

Revolting Men:
Queerness, Disability, and the Remaking of American Manhood

BY

CYNTHIA BAROUNIS
B.A., Knox College, 2003
M.A., University of Illinois at Chicago, 2005

THESIS

Submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Chicago, 2012

Chicago, Illinois

Defense Committee:

Lennard Davis, Chair and Advisor
Judith Gardiner
Chris Messenger
John D’Emilio, Gender and Women’s Studies and History
Judith Halberstam, University of Southern California

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project could not have been completed without the help of a number of people who have provided invaluable support, guidance, and inspiration. I am strongly indebted to the members of my committee, who have devoted generous time and energy to helping me refine my writing and ideas. I would like to thank Judith Gardiner, for consistently pushing me to think more deeply about the intersections of masculinity, race, and class; Chris Messenger, for his expansive and illuminating close readings (and seemingly limitless knowledge of American literature); John D’Emilio, for helping me to more rigorously historicize my claims; and Judith Jack Halberstam, for encouraging me to make careful distinctions between and within identities, genres, and archives. I am especially grateful to my dissertation director, Lennard Davis, for his incredible mentorship at every stage of the process. His constructive feedback, personal encouragement, and remarkable talent for seeing the big picture benefitted me immensely, particularly at critical moments when I was at risk of becoming swallowed up in the details.

An important handful of colleagues, peers, and friends also deserve mention. I would like to thank Darrell Moore for graciously allowing me to participate in his thought-provoking “Sexuality and the State” graduate seminar at DePaul University in the spring of 2009. My ideas have also been profoundly enriched over the last several years by my involvement with UIC’s Project Biocultures initiative, UIC’s Queer Theory Reading Group, and the Chicago Disability Studies Reading Group. These intellectual communities have been vital to the development of this project, and I have learned much from my conversations with Aly Patsavas, Margaret Fink, Ryan Parrey-Munger, Liat Ben-Moshe, Madeleine Monson-Rosen, Stephanie Reich, Alice Haisman, and Scott McFarland. I owe particular thanks to Megan Milks, who has provided generous feedback on multiple drafts of this dissertation, and whose creative and critical work

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS (continued)

has been an ongoing source of inspiration for my own. I am continually energized by our conversations and collaborations, and consider myself fortunate to count her as both a colleague and a friend.

I am grateful to the UIC Graduate College for providing important fellowship funding during my final year of graduate studies. I am grateful, as well, to my parents, Tom and Diane Barounis, for their unconditional support and for teaching me to ask the big questions. Their profound commitment to social justice has set for me the highest example. Lastly, I would like to thank my partner Stefanie Boese, who read countless drafts and always seemed to know exactly what the project (or I) needed at any given moment. Her brutal honesty, her sense of humor, and her amazing ability to put everything into perspective has helped me to take myself both more and less seriously during the writing process and beyond.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
1. INTRODUCTION: CRIPPING QUEER METHODOLOGY	1
1.1 Queer Theory, Disability Studies, and the Disciplinary Divide	1
1.2 Toward a Biopoliticized Model of Reading	8
1.3 American Democracy and Revolting Men	21
2. “AN INHERENT WEAKNESS OF THE CONSTITUTION”: JACK LONDON’S REVOLTING BODIES	41
2.1 National Manhood at the Fin de Siècle	41
2.2 A Beastly and Inarticulate Thing	54
2.3 Becoming Men	79
3. QUEERING REPRODUCTION: FAULKNER AND FITZGERALD’S CRIP CHILDREN	109
3.1 Heartfelt Democracy and the Contaminations of Sentiment	109
3.2 Faulkner and the Eugenic Imagination	118
3.3 Love or Eugenics?	137
4. “THAT’S NOT THE USUAL PATTERN, IS IT?”: JAMES BALDWIN, HOMOSEXUALITY, AND AMERICAN PSYCHIATRY	169
4.1 Crippling Baldwin Studies	169
4.2 Performing Diagnosis	180
4.3 Unimagined Alliances	199
5. PORN THEATERS, PUBLIC HEALTH, AND PEDAGOGY: SAMUEL DELANY AND POST-AIDS SEXUAL CITIZENSHIP	215
5.1 Gifts That Keep on Giving	215
5.2 The Sexual Politics of Contact	237
5.3 Compulsory Sexuality and Feminist/Crip Resistance	252
CITED LITERATURE	275
VITA	289

SUMMARY

My dissertation forges new avenues of collaboration between the academic fields of queer theory and disability studies by tracking the genealogy of what I call the “queer-crip” masculine subject as he has been envisioned by twentieth-century American authors ranging from Jack London to Samuel Delany. Arranged chronologically, each chapter addresses an era in which medical conversations about disability intersected with public conversations regarding perversely sexualized populations. These moments include 1) turn of the twentieth century discourses of sexual inversion, 2) eugenicists’ early twentieth-century efforts to control the fertility of the “feeble-minded,” 3) the rise of psychiatric models of homosexuality during the Cold War era, and finally 4) the relatively contemporary “post-AIDS” reclamation of viral metaphors among certain segments of the queer community. In each of these moments, I argue, queerness has been “cripped” by vocabularies of disease, defect and disorder, and then been resignified by American male writers in surprising (and even liberatory) ways. Revising the common assertion that traditional representations of queerness and disability are marked primarily by exclusion, isolation and repression, my project contends that these medicalized bodies were given new—and oftentimes positive—significations as they passed through the crucible of the twentieth-century American literary imagination.

In the first half of the dissertation, I outline the subtextual queer-crip paradigms of American citizenship that inhere in the work of several canonical male authors, including Jack London, F. Scott Fitzgerald and William Faulkner. The second half focuses on two queer writers of color—James Baldwin and Samuel Delany—who are central to the gay and lesbian canon. Though the narratives that all of these writers offer are often radically different from one another, what they share, I argue, is their ambivalent investment in a “queer-crip” masculine subject

SUMMARY (continued)

whose resistant or “revolting” masculinity carries the power to reinvent the meanings of American brotherhood in the twentieth century. Because the United States traces its political origins to revolutionary resistance to established authority rather than to a shared racial heritage, I argue, American authors have been left to puzzle out the paradoxical implications of what it means for an unruly body politic to be prized as the foundation for civic virtue. With the late nineteenth-century weakening of religious authority, I suggest, something new was needed to justify the bond that united male citizens to one another, and the diagnosable “constitution” of the medicalized queer provided an attractive material page upon which multiple counternarratives of American masculinity could be written.

This intervention is methodological as well as thematic, challenging some of the orthodoxies that characterize queer literary studies—in particular, queer theorists’ large-scale embrace of psychoanalytic and deconstructive reading practices. Though foundational and important, these methodologies often lead scholars to overlook the representational work that disability is performing in these texts. Queer literary criticism, I contend, has been stalled by its reliance on a model that tends to narrowly conceptualize queerness in terms of homoeroticism and repressed desire, usually with regard to a singular white male subject. By looking at the way that queerness and disability are paired in these texts, however, we are able to productively de-center the standard “site” of queerness. Championing biopoliticized reading practices over psychoanalytic and deconstructive ones, I therefore offer a set of correctives to traditional queer readings of canonical works.

1. INTRODUCTION: CRIPPING QUEER METHODOLOGY

1.1 Queer Theory, Disability Studies, and the Disciplinary Divide

In the third season of the popular lesbian television show, *The L-Word*, nondisabled lesbian partners Bette and Tina conceive a child together. Because Tina is the child's birth mother, Bette must file for adoption; however, the couple is met with resistance from the "obnoxious, wheelchair-bound social worker," as one fan site describes her, "who disapproves of their unorthodox parenting methods."¹ In the same year, the romantic comedy *Another Gay Movie* featured a blind female character. The girlfriend of the closeted Nico and the butt of many of the film's jokes, she provides slapstick comic relief as she bumps into walls and remains cluelessly "in the dark" about her boyfriend's sexual orientation. Significantly, both media examples present the relationship between gay sexuality and physical disability as one of antagonism, with the disabled characters serving as malicious or unwitting obstacles on the gay protagonists' paths toward homofuturity. These representations constitute an especially egregious example of what disability theorists David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder have called "methodological distancing," the process by which marginalized populations "[seek] to unmoor their identities from debilitating physical and cognitive association" (2). As the ultimate signifier of deficiency and inferiority, disability is often understood as "the 'real' limitation from which [these identities] must escape" (2).

While it is perhaps unsurprising to find ableist rhetoric at work in the "low-brow" examples provided above, we might also observe more subtle forms of methodological distancing in other cultural celebrations of gay identity. From the news coverage of able-bodied gay soldiers in the wake of the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" to the rehabilitative assumptions that underlie Dan Savage's recent "It Gets Better Project," much of the popular

media designed for gay consumers seems intent on reminding us of queerness and disability's mutual exclusivity.² As I have argued elsewhere, even the cinematically acclaimed *Brokeback Mountain* (despite its provocative title) affirms gay identity at the expense of disability, transporting its characters to a pre-AIDS landscape of healthy homosocial expression that contrasts markedly with the feminizing and disabling world of heterodomesticity that lies below the mountain. Given queer populations' long and ongoing history of medical pathologization, the impulse to sever the representational link between disability and same-sex desire is understandable. Such representations, however, are ultimately divisive, creating a problem for activist coalition between queer and disabled communities.³

Similar, though not identical to this set of tensions is a disciplinary rift that appears to separate the academic fields of disability studies and queer theory. Indeed, despite a few notable recent exceptions, queer theorists—when not making metaphoric use of disability—have remained relatively silent on the topic.⁴ McRuer and Mollow diagnose queer theory's limited engagement with disability studies as a “pattern of approach and avoidance,” in which disability is often invoked but rarely taken as a central category of analysis. But if “methodological distancing” provides an adequate explanatory mechanism for the representational antagonism between queerness and disability, it is much less adequate in accounting for the troubled relationship between these two scholarly fields. Queer theory has, after all, largely defined itself in opposition to the assimilationist frameworks of homonormativity outlined above. Both fields have strongly contested the concept of the “norm” and fiercely challenged the institutional structures that prop up certain practices and bodies while disqualifying others. Queer theory and disability studies' mutual embrace of stigmatized subjectivities would therefore seem, if anything, to suggest a common cause. Building upon these parallels, a number of disability

studies scholars—including but certainly not limited to Eli Clare, Robert McRuer, Anna Mollow, Ellen Samuels, Alison Kafer and Mel Chen—have over the last several years produced exciting scholarly work that rigorously theorizes the intersections between non-normative sexuality and physical and psychological disability. Nonetheless, collaboration between the two fields has been slow-going and vexed.

What, then, accounts for this disciplinary tension? While methodological distancing may still be partially at work, I believe that a more compelling explanation lies in the two fields' differing theoretical orientation toward the body as a site of knowledge, experience, and identity. Focusing on discursive effects, linguistic slippages, and interiorized states of desire and shame, queer theorists have been primarily invested in deconstructing the body as a stable ground of identity, focusing instead on psychoanalytic questions regarding ego formation and dissolution.⁵ Conversely, while most disability studies scholars have embraced constructionist understandings of identity (pitting an essentializing “medical model” of disability against a more relativizing “social model”), they have at the same time been reluctant to relinquish “the body” as a crucial site of identity formation. Emphasizing ostensibly more concrete issues of accessibility and health care, these scholars point out that there is little that is performative about ramps and curb cuts.

Challenging the tendency of each field to keep the other at an arm's length, this project argues that queer and disabled communities' shared history of medical othering might function instead as a productive site of scholarly intersection and activist coalition. While my project is not the first to explicitly pair queer theory and disability studies, it adds to a newly emerging scholarship inaugurated in large part by Robert McRuer's recent pioneering study *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* (2006). Reconceiving of “gender trouble” as “ability

trouble” and translating the now-common practice of “queering” stable categories of sexuality into the parallel practice of “cripping” stable categories of embodiment, McRuer opens up new and exciting avenues for bringing together queer and disability-centered modes of inquiry. Focusing primarily on the ways that figurations of queerness and disability intertwine in contemporary media, McRuer argues that the production of visibly “queer/disabled existences” serves neoliberalism by enabling able-bodied heterosexual subjects bodies to stage spectacles of liberal tolerance toward their queer-crip counterparts (2). McRuer’s pioneering investigation has been crucially important in advancing scholarly collaboration between these two fields, supplying disability studies with fresh theoretical frameworks while also taking to task queer theory’s elision of material conditions.

Other scholars, in addition to McRuer, have begun to pair queer theory with disability studies, though it is notable that the majority of them emerge from a disability studies context. Petra Kuppers, for example, has applied theories of gender performativity and queer dandyism to the self-presentation of disabled performance artist Mat Fraser. Carrie Sandahl has pushed us to consider how we might go about “cripping the queer,” and Lisa Diedrich asks how we might think about “doing illness as opposed to being ill” (30). Alison Kafer and Ellen Samuels have written about how the category of disability complicates or extends canonical queer concepts like “the closet” or “compulsory heterosexuality,” while the memoir and filmic work of disabled writers like Eli Clare, Terry Galloway and Loree Erickson have addressed the way that these intersections play out autobiographically. Indeed, given the richness of the developing field of queer disability studies, it is surprising how much more reluctant queer theory has been to incorporate “crip” methodologies and insights.

It is worth mentioning, however, that while very few of queer theory's most recent and influential texts have taken up disability as a central thematic, many of those have begun to productively gesture towards disability studies as one of queer theory's next horizons. Judith Halberstam, for example, has noted how figures of disability (Nemo's underdeveloped fin, Dory's amnesia) animate forms of productive failure while Tim Dean's provocative study of barebacking subcultures, though drawing largely from Bersani's psychoanalytic concept of "self-shattering," is one of the first to consider the controversial practice through the lens of disability studies and biopolitics. And while Heather Love, in *Feeling Backward*, does not take an approach that is explicitly rooted in disability studies, her reappraisal of "stigma" forges promising links between the two fields.⁶

In this project, I build upon and extend this emergent strand of queer inquiry by placing questions of disability and medicalization at the center of my queer readings. In this respect, the project may be understood as one attempt to fill the gap that McRuer and Mollow identify in their recent and important *Sex and Disability* anthology when they observe that queer theory has much to gain by considering the queerness of some of those more "paradigmatic" impairments like "paraplegia, blindness, deafness" (27). They additionally note that "the queer theorist turning to disability studies in order to buttress, complicate, or extend her or his discussion of the pathologization of queerness might be disappointed to discover that the illegitimate figures that populate queer academic discourses (addicts, crazies, compulsives, sick people) appear infrequently in disability studies—and are seldom held up as models of proud, disabled identity" (27). By focusing on queer sexuality as a site of medicalization, I thus hope to challenge conventional notions of what is or is not the "proper object" of queer and disability studies analysis. Additionally, while most of the work in queer disability studies has focused on how

“queer” and “crip” intertwine in our contemporary cultural moment, I am more interested in fleshing out the genealogical “backstory.” When did the medicalization of queerness begin, and how did those processes of medicalization create a continually evolving queer-crip subject?

To answer this question, I turn primarily to literary works, though my readings are supported by both primary and secondary historical texts. The reason that I have made literary texts central to my investigation is, on the one hand, disciplinary, as the majority of both the queer and disability studies scholars that I am in conversation with have their home in English, American Studies, and Cultural Studies departments. More fundamentally, however, I believe that the American literary landscape—existing as it does at the intersection of “official” medical discourses and imagined fantasies of national subjectivity—reveals new rhetorical dimensions of the medicalized queer subject that cannot be found by solely focusing on the historical record or, for that matter, solely on the literary text. Though writers like Jack London, F. Scott Fitzgerald and William Faulkner are not often considered in relation to either queerness or disability (much less the intersection of the two), I argue that their visions of American brotherhood both draw upon and reinvent their own era’s dominant discourses of anatomical and sexual science. More than simply parroting back the knowledge of experts, these authors, along with James Baldwin and Samuel Delany, produce literary works that ultimately reflect a qualified embrace of sexual and physical non-normativity.

Of course, a cursory glance over the chapters that follow reveal a set of bodies and archives that may not qualify, in many people’s minds, as “disabled.” What basis is there, one may object, for viewing physical injuries inflicted between men (in the case of Jack London), the medicalization of female promiscuity (in the case of Faulkner), or the psychiatrization of homosexuality (in the case of Baldwin) as examples of the literary figuration of disability?

While it could be argued that I am playing fast and loose with some of these terms—blurring the lines between concepts of pathology, medicalization, social stigma, and “real” physical or cognitive difference—I believe that such flexibility is necessary if we are to move beyond the disciplinary impasse outlined above.

Rather than echo the seemingly obligatory acknowledgement across this scholarship that, despite our embrace of a constructivist approach, there is still something “real” and “concrete” about disability that opposes queer sexuality’s lack of fixity, I focus in these analyses less on the presence of disabled bodies than on a set of complex signifying practices that resonate strongly within and across the ability/disability binary. I have no interest, for example, in claiming the character of David from *Giovanni’s Room* as a person with a disability; more productive, I believe, is an analysis of David’s strategic narrative use of psychiatric discourse. Neither am I interested in recuperating Faulkner’s Ruby Goodwin as one of the many queer subjects who have been “hidden from history.” Indeed, such a recuperation would reinforce the very identity claims that my reading of Faulkner’s novel attempts to dispute. Rather than understanding these figures through a traditionally gay and lesbian studies or disability studies approach, therefore, I employ in these readings a queer and “crip” methodology for understanding physical, mental, and sexual difference.

Crip theory, as McRuer articulates it, while not dispensing altogether with questions of identity, is more concerned with interrogating and deconstructing the performative practices through which coercive ideals of health and able-bodiedness circulate. Citing David Halperin, McRuer proposes that “crip theory might function—like the term ‘queer’ itself—‘oppositionally and relationally but not necessarily substantively, not as a positivity but as a positionality, not as a thing, but as a resistance to the norm’” (31). Thus my use of the term “crip” in this project, like

my use of the term queer, should be understood not as a noun but as a verb and modifier. It points not toward a coherent identity but towards practices and inflections that move both with and against the grain of dominant constructions of the able-bodied subject.⁷

By considering deviant sexualities within their historical and biopolitical contexts, we might begin to unsettle the disciplinary opposition between “material” (disabled) identities and “socially-constructed” (queer) ones.⁸ Conceiving of sexuality biopolitically, I argue, cuts through these binaries. It does so by setting aside the question of who really counts as disabled, and asking instead: who is a target of medicalized institutional regulation? A biopoliticized reading practice, I will argue in what follows, enables us to productively “crip” bodies and practices that we might not, from our contemporary vantage point, recognize as disabled. More importantly, it allows us to do so without, at the same time, projecting an essentialized version of disabled identity anachronistically onto the past.

1.2 Toward a Biopoliticized Model of Reading

I will elaborate shortly on what I mean by a “biopoliticized reading practice.” Before I do so, however, I’d like to spend some time clarifying some of the ways that standard queer reading practices are articulated in ways that either erase or appropriate the disabled subject. Eve Sedgwick, in her queer classic *Epistemology of the Closet* acknowledges this potential when she distinguishes between the more immediately “visible” identities (such as race, gender, and physical disability) and the verbal practices of secrecy and “outing” that structure the production and circulation of gay identity. If, as Lennard Davis has observed, disability is a “disruption in the visual field,” (*Enforcing Normalcy* 94) then the closet is conversely produced, for Sedgwick, by forms of “willful blindness” through which “ignorance effects” are produced and managed

alongside of the dominant discourses (5-6). Queerness, as it is presented here, is less about physical materiality than it is about the management of information and the speech effects which performatively render the “secret” of same-sex desire.

The readability of the sexual body is similarly at issue for Lee Edelman, who has coined the term “homographesis” to describe the contradictory process through which the homosexual body both invites and evades inscription.⁹ Remarking upon the anxiety that framed sexologists’ attempts at transforming the gay body into a readable text, Edelman cites John Addington Symonds’ homosexual narrator in his 1893 novel *Teleny* who felt “as if [he] carried his crime written upon [his] brow” (5). But the point, of course, is that the narrator’s “crime” is not really inscribed upon his body. Written in invisible ink, the stigma of homosexuality is framed here as an imagined projection of internalized shame. “Homographesis,” for Edelman, names precisely this process by which homosexual body (via sexology and other discourses) both demands to be read, and yet remains fundamentally unreadable. But while Edelman’s invocation of sexology opens up the opportunity to historicize the convergences between sexuality, disability, and the late nineteenth-century medical imagination, such questions are ultimately occluded by Edelman’s interest in transforming scientific discourse into a springboard for a more generalized deconstructive account of queerness; the unreadability of the gay body, he concludes, emblemizes the gap in signification that symptomizes all texts.

But if, for Edelman, the criminal “secret” of homosexuality continually threatens (but often fails) to manifest itself outwardly in the form of physical marking, then disability scholars have often noted disability’s inverse relation to criminality: outer markings or other forms of physical stigma are interpreted as pointing inward toward a damaged psyche or tarnished soul. Thus while the earliest major texts of queer theory were preoccupied with the way that sexuality

and gender resist legibility, then the earliest texts of critical disability theory focused, conversely, on the aggressive legibility of the anomalous body. “Never simply itself,” Rosemarie Garland-Thomson writes, “the exceptional body betokens something else, becomes revelatory, sustains narrative, exists socially in the realm of hyper-representation” (3).¹⁰

In his more recent and widely cited polemic *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, Edelman further widens this rift. The incommensurability between the (unmarked) subjectivity of the queer and the (un queer) body of the readably disabled person surfaces perhaps most notably in his reading of Charles Dickens’ notorious sentimental “cripple” Tiny Tim. Edelman’s larger project aligns the figure of the Child with heteronormativity’s coercive investment in the future, noting the way that queer subjects—existing as they do outside of reproduction—are framed as menacing both the future and the Child who serves as its heteronormative emblem. Applying this framework to Dickens’ tale, Edelman notes the way that perpetual bachelor Ebenezer Scrooge is queered by his anti-social bonds with Jacob Marley as well as his cold-hearted indifference to the well-being of families and children. Tiny Tim, imperiled by Scrooge’s queerness and healed by Scrooge’s willingness to reform, is conversely presented as the future-driven child whose innocence exists in fundamental opposition to Scrooge’s death-driven perversity. What Edelman’s innovative reading overlooks, however, is the centrality of disability to the dynamics he has sketched out.

Tiny Tim’s sentimental power, after all, depends not simply on his status as a Child, but more fundamentally on his status as “cripple.” Musing that his presence at the Christmas service might help the churchgoers recall “who made lame beggars walk, and blind men see,” Tiny Tim is well aware of how actively his “active little crutch” functions as a social symbol.¹¹ It is precisely in the interplay between Tiny Tim’s visible disability and Scrooge’s intangible change

of heart that we can see how figurations of queerness and disability both overlap while remaining in productive tension. On the one hand, Tiny Tim's crutch can be understood to function here as a form of "narrative prosthesis," a term that Mitchell and Snyder use to describe the process by which a novel's more abstract or metaphorical principles are provided with an "anchor in materiality." The crutch, in other words, props up the novel's larger narrative of heterosexual conversion. While this dynamic would seem to define queerness and disability antagonistically, with the disabled body inspiring a heteronormative epiphany, it's also important to point out that Scrooge's epiphany has a rehabilitative effect on Tiny Tim. Giving up his narcissistic investments, Scrooge instead invests in Tiny Tim's future, providing the Cratchet family with the financial support necessary for Tim's cure. Essentially, in taking the queer out of the man, Dickens has also taken the cripple out of the boy.

Taking disability into account here, however, also requires that we historicize sentiment as a genre. Though Edelman attempts to transform the dialectic between Scrooge and Tiny Tim into a universal Lacanian allegory, it's important to point out that this story may not have been told in the same way had it been written eighty years later, during the heyday of eugenics. Had Tiny Tim appeared in 1923 rather than 1843, it is unlikely that his "active little crutch" would have inspired the same politics of brotherly love that it does in *Scrooge*. Rather, Scrooge's hard-hearted declaration in that poor "had better [die], and decrease the surplus population" would have been utterly consistent with the conventional reproductive logic of the day which framed disability as potentially catastrophic threat to the national future. Eugenic logic, in other words, may have dictated a much different "moral" of Tiny Tim's story, one in which Scrooge's sentimental conversion contaminates the heteronormative future rather than preserving it. Thus, while Edelman's polemic constitutes an exciting and compelling innovation in queer theory, his

strict adherence to an exclusively psychoanalytic and deconstructive framework, I would argue, dehistoricizes queer and disabled identities. The result is an analytic framework that explicitly or implicitly leaves queerness and disability on opposite ends of the signifying spectrum.

David Greven, too, exemplifies this approach in his queer psychoanalytic account of Billy Budd's stutter in Melville's classic story. Reading Billy's stutter as an example of his "failure to wield the power of phallogocentric discourse," Greven reads disability in the text as a metaphor for feminization and queerness. Greven elaborates:

We almost never hear Billy "speak" the language of interiority... But through his stutter, we can learn what the fraternal order that converges around him needs: a point of entrance, a way in, to Billy's magnetic but unknowable, unreachable interior. And because his speech or lack thereof allows... the men to mourn for the loss of the ideal of their fraternal order, to grieve cathartically for the necessary loss of the ideal which Billy Budd represents... Billy Budd's stutter signifies the internal conflict within his own relationship with the order he serves and enslaves. His stutter is the ship's, the fraternal order's, involuntary, defining, stutter. Through it, Billy Budd somatically complies with the fraught, disjunctive wrongness, for Melville, of the fraternal order's utopian desires. (39)

Here, Greven both invokes disability while denying it any representational agency. A tool through which the novel's homoerotic and fraternal investments circulate, Billy's stutter is given here as a literalization of his inability to properly confess his queer desire. A gateway that both invites and forecloses knowledge about queer subjects' sexual interiority, disability is presented as the mechanism through which knowledge about gay male desire is produced, repressed, and negotiated. Like the "crime written" invisibly on the "brow" of Symonds' narrator, it is a material marker that fails to signify meaningfully, and in so doing, embodies the paradoxes and epistemological uncertainty of queer subjectivity. By allowing the disabled body to remain a corporealized site of difference (a tangible marker that both anchors and contrasts the queer subject's lack of readability), queer scholars thus often miss a set of opportunities to explore the

meanings and consequences of those histories in which queerness and disability were discursively intertwined.

Edelman and Greven are not alone in this approach, joining and extending a queer psychoanalytic discourse that began, in large part, with Leo Bersani's foundational article "Is the Rectum a Grave?" and is borne out in the current work of scholars like Calvin Thomas and Tim Dean. "In its fundamental formulations," Dean argues in *Beyond Sexuality*, "psychoanalysis is a queer theory" in that it represents "an imaginary encounter, a dialogue between—to invoke Yeats—self and antiself" (215). What makes psychoanalysis queer, for these writers, is the way in which, especially in its Lacanian formulations, it values the disruption of the Symbolic and the dissolution of the ego. While such theories are valuable and have contributed much to critiques of normativity, they too often present the solution to cultural problems in individualizing terms (the embrace of abjection, the jouissance of "self-shattering" sex, or the radical embrace of the Freudian death drive, for example). While psychoanalysis is certainly useful as a theory of explaining the radical incoherence and formal contingency of the self, I find it less useful for illuminating broader social movements and historically-contingent and intersecting forms of oppression, including but not limited to the biopolitical organization of populations.¹²

Of course, against and alongside of these more dominant accounts, is a scholarly trend which challenges, or at the very least complicates, this binary between a queer psychoanalytic interiority and disabled exteriority/stigma. Queer theory's preoccupation with negative affects over the last ten years might be understood as one strand of this emergent discourse. Though not yet squarely within the realm of queer disability studies, the affective turn has in many ways created one site through which queer theory might access the insights of disability studies, and vice versa—though it also, at times, risks replicating some of the same appropriative logics.

Sedgwick herself initiated this turn in 2003 with the publication of *Touching Feeling*, where she revised many of her earlier formulations in *Epistemology of the Closet*. Moving away from epistemology and toward phenomenology, Sedgwick trades her former emphasis on the relation between the known and the not-known for a much different set of relations between texture and affect. Specifically, Sedgwick explores the power of certain sensory experiences (especially those involving tactility and touch) to open up new modes of thinking about queer relationality. In so doing, Sedgwick moved the field beyond stale dichotomies between a Freudian theory of drives and a Foucaudian analysis of disciplinary power. Notably, one of Sedgwick's primary examples of how such affective tactile relations operate is the fiber art of Judith Scott, an internationally known deaf sculptor with Down's Syndrome. Pictured on the cover of Sedgwick's book in a sensuous embrace with one of her own pieces, Scott embodies, for Sedgwick, the aesthetic relation that Barbara Herrnstein has called "the senile sublime." Elsewhere, too, Sedgwick has partially credited her turn to affect to her own experience with breast cancer as well as her recollection of gay life during the early outbreak of the AIDS epidemic. Centralizing disability, and relocating queerness to the realm of sensory states rather than epistemological sites, Sedgwick's later work thus appears to have set the stage for subsequent collaboration between the two fields.¹³

Nonetheless, Sedgwick's turn here treads a fine line between intersectional engagement and queer appropriation. Tobin Siebers, for example, critiques Sedgwick's discussion of the "ethical leverage of shame"—one of Sedgwick's preferred affects—by pointing to a pattern of illustration in her text that makes problematic use of disabled bodies. Siebers notices that

Sedgwick does not illustrate the capacity of shame to create a new ethics with examples of the gay community. Rather, she uses disability to exemplify shame, whether representing the shared humiliation felt before the "toothless face" of

New York's post-September 11 cityscape or her own identification with Judith Scott... [I]n fact, Segwick's principal technique for illustrating the ethical power of shame is to ask her presumptively nondisabled audience to visualize an 'unwashed, half-insane man' who might wander 'into the lecture hall mumbling loudly, his speech increasingly accusatory and disjointed, and publicly urinate in front of the room, then wander out again.' The audience members feel alone with their shame... And yet Sedgwick interrogates neither the shame nor the identity of the disabled man. (201-202)

As Siebers points out, Segwick's examples often present the disabled person as a visual symbol of alterity which catalyzes a set of invisible affective responses in the onlooker. Vehicles for the queer shame of others, rather than bearers of complicated interiority, these figures lead Siebers to ask the important question: "Who gets to feel shame?" (202). Because the affect of shame "turns on the movement between the private and public realms," Siebers argues, it has a very different set of values and consequences for disabled people who are often, especially within institutional contexts, denied basic privacy (205). Always already a site of "public" scrutiny and intervention, the disabled body, though a catalyst for the shame of others, is understood, even within the careful analysis of queer scholars, to be "shameless."

While I appreciate Siebers' intervention here, particularly his call for new paradigms of sexuality that are more attentive to disability, he also appears to generalize the experiences of each population in ways that risk re-entrenching the very binaries he seeks to overturn. For example, later in the same essay, Siebers addresses Jacques Lacan's parable of gender assignment in which two children, male and female, look out their train window as it is stopped at a station and mistake the "Ladies" and "Gentlemen" signs (which mark the gendered restrooms) for actual train destinations. Introducing a disability studies twist on the parable, Siebers observes that "[m]ore often than not, accessible toilets are unisex," a coding which

conceives of people with disabilities and ungendered and asexual [and] reflects the mainstream belief that people with disabilities must relinquish feelings of

embarrassment or shame normally associated with being displayed to the so-called opposite sex. In the game of signifying practices the difference between ability and disability trumps the difference between Ladies and Gentleman every time. (208)

Placing queerness and disability in oppositional terms, where one is more fundamental and must “trump” the other, Siebers creates an unnecessary antagonism between the fields that relies on an overly circumscribed notion of what men, women, and disabled people, as groups, experience.¹⁴ What about, for example, those individuals who identify as disabled but who don’t need to use accessible bathrooms? How might other, less recognizable, barriers to access intersect with gendered and sexual institutions? Furthermore, what about the transgender, genderqueer, or transitioning individual for whom the unisex accessible bathroom—far from being a space of public exposure—represents a private refuge from the public policing of gender that can happen when, for example, a masculine-looking individual steps into the “women’s” room? When Siebers declares that “the distinction between the private and public spheres is a function of the disabled body” (207) or that disabled people “are not allowed to feel shame” (206), he bases his observations on a relatively narrow portrait of both disability embodiment and gender embodiment that opposes the “realness” of physical impairment against the confessional mobility of the gay and lesbian closet. But, as Robert McRuer and Anna Mollow note, such constructions often risk erasing the experience of individuals with invisible disabilities (including chronic pain, environmental illness or depression) who occupy a different relationship to shame and to practices of “coming out.”¹⁵

While not all disability studies scholars are as interested in constructing this “paradigmatic disabled person,” Siebers is not alone in his privileging of the physical body as an “authentic” site of identity formation (against other more “socially-constructed” identities).

Critiquing Mitchell and Snyder's singular focus on corporeality, for example, Emily Russell keenly observes that disability theorists, "seeking to avoid the posterior spot in a simultaneously contested and wearying line of identity categories... often seize upon the social importance granted to the body as that which 'really matters'" (12). Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, too, while on the one hand acknowledging that a "firm boundary between 'disabled' and 'nondisabled' women cannot be drawn," nonetheless cautions against the unqualified embrace of the "social constructionist argument," which "risks neutralizing the significance of [disabled women's] pain and [their] struggle with an environment built for other bodies" (*Extraordinary Bodies* 25). And while Simi Linton maintains that disability is a political category as much as a biological one, she also argues that erasing the distinction between disabled and non-disabled isn't especially productive in a society where disabled people are still routinely discriminated against. Indeed, even as Robert McRuer fashions "crip theory" as the postmodern antidote to disability studies' attachment to identity (in a move that parallels the positioning of "queer theory" as the antidote to "gay and lesbian studies"), he still posits "crip theory" as having a stronger relationship to physical praxis. While queer theory "didn't have a lot to do with queers in the street" (33), crip theory by contrast resists "dematerializ[ing] disability identity" (*Crip Theory* 35) through its connections to on-the-ground activism. While McRuer is likely responding here to the disciplinary division that *has* emerged between queer theory and disability studies, in fashioning crip theory as having a privileged relation to materiality, he risks perpetuating that division, potentially positioning disability as "that anchor in materiality" which will give weight and heft to the immaterial performativity of queerness.

We have become too accustomed, I argue, to understanding queerness and queer theory as that which "de-materializes" the body and disability and disability theory as that which causes

it to become “re-materialized.” Wedding queerness to psychic life, invisible desires, and fluid states of identification, we have (in our literature as well as our theory) transformed disability into the “hard kernel or recalcitrant corporeal matter that cannot be deconstructed away” (49). Thus while Segwick’s brief discussion Scott as a cipher for the “senile sublime” may have called for more careful consideration of and engagement with the insights of disability studies, her attention to cognitive disability and the interiority of the disabled subject does, at the same time, challenge—or at the very least throw into crisis—a long-standing disciplinary divide that has placed disability, physical materiality, and politics on one site of the signifying spectrum and placed queer sexuality, psychic interiority, and linguistic performativity on the other.

Even more than queer affect theory, however, I believe that it is the emerging paradigm of queer biopolitics that will ultimately prove to be the most useful framework for envisioning new sites of collaboration between queer theory and disability studies. Jasbir Puar has perhaps presented one of the most exciting articulations of queer biopolitics in her recent and important book *Terrorist Assemblages*. Centering her analysis on the perversely sexualized post-9/11 figure of the Muslim terrorist (who is juxtaposed against the mainstream LGBT activist emphasis on gay marriage), Puar argues that we need to begin a more sustained analysis of how various queers “reproduce life” and are “folded into” the life of the nation (35). What would it mean, she asks, for us to locate queerness not within the individualized psyche of the exceptional or eccentric queer subject but rather in the biopolitical management of “perversely sexualized populations”? Puar trenchantly observes that:

While questions of reproduction and regeneration are central to the study of biopolitics, queer scholars have been oddly averse to the Foucauldian frame of biopolitics, centralizing instead the *History of Sexuality* through a focus on the critique of psychoanalysis and the repressive hypothesis, implicitly and often explicitly delegating the study of race to the background...[Therefore] we can

trace the genealogic engagement of the *History of Sexuality* as a splitting: scholars of race and postcoloniality taking up biopolitics, while queer scholars work with dismantling the repressive hypothesis. (34)

Puar's analysis here importantly reconceptualizes queerness as something that has less to do with the exceptionality of individual desire and more to do with the intensely racialized intersection of body and population. Puar's work participates in a small but important recent turn in queer studies toward the biopolitical, a turn that I see my own work as extending. But while Puar's study explores the way that the referent of "queer" might attach itself to the brown body of the terrorist whose perversity is juxtaposed against, for example, patriotic images of gay white men wrapped playfully in the American flag, I am more interested in how the split that Puar outlines above—between queer theorists' interest in the repressive hypothesis and race studies scholars interest in biopolitics—might speak additionally to the divergence outlined above between queer theory and disability studies. Indeed, it is not only scholars of race and postcoloniality that have generally preferred the "biopolitical" Foucault, but scholars of disability studies as well.¹⁶

That disability studies scholars have gravitated toward the biopolitical Foucault is not surprising, as disabled people have continually found themselves at the center of a myriad of debates involving health care, prenatal testing, selective abortion, stem cell research, the development of new medical technologies and practices of physician-assisted suicide. For these reasons, disability studies has been a particularly rich site of theorization and analysis with regard to eugenics and other reproductive measures whose assumptions are rooted in ableist ideologies about "who should and should not inhabit the world"—and by extension, who should and should not inhabit the nation.¹⁷ Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, but especially between 1910 and 1940, officials not only policed what they saw as the "sexual perversity" of the people with disabilities, but also diagnosed as "feeble-minded" those

individuals whose sexual transgressions, it was believed, evidenced an “unfit” constitution. Though the “homosexual” certainly fell into this category, sexual perversity did not end, in these discourses, with same-sex desires and practices. Indeed, most frequently targeted by the eugenicists’ gaze and selected for sterilization and institutionalization were the reproductive bodies of working-class women, disabled women and women-of-color.

It is my contention in this project that by devoting more critical attention to the historical pairing of queerness and disability—and particularly, how that historical pairing has borne out in and through canonical literary texts—we can productively shift the site of queerness in ways that can have a transformative effect on the field of queer literary studies. What would it mean, for example, to think about queerness in relation to reproduction rather than the death drive? Or to understand viral exchange as a building block of (rather than a catastrophe for) the creation of queer kinship networks? Championing a biopoliticized queer methodology over psychoanalytic or deconstructive hermeneutics, I offer in the chapters that follow a series of correctives to traditional queer readings of canonical American texts.

Queer critics, for example, often misread the scene of amputation in Jack London’s novel *The Sea Wolf* as a form of castration anxiety arising from Humphrey’s repressed homoerotic desires; I argue, however, that in London’s literary universe, the eroticized and disabling exchanges staged between men testify not to their emasculation but rather to their hypermasculine endurance. In another chapter, I challenge Lee Edelman’s Lacanian reading of Faulkner’s novel *Sanctuary* through a consideration of the novel’s eugenic backdrop; though Edelman reads Popeye as a “sinthomosexual” threat to Ruby Goodwin’s baby, I move the discussion away from homosexuality and toward eugenics, arguing that the real source of Popeye’s queerness in the text is not his same-sex desires but his status as the disabled child of a

“feeble-minded” and perversely sexualized mother. Such a methodology, in jarring us out of calcified reading practices, not only opens up an array of new interpretive possibilities but also, in allowing us to locate queerness alongside of disability, opens up new avenues of collaboration between queer theory and disability studies.

1.3 American Democracy and Revolting Men

Another important question presents itself at the outset of an investigation like this one. Why narrow the scope of this investigation to twentieth-century American texts? And why focus exclusively on texts written by canonical male authors? In a project that seeks to unseat standard queer reading practices, what is to be gained by drawing upon such a familiar and conventional set of archives? In focusing primarily on men’s complicated relationship to medical authorities—and in particular, how that relationship has been negotiated by writers like Jack London, William Faulkner, James Baldwin and Samuel Delany—my intention is not to undermine the foundational work that has been done on women and medicine, nor am I attempting to recuperate a parallel history of male social marginalization.¹⁸ It is my intention, rather, to stage a conscious and critical intervention in the history of American masculinity. Indeed, however “unruly,” the queer-crip masculine subjects fashioned in these accounts often exist in tension with the insights of feminism and frequently rely, implicitly or explicitly, on the masculinist or homosocial exclusion of female subjectivity. Highlighting the extent to which ideologies of masculinity are wedded to ideologies of citizenship, I argue that circumstances unique to the founding of the United States—in particular, its revolutionary origins and its rejection of biological heritage as a justification for nationhood—have made the countercultural “revolt” of the queer-crip masculine body an attractive resource for twentieth-century male

writers attempting to negotiate (and often reinforce) their fraught relationship to the homosocial structures of American national belonging.

Metaphors of health and illness have, of course, often been used to characterize the status of the national body politic, and figures of sexual transgression have frequently populated its narratives. The rise of sexual science in the late nineteenth-century, however, ushered in a new way of thinking about bodies and, as a consequence, set in place a new set of biopolitical controls to manage the “life” of the population.¹⁹ As writers like Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis began publishing their case studies of sexual neuroses, sexual deviance and physical degeneracy became overlapping designations, constructed by and through the same frameworks that gave rise to the body of the “normal” citizen. Because sexual science invented the queer body as a disabled body, and the disabled body as a queer body, it provides (along with the literary texts it influenced) a rich site for analyzing the intersectional history of these identities, and their mutual evolution as national metaphors. Thus, far from reflecting a transhistorical mode of political subjectivity, this queer-crip subject emerged and evolved in tandem with a series of important historical shifts.

Furthermore, while sexual science did not originate in America, I would argue that the United States’ unique genesis as a nation created a paradox for citizenship that sexual science helped to solve. Unlike many European nation-states, there is no common racial or ethnic origin that defines the United States as a “nation” (nation itself referring to a kind of common “birth”). Founded primarily on the adoption of transcendent democratic principles—ones that represented a break from the of the English fatherland’s monarchical rule—the United States has never had the fantasy of common bloodlines to shore up its political structures. As Rogan Kersh points out in his study of the pre-Revolutionary rhetoric of American “union,” the framers of the Constitution

were well aware that “Americans were originally constituted as ‘one united people’ largely without appeals to shared blood or other ethnocultural appeals” (257). The absence of “shared blood” in early arguments justifying American independence, Kersh points out, owes to the particular situation of American revolutionaries whose cause largely rested not on the strengthening but on the *breaking* of the ethnic ties that might have otherwise bound them as subjects to English rule. This, added to the “pressing need for assistance in the independence effort from anyone willing to provide it” defined American political union as a type of statehood that rested on something other than a common national body. Put briefly, we might say that while the United States had a Constitution, it lacked a *constitution*. Indeed, when Washington Irving described the United States as a “logocracy... a republic of words,” his terminology points to an important anxiety: that the substance binding American men to one another was ultimately more rhetorical than physical (231).

What, then, did American political union rest on, if not a shared ethnic heritage? Kersh answers this question by pointing to both the rise of anti-British sentiment among American colonists, as well as use of religious rhetoric:

The purposes of promoting national union were straightforward: to oppose British retaliation; to aid in differentiating Americans from their cultural, and in many cases biological, forebears; and to glorify the God whose ‘Agency’ secured, as Samuel Adams had it, ‘this Union among the colonies and worth of Affection.’ Members of the union included virtually anyone willing to help the revolutionary effort... This relatively enlightened approach to membership in the new national union owed less to a spirit of liberal toleration than to an obvious difficulty in promoting ethnicity or culture as the basis for a national union. (255)

Because the blood that the American colonists shared with their “biological forebears” could not serve as a material justification for independence (to the contrary, it worked *against* it), arguments for independence had to rely instead on a set of more abstract, arguably

“disembodied,” set of principles regarding colonial injustice, violated rights, and religious providence.

But if there was an “obvious difficulty in promoting ethnicity or culture as a basis for national union,” such difficulties did not mean that whiteness was unimportant—only that it had been largely disconnected from national bloodlines. Considering the relationship between whiteness and what she terms “national manhood,” Dana Nelson considers the ways in which qualities of benevolence, professionalism, and rationality were coded as white, and figured against the inherent irrationality and primitivism of America’s indigenous and black racial others. Important to this understanding of whiteness was its global expansiveness and lack of national specificity—an expansiveness that Nelson demonstrates through a reading of Delano’s fraternal attachments to the Spanish captain Benito Cereno in Melville’s story of the same name, whom he unites with to quell the San Dominick’s slave revolt. Less important than the two distinct nations (the U.S. and Spain) that Delano and Cereno represent is the bond of white rationality that they both, theoretically, share.²⁰ Reading Melville’s story as an example of what she terms “fraternal melancholy,” Nelson understands “national manhood” through a primarily psychoanalytic framework, in which the potential for violent conflict is repressed through the formation of melancholic identifications between white men and the “representative” figures who must always already fail to successfully represent them. Citing the Freemasons of the 19th century as her central example of a brotherhood that offered a “‘pure’ space of formal masculine affiliation,” (184) Nelson examines the importance of ritualized purifications rites and the ceremonial sanctification of dead white patriarchs. These ritualized structures, she argues, provided opportunities for white men to understand themselves as unified, if not in body, than in spirit.

I will return to this notion of “fraternal melancholy” during my discussion of Jack London’s *The Sea Wolf*. For now, however, I want to more rigorously historicize Nelson’s model of national manhood by considering a provocative gap in her archive. It is significant, I would argue, that Nelson’s account of national manhood ends during the 1850s with the publication of *Benito Cereno* and doesn’t pick up again until the 1990s, with films like *Air Force One*. The connections that she draws between nineteenth-century structures of white fraternity and late twentieth century cultural idealizations of U.S. Presidential power suggest a historical continuity that I would dispute. With the publication of Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of the Species* in 1859, science and medicine began to replace religion as the main site of epistemological authority. If belief in divine “Agency” helped American forefathers ground the principles of American democratic citizenship in the absence of an appeal to biological ancestry, and if the ritualized structures of national manhood helped to perpetuate the spiritual groundings of masculine citizenship, then the emergence of evolutionary theory weakened those religious justifications, making them less viable as anchors for national belonging. Fields like sexology and criminal anthropology gradually replaced religiously-based institutions and, by the turn of the twentieth-century, had begun to reach wider audiences with literary writers adopting and adapting the scientific vocabularies of their day.²¹ In this way, the spiritual foundations of citizenship gave way to a citizenship that required a national “body” grounded in something other than national birthright. These conditions provide an especially fertile ground for a science of bodies to take root and a more urgent need for those material anchors, both queer and disabled, to legitimate and ultimately ground the abstractions of a newly formed political system.²² Thus, in a Foucauldian move that displaced the “symbolics of blood” with an “analytics of sex,” the queer and disabled body became a means through which American

biology could be accounted for without reverting to lines of patrilineal descent. As Dana Seitler notes in her study of atavism and American literature:

Operating less by a process of continuity than by sporadic interruption, atavism skips generations: it requires a period of latency or ‘intermission’ before it recurs in the present. It thus belies the conception of identity as direct and individualized and of time as an unbroken continuity, instead placing human beings in a more inclusive and unpredictable history of biological origins and influences. Indeed, atavism is posed as a category of personhood that erases an immediate reproductive connection between parent and child, situating the locus of the individual’s identity in a much earlier ancestral moment that is no longer secured in the past but destined to recur. (2)

By “erasing the immediate reproductive connection between parent and child” evolutionary discourses offered up a form of national embodiment that was detached from national bloodlines. The result was that the vexed question of national birthright became gradually displaced by a more generalized politics of “life.” Thus, while Nelson’s innovative concept of “national manhood” is compelling and illuminating, it cannot entirely account for the enormous impact that sexual science had on American understandings of national embodiment. As I will argue in the second chapter, the mourning of dead patriarchs, along with the “fraternal melancholy” that animates that mourning, requires an “immediate reproductive connection” that emphasizes a more static model of triangular bonding between father and sons—a structure that is displaced in many of the texts that I examine. While I am certainly not claiming that Oedipal narratives disappear with the emergence of twentieth-century sexual science (indeed, in my chapter on James Baldwin, I make a case for the prevalence of those narratives within the texts of Cold War sexual psychiatry), the authors under examination here each articulate what we might call a biopolitical counternarrative of American citizenship. These counternarratives reframe standard understandings of the relationship between homosociality and citizenship, as they have less to do

with psychic repression and more to do with unruly states of embodiment and resistant forms of sexuality.

The relationship between the physical body and the national body has, of course, already received ample attention from disability studies scholars.²³ Lennard Davis, for example, importantly observes that “for the formation of the modern nation-state, it was not simply language, but bodies and bodily practices that also had to be standardized, homogenized, and normalized” (*Bending Over Backwards* 106). The invention of the “average man,” he argues, was especially useful to representative democracies like that in the United States as it helped to solve the “paradox of how it is possible to be an individual equal to other individuals” and the additional conundrum of how large groupings of individuals could ever be represented by a single person (109). Meanwhile, revolution and other forms of “social unrest” were likened to diseases that threatened the physical health of the body politic (113). Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, too, observes that freak show in the United States became popular during a time in which, due to the rise of industrial capitalism, men’s bodies were increasingly being seen as standardized, interchangeable cogs. Against such uniformity, she argues, the “freak” embodied both the promise and the fears of American democracy, signaling the American virtues of freedom and singularity alongside of the more uncomfortable possibilities of social disorder and anarchy (the threat of individuality gone awry).²⁴

In the readings that follow, I similarly consider the way that abstract political ideals are performed or inscribed in and through physical bodies. In *Seeing like a State*, James C. Scott has observed that the failures of various utopian schemas throughout the twentieth century can ultimately be explained by looking at state authorities’ unrealistic commitment to formalist principles of order and uniformity. These “attempts at legibility and simplification,” he argues,

“took exceptionally complex, illegible, and local social practices and created a standard grid whereby it could be centrally recorded and monitored” (2). But in so doing, he observes, they overlooked the

essential features of any real, functioning social order. This truth is best illustrated in a work-to-rule strike, which turns on the fact that any production process depends on a host of informal practices and improvisations that could never be codified. By merely following the rules meticulously, the workforce can virtually halt production.... To the degree that the formal scheme made no allowance for these processes or actually suppressed them, it failed both its intended beneficiaries and ultimately its designers as well. (6)

Applying Davis’s observations about the suppression of the non-standard physical body to Scott’s point here about the failures of such rigidly formalist suppressions, we might understand the presence of disability as emblematic not of the state’s demise but of its continued success and well-being. Here, the utopian schemes that Scott points to might be analogized to a medicalized cure or rehabilitation regimen that succeeds only in harming or killing the patient it treats.²⁵ The “unruly body,” in this framework, might not emblemize the “disease” of “social unrest,” as much as it emblemizes those “informal practices and improvisations” that escape the state’s lethal efforts at “legibility and simplification.”²⁶

While writers like Garland-Thomson and Russell are primarily concerned with the power of spectacle and the presentation of “freakish” embodiments across a range of gender identifications, my project takes as its focus a set of “revolting men.” These characters’ medicalized (though not always spectacularized or even visibly readable) departure from sexual and able-bodied norms, I argue, represent the original and contradictory promise of American revolutionary independence. If the melancholic identifications of the “national man” were based on the repression of American democratic heterogeneity, then the “queer-crip” masculine subject

emblemizes, conversely, a qualified embrace of the very “disorder” or rebellion that underpins the founding of the nation itself.

For an example of such values, we might briefly turn to Thomas Jefferson who, in many of his writings, framed the American Constitution as a site of continual generational revision.

Writing for *The Guardian*, Michael Hardt summarizes Jefferson’s views on revolution:

The first key to understanding Jefferson’s notion of transition is to recognize the continuous and dynamic relationship he poses between rebellion and constitution or, rather, between revolution and government. A conventional view of revolution conceives these terms in temporal sequence: rebellion is necessary to overthrow the old regime, but when it falls and the new government is formed, rebellion must cease. In contrast to this view, Jefferson insists on the virtue and necessity of periodic rebellion—even against the newly formed government... “God forbid we should ever be 20 years without such a rebellion,” he writes. In Jefferson’s view, rebellion should not become our constant condition; rather, it should eternally return.²⁷

In Jefferson’s model, an unruly body politic represents America’s founding democratic promise, rather than its exception.²⁸ Like the primordial outbreaks that are “destined to recur” spontaneously in the human body, “revolution” is given here as a site of “eternal return.” Thus if America has anything like a “national body,” it is a body that whose materiality—unconstrained by the laws of its immediate predecessors—is subject to revision and reconstitution. Indeed, in an 1824 letter to Major John Cartwright, Jefferson noted that earth was made “for the living, not the dead,” adding that a “generation may bind itself as long as its majority continues in life; when that has disappeared, another majority... may change their laws and institutions to suit themselves. Nothing then is unchangeable but the inherent and unalienable rights of man.” Against the static and predictable channels that bloodlines take, Jefferson points to a generalized politics of “life” that has no truck with dead or absent patriarchs. In stark contrast to the usual framing of the body politic referenced in the model of a spiritualized sovereign “head” which

rules over a complicit material “body,” Jefferson’s ideal American Constitution seems to not be a “body” at all but rather a fleshy work-in-progress.

This vision of the body politic as a perpetually revisable body of work in some ways prefigures Roberto Esposito’s recent call for a “vitalization of politics” (157). Tracing out the contours of an “affirmative biopolitics,” Esposito envisions a power that is “[n]o longer over life but of life, one that doesn’t superimpose already constituted (and by now destitute) categories of modern politics on life, but rather inscribes the innovative power of a life rethought in all its complexity” (157). Tracing out a complex and mutually constitutive relationship between “immunitas” (which we might briefly summarize as the expulsion of outsiders) and “communitas” (the inclusions necessary to form community), Esposito wonders how we might convert our “immunitary” paradigms into an “originary and intense sense of communitas” (57). Moreover, Esposito notes, it is the “degenerates,” who, “like bacteria of fermentation,” help to challenge immunitary paradigms by “assum[ing] the office of decomposing and reconstructing institutions” (124). It is precisely this “vitalization of politics,” via the revitalization of American brotherhood, that preoccupies the authors under examination in this study. Mobilizing and resignifying vocabularies of degeneracy—both sexual and physical—these writers attempt to “decompose” and “reconstruct” the institutions of American masculinity and to redefine the contours of American homosocial citizenship.

Though “narrative prosthesis” has long been the dominant structure for understanding the ways in which representations of disability “prop up” various national ideals, my project is more interested in what we might call the “prophylactic.” If, as Caroline Sargent has noted, states tend to want to “make society legible” by “enumerating populations,” “creating cultural identities,” and “producing sanitary citizens,” then my project takes as its focus the twentieth-century

reinvention of American manhood through the creation of “unsanitary” citizens or, as I here term them, “revolting men.” In each of the texts under examination, the breaching of prophylactic barriers between citizens represents an ambivalent democratic promise that has unexpected—and often positive—consequences for the (de)formation and reconstitution of American masculinity.

It is important to point out, too, that all of these authors are to some extent writing against the grain of what they perceive as dominant American culture. Jack London was a Socialist protesting the capitalist exploitation of working-class men; Faulkner was writing in a South devastated by the Civil War; James Baldwin was a black gay man intensely critical of American race relations; and Samuel Delany is a black gay man targeting the corporate and right-wing eradication of Times Square’s sexual subcultures. Fitzgerald is, arguably, the most conventional of the writers that I examine, but even he struggled with what it meant to take up a “feminine” sentimental mode of writing against his more “masculine” modernist contemporaries. The queer-crip subject that inhabits these works, then, might be understood less as the dominant-but-overlooked site of masculine identity in the twentieth-century and more as a subtextual paradigm that enables disenfranchised male authors to remake the substance of American brotherhood.

