writing of "The swiftness, the pity, the pride, / The bravery crucified, / The marvelous intricate mirth, / The steel that clashed so knightly, / The beauty flashing so brightly."[11]

Like Elinor Wylie, Alyse Gregory was a member of New York's most influential literary community. Gregory became acquainted with many writers and editors when, in 1918, she opened a teashop in Greenwich Village, the "bohemian" center of the city. The shop promptly became a gathering place for William Rose and Stephen Vincent Benét and Scofield Thayer. Through these friends she met Wylie and Laura Benét, as well as Marianne Moore, who was to become her close friend. Another member of the shop's literary clientele was British writer Llewelyn Powys, the man Gregory would eventually marry. Because she was reluctant to give up her autonomy, Gregory lived with Powys for several years before finally marrying in 1924.

When the teashop failed financially, Gregory decided to try earning a living as a writer; during this period, she regularly published book reviews and magazine essays. In 1924, her friend Scofield Thayer, owner and editor of *The Dial*, invited her to join the journal's editorial staff. Gregory accepted the position of managing editor and took on a major role in the periodical's publication. Gregory became acquainted with still more writers, including Amy Lowell and Edna St. Vincent Millay.

As a member of the editorial staff of a leading literary magazine of the period, Gregory was a powerful arbiter of literary style. During her tenure, the magazine published work by artists and writers who are counted among the most important of the century, including Marsden Hartley, Georgia O'Keeffe, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, D. H. Lawrence, Jean Toomer, Marianne Moore, and Sherwood Anderson. In addition, *The Dial* published work by influential if less well-remembered writers, such as Mabel Dodge Luhan and Muriel Draper. Gregory's frequent book reviews in *The Dial* called attention to a variety of new books, including those by fellow New York writers such as Elinor Wylie. Her reviews were considered thoughtful and well written; "Your letter enclosing the reviews of Mrs. Wharton and of Van Wyck Brooks came today," Marianne Moore wrote to Gregory in 1925, "and as ever, your gifts—your own velvet footed thieving of phrases—leave me dumb, exanimated with admiration of your metaphors and method."[12]

Gregory had not always aspired to a literary life; as a child and young woman, she studied opera with some of the finest singers and teachers in Europe and the United States. She was thought to have such great potential as a singer that wealthy patrons supported her training, even sending her to Paris several times for extended periods of study with contemporary opera stars. In spite of the considerable attention she received, Gregory gave up her pursuit of a singing career when she was still a teenager.

Like many other young women of the period, including Adele Gutman Nathan and Katherine Dreier, Gregory became interested in the fight for women's suffrage. Her work as an activist made her aware of other social injustices, and she championed many social reforms, including the fair treatment of factory workers, the improvement of the city's education system, and relief for New York City's impoverished. A pacifist, Gregory also spoke out against World War I. She attended political rallies and marches, and was soon invited to lecture at such events. She also wrote and published articles in favor of the causes with which she was allied.

While Gregory's earliest published works are primarily texts associated with her activism, she is also the author of several novels, a book of essays, an autobiography, and copious journals. Selections from her journals were published in 1973 as *The Cry of a Gull 1923-1948*. Many of the journal selections included in this volume recount Gregory's experiences after she resigned her position at *The Dial* in 1926. That year, she and her husband returned briefly to his family home in England. When they returned to New York the following year, Powys began an affair with the couple's friend, Gamel Woolsey. Though she knew about the affair, Gregory did nothing to stop it and maintained her close friendship with Woolsey.

She and Powys had lived in New York and traveled extensively throughout their marriage, but when he died in 1939, Gregory moved to her husband's native country and resumed residence in the house they had shared in the English countryside. She continued writing and her essays appeared regularly in British and American journals. She also kept up her correspondence with several of her friends and fellow writers in New York, some of whom visited her in England. In the years after Powys's death, she began to gather his papers and letters and to edit and organize her own journals and writings as well, a project she would remain committed to until her death.

Marianne Moore, Gregory's lifelong friend, was also a member of New York's literary set and, as Gregory's fellow editor at *The Dial*, she played an important role in the development of twentieth-century American literature. Her contribution as an editor, however, is second to that of her own writing; Moore is commonly considered to be one of the most inventive poets of her time. Her close acquaintance

with poets such as William Carlos Williams and Wallace Stevens and her intimate friendships with expatriate writers such as H. D. made her a central figure in an international literary community that was to have a profound influence on both literature and art well beyond the Modernist period. Aware of her influence on the literature of her time, Moore saw herself "rightly as having been in a position of substantial power and as having used that authority in the service of literature, not her own name or career."[13]

Beginning in 1915, Moore's poems appeared regularly in little magazines published primarily in New York and London. Her first collection, *Poems* (1921), was privately printed as a surprise gift from her friend, the Imagist poet Hilda Doolittle. In spite of the fact that it was a small publication printed in a limited number, the book received considerable attention and helped to solidify Moore's reputation as an original and powerful writer. "This book has for its distinguishing quality thought as original as a spring of colored water," Laura Benét wrote in the *New York Evening Post.* Benét further noted the complexity of Moore's ideas and observations, finding some of the poems to be "more like philosophical soliloquies or scientific treatises than poems. They move but they do not sing."[14]

By the time *Poems* was published, Moore had been living in New York City's Greenwich Village for three years. Though she was raised in Pennsylvania and educated at Bryn Mawr, Moore was to become such an integral part of the city's literary landscape that she has been associated with New York ever since. She wrote numerous poems about the life of the city, including "Carnegie Hall: Rescued," "Granite and Steel," and "New York."