For example, in my first chapter, I argue that Jack London’s work, particularly his 1904 novel *The Sea Wolf* vacillates between two very different figurations of the queer-crip subject: the battered body of the homoeroticized primitive and the diagnosable sexual inversion of the modern gentleman. Scholars have, of course, commonly noted London’s championing of the primitive male body as the key to both physical and political “revolt.” That such revolt is expressed though a set of erotic and disabling exchanges between men, however, is a point that is commonly missed in readings of the novel. While psychoanalytic paradigms make it difficult to read the presence of disability in the text as anything other than Oedipal retribution for repressed

homosexual desires, I argue that London's representations of disability here, cannot, in fact, be reduced to the psychodynamics of punishment and prohibition. Rather, a biopolitical reading of London's novel reveals instead the extent to which Naturalist authors have relied upon the dual constructs of queerness and disability to "weigh down" and stabilize the written word of the American Constitution—adding physical "practice" to an otherwise empty "theory" of U.S. democracy.

By the 1920s and 1930s, of course, evolutionary theory had taken on a new set of practical applications, deployed by eugenicists in an effort to contain the American body politic by policing the fertility of "degenerate" populations. Therefore my second chapter examines the ways that the queer-crip male body has been constructed against and through the reproductive bodies of women. Here, I challenge Lee Edelman's Lacanian reading of Faulkner's novel *Sanctuary* (1931) through a consideration of the novel's eugenic backdrop, a consideration which refocuses attention away from same-sex desire and toward the perversely sexualized bodies of mother and child. While Faulkner's text focuses on this sexually deviant mother and her "defective" child-citizen, Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night* (1934) projects those reproductive anxieties onto the queer-crip male body: the doctor who, depleted by his emotional attachments to these perverse figures, fails to maintain proper ego boundaries. His psychic borders breached, this male body can be read as the microcosm of the American national body as it is made "vulnerable" to the eugenic contaminations of prostitutes, immigrants, and the sexual agency of the "new woman."

If the first two chapters focus on the embodied deviance of the "invert" and the "feeble-minded" mother and child, then my third chapter turns inward to examine the Cold War psychiatric construction of the homosexual psyche. Reading James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*

(1956) through both the discourse of sexual psychiatry and the discourse of anti-Communist sexual surveillance, I examine the practices of psychiatric self-diagnosis through which Baldwin's white protagonist, David, filters his experience of same-sex desire. Scholars writing on the novel commonly misunderstand David's emphasis on his own sexual repression as a sincere attempt on Baldwin's part to support psychoanalytic explanations of male same-sex desire. I argue, to the contrary, that *Giovanni's Room* uses David's conspicuous practices of self-diagnosis in order to enact a complicated critique of Cold War sexual psychiatry and expose the whiteness of its closet paradigm.

Finally, my fifth chapter, explores how the advent of new drug treatments for HIV in the late 1990s has shaped contemporary queer discourses of sexual citizenship. Though the contours of the "queer nation" have been well-covered in queer scholarship, less attention has been given to how the terms of that citizenship are altered in what Eric Rofes has termed the "post-AIDS" era. Pairing Samuel Delany's *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (1999) with contemporary discourses of "barebacking" and "bug chasing," I view the text as part of a larger cultural turn by which the virus has come to signify and organize new forms of civic life rather than organize, as it had previously, a queer politics of death and mourning. Prizing the anti-prophylactic willingness to be "infected" with the virtues of fraternal citizenship, Delany's text animates unpredictable forms of civic exchange that create a vibrant countercultural—though ultimately masculinized—world of American democratic belonging.

I want to make clear, however, that in tracing the contours of a revitalized "queer-crip" masculinity, I am not attempting to code these forms of masculinity as inherently subversive or liberatory. Rather, what we witness with the waning of national manhood and the rise of evolutionary theory, I suggest, is a fraught dialectic in which American male writers of the

twentieth century had to figure out how to produce an in-the-flesh oppositional space of masculine affiliation—one that embodied the virtues of democratic rebellion—while simultaneously minimizing the sexual and physical “risks” that such spaces implied. Furthermore, while a study that begins with Jack London and ends with Samuel Delany may appear to track a kind of progress narrative—beginning with the most identifiably heteromasculinist figure and ending with the most identifiably radical—my reading will make clear that it would be a mistake to view this historical trajectory as a movement from repression to liberation. Indeed, it is during my reading of Samuel Delany’s *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* that I launch one of my most pointed feminist critiques of homosocial citizenship. By giving attention to what is both productive and troubling in each author’s portrait of resistant queer-crip subjectivity, I present what I hope to be a non-teleological account of how discourses of physical and sexual deviance have intersected at key historical moments throughout the twentieth century.

Finally, one important assumption underlying this project is that, in order to launch a feminist investigation of queer-crip American masculinity, we need to use critical tools deeply attuned to intersectional and ideological critique. While much recent biopolitical theory has tended to turn away from ideological and epistemological critique (and toward Deleuzian assemblage, ontological states, and affective intensities), I insist on hanging on to certain “paranoid” reading practices.²⁹ Rather than fashioning a new theory of affirmative biopolitics, I suggest, we need to attend to the ideological uses to which discourses of nature and the body have been put—as well as the interlocking systems of privilege and oppression which they have served. I believe that understanding biopolitics as an epistemological system rather than as an

ontological condition will “vitalize politics” in ways that can engender exciting possibilities for future coalition and alliance between queer and disabled subjects.

¹ <http://www.tvloop.com/the-l-word/show/episodes/labia-majora-six-months-later-bette-and-tina-now-6935>

² For a more thorough critique of the homonormative and ableist investments of Dan Savage’s “It Gets Better Project,” see Jasbir Puar on “The Costs of Getting Better: Suicide, Sensation, Switchpoints.” The aim of Puar’s article, as well as her current book project, is to theorize the “heightened demands for bodily capacity and exceptionalized debility,” states that are “seeming opposites generated by increasingly demanding neoliberal formulations of health, agency, and choice... Those ‘folded’ into life are seen as more capacious or on the side of capacity, while those targeted for premature or slow death are figured as debility” (153). Within this framework, Puar argues, Savage’s project “refigures queers, along with other bodies heretofore construed as excessive/erroneous, as being on the side of capacity, ensuring that queerness operates as a machine of regenerative productivity” (153).

³ If, for Puar, the homonormative reproduction of “racial and national norms” ensures that “the homosexual other is white” while “the racial other is straight” (30-32), McRuer and Mollow have made a similarly trenchant observation about the relationship between sexual minorities and people with disabilities: today’s homosexual other is always assumed to be able-bodied while the disabled other is always assumed to be straight.

⁴ There are, of course, several notable exceptions to this silence, which I will elaborate on shortly.

⁵ One very striking exception to this dichotomy, of course, exists in transgender theory which has grown out of but also existed in tension with queer theory’s deconstruction of the gendered body. Jay Prosser, for example, articulates one of the most forceful transgender critiques of queer theories of gender performativity in *Second Skins* when he implicates Butler for “locat[ing] transgressive value in that which makes the subject’s real life most unsafe” (275). While I would take issue with Prosser’s assessment of Butler here, it is nonetheless worth pointing out that transgender theory’s attention to the “material” or “embodied” aspects of queerness as well as the complicated (and not always oppositional) relationship that some queer populations have to medical authorities position it as one potential site of articulation between queer theory and disability studies. Though a more thorough investigation of these convergences is beyond the scope of this project, one such analysis can be found in Ashley Mog’s 2008 article, “Threads of Commonality in Transgender and Disability Studies.”

⁶ Noting the way that a politics of pride fails “to address the marginal situation of queers who experience the stigma of poverty, racism, AIDS, gender dysphoria, disability, immigration, and sexism,” Love argues that it is only by contending with figures who are “characterized by

damaged or refused agency” that we can enact a more transformative queer politics. Love’s current book project, as she describes it in Andrew Parker and Janet Halley’s *After Sex* anthology, will center more explicitly on disability, launching a sustained engagement with archival materials that Erving Goffman used to compose his canonical book *Stigma: Notes on the Management of a Spoiled Identity*.

⁷ I want to make clear that I am not arguing the disability doesn’t exist as a meaningful category of analysis. There is something, in other words, that distinguishes the person with a twenty-four hour stomach flu from a person with quadriplegia, but I believe that it is a mistake to see that “thing” as inhering in their physical nature of the impairments themselves. That difference is found, rather, in the epistemological frameworks, both medical and cultural, that give those impairments meaning and transform their bearers to targets of biopolitical scrutiny.

⁸ Indeed, part of what I am suggesting here is that there may be less difference than we tend to think there is between physical and psychological states that we generally associate with disability, and the historically-specific medicalized construction of the “sexual invert,” the “feeble-minded woman,” and the psychiatrically treatable “homosexual.” Categories of disability, after all, are primarily given meaning through the medical discourses that differentiate between normal and abnormal bodies and practices. To understand “queerness” through “disability” in this way, however, does not require a return to pathologization. Instead, it requires us to understand disability culture’s movement toward a politics of pride along similar terms. To dwell on the medical origins of each identity category, then, is not to reinscribe medical models but rather to provide a site of possible coalition between subjects who have been marginalized by the intertwined norms of sexuality and able-bodiedness. Such a move may even, I would propose, allow us to invest the term “disability” with the same expansiveness and universalizing qualities that have increasingly come to characterize the term “queer.”

⁹ For Edelman, “the construction of homosexuality as a subject of discourse, as a cultural category about which one can think or speak or write, coincides . . . with the process whereby the homosexual subject is represented as being, even more than inhabiting, a body that always demands to be read, a body on which his ‘sexuality’ is always inscribed” (*Homographesis* 10).

¹⁰ Indeed, as many scholars have noted, visible disabilities tend to give way to an entirely different crisis of representation, in which the overt “readability” of the visibly disabled body serves as an incitement discourse—disability requires a narrative. For a more in-depth discussion of this representational crisis, see Lennard Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body*, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extradordinary Body*, and Ato Quayson, *Aesthetic Nervousness: Disability and the Crisis of Representation*.

¹¹ In her essay “Is Sex Disability?: Queer Theory and the Disability Drive,” Anna Mollow also considers Edelman’s arguments about queer antifuturity from a disability studies angle. Mollow argues that, while Edelman himself ignores the cripp dimensions of his project and disability analysis in general, we might productively reconceive of “reproductive futurism” as a form of

“rehabilitative futurism” in which the demands of the future include not just heteronormativity but able-bodiedness as well.

¹² Kathryn Kent offers a trenchant critique of queer psychoanalytic theories when she argues that critics like Leo Bersani and Teresa de Lauretis ultimately present “a separatist notion of desire (grounded in an ahistorical presocial or what Bersani often terms prepolitical or apolitical space). Although it may be strategically powerful to imagine an originary (gay/lesbian/queer) desire... these accounts remain unable to describe the ways in which specific historical shifts make thinkable specific forms of desire, identification, and identity” (*Making Girls Into Women* 9).

¹³ Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick, for example, have explored the role of touch in the phenomenological constitution of the self in their essay “Bodies Together: Touch, Ethics, and Disability.” Because touch is almost always mutual (one cannot touch without being touched in return), they argue, the range of contact that disabled individuals have with caregivers can destabilize the boundaries between self and other in politically productive ways.

¹⁴ In another essay, “Disability in Theory,” Siebers launches a similarly scathing critique of queer theory’s erasure of disabled experience, challenging queer body theory’s focus on pleasures of the body rather than on the body in pain. He argues, for example, that Donna Haraway overlooks the physical realities of the disabled person for whom the fusion of organic and inorganic is often a source of discomfort and vulnerability rather than a power (and hyper-ability). Pain, additionally, for Siebers, should not be understood as an individualized, interior phenomenon but rather as a source of collective identification for disabled people.

¹⁵ For more on this see Ellen Samuels’ “My Body, My Closet: Invisible Disability and the Limits of Coming Out Discourse” *GLQ* 9.1 (2003): 233-255.

¹⁶ See, for example, Shelly Tremain (Editor), *Foucault and the Government of Disability*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005.

¹⁷ See Ruth Hubbard, “Abortion and Disability: Who Should and Who Should Not Inhabit the World?” in *The Disability Studies Reader*. 3rd Edition. Lennard Davis (ed). NY: Routledge, 2010 and Marsha Saxton, “Disability Rights and Selective Abortion,” in *Abortion Wars: A Half Century of Struggle: 1950 to 2000*. Rickie Solinger (ed) Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998.

¹⁸ For such foundational work on the medicalization of the female body, see Emily Martin, *The Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1987 and Deirdre English and Barbara Ehrenreich, *For Her Own Good: Two Centuries of the Experts Advice to Women*. NY: Anchor Books, 1978.

¹⁹ See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*. New York: Vintage, 1990.

²⁰ This a model of generalized white “rationality,” Nelson observes, did multiple things for white American men of otherwise clashing classes and regional affiliations. First, by dissolving national or ethnic difference under the larger umbrella of whiteness, it helped American’s sever their blood ties with the British (a dissolution which needed to occur in order to justify the American fight for independence). Secondly, by coding whiteness with properties of rationality and benevolence, it provided a racial identification that justified the slave system and authorized the colonial presence on American soil. And finally, by making white manhood the common denominator of American citizenship, it helped to neutralize or repress the threat of clashing regional or socioeconomic interests—the anarchic potential of true democracy—under the unifying, if illusory, banner of whiteness. Thus, to say that American national manhood is invested in whiteness is not quite the same thing as positing American national belonging as a citizenship rooted in a shared ethnicity and common birth. While Americans have made race a crucially important to citizenship, this appeal to whiteness was less of an appeal to a common American birthright than it was a strategy for differentiating American colonists from the indigenous American populations they displaced and the black populations whose labor they exploited.

²¹ As science began to replace sentiment, and statistical analysis began to be supplanted religiously motivated reform, a discourse of both disability and sexuality gradually emerged in which sexual deviance and physical difference were no longer marked entirely though a language of morality and religious taboo, codified instead though a new language of defect and degeneracy. Indeed, given their overlapping histories, it is surprising that queer theory and disability studies have not been paired more frequently. It is possible, however, that such a disciplinary division has emerged not despite, but precisely because of, the uneasy linkages between queerness and disability that were forged throughout the sexological discourses of the late nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth century, a literature which anchored deviant sexual desires to the physical body and, in so doing, positioned queerness and disability in close and proximity to one another. Part of what this project suggests, then, is that historians of sexuality might have much to gain by embracing the insights of disability studies—or even by a recognition that the history of sexuality is, in some ways, part of the history of disability.

²² In her study of sexual science, Jennifer Terry observes that, because the principles of democracy required a commitment to equality in a society still deeply committed to upholding its gender, class, and racial hierarchies, the science of comparative anatomy rose up as a way to both champion democracy while excluding certain bodies from its rights and protections. As Siobhan Somerville similarly argues in *Queering the Color Line*, far from being merely analogical, “the formation of notions of heterosexuality and homosexuality emerged in the United States through (and not merely parallel to) a discourse saturated with assumptions about the racialization of bodies” (4). Thus the rise of sexual science, and its attendant invention of the primitive body, the sexually deviant body, and the disabled body, offered way of addressing the paradox of how American democracy can exist alongside of hierarchial structures.

²³ In these discourses, the disabled or sick body is often understood as that which exists outside of or threatens the regimentation, uniformity, and self-restraint of a functional and well-

disciplined body politic. In *The Birth of the Clinic*, for example, Foucault considered the way the “healthy” eighteenth-century body and its successor, the “normal” nineteenth-century body were invented to signify a well-governed body politic. Disability historian Henri-Jacques Stiker has built upon these insights, analogizing the restoration of movement to the bodies of wounded soldiers to the restoration of the national body after it experiences the crisis of war. Considering this issue from a set of literary perspectives, Lennard Davis, David Mitchell, and Sharon Snyder have all noted the way that narratives about disability often function to rehabilitate a national subjects.

²⁴ Emily Russell has recently coined the term “embodied citizenship” to tease out this very paradox by which “the anomalous characteristics that exclude individuals from full access to the political imaginary become the same features that structure their participation” (15). Reading a wide-range of literary figures, from Mark Twain’s conjoined twins to Katherine Dunn’s postmodern freaks, Russell explores these characters’ ability to “momentarily make strange America’s familiar categories of citizenship” (22).

²⁵ In addition to the numerous accounts of this within disability studies narratives, we might also here recall Hawthorne’s short story “The Birthmark,” which showcases precisely these dangers—Aylmer’s use of science, medicine, and alchemy to remove Georgiana’s physical “imperfection” is the quintessential cure that kills the patient.

²⁶ We might, in fact, turn to the television cartoon *South Park* for a compelling illustration of this process. In a Thanksgiving-themed episode, disabled character Timmy is charged with the task of selecting a turkey to be featured in the students’ school play (incidentally titled *Helen Keller! The Musical*). Finding affinity with a “messed up” turkey with a stooped neck, Timmy selects this disabled turkey for the play, naming him Gobbles. Dismayed by Timmy’s choice, his classmates send Gobbles to a slaughterhouse, but it is here that Gobbles’ stooped neck turns out to do him a valuable service. As a blade slices lengthwise across the slaughterhouse floor, all of the turkeys are simultaneously and efficiently decapitated—all except for Gobbles’ whose stooped neck has in fact caused him to dodge the blade entirely. Placed inside of a killing machine that assumes a uniformity of turkey bodies, it is precisely the “improvisational” qualities of Gobbles’ physical disability that confound the system and ensure his continued survival.

²⁷ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2007/jul/04/taketherevolutionaryroad>

²⁸ In a letter dated June 24, 1813, for example, Jefferson suggests that we “consider each generation as a distinct nation, with a right, by the will of its majority, to bind themselves, but none to bind the succeeding generation, more than the inhabitants of another country.” In a letter to Samuel Kercheval” (July 12, 1816), Jefferson further deemphasizes the ever-changing qualities of the American body politic, suggesting that “[e]ach generation is as independent of the one preceding, as that was of all which had gone before. It has then, like them, a right to choose for itself the form of government it believes most promotive of its own happiness.” It is in this way, for Jefferson, that the Constitution “may be handed on, with periodical repairs, from generation to generation, to the end of time, if anything human can so long endure.” Here,

Jefferson transforms American men's biggest liability—their differences from one another and from their predecessors—into a symbol of national strength and dynamism.

²⁹See Eve Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You." *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2003.

2. “AN INHERENT WEAKNESS OF THE CONSTITUTION”:

JACK LONDON’S REVOLTING BODIES

2.1 National Manhood at the Fin de Siècle

In his 1911 boxing narrative “The Mexican,” Jack London links the disembodied ideals of political revolution to the fleshy corporeality of battered masculine body. When Felipe Rivera, a young man whose parents have been slaughtered during Porfirio Diaz’s corrupt dictatorial regime, offers his services to the revolutionary uprising against Diaz, he is first met with suspicion, then simply confusion as he shows up day after day with bruises on his body and gold to fund the Revolutionary effort:

Now he appeared with a cut lip, a blackened cheek, or a swollen ear. It was patent that he brawled, somewhere in that outside world where he ate and slept, gained money, and moved in ways unknown to them. As the time passed, he had come to set type for the little revolutionary sheet they published weekly. There were occasions when he was unable to set type, when his knuckles were bruised and battered, when his thumbs were injured and helpless, when one arm or the other hung wearily at his side while his face was drawn with unspoken pain. (1070)

What his comrades don’t know, but what the reader soon finds out, is that Rivera has become a small-time champion on the boxing circuit, fighting not for glory or personal gain but to in order to raise money for the resistance. The reader is told that “[i]t takes money to raise a modern revolution, and... there were times when it appeared as if the Revolution stood or fell on no more than the matter of a few dollars” (1069). At these moments, it is Rivera who “laid sixty dollars in gold” or “a thousand two-cent stamps on May Sethby’s desk.” Rivera’s money, earned from his boxing matches, is ultimately the thing that allows the revolutionaries to send the

[t]hree hundred letters, clicked out on the busy typewriters (appeals for assistance, for sanctions from the organized labor groups, requests for square news deals to the editors of newspapers, protests against the high-handed treatment of

revolutionists by the United States courts) [that] lay unmailed, awaiting postage. (1069)

Rivera's boxing bruises are thus configured as part of an opposition between the empty "words" of the resistance and its material, physical practice. Here, the revolutionary effort is presented as a kind of printing press, a site invested primarily in the production of words but lacking the means to place those words into action. Though Rivera is a man of few words himself, it is ironically his damaged body and his "unspoken pain," that ultimately holds the power to animate those words. Though his boxing injuries render him "unable to set type," those same injuries nonetheless are the thing that place the Junta's "three hundred letters" into productive circulation.

Thus, much like the gold that he lays on Mary Sethby's desk, Rivera's body might be viewed here as a kind of raw natural substance that, through the vehicle of injury, is distilled into political capital. His bruised body giving form and weight to the Junta's abstract ideals, Rivera's battered flesh ultimately legitimates the revolution's loftier theoretical principles by providing them with an "anchor in materiality"—a dense physical body that houses the abstract spirit of the Mexican Revolution. As one awed member of the Junta describes him two pages later, Rivera is "the Revolution incarnate."¹

Rivera is not the only male character of London's to be introduced to the reader through an exhaustive catalogue of injuries, yet Jack London is rarely taken up from a disability studies perspective. And while queer revisions of London's work are more common, their critics' privileging of psychoanalytic models tends to cast disability through a standard language of deficiency, emasculation, and metaphoric castration. In such accounts, disability is either ignored or simply understood as Oedipal retribution for repressed homosexual desires. But in London's literary universe, I argue, amputation rarely signifies castration, and physical pain,

inflicted onto one man by another, cannot be reduced to the psychodynamics of punishment and prohibition. The eroticized and disabling exchanges staged between men testify instead, I argue, to their hypermasculine endurance, fitting them for entry into the American brotherhood.

This chapter thus contends that a reappraisal of London's fictional and political writings can reveal the often-overlooked role that queer and disabled bodies have played as figurative supports in structures of masculine national belonging in the U.S. Specifically, I suggest that the newly invented medical category of "sexual inversion" paired with the emerging discourses of primitivism to give fin de siècle public intellectuals like London a new way to solve the problem of how to legitimate masculine citizenship in a democratic state founded on something other than a shared ethnic heritage. London addresses this problem, I suggest, by fashioning for his characters a set of outlaw spaces whose harsh naturalist contours give rise to a set of erotic and violent exchanges between men. Mining the "queer" and "crip" dimensions of those exchanges, I argue that London presents his physically damaged and perversely sexualized rogues as the raw material out of which states are crafted. Like paperweights, their dense physicality is designed to anchor and stabilize the written word, providing heft and substance to the otherwise "empty" declarations of American democratic independence.

An obvious question, of course, presents itself at the outset of an investigation like this one: why Jack London? Why perform a queer-crip analysis of an author who is ostensibly neither queer nor crip? London was far from identifying with the labels his era assigned to male homosexuality, and to claim him as a disabled person would be an enormous stretch, even for readers committed the most inclusive definitions of disability. Quite often, London's celebration of a rugged, outdoorsman model of masculinity emphasized the contrary virtues of racial "fitness" and primal heterosexual desire. Put simply, London's notion of authentic American

citizenship was often implicitly, and more often explicitly, racist, sexist and deeply heteronormative. Furthermore, while London enjoyed literary fame during his lifetime, he has not fully endured as literary master of the twentieth century. Though frequently anthologized in American literature textbooks and assigned in high school English classrooms, he is often dismissed by scholars as too popular, too ideological, too sentimental, or too suited for younger readers to merit serious critical attention. I would not dispute many of these characterizations. Rather than rescue London from these critiques, I prefer to view these potential shortcomings as a set of opportunities. It is precisely because Jack London endures as an emblem of able-bodied heteromascularity that it is crucial to examine the queer-crip underside to his democratic vision.

Furthermore, in using the terms “queer” and “crip” to describe London’s writing throughout this chapter, it is my intention to disrupt rather than consolidate the meanings of these terms. Rather than understanding “queerness” and “disability” as transparent concepts that can simply be applied to turn-of-the-century texts, I am interested in disentangling the complicated web of discourses that shaped public views about health, embodiment, and sexuality during London’s particular era. By exploring the ideological investments of those discourses, it is my intention to historicize normative understandings of health and well-being. Following the lead of scholars like Robert McRuer and Carrie Sandahl, my use of the terms “queer” and “crip” can be understood as referring to a variety of practices, meanings, and forms of embodiment that have been discursively constructed in ways that exist in tension with an era’s reigning sexual, physical, and behavioral norms. In Jack London’s fictional and political writing, for example, we are presented with two recurring figures that seem to stand opposed to dominant ideals of health and sexuality: the medicalized male “sissy” and the lower-class brute who accumulates a vast inventory of injuries at sea and on “the road.” In using these figures to read against the

grain of London's "healthy" heteromascuine reputation, my intention is not to uncloset any of London's characters as gay or disabled but rather to trouble the coherence of concepts like "queerness" and "disability," even as I employ them as shorthand.

Keeping a historicized approach to these terms at the forefront of my analysis, I assert that London not only uses "positive" images of queerness and disability to elevate the working-class masculinity of his contemporaries; he is also employing "negative" images of disability in order to denigrate and disqualify some of the bourgeois masculine ideals that had preceded his own era. Seizing on the recently invented condition of "neurasthenia" and "sexual inversion," London uses sexology as rhetorical weapon against what he viewed as the anemic and substanceless masculinity of his direct antecedents. Transforming the previously celebrated qualities of the bourgeois patriarch into a set of queer pathologies and readable symptoms, London breaks with his nineteenth-century predecessors to offer what he felt was a newer and more robust definition of American manhood. But whether it is the diagnosable body of the sexual invert or the damaged body of the nautical rogue, images of queerness and disability are central to the representational strategies through which London attempts to re-imagine what a radical democratic practice in the United States might look like.²

However, tempting as it may be to find a liberatory value in these instabilities, I would contend that London's work does not ultimately challenge able-bodied norms or subvert structures of compulsory heterosexuality. Though his model of masculine citizenship self-consciously constructs itself in opposition to the masculine ideals of the nineteenth century, it provides an equally troubling definition of national belonging, one that champions the power of democracy while expelling various social contaminants—racialized bodies, feminized bodies, and even, ultimately queer and disabled bodies—from its rigidly patrolled outlaw spaces. The

result is the creation of a utopian brotherhood whose “queer” and “crip” dimensions London both claims and disavows.

In claiming the primitive, London and his naturalist contemporaries were in part attempting to address a perceived “crisis” in masculinity that had developed toward the end of the nineteenth century. As Michael Kimmel has noted, the market revolution during the first four decades of the nineteenth century produced important changes not only in America’s socioeconomic landscape but also in American archetypes of masculinity. With the rise of mercantile capitalism, the United States witnessed the emergence of a bourgeois middle class, alongside of which the concept of the “self-made man” was born. Coined in 1832 by Henry Clay, the self-made man referred to the virtues of self-sufficiency, individual achievement, and upward mobility that the capitalist marketplace ostensibly allowed men to cultivate. As Kimmel observes, “[s]ons had to compete for elusive manhood in the market rather than grow into secure manhood by replicating their fathers” (33). This model therefore existed in tension with a model of masculinity that Kimmel terms the “genteel patriarch”—an aristocratic form that was frequently becoming associated, in the public imagination, with European decadence. While some pundits of the period still praised the aristocratic man of “thin physique, pale complexion, and languid air,” other writers, including Hawthorne, Emerson, and S. C. Allen, denigrated the genteel patriarch as a “race of non-producers” and “foppish dandy[s]” (21). The difference, in other words, between the “genteel patriarch” and the “self-made man” was the difference between the American virtues of independent self-sovereignty and the European aristocrat’s dependence on and deference to a higher paternal and monarchical authority.

Moreover, the nineteenth-century “self-made man” himself appeared in multiple and often contradictory forms, from the “heroic artisan” to the capitalist entrepreneur. The archetype

of the heroic artisan, as Kimmel describes it, was embodied by rugged frontiersmen like Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett whose mystic biographies of self-sufficient masculinity captivated the public imagination. More rustic than professional, his retreat from civilization enabled him to bond with other men in ways that appeared to be foreclosed to the competitive capitalist entrepreneur.³ Against the instinctual manhood of the heroic artisan, the self-made man of the capitalist workplace was directed to adopt an ethic of self-control and self-government that would help curtail those instincts. To this effect, the period between 1830 and 1860 witnessed a proliferation of medical texts that warned against the physical dangers of masturbation, frequent sex (even within marriage), meat consumption, and any other activity that would feed the senses and inspire indulgence. Kimmel quotes Sylvester Graham's 1834 text *A Lecture to Young Men*, as exemplary of these prescriptions:

The wretched transgressor... sinks into a miserable fatuity, and finally becomes a confirmed and degraded idiot, whose deeply sunken and vacant, glossy eye, and livid shriveled countenance and ulcerous, toothless gums, and fetid breath, and feeble, broken voice, and emaciated and dwarfish and crooked body, and almost hairless head—covered perhaps with suppurating blisters and running sores—denote a premature old age! (35)

In these texts, restraint was made equivalent with good health while the indulgence of sexual and other appetites was understood as producing a long list of impairments and physical deformities. Committed to objectivity, rationality, and a brand of physical restraint that emphasized mind over matter, this nineteenth-century "self-made man" was thus often praised for his refined morality, entrepreneurial self-discipline, and a romantic championing of the power of the individual will. A master of both his own body and the body of others, Dana Nelson observes, this white nineteenth-century patriarch became the bearer of the emerging scientific and medical gaze. Popular and professional literature often represented him as a physician who exercised extraordinary skill in diagnosing the fleshy bodies of "disordered" female patients as

well as the “inferior” physiognomy of indigenous populations. The qualities that made the nineteenth-century patriarch a good doctor, she adds, were also seen as making him a good statesman, as his rationality appeared to qualify him to speak on behalf of his fellow citizens. In objectively and transparently representing the interests of many, his own physical body was subordinated to the higher functions of the mind.

Nelson coins the term “national manhood” in order to characterize these white “representative figures” as well as the fraternal affiliations that were formed between and through them. The most important role of the “national man,” suggests Nelson, was his capacity to act as an emblem of the American democratic spirit, a spirit that united men by seeming to transcend superficial divisions of economic class and regional geography—though not, importantly, divisions of race. Divisions of race were in fact crucial to the structures of national manhood, Nelson argues, as they allowed for a space of racial and gendered privilege to which *all* white men were theoretically heir, regardless of where they lived or how much money they had. In reinforcing the communal ties between white men, the discourse of national manhood thus created an illusory sense of masculine unity, an “imagined fraternity” of white men that ultimately masked a larger reality of ideological conflict and socio-economic inequality.⁴

It is surprising, however, that Nelson elides naturalist constructions of masculinity in her account of national manhood which takes her reader from the early republic to the present day with no mention of the way that either the “heroic artisan” ideal or later championing of the male “primitive” deeply impacted turn-of-the-century understandings of whiteness, masculinity and citizenship. Bringing together narratives as historically diverse as *Benito Cereno* and *Air Force One* under the rubric of national manhood, drawing a continuous line between Thomas Jefferson and Bill Clinton, Nelson implies that national manhood has endured throughout the whole of

American history as *the* central structure of national belonging. But the texts of American literary naturalism, along with their earlier nineteenth-century precursors, offer a version of manhood very different from the “national manhood” of the disembodied patriarch.

At the risk of oversimplifying to complex and interrelated patterns of masculinity that evolved throughout the nineteenth century, we might track two broadly oppositional genealogies that culminated in the early twentieth century opposition between the “national man” and what we might call the “naturalist” man. Though the rational and restrained American entrepreneur was initially presented as a critique of the decadent European aristocrat, he also in many ways extended the aristocrat’s commitment to class hierarchy. Furthermore, while nineteenth-century frontier masculinities shared with entrepreneurial masculinity a commitment to self-made manhood, those frontier masculinities’ interest in embodied fraternity sharply contrasted with the self-made businessman’s adversarial relationship with his market competitors. Indeed, by the turn of the twentieth century, the frontier had begun to represent, for many working men, a welcome retreat from the depersonalizing and exploitative industrial labor force.⁵ Meanwhile, the New Woman’s late nineteenth century push for suffrage threatened to challenge the masculine monopoly on the vote, and urban vice districts (understood as hotbeds of non-procreative sexualities) threatened to contaminate the male-headed nuclear family. These developments, compounded with the new presence of women, African-Americans and immigrants in the public sphere, began to make clear to white working men that the capitalist workplace was not always to be counted on as a site of masculine autonomy and self-fashioning. This changing socioeconomic landscape produced a fertile ground for a new “muscularized” paradigm of masculinity inspired by Darwin’s 1859 publication of *On the Origin of the Species*.⁶

Gail Bederman has produced a thorough and compelling account of this muscularized paradigm in her excellent study of turn-of-the-century American masculinities. Focusing on the deterministic power of the natural world and the enduring strength of primitive desires, naturalist masculinity re-imagined civilization as a feminizing force; excessive dependence on either its domestic comforts or its urban distractions was viewed as a pathological social development that robbed men of their natural connection with the earth, their natural heterosexual desire, and by extension, their natural claim to social power.⁷ Socially-constructed differences between men and women were mapped onto the evolutionary scale with “early man” embodying the “masculine” attributes of aggression, strength and sexual potency and modern man embodying the “feminine” traits of gentleness, domesticity, spirituality. Fundamental, then to this new “cult of muscularity,” was the drive for men to reconnect with the primordial materiality of their physical bodies.⁸ If earlier ideals of “manliness” were based on “civilized” and rational control over impulses, then this new brand of rugged masculinity (championed by public figures like Theodore Roosevelt and Stanley Hall) took seriously the primordial roots of masculine identity and men were advised not to stray too far from their earthy origins.⁹

Thus, the civilized professionalism that Nelson has identified as the hallmark of “national manhood,” became in the context of literary naturalism, reconfigured as an unhealthy overdevelopment of the mind and a shameful underdevelopment of the body. Far from celebrating the rationality, “health,” and benevolence of the “national man,” public figures at the turn of the century “protest[ed] the dangers of ‘overcivilization’ to American manhood and thus to American culture,” which boiled down, in the end, to “the dangers of women’s civilizing influence” (Chauncey, 113). Through naturalist eyes, the white entrepreneurial self-made man that had been prized in many nineteenth-century accounts, no longer signaled respectable

citizenship but instead began to look like just another symptom of capitalist culture's pathological emphasis on mind over matter.

But in solving one set of problems, the new naturalist model of masculinity created another. On the one hand, primitivism may have been gendered as masculine but it was also often racialized as non-white. To slide backwards into a more primordial manhood, then, was not just to recover the wellspring of one's masculinity—it was also to identify oneself with the “lower” races. Kimmel notes the paradox with which “[b]lack men and immigrants were seen simultaneously as less manly than native-born whites and as *more* manly, especially as more sexually voracious and potent” (69). Thus, in an intriguing set of rhetorical balancing acts, commentators were careful to frame the white primitive subject as ultimately superior to the black one; while the white primitive used both his brain and his brawn, employing superior strength and cunning, the black primitive lacked intelligence, and was therefore a mere slave to his instinct.¹⁰ While the racialization of the “primitive” complicated the category's application to the white masculine body, that racialization did not entirely invalidate the hold that evolutionary theory had on the public imagination.¹¹

Another problem that naturalist celebrations of primitive masculinity had to contend with was the constant threat of homoeroticism implicit in any male celebration of the masculine body. Examining the rise of spectator sports during the 1890s, John Dudley observes that many commentators who covered these sporting events found themselves walking a fine line between detached appreciation and sexual objectification. What to do, Dudley asks, about the sexual and feminizing power of the gaze as it has been conceived in feminist theory, especially when the subject of that gaze is not a woman but a white man? Furthermore, how might the male journalist who casts an appraising glance at Jim Jeffries in the boxing ring (a role that London

himself occupied) distinguish himself from effeminate Wildean aesthete (a figure whose threat male primitivism was intended to neutralize)? The naturalist literary commitment to the “artless” objectivity of purely journalistic and documentarian observation certainly helped guard against the potential sexualization of this gaze. (Indeed, writers like London saw the pleasure of athletic spectatorship as a specifically Anglo-Saxon trait, an extension of the disembodied medical gaze as it ventured into more rugged, masculine arenas.) Nonetheless, in presenting the male body as both spectator and spectacle, as both scientist and specimen, the visual dynamics structuring these homosocial spaces, as Dudley demonstrates through several compelling close readings, could not avoid frequent slippages into homoeroticism.

The homoerotic undercurrents of literary naturalism have been noticed by other scholars as well. Denise Cruz, for example, examines a set of homoerotic exchanges between the two hypermasculine protagonists in Norris’s *McTeague*, arguing that the triangulated queer desire that structures their friendship “shatters the myth that U.S. Naturalism’s agenda can be read easily as a heterosexual remasculinization of decadent, effeminate literature” (489) directing us instead to recognize the presence of “homoerotic partnerships between brawny, athletic, aggressive men” (489). But too often, in readings like Cruz’s, the “homoerotic” is framed as a function of psychic repression, melancholic attachment, and “paranoid gothic” doubling. Such framings, however, project a universalizing paradigm of masculinity onto naturalism’s very different construction of the masculine subject. As relevant as the concept of melancholic repression might be to nineteenth century manhood, I believe it is a mistake to understand male homoeroticism as performing the same function for turn of the century naturalist authors who were engaged in an entirely different project. To fall back on ahistorical psychoanalytic

renderings of homoeroticism in the naturalist text is to foreclose a more productive inquiry into the biopolitical contours of queer hypermasculinity.

Considering queer hypermasculinity through a biopolitical rather than a psychoanalytic lens can help to jar us out of certain institutionalized and calcified reading practices—in particular, the orthodoxy with which psychoanalysis has been wedded to queer inquiry.¹² In allowing us to take seriously Naturalism's commitment to the body (and its displacement of the psyche), a biopolitical reading of London's work can help to forge new links between queer theory and disability studies. Indeed, though queer readings of London are becoming more common, the presence of disability in his work still remains largely ignored. This may be partially due to London's overt support of eugenic marriage, his association with figures like Theodore Roosevelt who warned of the dangers of "race suicide," and his general assertion that the world belongs, ultimately, to "fittest."¹³ I have no interest in disputing London's obvious ableism. What I am interested in pointing out, however, is the way in which London valorizes physical injury as a mark of masculine virility and homoerotic violence while at the same time denigrating the medicalized figure of the sexual invert. Considering these figures through a biopolitical lens allows us to consider constructions of queerness and disability not simply as parallel discourses but as ones that were, from the beginning, epistemologically inextricable from one another.

Proceeding from the assumption that a biopolitical reading can yield new insight into an old topic—the well-worn thematic of male "homoeroticism"—I present in what follows a series of close readings of London's fictional and non-fictional works, including *The Sea Wolf*, *Before Adam*, as well as a few of London's political essays. Through these readings, I suggest that London's critique of national manhood ultimately relies on his ability to construct two

oppositional portraits of the queer-crip male body, portraits that fall along deeply gendered lines. On the one hand, London transforms the previously celebrated objectivity of the national man into the aesthetic detachment of the diagnosable queer, and in so doing, calls into question whether the “representative” figures of national manhood are ultimately capable of “representing” the interests of their white working class brothers. On the other hand, London actively celebrates the primitive masculine body, whose “inarticulate” materiality carries with it the dynamic potential for Socialist revolution. The hypermasculinity of that body is evidenced, I argue, by the violent injuries it sustains and the queer sexuality occasioned by those injuries. These two models of queer and crip embodiment, I suggest, are fundamental to London’s attempt to reinvent the American citizenship at the dawn of the twentieth-century.

2.2 **A Beastly and Inarticulate Thing**

When London “incarnates” the revolution in the physical body of Rivera, he biologizes the concept of revolt while at the same time universalizing it. Revolutionary resistance, in *The Mexican*, does not, in the end, issue from geographically-specific ideological conflict. Rather, the real muscle that animates revolution issues from a primordial place where the boundaries of nation do not yet exist. Rivera’s eyes are “are savage as a wild tiger’s” and he is “pitiless as steel, keen and cold as frost. He is like moonshine in a winter night when a man freezes to death on some lonely mountain top” (1070). Aligned with the primordial authenticity of the natural world, Rivera’s body is rendered both pre-national and pre-linguistic. His primitive physicality is at a fundamental disconnect from the eloquent words and specific ideologies that his brawn nonetheless succeeds in animating.¹⁴ Thus Rivera’s unruly flesh is more formal than ideological, emblemizing the physical force that is the founding condition of law itself.¹⁵

But what, for London, is to be gained by rendering nationality irrelevant to the masculine capacity for revolt? What can the Mexican prizefighter Rivera possibly have to do with London's reinvention of *American* masculine citizenship in *The Sea Wolf*? I would suggest that the process of de-nationalization (or perhaps more appropriately *pre*-nationalization) that Rivera undergoes throughout the story is helpful to London because it provides American men with a model of fraternity that does not rely on a shared national birth. As David Savran notes:

The United States is one of the few countries that became a political unit before it became a nation. After the Revolutionary War, it was consolidated as a political, commercial, and administrative entity... without, however, developing either a national culture or a consensus on what the defining qualities of the nation might be. Unlike other countries, it could not stake a claim to having a unique language. It shared English with its former colonizer, Great Britain, and with colonial states in North America. (262-263)

In other words, while most nation-states rely on a common narrative of ethnic origins to ground the political state, the United States has never had the fantasy of common bloodlines to shore up its political structures. When Washington Irving called the newly formed American political union a “logocracy” in 1807, he spoke precisely to this anxiety that the foundation the United States rests upon, more rhetorical than physical, lacks firm grounding.¹⁶ The “busy typewriters” of the Junta, producing inert stacks of letters that require a brawny masculinity to place them in circulation, might here be understood as both a lamentation of these rhetorical origins as well as a proposed solution to that problem. It is as though London is asking himself what, besides the disqualified concepts of religion and national birthright, can ground the democratic independence promised to him by his forefathers—what, in other words, is left to bind American men to one another? That binding substance is here revealed as the brute physicality of the primordial body: the “cut lip,” “blackened cheeks” and “swollen ears” that evidence a man’s physical capacity to step outside of the law and resist (any) unjust regime of political power. It is in this way that

the masculine body, materialized through injury, provides London with a solution for how to ground the United States' free-floating "logocracy" in the absence of either a shared ethnicity or a shared belief in the divine justification of American national origins. By offering Rivera as "the Revolution Incarnate," London is able to transform the liability of American manhood (the lack of a shared national ethnicity) into its best advantage. Claiming Rivera as a kind of "brother" to the revolutionary cause, London finds a way to give physical substance to the abstract revolutionary "spirit" that inspired the birth of the United States itself.¹⁷

Keeping in mind the strategies through which London aligns the battered masculine body with the anchoring force that grounds the abstract principles of (American) revolution and democracy, I want to consider London's 1904 novel *The Sea Wolf*. Unlike London's brief treatment of the Mexican Revolution in "The Mexican" or the dystopian portrait he paints in his 1908 novel *The Iron Heel*, *The Sea Wolf* is at a literal remove from the world of political conflict, taking place on a sealing schooner in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. It is in this remote setting that pampered aristocrat Humphrey Van Weyden is rescued from shipwreck when a seal-hunting vessel spots his body in the ocean's freezing waters. Captained by the ruthless and brutish Wolf Larsen, the vessel becomes Humphrey's unwilling home for the next several months during which time Wolf provides Humphrey with a harsh nautical education—an education that ultimately transforms Humphrey from an effete man of letters into a muscled and masculine sailor. Much of the novel centers on a set of philosophical debates between the intellectual gentleman Humphrey and the ferociously masculine Wolf. Wolf not only rejects the notion of a human spirit that transcends the body but, more importantly, refuses to acknowledge the sanctity of the abstract principles that lie behind the written law. His reign as ship's captain puts this materialism into practice: throughout the novel he delivers a set of vicious beatings to the men

around him and kills several of his sailors without conscience or remorse. His frequent displays of physical violence appear to be justified not by any national, human, or spiritual law, but instead by the principle through which the strong vanquish the weak—a hallmark of the period’s popularized Social Darwinism.¹⁸ Humphrey, in contrast, attempts to hold fast to his opposing ideals of an ethical law that transcends the biologically primitive (and thus ethically empty) fight for survival that Wolf champions. Throughout the novel, Wolf’s philosophy is expressed through the gradual molding of Humphrey’s body, which gains muscle and substance in proportion to his adoption of Wolf’s staunch materialism.

Taking place on a sealing schooner in the Pacific, and therefore isolated from the structures of any nation or framework of law, it has been read though a broadly humanist lens that interrogates the nature of good and evil, through psychoanalytic vocabularies of desire and repression, and more recently, though the lens of gender studies and queer theory.¹⁹ What few readings have done, however, is to connect its queer thematics to questions of American citizenship, outlaw masculinity and the representational connections to the ability/disability binary. I would suggest that, though *The Sea Wolf* does not explicitly address questions of political revolution or any specific set of political conflicts, it is here that London begins to negotiate the same anxieties about the “revolting” masculine body that he tackles more explicitly in “The Mexican” seven years later. These anxieties, far from being universal, grow specifically out of a growing discontent, I argue, with the nineteenth century’s structures of American “national manhood.”

In their attitudes towards the extent to which the “letter” of the law is sanctified, Humphrey and Wolf might be understood as emblems, respectively, of the de-materialized “national manhood” of the nineteenth century and the re-materialized “naturalist” masculinity

that developed as its antidote. There are several features that give Humphrey away as a nineteenth century “national man,” but one of the most striking of these features is his commitment to what Nelson terms “fraternal melancholy.” The national man’s melancholy, Nelson observes, arose out of a fundamental contradiction between the version of fraternity he is offered, and the version of fraternity he is given. Because his success within the 19th century marketplace depended on his rigorous self-discipline, he was expected to repress any desires that might sap his productive energies. Thus his bonds with other white men were more theoretical than practical, as that marketplace ultimately required masculine relations to fall along a model that was adversarial rather than cooperative. Though white fraternal unity was prized in theory, actual fraternal spaces and contacts—especially those occurring during the vulnerable period of a youth—were to be discouraged. Fraternity was instead oedipalized on a father/son model that understood men as *men* only when they have left behind their role of son and assumed their appropriate mantle as father and, by extension, salaried head of a nuclear household. More rhetorical than practical, more abstract than embodied, national manhood’s promise of a unified and uniform white brotherhood ultimately repressed political reality of clashing interests and deep regional, socioeconomic and cultural divisions. Such political and personal repressions, Nelson suggests, make necessary the ceremonial mourning of absent or dead patriarchs. Through the ritualized practice of gathering around the bodies of dead “representatives,” male citizens were able to observe the sanctity of a democratic spirit that seemed to transcend the mere materiality of the physical body. Created in these sentimental spaces of affective relation between white men, the fraternal structures of national manhood are always already, Nelson observes, premised on a kind of melancholic absence or loss.

With this in mind, I want to consider an often ignored passage narrated early in the novel. In it, Humphrey describes the manner in which Wolf verbally abuses his dying first mate who, after going on “debauch” in “San Francisco” “had the poor taste to die... and leave [Wolf] short-handed” (14). I quote this passage at some length, as it I believe that it is here that London launches one of his most clearly defined attacks on the national man’s misplaced commitment to “fraternal melancholy” and its unifying structures:

The captain broke loose upon the dead man like a thunderclap. Oaths rolled from his lips in a continuous stream. And they were not namby-pamby oaths, or mere expressions of indecency. Each word was a blasphemy, and there were many words. They crisped and crackled like electric sparks. I had never heard anything like it in my life, nor could I have conceived it possible. With a turn for literary expression myself, and a penchant for forcible figures and phrases, I appreciated, as no other listener, I dare say, the peculiar vividness and strength and absolute blasphemy of his metaphors... It should be unnecessary to state, at least to my friends, that I was shocked. Oaths and vile language of any sort had always been repellent to me. I felt a wilting sensation, a sinking at the heart, and, I might just as well say, a giddiness. To me, death had always been invested with solemnity and dignity. It had been peaceful in its occurrence, sacred in its ceremonial. But death in its more sordid and terrible aspects was a thing with which I had been unacquainted till now. As I say, while I appreciated the power of the terrific denunciation that swept out of Wolf Larsen's mouth, I was inexpressibly shocked... But the dead man was unconcerned. He continued to grin with a sardonic humour, with a cynical mockery and defiance. He was master of the situation. (14-15)

If, as Nelson argues, the national man found affirmation in his “obsessive recourse to communion with dead men,” (202) then what we may be witnessing here is the failure of the national man to carry out this communion. Wolf’s “blasphemy” is shocking to Humphrey not simply for its vulgarity but for the way in which it seems to actively block Humphrey’s attempts to sanctify the spirit of democracy through the sanctification of a dead patriarch. By replacing ritualized mourning with “expressions of indecency,” blasphemous “oaths,” and “terrible denunciation[s],” what Wolf ultimately appears to denounce is the spiritualized presence of national manhood’s “representative” figures. Indeed, Socialist writers like London himself were

well-aware of the extent to which their political representatives did not actually “represent” the voices of the working class.²⁰ In an 1895 essay titled “What Socialism Is,” for example, London envisions what he terms a “pure democracy” in which the “supreme power rests with and is exercised directly by the people” as opposed to a “republican form of democracy, in which the supreme power rests with the people, but is indirectly exercised by them, through representatives”—representatives that may or may not ultimately vote in their constituents’ best interests (57).²¹ A year later, in his 1896 piece “The Voters’ Voice,” London advocated again for direct legislation, expressing his distrust of the state’s elected officials.

What, then, is ultimately at stake in Humphrey’s page long account of the “vulgar” and “repellent” figures of speech—words that he hears but respectfully chooses to withhold from the reader and that, additionally, function to “repel” rather than “represent” the objects they refer to? I would suggest that London’s critique of the ineffectual structures of “representative” democracy is carried out here through a critique of the representational power of language itself. The growing gulf between capitalist representative and working-class constituent, between the elite few and the debased masses, seems to be allegorized here as the growing gulf between words and the material objects they represent. Though the “vulgar” is often linked to questions of obscenity and indecency, the concept of vulgarity primarily refers to a kind of common or distasteful accessibility that simplifies and reduces the obfuscations of high culture for easy mass consumption. When Humphrey afterwards concludes that “life” in this nautical wilderness “had become cheap and tawdry, a beastly and inarticulate thing” his diction suggests the he could just as easily be describing a trashy novel. Adjectives “cheap” and “tawdry” here suggest a kind of vulgar mass appeal and wide indiscriminate consumption by citizens who lack the literacy and education to select something more refined. Though Wolf’s “blasphemous metaphors” are in

some ways anything but “inarticulate” (characterized, to the contrary, by their “vividness and “strength”), Humphrey equates the practice of leveling all life down to its common denominator (a “soulless stirring in the ooze and slime”) with a process that ultimately “vulgarizes” language itself. By censoring Wolf’s speech and mediating his “blasphemous metaphors” with elegant figures of speech (indeed, we don’t know what exactly Wolf said, just that his words “crackled like sparks”), Humphrey neutralizes the “democratic” power of Wolf’s expressions, diluting them through the “representative” powers of his own elite literary imagination.

Further into the narrative, London delivers a parallel but inverse scene, this time explicitly connecting the “inarticulate” materiality of the body to the logic of political overthrow. A sailor named George Leach, responding to Wolf’s abuses of power as captain, publicly curses Wolf in a speech that

ran the gamut of denunciation, rising to heights of wrath that were sublime and almost godlike, and from sheer exhaustion sinking into the vilest and most indecent abuse... His lips were flecked with a soapy froth, and sometimes he choked and gurgled and became inarticulate. And through it all... Wolf Larsen seemed lost in a great curiosity. This wild stirring of yeasty life, this terrific revolt and defiance of matter that moved, perplexed and interested him. (97)

In his resistance to Wolf, Leach does not reach for the spiritualized authority of white manhood but instead embodies the primitive materiality of “matter that moved.” On the one hand, Leach’s “terrific revolt” here is intensely physical, requiring his de-evolution into something resembling a rabid animal frothing at the mouth. But the primary meaning here is, additionally, political. Like “yeast,” he is engaged in an act of uprising, taking a stand against an unjust regime of power. However, while Wolf may appear to stand here as a figure of tyrannical rule, I believe that the passage at the same time suggests the very opposite. Wolf is, after all, well-aware that his power depends not on abstract principles of justice but on his ability to physically enforce his will. More of a bully than a tyrant, Wolf’s “great curiosity” and “interest” in Leach’s

“terrific revolt” registers a qualified approval of Leach’s willingness to physically challenge his authority. Put simply, Wolf seems to care less about sovereign structures and obedience to authority than about the “wild stirring of yeasty life” that strains against the seams of representative democracy and its censorious omissions.

Thus, while it may be Leach and Wolf squaring off in this scene, the real opposition that emerges here is between the two models of American citizenship that Wolf and Humphrey each embody—an opposition, in other words, between the “inarticulate” revolt of the masses, and the “articulate” obfuscations of aesthetic representation. Indeed, just as Humphrey had earlier blocked the reader’s exposure to the “blasphemy” of Wolf’s “metaphors,” he here refuses to transmit Leach’s words to the reader, merely calling attention to their “vile” and “indecent” nature. If Wolf might be understood as representing the productive democratic discord of a violent and clamoring citizenry, then Humphrey may conversely emblemize the impotence of a democratic “logocracy” whose articulate and elegant phrases veil a reality of conflict.

I use the word “impotence” here intentionally, as London executes his critique of “national manhood” by presenting Humphrey (its emblem) as perversely asexual, improperly gendered and endlessly diagnosable. It’s important to remember that, around this time, sexologists like Krafft-Ebing began to diagnose a set of particularly “modern” ailments like neurasthenia and sexual inversion. These “disorders” seemed, to many, to be a byproduct of modernity’s unhealthy professional demands on the male body and mind. Because the specialized professions confined men to a solely intellectual existence, it was believed, the professional demands of the modern world ran the risk of alienating men from their natural drives. The inherent queerness of aristocratic detachment seemed to be confirmed by the effeminate figure of the dandy” whose elite investment in literary style and aesthetic taste coded

him as one of modernity's newest mutations. As Rita Felski notes in *The Gender of Modernity*, "[t]he stylization and theatricality of aestheticism, exemplified through 'living a life in quotation marks,' was thus to become a defining feature of a 'camp sensibility associated with the homosexual lifestyle of urban elites at the fin de siècle'" (103). Indeed, in a kind of Wildean fashion, Humphrey admits that he is unable to move his appreciation for women beyond the "aesthetic" (149). By emphasizing the way in which the "aesthetic" has supplanted the "sexual" in his appreciation of women, Humphrey appears to link his lack of heterosexual desire with his overinvestment in linguistic style.

But it is not simply the case that modernity's drive to classify has created a vocabulary for naming Humphrey's disorder. More fundamentally, it is modernity's drive to classify that, paradoxically, comprises the very core of Humphrey's disorder. By this I mean that, in London's formulation, the objective scientific gaze that categorizes people and populations through the rubrics of sexual pathology does not seem to be, in the end, much different from the detached gaze of the elite literary critic whose aestheticism makes him readable as queer. Humphrey in fact slips between these two positions when, drawing from the scientific vocabularies of his day, he turns his critical eye inward, diagnosing himself as "abnormal, an 'emotionless monster,' a strange bookish creature, capable of pleasuring in sensations only of the mind" (149). In other words, by "textualizing" himself in this way—by intellectualizing his intellectualism—Humphrey performs the very symptoms that he is in the process of diagnosing. It is in this way that London stages a reversal which implicates the previous century's disembodied diagnostic male gaze as the very site of queer pathology, transforming the heteromasculine doctor into the sexually inverted male patient and the diagnostic impulse into the illness itself. His queerness is thus framed as a kind of literary criticism gone awry, the

readable symptom of a life spent in the abstract realm of aesthetics and on the disembodied abstractions of the intellect.