At *The Dial,* Moore developed a reputation as an exacting editor who often requested revisions and omissions from even the most accomplished writers—including Gertrude Stein, Hart Crane, and Archibald MacLeish. This practice was not entirely popular among her contemporaries and some writers withdrew their submissions to *The Dial* rather than submit to her changes. Her editorship at the journal was short-lived—the magazine ceased publication in 1929—but her role in determining the literature of her time cannot be overestimated. In the years Moore acted as editor, *The Dial* published some of the most significant poems of the century, including Hart Crane's "To Brooklyn Bridge," and segments from long poems such as William Carlos Williams's *Paterson* and Ezra Pound's *Cantos*. She also published work by Gertrude Stein, Conrad Aiken, and her friend and former *Dial* editor Alyse Gregory.

Later in her career, Moore enjoyed a widespread fame and visibility of the kind poets rarely experience in the United States. Her interest in and love of baseball—especially the New York Yankees and the Brooklyn Dodgers, her hometown teams—and the poems she wrote about the sport brought Moore

and her work to the attention of a public well beyond the readers of literary magazines. Her baseball poems, including "Hometown Piece for Messrs. Alston and Reese" and "Baseball and Writing," were reprinted in large and small newspapers all over the country. In 1968, Moore was invited to throw out the first pitch at a New York Yankees game. Photos of the "baseball poet" commemorated the event in newspapers and popular national news magazines.

In addition to her popularity with nonliterary audiences, throughout her career Moore commanded the respect and admiration of her fellow writers and of literary critics. In his introduction to her *Selected Poems* (1935), T. S. Eliot states, "Miss Moore's poems form part of the small body of durable poetry written in our time."[15] H. D. described Moore's poems as "curiously wrought patterns, these quaint turns of thought and concealed, half-playful ironies." They have a quality, she writes:

> that catches us, that holds, fascinates and half-paralyses us, as light flashed from a very fine steel blade, wielded playfully, ironically, with all the fine shades of thrust and counter-thrust, with absolute surety and with absolute disdain. Yet with all the assurance of the perfect swordsman, the perfect technician, I like to imagine that there is as well something of the despair of the perfect artist. . . . Miss Moore turns her perfect craft as the perfect craftsman must inevitably do, to some direct presentation of beauty, clear, cut in flowing lines, but so delicately that the very screen she carves seems meant to stand only in that serene palace of her own world of inspiration—frail, yet as all beautiful things are, absolutely hard—and destined to endure longer, far longer than the toppling skyscrapers, and the world of shrapnel and machine-guns in which we live.[16]

Marianne Moore and many of her fellow New York writers were part of a community that included artists, theatrical personalities, political advocates, and cultural critics as well as writers and editors. One member of this wider circle was Muriel Draper, a worldly society hostess, writer, and arts aficionado. As a hostess, decorator, memoirist, and what might be called a "culture desk" writer, Muriel Draper's career in the traditionally female roles of hostess and homemaker and the often-maligned world of women's fashion elevated these pursuits into the realm of the arts.

Draper was born and raised in Massachusetts; her father earned his fortune as an early investor in the American Bell Telephone Company and the family lived comfortably. When she was a young woman, they moved to Europe, living variously in France and Italy. It was during this time that she met and fell in love with Paul Draper, a well-known singer. The couple married in 1909 and settled in Italy where they became acquainted with Mabel Dodge. The Drapers were regular guests at the Villa Curonia where they met artists and writers from across Europe and other American expatriates. During this period, Draper wrote, she was "largely concerned with outstanding people in the world of music,

painting, literature, politics, economics and society."[17] Describing Draper's appearance in this period, Mabel Dodge Luhan wrote:

> Bending slightly backwards, she was like a hard, slender, polished ivory figure carved from an elephant's tusk; she seemed to have been produced complete from that curving, unyielding form and ever afterwards to have retained, like a special destiny, the arbitrary character from which she emerged. . . . Her outline followed the tusk's curve and her blonde Negroid profile, with crushed, long nose, met the circumference of the jutting bony jaw with its thick, protuberant, intelligent lips, painted scarlet.[18]

When the Drapers moved to London in 1911, their home became a popular gathering place for their friends; Henry James, John Singer Sergeant, and Eleanora Duse visited often. Draper also befriended Gertrude Stein who was, at the time, writing "portraits" of some of her friends and acquaintances, including her famous *Portrait of Mabel Dodge at the Villa Curonia*. Though she endeavored to make a portrait of Muriel Draper, Stein told Draper that "she could not 'do' a portrait of me because I 'swooped so' she could not keep me still long enough."[19]

In London, the Drapers began to struggle financially as a result of Paul Draper's alcoholism and excessive gambling. In 1914, he embarked on a singing tour in hopes of raising money, but the tour ended abruptly when World War I started while he was performing in Germany. Though he was able to return to England and then travel to the United States, Muriel Draper and their two young sons remained in England because they could not afford the cost of the trip. By the time they arrived in New York in 1915, Paul Draper had been hospitalized and was being treated for alcoholism. The Drapers separated and later divorced; Muriel Draper remained in the United States and settled in New York City.

She continued to host gatherings of artistic and literary friends and acquaintances in her New York home, and she maintained her European reputation as a devoted supporter of artists and artistic activity of all kinds. She also began a new career during this period when she became an interior designer and, in 1927, opened her own design firm; her many connections in New York society allowed her to build her business designing for wealthy clients. Draper also wrote and published essays and articles in popular magazines, including *Vogue* and *Town and Country*. Her work often dealt with fashion and culture and she became known as an expert in good taste. A smart and witty writer and talented public speaker, she was often invited to lecture on style; in the early 1930s, Draper went on an extended tour, delivering talks entitled "Charm" and "We All Wear Clothes." During this period, Draper wrote *Music at Midnight*, a memoir of her years in Europe. The book was successful with readers and was named

among the year's bestsellers by its publisher. Draper's portraits of the many artists and writers she had entertained were praised by Harry Hansen, who claimed that she "describes them as no one else has ever drawn them."[20]

During the 1930s and 1940s, Draper became increasingly interested in the Soviet experiment; in 1934, she traveled to the USSR for the first time. During her trip, she wrote articles for American magazines about Russian fashion and culture. In "Moscow Fashions," Draper advised:

> The people of Moscow are definitely interested in clothes. Anyone who tells you not to bring bright or smart clothes to the [USSR] is giving you bad advice. . . . It is true that you need very strong—and for the winter months—very warm clothing, both for travel in the Soviet Union or a stay of longer than a day in any of its miraculously changing cities, but to confine yourself to a drab and outmoded wardrobe is to find yourself badly dressed in a country . . . where the desire of men and women to attract is by no means extinct.[21]

Draper goes on to give detailed descriptions of Russian ladies' day clothing, evening dress, and costumes at the opera (which she finds beautiful, despite a scarcity of jewelry) and she observes a proliferation of berets and pink nail polish. Draper even comments on the coats of the Army—they are "short-waisted, long skirted, smartly in and out pleated garments, tabbed with green, red-violet and scarlet, and have an extremely efficient dash about them that no other modern military coat can equal."[22]

Though Draper reported on Russian style, she was also interested in the country's political landscape. She was a founder of the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship and the head of its women's division. Draper traveled to the USSR several times during the 1940s; in 1945 she attended the Women's International Democratic Federation, a conference that brought together like-minded women from all over the world in search of "a peaceful and civilized way of life for themselves and their people, free from the atavistic and wicked stupidity of war."[23] When she returned to the United States, Draper helped to organize the Congress of American Women, an American chapter of the Federation. In 1949, she was elected president of the Congress. The organization became a target of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) later that year and disbanded in 1950 as a result. Under pressure from HUAC, she withdrew from political activity and, just two years later, Draper died in New York City.

Though her last years were devoted in large part to political activity, Draper remained in close contact with the New York artists and writers she encouraged, supported, and entertained in the 1920s and 1930s. One couple with whom Draper maintained an intimate friendship was Carl Van Vechten and

his wife, Fania Marinoff, who had known her since they met years earlier as guests at Mabel Dodge's Villa Curonia. Marinoff, an exotically beautiful and successful New York stage actress, and Van Vechten, a novelist, music and dance critic, photographer, and Harlem Renaissance patron, often inspired extreme responses in those they met. Van Vechten and Draper, for example, had an intense, immediate, and mutual dislike when they met in Italy. Decades later, however, they could not help but cross paths often in their common New York social circle. At the urging of mutual friends, they made a peace that eventually developed into friendship.

Despite the fact that her theater career is not well remembered, Fania Marinoff was known in her day as a lovely and talented actress who was not afraid to take risks on stage. She proved this especially when she appeared in Frank Wedekind's overtly sexual and scandalous *Spring's Awakening*, a play that was performed just once before the cast was arrested and the show closed by police. Marinoff had dramatic flair offstage as well; as guests at all the best parties and the hosts of frequent parties of their own, she and her eccentric husband were fixtures in New York's literary and artistic circles. The Van Vechten parties, where Harlem's premier writers and performers mingled with Greenwich Village bohemians and members of the city's high society, were famous in every corner of the city and were talked about even among American expatriates in Paris.

Known in her childhood as "Fanny," Marinoff was a strong-willed and lively child; she made her first stage appearance at just eight years old. Born in Odessa, Marinoff moved with her father, a Russian Jew, to the United States after her mother's death; the youngest of thirteen children, she was still very young when they settled in Boston. As a child, Marinoff moved west to Denver with her brothers and their wives. There, she worked as a domestic servant but became determined to pursue a career in the theater. She was only twelve when she joined a traveling acting company; after performing for several years with small regional companies, Marinoff made her way to New York City.

She found immediate success on the New York stage and performed regularly with local and touring companies; she changed her name to the more sophisticated Fania during this time. In New York, she met and fell in love with Carl Van Vechten, then a young theater critic. After a furiously passionate courtship, which included their first trip to Europe together, they were married in 1914. In the early years of their marriage, the couple lived in Greenwich Village, then a center of the city's artistic and urbane bohemianism and a powerful aesthetic and political radicalism. Marinoff and Van Vechten were at home among the neighborhood's many writers and actors; they lived on the same street as their friend Elinor Wylie and not far from Neith Boyce and Hutchins Hapgood as well as Mabel Dodge's salon.

During this period, Fania Marinoff performed her most successful roles. Working on both stage and screen, she developed a reputation as a gifted actress who could perform popular comic roles as well as more challenging classical and experimental parts. Her most celebrated performance was as Ariel in *The Tempest* in 1916, in which the *New York Times* found her "bewitching."[24] Marinoff was still quite young when she retired from acting. She and her husband remained central figures in several arts communities, serving as a point of connection among many of the period's most important artists and thinkers, those from Harlem and Greenwich Village, New York and Europe.