Recalling his elite urban enclave in San Francisco, Humphrey confesses that the only brutality he has witnessed is the “brutality of the intellect” with its “cutting sarcasm,” “cruel epigrams” and “occasional harsh witticisms” (101) which have left him unprepared for the scenes of physical brutality that he witnesses aboard Wolf’s ship. The intensity of these scenes causes him to gain new appreciation for his mother and sisters and, by extension, the civilized comforts of his domestic life in San Francisco:

It had dawned upon me that I have never placed a proper valuation upon womankind. For that matter, though not amative to any considerable degree so far as I have discovered, I was never outside the atmosphere of women until now. My mother and sisters were always about me, and I was always trying to escape them, for they worried me to distraction with their solicitude for my health and with their periodic inroads on my den, when my orderly confusion, upon which I prided myself, was turned into worse confusion and less order though it looked neat enough to the eye. But now, alas, how welcome would have been the feel of their presence, the froufrou and swish-swish of their skirts which I had so cordially detested! I am sure, if I ever get home, that I shall never be irritable with them again. They may dose me and doctor me morning, noon, and night, and dust and sweep and put my den to rights every minute of the day, and I shall only lean back and survey it all and be thankful that I am possessed of a mother and some several sisters. (85)

Forty years earlier, Humphrey’s knack for “surveying it all” from a position of disembodied intellectual authority might have been celebrated as a hallmark of masculine power.²² But if the national manhood of the 19th century rested on a binary that separated the disembodied gaze of the male doctor from the fleshy materiality of his feminine and racialized patients, then this passage performs a clever reversal. No longer issuing from powerful patriarchs, the medical gaze is here framed as a property of watchful maternal eyes. It is now the women who “doctor” and it is the upper middle class white male body that is “dosed” into a passive obsolescence. No longer figured as fleshy patients with pathological sexual anatomy, these women are presented as

beings without bodies at all. Like ghosts, their spiritualized “presence” is not something one sees but something one fetishistically “feels” by airy “swish-swish of their skirts.” Additionally, by framing Humphrey’s writing space as a parallel object of maternal caregiving (with his personal library receiving almost as much attention as his health), London forges an associational link between Humphrey’s physical body and the papers and books that absorb it. The equation here is clear—the modern male body loses muscle and substance as it gains literacy.

But perhaps most important to note here is the irony with which London frames the potential dangers of these comforting feminine interventions. Just as Humphrey observes the failures of his sisters’ attempts to add “order” to his library—their interventions, in fact, produce “less order” among his books—London implicates the maternal medical gaze as the very cause of illness. The maternal “solicitude for [Humphrey’s] health” does not cure but infects, creating the very symptoms it was designed to prevent. “Picture it to yourself,” he, as consummate critic directs the reader, translating his own physique into verbal portrait, “a man of ordinary stature, slender of build, and with weak, undeveloped muscles, who has lived a peaceful, placid life” (32). Thus we find that Humphrey’s “disordered” sexuality is not congenital but acquired from a lifetime of maternal pampering, a form of domestic care that has eroded the weight and heft of his physical body. If the nineteenth-century medical gaze was structured by a strict binary that subjected the unruly body of the patient to a set of disembodied medical authorities, then what we have here is, to the contrary, a kind of replication or mirroring in which Humphrey’s body does not materialize beneath the gaze of the women who “doctor and dose” him. Instead, he is feminized by the feminine gaze, his body *losing* substance the more it is subjected to his mother and sisters’ domestic surveillance. With both his body and library labeled as sites of “disorder,” Humphrey might be “neat enough to the eye,” but in that very “neatness” he betrays the extent to

which the nuclear household has, ironically, transformed him into an “emotionless monster” unfit for heteronormative courtship.

Mothers, however, represent only one pathologizing agent of the modern nuclear family—also important is Humphrey’s dependence on his father’s wealth. Though we are given no information about Humphrey’s father, we are told that it is the “income” he receives from his father’s estate, and not his occupation as a critic, that supports him financially. To the contrary, Humphrey’s inheritance is what funds his literary pursuits which are consequently framed not as a site of productive labor but as a parasitic drain on capital. When Humphrey answers “gentleman” to the question of what his occupation is, then, he reveals his faith in a patriarchal model of citizenship, one that is based not on the physical resources of the male body but the transmission of capital and status from father to son. Because this model of citizenship carries no currency in the Pacific wilderness that Humphrey now inhabits, Wolf accuses him of being too financially dependent on his father which has left him “standing on a dead man’s legs,” adding a crip dimension to the model of manhood that Humphrey embraces.²³ This observation is somewhat literalized earlier in the narrative, during Humphrey’s initial shipwreck, as he finds himself “becoming hysterical,” “with no sensation whatever in [his] lower limbs,” and several seconds later “confesses that a madness seized me, that I shrieked aloud as the women had shrieked, and beat the water with my numb hands” (5). Meanwhile, we see a sailor “stumping gallantly around on his artificial legs and buckling life preservers on all comers” (3). Though standard psychoanalytic readings often frame questions of amputation and prosthesis through vocabularies of castration and physical lack, the sailor’s “artificial legs” to the contrary function here to authorize his masculine independence. Meanwhile, Humphrey’s ostensibly nondisabled body is suddenly readable through the vocabularies of hysteria. His aristocratic lack of

economic self-sufficiency is thus rendered as a kind of feminized disorder of the nerves and an impotent numbness below the waist, a queer paralysis compensated for (and on some level caused) by the prosthetic supports of an absent patriarch.

I have emphasized Humphrey's status as "man of letters" thus far to make two major points. The first point is that, by lampooning Humphrey's status as a purely linguistic being, London stages a kind of "representational crisis" that occurs on the level of both language and politics. Humphrey is an empty signifier of American democratic brotherhood, "neat enough to the eye" but masking a deeper social disorder. He is the theory without the practice, the word without the flesh, the letter of the law with nothing to justify it. The second point is that vocabularies of queerness and disability are the tools that London uses to interrogate this problem. The modern male aesthete, diagnosable as a sexual invert, becomes for London a sort of cautionary tale about what can happen to the male body when national manhood is taken to its rational extreme. London's treatment of Humphrey's character, then, can be read as an attempt to expose the rhetorical foundations of white masculine American unity. Without a physical substance (like Rivera's primitive body) to stand in as a physical anchor for American national belonging, the masculine doctor collapses into the feminized patient, the able body becomes a site of weakness and atrophy, and the "normal" heteronormative relations between fathers, mothers, and sons collapse into the pathology of perpetual queer bachelorhood.

But if the heterosexual spaces of the modern city are presented as inherently feminine (and thus dangerously feminizing), then the perversely sexualized spaces of the sealing schooner, by contrast, are presented as inherently masculine (and thus productively masculinizing).²⁴ Indeed, when we turn our attention to Wolf and his shipmates, we can see how London attempted to solve to the fin de siècle crisis of masculinity not by purging tropes of queerness

and disability but by reconfiguring those tropes through the crucible of primitivism. By the novel's conclusion, Humphrey has been rehabilitated by a set of violent homoerotic dynamics that, in subjecting Humphrey's body to physical injury, function ultimately to remasculinize that body. Thus queerness, in *The Sea Wolf*, is present in two forms—pathological (and diagnosable) inversion and violent, hypermasculine desire between men.

Before I discusses the homoerotic currents of the narrative (which are very different from Humphrey's more asexual queering on land), I want to first consider the way in which the narrative re-masculinizes physical disability by transforming it into injury, and as such, an extension of violent combat between primitive men. In a series of passages that occur a third of the way into the narrative, Humphrey finds himself once again "shocked"—this time, not by blasphemous metaphors but by the events of a day in which "[b]rutality had followed brutality" (101). These brutalities mainly consist of altercations between crew members that come to blows (or, in this case, gunshots). London's portrait of the medical treatment these men receive contrasts starkly with his tribute to "womankind":

The sound of blows and scuffling came to our ears. Both men were wounded, and [Wolf Larsen] was thrashing them for having disobeyed his orders and crippled themselves in advance of the hunting season. In fact, they were badly wounded, and having thrashed them, he proceeded to operate on them in a rough surgical fashion and to dress their wounds. I served as assistant while he probed and cleansed the passages made by bullets, and I saw the two men endure his crude surgery without anesthetics and with no more to uphold them than a stiff tumbler of whiskey. (100)

This passage introduces a starkly gendered opposition. Rather than the maternal gaze that "doses" and "doctors" out of "solicitude" for the "health" of the male body, we here have a kind of hypermasculine form of care that is occasioned by violent injury, initiated with a "thrashing" and then coarsely applied to the male body in a bizarre spectacle of punishment. If the feminine medical gaze led to a figurative anesthetization of Humphrey's body, "capable of pleasuring in

sensations only of the mind,” then this “crude surgery without anesthetics” fully materializes the male body by “prob[ing]” its injuries and prolonging the physical pain that accompanies them.

Thus as Humphrey takes on more and more of the ship’s responsibilities, London celebrates the way various parts of Humphrey’s body become gradually materialized through the pain of injury. When he “burst[s] open the ends of his fingers” while working on a sail during a storm, he continues to work with “tears of pain running down [his] cheeks.” And when he begins to limp, having acquired a badly swollen knee, Wolf remarks that “the injury may cripple you some, but all the same you’ll be learning to walk.” This observation, of course, hearkens back to Humphrey’s initial framing as numb below the waist and standing on his dead father’s legs. As we saw with the sailor “stumping valiantly on his artificial legs,” injury in this nautical wilderness is not, ultimately, disabling. It bruises temporarily, but is ultimately healthful and restorative.

After all, despite his commitment to baseness, Wolf is ultimately “cleansing” the passages that his instruments penetrate. And while George Leach, in the passage described earlier, performed a kind of rabid animality in his verbal assault on Wolf, the froth edging his mouth was nonetheless “soapy.” It is as though Leach’s body has developed its own biological mechanism to balance out the “vileness” of his invectives, literalizing the proverbial practice of washing one’s mouth out with soap. Unlike Humphrey’s attempts to “cleanse” the passages of his own text by censoring the vulgarity of the speech he describes, both Wolf’s and Leach’s method of cleansing is intensely physical. Like the embodied materiality of the callous, this physicality replaces structures of civilized repression with a kind of “healthy” fidelity to one’s primitive desires. The sailors that Wolf treats may have made the mistake of “crippling”

themselves before the hunt, but Wolf's rough surgery will transform their injuries into a renewed masculine wellness.

In her book *Marked Men*, Sally Robinson connects literary depictions of wounded male bodies in late twentieth century literature to the post-liberationist discourse of identity politics. In response to the claims of cultural victimhood being made by various "marked" identities (women, people of color, sexual minorities), she argues, men who occupied the usually "unmarked" category of white masculinity began to engage in what she terms "an identity politics of the dominant" by making their own counterclaims of cultural victimization. But if the political "wounds" of sexism, racism, and homophobia were relatively self-evident and undisputed, Robinson argues, then white masculinity could only "represent itself as victimized by inhabiting a wounded body," and drawing upon "the persuasive force of corporeal pain" (20). Though Robinson's investigation centers on the post-liberationist era, and on texts directly informed by identity politics discourse, her observations about the power of wounds to foster collective masculine identifications can be compellingly applied to London's preoccupation with physical injury.

Like the authors in Robinson's archive, London appears to be using the occasion of physical wounding to break the association between abstract individualism and white masculinity, marking masculine selfhood through the injuries that recorporealize it. But if the late twentieth century "masochistic... explorations of pain" (11) that Robinson explores are interested in treating wounds as physical analog of cultural victimization, and in so doing, signal a crisis in masculinity, then the busted fingers and gunshot wounds of London's sailors seem to serve a slightly different purpose. These wounds do not so much signal a crisis as much as

resolve one, marking their characters not as afflicted “victims” but as newly masculinized subjects.²⁵

Amputation, in this context, cannot be read through its usual psychoanalytic lens, as a simple metaphor for castration. Although Scott Derrick uses the severing of ship cook Mugridge’s foot (the result of a shark bite) to illustrate the way in which “apocalyptic violence” within the narrative always threatens to punish “eroticism between men,” I would argue that Derrick’s formulation actually inverts the casual relationship between violence and queer desire that the novel sets up. Rather than acting as punishment for queer desire, violence, as I will illustrate shortly, is the very thing that originates and authorizes queer desire, both states framed as natural extensions of hypermasculinity. To view amputation as castration in the narrative is to ignore the way that many of the characters are, in fact, masculinized by their disabilities. Thus I would argue that Mugridge’s ultimate feminization within the narrative occurs not because of his amputated foot, but *despite* his amputated foot. If anything, the severing of his foot might have redeemed his otherwise disqualified masculinity.

In the end, what feminizes Mugridge is not his injury (which is framed by Wolf as the unintended consequence of “man-play”) but rather his association, however loose, with domesticity in his role as ship’s cook and toll that *urban* life has taken on his body. Mugridge elaborates on this toll in the following monologue:

I’ve been in ‘orspital ‘arf my bleedin’ life. I’ve ‘ad the fever in Aspinwall, in ‘Avana, in New Orleans. I near died of the scurvy and was rotten with it six months in Barbadoes. Smallpox in ‘Onolulu, two broken legs in Shanghai, pneumonia in Unalaska, three busted ribs an’ my insides all twisted in ‘Frisco. An’ ‘ere I am now. Look at me! Look at me! My ribs kicked loose from my back again. I’ll be coughin’ blood before eyght bells. (86)

Important to this passage is the way it stigmatizes illness as the “bad” sort of disability and thus contrasts it with the curative powers of “good” injuries like Humphrey’s swollen knee. If

physical injury on board *The Ghost* is masculinized, connected to purity of outlaw spaces, then illness is, conversely, feminized as a property urban life's contagions. Indeed what is striking about this description is the way in which each of Mugridge's ailments is tied to a different global city. This laundry list of global locations, I would argue, accomplishes two things for London. First, it de-emphasizes the importance of national bloodlines. Though critics have made much of Mudgridge's racialization as a low-class Cockney, London frames him in this moment as a kind of an infected citizen of the world. His damaged body is a global body whose injured materiality levels out all geographical difference—whether he falls ill in “Shanghai” or “Frisco,” the physical effects remains the same. Second, the repeated mantra of different city names testifies to the contagions of urban life, showcasing its effect on the lower class male body. Mugridge himself in this scene contrasts his own poverty with Humphrey's career as a gentleman, scrolling out this catalogue of misfortune as evidence of the much different impact that city life has had on his body. But whether it is upper class maternal pampering or lower class contagion, London makes clear the perils of modern living.²⁶

It is precisely the absence of maternal surveillance, indeed the absence of mothers at all, that transforms the homosociality of nautical life into a kind of perverse sexuality—one that is, however, wholly different from Humphrey's more classifiable sexual “disorder.” He describes his fellow sailors as:

a company of celibates, grinding harshly against one another and growing daily more calloused from the grinding. It seems to me impossible sometimes that they ever had mothers. It would appear that they are a half-brute, half-human species, a race apart, wherein there is no such thing as sex; that they are hatched out by the sun like turtle eggs, or receive life in some similar and sordid fashion. (89)

What Humphrey describes here is both the nightmare and revolutionary promise of a “race” of men who exist wholly “apart” from the constraints of the capitalist nuclear household. Indeed,

the fantasy of men without mothers is, in some sense, a fantasy of a wholly anti-Freudian existence. Without mothers, there can be no Oedipus complex, no castration anxiety, no fetish, and ultimately, no resolution in heterosexuality. Thus when Humphrey observes that, for these men, there “no such thing as sex,” he is implying neither androgyny nor asexuality but a world so fully masculinized that there is no such thing as sex *difference*. This hypermasculine “celibacy,” then, is celibacy only insofar as it marks a rejection of reproductive heterosexual standards of coupling, replacing them with a markedly non-reproductive community of men growing “calloused” from their “harsh grindings” “against one another.”

This image of “calloused” hypermasculine bodies is particularly interesting to consider in relation to the thematics of “numbness” that initially frame Humphrey’s effeminacy. If maternal “dosing” and “doctoring” has made Humphrey “capable of pleasuring in sensations only of the mind,” then the excessive physical sensation of injury (“surgery without anesthetics” and “tears of pain”) result in a kind of protective armor that takes the form of a second skin. While both “numbness” and “callousing” imply a deadening of sensation, they are positioned here on opposite sides of a gendered spectrum with numbness connoting a kind of disembodied feminizing paralysis while the callous, on the other hand, emerges as the embodied emblem of painful endurance and masculine independence. That these masculine callouses are gained through a sexualized “grinding” of male bodies against each other suggests the narrative interlinkages between physical injury and queer hypermasculinity.

Looking back to the earlier passage where Wolf performed “crude surgery without anesthetics,” we might, in fact, read a kind of perverse sexuality into the brutality with which he “probed and cleansed the passages made by bullets.” I choose the phrase “perverse sexuality,” over homoeroticism here because there is a kind of materiality showcased in this passage that

seems to go beyond traditional understandings of homoeroticism that frame it through the infinite displacements of a repressed desire between men. Indeed, from a certain angle, there is nothing at all repressed or displaced about the intensely sexualized physical contact staged here, or between the sailors “grinding harshly against one another.” For London, repression happens as an extension of the capitalist nuclear family. It is a product of modernity’s commitment to style over substance, language over materiality, progress over atavism, civilized restraint over primitive materiality. Rather than prohibition and taboo, what we are given on board *The Ghost* is the absence of prohibition and therefore the absence of repressed desire. Replacing the bourgeois individuality of the repressed sexual invert, then, *The Ghost* instead subjects its men to a perversely sexualized homosocial violence. The result of this violence is a rematerialized body, a restored masculinity and a renewed relationship to democratic citizenship.

In closing, I want to turn my attention to one last scene in which issues of queer sexuality, physical injury, national manhood and political revolution intersect in striking ways. In this often quoted passage, Wolf has just emerged from a bloody confrontation with a small band of mutinous sailors. Having been called to Wolf’s cabin to dress his wounds, Humphrey is drawn into a prolonged gaze at Wolf’s naked body:

I had never before seen him stripped, and the sight of his body quite took my breath away. It has never been my weakness to exalt the flesh—far from it; but there is enough of the artist in me to appreciate its wonder... Wolf Larsen was the man-type, the masculine, and almost a god in his perfectness. As he moved about or raised his arms, the great muscles leapt and moved under the satiny skin. It was the biceps that had nearly crushed out my life once, that I had seen strike so many killing blows. I could not take my eyes from him. I stood motionless, a roll of antiseptic cotton in my hand, unwinding and spilling itself down to the floor.
(99)

The queer valences of this rumination have been well-covered by other scholars.²⁷ However, in their attention to the homoerotic undercurrents of Humphrey’s appraising gaze at Wolf’s naked

body, most of these critics have left its biopolitical dimensions unexplored. But the homoerotic gaze here is deeply intertwined with a medical gaze and I want to suggest that we cannot fully consider one without interrogating the other. For example, though critics have remarked upon the way in which Humphrey's rumination ends in a figurative climax, his "roll of antiseptic cotton... unwinding and spilling itself down to the floor," I would suggest that the medical gauze here functions as much more than a simple vehicle for the staging of a homoerotic encounter. Rather, it constitutes the precondition for that encounter, and homoeroticism, in turn, helps to reconfigure the medical gaze in important ways.

No longer the passive object of watchful maternal eyes, Humphrey is re-instituted as the active agent of a new kind of medical seeing. Ironically, however, this new form of seeing is taken up only to be disavowed. This is because Humphrey's prolonged gaze at Wolf's naked body forces him to acknowledge that "real" manhood inheres not in the disembodied medical gaze (coded early in the narrative as feminine and maternal) but rather in the embodied physicality of the specimen under observation. He may begin his rumination by falling back on the comfortable vantage point of the disembodied critic, but the hypermasculinity of his object makes it impossible for him to stay there. As aestheticism gives way to an appreciation of violent potential that inheres in Wolf's body, Humphrey is suddenly restored to his own physical body. It is as though Humphrey's body is finally thawing out from the water that left him numb below the waist, and signaling its renewed "sensation" in the highly medicalized (and sexualized) form of the white cotton that leaps out from him. The movement from gaze to gauze, in other words, is a movement from norms of nineteenth century professionalized detachment to the embodied, muscularized versions of masculinity that dominated early twentieth century Naturalist paradigms.

This dynamic is reinforced when the hypermasculine Wolf swiftly takes control of the visual encounter. Humphrey self-consciously observes that Wolf “noticed me, and I became conscious that I was staring at him.” From here, Humphrey and Wolf share a philosophical exchange regarding the beauty of Wolf’s physique, and the encounter culminates in a bizarre moment in which Wolf flexes his muscles into an athletic pose and “commands” Humphrey to “feel them.” Suddenly, it is the specimen who “commands” and the doctor who obeys. As the disembodied gaze gives way to a shared sensation of touch, Humphrey finally concedes that the human body is a function of physical utility rather than divine purpose.²⁸ If the medical encounter in San Francisco led Humphrey’s body to erode in response his sisters’ disembodied medical gaze, then here we are given an opposite sort of mirroring with Humphrey’s gaining in substance and materiality the longer he stares at Wolf’s hypermasculine body. Occurring midway through the novel, this moment constitutes a thematic turning point, as it inaugurates Humphrey’s ability to appreciate the flesh-as-flesh (and not merely as a container for the spirit). It constitutes his first step in the process of giving up his “lettered” self for a more physical existence and relinquishing his outdated “national manhood” for a more “revolting” form of primitive masculinity.

It bears mentioning that Wolf’s “perfect” masculine body has, in this scene, just put down a mutiny. Humphrey’s appreciation of his brawny physicality is partially related to his new understanding of the contingent nature of law and sovereignty. Wolf rules *The Ghost* not due to any divine right or abstract moral principle but simply because he can fight a roomful of sailors and emerge with nothing but “bruises and lacerations.”²⁹ It may seem odd for an author like London, known strongly for his Socialism, to celebrate the putting down of a revolt. But it’s worth noting that Wolf has described, at other moments in the narrative, his own working-class

background and his wage slavery. Wolf does not stand in for the capitalist bourgeoisie as much as he stands for the principle of revolutionary conflict and the fantasy of state in which muscle does more than signify one's status as an exploited factory worker, carrying with it instead a serious measure of political capital.

Thus far I have argued that *The Sea Wolf* celebrates the revolutionary potential of bodies that exist in the oceanic spaces between nations and echo a pre-linguistic racial past. On the one hand, these choices would seem to universalize concepts of revolution and distance the narrative from the specific political landscape of turn of the century United States. But in emptying his narrative of specific political content, and focusing instead on more generalized questions about the nature of law, violence, desire, and physical life, London was in fact addressing a set of anxieties specific to American democracy and masculine political belonging, putting to work the universalizing vocabularies of his era to address a uniquely turn-of-the-century American "crisis" of masculinity. As a working-class white man, London quickly discovered the representational failure of a national manhood committed to protecting capitalist interests. As he placed himself in opposition to this model of citizenship, other forms of exiled subjectivity, including a certain version of queer hypermasculinity and a particular type of crip embodiment, became useful tropes to fuel his oppositional vision. As Nelson observes, if representative democracy's heteronormative imperatives were "symbolically expressed in vertical ordered relations among white men," then "homosexuality" was conversely "conceptualized as a kind of radical equality, a mob equivalent... a dangerous construction of democracy that threatened to emerge from the ranks of the citizens" (187). And if nineteenth century ideals of manhood inhered in the diagnostic gaze of the hyper-rational physician, then the unruly body of the

primitive male patient might just prove to be the foundation for the fin de siècle Socialist revolution.

In what follows, I examine the starring role that the adolescent male body has played in these framings. Claiming the national subject position of the rebellious teenager, London often looks backwards to his forefathers with a mixture of admiration and contempt—he is excited by the revolutionary origins of American nationhood but disillusioned by the failure of those forefathers to make good on their promise of white male unity. Using the elasticity of the primitive body as framework for understanding the development of the individual and aligning the growing pains that accompany the evolution of the species with the growing pains of the male adolescent, London displaces models “national manhood” with what might be described as an ethic of “democratic boyhood” that renders the question of nationality largely irrelevant. Though racialized, the primordial body is given here as preceding the founding of any single political state. It is not shared bloodlines that unite these bodies but rather their youthful (and primitive) ability to reject the outworn systems of the past.

Reading London’s novella *Before Adam* in the context of several of his political essays, I suggest in what follows that the liminality of male adolescence does important work for London, allowing him to appropriate images of queerness and disability in service of a new democratic ideal without having to significantly challenge cultural norms of heterosexuality or able-bodiedness. For London, the “road kids” and “boy socialists” of the world, though better for their rough and tumble injuries and his youthful sexual experimentation, are ultimately compelled to mature into healthy, heteromasculine adults. To further illustrate this point, I return to *The Sea Wolf*, addressing the narrative turn through which the novel’s queer-crip tensions are ultimately diffused into an able-bodied and heteronormative resolution.

2.3 **Becoming Men**

London's 1906 novella *Before Adam* in many ways articulates the core of London's beliefs about the redemptive, revolutionary power of the adolescent/primitive body. The novella unfolds from the perspective of a modern man who, thanks to his college education and his fluency in modern scientific discourse, is able to retrospectively identify his boyhood nightmares as the atavistic resurgence of a set of frightening "racial memor[ies]" inherited from one of his primitive half-ape ancestors. The bulk of the novella is comprised of the narrator's recounting of these memories to the reader, episodes delivered from the first person perspective of the primordial creature that he once was. Though the modern man remains unnamed, the primordial narrator who speaks through him calls himself Big Tooth, and sets the stage for his autobiography by placing himself as an the orphaned offspring of a father who has met an untimely and violent end, and a mother whose new mate has driven him out of their primitive dwelling. Finding companionship with a boy his age who he calls "Lop Ear," he takes us through several episodes that occur during what we might call Big Tooth's "teenage" years, scenes that are interspersed with the commentary of the modern narrator who occasionally intervenes to situate the reader back to the present.³⁰

Before Adam extends *The Sea Wolf*'s rejection of psychoanalysis in interesting ways. While, on the one hand, it could be argued that these ape-creatures act out a sort of Oedipal drama in Big Tooth's rivalry with his step-father, the story itself rejects even the quasi-domesticity of the two-parent care-giving dynamic. Anything remotely resembling a nuclear household is disposed of it as early as would be realistic (despite being taken up again towards the end of the narrative). But on an even broader level, the modern narrator's ability to deliver

this story to the reader at all depends on his willingness to interpret his dreams not as ciphers of repressed desire but through a Darwinian analytic of biological coding and species memory.

Explaining his duality of self (a duality which furnishes the story with not one but two first-person narrators), he explicitly suggests the limitations of psychoanalytic vocabularies.

“[P]sychologists of the book will find fault with my way of using the phrase, ‘disassociation of personality,’” he acknowledges, “I know their use of it, yet am compelled to use it in my own way in default of a better phrase” (13). Ultimately, however, he finds a more satisfying answer in evolutionary theory, explaining to the reader that certain “strains of germplasm carry an excessive freightage of memories—are, to be scientific, more atavistic than other strains; and such a strain is mine” (20). If Freud often interpreted frightening animal dreams in childhood as a manifestation of the repressed trauma of the “primal scene” the child has witnessed between father and mother, then that primal scene is, in this moment, strikingly reconfigured. London has stripped it of its status as metaphor, transforming it quite literally into a portrait of primordial life. We are directed to read the narrator’s ape nightmares not as the psychic repressions of the child who has wandered into his parents’ marital bedroom, but merely as a form of biological “freightage” stamped forcefully into his flesh.³¹ Put rather simplistically, Big Tooth does not fear castration as much as he fears the possibility of becoming lunch to wild predators.

This is an important point because Big Tooth’s freedom from these gendering Freudian structures of the nuclear household immunizes him against the feminizing effects of both maternal “solicitude” and paternal inheritance.³² Just as the men on board *The Ghost* were characterized as a race “without mothers,” Big Tooth is unbound from the repressive structures of the bourgeois family, released from Oedipal anxieties and repressions and, as a result, free to forge alliances with other boys his age. Thus we find him spending the majority of the narrative

with his friend “Lop Ear” with whom he shares a small cave and considers a partner in survival. This homosocial (and occasionally homoerotic) fraternity with Lop Ear extends, importantly, beyond blood relation. They are not brothers and their kinship is based on more of a shared status and their practical ability to aid in each other’s survival rather than on any kind of nuclear family relation.

It is through figures like Big Tooth, furthermore, that London maps the mutability of adolescence onto the mutability of primitive “man,” drawing a parallel between the developing body of the male individual and the developing body of the collective species. This parallel is perhaps most explicit in Big Tooth’s description of the creature he calls “Red Eye”:

Red-Eye was an atavism. He was the great discordant element in our horde. He was more primitive than any of us. He did not belong with us, yet we were still so primitive ourselves that we were incapable of a cooperative effort strong enough to kill him or cast him out. Rude as was our social organization, he was, nevertheless, too rude to live in it. He tended always to destroy the horde by his unsocial acts. He was really a reversion to an earlier type, and his place was with the Tree People rather than with us who were in the process of becoming men. (103)

This “process of becoming men,” is, of course, much different than the act of having actually become men. If the beastly and atavistic Red Eye does not “belong with us” because, as evolutionary forefather, his “unsocial acts” make him too much the brute, then the hypersocialized modern “man” that Big Tooth is destined to “become” does not “belong with us” either. As “civilized” evolutionary grandson, he informs the reader that he is “hysterical” and “ill” (9), explaining to the reader:

Only once did I confide the strangeness of it all to another. He was a boy—my chum...He laughed at me, and jeered, and told me tales of ghosts and of the dead that walk at night. But mostly did he laugh at my feeble fancy. I told him more, and he laughed the harder. I swore in all earnestness that these things were so, and he began to look upon me queerly. Also, he gave amazing garblings of my tales to our playmates, until all began to look upon me queerly. (10)

Against the portrait that the narrator paints of Big Tooth's friendship with Lop Ear, or the harmonious community of primates ("we who were in the process of becoming men"), the narrator presents to his readers a modern landscape of broken or absent fraternal bonds and diagnosable male psyches. Not only has his "feeble fancy" caused his playmates to "look upon [him] queerly," but like Humphrey, we find him continually compelling himself into series of obsessive queer self-diagnoses. Within the space of a few pages, he manages to inform the reader that, like "a two-headed calf," his duality of self makes him a "freak" (17), confessing later that "in this matter I am, as I said, a freak—a freak of heredity" (18). Soon after, he confirms once again that he is "freak of heredity, an atavistic nightmare" (20), an admission that follows yet another reiteration that he "must again, at the risk of boring, repeat that I am, in this one thing, to be considered a freak" (19).

The extreme polarization between Red Eye's extreme atavism and the modern narrator's queer hysteria allows us to understand them as more extreme (and ultimately less appealing) versions of the polarities that Humphrey and Wolf represent, with the main difference being that in *The Sea Wolf*, there is no character serving as intermediary between them. Indeed, it is as though London took the dynamic space of conflict, interaction, and molding that occurred between Humphrey and Wolf and gave it a form and voice in the figure of Big Tooth. With Big Tooth standing in more concretely as the figure of masculine evolutionary adolescence, Wolf and Humphrey are then refigured much further apart from one another, as extreme polarities on an evolutionary timeline. Wolf may have been a "brute," but Red Eye is an "atavism." Humphrey may have been an "emotionless monster" but *Before Adam*'s modern narrator is a "freak" five times over. If London valued the liminal states of "becoming" (becoming "men," becoming civilized, or becoming citizens of a nation on the brink of political self-recognition), then

perverse sexuality and physical disability exist for him not on one end or the other of the evolutionary timeline, but on both ends—deviant brackets that bookend the privileged middle.³³

Thus the finished masculine body, for London, is less important than the male body in transition. In this world, fathers are less important than sons, and sons are most important *before* they become fathers.³⁴ Indeed, sons find themselves most powerful when they are connected *not* to their fathers but to other boys in a fraternal bond not yet severed by the demands of the nuclear family. Thus, by calling attention to the “process of becoming men” as the precondition for social “belong[ing],” the basis upon which you can call yourself a “we,” London celebrates (and in some sense conflates) the collective utopian potential of both the developing adolescent body and the developing body of the species. This primitive flesh can thus be interpreted as providing a kind of physical anchor for London’s adolescent collectivities, providing a blueprint for uniting an otherwise unrelated grouping of male bodies. Because its members understand themselves as sharing something other than blood, brotherhood is not quite the right word. Brotherhood, after all, reinforces the importance of patrilineal inheritance—a model that London was attempting to reject. The alliances that London imagines, then, might be more accurately termed “boyhoods.” The primitive framing of these boyhoods ultimately suggests the mutability of political structures and allegorizes the utopian promise of a society engaged in a powerful transition from one social organization to the next.

Indeed, though London shares many philosophies and strategies of representation with his naturalist counterparts, one thing that sets him apart is his unrelenting utopianism. Crane gives us urban degeneration and battles that mark the end of romantic heroism. Norris offers a pessimistic and brutalizing account of urban domestic life. London, however, presents many of his primitives, not as sites not of degeneration but as the hopeful foundation for revolution, the

raw materials out of which a socially just future might be built. His revolutionary optimism carried, for the public, strong and exciting associations with youth. Thus the day after London published his 1895 essay, “What Socialism Is,” Jonah Raskin notes in his introduction to *The Radical Jack London*, “the Examiner ran a colorful profile of London as the ‘Boy Socialist.’” Echoing (intentionally or not) the *Boy Pirate* and *Boy Highwayman* titles of the 19th century “penny dreadfuls,”³⁵ the “Boy Socialist” moniker in some ways offered London a way to carve a space in opposition to the outdated “national man” whose politics were old and tired while, at the same time, escaping the “cliche of the bearded, bomb-throwing anarchist” (Raskin, 56). Raskin relates the way in which “Two bold headlines reinforce[d] the positive spin: ‘The Boy Socialist Defines the Meaning and Intent of the New Philosophy’ and ‘A Youth With Up-to-date Ideas who Will Make a lasting Impression on the Twentieth Century’” (56). In this way, London’s identification as “Boy Socialist” enabled him to preserve the revolution as protean or embryonic, a figure not yet perverted into the full-grown “anarchist” whose “beard” and “bombs” placed him fully outside of the law.

Thus London’s image as the youthful, charismatic boy next door did important ideological work by distancing the Socialist movement from the specter of a more menacing outlaw adulthood. Framing the United States at the fin de siècle as a (male) body engaged in a powerful transition from one century to the next, London also helped to construct a set of (imaginative though not entirely justified) analogies between the transitory body of the human “primitive,” the transitory body of the pubescent male and the turn-of-the-century changes in the American socio-political landscape. As “Boy Socialist,” London became spokesperson for the vibrant fraternity of adolescents whose “elastic” bodies separate the old (Red Eye) from the new

(Big Tooth's eventual descendent), the forefathers of yesterday from the future sons of tomorrow, the utterly prehistoric from the excessively modern.

Indeed, just as Big Tooth rejects the pure animality of his *ancestral* forefathers, so does London reject (or at the very least, revise) the philosophies of his *political* "forefathers" who, in his view, no longer represent universal sovereign right. In a 1905 speech titled "Revolution" (delivered between the publication of *The Sea Wolf* and *Before Adam*), London declares that "[t]he comradeship of the revolution is alive and warm. It passes over geographical lines, transcends race prejudice, and has even proved itself mightier than the Fourth of July, spread-eagle Americanism of our forefathers (142).³⁶ In his elliptical reference to the signing of the Declaration of Independence, London pays a certain amount of tribute to the United States' revolutionary origins. But, though fathers and sons might here share a family resemblance, both deeply committed to principles of revolution and the legitimacy of political rebellion, London places his own Socialist boyhood as a sort of revised alternative to the current status of the nation. Though the United States may have initially been founded in a state of masculine rebellion, it has, for London, now matured into a fatherland that neglects the welfare of its industrial-age laboring sons.³⁷

London's account of his experiences with the United States penal system reveal his sharp disillusionment his forefathers to secure for him the abstract rights he has been promised in the Constitution. Having taken to the "road" in 1894 (partially in response to his disillusionment with his experiences within the capitalist labor force), London was arrested for vagrancy and placed in prison without being given the opportunity to speak in his own defense. As if to deliver the testimony he was denied in a court of law, he declares to the reader "now I shall faithfully describe what took place in that court-room, for know that my patriotic American

citizenship there received a shock from which it never recovered” (70). Like Humphrey’s “shock” in the face of Wolf’s blasphemous metaphors, London’s “shock” at this moment relates to his realization that the white national manhood that he had believed to be anchored in the bedrock of principle was nothing more than a mirage of words.

Thus London elaborates on the fundamental constitutional rights he had been denied by the state’s legal arm: “The right to a fair trial,” he argues, is a right that “those ancestors of mine had fought and died for... This was my heritage, stained sacred by their blood, and it devolved upon me to stand up for it” (71).³⁸ Interesting to note here is the way that London’s use of the term “devolved” itself semantically “devolves” into its own opposite. Though London feels that, as heir to his forefathers’ legacy, it has “devolved” upon him (in other words, been delegated to him) to defend the constitutional rights that his fathers’ spilled blood has made sacred, the following page documents a very sort of “devolution,” consistent with its alternative definition as a “degeneration,” or “retrograde evolution.” Thus, like Humphrey staring at the body of the dead sailor, London at this moment registers his discovery that, far from “sacred in its ceremonial” his life had become “cheap and tawdry, a beastly and inarticulate thing.” His attempts to defend his constitutional rights rendered irrelevant, he finds himself forming a fraternal bond with a fellow inmate whom he describes as “a brute-beast, wholly unmoral, and with all the passion and turgid violence of the brute-beast” (73). Doubly defined here as a “brute-beast,” this inmate becomes London’s “meat,” (73) and the subsequent scenes present an almost literal “devolution” in which the prison emerges as a sort of wild jungle whose brutalities, occurring within the physical structures of law (the prison) and yet wholly outside of any transcendent principles of law (ethical notions of universal right and wrong), reflect the provisional status of all law and the

materiality of all life. The alliances London makes with other male inmates in this penal jungle are what he credits, in the end, as large part of what ensured his survival.

Thus London uses the representational tools of naturalism and the philosophical tools of Darwinism to present a set of appealing “outlaw” spaces where brotherhood appeared to exist in practice, as well as in theory—the glorified venues of nautical vessels as well the less glorified spaces of modern prisons and primordial jungles. As E.L. Doctorow observes, the “capital” that fueled London’s writing came from his “emotionally desolate boyhood, and from the life he had seen on the sea and land, and from the servitude he had endured” (6). Drawing from these experiences in his fictional and political writing, London launches a continual and impassioned critique of the rhetorical nature of male democratic citizenship which gave lip service to white male fraternity while at the same time “depict[ing] emotional relations between boys-in-training as an actual threat to the purity of national manhood” (13). Nelson quotes one nineteenth century thinker as warning against the dangers of “crowding boys together under one roof for the purposes of education” because “[t]he vices of young people are generally learned from each other” (13). But rather than warding against the dangerous and infectious “vices of young people,” London celebrated the adolescent body as a site of transformation, adaptability, and revolutionary potential. Even his adult characters find themselves experiencing a kind of second puberty, plunged into dangerous homosocial environments that reconfigure their bodies in uncomfortable but ultimately rewarding ways. In this way, primitivism offered London a productive model for his vision of fraternity, one that displaced the imagined brotherhood of capitalist national manhood with the embodied boyhoods of Socialist adolescence. Put somewhat simplistically, rather than the rational restraint of the national man, London’s

naturalism offers his readers the impulsive freedom of the boy outlaw who is heir to nothing but the resources of his own physical body.

But if male adolescence represents a developmental stage that preceded the demands of marriage, capitalism, and the nuclear family then part of his freedom includes the perverse potential of his sexuality. Indeed, the fact that London dedicated *The Road*, his autoethnography on the practice of “tramping,” to Josiah Flynt is striking given Flynt’s pathologizing treatment of the tramp population. Flynt is perhaps best known for the appendix he contributed to Havelock Ellis’s *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, titled “Homosexuality Among Tramps.” Though London makes no reference to homosexuality in his own account of tramp life, Flynt provides an exhaustive account of male same-sex sexuality in his essay. “Every hobo in the United States,” Flynt warns, “knows what ‘unnatural intercourse’ means” with “every tenth man practic[ing] and defend[ing] his conduct.” These “sexually perverted men,” Flynt argues, are not only “abnormally masculine,” but importantly, make a practice of seducing young boys of the slums. They will tell them “stories about life ‘on the road,’ how they can ride on the railways for nothing, shoot Indians... The tramp, of course, continues to excite his imagination with stories and caresses, and some fine night there is one boy less in the town.” Unlike the congenial invert, Flynt warns, any working-class boy who romantically hopes for better circumstances might find the homosocial (and ultimately homosexual) world of tramping an appealing alternative to the capitalist world of heterodomesticity and wage labor.

In this respect, both Flynt and London are interested in the mutability of the youthful masculine body. But while Flynt identifies that underworld as a site of potential sexual corruption, London ambivalently claims it as a site of political redemption.³⁹ Though London often acknowledges the vulnerability of the “tramp population,” he nonetheless celebrates their

“shifting” qualities and dynamic capacity to adapt. Indeed, the “road,” for London, is complicated precisely because it is inhabited by boyhoods that exist in a liberatory space outside of the law and yet simultaneously serve a testament to modernity’s corruptions. In “How I Became a Socialist,” for example, he confesses to that in his younger days, he ascribed to an “individualism” and “bourgeois ethics” that caused him to dismiss disability as something that did not belong to the authentically masculine body. Crediting his “good health and hard muscles” to his “boyhood hustling newspapers on the streets of a healthy Western city,” London confesses to being certain that he “should continue to travel with unfailing health, without accidents, and with muscles ever vigorous... I could see myself only raging through life without end like one of Nietzsche’s blond beasts, lustfully roving and conquering by sheer superiority and strength.”⁴⁰ This evolutionary paradigm of fitness, however, is compromised the moment he, at eighteen years old, “took it into my head to go tramping” and “found there all sorts of men, many of whom had once been as good as myself and just as blond-beastly; sailor-men, soldier-men, labor-men, all wrenched and distorted and twisted out of shape by toil and hardship and accident, and cast adrift by their masters like so many old horses” (126). In this framework, disability is distanced from constitutional deviance; these men are not “degenerates,” but previously healthy masculine specimens contaminated by their environments, boys who have simply been conditioned into the wrong kind of men.⁴¹

In “What Shall Be Done with this Boy?” London similarly explores what he perceives to be the difference between inborn constitutional degeneracy and the understandable effects of a mismanaged environment. Submitting the case study of one particular juvenile delinquent, Edgar Sonne, for the reader’s consideration, he argues that Sonne’s fate is of interest “not only to those with a penchant for criminal sociology, but every person who is concerned with good

government, good citizenship, and good social morality” (72). A teenage boy and member of the lower class, Sonne had been arrested for various petty crimes. London argues that while prevailing hereditary arguments would categorize Sonne “a deviation from the normal type” and therefore fit for “social quarantine” rather than “being punished in the old retributive sense,” there is something wrong with lumping Sonne in with those populations who are truly fit for biopolitical management (73). Asking whether we should view Sonne’s “yielding” to the temptations of theft as a part of an “inherent weakness of the constitution itself, which cannot be cured” or as part of an “acquired and non-essential weakness of the constitution that can be cured,” (73) London provides a catalogue of Sonne’s physical ailments that is lengthy and exhaustive: a “rottenness and irregularity of the teeth, an abnormally shaped roof of the mouth,” tonsils that “were so enlarged that the passage between them was no more than an eighth of an inch wide,” a “postnasal cavity entirely filled with a growth of adenoids or tumors” whose “pressure on the brain” had begun to cause deafness, and a heart problem. Furthermore,

it was patent that he did not get sufficient air into his lungs. Instead of breathing down to his stomach, as a healthy boy should, he breathed high up in his chest—higher up than any woman breathes. As a result, his blood lacked oxygen, was impoverished... Body and brain were in an anemic condition. He rolled up his sleeve, exposing a scrawny, emaciated arm, sharp at the elbow and with no more than a faint semblance of the biceps, which reminded one forcibly of the famine pictures of starving children in India. (75-76)

Both feminized and likened to a colonial subject, Sonne here resembles Mugridge in his body’s state of urban disrepair. Rather than the fantasy of the nautical outlaw or the pre-national primitive, we have the physical rendering of the urban juvenile delinquent. But while Sonne’s marks of “degeneracy” are numerous and almost entirely physical, London ultimately argues that Sonne was “normal in the making,” having “come into the world a soft and pulpy infant, to be molded by the physical and social forces which would bear upon him,” forces that included “an

unchecked, untreated disease,” and a “harsh, unlovely and unsympathetic home and neighborhood environment” (76). Thus London does not challenge categories of degeneracy, but rather attempts to rescue lower-class white masculinity from those categories by implicating poverty and class stratification in the production of “road kids” and “boy tramps” whose health and heteronormativity are compromised by their exile among a nomadic homosocial fraternity.

Thus emerges a gendered and racialized split between the pathologies of heredity and the pathologies of environment. In this framework, it is the white male body that is granted the privilege of this evolutionary dynamism. The physical adaptability of the white tramp, London argues, contrasts markedly with the inert passivity of the “stationary Negro population,” reflecting instead the “the indomitability of the Teuton” (66).⁴² One criminality is inborn while the other is circumstantial. While the latter is not necessarily excusable, it is, importantly, fit for rehabilitation. At the end of “What Shall Be Done With This Boy,” Sonne’s doctor reassures London that a “tonic treatment of the body,” a tonsil operation” will allow Sonne’s “mind” and “moral nature” to become “healthy, wholesome, and good” again (77). “Give me three months,” says the doctor, “and I’ll show you a transformed boy” (77). Thus on the one hand London affirms a category of inborn degeneracy, racial inferiority, and constitutional weaknesses for which there can be no cure but the evolutionary process that will render such defective populations obsolete. On the other, there is the rough and tumble world filled with sickness and injury that deforms otherwise healthy male bodies. For London, there is a place in the world for the latter, but not for the former, and Socialism is what will carve out this space for healthy, racially superior masculine bodies to flourish.

What, then, may have originally appeared as a radically affirmative biopolitics, ultimately collapses into its opposite. We have on the one hand the London who asserts in 1905 that the

“comradeship of the revolution...passes over geographical lines” and “transcends race prejudice,” and the London who in 1899 declares in a letter to Cloudesley Johns, “I do not believe in the universal brotherhood of man... I believe my race is the salt of the earth,” adding later that year that Socialism isn’t open to every man, but rather exists to move the higher races forward and leave the weaker ones behind. (Kershaw, 102).⁴³ Because evolution has “no concern for right and wrong” (101) and because the “passing of [inferior] peoples is no manifestation of retributive justice” (102), argues London, we must reject the “sentimental ethicists, heart-reasoners and dreamers” who “spell out, with reckless reverence, such phrases as ‘liberty,’ ‘equality,’ ‘natural rights,’ and ‘universal brotherhood,’ seemingly unaware of that fact that eternal difference and eternal inequality is the iron rule of life” (101). No longer universal and expansive, boyhood here is demarcated, contained and protected. What on the one hand looks like a liberatory queer and crip sensibility that existed in the liminal and lawless spaces—between the human and the animal, the legal and the extralegal, the child and the adult—begins here to look instead like the continuous line of a parabola, the human genealogical timeline bent into the graphical equivalent of Galton’s bell curve. What difference is there, then, between London’s queer-crip revolutionary boyhoods and the ranks of a heteromasculine citizenry that Sonne, after his “tonic treatment,” will finally be fit to join? What is the difference, in other words, between “we who are in the process of becoming men” and the rehabilitated body of a “transformed boy”?

To answer this question, we might briefly, in conclusion, return to the ending of *The Sea Wolf* which effectively neutralizes the queer-crip materiality it has previously invoked as a model from revolution. Critics have often identified the novel itself as moving in two distinctly opposite directions, with its bleak, deterministic Naturalistic set-up at fundamental odds with its

romantic resolution, a resolution that begins the moment that the intellectual and ethereal female castaway Maud Brewster is introduced into the Ghost's homosocial environment. Maud, it has been generally noted, functions as a kind of catalyst that, introduced late in the character experiment, neutralizes its tensions. Thus Ambrose Bierce, upon being sent a review copy of the novel, "confes[ses] to an overwhelming contempt for both sexless lovers" whose "absurd suppressions" and "impossible proprieties" distract from the "tremendous creation" that is "Wolf Larsen." Indeed, just as Maud declares in the novel's last line her relief at the appearance of the steamship that will "rescue us from ourselves," the heterosexual subplot that Maud initiates may have been the only way London could rescue his text from its own ambivalent creations. That is to say, Humphrey's inevitable return to San Francisco sets up the conditions for the narrative to ultimately disavow the "revolting" bodies that it had previously championed as an alternative to modernity and national belonging. The approaching steamship suggests that the Ghost has, all along, been less of an alternative to national belonging than a sort of unorthodox "training school" that has refitted Humphrey for the citizenship from which he had previously been disqualified. Just as the heterosexual household ended up producing its own opposite (the queer and the crip), so might the outlaw spaces of the sea become the crucible out of which emerges a newly able (heterosexual) American political subject.

Several scholars have pointed out the triangulated gaze that reveals Humphrey's eventual desire for Maude as an extension and rerouting of his original attraction to Wolf. Indeed, Humphrey's primal dubbing of Maud as his "mate" towards the end of the narrative both replaces and intensifies the homoerotic implications of an earlier scene in which Wolf tells Humphrey that he has been promoted to the position of "mate" aboard the ship.⁴⁴ On nearly every level, queer desire is framed in the narrative as the precondition of heterosexuality. Thus if

heterosexual modernity's obsession with health is what produces the medicalized specimen of the sexual invert, then violent injury and perverse sexuality between men, in a similar fashion, ultimately negate themselves, producing a restored and rehabilitated heteromascuine body.

In setting up a marriage plot between Humphrey and Maud, London is able to resolve the problem of both the New Woman and the problem of Humphrey's queerness simultaneously.⁴⁵ As an unmarried woman and a well-known poet, Maud's independence may have, in San Francisco, been medicalized as unhealthy, masculine, and even lesbian. But on board *The Ghost*, she is rendered a creature infinitely more fragile and ethereal than Humphrey ever was. Her feminine physical "dependence" on Humphrey reinforcing Humphrey's newly acquired masculine independence, Humphrey and Maud's respective queerness is effectively canceled out by their gendering effect on one another. Thus London cannot redefine Humphrey as masculine without at the same time redefining the New Woman as a passive, feminine and with a restored connection to her reproductive role.⁴⁶

But just as perverse sexuality is transformed, at the end of the narrative, into the fire that ultimately fuels a renewed commitment to heteronormative coupling, so too does disability intervene a final time to neutralize the revolt it had initially framed. As Humphrey discovers Maud unwillingly "crushed in the embrace of Wolf's arms," Humphrey strikes his first blow of the narrative, punching Wolf and then stabbing him in the shoulder (174). The ultimate victor of this fight, however is not Humphrey but Wolf's brain tumor that, having caused Wolf only occasional headaches until now, at this moment attacks Wolf's body from within, causing him a sudden searing pain. Reacting to the pain of the tumor, Wolf "grope[s] about in a dazed sort of way," (174) and eventually "grow[s] limp" (175). The scene of combat is suspended, along with Humphrey's knife which, poised mid-air, would have otherwise struck a killing blow.

Humphrey's willingness to engage in an act of violent revolt against Wolf is what finally marks him, at this moment, as a fully masculinized being. The emergence of Wolf's tumor here both supports and contains that masculinity, kicking in as a sort of security system or safety valve that places appropriate limits Humphrey's actions. Interrupting the arc of Humphrey's knife, the tumor conveniently ensures that Humphrey's newfound masculine independence does not—as Wolf's has—transgress the abstract principles of right and wrong. By denying Wolf a violent death by overthrow, London assures his readers that the queer-crip materiality he has introduced in the novel should not, ultimately, be viewed as a viable alternative to national manhood. Rather, he directs his readers to view that materiality as the raw substance out of which the rehabilitated American masculinity of the twentieth century might be built.

Thus in one final medical exchange, we find Wolf back in his role as patient, but this time it is his deathbed, and it is now the heterosexual couple that, working together, tend to Wolf's ailing body. As Wolf's body gradually gives itself over to blindness, then paralysis, Wolf and Maud are free to once again embrace the sanctity of the law and perform acts of liberal benevolence, bestowing charity upon a "feeble" body whose impairment exists in contrast to their own robust health (217). Thus Humphrey concludes that "somewhere in that tomb of the flesh still dwelt the soul of the man," whose "fierce intelligence... burned on in silence and in darkness. And it was disembodied" (246). When Wolf dies peacefully in his bunk, Humphrey and Maud together observe that he has now become a "free spirit" (251).⁴⁷ This closing observation, along with the makeshift funeral that he and Maud fashion for Wolf's body, allows Humphrey to access the fraternal melancholy that he was denied in the first scene as he witnessed the "sordid" death of the sailor, enabling him, ultimately to make death "sacred in its ceremonial." That Wolf's stubbornly material body has finally transformed into a vehicle for

meaning rather than a thing-in-itself seems to justify Humphrey's own transformation, establishing that a white man can indeed incorporate a little bit of primitivism without sliding all the way down the evolutionary ladder, emerging instead as a newly fortified heterosexual subject.

Indeed, it's worth remembering here that earlier in the novel, women had been presented as exclusively spiritual beings, feminizing and dematerializing everything they "dosed" and "doctored" while men, meanwhile, had been presented as exclusively physical beings, materializing and masculinizing one another through injury. Heterosexual contact, of course, is a difficult prospect in a world where anything feminine is feminizing and anything masculine is masculinizing. But in furnishing Wolf, in these final moments, with a spiritualized interiority, London makes heterosexuality once again possible. If the men on board the Ghost were once a "race apart, wherein there is no such thing as sex," Wolf's new "spirit" reverses the polarities of this earlier imagery. Making possible the marriage of flesh and spirit, London simultaneously makes possible Humphrey's eventual romantic union with Maud. "The youth of the race seemed burgeoning in me, over-civilized man that I was," (201) confesses Humphrey as he contemplates the way his rough maritime education has newly fitted his body for heterosexual marriage. Reading Humphrey's physical transformation on the waters of the Pacific as a sort of delayed coming of age, we find that the hypermasculine queer-crip exchanges that he receives in the "process of becoming [a man]" ultimately give way to the rehabilitated heterosexual body of the "transformed boy."

A number of scholars, including Judith Halberstam and Sarah Gleeson-White, have pointed to the way that the body in adolescence can be understood as a body that, at least temporarily, resists normativity. Demonstrating the contingency and mutability of both desire

and embodiment, the adolescent body becomes as a space of non-normative possibility before the requirements of adulthood are brought in to contain its transgressive potential. Of course, not all adolescent bodies enjoy the same access to rebellion. Halberstam is careful to distinguish between the male adolescent of “literary and cinematic history...a sullen and recalcitrant white youth who says no to paternal authority,” and the “rogue tomboy” who finds herself caught between “assimilat[ing] to the demands of femininity,” or conversely “imagining a queer future for her butch body” (208). Sarah Gleeson-White similarly identifies the queer gendering of rebellious female adolescents (specifically those that populate Carson McCullers’ fiction), placing them, additionally, within the popular discourse of the freak show, provocatively suggesting that “we might define the freak, like the adolescent, according to physical distortion and in opposition to the ‘normal’ body.” Though Gleeson-White never addresses disability directly, her analysis draws heavily from the canonical texts of disability studies (Robert Bogdan, Mikhail Bakhtin, Michel Foucault) and her identification of the queerness of the adolescent body relies on the medicalized construction of the “abnormal” body.

While Gleeson-White’s book may reflect a missed opportunity to explore the intersecting construction of the queer and disabled body, it does provide a framework for thinking about adolescence as a state that, at least figuratively, presents a challenge to both gender normativity and what Tobin Siebers terms “the ideology of ability.” But given Halberstam’s important distinctions between the male “youth who says no to paternal authority” and the rogue tomboy headed for a “queer future,” what does it mean for London to present his readers with an idealized portrait of a civilization in its evolutionary adolescence? This primitive/adolescent body enabled London to make a set of connections between democratic discord, hypermasculine violence, impassioned Socialist revolution, and queer-crip materiality. But unlike the female

tomboy whose rebellion necessarily constitutes a rejection of gender norms, London's male adolescents embody a kind of hypermasculinity that is queer only to the extent that it images an intimate zone of citizenship populated exclusively by male bodies. Thus, if the female tomboy is subversive because she precedes the normative imperatives of heterosexual femininity, then London's adolescent boys are less so; the preservation of their adolescence ultimately constitutes a preservation of a version of normative masculinity which maturation into adulthood both threatens and reassuringly promises to wash away.

Indeed, the difference between London's account of rebellious adolescence and Halberstam's is London's continual appeal to the natural world, and his commitment to isolating a version of physical materiality that, existing in an imagined space of freedom outside of the political landscape of the nation, ultimately anchors normative gender constructions rather than destabilizing them. Queer-crip materiality is presented as beneficial only when it take place outside of national boundaries (whether in a nautical or primordial context). Within the structures of the nation, however, that materiality is for London, always collapsed back into a model that interprets it as stigma and pathology.

It is precisely the specific political underpinnings of London's universalizing philosophical claims that leads me to resist readings of London that privilege ontological questions of the human/animal divide over ideological critique. For example, mining the text's deconstructive potential, Dana Seitler has recently located *The Sea Wolf* among a set of other "atavistic embraces" between an animalized figure and a human. Drawing from the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, she looks at the role of physical touch in these encounters which, though often fatal, open up set of complex identifications that challenge the rigid binaries and classifications of science. Seitler acknowledges the utopianism of her own methodology, but stands firm in her

choice to privilege a phenomenological reading over an historical and ideological one. But as exciting as this move to phenomenology is, I am cautious of the extent to which it seems to provide too easy a way out the knot of overlapping and conflicting political investments that structure texts like these. I believe that there is ultimately more to be gained by meticulously untangling those investments than by celebrating the deconstructive value of their incoherence. What we see in London's writing, I would argue, is not a valuable deconstruction of the human but, to the contrary, a clever (if not always successful) negotiation of contradictions that might otherwise threaten the white masculine claim on American citizenship at the *fin de siècle*. The model of queer-crip masculinity that London offers, I would suggest, is thoroughly ideological, constituting an impassioned (if somewhat ambivalent) rejection of the national manhood whose failures marked a crisis in American masculinity.

Though Jack London used tropes of sexual deviance and disability to ground his oppositional political vision—and not simply in unequivocally negative ways—I don't believe that we can or should attempt to liberate some radical queer or disabled consciousness that, lying below the surface of London's work, threatens to subvert his more hegemonic narratives. Rather than claiming London as a new figure for queer or disability studies, my goal has been to demonstrate the pervasive, and often problematic, starring roles that queer and disabled bodies have been made to play in the construction of a larger national narrative. As I will continue to argue in the chapters that follow, London was not the only male American author of the twentieth-century to find his meditations on the question of national belonging intertwined with his ability to negotiate the tricky representational terrain of perverse sexuality and crip embodiment. As turn-of-the-century evolutionary theory gradually gave way to the 1920s discourse of eugenics, a new set of anxieties began to emerge, this time around the body of the

sexually delinquent girl and her capacity for reproduction.⁴⁸ It is these anxieties, and the way those anxieties are negotiated in the novels of William Faulkner and F. Scott Fitzgerald, that I turn my attention to next.

¹ I am here drawing from the disability theory of David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder who, in “Narrative Prosthesis and the Materiality of Metaphor,” write: “The desire to access the seeming solidity of the body’s materiality offers representational literatures a way of grasping that which is most unavailable to them... The passage through a bodily form helps secure a knowledge that would otherwise drift away of its own insubstantiality. The corporeal metaphor offers narrative the one thing it cannot possess—an anchor in materiality” (215).

² In rejecting the evolutionarily “advanced” body of the “civilized” bourgeois male, London adopts an attitude that, while not exactly subversive from a disability studies standpoint, nonetheless casts an intriguing shadow over the nineteenth century’s able-bodied ideals. Similarly, in supplanting the structures of bourgeois manhood with the nomadic figure of the “boy tramp” and “road kid,” London presents a model of American citizenship that, while not exactly anti-heteronormative, might be seen as curiously “pre-heteronormative.”

³ Here Kimmel both extends and revises Leslie Fiedler’s classic observations about male friendships in early American literature. While Fiedler “attributes this tradition of cross-race male bonding to a search for redemption for white guilt,” Kimmel points out that “it is also a way to present screens against which white manhood is projected, played out, and defined... Their homoerotic passion is never the passion of equals; the nonwhite is either the guide and exemplar or the Rousseauian ‘noble savage’ who, in his childlike innocence, is more susceptible to the wiles of civilization” (48).

⁴ My own use of the term “national manhood” throughout this chapter refers specifically to Nelson’s formulation of the concept.

⁵ As Kimmel observes, “[r]apid industrialization, technological transformation, capital concentration, urbanization, and immigration...created a new sense of an oppressively crowded, depersonalized, and often emasculated life. Manhood had meant autonomy and self-control, but now fewer and fewer American men owned their own shops, controlled their own labor, owned their own farms. More and more men were economically dependent, subject to the regime of the time clock” (62).

⁶ Following the lead of European authors like Emile Zola, naturalist authors purported to replace artistry with observation, crafting novels as experiments that would offer useful information about complex interplay between heredity and environment. The subjects under scrutiny in these literary experiments behaved in ways that suggested that modern ‘man’ was little more than an intelligent animal who had learned to repress his primal instincts. The rise of spectator sports around this time is significant in that such spectacles provided both an arena for these encounters

with primitivism, a “level playing-field” where the muscular competitions of species selection and the independent, self-representative ideals of American democracy could be staged.

⁷ For a fuller account, see Gail Bederman’s *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (1996) and Michael Kimmel’s *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (2012).

⁸ This model existed alongside of a similar movement that was popular during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century called Muscular Christianity, a religious movement that promoted athleticism as a way to build manly and moral character,” with the aim of “reviriliz[ing] the image of Jesus and therefore remasculinizing the Church” (Kimmel 129). Though Muscular Christianity shared with Naturalism a commitment to the cultivation of brawny masculine bodies, Muscular Christianity’s emphasis on religious virtue and “moral character” contrasted with Naturalism’s commitment to Darwinian evolutionary paradigms. In many Naturalist texts, questions of transcendent morality and justice are subordinated to the more immediate questions of survival and fitness.

⁹ For a classic example of this, we might consider the protagonist of London’s 1902 short story “To Build a Fire” in which a man too accustomed to the comforts of civilization overestimates his ability to travel alone in the Yukon. Just before freezing to death, the protagonist “got upon his feet” and “glanced down at first in order to assure himself that he was really standing up, for the absence of sensation in his feet left him unrelated to the earth” (1065). The man’s changing posture, as he moves from a position on all fours to an erect standing position, mimes the motions of primordial man as he develops into a “civilized” creature of modernity. Evolving away from his primitive roots, however, does not translate, for the protagonist, in to greater masculine power. To the contrary, “evolution” had merely alienated him from his body and his connection to his natural drives. Lacking “sensation” in his lower body, he is impotent despite his erect posture and succumbs to the cold two pages later. In demonstrating the fate of a modern man who no longer “related to the to earth,” London allegorizes for his male readers the dangers overcivilization.

¹⁰ Indeed, when Jim Jeffries (an American boxer nicknamed “the Hope of the White Race”) faced off against the African-American boxer Jack Johnson (nicknamed “The Negro’s Deliverer”), the coverage described the white Jeffries in both primal terms, as a man with a “vast, hairy body,” “legs like trees,” and a “long projecting jaw” (41) and intellectual terms, as a man whose “brain” would inevitably give him an advantage over the “emotional” fighting style characteristic of the “Negro.” Thus their fight was given as a racial battle that would, if Jeffries were victorious, prove that “white men’s capacity for masculine violence was as powerful as black men’s—that civilization had not undermined whites’ primal masculinity” (Bederman, 41). London himself covered this match as a reporter as well as providing a fictionalized retelling of the event in his 1911 prizefighting novella, *The Abysmal Brute*. In the novella, white masculinity is reclaimed as Pat Glendon, Jr. (a fictionalized version of the white Jim Jeffries) prevails over his racialized and animalistic opponents.

¹¹ In *The History of White People* (2010), Nell Painter argues that while historians of masculine primitivism often “concentrate on crises at the turn of the twentieth century... Emerson, the great

voice of American thought, expressed such notions in the antebellum era in phrases that carried over in the lexicon of late nineteenth-century Americans,” like “Saxon” for example, which was later converted into “Anglo-Saxon” at the turn of the century, and became “white” by the mid-twentieth century.

¹³ Indeed, London’s “blonde beast” Buck in his most popular novel *The Call of the Wild* is presented as a creature whose fitness qualifies him not only to rise through the ranks of the sled dog team he is a part of but to ultimately overthrow the capitalist masters who attempt to domesticate him.

¹⁴ Importantly, Rivera’s authentic physicality is counterposed against the superficial vanity of his white opponent, Danny Ward. Though Ward possesses a muscular body, his skin is “white as a woman’s” and his photographs appear in “all the physical culture magazines.” Unlike the feminized superficiality of Ward’s body (whose power is only skin-deep), Rivera is described as having a “deep chest” and “muscles” that “made no display.” Thus Ward’s alignment with the inauthentic, feminine performances of culture sets the stage for Rivera’s masculine materiality to emerge in relief, a materiality that is deeply intertwined with the authenticity of the natural world.

¹⁵ My thinking on this is influenced by Giorgio Agamben who points to the “state of exception” that exists at the heart of the sovereign paradigm. This exception consists primarily in the sovereign’s power, in moments of crisis, to paradoxically suspend law for the sake of preserving law, and in parallel fashion, to kill in the name of preserving life. Agamben’s point however, is that the state of exception is less an exception to the rule than it is the hidden logic behind the rule itself. The power of the sovereign to act both within and outside of the law reveals the law’s dependence on a largely arbitrary violence and power over physical life. In the phrase “force of law,” then, force is to be understood not as the simple administration of law (the punishment of crimes, for example) but the founding moment that enables law to establish itself as such. Though Agamben’s privileging of ontology over ideology is at odds with my purposes in this chapter, I find his ideas about the law’s exceptionality helpful in illuminating what London is up to—specifically London’s tendency to dwell on ontological states even as he launches a thoroughly ideological project.

¹⁶ “To let thee at one into a secret, which is unknown to these people themselves, their government is a pure, unadulterated logocracy, or a government of words... In a logocracy, thou must know there is little or no occasion for fire-arms, or any such destructive weapons. Every offense or defensive measure is enforced by wordy battle and paper war; — he who has the longest tongue or readiest quill is sure to gain the victory.” Washington Irving, *Salmagundi: or, The whim-whams and opinions of Launcelot Langstaff [pseud.] and others*, Volumes 1-2. Printed by Jules Didot, for A. and W. Galignani, 1824.

¹⁷ Key to this embodied revolt, however, is its complete removal from the actual political apparatus of the state—a removal that we witness in Rivera’s inability to actually set type. His masculine body is revolting in a double sense, marked by unsightly injuries and put in service of the revolutionary cause. But this revolt is ultimately more conceptual than practical. After all, Rivera’s injuries do not issue from combat between masculine revolutionary and oppressive

regime. His skill for physical combat may *fund* the purchase of guns to mobilize against Diaz, but Rivera himself wields only his fists and only then against the other “primitive” bodies his manager pits him against. Because his literal fights do not take place against the state, they are empty of direct political content. In his association with the evolutionary past, then, Rivera is not a man *against* the state as much as he is a boy *outside* of the state, furnished with a young “savage” body that seems to precede the emergence of any kind of sovereign power.

¹⁸ Indeed, image of Darwinian competition as a physical fight between individuals (rather than as a much slower and more nuanced process involving the evolutionary fit between species and environment) represents a popular distortion of Darwin’s own views. As Kimmel observes, “[n]o sooner had Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* been published in 1859 than social thinkers on both sides of the Atlantic attempted to apply his theories of natural selection and survival of the fittest to human societies—something that Darwin himself had been hesitant to do” (67).

¹⁹ For a particularly thorough and compelling account of the novel’s gender and sexual politics see Mitchell, Lee Clark. “And Rescue Us From Ourselves”: Being Someone in Jack London’s *The Sea-Wolf*. *American Literature*, 70.2 (1998): 317-335.

²⁰ Wolf’s indecencies demystify and de-sanctify the power of these representative figures by firmly planting the them back in their physical bodies. The dead man’s ultimate lack of concern for anything or anyone he might “represent” might in fact embody London’s own “cynical mockery” of the governmental figures that have failed to protect his working-class interests; those authority figures are here re-corporealized into nothing more than a set of grinning corpses. Important to note, however, is that what is most “vile” in this passage is not ultimately the grotesque figure of the corpse but rather the “vulgar” and “repellent” figures of speech that Wolf uses to block the dead man’s sanctification.

²¹ London here appears to be be echoing Thoreau’s “Resistance to Civil Government,” but with a much more optimistic outlook on the democratic process. Thoreau envisioned democracy as an imperfect alternative to monarchy, a stepping stone on the path to a government that might, at some future date, truly represent the freedom of the individual to make moral choices. Though we will see how London’s invalidates Thoreau’s emphasis on principles of right and wrong, he nonetheless, like Thoreau, ultimately envisions a type of masculine citizenship that eradicated dependency—in particular, the dependency of (male) voters on their elected officials.

²² Indeed, nineteenth century literary culture is filled with examples of the dispassionate physician, from Hawthorne extensive catalogue of misguided men of Science (Chillingworth, Aylmer, Rappacini) to the more sympathetic portrait of Dr. Alec in Louisa May Alcott’s *Eight Cousins*. For a compelling and comprehensive account of the ambivalent position that doctors occupied in the nineteenth century literary imagination, see Stephanie P. Browner’s *Profound Science and Elegant Literature: Imagining Doctors in Nineteenth-Century America* (2005).

²³ As Lee Clark Mitchell suggests, “It may come as no surprise that a novel about an inept landlubber’s schooling at sea devotes so much energy to the acquisition of ‘sea legs,’ but the process of getting one’s legs beneath one functions as a conceit more central to the meaning of *The Sea-wolf* than simply adapting to turbulent seas. The phrase ‘finding one’s legs’ recurs

insistently through the narrative and acquires multiple meanings; it refers not only to striving to rise above the horizontal but also to preserving one's life, discovering one's 'soul,' and defining one's status independent of culture." (319)

²⁴ This paradigm, of course, produces an interesting problem for heterosexual contact which would, in this schema, produce a feminizing effect on men and a masculinizing effect on women. Toward the end of the novel, London crafts a solution to this paradox which I will discuss in more detail later in the chapter.

²⁵ While this difference may largely reflect the difference in eras between Robinson's archive and mine, her emphasis on the Freudian dimensions of masochism and the psychoanalytic dimensions of cultural trauma nonetheless make it difficult to understand physical impairment outside of the usual frameworks that understand disability as deficiency or affliction.

²⁶ As ship's cook, Mugridge is already more closely associated with the domestic sphere, affording London and additional opportunity to showcase the way the contagions of urban life manage to feminize even those lower class men who have escaped maternal surveillance.

²⁷ See Oliveri, Vinnie. "Sex, Gender, and Death in *The Sea Wolf*." *Pacific Coast Philology*, Vol. 38 (Fall 2003): 99-115).

²⁹ The ship's name, "The Ghost," is of course important to consider in any discussion of the gendered relationship between body and spirit. Indeed, there is a certain irony in using a term with so many connotations of disembodiment and spectrality to describe the muscularized, masculine landscape of the ship itself. If the body is commonly understood in religious discourse as the structure that contains the soul, than London's naming here performs an intriguing reversal—it is the "spirit" that composes the usually concrete "structure" and a set of brawny material bodies that constitute what is generally understood to be an intangible soul. Rather than the body containing the spirit, in other words, London presents us with a spirit that contains a set of bodies.

³⁰ The forms of male bonding depicted in *Before Adam*—occurring in the free spaces beyond "civilization" are in many ways reminiscent of the relationship between Huck and Jim in Twain's *Adventure of Huckleberry Finn*. In this context, Huck's own description of his father in the novel is suggestive: "He had been drunk over in town, and laid in the gutter all night, and he was a sight to look at. A body would a thought he was Adam—he was just all mud" (20). Despite the religious reference, the image of Huck's father caked in mud suggests precisely the sort of primordial physicality described later in London's *Before Adam*. In both the title of London's novella and the reference in Twain's novel, then, fatherhood and paradigms of patrilineal descent are displaced by atavism and animal ancestry. If the biblical Adam is given as the original father of all generations, then Big Tooth and Huck's father issue from an even more primordial site of generation.

³¹ For Freud's explanation of the primal scene, see "From the History of Infantile Neurosis [The 'Wolfman']" in *The Wolfman and Other Cases*, Penguin, 2003.

³² I use the word “immunizes” here with Roberto Esposito’s *Bios* in mind. Esposito argues that “the modern subject who enjoys civil and political rights is itself an attempt to attain immunity from the contagion of the possibility of community. Such an attempt to immunize the individual from what is common ends up putting at risk the community as immunity turns upon itself and its constituent element” (*Bios*, xi).

³³ Just as London had previously critiqued Humphrey’s impulse to distill the “blasphemous metaphors” that come out of Wolf’s mouth into a more refined mode of literary (and ultimately political) representation, in *Before Adam* he takes a step further and effaces the representational agency of the modern narrator entirely. Though the story begins with a kind of split narration, with the “I” sometimes referring to modern man plagued with an overdeveloped racial memory and other times referring to the ape-like creature of his ancestral past, by the end of the narrative, the latter figure has drowned out the voice of the former. Shedding his frame narrator like an obsolete skin, Big Tooth absorbs his ancestor’s verbal skill and emerges as the real narrator of the story. It is his “truth” and not his ancestral grandson’s that the reader is ultimately left to contemplate. Thus the Darwinian concept of “racial memory” provides London with a curious narrative technology that renders pre-linguistic man suddenly capable of speaking for himself. It is in this way that London finally achieves the democratic ideal of “direct representation” that he had earlier championed in “Revolution.”

³⁴ Indeed, the fact that the character of Peter Pan first appears around the same time, in J.M. Barrie’s 1902 novel *The Little White Bird*, evidences a larger cultural preoccupation with boyhood at the turn of the twentieth century.

³⁵ The term “penny dreadful” was a common term for the nautical adventure literature of the late 19th century. This literature was written specifically for consumption by an adolescent readership, often featuring adolescent boys as their protagonists. Though this genre of the adventure literature is generally thought to have been inaugurated by Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, it hit its peak in popularity by the end of the nineteenth century, and its narratives ranged from the more iconic books like Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* and Kipling’s *Kim* to the mass market “penny dreadfuls” that were comprised of cheap plots with formulaic titles like *The Boy Highwayman*, *The Boy Pirate*, and *The Boy King of Outlaws*. On the level of both thematics and consumption, the focus was on the education of the adolescent male and these ambivalent bildungsromans found themselves treading a fine line between proper masculine development and the encouragement of immoral or deviant behavior. Though filled with boy “pirates” and boy “outlaws,” these texts were often, at the same time, deeply committed to empire and heavily invested in transforming its boys into appropriately masculinized national subjects. As Elyssa D. Warkentin notes, these novels “conducted a subtle didactic campaign to shape masculine identities in service of nation and empire, to instill dominant values, and to provide wholesome role models” (3). Thus, nautical adventure was seen either as offering a violent and romanticized alternative to the constructs of nationality and law, or to the contrary, merely using an “outlaw” thematic to “produce imperial men” (3).

³⁶ Mirroring Big Tooth’s commitment to “comradeship” over the blood relation of literal brotherhood, London here invokes a kind of revolutionary boyhood that “passes over

geographical lines” and thus emerges in opposition to a conception of United States as political state held together through shared national birth and patrilineal inheritance.

³⁷ In this sense, “spread-eagle Americanism” is an extremely suggestive phrase. A term originating in the late 1850s, “spread-eagleism” was commonly used during the late nineteenth century to refer to the practice of being “bombastic, extravagant, ridiculously boastful, esp. in laudation of the United States,” deriving from the sixteenth and seventeenth-century representation of the “spread-eagle,” and its later adoption as the Great Seal of the United States (OED). From this angle, Humphrey’s excessive laudation of law-as-such transforms him into not just a defender of the moral good, but much more specifically, into an emblem of those forefathers whose patriotism failed to move beyond the mere words of the Constitution. Of course, the phrase “spread-eagleism” also carries with it set of fascinating connotations regarding punishment and physical vulnerability, as another, more vulgar, late nineteenth-century use of the term “spread-eagle” referred directly to penal practices. A “spread-eagle” was a “person secured with the arms and legs stretched out, esp. in order to be flogged,” and in, in its verb form, to “spread-eagle” was to “tie up (a person) for punishment.” Thus, the image suggests its own opposite, forefathers “spread-eagle” and vulnerable to the physical force of the law they themselves embody.

³⁸ Important to point out here is that London, in referring to his ancestor’s blood, is appealing not to the importance of patrilineal blood ties—birthrights passed from fathers to sons—but of a national covenant sealed through sacrificial wounds.

³⁹ This is not to say, however, that there is nothing alarmist in London’s characterizations of “the road.” As if to offset the revolutionary possibility he had previously located in the perversely sexualized and battered bodies of his male characters, London here warns of the threat that outlaw spaces can pose to the healthy development of the white male body:

Saddest of all, is the training school of the ‘Road.’ Man, vicious and corrupt, the incarnation of all that is vile and loathsome, is a melancholy object; but how much more, is innocent youth, rapidly becoming so! Modification by environment: O pregnant term!... we, Americans... allow in our midst the annual prostitution of tens of thousands of souls. Boy tramps or ‘Road-kids’ abound in our land. They are children, embryonic souls—the most plastic of fabrics. Flung into existence, ready to tear aside the veil of the future; with the mighty pulse of the dawning twentieth century throbbing about him... they are cast out, by the cruel society which gave them birth, into a nether world of outlawry and darkness.
(70)

If the savage wilderness of *The Ghost* constituted a sort of productive “training school” that educates Humphrey’s underdeveloped body in the art of “standing on his own two legs,” then “the road” here provides a similar sort of brutal education but with a much different result. Poised between the nineteenth and the twentieth century, the innocence of childhood and the inevitable “corruptions” of adulthood, the vulnerability of London’s “embryonic souls” lies primarily in their exposure to the capitalist economies that “modify” them. Exiled to the “outlaw” world of tramping, these “road kids” thus become the urban analog to the sailor outlaws that populated London’s nautical wilderness. Physical injury and perverse sexuality may have carried a kind of curative power in the lawless spaces of the ocean, but resituated

within the “cruel society” of an established nation, we find these subjectivities coded much differently. No longer a site of painful-but-productive rehabilitation, this “netherworld of outlawry and darkness” serves instead as an index of the damage inflicted by capitalism. The abject fate of these otherwise healthy white bodies serves as a testament to the shaping power of environment and an indictment of a capitalist economy that produces more than it can consume and relies on the labor of bodies that it treats, ultimately, as disposable.

⁴⁰ London’s use of Nietzsche here does not entirely reflect Nietzsche’s actual views on evolution, which were more complicated than simple approval. Kimmel, for example, points to the way that Charles Zueblin, in his 1910 book *Democracy and the Overman*, “fused Social Darwinism and a bastardized Nietzschean evocation of the Overman when he argued that the survival of the fittest resulted in the ‘raw, sturdy Saxon of primitive England’” (68).

⁴² Calling upon the tramp’s superior Germanic roots, London forwards a racial philosophy that has less to do with national borders and more to do with evolutionary theory and the black/white divide that, during the Jim Crow Era, was quickly becoming reconfigured around an exhaustive science of comparative anatomy.

⁴³ Three years later, in an essay titled “The Salt of the Earth,” London most explicitly showcases the racist underpinning of his Darwinism, championing an evolutionary process through which the weak, docile, inferior races are vanquished by the strong, innovative master races. In a passage that could have easily been an epigraph to *Before Adam*, London writes:

The dim perceptions and vague phantasms of the old technology have flickered and vanished in the clear white light of science. Darwin horrified the world, but today our remote relationship with the anthropoid apes is not repulsive. Our cave and arboreal ancestors, hairy of body and prognathous of jaw, have taken their place on the witness stand, and false Adam’s lineal claim has been thrown out of court... No matter how much it hurts, the truth must be spoken. Truth—not the heart’s ardent logic but the head’s colder reasoning. (100)

On the one hand, London’s here fashions the testimony of “anthropoid apes” and “arboreal ancestors” into a mode of Foucaultian confession. Stepping forward to name themselves, these talking primates replace patriarchal lineage and religious authority (a staple of national manhood) with the biopolitical machinery of science and technology. But even more interesting is the way in which this passage allows us to understand *Before Adam*, published four years later, as an extension of *The Sea Wolf*’s negotiation of literary and political representation.

⁴⁴ See Walter Benn Michaels, Vinnie Oliveri, and Lee Clark Mitchell.

⁴⁵ Also interesting is Maud’s occupation as a poet—back on land before she and Humphrey knew each other personally, Humphrey (as literary critic) had favorably reviewed her “thin volumes” of poetry. If skill with language is given as the sign of a feminizing modernity, then the “old” Humphrey is even more “feminine” and “modern” than Maud. As a critic rather than an author, Humphrey is someone who writes about writing and is therefore even further removed from the material world than Maud who simply writes.

⁴⁶ Maud confesses: “You know, I was traveling to Japan for my health... I was not very strong. I never was. The doctors recommended a sea voyage and I chose the longest” (230) but concludes that this experience has made her a “stronger woman... and, I hope, a better woman” (230).

⁴⁷ As Walter Benn Michaels notes, “the disease that paralyzes before it kills [Wolf] is the triumph of Hump’s idealism... The proof of Wolf’s soul lies not in its escaping his body but in its being entombed by it.” (*The Cambridge History of American Literature*, Volume 3, p. 383)

⁴⁸ London’s own views on eugenics were influenced by David Star Jordan, a proponent of eugenics with whom London shared a friendship and an intellectual affinity. Though London was ultimately more interested in evolutionary theory and male primitivism, the evolving discourse around heredity lead him to express qualified support for eugenic philosophies in his writing and letters.

3. QUEERING REPRODUCTION: FAULKNER AND FITZGERALD'S CRIP CHILDREN

3.1 "Heartfelt Democracy" and the Contaminations of Sentiment

This chapter suggests that it's time to begin thinking differently about queerness, training our gaze not simply on the complexities of same-sex desires, identifications and affects, but on the biopolitical management of perversely sexualized populations. Of particular interest to me in this chapter are those populations who have historically found their reproductive bodies the target of social policies, public health panics, and coercive medical interventions. Though academic work on eugenics has traversed a broad range of disciplines including disability studies, African-American studies and feminist studies, with a few notable exceptions, scholars of queer studies have not often engaged with the important role of eugenics in constructing a set of national narratives about sexual normativity and sexual transgression.¹ Too often, particularly in psychoanalytic and anti-social strands of queer theory, the figure of the "queer" is understood as existing entirely outside of heterosexual reproduction, and therefore assumed to be utterly disconnected from a politics of life and futurity. In these accounts, the most notable of which occurs in Lee Edelman's extremely influential book *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, a dichotomy emerges between the heteronormative "children of tomorrow" and the "death-driven" childless queers who threaten to negate that future. But what if the bearer of perversity *is* the child—or the mother who bears the child? What if the figure of the "queer" does not exist in some abstract negative realm outside of "life" but instead inheres at the very heart of heterosexual reproduction, and the intersection between individual and population?

The novels under examination here, William Faulkner's *Sanctuary* (1931) and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night* (1934), are centrally concerned with these questions. I argue

that a close reading of each text reveals the extent to which certain reproductive bodies, during the era of eugenics, were figured as queer bodies. Furthermore, I contend, both novels bear out the extent to which this queering of reproduction relied on the reconfiguration of “sentiment” as a national concept. As the hazards of “feminine” sympathy were pitted against the ostensibly more prudent objectivity of “masculine” medical science, the bodies of mother and child became the battleground upon which this war was waged. In the readings that follow, I call attention to three main figures who are pathologized by the changing status of sentiment: the perversely sexualized girl/mother, the male authority figure who, weakened by his sentimental attachments to women, fails to maintain proper “national” boundaries, and the child produced out of this union, who vacillates between the smiling face of the utopian future and, much more menacingly, the burdensome liability whose perverse dependence imperils the health of the nation. Constantly pivoting around discourses of sexuality and disability, both “mother” and “child” in these novels vacillate uneasily among sentimental, scientific, and sensational registers; they are both figures of sympathy and bearers of monstrosity, the repository of the national future and the queer-crip force that threatens to destroy it.

Of course, “sympathy” has not always been aligned with the “feminine,” nor has it always been a denigrated mode. To the contrary, sympathy was absolutely central to eighteenth and nineteenth century constructions of American national belonging. Fraternal “feeling,” as several scholars note, played a central role in early discussions regarding the boundaries of American citizenship. Maud Hines, following Leslie Fiedler and Carole Levander, points out that the first accounts of American nationhood validated the cohesive power of sentimentalism, with “the new nation... ubiquitously characterized as a child, innocent of the corruption and historical baggage of England” (157). Elizabeth Dill additionally suggests that in the early

American republic, sympathy was understood and celebrated as a particularly democratic force; the inclusive spirit of American democracy promised to “erase differences and create a shared social being” (710). In this model, the nation was understood as being held together by the same substance that bound together members of the nuclear family. Thus, as Elizabeth Barnes suggests, “American culture’s preoccupation with familial feeling as the foundation for sympathy, and sympathy as the basis of a democratic republic, ultimately confounds the difference between familial and social bonds” (xi). If citizens were not literally bound through a blood connection to American soil, then they could be metaphorically bound through a kind of democratic sympathy that encouraged them to imagine themselves as brothers. These scholars, along with Dana Nelson, Kristin Boudreau, Lauren Berlant and Julia Stern have productively challenged totalized understandings of sentiment as a purely feminine mode, arguing that sentiment was, in fact, absolutely central in constructions of American masculine citizenship.²

Dill adds, however, that this version of masculine democratic sympathy, based on the imperative of “feeling right,” was counterbalanced by sensationalism and its opposite proclivities toward “feeling wrong.”³ Thus Dill questions what she sees as a “false rift between the sensational and the sentimental” arguing that these opposite registers of feeling in fact reveal some of the paradoxes and anxieties fundamental to American democracy. Sympathetic bonds may have been framed as a force powerful enough to unite citizens to one another across bloodlines, but those same sympathetic bonds could also be dangerous in excess. Without appropriate discrimination and boundaries, the dream of peaceful democratic harmony might easily collapse into the nightmare of democratic discord and mob rule. “Right” feelings of fraternal love and affection can, in excess, slip into “wrong” feelings of lust, violence and transgression. What begins as “heartfelt democracy” (713) can end in incest and interclass

intimacy. These tensions were exacerbated by late nineteenth and early twentieth century transformation of emotions themselves into clinical entities.⁴ As medical experts including Sigmund Freud and Richard von Krafft-Ebing related concepts like “love” to the physical (and often pathological) drives of the human body, there suddenly seemed to be little separating the transcendent qualities of sentimental affiliation from the sensational, the pathological, and the diagnosable.⁵

But if sentimentality was on the one hand associated with the deep authenticity of buried pathological desires, it was also, conversely, denigrated as a form of political artifice. As Fred Kaplan notes in *Sacred Tears*, sentimentality was not viewed “perjoratively” until the late nineteenth century when it became increasingly understood as an “excessive indulgence” or “insincere display” that placed one “in opposition to reason” (17). Elizabeth Maddock Dillon adds that “[s]entiment and its derivatives indicate a moment when emotion is recognized as socially constructed,” suggesting that sentimentalism’s “excessive nature” might lie in our understanding of its instrumental qualities—the manipulation of the emotions for the sake of a particular agenda (515).⁶

It is worth pointing out that the historical moment in which sentimentality began to be coded as an “excessive” and “insincere” manipulation of the emotions occurred soon after women had begun to lay claim to the power of sympathy in both the literary and political sphere. During the last half of the nineteenth century, abolitionism had carved out a space for women, and particularly mothers, to assert themselves as sentimental caretakers of the body politic. For authors like Harriet Beecher Stowe and Lydia Maria Child, maternal sympathy became a foothold on which to step into the public debate about slavery and, more subtly, women’s rights.⁷ As the virtues of sympathetic religious motherhood gained political currency, women who

donned the mantle of maternal authority found themselves able to enter the world of public policy and political debate as impassioned spokespersons for exploited slaves. Women, during this period, also served as founders and heads of charitable institutions designed to rescue and “save” wayward girls and anti-social boys from a life on the streets. As historian Regina Kunzel has demonstrated, the late nineteenth century maternity home movement was dominated by female religious discourse and evangelical reform. In these narratives, young unwed mothers were presented as innocent victims, the men that impregnated them as predatory seducers, and the female reformer herself as kind of maternal benefactress.

Thus, the nineteenth century witnessed a process by which fraternal structures of sympathy became recodified as fundamentally maternal. Capitalizing on the discourses that aligned sentiment with citizenship, female authors like Harriet Beecher Stowe and Lydia Maria Child implied that mothers, as creatures of sympathy, were particularly well positioned to take up the mantle of American civic responsibility. Advocating a kind of national practice of sympathetic identification with victimized racial and social others, these authors posited the love of a mother for her child as the strongest of all bonds. Such love, it was implied, gave mothers the unique ability to discern what was best not only for her children but for the national future that those children will inevitably come to inhabit.

With the rise of evolutionary theory in the post-bellum era, female authors’ claim on sympathy persisted but became reconfigured through the language of science. In her reading of Louisa May Alcott’s 1871 novel *Little Men*, for example, Levander argues that Alcott uses sympathetic structures to foreground “process through which anti-social children are transformed into bourgeois citizens—a process requiring children to shed the ‘savage’ impulses indicating, for evolutionary theorists, a lack of civilization and to adopt the ‘civilized’ behaviors coincident

with middle-class ideals” (30). However, despite this brief overlap between sentimental and scientific narratives, science, by the second decade of the twentieth century, had largely succeeded in discrediting sympathy as a viable form of politics. As social work became increasingly professionalized in the 1920s, the period witnessed a backlash against the authority of programs founded upon “sentiment.” The invention of the male “expert” cast previous maternal reformers as “amateurs,” transforming values of “sisterhood, sympathy, and sentiment” from strengths into liabilities.

Furthermore, if the nineteenth-century had made room for concerned Christian “mothers” to speak out against the inhumanity and injustices of slavery, the early twentieth century began to see a gradual shift in public perceptions of the maternal body. As values of hard scientific objectivity began to replace the “softer” values of religious sentiment, experts became preoccupied with adolescent girls’ physical capacity to bear children. A resulting tension emerged between an understanding of mothers that emphasized their status as religious caretakers of the national future and an understanding of mothers as potential biological liabilities. What *kind* of children, officials wondered, might be produced through unregulated female sexuality and what damage might those children do to the overall “health” and vigor of America’s body politic? Using the eugenic vocabularies of “fitness,” “normalcy,” “feeble-mindedness” and “degeneracy,” medical professionals and public officials thus forged a rhetorical link between what they saw as the “dangerous” sexuality of wayward girls and the hereditary defects they were no doubt passing on to future generations through their unfit children. The very sentiment that had previously guaranteed the innocence of the “fallen woman” now became suspect as potentially artificial, pathological, and contaminating. If earlier sentimental narratives had constructed white middle class girls as a population in need of

sympathetic maternal protection against black men, immigrant men, and predatory lesbians, the rise of eugenic science suggested that these “problem girls” were precisely the thing that future generations needed protection *from*.

Historian Linda Gordon points out that, though late nineteenth century advocates of “voluntary motherhood” did seize on Neo-Malthusian rhetoric, discussions of birth control at this moment were still largely connected to women’s rights movements that stressed female reproductive autonomy, a women’s right to limit her husband’s sexual access to her body, and the glorification of motherhood itself as a social and cultural labor worthy of respect. Around the turn of the century, however, these conversations were similarly reframed through the language of selective breeding. “Patriotic motherhood” consisted not in the mother’s unique powers of national sympathy but the use she made of her reproductive anatomy—specifically, the extent to which she succeeded in following the imperative for “fitter” families to outbreed racial minorities, immigrants, and the lower classes. Thus, no sooner had women taken up the mantle of sentimental motherhood than “motherhood” itself became a field of medical scrutiny.

Countering the anti-birth-control thrust of “positive eugenics,” feminist activists retaliated by stressing the contribution that birth control could make to the carrying out of “negative eugenics.” Margaret Sanger’s biographer Ellen Chesler concedes that Sanger actively supported “enforced contraception” for the “physically and mentally incompetent” (195) and that she was in favor of Southern initiatives for the involuntary sterilization of its institutionalized inmates. In order to defend birth control from its “anti-family” stigma, feminist activists thus partnered with male eugenicists whose backing helped them set up clinics and establish medical legitimacy. After 1920, male medical authorities continued to play an even greater role in the distribution of birth control, and women eager to enter the professional realm took jobs as

eugenic field workers, disseminating birth control technologies among the lower classes.⁸ The feminist response to the “race suicide” controversy, then, did little to overturn biologically deterministic notions of poverty, stereotypes about race or value judgments about disability. That feminist advocates of birth control partnered with eugenicists during this period even to this day continues to be a source of tension between feminist and disability activists.⁹ In this way, a maternal politics of sympathy ultimately gave way to something that looked much more like the scientific quantification of childbirth.

To summarize, before the late nineteenth-century, sentimental bonds between citizens were characterized as a kind of important national glue. Brotherly affection between men was seen as the key to making American democracy work; without sentimental attachments between citizens, America was nothing but a loose amalgam of settlers with little binding them together as members of a unified nation. Women, capitalizing on the privileged relation to sympathy that they felt their maternal bodies had fitted them with, gained a new voice in matters of national policy. But by the turn of the twentieth century, these sentimental modes of citizenship were being discredited and replaced with biological models that relied heavily on ideologies of physical “fitness” and the cold hard facts of science. If women had initially used a politics of sympathy to enter the political sphere by capitalizing on their capacity for maternal feeling, then the discrediting of sentiment had the opposite effect. Motherhood, when not properly regulated or policed by the “objective” arm of science, was made pathological and perverse. Politics based on “feelings” began to be seen as suspect; sympathy might be appropriate in certain circumstances, but too much well-meaning identification with one’s metaphorical brothers, sisters, or daughters might lead to dangerous identifications and intimacies with populations that should, according to doctors, journalists and policymakers, remain outside of the American

family. To advocate a sentimental politics of inclusion, from this perspective, was to cast American citizenship as a wide net, making the country vulnerable to contamination by immigrants, prostitutes and other undesirable populations.

“Heartfelt democracy,” in this context, was no longer a manly national ideal but a feminizing condition. In this way, we can see a broad evolution in the uses of and value placed on “sentiment”: from its initial status as vehicle for male fraternal affiliation to a female tool of participation in the public sphere to, finally, a mode of feminizing weakness or pathology that, in embracing of the wrong kind of mothers and children, placed that the national gene pool at risk.¹⁰ By relocating concepts of national belonging firmly in the reproductive physical body, medical experts had found a new way to materially anchor American citizenship while at the same time challenging the active political forces women were becoming. If mothers had decided to use their cultural claim on sympathetic structures of feeling to launch themselves into public roles, then the professionalization of social work and the emerging science of eugenics struck back by spotlighting women’s sexual and reproductive anatomies as passive vessels through which national health and fitness could be maintained.

In what follows, I will explain how the physical targets of eugenic policies might be thought of as both “crip” and “queer,” unpacking the biopolitical tensions that inhered in the perversely sexualized bodies of mother and child during this historical moment. As we will see, the category of “feeble-mindedness” was applied not only to people with intellectual disabilities but also quite frequently to lower class women, black women, prostitutes, middle class lesbians—as well as the potential children such women might produce. For both Faulkner and Fitzgerald, I will argue, sexual transgressiveness ultimately has less to do with anxieties related to same-sex desire than with questions of reproduction and the scientific quantification of “life.”

More than simply illuminating the preoccupations of each author, however, my aim is to demonstrate the limitations of psychoanalysis while highlighting the usefulness of biopolitical modes of inquiry. Bringing queer studies to bear on the history of eugenics, I would suggest, not only broadens the scope of queer theory in productive ways but reveals important historical and discursive linkages between queer and disabled subjects.

3.2 **Faulkner and the Eugenic Imagination**

“Birth control and contraception cannot be depended upon to *save us from the children* of the very groups whom we are most eager to restrict.”

– Rabbi Sidney Goldstein, speaking in support of more widespread sterilization of the unfit (1936), *emphasis added*¹¹

“She sat on the cot beside him, holding the child in her lap. It lay in a sort of drugged immobility, like the children which beggars on Paris streets carry, its pinched face slick with faint moisture, its hair a damp whisper of shadow across its gaunt, veined skull, a thin crescent of white showing beneath its lead-colored eyes.”

– William Faulkner, *Sanctuary* (1931)

Amidst the barrage of horrors that the reader encounters in *Sanctuary*—from the rape of Temple Drake to the murder of the “halfwit” Tommy to the instances of sadism outlined in Popeye’s psychobiography—it could be argued that the most horrific moments confront the reader, ironically, in the form of Ruby Goodwin’s sickly infant. From our introduction to Ruby’s child nine pages into the novel to the “fretful sound” of “whimpering” we hear upon the infant’s exit from the narrative roughly three hundred pages later, the sickly child becomes the grotesque refrain to which the narrative continually and compulsively returns. Thus on two separate instances, we witness the infant lying “in a sort of drugged immobility” (116, 269) and in one of those instances we additionally gaze upon “its pinched face slick with faint moisture, its hair a damp whisper of shadow across its gaunt, veined skull, a thin crescent of white showing beneath

its lead-colored eyes” (116). Later, we observe that “[i]ts eyes were half open, the balls rolled back into the skull so that only the white showed, in color like weak milk” (161). In opposition to past sentimental framings of the child as the hopeful instrument of the future, Faulkner gives us an infant already infected by the vices of the present and—we are led to assume—barred from the traditional narrative arc of maturity and adulthood.

To make sense of Faulkner’s peculiar figuration of Ruby Goodwin’s grotesque infant, we might turn to Lee Edelman’s recent notion of “reproductive futurism.”¹² In his hugely influential and widely debated polemic *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, Edelman argues that the figure of the Child, understood as inheritor of the communal future, has come to be deployed as the universal icon that justifies any and every political agenda. The rhetoric is always the same; we must “make the world a better place for our children.” Filtering this cultural argument through the lens of Lacanian theory, Edelman adds that our investment in the Child is furthermore an investment in the Symbolic Order that encompasses both the “telos of the social order” (11) and “the narrative sequence of history” (10). Thus the Child represents coherence, linear narrative, identity, politics, and successful signification—what, combined, Edelman coins “reproductive” or “sentimental futurism.”

Accordingly, it is the queer, Edelman argues, that occupies the Child’s abject negative space. Because gay male sexuality is perceived as occurring outside of reproduction, the gay man has been continually framed not only as a threat to the safety and well-being of the Child, but, even more malevolently, as “a threat to the logic of thought itself” (39). Embodying a kind of crisis of signification, he is a menace to both the political future and the Child who functions as the screen upon which that future is projected. Here, Edelman playfully queers Lacan’s notion of the *sinthome*, by coining the phrase “sinthomosexuality.” If for Lacan, the *sinthome* is

a kind of sign that does not signify, then “sinthomosexuality” reveals the extent to which the turn away from signification and toward the death drive has been culturally mapped onto homosexual bodies and practices. As part of a “culture of death,” Edelman argues, queers are uniquely poised to tear apart signification, dissolve identity, and obliterate both the future and the Child upon whose shoulders the future rests. Indeed, rather than advising his readers to reject such figurations, Edelman urges queers to take up their abjection exuberantly. We can challenge the heteronormative structures of reproductive futurism, Edelman suggests, only by embracing the death drive and occupying the unintelligible spaces outside of the political to which we have already been exiled.¹³

Edelman’s own brief engagement with *Sanctuary*’s grotesque infant serves as an excellent example of what is most productive in his account of queerness, as well as what is most problematic. But first, a brief summary of Faulkner’s self-avowed “potboiler” is in order. *Sanctuary*’s central villain, Popeye, exists at the heart of Yoknapatawpha County’s criminal underworld; he not only runs a bootlegging operation but is connected to the industry of prostitution. Early in the novel, Popeye murders his associate Tommy in order to gain access to the corn crib where Tommy has hidden Temple Drake, a University of Mississippi co-ed with a reputation for associating with the wrong kind of men. Though impotent, Popeye rapes Temple with a phallic substitute (a corn cob), eventually stashing her away in a brothel where he voyeuristically enjoys watching men more virile than himself have sex with her. Meanwhile, Popeye pins Tommy’s murder on his the sympathetic character of Lee Goodwin, father to the sickly infant described above. Horace Benbow, Goodwin’s defense attorney and the novel’s central narrative consciousness, worries that Goodwin’s conviction may result in the death of Ruby’s child.

In lengthy footnote, Edelman argues that Popeye's "defective" masculinity (his inability to perform heterosexually), coupled with the indirect threat that he poses to Ruby Goodwin's child, allows us to understand him as a "sinthomosexual." With a "face like stamped tin," Popeye is a mask that hides nothing, a symbol without a referent, a signifier with no signified. Furthermore, his willingness to let Goodwin take the blame for a murder that he himself committed ultimately jeopardizes the reproductive futurity of the nuclear family. "Though Popeye, of course, has no literal responsibility for the illness of the child," Edelman contends, "he embodies the 'evil' whose outcome the infant's cadaverous torpor conveys" (179). Thus, for Edelman, Popeye constitutes the novel's antisocial, homosexual villain; his victory over Goodwin would spell the demise of Ruby's infant just as surely as his downfall would secure the child's future.

Edelman's reading here opens up some fascinating questions, but in his exclusive focus on (white male) homosexuality as the *only* site of queerness, and in his broad theoretical resistance to the political *as such*, Edelman deliberately stops short of opening up a much more interesting dialogue about where, exactly, queerness might be located in the text. Indeed, given the provocative connotations of the term "reproductive futurism," it is surprising that a discussion of eugenics does not appear anywhere in Edelman's book. The regulation of fertility has historically been, after all, a politics that is wholly future-driven, and largely invested in securing that future by controlling patterns of reproduction. But if reproductive futurism, in Edelman's account, rests on the sentimental premise that we must make the future better *for* our children, then the future-oriented politics of eugenics rests on the similar but somewhat inverted notion that we must, in fact, rid ourselves of our sentimental attachments to the child. For the eugenicist, the collective future rests less on the project of making the world better *for* our

children than it does on the project of making the world better *through* our children—that is, through the utilitarian manufacture of better, “fitter” children.

In this context, Edelman’s insistence that reproductive futurism is always necessarily “sentimental” seems additionally strange. Historically speaking, the relationship between sentimentality and accounts of national futurity is by no means a stable one. As religiously-based charitable institutions headed by sympathetic maternal figures were gradually replaced around the turn of the century with more professionalized institutions, personal feelings and intimate bonds became largely discredited as a basis for national reform. If, during the late 19th century, young unwed mothers were largely understood to be innocent victims of predatory men, and the female reformer was presented as a benevolent maternal figure, then by the turn of the century, mother and child were beginning to be cast into much less flattering roles. With the rise of the male “expert,” previous female reformers began to be framed as little more than amateurs whose reliance on “sentimental” programs of rehabilitation were misguided, or even dangerous to the health of the nation. No longer innocent victims of predatory men, “fallen women” were increasingly seen as potentially delinquent themselves, threatening to contaminate the bloodlines of the middle class American male with their carefully disguised pathologies. No longer victims in need of religious uplift, they became understood as “feeble-minded” girls whose fertility was as a national liability.

Writing at the cusp of this transition, Galton’s 1869 rumination on the limits of “kindness” reflects a growing skepticism toward sentiment as a national project. He writes:

I do not see why any insolence of caste should prevent the gifted class, when they had the power, from treating their compatriots with all kindness, so long as they maintained celibacy. But if these [compatriots] continued to procreate children inferior in moral, intellectual and physical qualities, it is easy to believe that the time may come when such persons would be considered as enemies to the State, and to have forfeited all claims to kindness. (qtd in Whitaker 44)

By the 1920s, most eugenicists agreed that the time had indeed come to regard such persons as “enemies to the state” who had “forfeited all claims to kindness.” For example, documenting role that Ivey Lewis played in incorporating eugenic science into Southern university curriculums, Gregory Dorr explains that “Lewis regarded as ‘sentimentalists’ those who viewed racial inequalities as the result of prejudice rather than biology,” and criticized, in 1924, what he saw as “the large class of the falsely sentimental” (279). Describing the student papers written at University of Virginia under this curriculum, Dorr points out their “millennial tone” (280) and their utilitarian logic, advocating genocide as “the best solution for racial problems,” and disparaging the effectiveness of “‘sentimentalist’ social interventions [that] artificially prolonged the lives of the unfit” (284). Against the dangers of sympathy emerged the utilitarian objectivity of the medical expert who was willing to put the good of the nation before his own emotional biases.

Given this political backdrop, it becomes impossible to talk about reproductive futurism in Faulkner’s novel without addressing the eugenic anxieties that inform the markedly unsentimental portrait of the baby imperiled by Popeye’s queerness.¹⁴ Indeed, as Horace contemplates the desperation of the situation in which he has become entangled, his rumination is accompanied by a set of disturbing eugenic, and even genocidal, undertones:

He thought of [Temple], Popeye, the woman, the child, Goodwin, all put into a single chamber, bare, lethal, immediate and profound: a single blotting instant between the indignation and the surprise. And I too; thinking how that were the only solution. Removed, cauterized out of the old and tragic flank of the world. (221)

Described through a vocabulary that suggests removal, purification and even extermination, the future that Horace wants to save for Ruby Goodwin’s baby suddenly begins to look a lot like a future where the Ruby Goodwins of the world are no longer *having* babies. During the 1920s,

Ruby Goodwin would in fact have been a likely subject of eugenic regulation—women with a history of prostitution were among the first candidates for what was called “prophylactic institutionalization” and even enforced sterilization under many Southern initiatives of the time.¹⁵

In her study of the how the profession of prostitution evolved in America between 1900 and 1918, Ruth Rosen emphasizes the rhetorical links that were forged between the criminal sexuality of the prostitute and vocabularies of disability. “By 1913,” Rosen writes, “twelve states had laws that permitted the sterilization of criminals, idiots, the feeble-minded, imbeciles, syphilitics, moral and sexual perverts, epileptics, and rapists” (21). The grouping of all of these categories attests to the extent to which prostitutes, seen as perversely sexualized, were additionally marked with the stigma of disability, allowing reformers to diagnose women’s sexual non-conformity as evidence of genetic weakness through the diagnosis of “feeble-mindedness.” Around this time, roughly 15,000 prostitutes were imprisoned.¹⁶ Legal measures like this, along with the frequent institutionalization and sterilization of prostitutes, Rosen argues, “reflected a society that increasingly associated degeneracy with poverty and gradually sought means to control the sexual behavior of the poor” (21).

Especially interesting, I would add, is the slippage that concepts of “childhood” and “sympathy” undergo in these discourses. Rosen includes, for example, a quote from Massachusetts investigators who, in 1914, came to the following conclusion with regard to the prostitutes he has examined:

the general moral insensibility, the boldness, egotism and vanity, the love of notoriety, the lack of shame or remorse, the absence of even a pretence of affection or sympathy for their children or for their parents, the desire for immediate pleasure without regard for consequences, the lack of forethought or anxiety about the future—all cardinal symptoms of feeble-mindedness—were strikingly evident in every one of the 154 women.” (22-23)

Striking in this passage is the extent to which it rehearses the logic of sentimental futurism that Edelman has analyzed in his study. The prostitute, as she is described here, “lacks” many things, but central among them is the average person’s “forethought or anxiety about the future.” This disregard for the future is furthermore tied to her inability to feel “sympathy” for her “children.” Indeed, if we were to replace the word “women” in this passage with “homosexual men,” it would be difficult to tell this passage from the many cited in Edelman’s account.

There are two points to be made here. The first is that homosexuality isn’t the only perverse sexuality to be culturally framed as a kind of death driven commitment to anti-futurity: the prostitute here occupies a similar relationship to sexual stigma. But the second, and even more interesting, point is the way this passage works against its own logic. The prostitute described here not only lacks sympathy for her children, but also lacks sympathy for the parents to whom she is herself “delinquent daughter.” Thus she is not only a feeble-minded mother but also, herself, a sexually perverse child who menaces the nation’s collective future. Unlike the homosexual, then, the prostitute’s sexual stigma does not issue from the fact that she cannot produce children but, to the contrary, the fear that—as a child of inferior stock—she will produce other children like herself.

But while the prostitute’s gendered perversity is evidenced by her supposed lack of sympathy toward her children, the same lack of sympathy was, ironically, the very thing that was required of the medical professionals assigned to evaluate whether or not she qualified for eugenic sterilization. This hard-lined utilitarian logic is perhaps most famously showcased in the widely discussed 1927 Supreme Court ruling on *Buck vs. Bell*, a ruling that took place in Virginia four years before the publication of *Sanctuary*. Having borne an illegitimate child out of wedlock as a result of a rape, seventeen-year-old Carrie Bell was institutionalized by her

adoptive family. During her institutionalization, Buck was labeled “feeble-minded” and sterilized without consent. Significantly, Bell’s biological mother had been a prostitute, and because Buck’s pregnancy was attributed to a constitutional predisposition toward promiscuity, all three—mother, daughter, and grandchild—were declared “feeble-minded.” Buck brought her lawsuit to the Supreme Court in 1927, but the court upheld Virginia’s compulsory sterilization statute. Regarding the ruling, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. made the famous declaration that “three generations of imbeciles are enough.”¹⁷

Keeping this in mind, we might reframe the binary oppositions that underpin Edelman’s account of Popeye’s relationship to the Child. I would suggest that Popeye, as *Sanctuary*’s perversely sexualized villain, does not threaten the sentimental futurity of “the child” as much as he might be understood as *himself* a perversely sexualized child whose very presence in the world places future generations at risk. Put another way, Popeye does indeed cast a menacing shadow over Ruby Goodwin’s baby, but only insofar as he embodies precisely the kind of monster that such “feeble-minded” infants will inevitably grow up to be. He does not threaten the child with death as much as he represents the perversity of its continued life.