A diverse group of American and European artists also came together at the famous soirees hosted by the Stettheimer sisters. Dear friends of the Van Vechtens, Ettie, Carrie, and Florine Stettheimer were at once ethereal and worldly; they were "an exotic if somewhat strange trio: Ettie in red wig, brocades, and diamonds; Carrie, who dressed never in the fashions of the day but in the elegance of a past era; Florine in white satin pants."[25] The sisters—one a writer, one the designer of an extravagant, one-of-a-kind dollhouse, and one a painter—were devoted to the arts and counted among their friends the most important artists and writers of the early twentieth century. Their contemporaries did not always admire the sisters' eccentricities; to their mutual friend Muriel Draper, Mabel Dodge Luhan once wrote, "I don't find any amusement in Stettheimer affectations, or in taffeta ruffles and false hair."[26] Draper replied, "if you think they are nothing but affectations and false hair and ruffles, you've missed something."[27] In any case, everyone agreed that there was no one else quite like them; "they were all very different," Georgia O'Keeffe wrote, "but they were also very much more like each other than they were like the rest of us."[28]

The sisters were born in Rochester, New York, but they spent most of their younger years living in Europe with their mother. They returned to the United States to escape World War I and settled on New York's Upper West Side. Before long, their home became a gathering place for an international community of writers and artists that included the Van Vechtens, Francis Picabia, Henry McBride, Leo Stein, Man Ray, Marcel Duchamp, Charles Demuth, and Marsden Hartley.

Though her work differed dramatically from that of the high Modernist painters whom she and her sisters counted among their friends, today, painter Florine Stettheimer is the best known among the Stettheimer sisters. Her paintings were popular with artists and art critics who visited the sisters but her work was rarely exhibited outside the Stettheimer home. As a result, her work was ignored for most of the twentieth century. Her clever and vividly colored paintings included city scenes and many portraits of friends. "She put into visible form in her own way," O'Keeffe wrote of her paintings, "something

that they all were, a way of life that is going and cannot happen again, something that has been alive in our city."[29]

In 1934, Florine Stettheimer designed the sets for *Four Saints in Three Acts*, the controversial opera by Gertrude Stein and Virgil Thomson. For the opera, she "devised an extravagant setting with a sky of cellophane looped and draped like an opera curtain, with palm trees whose foliage was made of huge bows of pink tarlatan."[30] The press described Stettheimer's staging as "fantastically absurd,"[31] but Gertrude Stein admired it. In response to her praise of the sets, Florine Stettheimer wrote to Stein, "I am so pleased you decided that our production of the *Four Saints* opera was not the way you do not like it."[32]

Ettie Stettheimer, a novelist, published several books under the pseudonym Henrie Waste, a name derived from her own full name, Henrietta Walter Stettheimer. Family friends considered Ettie to be most amusing and perhaps the most charismatic of the sisters; she was, by all accounts, a brilliant conversationalist. That her writing was ove rtly feminist comes as no surprise, considering that the sisters were all examples of the "new woman" of the 1910s who resisted societal pressure to marry and did as they pleased. Though her novels are no longer in print, her contemporaries praised her work and considered her to be a talented writer.

Among their friends, Carrie Stettheimer was celebrated as a gifted hostess who managed a spectacularly beautiful home and planned elegant and surprising meals (feather soup was a favorite dish). "Although my sister was an extremely successful and competent housekeeper, as our friends will confirm," Ettie wrote after Carrie's death, "she had no liking whatever for this job, and this, I imagine, no one suspected."[33] Carrie Stettheimer's passion was for the two-story, sixteen-room dollhouse she designed and decorated beautifully, down to the last detail. Among its many rooms, Carrie's model had a gallery filled with miniature works of art created by artists who frequented the sisters' soirees. The dollhouse, for example, included Marcel Duchamp's own minuscule rendition of his famous painting, *Nude Descending a Staircase*.

For more than twenty-five years, Carrie Stettheimer worked on the rooms of her dollhouse, paying close attention to details such as lampshades, wallpaper, and furniture; she even included miniature playing cards and a tiny mah-jongg set. Reflecting upon the dollhouse, Ettie Stettheimer wrote, "I look upon this production of Carrie's as a facile and more or less posthumous substitute for the work she was eminently fitted to adopt as a vocation, had circumstances been favorable, —: stage design."[34]

Their association with the era's most influential artists put the Stettheimer sisters near the center of one of the most innovative art movements of the century. Duchamp and Man Ray, along with artist and collector Katherine S. Dreier, founded the Société Anonyme, an organization designed to support and generate awareness of Modernist art; the group's name, a French phrase meaning "incorporated," was suggested by Man Ray to highlight the fact that the organization was not allied with any particular artistic school. The Société Anonyme promoted new artists by arranging exhibitions and creating art programs that helped introduce audiences to their work and develop their reputations among galleries and collectors.