This continuity between Ruby’s feeble infant and Popeye’s queer adulthood is suggested through a set of images that bind them figuratively to one another. The image of the infant’s “pinched face slick with faint moisture, its hair a damp whisper of shadow across its gaunt, veined skull” (116) is strikingly mirrored in Popeye’s death scene as the executioner “drag[s] [the rope] over Popeye’s sleek, oiled head, breaking his hair loose” (315). This causes Popeye to “jerk his neck forward in little jerks,” (316) a gesture that echoes a much earlier description of the infant: “It was still whimpering now and then, tossing its thin body in sudden jerks” (133). Edelman himself notes the similarities between descriptions of Popeye’s eyes and the “lead-

colored” eyes of the infant, but concludes that such similarities merely demonstrate Popeye’s malevolent influence upon the otherwise innocent infant. I would contend, however, that these parallels go much deeper, marking “the child” itself as the emblem (not the victim) of perversity.

Indeed, when Holmes declared that “[t]hree generations of imbeciles is enough,” he could have just as easily been referring to Popeye’s own perverse genealogy, celebrating Popeye’s impotence and early death as the welcome end to a degenerate family line. As we learn in the psychobiography that concludes the narrative, Popeye’s grandmother was a pyromaniac and his mother was a mentally unstable syphilitic who conceived him out of wedlock. Popeye himself, meanwhile, is presented as a sociopathic child who never possessed any sentimental claim on innocence. Following a particularly devastating fire set by Popeye’s grandmother, we find that

there were times when [Popeye’s mother] still believed that the child had perished, even though she held it in her arms crooning above it. Popeye might well have been dead. He had no hair at all until he was five years old, by which time he was already a kind of day pupil at an institution: an undersized, weak child with a stomach so delicate that the slightest deviation from a strict regimen fixed for him by the doctor would throw him into convulsions. ‘Alcohol would kill him like strychnine,’ the doctor said. ‘And he will never be a man, properly speaking. With care, he will live some time longer. But he will never be any older than he is now.’ (308)

Popeye’s “weak” and “undersized” body, his “delicate” stomach, and his arrested physical development mark his queerness with the additional stigma of disability.¹⁸ The queer-crip child of a “feeble-minded” and promiscuous mother, he is the last gasp of a degenerate family line. A boy who will never grow into manhood, he is a patrilineal dead-end. Thus, while no sterilization literally occurs within the novel, we might say that the narrative itself imposes a kind of sterilization upon Popeye whose impotence ensures that his genes will not pass into future generations.

When the narrator informs the reader that “Popeye might well have been dead,” then, this “death” should not be read as the queer jouissance that emerges in the wake of a transgressive embrace of the Freudian death drive. Rendered by the narrative in far more biopolitical terms, Popeye’s relation to death might be understood more as a kind of negative relation to birth. The death that enfolds Popeye and Ruby Goodwin’s child is not about the end of life but about the beginning, gesturing not towards the gallows but toward the female reproductive body and the question of “who should and should not inhabit the world.” As we witness Popeye at his own execution, with a rope around his neck, we find that he “stood rigid, as though he had an egg balanced on his head” (316). That Faulkner evokes such a bizarre image of female fertility in the moment before the sheriff “spring[s] the trap” seems to suggest that Popeye’s execution, in the end, has more to do with birth than death. It is less a matter of retributive justice than of biopolitical management, a kind of retroactive sterilization to correct the error of his conception.

Thus despite Edelman’s contention that the cultural imperative has always been to “save” the future *for* the children, in *Sanctuary* we find a very different invocation to “save” the future *from* the children. As Rabbi Sidney Goldstein declared in 1936, in support of a measure that would lead to more widespread sterilization of the unfit, “Birth control and contraception cannot be depended upon to save us from the children of the very groups whom we are most eager to restrict” (219). The children that the future needs saving from, in these accounts, are the children of prostitutes, the children of the lower class, the children of African-Americans, the children of immigrants, and perhaps most importantly, the children of people with disabilities to whom the rest of these populations were likened. We might say that these perversely sexualized populations are less “death-driven” than “life-driven.” It is not their relation to death that must

be policed, but their relation to a kind of queer-crip life that threatens to exceed the boundaries of national belonging.

Faulkner's own attitude toward eugenic philosophy is unclear in *Sanctuary* as the novel contains no real moral center to guide its reader attitude toward these issues—even the status of Horace Benbow's benevolence towards Ruby Goodwin is compromised by his own incestuous family drama, foregrounded more heavily in earlier drafts of the novel.¹⁹ Though Scott DeShong argues that the novel's horrors function to intensify the reader's empathy, I am more convinced by other accounts of the novel that emphasize its sensationalism.²⁰ *Sanctuary* is unique among Faulkners' work for its extreme exteriority, its investments with the flattened surfaces of modernity, and its use of horror to both attract and repel its reader. Unlike his more widely read *The Sound and the Fury*, *Sanctuary* appears to be committed to a kind of sensationalism that seems to trade sympathetic identification for the burlesque performativity of a gothic surface. And yet the two novels traverse strikingly similar ground. Might we, after all, see in Popeye's diagnosis as a child who "will never be a man" and "will never be any older than he is now" echoes of Benjy Compson whose arrested intellectual development has kept him at the age of "three years old" for "thirty years" (17). Both men are described as perpetual children who will never reach adulthood and both, to some extent, have been made to signify the end of a tainted family line.

Is there justification for reading Benjy's literal sterilization in *The Sound and the Fury* as that which prefigures the Popeye's more figurative sterilization in *Sanctuary*? I believe that there is, and that we might ultimately see the one character as the gothic inversion of the other. If Popeye is a perversely sexualized adult doomed to perpetually inhabit the physical body of a child, then Benjy provide a kind of purified alternative: his disability, scholars often note, allow

him to carry the innocence of childhood into a body that has physically matured into adulthood. It is precisely this mismatch between Benjy's childlike interiority and his exterior appearance of adulthood that leads the schoolgirls he approaches to misread his innocent, child-like advances as sexual—an incident that leads to his castration and to discussions of institutionalization. A sentimental child himself, he is mistaken for a perversely sexualized predator of children.²¹ But unlike Popeye, Benjy's sexual innocence is guaranteed by the narrative; thus his perverse sexualization and subsequent sterilization is framed as an act that is both brutal and unnecessary. David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder have persuasively argued that Benjy's disability becomes, for Faulkner, less a source of pathologization and stigma than a kind of litmus test of the other characters' ethical integrity. As Mitchell and Snyder argue in *Narrative Prosthesis*, "[a]ll of the Compson family members are explicitly judged in relation to their ability to imagine Benjy's humanity" (167). Thus characters like Caddy and Dilsey, who treat Benjy with sympathy and oppose his sterilization and institutionalization, are awarded greater moral authority than characters, like Jason, who operates as mouthpieces for eugenic ideology. Jason rejects outright any overtures of "sympathy" even (or especially) when those overtures are directed towards his own family. "They never started soon enough with their cutting, and they quit too quick" (263) declares Jason at the conclusion of his narration, epitomizing the callous utilitarianism understood to exist at heart of eugenic policy. Indeed, if Faulkner's attitude toward eugenics is unclear in *Sanctuary*, *The Sound and the Fury* demonstrates a more straightforwardly critical attitude towards philosophies that biologize poverty and initiatives that advocated the sterilization and institutionalization of the "unfit."

Faulkner's sympathetic approach to Benjy's character, however, is not unproblematic. Maria Truchan-Tataryn, for example, points out that Faulkner's childlike rendering of Benjy's

innocent and “mindless” affinity with the animal world performs a kind of representational violence against intellectually disabled people even as he attempts to give intellectually disabled people a voice through Benjy’s character.²² “Though others are judged by the way they approach ‘the idiot,’” she argues, this litmus test functions to “demarcate the humanity of others” while failing ultimately to illuminate the humanity of Benjy himself. Though I believe Faulkner’s rendering of Benjy to be slightly more complex, her analysis is especially compelling with regard to Benjy’s character’s reception in critical dialogues about the novel. An early reviewer of the novel who Truchan-Tartaryn cites, for example, suggests that Benjy is “as beautiful as one of the helpless angels,” possessing an “innocence” that is “terrible as well as pathetic” (163). Critical responses like these, in taking a sympathetic approach to Benjy, though ostensibly valuing Benjy’s pastoral innocence, reinscribe a problematic sentimentalizing of disability that frames it as a pitiable tragedy. In framings like these, Benjy becomes another version of the March of Dimes poster child whose disability reduces him to the innocent, voiceless victim of his disability—the Tiny Tim whose angelic smile and pitiable limp exist at the very heart of sentimental/reproductive futurism’s forward-moving engine. Caught between sentimental models of pity and the callous interventions of eugenic medicine, Benjy—like Ruby Goodwin’s baby and even like Popeye himself—exists on both sides of reproductive futurism’s binary. If his disability leads him to be misread by his community as a sexually perverse adult, then it also leads him to be misread by Faulkner scholars as sentimental futurism’s vulnerable child.²³

But just as *Sanctuary*’s male “monsters” could be traced back to a kind of dangerous female fertility, so too does Benjy’s crip embodiment forge an interesting link between himself and Caddy, the novel’s figure of perverse motherhood. While Caddy is not Benjy’s mother in a literal sense, the role that she plays in relation to Benjy is exceedingly maternal. Her intimate

bonds with the sentimentalized, child-like Benjy in some sense align her with nineteenth century models of maternal sympathy. These bonds, however, become severed when she is finally expelled from the Compson household for conceiving a child out of wedlock. Caddy's absence, the narrative makes clear, is what ultimately motivates Benjy's disastrous attempt to communicate with the young schoolgirl—in "trying to say" that he misses his sister, he inadvertently resignifies himself as a sexual predator whose sterilization performs a greater social good.

Through Caddy, then, Faulkner appears to be allegorizing the larger historical process through which a politics of maternal sympathy was gradually replaced with the scientific regulation of female reproductive deviance.²⁴ She is a kind of failed maternal protectress whose embrace of Benjy is discredited the moment that her metaphoric motherhood becomes biologically literalized. A girl without a husband from a family without money, Caddy is finally just another "bitch" whose "blood" inevitably "tells" its own disordered truth. Once a sympathetic mother opposing her disabled brother's sterilization, Caddy has been reduced, by the end of the narrative, to the bearer of a dangerous lower-class fertility. Her daughter Quentin, it turns out, "inherits" Caddy's sexual delinquency but none of Caddy's compassion. Like Caddy, Quentin transgresses the boundaries of acceptable female sexuality, eventually running away from home with a circus performer, but it's important to note that Quentin expresses only disgust and annoyance with Benjy, aligning herself with Jason's suggestion that Benjy be sent to Jackson for institutionalization. If Caddy treads the line between the sympathetic womanhood of the nineteenth century and the female delinquency of the twentieth, Quentin marks the completion of the process through which a politics of sympathy is replaced with the more "objective" science of defective bodies.

But the novel's central figure of eugenic "objectivity" is not ultimately Quentin but Jason. Jason, Faulkner makes clear, is of course not objective at all but biased by his own anger at his inability to access the white privilege that he feels is properly his. His narration in fact reveals the fundamental contradictions and paradoxes of eugenic thought, as well as its underlying political investments. As the white patriarch of a once wealthy family, Jason is, on the one hand, the very portrait of the ideal American citizen whose family must be protected from the fertility of undesirable others. And yet the defects that Jason is most eager to police and restrict emerge not from outside of his family, but from within it. Jason struggles with this tension, deploying the rhetorical tools of eugenics even as he finds them ultimately turning back upon himself. As Quentin makes her escape with her red-tied suitor, Jason thinks:

you can't do anything with a woman like that, if she's got it in her. If it's in her blood, you cant do anything with her. The only thing you can do is to get rid of her, let her go on and live with her own sort. I went on to the street, but they were out of sight. And there I was, without any hat, looking like I was crazy too. Like a man would naturally think, one of them is crazy and another one drowned himself and the other one was turned out into the street by her husband, what's the reason the rest of them are not crazy too. All the time I could see them, watching me like a hawk, waiting for a chance to say Well I'm not surprised I expected it the whole time the whole family's crazy. (233)

The problem, of course, with excising Quentin from her biological relations and exhorting her to instead "go on and live with her own sort," is that eugenic logic dictates that her "sort" is the Compsons themselves. The Compson's financial decline in the post-Civil War South, compounded with the new science of heredity, has altered their relationship to American national belonging, transforming them from Southern aristocracy to potential genetic liabilities. Because the female reproductive body is central to these tensions, Caddy's out-of-wedlock pregnancy and her daughter's sexual delinquency make the two young women easy scapegoats for Jason's frustrations of class. Constantly immunizing himself from their contaminations, Jason engages

in an ultimately paradoxical act of declaring that “blood is blood and you cant get around it” (243) even as he rhetorically separates his own blood from his sister’s and his niece’s.²⁵

Jason’s more direct discussion of authentic American citizenship is similarly paradoxical. After declaring that what America “needs is more white labor,” Jason engages in a conversation with a drummer about crops, disparaging the “dam eastern jews” who “produce nothing” but “follow the pioneers into a new country and sell them clothes” (191). Jason clarifies that he’s “not talking about men of the jewish religion” and has “nothing against the jews as an individual” only the “race” (191). The drummer replies that Jason must be thinking of “Armenians” as a “pioneer wouldn’t have any use for new clothes,” and clarifies that he, with his “French blood” is properly “American.” Soon after, Jason reflects that while “those eastern jews have got to live too,” he’ll “be damned if it hasn’t come to a pretty pass when any dam foreigner that cant make a living in the country where God put him, can come to this one and take money right out of an American’s pockets” (192). In this confused exchange, the relationship between “blood,” nationhood, and citizenship becomes muddled and it is unclear what exactly it is that blood ultimately “tells.” Jews are foreigners, but French are American citizens. The pioneers that leave the “country where God put them” to settle the New World are authentically native, but those that follow to “sell them clothes” are burdensome imposters.

The dovetailing between Jason’s anti-immigration attitudes and his racism toward African-Americans reflects a larger adoption of eugenic attitudes within the American South during the 1920s. With the crumbling of Southern aristocracy following the Civil War, traditional race and labor relations were recast in ways that challenged the previous authority of the white male property owner. Attempts to preserve racist institutions additionally compromised the South’s political credibility: Southerners who clung to an outdated regionalism

were seen as backwards and provincial, a drag on the process of modernization that would help reunify the American body politic. As Dorr observes, the incorporation of eugenics into the University of Virginia curriculum “eased the merging of Virginians’ regional identity with a new overarching identity of so-called pure, 100 percent Americanism. Scholars at elite northern institutions emphasized the importance of whiteness and Anglo-Saxon heritage in defining the ‘American race’” (261). Thus the incorporation of eugenics into Southern public life provided an opportunity for the South to reinforce its claim on true American-ness, bringing itself up to date with the policies of the North while at the same time preserving its traditional racial hierarchies. As Dorr puts it,

Although eugenic legislation challenged traditions of local control, it sounded many of the major chords of southern society: white supremacy, paternalism, and the myth of a predatory, atavistic African American population. Many Americans believed that, through government action in support of eugenic policies, the nation’s population would become racially and democratically homogeneous. (263)

The embrace of “Northern” eugenic science, then, came in part out of a desire to demonstrate that the South was capable of modernizing itself, to prove that the South was as important part of America as the North, and to justify anti-miscegenation legislation that would, amidst all of this modernization, allow policymakers to maintain a traditionally segregated South. But while eugenic philosophy validates Jason’s desire to protect “white labor,” it has ironically transformed the concept of racial superiority into a more complicated category. The fact that eugenic “fitness” was a designation open *only* to “white” people did not make it automatically inclusive of *all* white people. Lines are as hard to draw between acceptable and unacceptable ethnicity as they are to draw between fit white families and the contaminated bloodlines of poor “white trash.” The drummer’s “French” nose authenticates claim on American citizenship while the Anglo-descended Benjy’s intellectual disability codes him as a threat to the integrity of

American bloodlines. Jason never questions the authenticity of his “whiteness” and his inclusion in the category of “white labor,” yet he is at the same time deeply aware that his whiteness does not exempt him from the contagion of feeble-mindedness and that his family’s poverty might well determine his own inclusion among the ranks of the degenerate.

Thus when Edelman quotes David Lane’s Aryan assertion that “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children,” (66) the invocation of whiteness must be taken seriously as an important facet of the futurism that Edelman wishes to critique, a futurism whose relationship to both “reproduction” and “sentiment” is much more complex than Edelman’s equations allows for. While Lane’s comment provides an opportunity to examine the confluences of heteronormativity and ethnocentrism, Edelman’s critique of Lane forecloses that opportunity: “So long as ‘white’ is the only word that makes this credo appalling, so long as figural children continue to ‘secure [our] existence’ through the fantasy that we survive in them” (66). But of course, white is *one* of the words that make the credo appalling; indeed, it provides an analytically productive link between reproductive futurism and eugenic ideologies of racial sanitation. It reminds us that what threatens the political “future” is not just the “unregenerate, and unregenerating” sexuality of the queer; it is also the fertile mothers of the non-white underclass whose perceived *hyper*-regenerate heterosexuality itself constitutes a threat to the ‘legitimate’ children of the racially normative and the socio-economically secure. By addressing this mode of being “queer,” we can begin to acknowledge that at certain stages in history, it was not just homosexual desire, but specific modes of heterosexual desire that were perceived as threats to the future of the nation.

Thus, despite recent queer theoretical accounts that have pitted the sentimental futurity of “the child” against the radical death-driven subjectivity of the male homosexual, America’s

biopolitical legacy and literary history reveal a somewhat different story. Understood alongside of early twentieth century eugenic discourse, *Sanctuary*'s framings of childhood ultimately challenge the rigid dichotomy which places sentimentality, reproduction and futurity on one side of the binary and the death-driven (white) *sinthomosexual* on the other. Rather, by expanding our notion of what has culturally constituted abject sexualities, and by looking beyond a purely psychoanalytic paradigm of reproductive futurism, we can discover a much more complicated relationship between the figure of "the child" and the heteronormative national futurity that she or he is assumed to emblemize.

3.3 Love or Eugenics?

Clover:

My figure discloses no finicky poses
 No curve so soft and fair
 No fashionable bustle but plenty of muscle,
 And avoirdupois to spare.
 The rouge and the powder that make you look louder
 I always scorn to use.
 I'd rather be lorn with the face I was born with,
 A face never meant to abuse.

Celeste:

Now I'm a most popular, tippular, toppular
 Maiden born to vex.
 And yet he prefers me and always avers me
 The queen of the feminine sex.
 You scorn good cosmetics in verses ascetic
 But there's a reason alack!
 For powder looks smart on, with something to start on,
 A something you certainly lack.

Chorus:

Ladies,
 Here's a problem none of you can flee,
 Men, which would you like to have come and pour your tea?
 Kisses that set your heart aflame,
 Or love from a prophylactic dame.

Ladies,
Take your choice if what your style shall be.

– F. Scott Fitzgerald, “Love or Eugenics” written for the college musical *Fie! Fie! Fi-Fi!* (1914)

In 1914, while he was a student at Princeton, F. Scott Fitzgerald penned the plot and lyrics for a university-sponsored musical playfully titled “Fie! Fie! Fi-Fi!” One song in particular, titled “Love or Eugenics,” (quoted above) directly addressed scientific efforts to control reproduction, presenting with a kind of irreverent flamboyance the dichotomy that framed many of the more “official” debates on the subject. In her reading of the song, Daylanne English points to the way Fitzgerald “pits the plain, muscled dame and her ‘ascetic verses’ (Clover) against the ‘queen of the feminine sex’ (Celeste) with the natural choice for men being obvious.” English thus concludes that Fitzgerald “mocks and rejects eugenics’s programmatic, constrained approach to sex and reproduction. What real man, after all, would want a ‘prophylactic dame’? Rendering women more like men, leveling sexual difference, strikes Fitzgerald as quite unsexy” (77). Kaufman reinforces Fitzgerald’s embrace of “love” over “eugenics,” adding that Fitzgerald “scoffed at the eugenic regulation of human passion; he rejected eugenics’ inherent sexual utilitarianism and its ideals of human standardization” (67). Holding up beauty and aesthetics as a welcome alternative to the hard, cold rationality of scientific classification, the song appears to suggest that the heart might be a better judge than the head, and thus articulates a critical stance toward initiatives designed to sanitize the race through selective breeding.²⁶

In championing the generative power of “kisses that set your heart aflame,” Fitzgerald embraces a form of sympathy that, on some important level, sets him at odds with Faulkner. As I argued in the last section, Faulkner’s narratives constantly showcase the process through which

sympathetic bonds between family members are replaced with something that looks a lot more like the utilitarian regulation of fertility. Put another way, Faulkner's fictional worlds are ones in which "eugenics" will always win out over "love" and sympathy is always already foreclosed. In novels like *The Sound and the Fury*, sympathy persists only in the characters' unrelenting nostalgia for a past whose intimacies seem a welcome alternative to the sterile world of the present. While Faulkner's characters (and even, perhaps, Faulkner himself) might indeed prefer love over eugenics, that love (interracial, incestuous, homosexual) is never quite accessible, always a ghost on the horizon. For Fitzgerald, however, love is ever present, flowering around his characters like the "huge horse-chestnut tree in full bloom" that Rosemary spots on a passing truck after a particularly charming night with the Divers. The seeming gulf between Faulkner's unrelenting gothicism and Fitzgerald's lush sentimentalism, along with the two authors' regional differences, have placed them on opposite sides of the modernist canon. How does one begin to analyze Fitzgerald's sparkling New York, with its flappers and its nouveau riche, against the somber and desolate landscape of Faulkner's decaying south? It is, however, precisely these two authors' seeming diametric opposition that makes their intersections a generative site of analysis, particularly with regard to the eugenic philosophies that framed their work. Though Fitzgerald embraces the sentiment that Faulkner exiles from his landscapes, both authors, I argue, conceive of sentiment in similar terms: as a concept with important consequences for national citizenship.

While Faulkner and Fitzgerald never met, there are several documents suggesting that Fitzgerald was reading *Sanctuary* as he composed *Tender Is the Night*.²⁷ Further, in Fitzgerald's outline for the novel, he squarely positions his own writing as the sentimental antidote to Faulkner's pathologizing gaze. Under a section titled "Method of Dealing With Sickness Material," Fitzgerald writes, "Must avoid Faulkner attitude and not end with a novelized Kraft-

Ebing—better Ophelia and her flowers” (Brucoli, 334). This note is, of course, consistent with his more flippant championing of “love” over “eugenics” twenty years earlier. As Thomas Inge puts it, Fitzgerald attempts to avoid “sounding clinical and too deeply immersed in psychological theory the way he felt Faulkner’s novels were and, if necessary, opt for the romantic description of madness and insanity.”²⁸ It would seem, then, that we are left with a relatively clear cut set of oppositions: Shakespeare is preferable to Krafft-Ebing, poetry trumps pathology, aesthetics is more appealing than diagnosis, Ophelia’s flowers make a welcome alternative to Temple’s corn cob, and ultimately sentimental love should be chosen over the cold rationality of eugenics.²⁹ Given the seeming continuity between 1914 and 1934, are we authorized to read Fitzgerald’s embrace of sympathy as an outright rejection of eugenic philosophy?³⁰ Is the sentimentalism that structures both the form and content of *Tender Is the Night* simply a more masterful rendering of his initial assertion twenty years earlier that “kisses that set your heart aflame” are always preferable to “love from a prophylactic dame?” A close reading of the novel, I would argue, reveals otherwise. While Faulkner’s markedly unsentimental landscapes showcase the horrors of a eugenic world, Fitzgerald’s embrace of sentiment has a very different implication. Sympathy, the novel makes clear, has its price and Dick Diver’s sentimental identifications do not ultimately provide a viable alternative to eugenics. The novel, I would argue, foregrounds a kind of ambivalence on Fitzgerald’s part regarding the highly gendered schism between sentiment and science; throughout the novel, sentiment is framed both as the glue that holds together American society and, conversely, as a perilous disregard for national borders.

“Love” might be championed in Fitzgerald’s song, but it is important to note that it is at the same time aligned with the “bad” version of sentimentality that had been discredited toward the end of the nineteenth century as mere feminine artifice.³¹ What Celeste has to offer here is

not authentic emotional bonds but “good cosmetics.” What transforms her into the “queen of the feminine sex” is her skill with illusion, manipulation, and subterfuge. If Clover’s “eugenic” muscles masculinize her as a kind of “New Woman” (and on some level queers her by making her an inappropriate object of the heterosexual male gaze), then Celeste’s feminine superficiality reveals the fundamental frailty of the appropriately gendered female body, a lack with must be made up for with “the rouge and the powder.”³² These are traits you might not want to pass to your future offspring but which should nonetheless, in the logic of the song, excite the sexual imagination of any red-blooded American male. The choice of “love” over eugenics, then, is obvious only insofar as love is equated with the feminine mystifications of charm that tempt the American male away from his reproductive duty to the race.

We can see, then, how the dichotomy Fitzgerald sketches out here is not simple binary as much as it is a gendered minefield. Congealing some of these tensions is a photograph of Fitzgerald himself, costumed as a call girl for “Fie! Fie! Fi-Fi!” and looking every bit the “queen of the feminine sex.” If eugenic muscles only look good on men, then we might also infer that there is something queer in a man who adopts, as part of his own presentation, the lure of sentimental charm over the no-nonsense rationality that characterizes eugenic thought. My thinking on these issues is very much influenced by Christian Messenger’s recent work on F. Scott Fitzgerald’s vexed relation to the sentimentalism in *Tender Is the Night*. In his forthcoming manuscript, Messenger argues that

Fitzgerald’s intimation was that his fictional authority arose from the sentimental, that he was best there, while he also held to the counter-belief that that the sentimental was ‘vicious’ rather than ‘whole-souled’ (34), and was cheapened through the ‘harlot’s mind’ (69) of Hollywood, as well as darkened and imbricated by sympathy’s twinning with its inevitable counterparts of seduction and emasculation. (Chapter 3, p. 4)

In his reading of Dick's relation to the book's three gay male characters, Dumphry, Campion and Francisco, Messenger identifies this vacillation between the "whole-souled" and "vicious" character of sentiment as, in part, a kind of psychoanalytic slippage that places Dick in a "continual cycle of 'wanting to be' and 'to have'" (Chapter 3, p.7). Dick's charm is both appealing and dangerous, allowing him to possess women but also leads him down a path of uneasy identifications with gay men, incestuous fathers and into a world of decadence and degeneracy. Navigating the novel's complex chain of associations, Messenger identifies Dick both as an "American psychiatric 'priest' in the new sexual science" and as a "pansy's trick" (9). Simultaneously phallic and castrated, Messenger argues, Dick bears the romantic potency of Hollywood heartthrob even as he is feminized by Hollywood's manipulative power to charm. Sentiment, in this framework, can be restorative, but it can also just as easily function as a form of "vicious" contamination.³³

Messenger argues that, furthermore, in *Tender*, the "vicious" version of sentimentality often is aligned with the sentimentalization of the figure of the child. Analyzing Fitzgerald's note about avoiding Krafft-Ebing in favor of "Ophelia and her flowers" alongside of Fitzgerald's pronouncement that *Sanctuary* and *Little Lord Fauntleroy* are in fact "two faces of the same world spirit," Messenger unpacks the incestuous subtext to the sentimental mother-child bond in Burnett's novel. It is precisely this repressed sexual horror that, in *Sanctuary*, is stripped to its bare bones. What makes Burnett tracts "vicious" for Fitzgerald, in other words, is the extent to which the sentimental in her narratives functions as a smokescreen or—I would add—a kind of feminine "cosmetic" that obscures a more sensational sexual narrative that lies just under the surface. Though Fitzgerald is committed to a sentimental rather than sexological rendering of his characters, good "whole-souled" masculine sentiment is always in danger of slipping into bad

“vicious” feminine sentiment which is, in turn, neutralized by Dick’s assumption of the mantle of male medical professionalism.

I want to apply these observations to a more pointedly biopolitical reading of the novel. Fitzgerald’s troubled relationship to sympathy, I would suggest, is indicative not only of his own psychological investments, but of a historical moment in which American sentimentalism was denigrated as the foundation of a dangerous political practice. *Tender*’s conflicts and investments deal precisely with the way that the medical categorization and containment of disordered and perversely sexualized bodies existed, during this time, in fundamental tension with a (feminine and feminizing) politics of sympathetic inclusion. During this period, sentiment was not only seen as suspect, but framed as a problem of weakened national borders. Noble sentiments were always at risk of collapsing into the “wrong” feelings of lust and other dangerous desires—desires that either literally or figuratively opened America’s borders to the contaminating hordes of “feeble-minded” immigrants.

This dangerous slippage from national practices of sentiment to sensationalist anxieties about the mixing of bloodlines is most clearly allegorized through the body of *Tender*’s child figure, Rosemary, a starlet who encounters the Divers on the French Riviera after she has gained fame through her Hollywood role as *Daddy’s Girl*. As the novel opens we are given a relatively simple binary; Rosemary is the sentimentalized child of reproductive futurism’s claim on the social; she is put in peril by racial otherness and protected through ethnocentric exclusionism. Indeed, our first portrait of Rosemary retains traces of an almost Victorian sentimental sensibility. She is described as having

magic in her pink palms and her cheeks lit to a lovely flame, like the thrilling flush of children after their cold baths in the evening... Her eyes were bright, big, clear, wet, and shining, the color of her cheeks was real, breaking close to the surface from the strong young pump of her heart. Her body hovered delicately on

the last edge of childhood—she was almost eighteen, nearly complete but the dew was still on her. (3)

Although Rosemary “hovers” dangerously close to adulthood, she is able to access the status of the Child through sentiment. Because we have not yet witnessed Dick’s son bathing in the “dirty suds” of a child who has picked up some “Asiatic” disease, the invocation of “children after their cold baths” connotes purity (both sexual and racial) (264). If sentiment, as some critics have argued, is designed to be registered visibly on the surface of the skin (often through physical tears), then Rosemary’s “thrilling flush” and her “clear,” “wet,” and “shining” eyes mark her physically as a creature of sympathy.³⁴ Fitzgerald’s ornate prose here suggests that he has made good on his promise to circumvent medicalization by emphasizing “Ophelia and her flowers.” As Rosemary enjoys the water, “embracing it, wallowing in it” (5), the beach on the Riviera takes on the purity of the Aryan gene pool.

Thus it is not surprising the first threat to Rosemary’s safety comes in the form of a man of “indeterminate nationality” who warns her that the water has sharks. If the water is a gene pool, then sharks become that force which, given the right circumstances, can taint it with the wrong kind of blood. The same racial threat hovers in the air as Rosemary takes her place on the beach “between the dark people and the light” (6) and worries about getting a sunburn because, as Mrs. Abrams warns her, “*your* skin is important” (7); presumably, she means that Rosemary’s skin must remain light so she can assume future roles playing an approximation of “Daddy’s Girl.” In order to remain a child, one must safeguard one’s whiteness and avoid becoming “dark.” Sentimental childhood must finally be protected eugenically from the contaminations of race.

To this effect, Dick “arrang[es] an umbrella to clip a square of sunlight off of Rosemary’s shoulder,” as Tommy Barban catalogues (and evokes a certain anxiety over) the different

nationalities that have been mixed together on the Riviera. Indeed, the umbrella continually functions as an emblem of American racial exclusionism, and the act of recreating the “clamor of Empire” (13) even while vacationing abroad: “they obviously formed a self-sufficient little group, and once their umbrellas, bamboo rugs, dogs, and children were set in place the part of the plage was literally fenced in”(16). Indeed, later they form “so bright a unit that Rosemary felt an impatient disregard for all who were not at their table. They had been two days in Paris, but actually they were still under the beach umbrella” (52). As the Divers are largely credited with their ability to hold together this community of American expatriates, it becomes fitting that Rosemary’s imagined fantasy of the Divers ends with a return to the safety protection of the Child: “She thought of [the Divers] both together, heard them still singing faintly a song like rising smoke, like a hymn, very remote in time and far away. Their children slept, their gate was shut for the night” (40). Whether under the umbrella’s protective shade or “fenced in” by a gate that is “shut for the night,” the Divers’ colorful entourage provides a tightly sealed space of American racial exclusionism.³⁵

However, while Rosemary is given to the reader initially as a dewy-eyed child of sentiment, it is her intimacy with the Divers that becomes, ironically, the very thing that leads to the materialization of a dead black man in Rosemary’s bed. After beginning an extramarital affair with Rosemary in her hotel room, the couple is interrupted by Dick’s friend Abe North and Jules Peterson, a black shoe polish salesman who had recently testified against a prominent business owner. Rosemary later returns to her room to find Peterson’s bloody corpse in her bed, an event which appears to transform her sentimental romance with Dick into a nightmarish racial scandal. No longer the sentimental child whose vulnerable “skin” needs protection, Rosemary faces the possibility that the newspapers will paint her, instead, as a delinquent girl whose

transgressive sexuality jeopardizes the racial health of the body politic. The swift succession with which Rosemary's romantic affair with Dick is replaced by Peterson's bloody corpse signals the extent to which, by 1934, the grand gestures of sentiment had collapsed into the specter of miscegenation and criminal female sexuality.³⁶

The presence of Peterson's murdered body on Rosemary's bed, coupled with the threat of a media scandal for Rosemary, invokes the specter of two early twentieth century "love-murders" that received sensationalized attention in the press. One of these accounts centered on the 1909 murder of Elise Siegel in New York's Chinatown by her Chinese lover Leon Ling. Predictably, the murder was framed as evidence of the inherent perversity and unassimilability of the Chinese male, as well as a testament to the dangers of racial mixing. Occurring between the 1882 passing of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the Immigration Act of 1924, the murder contributed to anti-Chinese sentiment and led to the imposition of even stricter controls on immigration. As Douglas Bayton points out, immigrants entering the country at Ellis Island during this period were subject to medical scrutiny and rigorous tests to determine their level of "fitness," with certain ethnicities being regularly pronounced more defective than others. Thus, not only were people with disabilities being excluded from citizenship during this time, but the concept of disability was also being applied to people from "undesirable" ethnicities as a pretense for their exclusion.³⁷

The other "love-murder"—the 19 year-old Alice Mitchell's murder of her 17 year-old lover Freda Ward in 1892—though not explicitly dealing with miscegenation was still overlaid with a set of anxieties that attached female sexual transgression to both disability and foreignness. Examining the sensationalized contemporary accounts of the crime, Lisa Duggan looks at the way the press coverage both reflects and creates the new lesbian identities that were

emerging at the turn of the twentieth century. Categorized as both an unnatural criminal act and a “love-murder,” the crime was presented as, itself, a key piece of evidence that supported the emerging medical construction of lesbianism as a diagnosable mental disorder. Nineteenth century romantic friendship, Duggan points out, had been previously perceived as innocent sisterly companionship between young women. But by the twentieth century, intimate bonds between women had been furnished with a new, and much more sinister, narrative frame. Based on the emerging science of sexuality, this new frame replaced the previously “innocent” bonds between women with the specter of the cross-identifying lesbian whose medically pathological appropriation of masculinity posed an explicitly sexual threat to the traditional woman who might find herself seduced by her masculine charms.³⁸ Duggan thus reads the trial coverage an example of the ways in which the murder “persisted as a topic of newspaper sensationalism and of scientific sexology,” pointing out that Mitchell was not ultimately brought before a criminal court but rather “declared ‘presently insane’” and “confined to the state lunatic asylum as dangerous to the community” (795). Thus the slippage of the sentimental into the sensational is indicative of the increasing authority of scientific and hereditary explanations of selfhood.³⁹ In her rejection of traditional structures of heteronormative reproduction, Mitchell was not a “fallen woman” in need of religious compassion but a monstrous member of a new queer-crip species.

In addition to the Jules Peterson incident, there are only two instances in *Tender* where the term “murder” is invoked. The first takes place during an acting lesson, in which Dick offhandedly mentions that it is the responsibility of the actress to “get the audience’s attention back on herself, away from the murdered Chinese [lover],” a statement that bears traces of Elsie Siegel’s Chinatown murder twenty-five years earlier (288).⁴⁰ However, the second instance is even more interesting as it initiates a series of female parings which, presented in quick

succession, provide a condensed thematization of the historical process by which the female “romantic friendship” transformed into a form of diagnosable criminal sexuality like that which was sensationalized in the Alice Mitchell trial.

We encounter the first of these pairings when Tommy Barban and Nicole Diver, having just begun their affair, hear a commotion outside of their hotel room. Hearing it again, Tommy exclaims, “My God, has there been a murder?” Upon investigating the source of “increasing clamor,” however, Tommy opens the window to find “two women on the balcony below this... talking about weather and tipping back and forth in American rocking chairs” (295). Though brief, this placid image of female companionship might be understood in relation to the nineteenth-century model of “romantic friendship” through which the public made sense of intimacy between women. Chatting about the weather in their “American rocking chairs,” their maternal serenity empties the relationship of any potentially threatening sexual connotations.⁴¹

Looking past them, however, Tommy discovers the real source of the commotion as two American sailors trade blows before a cheering crowd. “They have *poules* [prostitutes] with them,” Tommy notes, “I have heard about this now--the women follow them from place to place wherever the ship goes. But what women! One would think with their pay they could find better women!” (296). Soon after this rumination, Tommy and Nicole discover:

two girls, young, thin and barbaric, unfound rather than lost, in the hall. One of them wept chokingly.

“Kwee wave off your porch?” implored the other in passionate American. “Kwee please? Wave at the boy friends? Kwee, please. The other rooms is all locked.”

“With pleasure,” Tommy said.

The girls rushed out on the balcony and presently their voices struck a loud treble over the din.... One of the girls hoisted her skirt suddenly, pulled and ripped at her pink step-ins and tore them to a sizable flag; then, screaming “Ben! Ben!” she waved it wildly. As Tommy and Nicole left the room it still fluttered against the blue sky. Oh, say can you see the tender color of remembered flesh?—while at the stern of the battleship arose in rivalry the Star-Spangled Banner. (297)

Note the swiftness with which the initial image of romantic friendship (two women chatting benignly in rocking chairs) has here been replaced by a much more unruly female pairing (two girls “wildly” waving their undergarments at departing sailors). Embodying the sexual license of a younger generation of American women, their infiltration of the heteronormative bedroom signals an uneasy shift in gender norms. Rhetorically and thematically linked to the sexually-delinquent prostitutes Tommy has just described, they make a very different spectacle than the matronly pair in the balcony below them. With their “flag-like” underwear billowing against the sky to the tune of the national anthem, they emblemize the nation while simultaneously threatening its undoing.⁴²

But if the young age of the two girls on the balcony to some extent “excuses” or makes understandable their lack of sexual discipline (girls, after all, will be girls), then Lady Caroline and Mary North’s antics five pages later reveal what can happen when youthful sexual license is carried into adulthood. Late at night, Dick is called to the police station to help Mary North and Lady Caroline who had “pretended to be sailors on leave” and “picked up two silly girls” (303). Though the incident is more of a “lark” than an expression of lesbian desire or identity, the “stunt” nevertheless brings this cycle of female pairings to a conclusion by conjuring the specter of the predatory cross-identifying lesbian whose medical profile was widely circulated during the Alice Mitchell case. No longer chatting about the weather in rocking chairs or waving their undergarments to American sailors from a stranger’s balcony, this female pairing has now morphed into the sailors themselves. Preying on innocent girls, they produce a potential newspaper scandal that Dick, once again, is in a position to clean up. “You’re an insanity doctor, aren’t you?” Lady Caroline wryly jokes to Dick, “You ought to be able to help us.” The help that Dick offers, however, is more political than medical, as he uses money and persuasion to

make the record of his friends' transgression, like Jules Peterson's body, disappear. Thus, in this swift succession of scenes, Fitzgerald presents to the reader a condensed history of female delinquency, from its "innocent" genesis in romantic friendship, to its ambivalent expression in young girls' increased sexual latitude, to, finally, the disordered and criminal sexuality of the cross-identifying lesbian.

Thus, by linking Rosemary, through Jules Peterson, to the era's racially and sexually charged "love-murders," Fitzgerald registers a set of national anxieties regarding racial mixing, gender-crossing, medical diagnosis, and masculine decline.⁴³ As a doctor, Dick is expected to apply a cold scientific gaze to the patients under his care; as a sentimentalist, however, he continually fails to maintain these boundaries. Might we go so far as to say that, as Dick's sentimental identifications with potentially "delinquent" women increase, he can be read as the figural embodiment of a nation whose racial borders have been penetrated by undesirable populations? It is through this lens that we might read the following description of Dick's psyche as a passage with broad biopolitical ramifications:

in the broken universe of the war's ending—in such contacts the personalities had seemed to press up so close to him that he became the personality itself—there seemed some necessity of taking all or nothing; it was as if for the remainder of his life he was condemned to carry with him the egos of certain people early met and early loved, and to be only as complete as they were complete themselves. (245)

In his reading of this scene, Messenger observes that "Dick's sentimental 'carrying' of the egos allows him to produce belief and master his psyche's production while usurping all the bodies as desiring subject," conceiving of Dick's recourse to charm as both narcissism and melancholia (Chapter 3, p. 17). I agree, but want to additionally consider how Dick's melancholic incorporation of others might additionally be applied to the era's obsession with eugenic fitness

and the preservation of American bloodlines. Drawing out some of the national implications of Dick's sentimental identifications, I would suggest, yields some intriguing results.

The fact that Dick's psychic incorporation is figured as a burden (he is "condemned" to carry others' egos) implies the dead weight of dependent populations and the draining of national resources. Indeed, even Nicole realizes that "there was a pleasingness about [Dick] that simply had to be used—those who possessed that pleasingness had to keep their hands in, and go along attaching people that they had not use to make of" (87). Furthermore, musing about Dick, Rosemary wonders, "When people have so much for outsiders, doesn't it indicate a lack of inner intensity?" (75). Considering these observations against the social backdrop of eugenic policy, we can see how Dick's willingness to let "outsiders" enter his ego and make use of his psychic resources might, beyond its psychoanalytic dimensions, indicate the sapping away of the national vitality. In his sentimental or sympathetic acts of incorporation, then, Dick's psyche metonymically transforms into a national "Melting Pot" of all of the egos that he is "condemned to carry" and incorporate within himself. Dick's sentiment, in other words, allegorizes him as a figure for America itself.⁴⁴ He embodies a masculine citizenship depleted by the gains of the (lesbian) New Woman and the incoming hordes of "feeble-minded" immigrants.

Unlike the opening scene where sentiment was the exact thing that reinforced empire, protecting Rosemary from becoming too dark, sentiment is here set up in stark contrast to the "self-discipline" of eugenic scientism. This framing in fact echoes much of the contemporary rhetoric which gave more weight to "hard facts" and typological classifications than the soft-hearted liberal impulse to open up the national gene pool to outsiders. Nancy Ordover punctuates the point by quoting a 1917 speech made by eugenicist Robert Ward and a 1916 speech by Madison Grant. Though these commentators' visions of eugenics is fueled by an

appeal to the future of the nation—and the vulnerable children who will come to inhabit that future—that future’s realization is entirely dependent on the banishment of sentiment and the practical implementation of utilitarian discipline. As Robert Ward proclaims:

I do not believe that *sentiment* can solve grave national problems. I do not believe that the indiscriminate kindness we may seem to be able to show to some thousands, or millions, or Europeans and Asiatic immigrants can in any conceivable way counterbalance the harm that these people may do our race if large numbers of them are mentally and physically unfit... It is in the highest degree ungenerous for us, who are the *custodians of the future* heritage of our race, to permit to land on our shores mental and physical defectives who... will tremendously increase all our *future problems* of public and private philanthropy. We have no right to addle any additional burdens upon the already overburdened *coming generations of America*” (qtd in Ordovery, emphasis added, 52)

Madison Grant, similarly, observes that:

the *maudlin sentimentalism* that has made America ‘an asylum for the oppressed’ [is] sweeping the nation toward a racial abyss. If the Melting Pot is allowed to boil without control, and we continue to follow our national model and deliberately blind ourselves to all ‘distinctions of race, creed, or color,’ the type of *native American of colonial descent* will become as extinct as the Athenian age of Pericles and the Viking of the days of Rollo” (qtd in Ordovery, emphasis added, 51-52)

Note the way that Edelman’s notion of reproductive futurism surfaces within this passage.

Eugenics and tighter restrictions on immigration are here framed as the politics that will help safeguard the racial purity of America’s future children. It is the vaccine that will immunize the “coming generations” and secure the “future heritage of our race” and circumvent any “future problems.” But Ward and Grant’s strain of “futurism” is by no means “sentimental” and has a much more complicated relationship to reproduction than simple affirmation of childbearing. If Ward warns against letting the “unfit” land on American shores, then Grant invokes the fear of the kind of racial interbreeding that will happen once they’re here, transforming America’s Melting Pot into a volatile chemistry experiment. Though Dick’s earlier practices of sentiment folded “the child” safely between the borders of empire, sentiment is now the thing that is

“sweeping the nation toward a racial abyss.” Practices of national sympathy here collapse into something “vicious,” contaminating, and contagious. Sentimentalism in these quotes is both “maudlin” and dangerously “indiscriminate,” opening up national borders to the “degenerate” hordes of “mental and physical defectives” clamoring to get in.

In these mergings, Dick is not only infiltrated by racial otherness; he is also feminized. This anxiety over feminization becomes most apparent in Dick’s identification with Nicole: “men were for that, beam and idea, girder and logarithm; but somehow Dick and Nicole had become one and equal, not opposite and complementary; she was Dick too, the draught in the marrow of his bones. He could not watch her disintegrations without participating in them. His intuition rilled out of him as tenderness and compassion” (191). While the archetypal eugenically fit Nordic male was supposed to “save the New Woman from the trauma and dangers of her newly formed freedom” (and presumably his own masculinity in the process), Dick opts through sentiment to identify with and incorporate the New Woman into his own psyche.⁴⁵

Additionally, the frequent mention of “rest cures” throughout the novel remind us that liberated womanhood was itself, in that period, often considered a treatable illness.⁴⁶ Even the eczema-encrusted woman whom Dick treats wonders if she is “sharing the fate of women of [her] time who challenged men to battle” (184). Fitzgerald’s outline comparing Nicole and Zelda’s case studies reminds us of how close to home Nicole’s institutionalization was for Fitzgerald. Drawing from personal correspondences, Zelda’s biographer Sally Cline notes that “Zelda’s doctors believed her recovery depended on a ‘successful’ marriage, so they advised her against conflicts with Scott.... doctors thought the propensity towards homosexuality and menstrual disturbances noted in female schizophrenics indicated endocrine or chemical

imbalances.” Listing several invasive chemical treatments that Zelda’s body was subjected to, she hypothesizes along with Scott that Zelda’s painful eczema might have been “caused by a lack of elimination of poison” (283). Recalling Dick’s metaphoric status as an America bloated and burdened with unnecessary (even toxic) populations, we might go so far as to suggest that Dick psychically takes on both Zelda and the eczema woman’s physical condition.

Dick is, of course, also the eczema woman’s doctor; it is his medical authority that diagnoses her illness and his fidelity to the male medical establishment that causes a much more paternalistic tone to creep into his interactions with her. It is in these interactions that the reader is perhaps drawn most acutely into the tension between the medical objectivity that fueled the rhetoric of eugenicists and the expansive sentimentality that has caused Dick to overidentify with “outsiders.” “You are sick,” he tells the woman “mechanically” (185). As he leaves the room, he punctuates the episode with a moral: “We must all try to be good” (185).⁴⁷ These moments to some extent recall the cold logic embedded in Robert Ward’s appeal to eugenics as a form of utilitarian social ethics. But between these statements we find in Dick a much different sensibility: “He wanted to gather her up in his arms, as he so often had Nicole, and cherish even her mistakes, so deeply were they a part of her” (185). This moment of unconditional sentimental acceptance provides a sharp contrast to Dick’s status as a clinical psychologist (especially one who writes books on “classification”), and highlights the two opposing polarities between which the novel’s sentiments vacillate.

But the great irony of Fitzgerald’s framing of Zelda’s eczema is that the cure has not treated an illness; it has created an illness. We might consider this alongside Dick’s encounter with a “normal and conscientious” father who “had tried to protect a nervous brood from life’s troubles and had succeeded merely in preventing them from developing powers of adjustment to

life's inevitable surprises" (186). Sentimental protection of the child nearly always, in *Tender Is the Night*, collapses into the very thing that puts the child at risk, or worse yet, produces children who put the population at risk. Consider, for example, Devereaux Warren's confession to Nicole's psychiatrists:

After her mother died when she was little she used to come into my bed every morning, sometimes she'd sleep in my bed. I was sorry for the little thing. Oh, after that, whenever we went places together, we used to hold hands. She used to sing to me. We used to say, 'Now let's not pay attention to anyone else this afternoon—let's just have each other—or this morning you're mine.' A broken sarcasm came into his voice. 'People used to say what a wonderful father and daughter we were—they used to wipe their eyes. We were just like lovers—and then we were lovers—and ten minutes after it happened I could have shot myself—except I'm just such a Goddamned degenerate I didn't have the nerve to do it. (129)

Devereaux Warren's language is saturated with the language of sentiment; like one of "Mrs. Burnett's vicious tracts," the portrait that he paints evokes sympathy: a motherless child, a "wonderful father and daughter," the physical tears issuing from the eyes of strangers.⁴⁸ But just as Dick's attempts to protect Rosemary through a "rare atmosphere" of sentiment result in black man staining her sheets with blood, the sentimental narrative that constructs Nicole and Devereaux Warren as a "wonderful father and daughter" collapses inward on itself, transforming the safety of metaphor "like lovers" into the literal act of incest: "—and then we were lovers." Whether it's Alice Mitchell, Leon Ling, Jules Peterson, or Devereaux Warren, the ending is always the same: bloody sheets left over as evidence of a love that has gone too far.

Just as Dick preserves Rosemary's reputation (and her claim on racial fitness) by cleaning up the mess left by Jules Peterson's body, he performs a similar clean-up operation following Devereaux's confession, taking on Nicole as a patient and allowing her to fall in love with him. But Dick too, Fitzgerald seems to suggest, makes the mistake of "[feeling] sorry for the little thing." Opening his heart to Nicole, falling in love with her, Dick fails to maintain

medical objectivity and falls prey to sentiment. Though Nicole was framed as the original child-victim, she is ultimately transformed into the catalyst of Dick's own decline. By the end of the narrative, Nicole leaves Dick emptied of resources and contemplating her fear of "what the stricken man above [Dick] would feed on while she must still continue her dry suckling at his lean chest" (279). Warren too experiences a sort of physical depletion. Several pages before his confession, we learn that "He was a fine American type in every way, tall, broad, well-made... he had that special air about him of having known the best of this world" (125). And yet he punctuates the revelation of his rape of his daughter with the conviction that he is a "Goddamned degenerate."⁴⁹ It is at though, in the act that creates in his daughter a "disordered" personality, Warren has compromised his own racial fitness in the process. Just as the metaphor of "lovers" became literal, the psychoanalytic dynamics of the situation seem strangely materialized in the physical, hereditary body. Despite Fitzgerald's initial notes to the contrary, it would seem that we begin with "Ophelia and her flowers" but end up with "a novelized Krafft-Ebing."

Thus sentiment is continually figured by Fitzgerald as both a balm and a threat. Like the "brutal sunshine" (4) which causes Rosemary to "feel her skin broiling a little bit" (6) or Dick's "carnivals of affection" that resemble massacres (27), Fitzgerald's use of sentiment is fraught with paradoxes, threatening to ruin the children of the future by spoiling the children of today; or, conversely, sacrificing today's children to the ghostly bounties of the future. Ultimately in *Tender*, no child is safe. Whether it is Lanier bathing in his oxymoronic "dirty suds," Baby Warren waltzing with a bloated spleen, Rosemary catching pneumonia on the movie set, or Nicole's "moving childish smile that was like all the lost youth in the world" (134), we are met with a parade of children who are continually put in peril by the very kinship structures designed to keep them safe. Thus when the "[t]hree children sledding past shouted a warning in some

strange language” (173), we might read it as siren signal to every child whose existence reproductive futurism both depends on and obliterates.

But what a close reading of the novel ultimately illustrates is that there is no inherent political content to sentiment and no singular cause whose badge bears the insignia of the baby’s face. Neither is queerness easily located in the body of the gay man. Ironically, the novel’s two gay men, Campion and Dumphrey, are among the only adults who never put a child at risk; conversely, the homosexual youth Francisco brings a mature and balanced perspective to the scene that is unmatched by any of his heteronormative counterparts.⁵⁰ In a chapter that deals with recent articulations of queer theory, it may seem odd that I have barely addressed same-sex desire. But in part, this was a calculated omission. While Edelman is entirely correct to point out that the icon of the Child has often been put in the service of heteronormative—sometimes even fiercely homophobic—agendas, his examples suggest that gay men constitute the only demographic that have been “collectively terrorized” under reproductive futurism’s flag. But by acknowledging those sexualities whose very link to reproduction is what makes them “queer,” we can begin the cultural work that queer theory, at its best, enables.

Reading these novels with serious attention to their biopolitical investments therefore reveals an important history that is obscured in Edelman’s primarily psychoanalytic paradigm. For both Faulkner and Fitzgerald, childhood is continually linked to social hygiene—children are both vulnerable to contamination and themselves carriers of contagion. In these works, there is often a jarring swiftness with which sympathy becomes love, love becomes perverse sexuality, and the perversely sexualized adolescent girl becomes the bearer of unfit children. Most ironically, it is often the eugenic enforcement of normalcy against the specter of queerness that produces the very “degeneracy” it had sought to prevent. The child’s paradoxical relationship to

the future in these works, I have argued, registers a broader social ambivalence regarding sympathy as national practice of politics.

I'd like to briefly conclude, then, by turning my attention to Harriet McBryde's narration of her personal and academic dialogues with Peter Singer, one of disability studies' notorious foes. McBryde Johnson begins her essay provocatively:

He insists he doesn't want to kill me. He simply thinks it would have been better, all things considered, to have given my parents the option of killing the baby I once was, and to let other parents kill similar babies as they come along and thereby avoid the suffering that comes with lives like mine and satisfy the reasonable preferences of parents for a different kind of child. It has nothing to do with me. I should not feel threatened." (573)

When Singer professes that McBryde Johnson's parents ought to have been given the option of "killing the baby [she] once was," he is nowhere close to taking up Edelman's rallying cry to "Fuck the social order and the Child in whose name we're collectively terrorized" (29). To the contrary, Singer's strict adherence to utilitarian logic depends on his faith in a system that can categorize bodies, making them coherent and legibly inscribed upon a hierarchical scale—a scale at the tip of which exists the able-bodied citizen. The utilitarian logic underpinning Singer's views on disabled children is, of course, markedly different from the eugenic philosophies that preceded him. As a twenty-first century philosopher, he is less concerned with the racial composition of the nation and more concerned with questions regarding the relationship between available resources and "quality of life." What remains strikingly similar, however, is a logic that prizes the "reasonable" preferences of parents (and professionals whose diagnosis are believed to predict quality of life) over other individuals' less rational and more "emotional" attachments to the sanctity of life.

Furthermore, like "fitness," the framework created by a measurable "quality of life" creates a fixed scale of worth that does not often correspond to the experience of those it

describes. McBryde Johnson explains that because “the sight of me is routinely discombobulating” for many she encounters, she find herself in the continual “tedious” position of explaining that “I enjoy my life, that it's a great sensual pleasure to zoom by power chair on these delicious muggy streets, that I have no more reason to kill myself than most people.” The “sensual pleasure” McBryde Johnson describes here—real, felt, unquantifiable—shifts the terms of the debate in important ways. Taking to task both sentimentalized approaches to her disability that stereotype her as an object of pity and utilitarian approaches to her disability that pronounce her a life not worth living, McBryde Johnson frames her disability as an authentically felt experience. In so doing, she moves beyond the binaries (sentimentalism vs. hard-headed rationality, “love” vs. “eugenics”) that has dominated public debates on disability. By discussing the affective, as well as the epistemological, dimensions of disability, McBryde Johnson reveals the choice between love or eugenics as a red herring and helps us, additionally, to deconstruct Edelman’s strangely absolutist dichotomy between sentimental futurism (the province of the Child) and queer negativity (the province of the homosexual adult).