Dreier, a suffragist and member of various political and activist organizations, was an early feminist who supported the improvement of educational opportunities for women and was involved in creating several schools for girls in New York City. An accomplished painter—two of her paintings were hung in the legendary Armory Show of 1913—Dreier studied art in Europe and exhibited her early work there. Dreier and Duchamp shared a lifelong friendship and a mutual devotion to modern and experimental art. Critics praised the Société Anonyme for its commitment to new artists and its inclusion of their work in exhibits and catalogs. In response to a retrospective catalog, Katharine Kuh wrote, "perhaps [most] useful are those many lesser known artists who supported the new movement, for, in a sense, they form a broad base from which the most progressive of our times evolved."[35]

Katherine Dreier was also a well-known collector of fine art; her famous collection included some of the most important artworks of the era, such as Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors* and work by Man Ray, Wassily Kandinsky, Piet Mondrian, and Fernand Léger. As the president of the Société Anonyme, perhaps her most important contribution to the international arts community, Dreier played an essential role in generating American interest in and acceptance of modern art. She ran the organization's small gallery, curated exhibitions, and wrote essays and gave lectures in support of modern art. In one such piece, Dreier wrote:

> I have found that many people do not feel that humor should enter in the realm of Art. . . . Why this seriousness I cannot imagine, for there is nothing finer than spiritual gaiety as expressed in the Fine Arts. To live at a period when such richness of new vitality has entered the life of the art world rouses the best efforts in each and all, whether they consciously see the new vision or not.[36]

Artist Pamela Coleman Smith was associated with another of New York's dominant artistic circles, the group of photographers and painters who exhibited work at Alfred Stieglitz's famous gallery, 291. Most late twentieth-century scholars and artists have overlooked her work, but at the height of her career

Smith was a celebrated painter who enjoyed many successful exhibitions in New York and abroad. Smith was born in the United States around 1877 and she spent her childhood in New York, Jamaica, and England. These different geographies each influenced Smith and her artwork. While living in Jamaica, she developed an interest in the island's folk culture and she later wrote and illustrated a book of Jamaican folktales. As a teenager living in England, she informally studied set and costume design and toured with the Lyceum Theatre company; in addition to staging, she often performed small parts in the company's productions. Like Carrie Stettheimer, Smith was a skilled miniaturist interested in a small stage; she designed and presented sophisticated miniature theater productions. Smith's diminutive dramas were thought to be quite ingenious and they caught the attention of several critics who wrote about them in art magazines. In spite of this notice for her theater productions, it was as a painter that Pamela Coleman Smith enjoyed her greatest success. In the mid 1890s, Smith returned to New York and enrolled in the Pratt Institute where she studied art and illustration.

After graduating from Pratt in 1897, Smith had immediate success selling small commercial drawings and illustrated pieces such as cards and theatrical prints. She returned to England where, in the following years, she would provide drawings for numerous small publications, including *A Broad Sheet* and *The Green Sheaf*, which she also edited. She ran a small press that printed books with hand-colored drawings, and she opened a school for handcoloring. During this period she became acquainted with William Butler Yeats; later she would design scenery for his plays when they were performed in England.

Around the turn of the century, Smith began the paintings that would be her most successful. Inspired by the Rosicrucian theory of correspondence, she began to paint while listening to music, allowing the sound to influence her compositions. "They are not pictures of the music themes—pictures of the flying notes—not conscious illustrations of the name given to a piece of music," Smith told an interviewer, "but just what I see when I hear the music—thoughts loosened and set free by the spell of sound."[37] Smith took inspiration from the work of different composers, making each painting a response and record of her experience of a piece of music. These paintings have been said to foreshadow some of the tonal elements of the Surrealist painters of the next several decades.

In 1907, her paintings to music were exhibited at Stieglitz's Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession, otherwise known as 291. Smith was, in fact, the first painter to have an exhibition in what had, until then, been a gallery devoted to photography. The show was a critical and financial success and so many viewers visited the gallery that Stieglitz decided to extend the exhibition. He mounted two more exhibitions of Smith's work at 291 during the next several years, both of which were well received.

Work from these shows was described as, “exotic and invariably personal. . . . Miss Smith’s work has always a touch of the bizarre united to elements of greater dignity.”[38]

Perhaps Pamela Coleman Smith’s most successful artistic project is one for which she is not often recognized. Because of her lifelong interest in the occult, in 1909 Arthur Edward Waite invited Smith to collaborate with him on the design for a deck of tarot cards. Waite worked closely with Smith on the design for the “face” cards, or the Major Arcana; but Smith alone created the images for the “number,” or Minor Arcana, cards. Until this time, the Minor Arcana tarot cards were generally decorated with abstract forms or they weren’t illustrated at all. Thus, Smith’s images became the model for many deck designs that followed. Though there are countless illustrated tarot decks in the world, Smith’s deck is among the most widely recognized and the most often reproduced.

In contrast to the miniature dramas conceived and staged by Smith are the grandiose theatrical pageants designed and produced by actress, writer, and theater producer Adele Gutman Nathan. Late in life, Nathan described herself as “an advocate of changing horses in mid stream,” noting that in the course of her long career she had “worked in almost every field of communications—newspapers, radio, TV, motion pictures, museums, theatres, pageants.”[39]

Born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland, Nathan was the daughter of one of the city’s leading families, the owners of a prominent department store. She enjoyed the benefits of her family’s affluence, including many opportunities to meet interesting visitors to the city, such as Gertrude Stein, who lived in Baltimore while attending medical school at Johns Hopkins University. Nathan’s interest in theater developed when she was in school; as a high school student she worked on her school’s plays and also became involved in a children’s theater group. Nathan was committed to adapting classical dramas for young audiences; later in her life she would also write several historical narratives for children, including the popular and well-regarded books *The Iron Horse* (1931) and *Wheat Won’t Wait* (1952).

In 1916, Nathan joined some friends in starting the Vagabond Players, a theatrical company that performed in a hotel basement. In order to find new plays for the company to perform, Nathan traveled to Provincetown, Massachusetts, home of the Provincetown Players, where she met the then unknown playwright Eugene O’Neill. The Vagabond Players performed O’Neill’s one-act play *Bound East for Cardiff* during one of their first seasons. In the 1920s, Nathan moved to New York, where she joined the Cellar Players of the Hudson Guild. She directed numerous plays with this small company, including O’Neill’s *Anna Christie*. In addition to her work in theater, during this period Nathan was active in the women’s suffrage movement, especially in Baltimore and Washington.