I have spent a bit of time in this chapter focusing on Edelman’s *No Future* because I believe it provides an example of the kinds of assumptions within queer theory that can foreclose our ability to understand queer and disabled bodies alongside of, and in potential coalition with, each other. This is not, however, the only way to take up negativity. Recent work by Heather Love and Judith Halberstam, for example, has demonstrated the way that concepts of negativity, refusal, and failure can take on radical social and collective dimensions, opening up possibilities for the future that are not simply a repetition of neoliberalism’s normative logics. But to posit, as Edelman does, the radical incommensurability of sentimental or reproductive futurism and queer political negativity is to construct the same red herring that Fitzgerald did in 1914 (albeit at the

very young age of eighteen) when he pressed his audience to choose between “love” and “eugenics.”

Like McBryde Johnson, we must find a way of discussing the experience of bodies coded as queer and disabled without, at the same time, rejecting the epistemological foundations upon which those bodies have been constructed. “My goal,” McBryde Johnson writes “isn't to shed the perspective that comes from my particular experience, but to give voice to it,” and so “[t]o justify my hopes that Singer's theoretical world—and its entirely logical extensions—won't become real, I'll invoke the muck and mess and undeniable reality of disabled lives well lived” (585). To “invoke the muck and mess,” as McBryde Johnson puts it here, is not to “shatter the self” or to transcend the ego through a temporary foray into queer self-debasement. More radically, it is to persist in imagining a future for unimaginable subjectivities: the queer-crip child who “fuck[s] the social order” precisely by having been allowed to grow up.

¹ Siobhan Somerville's *Queering the Color Line* and Nancy Ordovery's *American Eugenics*, are two such notable exceptions.

² See Julie Stern, *The Plight of Feeling*, Dana Nelson, *National Manhood*; Kristin Boudreau, *Sympathy in American Literature*; and Lauren Berlant, *The Female Complaint*.

³ The notion of “feeling wrong,” of course, resonates strongly with current work in queer theory, particularly Heather Love's notion of “feeling backward” and Sianne Ngai's emphasis on “ugly feelings.”

⁴ As Krafft-Ebing noted in his 1886 study *Psychopathia Sexualis*, “[s]exual instinct—as emotion, idea, and impulse—is a function of the cerebral cortex. Thus far no definite region of the cortex has been proved to be exclusively the seat of sexual sensations and impulses. Suzanne Clark additionally observes that “[t]he word which marks a passing over the limits of acceptable feeling for Freud is not ‘obscene’ but ‘sentimental’” (*Sentimental Modernism* 1992).

⁵ Other factors, too, led to discrediting of sentimental in the early twentieth century: the rejection of Romanticism in favor of modernism's more experimental, non-representational modes of artistic expression, a collective sense of disillusionment following the Civil War and WWI, and

(as I will elaborate upon shortly) sentiment's increasing association with women's participation in the public sphere.

⁶ As June Howard observes, "when we call an artifact or gesture sentimental, we are pointing to its use of some established convention to evoke emotion; we mark a moment when the discursive processes that construct emotion become visible" (245).

⁷ For a more thorough account, see Shirley Samuels, ed. *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in 19th-Century America*. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson additionally delivers, in her reading of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a compelling account of how the sentimental authority of the maternal benefactress was often established at the expense disabled black female bodies whose scars and deformities functioned to inspire sympathy.

⁸ Though eugenic notions held less sway following the Depression, a new conservative resistance to Progressive relief programs led to the promotion of birth control as an alternative to welfare and public aid. During this era, many women looking to break into the professional sphere chose to assist male eugenicists in their fieldwork. For more on this, see Edward J. Larson, "'In the Finest Most Womanly Way': Women in the Southern Eugenics Movement." *The American Journal of Legal History* 39.2 (1995): 119-147.

⁹ See Marsha Saxton, "Disability Rights and Selective Abortion" and Ruth Hubbard, "Who Should and Should Not Inhabit the World," *Disability Studies Reader*, 3rd Edition. Ed. Lennard Davis. New York: Routledge, 2010.

¹⁰ In this way, the professionalized female social worker was created perhaps at the expense of the "problem girls" she diagnosed. However, it's important to keep in mind that this transition was neither smooth nor total. Countering studies that frame this transition as one movement wiping out the other, Kunzel emphasizes the various and highly gendered moments "moments of contest" and resistance that accompanied this transition.

¹¹ Quoted in Ruth Rosen's *Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in American, 1900-1918*.

¹² From Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley's 2004 anthology *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children* to Kathryn Bond Stockton's most recent notion of "growing sideways" in her 2010 book *The Queer Child*, the status of "childhood" and the "child" has recently emerged as a major site of interest in queer theory.

¹³ This point might be made by briefly revisiting a passage that Edelman himself cites in his book, taken from a 1998 essay written in support of a "Parent's Bill of Rights." In it, one of the bill's proponents sounded the following call to action:

It is time to join together and acknowledge that the work that parents do is indispensable—that by nourishing those small bodies growing those small souls, they create the store of social human capital that is so essential to the health and wealth of our nation. Simply put, by creating the conditions that allow parents to cherish their children, we will ensure our collective future." (111-112)

For Edelman, this passage demonstrates evocatively the principles of what he terms "reproductive futurism" (111). But what I find most striking about his passage is not its

sentimentality but, to the contrary, the almost clinical portrait of children as a form of “human capital” that circulates through the veins of a “healthy” and “wealthy” body politic; I would even suggest that its diction retains echoes of the same eugenic ideologies that drove American social policy in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

¹⁴ Faulkner’s intricate treatment of the racial tensions that marked his era have been thoughtfully explicated by many scholars, and anxieties over the socio-political implications of acceptable and unacceptable forms of heterosexual reproduction mark nearly all of his novels. Miscegenation and incest, for example, are two recurring themes within Faulkner’s work. Despite—or perhaps precisely because of—the possibility that such pairings will produce offspring, these modes of sexuality are figured as the most queerly abject within his novels. For a comprehensive study of race relations, and the miscegenation anxieties that accompanied them, see Eric Sundquist’s *Faulkner: A House Divided*.

¹⁵ For a more thorough discussion of enforced sterilization, and its intersections with race, class and gender see Larson, Edward J. “‘In the Finest Most Womanly Way’: Women in the Southern Eugenics Movement.” *The American Journal of Legal History* 39.2 (1995): 119-147; Shoen, Johanna. *Choice and Coercion: Birth Control, Sterilization, and Abortion in Public Health and Welfare*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005; and Solinger, Rickie. *Pregnancy and Power: A Short History of Reproductive Politics in America*. New York: New York UP, 2005.

¹⁶ For a more thorough account of the medicalized governmental treatment of prostitutes, see Allan M. Brandt’s *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States Since 1880*.

¹⁷ See Solinger, *Pregnancy and Power* (2005). Importantly, the ruling against Buck set a precedent for other eugenic sterilization laws throughout the country, laws which were, even into the 1970s, used to sterilize black and lower class women without their consent.

¹⁸ Soon after this, Popeye is “sent to a home for incorrigible children” for abusing animals and is let out five years later when his “impeccable” behavior suggests that he has been “cured.” While Popeye’s sociopathic leanings may suggest anything but a “feeble” mind, his institutionalization nonetheless places him squarely within those discourses that separated the “fit” from the “unfit.”

¹⁹ While Faulkner’s larger body of work cannot really be described as moralistic, other novels do seem to provide a clearer set of guidelines regarding who the reader is intended to sympathize with. For example, while the reader of *Light in August* is led to empathize with the innocent Baby Joey and to morally reject Doc Hines’ abhorrent treatment of his mixed raced grandchild, the grotesque depictions of Ruby Goodwin’s baby is much more likely to elicit revulsion than sympathy.

²⁰ See Scott DeShong, “Toward an Ethics of Reading Faulkner’s *Sanctuary*.”

²¹ In this sense, Benjy seems to prefigure the cognitively impaired Lennie from John Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men*, published nearly a decade later. But what for Benjy consists only of the public’s projection of danger onto his adult body, for Lennie results in the actual death of a

woman. And while Benjy's sterilization is largely denounced by the novel as misguided and unnecessary, the moral implications of George's final act of "euthanasia" is left more ambiguous in Steinbeck's novel.

²² Indeed, as Quentin ruminates, "[w]e will swap Benjy's pasture for a fine dead sound." Opposing the fertility of the pasture against the "fine dead sound" of both Quentin's suicide and Benjy's castration, Faulkner signals the end of a family line. Of course, Faulkner gives us Benjy's non-castrated counterpart in *The Hamlet* through the figure of the cognitively disabled Ike Snopes. Ike's erotic pastoral drama with an elusive cow preserves the lush, pastoral fertility that was taken from Benjy in *The Sound and the Fury*. If Faulkner disapproves of Benjy's sterilization, then he similarly seems to celebrate Ike's erotic connection to the natural world.

²³ A 1920 reviewer of the novel captures this dynamic well, perhaps, when she observes of Benjy that "it is as if the story of Hans Anderson's *Little Mermaid* had been taken from the nursery and sentiment and made, rather diabolically, to grow up" (79). For the full review, see Evelyn Scott, "On William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*." *William Faulkner*. Ed. John Bassett. New York: Routledge, 2001.

²⁴ We might also observe this vacillation between sentimental and scientific registers with respect to *Light in August*'s Lena Grove. Replacing, on some level, the novel's abandoned child Joe Christmas, Lena's fills the narrative with a form of powerful maternal sympathy despite her status as a "delinquent" unwed teen mother.

²⁵ We might here recall Jason's mother's declaration that "Jason can do no wrong because he is more Bascomb than Compson... I look at him every day dreading to see this Compson blood beginning to show in him at last with his sister slipping out" (193).

²⁶ The sensibility of the song even echoes Mrs. Bird's appeal to her husband, the Senator, in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that "[his] head is better than [his] heart" on the practical implications of the Fugitive Slave Law.

²⁷ See Inge, M. Thomas. "Fitzgerald, Faulkner and Little Lord Fauntleroy." *The Journal of American Culture* 26.4 (2003)

²⁸ In his comparative essay on the two authors, Thomas Inge draws out the humanist implications of this comment, suggesting that Fitzgerald's willingness to embrace sentiment in his writing allows him to strike a prudent balance between Faulkner's depleted moral vision and Burnett's trite sentimentalism. Inge does not, however, discuss how this balance might be connected to the eugenic rhetoric that was, at the time, dominating public discourse.

²⁹ Indeed, Ophelia's "flower" monologue in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* reads in many ways like a primer for Fitzgerald's own cast of characters, from *Tender*'s "Rosemary" Hoyt and "Violet" McKisco to *Gatsby*'s "Daisy" Buchanan, to even the description of Dick's lace drawers as a "pansy's trick":

"There's *rosemary*, that's for remembrance; pray,
love, remember: and there is *pansies*. that's for thoughts.
There's fennel for you, and columbines: there's rue

for you; and here's some for me: we may call it
 herb-grace o' Sundays: O you must wear your rue with
 a difference. There's a *daisy*: I would give you
 some *violets*, but they withered all when my father
 died: they say he made a good end,—"
 (Act IV, Scene V, emphases added)

³⁰ Fitzgerald's own views eugenics and racial Nordicism are unclear, due in part to his own ambivalent writing on the subject. Several Fitzgerald scholars have noted Fitzgerald's complex and sometimes contradictory treatment of race and miscegenation. While some elements of his fiction display an intense concern for protecting physical integrity of the white woman against the threat of "darker" men, other moments explicitly lampoon the appeals made by writers and orators like Lathrop Stoddard, Henry Goddard, and Madison Grant to safeguard the purity of the white race. According to Alan Margolies, Fitzgerald openly admitted in 1923 that "No one has a greater contempt than I have for the recent hysteria about the Nordic theory." At the same time, Felipe Smith cites a 1921 letter in which Fitzgerald writes "God damn the continent of Europe. The negroid streak creeps northward to defile the Nordic race. Already the Italians have the souls of blacamoors." Smith also notes that Fitzgerald

warned Wilson that America should 'raise the bars of immigration and permit only Scandinavians, Teutons, Anglo-Saxons, and Celts to enter,' going to far as to suggest that it might have been better after all if the Germans had been allowed to conquer Europe. Fitzgerald also leveled his strongest condemnation of the French in terms of 'racial' unfitness... Fitzgerald's letter reveals not only his strong sensitivity to racial and ethnic difference; it also shows his tendencies to use Africannness as a term of ultimate disapprobation and to see hierarchical classifications of and ethnicity as absolute measurement of human worth. (191)

³¹ Artifice, at the time that Fitzgerald was writing, was becoming increasingly linked to Hollywood manipulation. We see this linkage in the text through Fitzgerald's description of the exceedingly (and artificially) sentimental film *Daddy's Girl*.

³² In this respect, Clover and Celeste might be understood as precursors to the wry, no-nonsense New Woman Jordan Baker and the charming, feminine Daisy Buchanan of Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. .

³³ We might here recall one of our earliest descriptions of Popeye as a person with the "vicious depthless quality of stamped tin" (4) who walks with his "tight suit and stiff hat all angles, like a modernist lampstand" (7). Far from being coded with qualities of sentiment, Popeye's "viciousness" is here aligned with modernity's cold assembly-line logic as well as the novel's own "depthless" sensational qualities. Rather than forming a contradictory portrait, however, I would argue that these two very separate set of associations in fact expose the sentimental and the scientific/sensational as two sides of the same coin.

³⁴ Of course, what at this moment is a sincere rendering of the sentimental child becomes, by the middle of the same section, hardened into satire during the screening of *Daddy's Girl*:

There she was—the school girl of a year ago, hair down her back and rippling out stiffly like the solid hair of a tanagra figure; there she was—so young and innocent—the product of her mother’s loving care; there she was—embodying all the immaturity of the race... Before her tiny fist the forces of lust and corruption rolled away; nay the very march of destiny stopped; inevitable became evitable, syllogism, dialectic, all rationality fell away... happier days now, and a lovely shot of Rosemary and her parent united at the last in a father complex so apparent that Dick winced for all psychologists at the vicious sentimentality. (69)

Now labeling sentimentality “vicious,” Dick distances himself from its intimacies by envisioning himself as an “an old scientist all wrapped up in his private life” (70).

³⁵ Considering the tension between Fitzgerald’s desire to join a revered white male literary tradition and his desire to be a popular novelist in a feminized and racialized entertainment industry, Michael Nowlin observes that

It was from the limelight of of this democratic, multiracial, erotically charged, competitive, and thorough commodified cultural arena that Fitzgerald appealed to a literary-cultural elite for the kind of recognition that might redeem him from the ‘failure’ imminent in such ‘early success.’ In aspiring to to a seure place in the cultural world, he was seeking immunity frlm the dynamics of the marketplace and the vicissitudes of popular taste. By the binary logic of the racial symbolism with which he registered his immersion in what I am calling the modern American scene, this meant encoding his ‘higher’ aspirations—after artistic purity and literary immortality—in terms of a transcendental whiteness that inevitably had long-standing associations with a specific national history of white (and ‘Anglo-Saxon’) supremacy. (12)

This helps to contextualize the ambivalence of the umbrella image which suggests both exclusion and inclusion—it preserves Rosemary’s whiteness with the bourgeois armor of the Divers’ literary circles, but in so doing, also preserves her relationship to the sexualized and racialized world of the entertainment industry. I will elaborate on this ambivalence in what follows.

³⁶ Fitzgerald’s former flame Ginevra King was, at the time of the novel’s writing, living on a street called “Rosemary Avenue” with her husband and children, one of whom had Down’s Syndrome. It’s unclear whether or not F Fitzgerald’s naming of Rosemary’s character was at all influenced by this biographical fact, but it gestures, in interesting ways, nonetheless, toward some of the novels thematics.

³⁷ For a more thorough account of this “love murder,” see Lui, *The Chinatown Trunk Mystery*.

³⁸ Alice Mitchell’s case also, on some level, forms the background of London’s disapproving portrait of Humphrey Van Weyden’s masculinity—the “mannish lesbian” is understood to be all the more successful at romancing impressionable girls when her primary competitors are effeminate male intellectuals like Humphrey.

³⁹ We might here recall Dick's "monumentally" titled manuscript which reflects his ambivalent status as both a man of sentiment and a man of science. In an effort, for example, to provide an "antidote" for Nicole's emotion hold over him, he decides on an

intensification of work on his proofs for the book that this autumn was to be presented to the German-speaking world of psychiatry. Dick had outgrown the book... Meanwhile he had projected a new work: *An Attempt at a Uniform and Pragmatic Classification of the Neuroses and Psychoses, Based on an Examination of Fifteen Hundred Pre-Krapælin and Post-Krapælin Cases as they would be Diagnosed in the Terminology of the Different Contemporary Schools--* and another sonorous paragraph--*Together with a Chronology of Such Subdivisions of Opinion as Have Arisen Independently*. This title would look monumental in German. (146)

⁴⁰ Dick explains: "The danger to an actress is in responding. Again, let's suppose that somebody told you, 'Your lover is dead.' In life you'd probably go to pieces. But on the stage you're trying to entertain--the audience can do the 'responding' for themselves. First the actress has lines to follow, then she has to get the audience's attention back on herself, away from the murdered Chinese or whatever the thing is. So she must do something unexpected. If the audience thinks the character is hard she goes soft on them--if they think she's soft she goes hard. You go all out of character—you understand?"

⁴¹ In this sense, they almost evoke the "Gold Star" mothers who, entering the narrative much earlier in the novel, remind Dick of the

maturity of an older America. For a while the sobered women who had come to mourn for their dead, for something they could not repair, made the room beautiful. Momentarily, he sat again on his father's knee, riding with Moseby while the old loyalties and devotions fought on around him. Almost with an effort he turned back to his two women at the table and faced the whole new world in which he believed. (101)

Interestingly, this passage, too culminates in a "new" female pairing that ambivalently extends and displaces the sentimental ideals of an earlier generation.

⁴² Tommy's multinational ancestry is worth briefly dwelling on here. Half American and half French, Tommy is first introduced as a mercenary soldier who will fight anyone's war (30). His multinationality is rooted not just in his shifting loyalties but also in his physical body itself. As he opens the window to "find out what caused the increasing clamor below their windows, his figure was darker and stronger than Dick's" (294). In the word "clamor" here, we might recall Fitzgerald's earlier reference to the "clamor of [American] empire." Indeed, while Dick's white masculinity and his status as a doctor had earlier sanitized that empire under his protective umbrella, the "stronger" and "darker" Tommy bears witness to a more unruly scene of empire. If Dick's willingness to merge with others makes him the metanarrative of a dangerously inclusive America, then Tommy's "strong," "dark" body seems to suggest a remasculinization of the American "Melting Pot" ideal, his robust physicality pointing not to a strict preservation of national bloodlines but to a transcendence of them.

⁴³ This is, additionally, a third real-life “case” which haunts the narrative, alluded to in Dick’s observation, upon discovering Peterson in Rosemary’s bed, that the “paint was scarcely dry on the Arbuckle case” (100). Roscoe “Fatty” Arbuckle’s was a Hollywood comedian and filmmaker who created a national scandal when he was implicated in the rape and death of aspiring starlet Virginia Rappe. Chris Messenger discusses the case in detail in his forthcoming manuscript, noting the way that the Arbuckle scandal informs the dynamics of Fitzgerald’s novel. “No one is innocent,” Messenger observes, “in these narrative fantasies and transactions surrounding what became *Tender is the Night*. To save Rosemary is to save Arbuckle; however, to save Rosemary is also to indict Dick as Arbuckle.”

⁴⁴ Dick’s status as a national metanarrative is not without its gendered and psychoanalytic implications. In *Eugenic Fantasies: Racial Ideology in the Literature and Popular Culture of the 1920’s* (2002), Betsy Nies draws from the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin, Julia Kristeva, and Mart Douglas to discuss the ways in which psychoanalytic theories of abjection play out in the political sphere through the repudiation of cultural otherness. Nies notes that “The Nordic male now stood as an image of containment, one separated from the mother; his ethnic Other, caught in the throes of living and dying, was forever merged with her figurative presence, inside her in birth, merged with the Kristevan maternal earth in death... Bodily boundaries became national boundaries as the eugenicists made their stand” (14). Nies study therefore offers a productive starting point for broadening psychoanalytic readings of the novel into more explicitly biopolitical ones.

⁴⁵ Ironically, however, Nicole’s maternal presence is accompanied not by domestic warmth and sentiment, but by a hard rationality that is more characteristic of male scientism. She “bring[s] up children she could only pretend gently to love” (180), and she takes Lanier and Topsy on an “organized romp” during which she reacts to Kaethe with the revulsion of a person who fears contagion (240). Indeed, the following description leaves little room for doubt that Nicole is, ultimately, no nineteenth-century maternal benefactress but, rather, a consummate child of modernity:

Nicole was the product of much ingenuity and toil. For her sake trains began their run at Chicago and traversed the round belly of the continent to California; chicle factories fumed and link belts grew link by link in factories; men mixed toothpaste in vats and drew mouthwash out of copper hogsheads; girls canned tomatoes quickly in August or worked rudely at the Five-and-Tens on Christmas Eve; half-breed Indians toiled on Brazilian coffee plantations and dreamers were muscled out of patent rights in new tractors--these were some of the people who gave a tithe to Nicole, and as the whole system swayed and thundered onward it lent a feverish bloom to such processes of hers as wholesale buying, like the flush of a fireman’s face holding his post before a spreading blaze. (55)

⁴⁶ For a comprehensive study of the ways in which femaleness was defined and regulated through medical discourse, see Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *For Her Own Good: Two Centuries of the Experts Advice to Women* (1978).

⁴⁷ This to some extent recalls Dick’s letters to the institutionalized Nicole: “All I said in my letters was ‘Be a good girl and mind the doctors’” (130).

⁴⁸ Additionally, the literal “death” of the mother here might be read as the more figurative “death” of the previous century’s maternal politics of sympathy, and an unmasking of the sensational undercurrents that, ostensibly, lie beneath sentiment’s artifice.

⁴⁹ One of Fitzgerald’s most striking juxtapositions of ‘fitness’ and ‘degeneracy’ can be found in his characterization of Professor Dohmler whose face is “beautiful under straight whiskers, like a vine-overgrown veranda of some fine old house... Dick knew some individuals with more talent, but no person of a class qualitatively superior to Dohmler” (139). One page later, Dohmler metaphorically transformed into an amputee: “Professor Dohmler raised himself like a legless man mounting a pair of crutches” (140).

⁵⁰ During Dick’s conversation with Francisco, Francisco remarks that, though he is “unhappy” and drinking excessively, he believes that his alcohol problems are caused by his anxiety regarding his same-sex desires, and not, as doctors commonly believed, the other way around. And though Dick advises Francisco to control his homosexual impulses, we find that he had in fact “abandoned the case ten minutes before. They talked pleasantly through another hour about the boy’s home in Chili and about his ambitions. It was as close as Dick had ever come to comprehending such a character from any but the pathological angle” (245).

4. “THAT’S NOT THE USUAL PATTERN, IS IT?”: JAMES BALDWIN, HOMOSEXUALITY, AND AMERICAN PSYCHIATRY

4.1 Crippling Baldwin Studies

This chapter focuses on James Baldwin’s literary response to the designation of homosexuality as diagnosable mental disorder during the 1950s and 1960s. From its first entrance into the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)* in 1952 to its eventual removal in 1973, “homosexuality” spent nearly twenty years classified by the American Psychiatric Association as a personality disorder. Psychiatric models of homosexuality contrasted with previous discourses of sexual inversion in significant ways. If the sexually-inverted man of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was understood as having a desire for difference (a feminine subject attracted to a masculine one), then the homosexual male was understood conversely as having a desire for sameness (one masculine subject attracted to another). Furthermore, while medical professionals generally believed the sexual invert’s disorder to be a property of the physical body, the disorder of “homosexuality” was understood as a mental disorder stemming from early childhood psychological trauma.¹ Many literary and cultural representations from the period—from mainstream cinema to the lesbian pulp novels of Ann Bannon—reinforced this portrait of homosexuality as the expression of psychological maladjustment.²

I have chosen, however, to focus on James Baldwin’s 1956 novel *Giovanni’s Room* precisely for the unique way that it challenges these models. Though it is common in scholarship on *Giovanni’s Room* to understand Baldwin’s protagonist David as a self-hating homosexual, or even further, to understand Baldwin himself as ambivalently reinforcing psychiatric models of queer desire, I argue that *Giovanni’s Room* is, to the contrary, engaged in a

subtle and biting critique of those models. Baldwin's analysis, however, differs significantly from standard gay and lesbian criticisms of psychiatry which, in attempting to convert the bad feelings of sexual shame into the good feelings of sexual pride, tend to emphasize the inherent "health" of the gay psyche. Instead, Baldwin is more interested in exploring the way these psychiatric understandings of queer desire, while certainly oppressive in their own right, might at the same time be understood as a counterintuitive site of class privilege.³ In what follows, therefore, I illustrate some of the ways in which David uses the Freudian concept of repression *repressively*, consciously fashioning himself as the model homosexual patient to be diagnosed by the reader. Through these narrative performances, David attempts to fortify or "immunize" his middle-class masculinity against an important set of cross-racial, cross-class and cross-gendered queer histories.

Indeed, Baldwin's canonization within an LGBT literary tradition has too often served as a way of muting the pointed racial critiques that his novels offer, with gay and lesbian readers either tokenizing Baldwin (his racial difference simply illustrating the "diversity" of the gay and lesbian canon) or ignoring the way that his status as a black man had, in various ways, complicated his sense of identification with the gay community.⁴ What suppressions and omissions are necessary, in other words, for us to view Baldwin as nothing more than the Cold War successor to Oscar Wilde and Henry James? At the same time, Baldwin's queerness, along with his openness to interracial intimacies, brought him under attack by Black Nationalists like Eldridge Cleaver who saw Baldwin's (sometimes sexual) alliances with white men as evidence of a "racial death wish." This understanding was premised on the homophobic equation of homosexuality with weakness and effeminacy (qualities that were perceived as bad for militant uprisings) and the sexist alignment of practices like heterosexual rape with masculinity and

strength (qualities that were perceived as good for militant uprisings). Cleaver's dismissal of Baldwin's sexuality was also fueled by the belief that a successful Black Nation depended on the perpetuation of "untainted" black bloodlines, a perpetuation that could only take place via heteronormative reproduction.⁵ This Black Nationalist repurposing of eugenic logic resulted in a set of reproductive ideals that Baldwin's novels, in their frank and often redemptive portrayals of homosexuality and interracial intimacy, threatened to undermine.⁶

These conflicts and intersections have played an enormous role in shaping Baldwin's reception in both literary and political circles. His status as a black man writing in a white gay canon, a gay man writing in a straight black canon, and a political activist publishing literary "masterpieces" has sparked seemingly endless debates regarding the slippery intersectionalities that frame his work. It is not my intention to here to intervene substantially in the canon debates that have dominated Baldwin Studies. But by bringing up these conversations in a relatively cursory way, I am hoping to illustrate how the critical difficulty of "placing" Baldwin within a single coherent tradition is emblematic of Baldwin's own unique approach toward American citizenship. Repeatedly in his essays, Baldwin articulates "Americanness" as a form of relational consciousness that has much more to do with a national psychology than with either a national biology or an individual psychology. Unlike the strictly linear notions of reproduction, inheritance and species fitness that had informed earlier understandings of citizenship (or the individualized notions of psychological development that dominated his own era), Baldwin reframes what it means to be "American" by drawing his audience's attention to the psychological consequences of living in a country marked by divisions and power differentials between differently raced, sexed, gendered, and classed bodies. From his vantage point as a black man whose sexuality crossed lines of race and gender, Baldwin created in his work a space

of dialogue in which the breakdown of seemingly discrete categories of identity could be explored—not as eccentric exceptions to the rule of American citizenship, but as the very basis of citizenship itself.⁷

Building off of these critical dialogues, I want to consider Baldwin from a vantage point that has thus far largely escaped the attention of scholars: the vantage point of disability studies. What is to be gained by bringing this new critical angle to bear on Baldwin's body of work, considering him through the lens of yet another marginalized category of identity? Why confuse and complicate the already fraught intersections between "black" and "queer" outlined above? And perhaps most importantly, what basis is there for placing a nondisabled author like Baldwin in the context of larger crip critique? Baldwin scholarship, in my view, has found itself in a kind of intersectional rut with the tension between the signifiers "black" and "queer" overdetermining the way scholars have received and responded to his work. To get out of this rut, I believe that we need to begin thinking in new ways about Baldwin's work, expanding our frames of reference beyond (without at the same time abandoning) the important critical observations that queer-of-color scholars have made about Baldwin's dueling dual identities.⁸ Understanding Baldwin through the context of disability studies, and particularly through the often ignored critical intersections between queer and crip, I would argue, provides precisely such an opportunity.⁹

I want to clarify here that I am less interested in how Baldwin configures the relationship between *separately* identified queer subjects and disabled subjects in his work, and more interested in the discursive intersections that constructed male homosexuality as, itself, a diagnosable and treatable psychiatric disability. Additionally, in constructing a discursive triangle between "black," "queer," and "crip," and focusing primarily on the intersection of

“queer” and “crip,” I am necessarily leaving out an important (and often problematic) dialectic that emerges in Baldwin’s work between the signifiers of “black” and “crip.” Indeed, Baldwin’s troubling tendency to use disability as a racial metaphor might, in some ways, make him an unlikely candidate for a disability studies approach. In “Notes of a Native Son,” for example, Baldwin dramatizes choice between fighting racial stereotypes or internalizing them as a choice between death and disability:

One is always in the position of having to decide between amputation and gangrene. Amputation is swift but time may prove that the amputation was not necessary—or one may delay the amputation too long. Gangrene is slow, but it is impossible to be sure that one is reading one’s symptom’s right. The idea of going through life as a cripple is more than one can bear, and equally unbearable is the risk of swelling up slowly, in agony, with poison. And the trouble, finally, is that the risks are real even if the choices do not exist. (112)

Describing the life of the “cripple” as “more than one can bear,” Baldwin finds in physical disability a convenient metaphor for the alienation and pain experience by minorities in the United States. The image of the amputee is invoked here simply as an index of racism’s warping effects on the racialized individual. Thus Baldwin’s nuanced examination of race relations comes at the expense of disability, whose experience must be flattened out for Baldwin to be able to flesh out the contours of a racially divided political landscape.

Another purpose, however, that metaphors of disability appear to serve Baldwin is to provide him with a form of embodiment that transgresses racial divisions without transcending the racialized body itself. Anyone, after all, regardless of their race, can step on a rusty nail. The gangrene example that he provides is interesting precisely because of its universalizing potential, allowing Baldwin to break down the essentializing boundaries that separate black and white without capitulating to a “disembodied” color-blind liberalism. As Lawrie Balfour notes in her study of James Baldwin and American democracy, Baldwin “refus[ed] the choice between

integration and separation as a false one,” (12) fashioning instead a theory of “race consciousness” which, “by going to the level of assumptions and unacknowledged beliefs... provides a way of casting a broad net and pulling in a wide range of conscious and unconscious associations with race and blackness, Americanness and whiteness” (7). Tellingly, however, in describing Baldwin’s racial politics, Balfour herself seems to find it almost impossible not to absorb vocabularies of disability similar to those that Baldwin has used to diagnose the American body politic. White Americans’ refusal to “acknowledge uncomfortable truths” about racial privilege, for example is described as a “deliberate blindness or deafness” (32) and racism is explained as a “moral sickness” whose “cure” (the realization of a true democracy in America) is sure to be prolonged and “painful.”

Problematic as it may be, Baldwin’s framing of race-as-disability might at the same time be seen as revising the disability imagery of his Black Naturalist predecessors in new and productive ways. In his study of Baldwin’s relationship to black manhood, for example, Keith Clark examines Baldwin’s relation to authors like Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison whose commitment to Naturalism and the politics of protest caused them to create characters who find themselves continually “deformed” or “crippled” by their toxic urban environments. The limitation of these Naturalist representations, Clark argues, is their authors’ investment in ideologies of American individualism: freedom is defined through a set of isolated, singular men who find themselves at odds with their communities as they struggle to access their place in the American dream. Baldwin’s work provides a counterpoint to this individualism, Clark suggests, by merging homosexual intimacy into something that looks like homosocial solidarity, thereby showcasing the nurturing bonds that can exist in politically productive ways between black men. Redefining these masculine bonds as a potentially feminist (or at the very least, non-patriarchal)

site of community, Clark suggests that Baldwin and a handful of his contemporaries “negate... deformation” by defining their community through “healing rituals” and a larger ethics of care.

This vocabulary of “healing rituals,” of course, comes with its own set of ableist undertones and I’m not entirely convinced by Clark’s claim that these space of homosocial nurturance and healing are inherently feminist. I would, however, still contend that Baldwin’s revision of the Naturalist tradition—his refutation of American individualism, self-reliance and independence and his emphasis on the importance of reciprocal responsibility and care—aligns him to some extent with disability theories of “interdependence.” In *The Rejected Body*, feminist disability theorist Susan Wendell explores the way in which “societies that regard independence as a central virtue... tend to diminish the esteem of people who cannot live without a great deal of help from others” and “undervalue relationships of dependency or interdependence” (145). In this formulation, disabled people are reconceived as agents within a community rather than dependent populations whose needs are a burden upon the otherwise self-sufficient individuals who care for them. Like Wendell’s critique of individualism and her alternative theorization of interdependence, Baldwin refuses to counter discourses of African-American economic dependency with a striving toward African-American individualism and independence. Rather he rejects altogether the binary between “independence” and “dependence,” emphasizing instead an ethics of care and the depths of our responsibilities to one another. Thus Andrew Shin and Barbara Judson locate in Baldwin’s work an “emphasis on the pleasures of nurturance as opposed to mastery” and a “repudiat[ion] of masculine autonomy,” values that Baldwin tends to express through

the messiness of bodily odor and fluid—a convergence of bodies that opposes the formulations of white liberalism and black radicalism. He does not invoke the cult of the primitive as a reservoir of primal energy capable of bursting through social

restraint; instead, he marshals love as the glue of a just society. The exchange of odors between men cuts across racial, class, and sexual lines. (251)

Though Shin and Judson's observation is put forth in relation to Baldwin's full body of work, this focus on interdependency and the breakdown of bodily boundaries is much more common in criticism on *Another Country* (1963) than it is in criticism on Baldwin's earlier, and less explicitly "racial" novel *Giovanni's Room* (1956). Scholarship on *Another Country* has focused, for the most part, on the way that Baldwin uses cross-racial and intragender intimacies to craft a model of citizenship based upon networked and highly politicized intimacies between differently raced, classed and gendered bodies. In the most compelling accounts of Baldwin's novel, we find that the democratic American body is not a "body" at all; rather it is the physical and psychological dialectic *between* racialized, sexualized and gendered bodies that, for Baldwin, form the metaphorical ground for the formation of an ethical American democracy.¹⁰

One of the most provocative scenes in *Another Country* in fact uses sexual psychiatry as a method for showcasing one such dialectical pairing. In it, white bohemians Eric and Cass find themselves on the verge of an unlikely love affair—unlikely because Cass is a married woman and Eric is a gay man. Before they begin their sexual encounter, Eric explains to Cass that their affair must remain temporary because his French lover, Yves, will be arriving in New York soon. No matter what Yves "think[s] of the States," Eric explains, his love for Yves has made Eric "responsible for him when he gets here" (289). Eric's sense of responsibility for Yves, it's important to point out, escapes both the rhetoric of dependence and burden that characterize some discussions of immigration as well as the rhetoric of autonomy, independence and the "American Dream" that characterizes others. Eric's "responsibility" for Yves is based, rather,

upon an ethic of queer interdependence in which the two men rely on each other for various forms of material and emotional support.

When Eric casually adds that Yves “hates his mother,” Cass’s reply (and the subsequent exchange between the two) reveals the extent to which clinical psychiatric understandings of homosexuality had made their way into popular consciousness:

“That’s not the usual pattern, is it?” Then she wished that she had held her tongue, or could call the words back. But it was too late, really, to do more than blandly compound her error: “I mean, from what we’re told, most men with a sexual bias toward men love their mothers and hate their fathers.”

“We haven’t been told much,” he observed, mildly sardonic. “I used to know street boys in Paris who hadn’t had any opportunity to hate their mother or their fathers. Of course, they hated *les flics*—the cops—and I suppose some safe slug of an American would work it out that they hated the cops because they were father figures... but it seems just as likely to me that they hated the cops because the cops liked to beat the shit out of them.” (289-290)

Here Cass, a straight woman, finds herself ‘caught’ in the attempt to sanitize and fortify the ‘naturalness’ of her heterosexuality against Eric and Yves’ homosexual otherness. But her knee-jerk Freudian explanation not only fails to account for Yves’ family dynamic (since he hates the wrong parent); it outright backfires. It is in that backfiring that Baldwin deftly reverses the usual scene of sexual “outing”: revelation emerges not from the scandalous declaration of homosexual difference but rather, ironically, from Cass’s unintentional eruption of heterosexist “bias.” Indeed, we might view Cass’s rhetorical deployment of pop psychiatry as kind of preventative measure: the precoital prophylactic that promises to protect her against the complicated web of queer relationality that her intimacy with Eric threatens to fold her into.

Baldwin’s intention here, however, is neither to condemn Cass nor to transform Eric into the bearer of moral authority. Instead, these moments of interpersonal alienation lead his characters toward alternative (and ultimately productive) sites of social revelation. In this sense,

Eric becomes a sort of anti-Freudian Freudian analyst. Refusing to take Cass's psychiatric speculations at face value, he asks her instead to address the wider social unconscious that lies beneath the comfortable psychiatric narrative she has just related. Reading past the surface Cass's psychiatric text, Eric therefore uncovers an important set of unresolved political and class conflicts which, taken seriously, means that gay sexuality can no longer be reducible to the psychic complexity of white bourgeois men with father issues. Instead, gay sexuality must be contextualized socially and politically in relation to the economically disadvantaged street kids and the institutionalized forms of violence they experience when faced with officers of the law—a law that can't, in their case, be counted on for protection. If Cass describes a version of selfhood that is self-contained (to discover who you are, you must examine the depths of your psyche), then Eric mines its meanings to create an opposing version of selfhood that is ultimately social and dialectical (to discover who you are, you must examine your political and ethical relation to others).

Eric's political reframing of homosexuality as a relational practice rather than a static identity causes Cass to consequently question her own relation to the police:

She had never had to deal with a policeman in her life, and it had never entered her mind to feel menaced by one. Policemen were neither friends nor enemies; they were part of the landscape, present for upholding the purpose of law and order; and if a policeman—for she had never thought of them as being very bright—seemed to forget his place, it was easy enough to make him remember it. Easy enough if one's own place was more secure than his, and if one represented, or could bring to bear, a power greater than his own. (290)

Cass's rumination on the police pushes her frame of reference beyond the interiority of the individual, forcing her instead to interrogate her own position within a network of social relations marked by a complex set of power differentials. The sudden visibility of the police brings into view Cass's own class status in relation to both the police and the street boys: the

street boys are subject to the power of the cops, and the cops, as members of the working class, have less financial and social capital than Cass.¹¹ Eric may not be a “street boy” but his sexuality still makes him subject to the power of the police in a way that Cass is not. At the same time, Eric’s gender places him in a position of privilege within a patriarchal society, even as his sexuality complicates that privilege.¹²

Thus what had begun as a sexual exchange between equals has now been revealed as a complicated and politically fraught union between differently empowered political subjects. Ironically, however, this realization does not block intimacy but enables it. If Cass had originally attempted to wield psychiatry as a kind of epistemological prophylactic, shielding her against a complex web of queer relationality, she now allows Eric’s “wonder,” during the subsequent scene of lovemaking, to “infect her” (291). Put simply, the scene suggests that medical discourses sanitize and separate individuals while deeper political revelations enable subjects to enter into productive and intimate exchanges.¹³

But if *Another Country* seems to lend itself more readily to these sorts of intersectional analyses, *Giovanni’s Room* has appeared to be more resistant to such investigations. This is partly owing to Baldwin’s choice of subject matter (white homosexuals in Paris), a choice that surprised and dismayed audiences who had pigeonholed Baldwin as an author of “the black experience.”¹⁴ Some critics took the lack of African-American characters in the text as evidence of Baldwin’s desire to focus exclusively on the complexities of same-sex desire without the distractions of racial controversy. Others have more helpfully pointed out the racialized dimensions of the text, examining the construction of David’s Nordic and Anglo ancestry in relation to Giovanni’s ethnic Mediterranean difference.¹⁵ To most critics, however, the novel’s racial and class consciousness seems negligible in comparison to the more radical queer

achievement represented by the publication of *Another Country* seven years later. I would contend, however, that *Giovanni's Room* is best understood not as a kind of timid, ambivalent “warm up” to the more politically brave *Another Country*, but as an extensive and inverted telling of the same narrative, related from the opposite perspective but fashioning, more subtly, the same critique. While *Another Country's* approach to racialized embodiment might be a more obvious choice for a disability studies analysis (and would, on its own make a fascinating project), I'm interested in *Giovanni's Room* precisely because it moves away from a model that anchors disability within the “authentic” materiality of the physical body. The novel instead presents a model of psychiatric disability that—in its linkage with queer white desire—ultimately collapses inwardly upon itself. Rather than offering a blueprint for ethical citizenship (as he does in *Another Country*), Baldwin performs in *Giovanni's Room* a rejection of homosexual medicine's epistemological investment in white masculinity.

4.2 Performing Diagnosis

The plot of *Giovanni's Room* unfolds through a series of flashbacks recounted in the first person by David, an upper middle class white American living in Paris. David begins his story by relating a set of early events and impressions which he believes have set the stage for his flight to Europe. Key among those impressions is his status as the only child of a widowed father, and of his having once had sex, during his teenage years, with his male friend Joey. Frightened and secretive about both the encounter and its implications, David travels to Europe and proposes marriage to the first American woman that he meets during his travels. He finds himself alone, however, for a brief period of time while his potential fiancée, Hella, travels to Spain in order to think over his proposal. The main action of the novel takes place during this

interval. Soon after Hella's departure, David meets Giovanni, the Italian bartender of a gay establishment, and the two men begin a passionate love affair. But, unable to come to terms with his sexuality and desperate to protect his reputation, David ultimately abandons Giovanni for Hella when she returns to Paris. Without David, the poverty-stricken Giovanni is forced to accept the sexual advances of wealthy Parisian men in exchange for financial security. When David finds out that Giovanni has been sentenced to death, having murdered his boss, Guillaume, after particularly exploitative sexual exchange, his guilt over Giovanni causes his relationship with Hella to fall apart. In the novel's final scene, David—alone and depressed on the night of Giovanni's execution—struggles to make sense of his own role in Giovanni's tragic demise.

Significantly, David's psychobiography is presented to the reader within the first dozen pages. Before we know almost anything about David, we are briefed on the death of his mother when he was five years old and his boyhood nightmares of her "putrescent" corpse which, David recalls, "opened, as I clawed and cried, into a breach so enormous as to swallow me alive" (16). We are also given information about the way in which David's aunt Ellen (his father's sister) appeared to replace David's mother as a caregiver. Ellen, we are told, "flirted" with her brother's party guests in a "nerve-wracking kind of way," with a "mouth redder than any blood" and a voice going "on and on like a razor blade on glass" (17). David additionally describes his experience of feeling "exhausted and appalled" (21) by his father insistence in treating him like a "buddy" and the uncomfortable "masculine candor" about women that existed between them.

It is not difficult to read into these brief recollections a distilled portrait of Freudian angst. David's dream of his mother's powerful and suffocating corpse represents a kind of inverted incestuous longing; Ellen's "blood red" "razorblade" mouth stands in for the resulting threat of

castration; and the fraught intimacy with his father constitutes a failed Oedipal bond that does nothing to protect him against the force of his childhood fantasies. David's first homosexual encounter, narrated directly before his psychobiography, is similarly knotted up in this web of Freudian imagery. After their lovemaking, David looks upon Joey's naked body and sees "the black opening of a cavern in which I would be tortured till madness came, in which I would lose my manhood" (14).¹⁶ Like the "enormous breach" that opens up within his mother's corpse and threatens to devour him, Joey's body becomes a similarly ravenous "opening" that threatens castration.¹⁷ Homosexuality, for David, can only represent the pathological attempt to negotiate an Oedipal drama gone awry. Summarizing Freud's fourth theory of homosexuality Kenneth Lewes explains that

The homosexual lover is not drawn to his object through preference, but it impelled to it by the horror of the mutilated female genitals and the possibility of suffering a similar fate, a force that operates each time a homosexual object choice is made or a heterosexual one repudiated. Behavior that is propelled not by desire, pleasure, or the need for discharge but by anxiety is by definition pathological. (31)

Understanding his homosexuality as a horror of femininity and castration rather than a desire for men, David recites the common medical narrative that dominated popular understandings of same-sex desire during the 1950s. These understandings grew out of psychiatric professionals' interest in (and oversimplification of) Freud's earlier theories of sexuality. Indeed, Freud's views of same-sex desire are themselves somewhat ambiguous and ambivalent. On the one hand, Freud's writings do often reinforce the normativity of heterosexual desire, providing a set of psychosexual schematics that frame homosexual desire as the result of genital narcissism, arrested development, or abnormal resolution of the Oedipus complex. He suggests, for example, that identification with an inaccessible or absent object of desire (the mother), or

excessive fear of paternal retaliation, might result in a redirection of the sexual drive towards men. Furthermore, because the Oedipus complex happens on the way from the anal stage to the phallic state, Freud theorized that the unresolved Oedipal anxieties may stall the boy in the narcissism of the anal stage, causing him to seek an object who is like himself.¹⁸

In other writings, however, Freud frames homosexuality as a manifestation of natural sexual diversity, a set of benign variations that need not be pathologized. For example, in his often cited 1935 “Letter to a Mother,” Freud responds to a woman’s request for “help” in treating her son’s homosexuality by assuring her that while homosexuality may be produced by a certain “arrest in sexual development,” it is in fact a legitimate “variation of the sexual function “that “cannot be classified as an illness.” Thus, while Freud did to some extent frame homosexuality as a result of psychosexual maladjustment, he was also open to more fluid understandings of homosexuality and did not generally regard same-sex desire as something that required (or responded to) medical treatment or cure.¹⁹

The 1940s and 1950s, however, witnessed a reinvention and revision of Freud’s original theories regarding homosexuality. As Simon LeVay notes, “[t]he real psychoanalytic attack on homosexuality was initiated by Freud’s followers, particularly those working in the United States” (75). With the 1940 publication of Sando Rador’s article “A Critical Examination of the Concept of Bisexuality,” homosexuality became redefined as an inherently pathological (and curable) disorder that results when a child has been frightened away from heterosexual contact. Twenty-five years later, Edmund Bergler published his influential study titled *Homosexuality: Disease or Way of Life?* in which he defined homosexuality as a “neurotic disease” caused by an “unsolved masochistic conflict with the mother of earliest infancy” (263). Though Bergler claimed to have “no bias against homosexuality,” he nonetheless outlined a set of personality

traits that symptomatized the homosexual condition, including “a mixture of superciliousness, false aggression and whimpering... subservien[ce] when confronted with a stronger person, merciless[ness] when in power, unscrupulous[ness] about trampling on a weaker person” (3). There is, we might note, ample evidence in David’s confessional narrations to support most of these charges: he admits to fearing his father’s censure (to the point of running away to Europe) while documenting his cruelty toward individuals who carry less social power than himself—specifically, women and effeminate gay men. Indeed, even David’s displays of sexism seem to reflect conventional psychiatric wisdom about gay men’s misogynistic fear of women—a belief that, as Kenneth Lewes points out, is more reflective of psychiatry’s own “gynecophobic stance” (9). These thinkers were joined by others in the profession, most notably Irving Bieber, Charles Socarides, Lionel Ovesey, and Edward Glover, who all maintained that that, far from being an innate constitutional variation, homosexuality was a form of sexual psychopathology.

As historian Ronald Bayer notes, “[ha]ving explained homosexuality as a phobic response to members of the opposite sex rather than a component of human instinctual life, and having assumed the ever-present existence of a strong heterosexual drive, Rado and his followers were able to assume a more positive therapeutic stance” (29).²⁰ This “positive therapeutic stance” was enabled, as Bayer points out, by the emergence of the *DSM* which, first published in 1952 by the American Psychiatric Association (APA), included “homosexuality” among its index of treatable mental illnesses. The publication of the *DSM* was itself a significant moment in the history of psychiatry, not only grounding the institutional authority of the APA but creating, for the first time, a standardized and mainstreamed rubric for the classification, diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders. In some ways, it may have been the emergence of the *DSM* that allowed psychologists like Frank Caprio to argue that “[t]he policy of self-

acceptance and resignation recommended by some therapists is an unwise one as there are many inverts who do not wish to accept the status of being a homosexual,” and advocate, instead, a “psychoanalytic treatment” that “concentrates on changing the basic character structure (the personality pattern) and thus eliminates the mental block that stands between the patient and heterosexual adjustment.” In addition to psychoanalytic treatments, homosexual patients during this period were subjected to hypnosis, electroshock treatment and aversion therapy.²¹

The *DSM*, it’s important to add, was not simply a medical text but a bestseller, helping to convert psychiatric vocabularies of disorder into the popular parlance of the upper middle class. Like Cass, David is likely to have been literate in the mainstreamed psychological account of “disordered” homosexuality and to have fashioned his understanding of himself and his desires through its vocabularies. That David understands his queer desires in the novel through a medicalized psychiatric framework is a point that has been noted by other critics as well. Mae Henderson, for example, writing as recently as 2001, sees in David’s narration a “variation on the classic psychological explanation for homosexuality” which she describes in detail:

Following the fashionable Freudian formulation of homosexuality, the narrator's ambivalence toward the mother, coupled with his father's distance, creates a confusion for young David that is compounded by the brief, but frightening, adolescent homosexual encounter with a childhood schoolmate, Joey... The union between David and Giovanni, thus, figures that of a motherless son and a childless father, a configuration suggesting a symbolic displacement of the Freudian Family Romance. (317)

Henderson’s reading here is cleverly attuned to the “fashionable Freudian formulations” that the novel, on its surface, presents. I would argue, however, that she misreads the implications of those formulations, understanding them only as part of the process through which Baldwin grappled with his own same-sex desire. Though he “masks in whiteface his first explicit treatment of homosexuality,” (326) Henderson argues, “the act of writing *Giovanni's Room*

represents a significant step for the author in understanding his own homosexuality and reconciling himself with a vision of America” (326). In this framing, David’s struggle to accept his aberrant sexuality is taken to be representative of Baldwin’s own struggle to accept himself as gay, the only difference between them being the (apparently insignificant) difference of skin color. Yasmin DeGout also focuses on Baldwin’s medicalization of homosexuality, arguing that, while the novel sometimes frames love between men as innocent, redemptive and healing, it also “creates a psychological history that can be used to explain homoerotic love as behavior that is produced by diagnosable circumstances within a society” (430). Thus, most of the critical accounts of *Giovanni’s Room* that address the novel’s Freudian undertones view David’s confession as a sincere attempt (on his own part and Baldwin’s) to negotiate and come to terms with a stigmatized sexual identity.

But to view David’s race as merely a form of “whiteface” behind which Baldwin could safely negotiate his personal ambivalence about his own sexuality is to miss the much larger and more exciting critique that Baldwin advances in *Giovanni’s Room*. While both David and Giovanni’s personal histories are consistent with psychiatric narratives of homosexuality that were popular during the 1950s—narratives that located same-sex desire as evidence of a traumatic disruption of the nuclear family—I want to suggest that Baldwin was up to something a bit more shrewd in his representations of David’s “disordered” sexuality. Might we, in fact, detect a level of wry performativity—or at the very least, overstatement—in the textbook clarity with which Baldwin has David present his psychobiography? Though David, as a gay man, would appear on the surface to have more in common with Eric than Cass, his obedient conformity to a psychiatric origin story actually places him more in line with Cass’s lapse into

Freudianism; he is all too aware that what he has presented the reader with conforms precisely to the “usual pattern” of unresolved Oedipal conflict.

Indeed, what is perhaps most striking about David’s psychosexual ruminations is their dense concentration at the outset of the narrative and the lack of subtlety with which the psychological etiology of David’s disordered sexuality is fashioned. The first dozen pages read more like a case history or a medical chart than the opening of a novel. It’s certainly possible to chalk up this Freudian overkill to Baldwin’s youth and lack of experience as a novelist, but looking at the subtlety and complexity of Baldwin’s entire body of work suggests otherwise. I put forth instead the following possibility: David’s obedient delivery of a prepackaged “explanation” for his homosexuality is not intended to reveal anything about his psychological past and its bearing on his sexual present. Rather, it is a calculated performance of discursive literacy whose exaggerated qualities reveal the regulatory function of medical and psychological discourse. A perfectly disciplined subject, David is the ideal patient but his dutiful repetition the standard psychiatric narrative necessarily overdetermines the information he provides, making the standard Freudian analysis impossible.²² In other words, David’s conscious insistence on the Freudian origins of his desires automatically rule out their usefulness as an explanatory tool. David’s castration anxieties and unresolved Oedipal conflicts become the text rather than the subtext. Consequently, the reader is asked to read *through* David’s neatly packaged account of his “disorder” to the historical unconscious that strains below its surface.

What kind of historical unconscious, then, is being “repressed” by David’s airtight account of his own psychosexual trauma? David’s commitment to psychiatric models of gay identity, I would suggest, obscures the practices of cross-gendered identifications and working-class associations that dominated public understandings of deviant sexuality before they were

displaced by newer psychiatric designations. The version of sexual identity that David is committed to relies on a gay/straight binary that had, in fact, only recently emerged at the time of his narration. As George Chauncey points out in *Gay New York*, models for understanding male same-sex sexuality in the United States before World War II were both highly gendered, and often crossed class-lines. During these decades, male queerness was understood by medical professionals primarily through the model of gender inversion, focusing on “effeminate” men whom the larger public termed (and many of whom self-identified as) “fairies.” Elaborating on what he calls the “working-class bachelor culture” of the early twentieth century, Chauncey explains the social dynamics through which working class “fairies” partnered with traditionally “masculine” men in brief encounters that occasionally may have involved an exchange of money. These masculine men were often sailors, or engaged in other transient or low-paying occupations that made them less likely to be married or supporting a family; like Jack London’s “road-kids,” many of them actively “scorned the manners associated with the domesticating, moralizing influence of women” (79). In these instances, taking the active sexual role in a same-sex encounter did not threaten their masculinity but rather amplified it. Unlike the “fairies” they had sex with, these men were not understood as sexually different, or even “gay” in the modern sense of the term. Same-sex encounters were simply seen as providing for these men another outlet for their inborn masculine virility. Neither was the “fairy” understood as “gay” in the modern sense, having more in common with female prostitute culture than with modern gay identity.

Around the same time, however, a middle class “queer” culture was emerging that had begun to reject the effeminacy of the fairy. Middle class gay men found themselves both relieved and threatened by the fairy’s outward displays of femininity—relieved because the

police attention that those displays drew allowed middle class gay men to pass largely under the radar; threatened because many of them felt that the hypervisibility of the fairy tainted the public image of same-sex sexuality. “In general,” Chauncey notes, “the style of the fairy was more likely to be adopted by young men and poorer men who had relatively little at stake in the straight middle class world” (102). Thus the “queers’ antagonism toward the fairies,” Chauncey suggests, “was in large part a class antagonism” (106). It was a conflict, in other words, between a middle class culture invested in privacy and respectability and a working public culture for whom “privacy could only be had in public” and whose sexual bodies bore the main force of the law.²³ These class antagonisms continued after World War II, though the frameworks for understanding male same-sex desire had changed significantly. “Gay” replaced “queer” as a term to denote sexuality between men, and the term “queer” became derogatory rather than affirmative. As the gay/straight binary gained currency, same-sex encounters were no longer seen as a legitimate outlet for “normal” men. As Chauncey explains:

Earlier terms—fairy, queer, and the trade most commonly—had distinguished various types of homosexually active men: effeminate homosexuals, more conventional homosexuals, and masculine heterosexuals who would accept homosexual advances, to use today’s nomenclature. Gay tended to group all these types together; to deemphasize their differences by emphasizing the similarity in character they had presumably demonstrated by their choice of sexual partners. (21)

If the culture of the “fairies” was a culture attentive to differences—in gender expression and in class—then the new gay identity that was beginning to emerge in the postwar era was understood through lens of sameness. It was no longer about the biology of gender inversion (effeminate men attracted to the masculinity that they themselves lacked) but about homosexuality (the psychological preference of one white, middle-class man for another). If earlier models had emphasized messier gender identifications and cross-class intimacies, then the new gay male

subculture was one with more cleanly sanitized boundaries. It is those social boundaries, I would suggest, that are really at stake for David and those boundaries which his diagnostic performances are meant to fortify. Thus, by presenting to the reader the psychiatric origins of his sexually disordered psyche, David produces not a confession but an alibi—a discursive smoke screen that ironically protects his white masculine privilege even when seeming to call it into question.

With this in mind, I want to turn my attention to a scene that occurs early in the novel. Visiting a local gay bar with his gay friend Jacques, David engages in an intense flirtation with the bartender, Giovanni. Because David's sexuality had been a source of speculation among the bar patrons, the courtship attracts notice with one particularly flamboyant patron approaching David in order to tease him. As he approaches, David records his reaction in the following hyperbolically gothic terms that evoke Frankenstein's famous first description of his monster:

It looked like a mummy or a zombie—this was the first overwhelming impression—of something walking after it had been put to death... It carried a glass, it walked on its toes, the flat hips moved with a dead, horrifying lasciviousness... It glittered in the dim light; the thin black hair was violent with oil, combed forward, hanging in bangs; the eyelids gleamed with mascara, the mouth ragged with lipstick, the face was white and thoroughly bloodless with some kind of foundation cream; it stank of powder and gardenia-like perfume. The shirt, open coquettishly to the navel, revealed a hairless chest and a silver crucifix; the shirt was covered with round paper-thin wafers, red and green and orange and yellow and blue, which stormed in the light and made one feel that the mummy might, at any moment, disappear in flame. A red sash was around the waist, the clinging pants were a surprisingly somber grey. He wore buckles on his shoes.
(41)

Like the classically-theorized feminine object of the voyeuristic male gaze, the patron's body is fragmented into bits of clothing and isolated body parts, but these parts fail to produce in David the desire aroused by the traditional "fetish" object. If the psychosexually healthy male is able to neutralize the threat of castration through recourse to the fetish, these fragments of feminine

artifice (perfume, cosmetics, revealing attire) are attached not to desire but to death. The cosmetics worn by the “zombie” (lipstick, mascara, foundation cream) feel more like the work of a mortician preparing a body for a public viewing than the trade secrets of the glamour model. Rather than the flawless skin and objectified curves of the female movie star, we are given only the “stink” of “bloodless” flesh and the “horrifying lasciviousness” of “dead” hips.

This gothic rendering is, of course, entirely consistent with David’s earlier Freudian projections which rationalized his homosexuality as a phobic response to femininity.²⁴ The memory of his dead mother’s decaying corpse might be easily transposed onto the “mummy” (mommy?) who stands before him at this moment. That this mummy’s “mouth ragged with lipstick” echoes David’s earlier description of his Aunt Ellen, whose mouth, “redder than any blood,” carries with it the (perpetually unresolved) threat of castration. This threat is confirmed by abrupt introduction of the word “he” in the final line—the feminine subject, it turns out, was a castrated male all along. But as I have suggested above, this too-easy textbook Freudianism obscures the real source of David’s anxieties in this scene. Ultimately, David’s fear is not that castration will transform him into a woman but that his attractions to Giovanni’s masculinity will transform him into a “fairy.” The mummy described here may signal a return of the repressed (“something walking after it had been put to death”) but what is repressed here is a social history rather than a personal, individualized one.

Indeed, when David offhandedly describes the “band of disgusting fairies” that his friend Jacques runs with, his revulsion is mixed with uneasy recognition. He confesses that he “always found it difficult to believe that they ever went to bed with anybody, for a man who wanted a woman would certainly have rather had a real one and a man who wanted a man would certainly not want one of them” (30). Later he confides in the reader his own discomfort upon

encountering a boy dressed in drag: “his utter grotesqueness made me uneasy; perhaps in the same way that the sight of monkeys eating their own excrement turns some people’s stomachs. They might not mind so much if monkeys did not—so grotesquely—resemble humans” (30). These “silly old queens” who seem to periodically surround and haunt David function as a set of historical mirrors; lurking around every corner, they remind David that it was not very long ago that attractions like his—to masculine men—were considered to be symptoms of a deviant lower class physiology, rather than evidence of a disordered middle class psyche.

Crucial, also, to the boundaries that David wishes to maintain is the color line. In his excellent study of the history of queer urban geography, Kevin Mumford observes that when red light districts came under stricter police surveillance during the early part of the twentieth century, much of the sexual underground relocated to black communities. It was in this way that Harlem was gradually transformed into safe haven for both queer subcultures and for individuals (both gay and straight) involved in interracial relationships. In light of these cultural shifts, Mumford concludes that the origin of most modern queer subcultures can be traced back to the “Black and Tan” speakeasies of the Jazz Age where interracial affiliations, queer sexualities and the culture of prostitution overlapped in ways that invited both alliance and conflict.²⁵ These sites of interracial mixing, I would suggest, compose an important part of the cultural past that David is intent upon repressing. His flight from New York is, ultimately, a flight away from Harlem’s interracial and cross-class histories.

David’s preoccupation with the intertwining markers of race and sexuality becomes especially apparent in his brief exchange of looks with an American sailor he sees while walking down the streets of Paris:

There was a sailor, dressed all in white, coming across the boulevard... He seemed—somehow—younger than I had ever been, and blonder and more beautiful, and he wore his masculinity as unequivocally as he wore his skin... I wondered if my father had ever been like that, if I had ever been like that—though it was hard to imagine, for this boy, striding across the avenue like light itself, any antecedents, any connections at all. We came abreast and, as though he had seen some all-revealing panic in my eyes, he gave me a look contemptuously lewd and knowing; just such a look as he might have given, but a few hours ago, to the desperately well-dressed nymphomaniac or trollop who was trying to make him believe she was a lady. (88)

On the one hand, for David to become the object of the sailor's gaze—to be cruised, in other words, by such a hearty masculine specimen—is to be transformed, according to older sexual frameworks, into a creature not very different from the early twentieth century “fairy.” This would account for why David feels like a “well-dressed... trollop” in comparison to the sailor's shining and untarnished butch exterior. Though he wants to understand his relation to the sailor as a relation of sameness (with the sailor's masculinity acting as a mirror to his own), he finds himself ultimately perceiving this encounter through a framework of difference. The sailor's “unequivocal” masculinity can only diminish David's sense of his manhood, and the sailor's freedom from “antecedents” can only emphasize David's own fraught relation to the fairies and wolves who were his genealogical forebears.

But we might also note that if the sailor's “unequivocal” masculinity makes David feel like a “well-dressed... trollop,” then his radiant whiteness has a similar effect, causing David to feel like a darkened silhouette standing in his relief. Had David succeeded in situating his desire for the sailor along the Cold War model of gender and racial sameness, then the sailor's whiteness would have amplified, rather than diminished, David's own. But because all of David's encounters are haunted by the specter of a past in which queer sexuality was understood through a lens of difference rather than sameness, David finds a failed mirror in the sailor's

radiant whiteness. Finding it “hard to imagine” that he and the sailor were ever the same, David becomes the sailor’s inverted image, the “reflection in the darkening gleam of the window pane” which opens the novel:

I watch my reflection in the darkening gleam of the window pane. My reflection is tall, perhaps rather like an arrow, my blond hair gleams. My face is like a face you have seen many times. My ancestors conquered a continent, pushing across death-laden plains, until they came to an ocean which faced away from Europe into a darker past. (9)

In this brief and frequently discussed “reflection” on race, David both insists upon and expresses anxiety about status of his whiteness. Not surprisingly, this moment has, for many scholars, provided an important opening through which the novel’s racial politics can be glimpsed. Mae Henderson, for example, has compared Baldwin’s opening lines to Fitzgerald’s closing lines in *The Great Gatsby*. If, in the closing image of *Gatsby*, Henderson suggests, Fitzgerald “captures the innocence and freshness of the New World encounter,” then Baldwin’s opening image by contrast “evokes a vision of the ravages and destruction consequent upon its discovery, the blood-guilt of its violent colonial origins.” Washington adds that “it is here that “David acknowledges his complicity with racial conquest. And his recognition marks the beginning of an associative pattern compelling the reader to explore the connections linking Giovanni’s persecution with the African-American’s” (72). Robert Reid-Pharr also examines the novel’s racial politics, comparing Giovanni’s sexual and labor exploitation situation to the commodified bodies of both male and female black slaves. While I believe that all of these critics are correct to point out that Baldwin has racialized the sexual dynamic between David and Giovanni, it is curious that they have kept their observations regarding that racialization consistent with the timeline that David, as narrator, has presented to the reader.

If we liken Giovanni to an African-American slave or the colonially exploited native, I would venture, we may be making the mistake of taking at face value the version of whiteness that David wishes to insist upon, while ignoring the racial politics he wishes to obscure. If David's confession of his modern homosexuality functioned as a disavowal of a more "deviant" sexual past, might we also understand David's confession of his genetically inherited white guilt as performing a similar disavowal? When David insists on his ancestral connections to the original European settlers of America, he not only perpetuates eugenic understandings of his own normalcy and fitness, but attaches himself (albeit through guilt rather than innocence) to a long line of white literary precursors. In facing toward a "darker" and more distant past, David may in fact be evading the complicated knot of queer interracial intimacy and prostitution that directly preceded his own era. As Sharon Holland points out, Europe "offers David another space of privilege and becomes a new symbol of whiteness" (276). Focusing on David's early sexual encounter with his ambiguously racialized friend Joey, Holland observes that: "'America,' even though 'conquered,' is tainted by a queer act with a 'brown' body... Early in *Giovanni*, it is made perfectly clear to us that escape to another country is an imaginative 'out' for those who, like David, fear their queer acts will somehow divest them of their whiteness" (276). It is in this way that David to some extent trades in his American identity (marked as it is by a contaminated cultural heterogeneity) for what he imagines is a less adulterated form of European whiteness.

I would suggest, furthermore, that David performs this trade by laying counterintuitive claim to yet another stigmatizing discourse—the Cold War American conflation of homosexuality with Communism. World War II, as John D'Emilio has pointed out, constituted an important turning point in the history of gay and lesbian identity in the United States. Men and women with same-sex desires who enlisted in the military found themselves relocating to

cities where they experienced greater freedom to explore unconventional lifestyles. These geographical and cultural shifts resulted in the establishment of a greater number of gay bars and the formation of a more visible (and largely white) gay subculture. This increased visibility had a couple of consequences. With gay bars beginning to be filled with a greater number of men and women who did not gender cross-identify, it became increasingly apparent that the question of who was or was not a “homosexual” could not be answered through visual markers alone. In the absence of a direct confession, greater attention to their behavior and actions was required. Additionally, with police surveillance of gay bars becoming more common, middle class gay men found themselves facing a higher risk of discovery. These dynamics were largely responsible for creating the image of the gay man who leads a scandalous “double life,” passing as heterosexual by day while stalking the shadows of the homosexual underworld by night.

With this rising sexual paranoia, it is not surprising that this image of the duplicitous homosexual who lives a secretive double life began to overlap, in the Cold War cultural imagination, with the possibility of Communist infiltration. As David Johnson details in *The Lavender Scare*, one aspect of McCarthyism that has often been overlooked is the widespread persecution of gays and lesbians during the Communist witch hunts of the 1950s. Like the Communist spy, it was believed, the homosexual might blend into society, all the while bearing allegiance to sexually foreign subculture. Promiscuous, alcoholic, and vulnerable to blackmail, he could not be trusted with classified information, and posed a serious threat national security. This conflation was not merely subtextual but coded into policy itself, leading to the massive 1950s governmental purge of homosexual employees from the State Department.

Furthermore, because it now seemed that gay men could look like you’re average boy-next-door, sexuality was no longer believed to be immediately and outwardly “readable” on the

effeminate physical body. With the help of the DSM, homosexuality must instead be “outed” through the epistemological structures of confession or discovery. Thus, the new psychiatric model of gay identity paired conveniently with the Cold War political anxieties. Both relied on the epistemologies of the closet, constructing a gay/traitor subject whose physical sameness allows him to move undetected through heterosexual/American culture, all the while harboring a foreign/sexual secret that is subject to disclosure.²⁶ This provides additional context for the sailor’s “lewd and knowing” all-American gaze which reads past David’s clean heteromasculine exterior to the psychosexual and traitorous tumult that David is attempting to conceal. The exchange of looks signals a kind of epistemological danger. What does the sailor know? What does he see in David’s unguarded eyes? Indeed, the psychiatric literature of the time witnessed a proliferation of clichés about the dark homosexual underworld and the homosexual’s proximity to the paranoid-schizoid personality type.²⁷

These anxieties, I would argue, help to account for both the novel’s Parisian backdrop as well as David’s obsession with what it means to be an American—an issue that he takes up almost as frequently as the question of his sexuality.²⁸ Not only is the difference between American “innocence” and European experience and tradition foregrounded in many of David’s conversations with the Italian Giovanni, but David himself confesses to feeling a vacillation between his identification with Americans on the one hand and his total alienation from them on the other. He admits that he “resented being called an American (and I resented resenting it) because it seemed to make me nothing more than that... and I resented being called not an American because it seemed to make me nothing (85-86). Visiting the American embassy soon after beginning his affair with Giovanni, David observes that the “disquietingly cheerful horde” of Americans that stand before him “struck the eye, at once as a unit. At home I could have

distinguished patterns, habits, accents of speech... now everybody sounded, unless I listened hard, as though they had just arrived from Nebraska” (86). Though this description registers a certain alienation, it also produces a level of comfort—unlike Harlem’s gender and racial crossings, this portrait of “Americans” is one of familiarity and homogeneity. Ironically such a purified vision of American identity is, for David, only possible when taking up a traitorously non-American subjectivity. Following this rumination David receives a letter from his father asking him to come home—or to at least explain why he has stayed away for so long. Reading into his father’s request an unspoken interrogation of his heterosexuality, David constructs the division between American and European values as a division, ultimately, between straight and gay culture.

Echoing the Cold War renderings of the homosexual traitor, David understands his flight to Paris as a kind of disloyalty that is national as well as sexual. Placing an ocean between himself and Harlem, and casting himself in the Cold War role of the homosexual traitor, David’s distance from America ironically places him more squarely within the white discourses of the closet and protects him from the earlier discourses that rendered queerness through the more perplexing lens of social difference and conflict. David’s self-construction as a closeted, un-American traitor thus functions much like his earlier Freudian disclosures. By embracing Cold War discourses that place the anti-American homosexual Communist at their center, David shields himself from the social formations and discourses that preceded the McCarthy era. Being “exposed” as a modern Cold War homosexual traitor is, for David, a better fate than being thrust into an American past in which he may have been feminized as a lower-class “fairy.” When David describes his alienation from other Americans, then, he is not simply demonstrating a

passive internalization of psychiatric discourse and Cold War sexual paranoia—he is actively employing those discourses prophylactically against a threatening national past.

4.3 Unimagined Alliances

In his review of late twentieth-century gay and lesbian novels, Chris Freeman has noted that the “overwhelming sense [of] claustrophobia” that permeates *Giovanni’s Room* represents the “kind of self-loathing familiar to many gay men in the 1950s” (141). Given the above analysis, however, I want to suggest that we understand David’s narrative excursions into the suffocating spaces of his psyche as being fueled not by claustrophobia but by what Marlon B. Ross has termed “claustrophilia.” In his excellent article “Beyond the Closet as a Raceless Paradigm,” Ross contends that the closet paradigm, as it has been articulated within traditional queer theory, ultimately privileges the complicated interiority of elite white male subjects at the expense of black subjects and other racial minorities. Sedgwick herself reinforces the whiteness of the closet when she contrasts the sense of secrecy and “outing” that is inherent in gay identity with the more immediately “visible” markers of race, gender, and physical disability which do not tend to pivot in the same way around the binary of the “known” and the “not known.” Where, then, does this leave the black gay subject? As Ross points out, to hold the closeted homosexual psyche in strict opposition to the “always known” physiology of black body is, in fact, to make the black gay subject invisible. The eminent readability of his racialized body, it would seem, obviates any need to plumb his psychological depths. Against, then, the spiritualized rationality of the white subject whose utterances are rich with subtextual significance emerges the primitive, non-rationality of the black subject whose sexuality requires no interpretation beyond its own ever-present (and ostensibly heterosexual) materiality.

Extending his critique to the literary canon itself, Ross identifies as “claustrophilic” various queer theorists’ preoccupations with the epistemological architectures of their white literary forebears’ closets. There is more than a passing resemblance, Ross suggestively argues, between the epistemology of the “closet” and the practices of “close reading” (and, indeed “closed off” reading) that scholars of queer theory use in order to mine the rich sexual subtexts that exist in the work of figures like Henry James and Marcel Proust.²⁹ Bryan R. Washington, for example, might be understood as engaging in a form of literary claustrophilia when he argues that *Giovanni’s Room* can be read as a “revision” of Henry James’ canonical gay text “The Beast in the Jungle.” If the “beast” of “homosexuality” was something that, for James, could be alluded to but never actually named, then Baldwin, by contrast, invokes James’ “beast” in a context that is explicitly homosexual. In “naming what the Master will not name,” Washington seems to conclude, Baldwin throws open the closet doors, proving himself to be James’ brasher and more liberated literary successor (71). But *Giovanni’s Room*, as I have suggested throughout this chapter, is less concerned with giving voice to the “love that dare not speak its name” than it is with showcasing the often invisible ideologies of race that, in the words of Toni Morrison, leave “unspeakable things unspoken.”³⁰ Thus, whether its doors are flung open in sexual liberation or resolutely and repressively shut, the “closet” itself bears greater ideological scrutiny. Protective rather than stifling, David’s closet can be understood as a site of intense claustrophilia, both for himself and for many of the novel’s critics who mine its exhaustive psychoanalytic subtexts.

Early in the novel, David provides a description of his “closet” that testifies precisely to the kind of white claustrophilic impulse described above:

To begin with, the room was not large enough for two, it looked out on a small courtyard. ‘Looked out’ means only that the room had two windows, against which the courtyard malevolently pressed, encroaching day by day, as though it had confused itself with a jungle. We, or rather Giovanni, kept the windows closed most of the time; he had never bought any curtains, neither did we buy any while I was in the room; to insure privacy, Giovanni had obscured the window panes with a heavy, white cleaning polish. We sometimes heard children playing outside our window, sometimes strange shapes loomed against it. (82)

Taking literally the phrase “looked out,” we might visualize the room’s two windows as a pair of eyes. If the eyes are at the threshold of the body through which new sights are taken in and processed, then we might understand the cleaning polish as more than just an attempt at privacy. Not simply a barrier to keep the outside world from peering *in*, the cleaning polish has the additional virtue of keep David and Giovanni from peering *out* onto the racialized “jungle” of courtyard. By effectively shutting the eyes of the room, David and Giovanni, I would suggest, participate in a practice that Sedgwick has termed “ignorance effects.” These “ignorance effects,” Sedgwick has explained, relate to the “epistemological privilege of unknowing” held by those in power, a privilege that enables those subjects to evade culpability in a range of situations (5).³¹ Built from psychoanalytic vocabularies, David’s closet is “not large enough for two”; ultimately, it can accommodate only one (white) race, one (middle) class, and one (same-sex) model of queer desire.

Furthermore, in constructing Giovanni’s room as a space of sameness on the level of race, gender, and class, David attempts not only to block out the power dynamics that mark the world *outside* of the room but also to level out the power differential that emerges between the

two men *inside* of it.³² This is perhaps nowhere more apparent than during their first meeting when, during a flirtatious cab ride, David tells Giovanni that he is about to be evicted by his hotel:

I had said it lightly, with a smile, out of a desire to put myself, in terms of an acquaintance with wintry things, on an equal footing with him. But the fact that I had said it as he held my hand made it sound to me unutterably helpless and soft and coy. But I could not say anything to counteract this impression: to say anything more would confirm it. I pulled my hand away, pretending that I had done so in order to search for a cigarette. (47)

This brief reflection binds the same-sex logic of the closet to a logic of socioeconomic equivalence—David desires to place himself “on an equal footing” with his soon-to-be lover. Thus while David’s account of the conversation certainly emphasizes the tricky border between secrecy and disclosure that structures the closet paradigm, it also registers an anxiety about the extent to which his same-sex desire is, ultimately, rooted in sameness.³³ Because David’s financial resources make finding a job unnecessary for him, Giovanni’s work schedule leaves David alone at home for long periods of time. As David takes on more domestic tasks, he begins to feel feminized by what he perceives to be a gendered division of labor that has left Giovanni’s masculinity intact. At the same time, Giovanni’s very real poverty intervenes to reveal the starkness of the two men’s class differences. Appearances may lead David to become anxious that he is being “bought” and therefore feminized by Giovanni; in the end, however, it is Giovanni who must prostitute himself to rich white men when David abandons him.

Compounding Giovanni’s class difference is, of course, his racialization. Whether, as some critics have argued, Giovanni stands for the commodified body of the American slave or whether, like Yves in *Another Country*, he simply registers the threat of immigration and ethnic difference, he is ultimately less white than our “Nordic” narrator.³⁴ But unlike Eric, who sees

himself as being “responsible” for Yves, David is only able, ultimately, to conceive of his relationship with Giovanni in two ways. At the outset, he mistakenly understands it as the meeting of equals; as it progresses, he mistakenly understands it as the burden of dependency. Giovanni is understood either as an autonomous white subject or a dependent subject of color. But for David to take seriously the differences between himself and Giovanni, he would need to interrogate and, moreover, address the power differential that exists between them.

On the opening pages of his book *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique*, Rod Ferguson calls attention to the “black drag-queen prostitute” who appears in Marlon Riggs’ *Tongues Untied*, suggesting that queer of color analysis offers the only adequate critical tools for understanding the “social heterogeneity” that her figure ultimately “allegorizes.” But while this “black prostitute drag queen” may offer the most legible figure for a cultural heterogeneity that cuts across racial and class lines, Ferguson suggests that the subject of color, no matter who he or she sleeps with, always exists on heteropatriarchy’s outskirts. Because “racialization has helped to articulate heteropatriarchy as universal,” Ferguson argues, African-American subjects were (and continue to be) seen as fundamentally unassimilable to the structures of the white bourgeois nuclear family; structures that set the “rationality” of the white individual against the primitive “irrationality” of non-white populations. Challenging white homosexuality as the exclusive and homogenous site of queer difference, queer of color analysis assumes that non-heteronormativity extends far beyond the boundaries of same-sex desires and practices. With these complicated intersections in mind, Ferguson remarks on the “odd bedfellows” that sometimes unite over their mutual enforcement of “gender and sexual norms and ideals” as well as the “unimagined alliances” that can form in resistance to those ideals.

Ferguson's attempt, throughout his book, to bring together critical race theory and queer analysis constitutes a powerful example of one such alliance.

Part of what I have been arguing in this chapter is that the 1950s framing of homosexuality as a psychiatric disorder reveals a set of surprisingly "odd bedfellows," with psychiatric models of homosexuality opening up new spaces of privilege for white, middle-class subjects. It is not the psychosexual traumas of his early childhood that David is unable to reconcile in *Giovanni's Room* but the threateningly diverse sexual heterogeneity of the queer underground—a heterogeneity attended not only by differences in race and gender, but also differing access to social power and resources. What ultimately horrifies David is not the same-sex desire that exists *inside* of his closet but the multiple forms of racial, sexual and class difference that "encroach" upon it from the outside: the deviant gendering of the "fairy," the interracial intimacies of the Black and Tans, and the "street boys" who, as Eric described earlier to Cass, are too busy clashing with the police to worry about hating either their mothers or their fathers. These are the "strange shapes" that "loom against" the polished windows of David's closet no matter how many layers of cleaning polish lay primed there. Holding onto a rigidly Anglo-American masculine ethic of progress, independence and privatized ownership, David insulates himself from the obligations and mutual reciprocities that would later come to be identified as feminist and crip models of interdependence.

In contrast, the strange coalition that forms between Eric, Cass and Yves might serve as an example of what this ethic of interdependence might look like in practice. Like David, Cass uses medical models of homosexuality as a kind of prophylactic, casting a protective boundary between the absolute psychological normalcy of heterosexuality and absolute psychological difference of homosexuality. But in challenging her psychiatric interpretation of same sex

desire, Eric not only challenges pathological models of homosexuality; he also challenges the assumptions of sexual and racial sameness that underpin that model. Thus, unlike other gay critics of “disordered” homosexuality, Baldwin appears less concerned with the extent to which these models have caused white subjects to feel shame about their desires and more interested in the way that those models have perpetuated a problematic division between the “sophisticated” interiority of white subjects and the “primitive” sexuality of their lower class and African-American counterparts.³⁵

Understanding Baldwin’s novel in this way allows us to dispense with the outworn binary that pits pride and progress against isolation and shame. Indeed, it is important to keep in mind that part of the progress narrative that converted the shame of medical stigma to the pride of gay community involved a problematic disavowal of disability, with gay activists ultimately partnering with the APA at the expense of individuals with other psychiatric disorders. As Bayer recounts, Gay Liberation activists made the psychiatric model of homosexuality one of their main targets during the early 1970s. Taking as their initial models anti-psychiatry activists like Thomas Szasz, they launched a comprehensive attack on the profession itself. Thus the 1971, the APA convention was assaulted by militant gay activists who used Guerilla Theater and other loud and irreverent forms of social protest to challenge the psychiatric regulation of difference. As John D’Emilio notes:

Chicago Gay Liberation invaded the 1970 convention of the American Medical Association, while its counterpart in San Francisco disrupted the annual meeting of the American Psychiatric association. As a session there on homosexuality a young bearded gay man danced around the auditorium in a red dress, while other homosexuals and lesbians scattered in the audience and shouted “Genocide!” and “Torture!” during the reading of a paper on aversion therapy. (295)

The Chicago Gay Liberation's tactics here strongly resemble the critiques of psychiatric authority that were being launched, at the same time, by early "Mad Pride" activists who, as Bradley Lewis explains, protested "their negative treatment within the psychiatric system," having "shared the common experience of being treated with disrespect, disregard, and discrimination at the hands of psychiatry" (163). In 1970, Portland, Oregon's Insane Liberation Front was founded, followed the following year by the emergence of the Mental Patients' Liberation Front in both Boston and New York City.³⁶ These tactics, shared by gay and disabled activists alike, cast a shadow on the "objectivity" of medicine and opened up the institution to more radical critiques. This, Bayer observes, led members of the APA to be "haunted by the specter of a politicized psychiatry that would be defenseless against an endless wave of protests" (141). Perceiving this threat, the APA ultimately partnered with more moderate gay activists who were less invested in anti-psychiatry activism than they were in proving the legitimacy and respectability of gay identity. Thus the 1972 convention made room for a gay activism panel that focused not on the institution of psychiatry as a whole, but rather on what was framed as a misclassification. Unlike other "real" psychiatric disorders, the members of the panel argued, homosexuality was not a symptom of psychosexual maladjustment but, to the contrary, a healthy sexual variation.

Describing the change that had occurred between the 1971 and 1972 conventions, Bayer notes that the 1972 display, "entitled 'Gay, Proud and Healthy,' was designed to win the support of psychiatrists in the struggle to end the classification of homosexuality as a disease" by suggesting that it was the disorder, rather than the institution, that required revision. Psychiatrists had simply "acted unscientifically" in their initial inclusion of homosexuality in the *DSM*, but their mistake that could be easily corrected through a simple deletion (108). Following

this lead, Ronald Spitzer wrote up a set of proposed revisions the following year that reflected a compromise between the position of the gay activists and the more conservative members of APA.³⁷ This compromise position finally passed in 1974; a later revision in 1986 removed “homosexuality” entirely. Thus the eventual removal of homosexuality as a diagnosable “disorder” was accomplished at the expense of a more radical disability critique. What began as a partnership between queer and disability activists ultimately gave way to a strategy that protected the institutional integrity of psychiatry in exchange for a measure that granted gays and lesbians a place at the table.

I end with this episode in the history of psychiatry both to provide an epilogue to Baldwin’s treatment of gay psychiatry in the 1950s and 1960s and to raise some broader questions about how queer writers and activists ought to go about addressing the politics of diagnosis. Passed through all of the appropriate channels and constructed on the profession’s own terms, the new gay and lesbian claim on “health” was ultimately granted at the expense of other psychiatric disabilities that still carried the weight of stigma and pathology. If queer of color critique, as Ferguson demonstrates, can indeed help to foster “unimagined alliances” between gays and lesbians and men and woman of color, then we must begin by rejecting the white architecture of the “closet” in favor of radical coalitional possibilities.³⁸ These are the alliances that David is continually offered throughout the novel but which he ultimately fails to imagine.

In his conclusion, Bayer remains skeptical of the victory that gay and lesbians won against the APA, aware of both the continuing power of the medical establishment and the cultural need to enforce heterosexual hegemony. He therefore ends his study with the prophecy that the APA’s decision to remove “homosexuality” from the DSM will not ultimately hold.

Unless there is a massive mobilization of gay activists to combat the impending conservatism of the 1980s, he predicts, medical institutions will discover new ways to redefine homosexuality through disability and pathology. Writing in March of 1981, just three months before the first case of AIDS was reported in the United States, Bayer could not have known how poignantly his prediction would resonate in retrospect. As I will discuss in the following chapter, the AIDS crisis in the United States drastically changed the nature of medical discourse on queer desire, enabling precisely these new and unimagined alliances between queer and disabled activists.

¹ See Jennifer Terry, *Deviant Bodies: Critical Perspectives on Difference in Science and Popular Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1999 and Ronald Bayer, *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry: The Politics of Diagnosis*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1987.

² See Sally Munt, *New Lesbian Criticism: Literary and Cultural Readings*. New York: Columbia UP, 1992.

³ It is, of course, important to point out that, despite its pathologization of homosexuality, these medical and psychiatric definitions nonetheless represented a more progressive approach to queer sexuality when compared with the moralistic approach of earlier religious models. The psychiatric model is interesting, however, for the way that it combines a medical approach with a moral one. While earlier research located a biological basis for homosexuality, and had therefore removed “blame” from both the patient and their immediate family, the psychoanalytic frameworks located the sources of the pathology squarely within the nuclear family. In these models, then, a homosexual diagnosis pointed away from nature and towards nurture, implicating parents—and especially mothers—in the production of disordered children.

⁴ See Randall Kenan and Amy Sickels. *James Baldwin*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2005.

⁵ See Stephanie Dunning, “Parallel Perversions: Interracial and Same Sexuality in James Baldwin’s *Another Country*.” *MELUS* 26.4 (2001): (95-112).

⁶ Baldwin’s unwillingness to share Eldridge Cleaver’s vision of a heteromasculine Black Nation—his insistence that the relation between black and white Americans was too intimately wedded and dialectical to be conceived of in terms of simple oppositionality—earned him the nickname “Martin Luther Queen,” an epithet that aligned his perceived race betrayal with homosexuality and effeminacy. His queerness, from the perspective of many Black Nationalists,

was evidence of his misguided alliances with white people, and those alliances disqualified him from speaking on behalf of the race.

⁷ Nearly every James Baldwin scholar has remarked upon the way that Baldwin's work resists linear narratives of inheritance and simple genealogies. Indeed, to spend any amount of time with the critical essays that have been published in the last twenty years on James Baldwin's life and work is to enter into a web of competing allegiances and identifications. Baldwin's political and literary "paternity" has been traced to a diverse set of writers including F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway (for their expatriate writing), Henry James (for his closeted gay writing) and Richard Wright (for his writing on African-American identity and his role as friend and mentor to Baldwin). Politically, Baldwin is framed as the estranged brother of both Eldridge Cleaver and Martin Luther King Jr., his writings existing in the shadows of both the militant Black Nationalist movement and the more institutionalized struggles for Civil Rights. To one political commentator in October of 2008, Baldwin even appeared to be a political precursor to the not yet elected presidential candidate Barack Obama. Thus, on the eve of the 2008 presidential elections, Colm Toibin observes that:

Had their ambitions been less focused and their personalities less complex, Baldwin and Obama could easily have become pastors, preachers, leaders of black churches. But for both of them there was a shadow, a sense of an elsewhere that would form them and make them, eventually, more interested in leading America itself, or as much of it as would follow, than merely leading their own race in America. Both of them would discover their essential Americanness outside America, Baldwin in France, the home of some of his literary ancestors, Obama in Kenya, the home of his father.

In the remainder of the article, Toibin identifies a set of parallels between the personal lives and public personas of the late twentieth-century novelist and the early twentieth century politician. Like Barack Obama, Toibin suggests, Baldwin's personal and professional life fashioned him as an eloquent spokesperson advocating difficult cross-racial alliances as the foundation of American national unity. Toibin's invocation of Baldwin's specter at this particular turning point in United States national history testifies to James Baldwin's enduring presence within the American political imagination. Baldwin's novels, in their intense concern with the racial, gendered and sexual dimensions of American national belonging, authorize us to read them not merely as aesthetic artifacts but as political treatises. Through them, Baldwin became, as Toibin suggests, a complicated and controversial "leader" of "America itself."

⁸ In reading black against the grain of queer, and vice versa, scholars including Marlon B. Ross and Rod Ferguson have enriched both fields. My observations in this chapter often rely on their exciting and innovative work, which I invoke not to dismiss, but to build upon it and take in new directions.

⁹ I am using the terms "queer" and "crip" here not in order to make any kind of universalizing identity claims but rather to read against the grain of dominant narratives of sexuality and ability. Thus I am not attempting to "uncloset" these characters as gay or disabled. My use of the term "queer" can be understood as shorthand for non-heteronormative forms of sexual subjectivity

and my use of the term “crip” can be understood as forms of embodiment that depart from traditional understandings of health and well-being.

¹⁰ For some other accounts, see Ernesto J. Martinez, “Dying to Know: Identity and Self-Knowledge in Baldwin’s *Another Country*” *PMLA* (May 2009); James Dieveler, “Sexual Exiles: James Baldwin and *Another Country*,” *James Baldwin Now*. Dwight A. McBride, Ed. New York: NYU Press, 1999; and Stephanie Dunning, “Parallel Perversions: Interracial and Same Sexuality in James Baldwin’s *Another Country*,” *MELUS* 26.4 (2001).

¹¹ When Cass realizes that she had until now perceived policemen as “neither friends nor enemies,” she invokes the famous binary that Carl Schmitt had, in 1927, proposed as that which defines the conceptual boundaries of the state. In clarifying her relation to those boundaries, she finds that cops are indeed “friends,” and that she is therefore folded into the structures of national belonging in ways that the gay street kids, who see an “enemy” in the cops, are not.

¹² Indeed, though it is outside the scope of this chapter, the power differential between men and women actively shapes many of the novel’s explorations, from Rufus’s abusive relationship with Leona to Vivaldo’s fraught intimacy with Rufus’s sister Ida.

¹³ It is, however, not just the borders of the self that are challenged here but the borders of the nation. Yves’ foreignness is both literal and figurative—in entering “the States,” he is both an immigrant piercing national borders and a queer kid whose sexuality subjects him to the homophobic violence of American law. Indeed, when Cass realizes that she had until now perceived policemen as “neither friends nor enemies,” she invokes the famous binary that Carl Schmitt had, in 1927, proposed as the basic distinction which defines the conceptual boundaries of the state.¹³ In clarifying her relation to those boundaries, she finds that cop are indeed “friends,” and that she is therefore folded into the structures of national belonging in ways that the gay street kids, who see an “enemy” in the cops, are not.

¹⁴ As Baldwin explains in one interview, “my publisher, Knopf, told me I was a ‘Negro writer’ and that I reached a certain audience. They told me I could not afford to alienate that audience, and that my new book would ruin my career because I was not writing about the same things in the same manner as I had before... You see whites want Black writers to mostly deliver something as it were an official version of the Black experience. But no true account to Black life can be held, can be contained in the American vocabulary.” (qtd. in Kenan & Sickels, 126)

¹⁵ See Reid-Pharr, Robert. *Black Gay Man: Essays*. New York: NYU Press, 2001.

¹⁶ When David pronounces that “the bed, in its sweet disorder, testified to its vileness” (14), his language connects the sexual to the medical. The “disorder” of the bed might “testify” to its “vileness,” but it is also, arguably, the “vileness” of David’s gothic recollections that enables him to “testify” to the “disordered” state of his own psyche.

¹⁷ Indeed, “fear of engulfment by women” is listed second among psychologist Charles Socarides’ fifteen pathological characteristics of the male homosexual in his 1978 book *Homosexuality*.

¹⁸ This is, of course, only one small sampling of the psychoanalytic theories regarding homosexuality that circulated among psychoanalysts of the period. Lewes identifies at least four Freudian theories of homosexuality, theories which themselves took a complex variations and shadings in the work of Freud’s successors. My aim here is not to provide an exhaustive account of these theories. Rather, in tracing their broad outlines, I hope to demonstrate the provocative intersection of psychiatric and literary culture.

¹⁹ Lennard Davis, for example, has argued against oversimplified understandings of Freud’s theories as simply sexist or homophobic by considering Freud’s early forays into transbiology—Freud’s 1876 study of eels, Davis argues, provided an early framework for his later queering of the unconscious.

²⁰ Of course, these were not the only voices. Researchers like Alfred Kinsey (in 1948) and Cleland Ford and Frank Beach (in 1951) were simultaneously suggesting that homosexual behavior was more widespread than suspected and therefore was therefore (quantitatively at least) much closer to the “norm” than many suspected. Additionally, Evelyn Hooker’s qualitative study of gay men revealed them to be more psychologically stable and happy than other research (drawn specifically from individuals who had sought help from the medical profession) had suggested. Hooker also suggested that those homosexuals who did conform to the image of maladjustment (promiscuous anonymous sex and mental distress) did so due to restrictive social attitudes and not psychosexual pathology. But it was Thomas Szasz who in the mid-1950s launched one of the most radical critique of psychiatry as a profession. Szasz argued vehemently against the type of metaphorical thinking that led practitioners to extend both the disease model and the fact of reproductive capacity (both rooted in biology) to psychic processes and complex lifestyle choices (which he likened to a type of foreign language that the native psychotherapist had a responsibility to “translate” and understand rather than to pathologize). For more on this history, see Ronald Bayer, *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry: The Politics of Diagnosis*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1987.

²¹ For a fuller account of these therapeutic interventions, see Jonathan Ned Katz, *Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A.* (1978) and Simon Levay, *Queer Science: The Use and Abuse of Research into Homosexuality* (1996).

²² As a result, the analysis is tainted and the usual prosthetic reliance on disability is unmasked. David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder have explained these “dependencies of discourse” as follows:
 Our notion of narrative prosthesis evolves out of this specific recognition: a narrative issues to resolve or correct—to “prostheticize” in David Wills’s sense of the term—a deviance marked as improper to a social context. A simple schematic of narrative structure might run thus: first, a deviance or marked difference is exposed to a reader; second, a narrative consolidates the need for its own

existence by calling for an explanation of the deviation's origins and formative consequences; third, the deviance is brought from the periphery of concerns to the center of the story to come; and fourth, the remainder of the story rehabilitates or fixes the deviance in some manner. This fourth step of the repair of deviance may involve an obliteration of the difference through a "cure," the rescue of the despised object from social censure, the extermination of the deviant as a purification of the social body, or the revaluation of an alternative mode of being.

²³ Chauncey, of course, is careful to qualify these distinctions, noting that "[n]ot all queers were middle class, by any means, just as not all fairies were of the working class... Many working-class men defined themselves as queers and eschewed the style of the fairy because they found such styles inexpressive or objectionable or because they simply refused to suffer the indignities of being a fairy. But the cultural stance of the queer embodied the general middle-class preference for privacy, self-restraint, and lack of self-disclosure, and for many men this constituted part of its appeal" (106).

²⁴ In Bryan R. Washington's reading of this scene, he mistakenly attributes the grotesque portrayal of the bar patron to David's own internalized homophobia—the fact that David is a "homosexual who despises homosexuals" (76). The zombie's gender deviance, as it is illustrated here, however, makes him anything but a "homosexual"—indeed, he seems to have much more in common with the "fairy" who historically preceded him.

²⁵ Indeed, Mumford is careful to point out that while sites like Harlem were home to a range of marginalized sexualities, these spaces often, at the same time, operated according to their own internal gender and racial hierarchies.

²⁶ Moments before his encounter with the "mummy," David had produced an account of his flirtation with Giovanni that places it squarely within the realm of surveillance and disclosure. Aware that he and Giovanni are being carefully scrutinized by the other patrons at the gay bar, David recounts: "I watched [Giovanni] as he moved. And then I watched their faces, watching him. And then I was afraid. I knew that they were watching, had been watching, had been watching both of us" (41). These insistent variations on word "watching" work the sentence into a kind of panicked frenzy and reveal the extent to which surveillance is central to the way that David experiences his desires. Though the word initially refers to David's own desiring gaze at the Italian bartender, it is quickly transformed into a collective social gaze whose object is to uncover the "truth" about David's mysterious sexuality—can he, or can he not, be counted among their ranks? The known/not known binary mapped onto the homosexual/heterosexual binary, David thus finds himself the paranoid subject of surveillance and therefore in the awkward position of having to carefully manage (for the rest of the night at least) the kind of information about his sexuality that he dispenses.

²⁷ Lewes reports that during the late 1940s, psychologists had "reasserted that paranoia and homosexuality were intimately connected and could be distinguished only on the basis of the

degree and quality of projection involved and of the conversion of sadism into masochism in the latter case" (88).

²⁸For an excellent account of the intersection between Baldwin's work and the politics of the Cold War see Roderick Ferguson's, "The Parvenu Baldwin and the Other Side of Redemption: Modernity, Race, Sexuality, and the Cold War" in *James Baldwin Now*. Ed. Dwight A. McBride. New York, NY: New York UP, 1999.

²⁹ Indeed, David's unrelenting introspection throughout the novel transforms him into a close reader *par excellence*—when it comes to plumbing the depths of his own psyche, there is nothing that he fails to miss.

³⁰ See Toni Morrison, "Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature" in *Michigan Quarterly Review* 28, no. 1 (Winter 1989).

³¹ "If ignorance is not," Sedgwick proposes, "a single Manichean, aboriginal maw of darkness from which the heroics of human cognition can occasionally wrestle facts, insights, freedoms, progress, perhaps there exists instead a plethora of ignorances, and we may begin to ask questions about the labor, erotics, and economies of their human production and distribution... these ignorances, far from being pieces of the originary dark are produced by and correspond to particular knowledges and circulate as part of particular regimes of truth" (8).

³² We saw a version of this attempt when David tells Giovanni of his hotel eviction, sharing his misfortune "out of a desire to put myself, in terms of an acquaintance with wintry things, on an equal footing with him." This "equal footing," of course, ultimately proves to be a pretense, as the differing class status between the two men create insurmountable tensions.

³³ Indeed, David's "desire," as it is articulated here, is less a desire for Giovanni than it is the desire to exercise control over both his self-image and the image that he presents to the world. We know about David's feelings for Giovanni, in other words, not by any admission of attraction but, rather, by his anxieties regarding the "impression" that his words might have left. It is thus secrecy rather than desire that forms the core of David's understanding of himself as a gay subject. Thus, as David finds himself transported from public exposure of Guillaume's bar to the semi-privacy of the breakfast establishment to, ultimately, the erotic intimacy of Giovanni's room, he is simultaneously navigating his way through the interiors and exterior spaces of the closet's epistemological architecture. That his words backfire, revealing rather than concealing his innermost thoughts, seems to confirm Sedgwick's observation that, within the epistemology of the closet, silence itself takes on the weight of information withheld. "[U]nknowing," Sedgwick explains, should be understood "not as a vacuum or as the blank it can pretend to be but as a weighty and occupied and consequential epistemological space" (77).

³⁴ See Reid-Pharr, Robert. *Black Gay Man: Essays*. New York: NYU Press, 2009.

³⁵ For more on the politics of gay shame and the critique of gay pride, see David Halperin and Valerie Traub's *Gay Shame* anthology (2009), Jasbir Puar's *Terrorist Assemblages* (2007), and Heather Love's *Feeling Backward* (2009).

³⁶ For a more thorough account of Mad Pride and its relation to disability studies, see Bradley Lewis's "A Mad Fight: Psychiatry and Disability Activism."

³⁷ This new position argued that homosexuality was not necessarily a disorder, but can sometimes be an element of disordered behavior. Relabeled "sexual preference disturbance," psychiatrists' new therapeutic focus was on those who experience distress as a result of their homosexuality. In this way, Spitzer allowed for the possibility of healthy and well-adjusted homosexuality while simultaneously avoiding having to say that homosexuality is "normal" or preferable to heterosexuality. Interestingly, the new designation actually compared homosexuality to other "sub-optimal behaviors" like racism and religious fanaticism.

³⁸ I am, of course, also thinking here of the theoretical legacy left behind by the 1981 anthology *This Bridge Called My Back: Radical Writing by Women of Color*.

5. PORN THEATERS, PUBLIC HEALTH, AND PEDAGOGY:

SAMUEL DELANY AND POST-AIDS SEXUAL CITIZENSHIP

5.1 Gifts That Keep on Giving

“A vector!” he whispered, urgently. “Forget about typhus, or smallpox, or flu. They’re rank amateurs! Wallies who give the show away with all their sneezing and flaking and shitting. To be sure, AIDS uses blood and sex, but it’s so damn savage, it forced us to become aware of it, to develop tests, to begin the long, slow process of isolating it. But ALAS—”

“Alas?”

“A-L-A-S.” He grinned. “It’s what I’ve named the new virus I’ve isolated, Forry. It stands for ‘Acquired Lavish Altruism Syndrome’...What if some virus one day stumbled on a way to make people enjoy giving blood?”

– David Brin, “The Giving Plague” (1988)

Bug chasers replace one story about the queer future with another. In place of the stock narrative about inevitable sickness and death, they have invented a story about kinship and life—a different version of the queer future to which HIV transmission nevertheless remains central... We might say that bug chasers are living a different mythology of HIV, one that treats the virus as a gift rather than as a punishment.

– Tim Dean, *Unlimited Intimacy* (2009)

In his 1988 short story “The Giving Plague,” science fiction writer David Brin imagines a future world in which altruism is contagious. No mere metaphor (like the popular cliché that “happiness is infectious”), Acquired Lavish Altruism Syndrome (ALAS) originates from a blood-borne pathogen. Because virus manifests itself in an intense desire to donate blood, it not only cultivates in its “victims” an altruistic self-image, but also spreads rapidly among and between populations. The British scientist Les celebrates the utopian potential of his discovery, imagining ALAS as an agent of world peace, a “final opportunity...to learn to cooperate” before “[s]elfishness and greed” succeed in “destroying the planet” (17). The American narrator Forry,

on the other hand, is “spooked” by the virus’s threat to his autonomy. A career-driven, status-obsessed individualist, the only potential that Forry sees in the virus is the Nobel Prize its discovery might win him. Hoping to take credit for Les’s discovery, Forry begins to plot the murder of his colleague. However, before he is able to execute his plan, a new global pandemic emerges that not only diverts the narrator’s energies but also results in a spike in blood transfusions. By the story’s conclusion, the virus has spread to a quarter of the world’s population. The narrator reflects: “Peace treaties were signed. Citizens of the industrial nations voted temporary cuts in their standards of living in order to fight poverty and save the environment. Suddenly, it seemed, we’d all grown up” (24). Transforming utopian ideology into altruistic biology, ALAS realizes Les’s dreams of a cooperative society founded upon viral bonds.

I begin with a brief synopsis of Brin’s story because of the surprising links it forges between HIV/AIDS discourse and the discourses of utopian citizenship I will be discussing in this chapter. The narrator’s brief mention of AIDS in the beginning of the epigraph, I would argue, is not incidental. Given that Brin’s story originally appeared in 1988, when public panic about AIDS was at its peak, might we understand his formulation of “ALAS” as a kind of utopian reimagining of the AIDS epidemic? The narrator, of course, is careful to distinguish ALAS from AIDS. AIDS is savage, destructive, and adversarial; ALAS, by contrast, is civilized, constructive, and cooperative. If AIDS erupts visibly and violently on the bodies of its “victims,” then ALAS is the invisible hand quietly shepherding its converts into noble humanitarian action. But what if we were to understand this contrast in temporal rather than qualitative terms? What if, in other words, we were to understand ALAS a projection of the

future trajectory of HIV/AIDS—the civilized “adult” that the rebellious virus would eventually or inevitably grow up to be?

While the utopian world that Brin’s story anticipates is far from having arrived, some recent critics and scholars—like Tim Dean, whose celebratory account of barebacking and bug chasing I have also quoted in the above epigraph—have shifted the meanings of AIDS in ways that emphasize its cooperative, community-building properties. With the advent of protease inhibitors and other biomedical innovations in the late 1990s, an HIV diagnosis was no longer a death sentence but, to the contrary, a new way of life.¹ If the first decade or so of AIDS activism had been structured around Douglas Crimp’s twin concepts of “mourning” and “militancy” (the mobilization of melancholia into a kind of productive oppositional queer rage), then much contemporary discourse has focused instead on risk management, sex education and routinized practices of personal safety.² Andrew Ross describes this transformation as a kind of selling out, a sapping away of the “frankly utopian energies and desires” that had previously powered gay liberation movements (398).³ But what Ross may not have seen or anticipated were some of the “frankly utopian” discourses of queer citizenship that did, I would argue, emerge directly out of this new biopoliticization of serostatus.

When Brin transformed the ravages of AIDS into the utopian promise of ALAS, a “selfish” epidemic into a “giving plague,” he in some sense anticipated the way that HIV/AIDS and its discourses would be newly invested, over a decade later, with utopian promise. In this chapter, I am interested in the ways that the HIV virus, in what Eric Rofes has termed the “post-AIDS” era, has provided an opportunity to rewrite queer kinship and restage American citizenship. If, as David Savran points out, unprotected sex in a text like *Angels in America* (1991) is represented as being death-driven and informed by questions of masochism and

internalized oppression, then we find a converse preoccupation in the texts under examination here. In these works, the possibility of transmission is reimagined as life-affirming, world-making, and even utopian endeavors.

In this chapter, I read Samuel Delany's *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (1999) and John Cameron Mitchell's recent film *Shortbus* (2006) as evidence of this cultural turn by which literal and metaphorical stagings of virus exchange have come to signify and organize new forms of civic "life" rather than organize, as it had previously, a queer politics of death and mourning.⁴ Prizing an anti-prophylactic willingness to be "infected" with virtues of queer citizenship, both texts reflect a distinctively "post-AIDS" consciousness. More concerned with HIV than AIDS, more focused on generation than mourning, these "post-AIDS" texts seem centrally invested in the creation of new queer forms of American life via the biological fact of sexual transmission. What is being transmitted in these encounters is not always clear—it might be a virus, a civics lesson, homosocial intimacy, or all of the above. But the result is an "imagined community" bound together by forms of "contact" grounded in the concrete world of physical exchange. In its resistance to regimes of compulsory able-bodiedness, I suggest, this new queer biopolitics holds many exciting possibilities for imagining coalition between queer and crip communities. At the same time, I argue, without a strong enough critique of gender privilege, such formulations of queer citizenship risk participating in the continued exclusion and marginalization of female, and even disabled, bodies. Closely reading the gender and sexual politics of both Delany's essay and Cameron Mitchell's film, I suggest that these new queer imaginaries, if they are to live up to their inclusive democratic ideals, must engage more deeply with a set of unresolved tensions left over from the feminist sex wars.

In this first section, I trace a broad genealogy of the AIDS epidemic and its evolving relationship to queer subcultural practices and rhetorics of queer citizenship. Reading *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* through contemporary discourses of barebacking, I consider some of the ways that Delany fashions a queer-crip sexual ethics that, without literally advocating practices of unsafe sex, nonetheless bases itself on a metaphorical logic of transmission. In the following section, I place this model under feminist scrutiny, suggesting that while Delany's model of sexual democracy holds many exciting possibilities for queer/crip resistance to global capitalism, it also risks participating in the continued exclusion and/or marginalization of female bodies. Attempting to bridge some of the tensions leftover from the feminist sex wars, I conclude the chapter with a brief reading of John Cameron Mitchell's *Shortbus*, excavating some important sites of feminist/crip resistance that are ambivalently offered within Mitchell's queerly American sexual utopia.