In 1927, Nathan produced the 100th anniversary pageant for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. Producing historical pageants—grand combinations of historical narrative, dramatic theater production, spirited musical, and community celebration—soon became her new career. During the subsequent decades, Nathan produced many highly praised shows, including pageants for the 1933 and 1939 World's Fairs in Chicago and New York, respectively, and the Niagarama in Niagara Falls, New York. Perhaps her most successful pageants were the annual Weirton Steel Labor Day celebrations she produced in Steubenville, Ohio. One such pageant had a cast of more than 600, most of whom were Steubenville residents, and included "dancing, some of it in European folk costumes, singing by an excellent male chorus from the mills and a continuous accompaniment of music from electric organs."[40]

In addition to producing pageants, Nathan continued to work in the theater, make short films, create radio programs, and write for magazines and newspapers. Nathan's continued interest in women's rights is evident in some of this work, including *It's a Man's World*, a radio piece written with June Hynd, that highlighted women's accomplishments in various fields. The piece made mention of Grace Comisky, owner of the White Sox baseball team; Nellie Taloe Ross, the first woman governor in the United States and the then director of the United States Mint; and of women working in everyday jobs as well: "Today's news about women," Nathan and Hynd wrote, "[is] today's news about the world—in the headlines, in the bylines, in the news behind the news. Women at work, in the homes, in the offices, in the defense industries, women buyers, women sellers, women thinkers and doers, that's today's world."[41] The piece never aired, however, because NBC was "not enthusiastic about its sales possibilities."[42]

Late in her life, Nathan appeared as a "witness" in Warren Beatty's Academy Award–winning film *Reds*, the story of the lives of political radicals Louise Bryant and John Reed. Because Bryant and Reed were involved with the Provincetown Players, Nathan knew them both during her time in Provincetown. The filmmakers asked her to discuss "the goals and character of the small theater movement in America before 1920 . . . and the significance of the Provincetown Players in this movement." They were interested also in Nathan's "wisdom, charm, knowledge, and wit, which, more than any specific information, is what we're hoping to record."[43] In a letter to Warren Beatty before the film's release and blockbuster success, Nathan wrote: "I'm afraid this is a bad time—what with Mr. Reagan and all—for anything liberal, but I'm hoping you'll be able to put it over."[44]

A year before Adele Gutman Nathan arrived in Provincetown in search of new plays, playwright and novelist Neith Boyce Hapgood was among a group of theater enthusiasts summering in the Cape Cod village who came together to found the Provincetown Players. Artists, writers, and actors who began staging original plays for their own entertainment, the company from the start was devoted to "the

development of a native drama and communal creation" and to the idea that "an American drama, like that of ancient Athens, should be a unifying force."[45] Along with her husband, journalist and writer Hutchins Hapgood, her friend and fellow playwright Susan Glaspell, and others, she helped to found a company that was to become one of the leading forces in the noncommercial theater movement of the 1910s and 1920s. When the Provincetown Players began performing their plays in Greenwich Village, they announced their determination "to establish a stage where playwrights of sincere, poetic, literaryand dramatic purpose could see their plays in action, and superintend their production without submitting to the commercial manager's interpretation of public taste."[46]

Born in the Midwest and raised in California and New York, Neith Boyce began writing stories as a child. Her father, a newspaperman, published some of these early stories in his papers; later, her work began to appear in popular magazines, including *Vogue*. Her first fulltime work as a writer was a position with the *New York Commercial Advertiser* and she continued to write fiction in her off hours. At the *Commercial Advertiser*, she worked closely with the paper's city editor Lincoln Steffens; she also met and fell in love with another reporter, Hutchins Hapgood. Though she resisted the constraints of a traditional marriage, "Hutch," as friends called him, convinced her to marry him. Theirs was a sometimes turbulent union, but the couple had four children together and remained married throughout their lives. Neith Boyce Hapgood left journalism to raise her family; she found it difficult to work on novels and stories and meet the demands of her husband and children, but she continued to write whenever possible. She used her maiden name professionally, publishing as Neith Boyce; this did not, of course, prevent the press and reviewers from referring to her primarily as Mrs. Hutchins Hapgood. "Mrs. Hutchins Hapgood's cleverly written story," one critic wrote of her novel, *The Eternal Spring*, "is a model of unusual originality and interest."[47] Describing the Hapgoods' relationship, Mabel Dodge Luhan wrote, "she let [her husband] think he was pursuing God, but she held the end of the leash in her enigmatic white hand and smiled a secret smile."[48]

The Hapgoods were connected to artistic and literary communities in both New York and expatriate Europe; among their closest friends were Carl Van Vechten, and Ida Rauh. The Hapgoods were regular guests at the famous expatriate salon of Mabel Dodge. Neith Boyce Hapgood made an impression on her hostess, who wrote, "Neith was really wonderful. She moved like a slow river and her hair was round and round her head in red braids. Her face was white and sweet and she had sleepy, green eyes that sometimes woke up."[49] When she returned to New York after traveling in Europe, Neith Boyce Hapgood's impression of the celebrated gatherings at European salons was that they would never be successfully duplicated in the United States. She wrote:

> We shall never have a salon on American soil; and most of us will never miss it, or will be satisfied with applying the classic name to an afternoon tea recurring regularly on a given day of the week. We may even say complacently… "her salon is a failure; she has bad wine" … the national genius is for action, not talk.[50]

Neith Boyce enjoyed a successful career as a novelist and wrote several plays that were produced by the Provincetown Players. Though they started as a group of friends putting on plays for one another in their summer cottages at the tip of Cape Cod, they soon revolutionized American theater. While the popular theater of the day included primarily melodrama and farce, the Provincetown Players produced plays based on their own lives; when they began to perform their plays in a Greenwich Village theater, they took the New York theater community by storm.

Eugene O'Neill was, undoubtedly, the most talented playwright among them; Neith Boyce Hapgood, however, was also well respected among the group for her smart and funny plays. Together the Hapgoods wrote and performed a play called *Enemies*, a dialogue based on their own conversations. Her play *Constancy*, the very first play the group performed formally, was "a hilarious send-up of the love affair between Mabel Dodge Luhan and John Reed, a stormy relationship roiled by fierce arguments about his infidelity."[51]

Mabel Dodge Luhan and Neith Boyce Hapgood were lifelong friends; Neith visited Los Gallos and also met with Mabel when she visited New York. In a letter to her friend, Luhan wrote, "It seems to me that your life is infinitely romantic—real—and interesting. You have bad times but you are living in the greatest, nearest Reality phase of *now*—and the rest of the world is mostly living in unreal, shadowed places."[52]

Like the Provincetown Players, the Theatre Guild, another New York company, played an essential role in the development of American theater. An art theater devoted to theatrical innovation and artistic quality, the Theatre Guild became famous for producing great plays, regardless of their commercial viability. Through subscriptions, the Guild was able to survive financially and to build an audience for its sometimes radical productions. Under the direction of writer, director, and producer Theresa Helburn, the Theatre Guild created some of the most significant plays of the twentieth century. Helburn headed this pioneering and influential group at a time when female producers were not common in the professional theater. Nevertheless, after starting as a play reader, Helburn quickly went on to become the company's executive director, a title she held for some forty years.

Helburn was born and raised in New York; her mother, an educator who was known to encourage and promote the work of young painters, was a profound early influence on her. Helburn studied at Bryn Mawr College where she was active in the school's drama programs; she produced many class plays during her undergraduate years. After graduation, she went on to teach dramatics at Miss Merrill's Finishing School in Mamaroneck, New York, a well-known girls' school with a reputation for promoting the theater arts. The future actress and theater producer Katharine Cornell was her student at Miss Merrill's.

During this time, Helburn wrote plays, some of which were produced on stage; she also wrote and published poems in literary magazines. Helburn soon entered Radcliffe as a graduate student. She took "English 47" at Harvard with Professor George Pierce Baker, a playwriting class that has become famous for its impressive list of alumni that included Eugene O'Neill, Philip Barry, and Lee Simpson. After working on various small productions and traveling in Europe, Helburn returned to New York and joined the staff of the *Nation* as a drama critic. In 1919, she became involved with the newly formed Theatre Guild. "A year later," Helburn remembered, "I was made executive secretary *pro tem*, a job that not only I didn't want but that no one wanted. So started a career of theater production to which I had never given a moment's thought, which had not interested me, and which I would have regarded in any case as beyond my capacities."[53]

Helburn soon proved her ability to produce both groundbreaking and successful shows; during her career with the Theatre Guild, she worked on the first productions of O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931), *The Philadelphia Story* (1939) by Philip Barry, Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals *Oklahoma!* (1943) and *Carousel* (1945), and O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh* (1946). Oscar Hammerstein described his friend, "Terry," as "a tiny woman with a wise little smile on her face, an alert, brisk, bustling little woman."[54] Of her work as a producer, he wrote:

> A producer is a rare, paradoxical genius—hard-headed, soft-hearted, cautious, reckless, a hopeful innocent in fair weather, a stern pilot in stormy weather, a mathematician who prefers to ignore the laws of mathematics and trust intuition, a realist, a practical dreamer, a sophisticated gambler, a stage-struck child. That's a producer. That was Theresa Helburn.[55]

On several occasions, the Theatre Guild invited another talented woman, Eva Le Gallienne, to direct company productions. An actor, director, producer, and an important translator of the work of Ibsen, Eva Le Gallienne was a central figure in New York's theater community throughout much of the twentieth century. She shared the Theatre Guild's philosophy about staging plays of the highest artistic merit, regardless of their potential for economic success. "The theater is important only in proportion to the

need it fills in the lives of the people," Le Gallienne wrote. "It should be a source of mental and spiritual stimulation to the community. . . . The theater should be an *instrument for giving* not a machinery *for getting*.[56]

The daughter of poet Richard Le Gallienne, Eva Le Gallienne was born in London. Her parents separated shortly after her birth and she was raised by her mother, a forward-thinking feminist who taught her daughter languages, literature, and art and insisted she be independent and self-sufficient. Le Gallienne moved to New York with her mother in 1915; though she was still a young woman, she was already determined to dedicate her life to the theater. She was immediately successful on the New York stage and with touring companies. In her first five years in show business, Le Gallienne performed in nearly twenty shows and was invited to join Ethel Barrymore's acting company. Her success as an actress did not prevent Le Gallienne from pursuing her ambition to direct and produce plays. During the early 1920s, she acted, directed, and produced plays in New York and Paris, including Mercedes de Acosta's *Jehanne d'Arc* (1925) and Ibsen's *The Master Builder* (1925).

Le Gallienne became a United States citizen in 1926; the same year, she founded a nonprofit theater group known as the Civic Repertory Theatre. With Le Gallienne as their premiere actress, director, and producer, the Civic Repertory Theatre was a major force in the thriving off-Broadway, noncommercial theater movement of the early twentieth century. Among the company's major productions were revivals of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* (1926) and *The Cherry Orchard* (1928) and several Ibsen plays, including *Hedda Gabler* (1928). The company's performance of *Peter Pan* (1928) included her as the first Peter Pan to fly over the audience on a wire. Of Le Gallienne's performance of the lead in *Romeo and Juliet, New York Times* critic Brooks Atkinson wrote:

> Her Juliet reveals her as an actress, not merely of intelligence which she has always been, but of scope and resilience. . . . Ardently girlish in the balcony scene, her Juliet grows steadily in dignity and command as the tragedy unfolds, and takes the terror and resolutions of the potion scene with a new fullness of emotion.[57]

Though the Civic Repertory Theatre closed in the early 1930s, Le Gallienne maintained her active career. She continued to translate and perform plays by Ibsen, and she produced and starred in *Hamlet*, playing not Ophelia as might be expected, but the title role. Le Gallienne also directed plays for the Theatre Guild, a company she enjoyed working with because of her "admiration for the Guild's achievements, as well as my personal regard and affection for its two guiding lights, Lawrence Langner and Theresa Helburn."[58] Among the plays she directed with the company were Sheridan's *The Rivals* (1941) and O'Neill's *Ah! Wilderness* (1942). Once while dining with Theresa Helburn before a

performance of *The Rivals*, they were interrupted with news that the lead actress was ill and unable to perform. Though she hadn't rehearsed with the actors, Le Gallienne knew the part and stepped in to play the role. "Terry Helburn informed the audience of the change of cast in a delightful speech which put everyone in the best humor," Le Gallienne wrote. "What I would have done without…Terry I can't imagine; if [she] had shown the slightest trace of nervousness or doubt, I am sure I would never have had the courage to go through with it."[59]

Eva Le Gallienne is best remembered as an actress, but she made a significant and remarkable contribution to the American theater as a translator. For many years, Le Gallienne was the premier translator of Ibsen's plays, and many of her translations were the English language standard translations for decades. She also translated Chekhov plays and some of Hans Christian Andersen's most famous stories. A writer as well as a translator, she wrote autobiographies, children's books, and a biography of theater great Eleonora Duse.

Like actress-director-producer-translator Eva Le Gallienne, many women in the New York artistic and cultural movements of the early twentieth century were multiply talented and committed to their arts in inclusive ways that not only promoted their own work, but also acknowledged and supported the processes of artistic production and consumption. Embracing the city's spirit of endless possibilities, women like Marianne Moore, Katherine Dreier, Theresa Helburn, and many of their contemporaries did not limit their participation in the arts; they were editors as well as writers, curators as well as painters, directors as well as actresses and playwrights. Their varied contributions were, like the dragon in Moore's poem "O to Be a Dragon," "of silkworm / size or immense; at times invisible."[60] Alone, their accomplishments as painters, writers, and performers would qualify them as significant American artists worthy of celebration and study. They should, however, also be recognized for their less glamorous but equally consequential work building and cultivating audiences for new and challenging art forms, encouraging aesthetic debate and development, promoting individual artists, and developing and supporting artistic communities and collaborations. The behind-the-scenes work of producing publications, arranging exhibitions, hosting gatherings and happenings, administrating events and performances—work sometimes viewed reductively as "housekeeping" or as merely secretarial—was often done by women and, perhaps as a result, has not always been highly valued or deeply investigated. This work, however, was as essential to the development of modern theater and to the shaping of American literary and artistic Modernism and its reception and understanding as the novels of Edith Wharton, the paintings of Florine Stettheimer, and the small and large artistic contributions of so many other women.

1 *Mabel Dodge Luhan,* Movers and Shakers, *New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1936, p. 143.*

2 *Janet Flanner,* An American in Paris, *New York: Simon and Schuster, 1940, p. 185.*

3 *Edith Wharton,* A Backward Glance, *New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1934, pp. 143-44.*

4 *New York Society Held Up to Scorn in Three New Books,"* New York Times, *15 October 1905.*

5 *Newport, "Mrs. Wharton's Novel,"* New York Times, *9 December 1905.*

6 *Flanner,* An American in Paris, *p. 191.*

7 *Nancy Hoyt,* Elinor Wylie: Portrait of an Unknown Lady, *New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1935, p. 25.*

8 *Some Rhymesters 'Piping Strains the World at Last Shall Heed,'"* New York Times, *10 June 1923.*

9 *[Alyse Gregory,] "Briefly Noted,"* The Dial, *84.6 (June 1928): 522.*

10 *Herbert S. Gorman, "High Peaks of Bookland This Season,"* New York Times, *16 October 1921.*

11 *William Rose Benét,* Elinor Wylie 1887-1928, *privately printed, 1928, p. [6].*

12 *Marianne Moore to Alyse Gregory, 17 June 1925, Alyse Gregory Papers.*

13 *Christanne Miller, "Marianne Moore and the Women Modernizing New York,"* Modern Philology *98.2 (2000): 339.*

14 *Laura Benét, "Poetic Sleight of Hand, A Review of* Poems *by Marianne Moore,"* New York Evening Post, *23 July 1921.*

15 *T. S. Eliot, introduction to* Selected Poems *by Marianne Moore, London: Faber, 1935, p. 12.*

16 *H. D. (Hilda Doolittle), "Marianne Moore,"* The Egoist *3 (1916): 118-19.*

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