As the U.S. government reacted with indifference to the deaths of thousands of gay citizens, the question of whether or not gay life was mournable became intimately tied to question of whether or not gay men and lesbians actually belonged to the nation. In his book *Acts of Intervention*, David Roman dramatizes the relationship between AIDS and citizenship through a brilliant rhetorical reading of the *New York Times*' very first reporting of the virus on July 3rd, 1981. A full page "Independence Day" bank advertisement directing the reader to "Sing out on the 4th!" (complete with lyrics to the Star Spangled Banner) is flanked on its left side by a skinny column bearing the alarming headline: "Rare Cancer Seen in 41 Homosexuals." This evocative juxtaposition, Roman observes,

uncannily places the two presumably "calendrical coincidences" in direct relation to each other. If the news item makes explicit that the outbreak is contained within the homosexual community, who then is directed to sing out on the Fourth,

and for what reasons? The cruel joke of the news item in juxtaposition with the bold “Happy Independence Day”... shifts a potential time of leisure for hundreds of thousands of gay men into a potential time of terror. The members of an imagined community of gay men, in particular, are forced to locate their positions on either one of the positions of A20’s binarism. (15)

What the news items’ placement makes clear, in other words, is the mutual exclusivity of the imagined community of Americans (the newspaper’s implied audience) the imagined community of gay men whose contagion must be contained, both rhetorically and literally, in the nation’s marginalia. The article’s wording, Roman adds, immunizes the generic American citizen (the implied reader of the New York Times) against the virus’s contaminating agents by calling attention to their apparent demographic specificity—gay men near the age of thirty-nine living in New York and California who have had upwards of forty sexual encounters per week. Roman thus concludes that the placement of these two items can be read as a “foundational cultural instance that initiates a national AIDS ideology” (15). This “national AIDS ideology” defines the person with AIDS and the United States citizen relationally, and against one another.⁵

To rhetorically place the person with AIDS outside of the imagined community of American citizens is to assert, to some extent, the negligibility of their deaths. As Jean Comaroff and others have noted, the person with AIDS might in fact be best understood as a kind of Agambian *homo sacer*, able to be killed but unable to be sacrificed.⁶ If the bare life of the person with AIDS is established through the unmournability of their death, then to recognize the rising queer body count of the early days of the epidemic as a form of sacrifice, and to commemorate those sacrifices through acts of collective mourning, was to engage in a process that was not only personally therapeutic but politically powerful. Roman discusses, for example, how in the early days of the epidemic, public memorials and candlelight vigils doubled as protest and activism. While Roman focuses on the very early years of the epidemic, Ann Cvetkovich

documents and analyzes the central role that collaborative and collective acts of mourning played in the later years of the crisis through the activism of organizations like ACT UP. Such practices, both writers emphasize, are more than merely therapeutic. By asserting the loss of queer life as a loss of American life—and as such, publically mournable—these activists crafted through their performances a powerful statement about queer American national belonging.⁷

It was not just the loss queer lives, however, that was being mourned in these communities, as Douglas Crimp famously argued in his 1989 essay “Mourning and Militancy.” Rather it was the loss of a queer *way of life*. As public health officials began to shut down gay bathhouses, many felt that it was not simply the virus that was under attack but, along with it, the alternative forms of queer sociality and kinship that flourished in those spaces.⁸ Furthermore, those establishments that did remain open felt the pressure to adopt safer sex measures that fundamentally transformed the dynamics of those communities. Crimp observes:

Alongside the dismal toll of death, what many of us have lost is a culture of sexual possibility: back rooms, tea rooms, bookstores, movie houses, and baths; the trucks, the pier, the ramble, the dunes. Sex was everywhere for us, and everything we wanted to venture: golden showers and water sports, cocksucking and rimming, fucking and fist fucking. Now our untamed impulses are either proscribed once again or shielded from us by latex. Even Crisco, the lube we used because it was edible, is now forbidden because it breaks down the rubber. Sex toys are no longer added enhancements; they’re safer substitutes. (11)

The “culture of sexual possibility” that Crimp mourns is thus one in which condoms and other safe sex practices, in creating a set of barriers between physical bodies, signified on a broader figurative level the breakdown of community cohesion. Latex, in this framing, is not a fetish but a “shield” that blocks productive exchange between queer subjects.⁹ Blocking intimacy, these safer sex substitutes were thus understood by many in the community as part of the apparatus through which public health discourses intruded upon previously unfettered sites of masculine

sexual abundance. Crimp's nostalgia for the lost intimacies of a pre-AIDS gay sexual culture echoes other scholars' utopian framings of that culture as a non-hierarchical site of harmonious brotherhood. In 1982, for example, Dennis Altman, described the bathhouses as spaces characterized by a "sort of Whitmanesque democracy, a desire to know and trust other men in a type of brotherhood far removed from the male bondage of rank, hierarchy, and competition that characterise much of the outside world" (79-80).¹⁰ Simon Watney, too, defended the bathhouses against the attacks waged by moralizing public health officials who saw them as breeding grounds for vice and contagion rather than, as Watney argues, affirmative sties of gay community.

Thus, while the increasing implementation of safe sex practices within these cruising sites constituted an important attempt to preserve both the lives of gay men and the institutions that enabled gay male communities to thrive, such implementation was perceived by many as creating a set of prophylactic barriers that hampered gay men's ability to "know and trust" one another within those communities. Though safer sex campaigns were implemented in the name of preserving the life of the populations (the standard rationale for biopolitical management), the result, according to some, was the death—or at the very least, the dampening and sanitizing—of the very practices that made those populations queer.¹¹ Thus, in 1996, Andrew Ross observed that it is "remarkable that the specific psychology of risk pioneered within AIDS education resonates so strongly with the developing political culture of risk and security in advanced capitalist societies in general," elaborating:

AIDS activism has pioneered the ethics and practice of active prevention. Consequently, the risk culture specific to AIDS is based on the premise that the future can be changed—by actions in the present. This might be described as an anti-dystopian premise, inasmuch as it is designed to avert a bad future. By being defined in the negative, however, it declines the frankly utopian energies and

desires that have traditionally characterized the principle of sexual liberation among gay people. (398)

Ross's observations here register an important shift in public thought about the virus. Indeed, Eric Rofes has identified 1996, the year in which Ross was writing—and, incidentally, the year that Delany first published portions of what would later become *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*—as a major turning point in the era of AIDS. Gay and lesbian activist gains, along with the biomedical advent of new treatments and medications, had created a generalized cultural sense that AIDS, as an epidemic and public health “crisis,” had ended. The July 1996 International AIDS Conference in Vancouver had initiated what Rofes calls the “Protease Moment” in which new advertisements for AIDS drugs proliferated, “consolidating conflicting images into a single, unified representation. People with HIV appeared now as healthy, active people bearing no obvious differences from uninfected people” (29). No longer understood as an automatic death sentence, HIV was reconfigured in the cultural imagination as a new way of life.

Bolstered by this declared “end of AIDS,” the gay male community's sex cultures experienced a new resurgence. If the virus's exponentially growing body count during the 1980s and early 1990s (and the government's failure to respond to the crisis) had fueled a radical politics of mourning, militancy and protest, then its transformation into a chronic rather than terminal condition in the late 1990s and 2000s incorporated the virus and its management into the disciplinary practices of global capitalism. The representation of the virus, in other words, was no longer primarily focused on the dying body of the person with AIDS but on the management of risk and the circulation of the HIV virus between generally “healthy” male bodies.

Rofes acknowledges, of course, that to proclaim “the end of AIDS,” as many newspaper headlines and cultural commentators had done during the last years of the 1990s, may seem both inaccurate and offensive to many who lack the capital or the circumstances to inhabit this “post-AIDS subjectivity.” “How can some of us have this feeling that AIDS is over,” Rofes asks, when “people are still dying, not only people from whom middle class white gay men separate themselves—Latinos, blacks, drug users, women, women, poor people—but middle class white gay men as well?” (10) Acknowledging the uneven distribution of resources and a reality of continuing AIDS casualties that contradicts the rosy picture of “healthy” and “active” individuals painted by the drug companies, Rofes resolves these conflicting portraits by explaining that while AIDS itself, as well as AIDS deaths, are far from “over,” the AIDS “crisis,” as a specific (and often white) cultural response to an enormous (and often white) death toll, has ended. To develop a concept of the “post-AIDS” era, then, is not to minimize its ongoing casualties but rather to register a discursive shift in the way the virus was signifying within the American cultural imagination. With a new generation of gay men coming of age in an era where safe-sex education and risk management were understood as the norm, the rhetoric of crisis and epidemic becomes somewhat misleading. Having moved out of a “state of emergency,” Rofes contends, our energies must now be invested in “regenerating community and culture” (18). Invisibly residing in the bodies of otherwise healthy-looking HIV-positive men, the virus therefore experienced a new shift in signification that carried with it new possibilities for community.

For Rofes, the primary means by which this “regenerat[ion]” could occur was the cultivation of new practices and cultures of low-risk promiscuity. But for other authors like Tim Dean, writing more recently, such regenerations can also take the form of “high risk” behaviors in which gay men are either indifferent to, or actively searching out, the possibility that a sexual

encounter will result in seroconversion. In his 2009 study *Unlimited Intimacy: Notes on the Subculture of Barebacking*, Dean explores the new and unexpected meanings that condomless sex has taken on in the post-AIDS era. Before 1981, of course, condomless sex between men was understood as just one of many benign sex practices that proliferated in the sexually liberated seventies. After the first outbreak of AIDS, however, condomless sex transformed into the culturally-maligned practice of “barebacking.” Signifying excessive risk or recklessness towards one’s own health and the health of others, “barebacking” is therefore a concept that only holds meaning in the context of the AIDS and post-AIDS era.¹² Often characterized a form of sexual Russian Roulette, the practice of barebacking has been stigmatized as irresponsible at best and suicidal at worst, frequently framed by members of both the gay community and the mainstream heterosexual community as a chilling example of homophobic self-hatred. Who, after all, would risk infection that did not already have a death wish or a desire for self-punishment?

Challenging dominant discourses that frame unprotected sex between men in the era of AIDS as a form of risky or even suicidal behavior, Dean maintains that barebackers are, to the contrary, engaged in affirmative practices of subcultural solidarity. Framing the appeal of barebacking and bug chasing as the appeal of “unlimited intimacy,” Dean explains how, in recent reimaginings, the virus is understood as a life-giving agent that enables new forms of “breeding” and “fantasies of generation” between men. These “fantasies of generation” take even more explicit forms among men who, identifying as “bug chasers,” consciously seek seroconversion. In what we might call a “crip” twist on the politics of marriage equality, Dean therefore presents a qualified celebration of the way that barebackers use “risky” sex to create alternative form of kinship and futurity. “Exchanging bodily fluids” rather than “wedding rings,” Dean observes,

barebackers resist nuclear family arrangements as well as mainstream health norms, replacing the national imperative to marry and have children with a queer imperative “confer solidarity” through the biologically literalized (and lateralized) genealogies of the “bug brotherhood.” “What would it mean,” Dean asks, “for a young gay man today to be able to trace his virus back to, say, Michel Foucault?” (89). Serostatus “conversion” is thus understood, within these discourses, not as a rising body count, but as the swelling ranks of a new queer citizenry—an imagined community physically connected through a biological network of virally-forged bonds. By “reasserting what might be considered a retrograde emphasis on blood or ‘substance,’” Dean suggests, this new form of “biosociality” among queer men, “[o]ffers a vital means of showing relatedness” (89-90, 94).¹³ Thus if Queer Nation was an outgrowth of ACT UP’s radical politics of mourning and militancy in the AIDS era, then the kind of consanguineous relations that Dean describes here might be understood as one of the new crip forms that queer citizenship has taken in the post-AIDS era.

Dean’s discussion of the racial demographics of barebacking and bug chasing subcultures, however, raises some interesting questions regarding what forms of social and financial capital (if any) are necessary to participate in these radical queer forms of biosociality. Dean begins his discussion of race and class difference by defending his study against charges that “bareback subculture is a product of privilege—all those financially comfortable white guys with good medical insurance who can afford the latest drugs and who boast the means to cultivate new forms of hedonism” or, conversely, a “subculture of the disenfranchised and desperate, those who see no future for themselves” (40). Dean’s defense against these charges, however, takes an oddly neoliberal tone, celebrating the barebacking community’s multiracial diversity rather than engaging with the very questions of privilege and disenfranchisement that

such questions were intended to open up. Pointing out the significant overlap between bareback and “down low” subcultures, Dean maintains that

[a]ll the evidence suggests that participants of in bareback subculture are as racially diverse as one would expect in a multiracial society such as the United States. Subcultural membership does not depend on race, class, age, serostatus, or even sexuality but simply on one’s willingness to embrace risk, to give and to take semen. In this respect, bareback subculture is unusually democratic. (41)

What strikes me as especially odd in this qualification is the way that Dean conflates demographic “diversity” with “democratic” equality. Such a conflation, however, risks eliding the very different meanings that practices like barebacking can hold for men of different racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. After all, the potential criticisms that Dean alludes to—that barebacking is a “product of privilege” or a practice of the “disenfranchised”—are far from invalidated by the fact that barebacking subcultures are socioeconomically and racially diverse. To what extent might a person’s access to health insurance, for example, provide a differential safety net that changes the nature and scale of their “risk”? As Claire Laurier Decoteau additionally notes, “race and age demographics have shifted significantly in recent years” with African-Americans “account[ing] for almost half of the estimated number of HIV/AIDS cases diagnosed” despite making up only 13% of the US population (349).¹⁴ In a footnote, Dean himself cites a study whose “qualitative findings... suggest that the act of bareback sex holds differential cultural and phenomenological meanings for Black and Latino men” (40). Such qualitative differences, however, are generally framed within Dean’s analysis as a form of queer commonality: “Just as some gay men pursue bareback sex without regarding themselves as barebackers, some non-white men pursue sex with other men without considering themselves to be gay. To a certain extent, bareback subculture is on the ‘down low’ even when non-whites aren’t participating” (42). While the overlap between these two subcultures opens the door to

some exciting forms of intersectional theorizing, such analyses require a rigorous attention to difference that is elided by Dean's projection of a simple parallelism between white barebackers and black men on the down low.¹⁵

It is with these distinctions in mind that I now turn to Samuel Delany's *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*. Though Delany himself publicly identifies as a black gay man, his memoir chronicles his experiences of public sex with a diverse population of men, many of whom might—to use contemporary terminology—be considered on the down low. Written on the cusp of the post-AIDS era, just after the advent of protease inhibitors, Delany's memoir looks both forwards and backwards. Delany affectionately chronicles the pre-AIDS era of sexual abundance that Crimp mourns while at the same time anticipating, I would argue, the post-AIDS ethos or trope of viral community outlined by Dean. As black, working-class, gay man, Delany is attendant to many of the power differentials that are elided in Dean's account. However, as I will ultimately suggest, his expansive vision of public sexuality as democratic praxis produces its own elisions, particularly with regard to feminist politics and female agency.

I will begin, however, with a brief overview of the essays themselves. Documenting the public sex subcultures that flourished during the heyday of New York City's porn theater district, Delany laments the eventual erasure of these spaces during the 1980s "clean up" of Times Square. Part memoir, part social theory, Delany's book provides a fascinating account of how a dynamic sexual institution was forged at the intersections of visual culture, urban space and, eventually, public health discourse. Interested less in the films themselves than in the way those films helped to animate a set of important subcultural practices, Delany argues that the eradication of Times Square's red light district, though enacted in the name of "public health" and "women's safety," ultimately served the interests of corporate expansion. The result, Delany

laments, was the implementation of stricter laws and new zoning ordinances that shut down the porn theaters and, in so doing, opened up real estate for establishments like the Disney Store.¹⁶ “The New Times Square,” he argues, “is simply not about making the area safe for women... It is not about reducing the level of AIDS... The New Times Square is about developers doing as much demolition and renovation as possible in the neighborhood” (161). By replacing the porn theaters with “family-friendly” commercial establishments, Delany suggests, developers blotted out a vibrant sexual community structured by an ethics of democratic inclusivity, neighborly goodwill, and (importantly, as I will argue) the “altruistic” exchange of goods and services.

To claim that Delany mobilizes an ethics of barebacking, much less “bug chasing,” in his text might initially appear to be a stretch given Delany’s own refusal to endorse such practices. It’s important to acknowledge that, while Delany expresses strong solidarity with queer repudiations of the safe sex movement, he has elsewhere explicitly repudiated bug chasing as a “lunatic” practice, and has recounted his own refusals to have anal sex with HIV-positive men. Countering what he points to as mainstream misinformation about the transmissibility of the virus, Delany has often championed masturbation and oral sex as activities that, unlike anal sex, do not require men to “swathe themselves in rubber.” It is these low-risk practices that Delany is most interested in chronicling in *Times Square Red*, *Times Square Blue*. Defining “intimacy” in much different terms than the barebacking subcultures that Dean documents, Delany therefore appears, on the surface, to fall much more in line with writers like Rofes who champion low-risk promiscuity over deliberate viral transmission.

What I locate in Delany’s text, then, is far from any sort of straightforward ethics of bug chasing. If, for Dean, one motivation of bug chasing is to biologically literalize a more abstract concept of community, what Delany presents us with, instead, is the metaphoric

instrumentalization of that biosociality. Delany, in other words, transforms the structural dynamics of AIDS transmission into a figurative schema that empties the virus of its actual disease properties. Indeed, what is perhaps most interesting about Delany's text is the way that he mobilizes a rhetoric that prizes the anti-prophylactic willingness to be "infected" not with the virus itself but rather with the virtues of fraternal citizenship. What is being "transmitted" in the encounters he describes can vary. Physical pleasure, to be sure, is part of the exchange, but so are multiple forms of intimate cross-race and cross-class education that can't be taught in the classroom. These unpredictable forms of civic exchange, for Delany, created a vibrant countercultural world of democratic belonging and pedagogical praxis. Thus, while Delany mentions AIDS only briefly in his text, the utopian models of citizenship advanced and illustrated in *Times Square Red*, *Times Square Blue* nonetheless appear to reflect a distinctively "post-AIDS" crip consciousness.¹⁷

One place where we begin to see this crip consciousness emerge is in Delany's anecdote about his chance meeting with Russian poet Andrei Voznesensky. When Voznesensky tells Delany about his refusal to use a public urinal for fear of contracting HIV, Delany interprets Voznesensky's trepidation as a "cross-section of the process by which AIDS functions, on an international level, as a discursive tool to keep visitors to the city away from all public facilities and place where, yes, one might, if so inclined, engage in or be subject to any sort of interclass contact" (156-157). Delany's "yes" here is revealing, as it functions rhetorically and grammatically to reinforce rather than deny the linkage between public space and the possibility of infection. Delany, in other words, is not at all interested in rehearsing the medical fact (as many liberal commentators do) that one cannot get AIDS from a toilet seat. Using the

transmission of the virus as a metaphor for the blurring of class boundaries, he implicitly celebrates the productive border-crossings and contaminations that public spaces make possible.

Delany's scant attention to HIV/AIDS or "safe sex" practices within the book itself, then, might be understood less as omission and more as an active form of queer/crip resistance to the public health panics and rhetorics of safety through which conservative forces that seek to sanitize public space and "dismantle the various institutions that promote interclass communication" (122). The promotion of "safe sex," Delany argues, tends to function as little more than extension of the conservative drive to cultivate "safe neighborhoods, safe cities, and committed (i.e., safe) relationships" (Delany 1999, 122). It is therefore no surprise that Delany chooses the word "contact" (which carries connotations of infection and transmission) to describe the practices that exist at the theoretical core of his treatise on public sex.

"Contact," Delany suggests, might be understood as the messy organic alternative to the stale and hygienic practices of professional "networking." Drawing examples from the institutionalized structures of academia, Delany frames networking in terms of the elitist commitment to self-promotion. For the networker, social exchange is purpose-driven—a means to an end. Often, too, networking proves to be ineffectual as the "supply" of opportunities available to networkers is usually much smaller than the demand. But if networking persists in the hierarchized institutions of higher education, then "contact" is democratic insofar as it constitutes a mode of social intimacy in which members of different social classes and backgrounds can experience pleasurable, surprising and mutually enriching connections with one another. Thus Delany's examples often combine the sexual with the quotidian:

Contact is the conversation that starts in the line at the grocery counter with the person behind you while the clerk is changing the paper roll in the cash register. It is the pleasantries exchanged with a neighbor who has brought her chair out to

take some air on the stoop... As well, it can be two men watching each other masturbating together in adjacent urinals at a public john...contact is also the intercourse—physical and conversational—that blooms in... public restrooms, sex movies, public parks, singles bars, and sex clubs. (123)

In all of these examples, public space provides a chance to experience pleasurable cross-class dialogue and intimacies that temporarily transcend the divisions that normally shelter citizens from one another. Indeed, if the vertical structures of networking reinforce a stagnant and static model of learning, then lateral structures of contact present fresh and exciting opportunities for the transmission and dissemination of knowledge. Ultimately the pedagogical practices to which “contact” gives rise are spontaneous and incidental, learning opportunities that can occur only when members of different races, cultures, and social classes make themselves available to one another. Thus if “safety” is defined as the sanitizing of social and class boundaries, then to do away with it here is no suicidal or masochistic endeavor. By rejecting the prophylactic barriers that insulate citizens from one another’s difference and by making sexuality part of the ordinary exchanges between neighbors, he instead frames cross-race and cross-class public sex as a life-giving, communal practice that allows parts of the city to “bloom.”

Because these pedagogical transmissions are unplanned, occurring as part of the rhythms of urban life, sustaining them requires the continued availability of public space and a willingness to engage in potentially uncomfortable intimacies. When developers shut down the porn theaters and replaced them with family-friendly retail outlets, Delany laments, what they ultimately shut down were these quotidian practices of civic democratic exchange and public pedagogy.¹⁸ Thus Delany pits the corporate greed that motivates the private sector against the generously “contaminating” reciprocities of the democratic public sphere. While the former clings to the prophylactic discourses of public health as a way of maintaining the boundaries

between social classes, the latter creates barrier-free spaces where unmediated forms of intraclass “intercourse” can take place.

These productive intimacies, it’s important to point out, cross lines not only of class and race, but also of ability/disability. As Robert McRuer and Abby Wilkerson have argued, what often goes unremarked in Delany’s essay is the “disability consciousness that permeates it: not only does Delany himself use a cane for mobility, but he seeks out and comes into contact with people who embody behavioral, cognitive, physical, and sensory difference” (McRuer and Wilkerson 2003, 6). These figures, among others, include a young man named Joe, nicknamed the “Mad Masturbator” because his sexual compulsions lead him to remain in the theater for hours at a time, muttering obscenities at the screen and rubbing his penis painfully raw in the process. Though some of the patrons are disturbed by Joe’s “derangement... [his] stooped shoulders, his scrawny arms, his drooling incontinent satyriasis,” Delany observes that most of the customers let him be, some of them even extending a friendly “hello” when they walked in. “Two months later,” Delany narrates, “the city closed the Variety Photoplays... when city inspectors noted... ‘a hundred and fifty acts of unsafe sex,’” adding: “What accommodations, if any, Joe was able to make for his condition, I cannot even imagine” (73). Thus against a contemporary gentrified landscape, Delany recalls the way in which the porn theaters functioned, by contrast, as accessible democratic sites of queer and crip sexuality.

By defending public sex against the ableist logic of public health panics, Delany might be understood as one of a number of theorists (including Robert McRuer, Chris Bell, and Tim Dean) who have begun to see AIDS theory as a site of productive exchange between queer theory and disability studies. As Dean points out in his discussion of barebacking and bug chasing,

it may be via disability theory as much as via theories of sexuality that HIV-positive people can argue most cogently the question of their self-determination... Fidelity to the subcultural ideal of erotic pleasure necessitates a betrayal of the mainstream cultural ideal of health—or, more precisely, betrayal of a distinctly medicalized understanding of what counts as health. (60)

Thus, while Delany never explicitly advocates condomless anal sex (and indeed, in other writing he advocates specifically against it), his work has nonetheless been productively taken up within the larger scholarly conversation on barebacking. Chris Bell, for example, has drawn upon *Times Square Red*, *Times Square Blue* in a recent essay which recounts and reflects upon his own experiences of unprotected sex as an HIV-positive African-American man. Complicating the question of “responsibility,” Bell considers the ways that certain state laws make non-disclosure of HIV-positive status a prosecutable offense, regardless of the context of the encounter or the level of risk involved in the individual sexual exchange. “People do not always disclose their status in sexual free zones,” Bell argues, “But that does not mean that they are lacking in moral fiber. It implies that those acting in sexual free zones realize that they are occupying a space in which the rules (‘read: family values’) of the outside are not in effect” (223). From this vantage point, Bell praises Delany for downplaying the question of sexual “safety,” in favor of a more fundamental set of protections—namely, the protection of sexual desire, regardless of one’s race, gender, class, or disability status.

Dean, too, explicitly finds in *Times Square Red*, *Times Square Blue* a productive model for formulating an ethics and rationale of cruising, among both barebacking and non-barebacking subcultures. Delany’s model of contact, he observes, is ultimately not that different from the practices of queer reproduction and generation that are at the heart of some barebacking subcultures. Calling Delany’s subcultures “profoundly democratic” and “Whitmanesque,” Dean wonders what it might mean to formulate “cruising as a way of life” (188). For those who

identify as bug chasers, this way of life rests upon practices of donation or “gift-giving.” “By treating HIV as a ‘gift’ whose donation creates consanguineous relations among subcultural members,” Dean argues, “barebackers are participating, almost invisibly, in the broader cultural enterprise of redefining kinship” (51). Thus the subculture of barebacking and bug chasing, Dean notes, creates new forms of life and community through the generous circulation of real or imagined “gifts.” With this in mind, it is surprising that Dean makes no mention of the central role literal acts of gift-giving play in Delany’s analysis.

“Contact,” at its best, for Delany, involves a pleasant cross-class interaction between strangers that results in the “easy and fun” exchange of goods or services. In its most idealized form, contact involves the spontaneous alignment between one citizen’s needs and another citizen’s unwanted cast-offs. Delany describes the editorial jobs that a straight male friend of his was able to offer several of the topless dancers that he met at strip clubs, a publishing job that he himself was able to secure for the client of a street hustler with whom he was acquainted, and the short bibliography of science fiction writers that he was able to jot down for the “aspiring director” in line next to him at the supermarket. Finally, he recounts an anecdote in which, ten minutes after trashing a broken vacuum cleaner, Delany encounters an Italian-American man looking to sell his own wet-dry vacuum cleaner for ten dollars. What makes these encounters different from networking, Delany maintains, is their spontaneity, their cross-class dimensions, and most importantly, the fact that they are motivated not by personal gain but by neighborly good will. Might we understand the economic pleasures of “contact,” therefore, as being structurally similar to the pleasures of barebacking? In both instances, acts of neighborly exchange are pleasurable-driven rather than motive-driven. Fueled by a desire for neighborly intimacy, the act of social and/or physical intercourse is satisfying in its own right, requiring no

external reward or incentive—and yet there exists the possibility that one participant in the exchange will nevertheless come into possession of an unexpected “gift.” It is almost as though Delany has retained the concepts of transmission and infection, but emptied them of their biological content. What is passed back and forth between men in these idealized intimate encounters is not a virus; it’s quotidian knowledge, learning opportunities, and on a very basic level, goods and services.

Thus if, for barebackers, the virus is understood as gift that “keeps on giving,” then Delany presents us with the inverse: the altruistic “gift” between strangers is framed in viral terms as a good deed that spreads outward into the population. Contracted from the “Good Samaritans at traffic accidents” or the “neighbor who... lets you use her phone to call a locksmith,” these random acts of kindness send ripples of neighborly goodwill among the populace. “Watching the metamorphosis of such vigil and concern into considered and helpful action,” Delany concludes, “is what gives one a faithful and loving attitude toward one’s neighborhood, one’s city, one’s nation, the world” (126). Striking in this quote is not just the utopianism of Delany’s vision, but the way his language of geographical expansion (from the local, to the national to the global) mimics the process by which an isolated outbreak can transform into a worldwide pandemic.

Like the utopian scientist in Brin’s short story, Delany celebrates the infectious and even utopian qualities of altruism much to the chagrin of the capitalist forces that would shut down all sites of potential viral transmission. Brin’s narrator Forry, on the other hand, is a networker *par excellence*—he is only able conceive of his work relationship with Les on competitive terms. Forry ends the story clinging to his false credentials: “I carry a card in my wallet that says I’m a Christian Scientist, and that my blood group is AB negative, and that I’m allergic to nearly

everything... I won't take blood. I won't. I'll donate, but I'll never take it." Forry's refusal is not surprising, given that he is presented throughout the story as the paragon of American selfishness and individualism and is therefore deeply suspicious of the new communitarian world that he inhabits. However, in the section that follows, I want to consider what it might mean to take seriously the refusal to make "contact." Can such refusals be understood something other than the process by which corporate developers marshal the rhetoric of public health and safety in order to stamp out democratic spaces of cross-class dialogue? While Delany's utopianism is appealing and generative, I suggest in what follows that there may be a problem with the assumption that good deeds are always rewarded, that a public pedagogical encounter will always result in learning—that, in short, all subjects who articulate themselves in opposition to the world of privatized capital will end up aligning harmoniously with one another. The belief that "contact" is always good belies other, less utopian possibilities of conflict and violence and Delany's model of "contact" fails to account for these intersectional clashes.

5.2 The Sexual Politics of Contact

Joe, the "Mad Masturbator," is one of the most provocative and perplexing figures in Delany's narrative. For Delany, the porn theater offers an important "accommodation" for Joe's sexual compulsion by providing a non-judgmental space of inclusion and acceptance where he can enjoy a limited amount of protection from the doctors and law enforcement officials who misunderstand his condition. But while Joe's compulsive behavior, on the one hand, showcases the crip dimensions of Delany's sexual democracy, those compulsions are also gendered in ways that might be difficult for a feminist reader to immediately reconcile. Delany relates a few of the phrases that he hears Joe directing toward the movie screen: "[t]hem fuckin' tits, man—oh, shit,

them tits! Go on, sit on my face bitch” (67). The difficulty in separating the objectifying language Joe uses from the sexual compulsions that frame his disability, I would argue, opens up a set of knotty questions about the potential limits of “contact” as a theoretical or political paradigm. If, as Delany argues, the porn theaters provide a space where intimate encounters between strangers can function as a kind of friendly social glue that binds men to one another (across the usual divisions of race, class and ability), then how are we to respond to expressions of sexuality in these spaces that appear to be inflected with patriarchal or misogynist meanings? In asking this question, my intention is neither to villainize Joe nor to dismiss his legitimate need for accommodation, but rather to complicate a set of the dichotomies that Delany seems to reinforce throughout *Times Square Red*, *Times Square Blue*. Constructing too neat an opposition between the democratic potential of public sex and capitalism’s anti-democratic practices of corporate privatization, Delany often leaves the sexual politics of his model undertheorized.

Of course, to critique Delany’s vision from a feminist perspective, we must first understand the complicated and often divisive role that feminism has played in the sex wars of the 1980s. The particular brand of lesbian feminism that emerged out of the sexual liberation movements of the 1970s was especially wary of a politics that saw lesbians’ as female versions of male homosexuals. Thus in her famous 1980 essay “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,” Rich urged feminists to:

move toward a dissociation of lesbian from male homosexual values and allegiances. I perceive the lesbian experience as being, like motherhood, a profoundly female experience, with particular oppressions, meanings, and potentialities we cannot comprehend as long as we simply bracket it with other sexually stigmatized existences... the term gay serves the purpose of blurring the

very outlines we need to discern, which are of crucial value for feminism and for the freedom of women as a group. (349)

Rich punctuates her argument by pointing to “women’s lack of economic and cultural privilege relative to men” and disparaging the “the prevalence of anonymous sex,” “the justification of pederasty,” and the “pronounced ageism in male homosexual standards of sexual attractiveness” (349). Against this hierarchical portrait of male same-sex sexuality, Rich asserts a deeply egalitarian “lesbian continuum” in which women exchange intimacy, support, and sometimes (but not always) sex. Thus while some lesbians who “lack a coherent female community” may find themselves “shar[ing] a kind of social life and common cause with homosexual men,” such common cause, Rich implies, is relatively superficial when compared with lesbians’ emotional and political connection to the feminist community (349).

Published one year before the first outbreak of AIDS in the U.S., Rich’s essay is positioned just on the cusp of what would turn into the deeply contentious sex wars of the 1980s. Aligning herself with anti-pornography feminists like Catherine MacKinnon, Andrea Dworkin, Susan Griffin and Susan Kappeler, Rich joined an emerging feminist scholarship that increasingly understood male heterosexuality as the primary emblem and tool of women’s social subordination. The heterosexual bedroom was positioned in these accounts as a site in which misogynist fantasies of sexual domination could be played out—fantasies that were themselves heavily informed by pornography’s objectification and sexual exploitation of women. As Robin Morgan famously put it, “[p]ornography is the theory, rape is the practice.” Thus, while gay male sexual subcultures were not the direct target of anti-pornography feminism, which was primarily focused on compulsory heterosexuality, there was ultimately little distinction being made between the largely same-sex cruising culture of the porn theaters, and the more clearly

hetero(sexist) exchanges that characterized the culture of the commercial sex industry.¹⁹ What came under attack in these accounts, then, were precisely those red light districts that writers like Crimp and Delany had celebrated as democratic spaces of sexual liberation. In this way, the anti-pornography rhetoric that characterized radical feminism was conveniently appropriated by the right to start the processes of zoning and privatization that Delany outlines.

Echoing Rich's initial polarizing imperative for the lesbian to choose between either gay liberation or women's liberation, feminism quickly became polarized into a set of highly contentious "pro-sex" and "anti-pornography" camps. Aligning themselves with gay men, pro-sex feminists fought to preserve sexual subcultures, defended BDSM and pornography, and became involved in AIDS activism.²⁰ Meanwhile, anti-porn feminists forged a controversial alliance with the religious right to censor obscene materials and stamp out vice districts. Pro-sex feminists saw the anti-pornography agenda as circumscribing women's agency by reinstituting a set of puritanical sexual norms, while anti-porn feminists accused the other side of not being sufficiently critical of sexuality's gendered power dynamics.²¹

Thirty years later, anti-porn feminism has largely fallen out of fashion, and it has become routine to denounce the insights of MacKinnon and Dworkin as examples of short-sighted feminist prudery. And indeed, there is much to critique. Critical race theorists, transnational feminists, and post-structuralist queer scholars have productively challenged many of the universalizing models that anti-pornography feminism rests on. Rich's global and transhistorical model of "lesbian resistance," it has been noted, consolidates an enormous variety of cultural practices under a singular model of "woman-identification," flattening out racial, geographical, temporal, and sexual specificity in the process. Using models of femininity and masculinity that relied upon unmarked racial norms (always assuming a universalizable white middle-class

subject), second wave feminism thus could not always account for the uneven forms of agency and victimization that do not fall neatly along a strict male/female binary.²²

It is precisely Delany's careful attention to and appreciation of heterogeneities of race, class, and ability that make his account in *Times Square Red*, *Times Square Blue* such a compelling rebuttal to the second wave's assault on pornography—and contextualizes his seeming disregard for “women's safety.” Presenting promiscuity as pedagogy and reframing the porn theater as a site of altruistic egalitarian exchange, Delany implicitly counters Rich's portrait of gay male sexuality as an extension of heterosexuality's commitment to hierarchical relations. But is it possible, in the context of Delany's analysis, to take a concern for “women's safety” seriously without capitulating to the moral and health panics that he so insightfully critiques? What is the relationship between the heterosexist encounters taking place *on* the movie screen and the male same-sex encounters taking place *off* of it? Can a feminist reading of *Times Square Red*, *Times Square Blue* be undertaken without resurrecting the clichéd and politically problematic image of the predatory underclass rapist and the helpless upper class female victim? What modes of analysis, in other words, are available to us for theorizing “safety” and “privacy” in a way that does not place feminist insights at odds with theories of queer and crip citizenship?

One way out of this bind, I propose, is to subject Delany's text to some of the same critiques that have been made, ironically, of lesbian feminism's commitment to sexual utopianism. In *Hard Core*, Linda Williams notes that the “radical utopian dreams of achieving a better, more egalitarian set of sexual arrangements too easily slip into what Alice Echols (1984) calls a new ‘feminist biological determinism’” (26). Might we see in Delany's biosocial politics of “contact” another version of this deterministic utopian imaginary? And like that utopian imaginary, might it also exclude certain subjects or erase certain types of difference in its

commitment to universalizing models? What a writer like Delany and a writer like Rich surprisingly share, I would suggest, is their commitment to a globalizing framework of egalitarian sexuality that creates a too-rigid binary between “right” and “wrong” sexualities. While Rich’s vision of egalitarian sexuality can be found within the “lesbian continuum,” Delany’s blooms within urban zones of interclass contact. What is policed in Rich’s account are forms of desire and identification that seem to be aligned with patriarchy while what is policed in Delany’s are those forms of non-identification and sexual prudishness that seem aligned with the homophobic and conservative forces of corporate capitalism. And just as Rich’s model purports to encompass all women without ultimately attending to the structural differences in their racial, class, or geographical milieu, Delany’s model purports to encompass all *human* subjects without attending to key differences in gender.

However, while radical feminism has, over the years, come under heavy fire by third wave feminists for its theoretical shortcomings, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* has, with one recent exception, received almost exclusive praise from queer scholars.²³ By troubling Delany’s text from a feminist standpoint, then, it is not my intention to simply reshash an old political debate between “pro” and “anti” sex positions, but to suggest that a more radical approach to intersectionality—one that contends with conflict as well as democratic inclusion—might help us out of this theoretical rut. In what follows, I discuss a couple of episodes in which feminism comes into uneasy—but perhaps productive—conflict with the queer and sometimes even crip world of democratic sexual exchange that Delany celebrates. These conflicts are not easily resolved, but acknowledging their existence may bring us a step closer to developing new ways of talking about sexuality that guards against conservative co-optations of “women’s safety” while still remaining attentive to gendered structures of social power.

The conflict between Delany's politics of "contact" and a feminist analysis of gender is showcased most clearly, perhaps, in his encounter with a young man named Rannit. Having developed a casual sexual relationship with Rannit inside one of the theaters, the two men decide to have lunch together one day. The excursion brings to Delany's attention a habit of Rannit's of which he had been previously unaware:

In the seventy-five yard walk... Rannit managed to brush up against three women on the street, dragging his hand across their hip as he passed, and, once, as he was going into the pizza place, outright grabbing a young woman's behind. She turned and gave him a sharp, disgusted look. He grinned at her, then at me. (86-87)

Appalled by what he observes and refusing to celebrate or encourage Rannit's acts of street harassment, Delany attempts over lunch to engage him in a conversation about his compulsions. Though he makes little headway in helping Rannit to understand why his actions toward women are inappropriate, Delany uses this encounter to highlight the informal but important civic value of public sexuality. Delany describes Rannit as

a guy I'm unlikely to invite to my house. But that still doesn't mean that the sex between us wasn't fulfilling and mutually satisfying. And who knows: if we continue running into each other... maybe I'll be a good influence. Perhaps I'll begin to get across to him some idea that there are other ways to behave in this society that might satisfy the largely heterosexual components of his desire, ways that are a good deal more socially acceptable than touching up women in the street. (88)

This raises, I think, a perplexing question about what precisely it means to conceive of sexual exchange as an extension of civic dialogue. Does this encounter constitute a moment of "contact" *despite* Rannit's misogynist treatment of women? Or does "contact" happen here precisely *because* clashing ideologies are brought together within a network of intimacy through which pedagogy, as well as pleasure, can productively flow? Delany seems to conceive of his friendship with Rannit as falling under the latter rubric, their friendly exchange of sexual

pleasure leading to a productive dialogue in which Delany can exert a “good influence” over Rannit’s misguided beliefs about acceptable conduct towards women.

I, however, am less convinced. This is, in part, owing to the somewhat problematic reasoning that Delany uses to attempt to persuade Rannit not to grope women on the street. Telling Rannit “there are a lot better ways to go about getting yourself laid than that,” and later, “you’re going to get in trouble. What happens when some woman calls the police on you?” (87) Delany’s dialogue with Rannit does not appear, in the end, to provide him with any substantial feminist education. If Rannit learns anything from the exchange with Delany, it’s not a lesson about sexual politics and the institutionalized gender relations that underlie the sexual objectification of women. It’s a lesson, rather, about how best to fulfill his desires within the acceptable limits of the law. Though Delany at one point observes that Rannit’s behaviors “seemed a cross between social and obsessive, rather than in any way sexually gratifying,” he seems uninterested in connecting that observation to the radical feminist belief that social practices like rape and sexual assault are indeed more social than sexual, an assertion of social power wedded to an intricate set of institutionalized practices and representations. Pointing out merely that there are ways to “satisfy the largely heterosexual components of his desire” that are “more socially acceptable” than street harassment does not, in the end, provide an adequate counter to the beliefs and practices that inform Rannit’s compulsions. Indeed, if second-wave feminism taught us anything, it’s that there are plenty of “socially acceptable,” and indeed, institutionalized, ways to infringe on women’s sexual autonomy. Though Delany may have been attempting to influence Rannit behavior by meeting him on his own terms, he ultimately allows his own example of civic exchange to be emptied of most of its civic value.

This failure of feminist pedagogy extends to Delany's framing of the films themselves. Acknowledging the sexism of most of the commercial film pornography of the 1970s and 1980s, Delany contends that these films also challenged gender norms in potentially transformative ways. Conducting an unofficial experiment during the 1980s in response to the tours that WAP (Women Against Pornography) was leading through the area, Delany recalls comparing six mainstream films in the movie theaters in New York with six of the films playing in the porn theaters. The pornographic films, Delany reports, represented more women as "having a profession," more "friendships between women," and ended with more women "getting what they want" (79).²⁴ Delany does not, however, discuss what precisely it is that the women in the films are represented as "wanting" in these films, nor does he engage with the common feminist argument that heterosexual sex scenes in pornographic films can often function as a form of discipline, in which professional women are "taken down" and intimacy between women is disrupted and disqualified by the eventual intrusion of the male member.²⁵

While Delany's informal reading of the pornographic films can be understood as an innovative counter to anti-porn feminists' oftentimes reductive accounts of the same films, feminist critics like Constance Penley and Linda Williams have provided instructive examples of how one might critically appraise pornography both for what it is accomplishes (an aspect often overlooked by anti-porn feminists) and for what it fails to accomplish (an aspect often overlooked in Delany's text). For example, in her classic study of pornography, Williams, like Delany, urges that porn be understood as genre comparable to other genres, with its own unique narrative structures and devices. Unlike Delany, however, who concludes his analysis with the declaration that porn is, in general, less sexist than mainstream cinema, Williams understands

that parallel as an opportunity to unpack the porn genre's deeply gendered conflicts (while also celebrating some of its possibilities).

For example, while Williams acknowledges that *Deep Throat* was “one of the first pornographic films to concentrate on the problem of a women's pleasure and to suggests that some sexual acts were less than earthshaking,” she is careful to qualify that such an exploration does not automatically make the film “a progressive or feminist work” (25). Performing a meticulous close reading of the “money shot,” Williams makes the convincing case that *Deep Throat* both “model[s]... orgasm on a decidedly phallic model of ‘bursting bombs’” while simultaneously producing “a contradictory subtext of plurality and difference” (113). For Williams, then, pornography is neither to be monolithically condemned as the exemplary site of female victimization, nor is it to be understood as a representation of unfettered sexual freedom. Like other genres, it instead represents a complicated negotiation sexual and gender norms.

But what for Williams is an intriguing subtext of “plurality and difference,” for Delany becomes not only a text but an important primer from their working-class audiences. Observing the way that pornography diversified the sexual act into a “a four part act, oral and genital, where everyone gets a chance to be on top” (78), Delany suggests that the sex acts represented in the films may have helped to normalize and destigmatize non-missionary sex positions in ways that were liberating to both men and women. He elaborates:

Generally, I suspect, pornography improved our vision of sex all of the country, making it friendlier, more relaxed, and more playful—qualities of sex that, till then, had been often reserved to a distressingly limited section of the better-read and more imaginative members of the mercantile middle classes. For the first year or two the theaters operated, the entire working class audience would break out laughing at everything save male superior fucking... By the seventies' end, though, only a few chuckles sounded out now—at the cunnilingus passages. And in the first year or two of the eighties, even those stopped... I think, under

pressure of those films, many guys simply found themselves changing what turned them on. (78)

Delany thus concludes that films that were screened in the porn theaters may have actually provided a “tremendous sexual education for their working class audience” (78).²⁶ Here, Delany both replicates and reverses the logic of second wave feminist condemnations of pornography. What for writers like Dworkin and MacKinnon was most dangerous about pornography—its ability to act as an instructive primer for how to treat women—for Delany becomes its greatest virtue. If anti-porn feminists saw pornography a kind of violent and patriarchal sex education for men, then Delany sees in those same films a sexual pedagogy committed to non-patriarchal egalitarian values. Both, in other words, understand pornography as a genre with a relatively direct and unmediated relation to the public it reaches, its transmission of social values resulting in a predictable set of real-world consequences.

Even more notable in this passage, however, is the way that it resonates with Delany’s invocation, elsewhere in the text, of the infectious qualities of altruistic exchange. Like the good deed whose positive ripples and effects spread concentrically outward into the population, “giv[ing] one a faithful and loving attitude toward one’s neighborhood, one’s city, one’s nation, the world,” (126) we are here given a singular sex practice (“male superior fucking”) that expands outward into a democratic diversity of sex practices. Originating with a privileged sliver of the educated elite, these practices eventually spread to the working class, ultimately “improv[ing] our vision of sex all of the country.”²⁷ If for Robin Morgan, “porn is the theory” and “rape is the practice,” then for Delany, we might say that “porn is the theory” and “democracy is the practice.”

Delany is not the only one to conceive of pornography as a site of democratic sexual abundance. Steven Marcus has used the term “pornucopia” to discuss many pornographic texts’ framing of sexuality as an endless and communally shared resource. “Everyone,” Marcus writes, “is always ready for anything, and everyone is infinitely generous with his substance... No one is really jealous, possessive, or even angry” (273). Marty Klein adds that “the most straightforward narrative for pornography is erotic abundance. In the world that porn depicts, there is more than enough of everything,” creating “a world of erotic surplus in which all choices are possible” (249).²⁸ This pornucopic world of erotic surplus is, for both Marcus and Klein, limited to the fictional world of fantasy, as it differs markedly from what Klein calls the “sexual economy” of dominant culture where “female eroticism” is understood to be a “precious” and “scarce commodity” (252). In almost identical terms, Delany describes what he sees as the “system of artificial heterosexual scarcity” which he blames for some of the street harassment women experience. Were heterosexual women to adopt a similar approach to sexuality as gay male culture, he speculates, the whistles and catcalls that women regularly encounter on the street would likely either disappear or at the very least lose their “hostile tenor” (197). Envisioning a “situation of greater sexual availability” for all genders, Delany take a step further than either Klein or Marcus in envisioning what a fantasized “pornucopia” might look like into utopian practice.²⁹

Delany’s championing of a democratic sexuality to be shared by women and men alike is certainly worth pursuing. To bring that world into being, however, we must first contend with the patriarchal ideologies that underlie the very logic of “abundance” and heterosexual “scarcity.” As Adrienne Rich pointed out twenty-years before the publication of Delany’s essay, compulsory heterosexuality is culturally enforced precisely through “the mystique of the

overpowering, all-conquering male sex drive, the penis-with-a-life-of-its-own,” a mystique that “is rooted the law of male sexual right to women.”³⁰ By framing sexual violence as primarily a problem of men’s limited sexual access to women (rather than a problem of sexual entitlement), Delany does not go far enough in counteracting that “mystique” or critiquing the structures of compulsory heterosexuality which create it.

Delany’s arguments about the feminist pedagogical value of the films is somewhat belied by his own observation earlier in the piece that the forms of homosexual and homosocial bonding that take place inside the theaters in many ways

depend entirely on the absence of “the woman”—or at least depend on flattening “the woman” till she is only an image on a screen, whether of light or memory, reduced to ‘pure’ ‘sexuality,’ till, a magical essence, a mystical energy, she pervades, grounds, even fuels the entire process, from which she is corporally, intellectually, emotionally, and politically absent. (25)

We might recognize in this description the classic traits of what Eve Segwick identified in 1992 as “male homosocial desire” as it is triangulated through the figure of the woman.³¹ In the context of the porn theaters, of course, this homosocial bonds are literalized through the the homosexual contacts that take place there. In his study of male-male homoeroticism in the *Penthouse Letters*, Henry Jenkins examines the way that “plausible deniability,” within the pornucopic world of the magazine, enables a “passive slide into homoeroticism.” By framing same-sex encounters as unintended consequences of heterosexual acts, the letters opens up a world of transgressive sexual possibilities without, at the same time, leveling a serious threat to male heterosexual privilege.³² The “woman” in the *Penthouse Letters* is thus reduced to “thin membrane” between the two men involved, a process that is structurally echoed in Delany’s description of the process by which the absent woman is “flatten[ed]” into an “image on a screen.”

Aware of this dilemma, Delany attempts to resolve the paradox not through intersectional critique but rather by transforming this “corporally, intellectually, emotionally, and politically absent” woman into a “present” one. In the pages that follow, Delany recounts episode in which he allowed a curious female friend to accompany him to the porn theaters one afternoon. Ana’s interest in the space is more anthropological than sexual, motivated by a desire to observe for herself the practices that Delany had related to her in conversation. As she tours the aisles and observes various sexual exchanges taking place around her, she finds herself propositioned by a couple of men who politely accept her rejections. “It was more relaxed than I thought it would be,” she observes afterwards, “I thought it was going to be more frenetic—people just grabbing each other and throwing them down in the shadows and having their way. But it was so easy going” (30). This anecdote serves an important purpose in Delany’s narrative as it appears to demonstrate how “safe” the porn theaters actually are for women. If the dominant rhetoric has painted them as dangerous havens for sexual predators, then Delany’s recounting of Ana’s reaction frames them instead as a neighborly space of social and sexual exchange—spaces where female agency can be easily exercised. But when Delany asks Ana if she would ever consider returning, she says “no,” adding later, “I was scared to death!” Ana’s affective relation to the porn theater (one of fear) seems thus at odds with her intellectual perception of the space’s “easygoing” atmosphere.

Privileging Ana’s intellectual response over her affective one, Delany is quick to imply that Ana’s fear is irrational. When prompted, Ana is unable to point to “anything in particular that scared [her],” leading Delany to chalk up much of her anxiety to the “fear of the outside that she brought within.” Delany concludes that “despite Ana’s assertion from more than twenty years ago” that she felt uncomfortable in the theater, he doesn’t see “any reason that a woman (or

women) couldn't take any (or every) role I've already described or will go on to describe for any (and every) male theater patron." But to produce the diversely gendered sexual subculture that Delany envisions, we may need to do more than simply encouraging more women to check their anxieties at the door or "educating" them to be less afraid of strange men in dark places.³³

Taking an additive approach ("the more the merrier"), Delany seems unwilling to acknowledge the structural overhaul that may be necessary to make these spaces of "contact" truly inclusive of and accessible to women.³⁴ As Kendall Thomas observes in his 1996 interview with Jocelyn Taylor (founder of one of the first New York City lesbian sex parties):

the culture of public sex is definitely gendered; even within the queer world, the possibilities are not identical, and therefore the efforts to create a public sexual space for women must be qualitatively different. Although it would be important not to exaggerate the degree of safety that gay men have, one must meet needs that simply aren't present in the culture in which men can move freely, through the night, in and out of doors. (64)

It is these qualitative differences that seem get lost in Delany's indiscriminate Whitmanesque model of contact. Understanding desire and intraclass intimacy on primarily masculine terms, Delany can ultimately only conceive of "privacy" as a version of capitalist "privatization" and seems to only understand "safety" as a corporate buzzword designed to stamp out interclass contact. But, as Kendall's observation suggests, terms like "safety" and "privacy" might hold more radical feminist meanings and associations as well, ones that are not simply reducible to the capitalist privatization. While anti-porn feminism may have brought discussions of sexuality in directions that were often divisive and counterproductive, we may still do well to remain wary of theoretical paradigms that celebrate the inherently subversive power of public sexuality while ignoring the power relations that structure it.

How, then, are we to finally break out of the binds and stalemates which continue to pit “pro-sex” ideologies against “anti-sex” agendas? Rather than simply rehash the oppositions and resentments leftover from the feminist sex wars, I have attempted in this section to highlight a set of unexpected convergences between these opposing factions, alongside of the more conventional accounts of their differences. Indeed, in the end, Delany and Rich have more in common than we might think. Both convert a specific form of sexuality into a broader rationale for egalitarian, democratic, and even utopian renderings of American culture. These convergences are not limited to Delany and Rich. While Leo Bersani’s queer championing of sexual “self-shattering” and anti-relational practices of cruising sexuality are in many ways antithetical to the arguments of anti-porn feminists, it’s worth remembering that Bersani’s theories were directly influenced by Catherine MacKinnon’s account of sexual power relations. And while Gayle Rubin’s “Thinking Sex” was written as a critique of anti-porn feminists’ reinforcement of conservative sexual norms, we might also note that Eve Sedgwick drew from Rubin’s earlier work in *The Traffic in Women* to formulate her theories of homosocial triangulation. Examples like these help us to trouble some of the institutional and activist binaries that have dominated the terms of the conversation. It may therefore be the lowering our disciplinary barriers, rather than our sexual ones, that provide us ultimately with the most productive instances of “contact.”

5.3 Compulsory Sexuality and Feminist/Crip Resistance

In this chapter I have argued the Delany’s utopic queer meditations in *Times Square Red* *Times Square Blue* might be understood as an important precursor to later queer mobilizations of barebacking in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Articulating the pleasures of

democratic “crip” sexuality against the conservative public health panics that would stamp out these vibrant worlds of social exchange, Delany envisions “contact” as the glue of a just society. Delany’s writing thus constitutes a crucial intervention in the critical discourses that have, over the last twenty years, attempted to imagine new modes of queer citizenship. However, Delany’s observations about women and pornography, I have suggested, raise a set of troubling questions regarding the status of female sexuality within this queer utopian imaginary. Converting the “scarce” resource of female sexual openness into the fantasy of future erotic abundance, Delany appears to view blocked sexual pleasure as the cause of conflict—and sexual connection as the antidote. Without a strong feminist framework, and without enough attention to the difficult intersections that can emerge between feminism, queerness, and disability, Delany’s model of democratic intimacy risks being applicable only to male bodies and homosocial practices. Stressing inclusivity over intersectionality, we might say that Delany lays down a welcome mat without unlocking the door. That is to say, female sexuality is invited, but not ultimately, accommodated. To make these worlds truly and radically accessible to all, we must acknowledge the intersectional clashes that inform our ability to participate, and take seriously the politics of refusal.

To address the value of feminist and queer refusal, I want to conclude with a brief turn to John Cameron Mitchell’s recent film *Shortbus* (2006). A fictionalized document of queer public sexuality in the contemporary subcultural spaces of New York City, Cameron Mitchell’s film might be understood as *Times Square Red*, *Times Square Blue*’s younger sibling. When Justin Bond describes the underground sex party/salon to Sofia, he remarks that “it’s like the sixties, only with less hope.” Post-9/11 malaise is not the only thing, however, separating the *Shortbus* salon from Delany’s sexual subculture. Notably, the sex parties that take place as *Shortbus* are

less racially diverse than the porn theaters of the 1970s, and even more homogeneous when it comes to socioeconomic status. Furthermore, unlike the porn theaters, it takes place within a private residence, and therefore operates by invitation only. Though more racially and socioeconomically uniform, the space does boast a greater diversity of gendered bodies, with both men and women taking part in the pleasures of the salon. Like Delany's description of the porn theaters, the interactions that take place at Shortbus are comfortable and lively, filled with unexpected connections and intimacies between characters. Mirroring Delany's pedagogical model of "contact," the intercourse that takes place within its walls is not only sexual but artistic and intellectual.

There is also an interesting generic shift at work here. While Delany's essay documents the sexual subcultures that organize around the screening of pornographic films, *Shortbus* is itself a film that treads a fine line between art and erotica. Described by *GQ* as "the most sexually explicit film to ever go on general release," *Shortbus* pioneers in its use of frequent unsimulated sex scenes in which, Mitchell assures us, nearly all of the orgasms are real. With *Shortbus*, Linda Williams observes, "Mitchell set out to make a uniquely American film of hardcore art that might leave his viewers with a feel-good afterglow" (*Screening Sex* 284). Taking the film as a "knowing counterpoint" to the traditional American pornographic genre, Williams argues that *Shortbus* is "modeled on the quintessential pornographic narrative" but also "operates as corrective to the isolation and fixation on bodies that solitary porn can engender" (288). Perhaps its most apparent twist on the pornographic narrative, however, is its seemingly total disinterest in producing sexual arousal in the viewer. A common observation about the film is that, despite its hardcore depiction of sex, the film is not particularly sexy. The "feel-good

afterglow” that Williams points to is ultimately more sentimental than sexual, more about personal and collective liberation than physical release.

In the DVD commentary, Mitchell notes that he is attempting to invert the standard practice through which critics locate sexual subtexts in seemingly non-sexual images and narratives; by making a film that is wholly about sex, sex itself can stand in as a metaphor for something else. In the case of *Shortbus*, sexual possibility is therefore less about pleasure or arousal than it is about the radical reinvention of American democracy. Mitchell reflects on how the gymnastic qualities of some of the film’s sexual acts echo the initial aspirations of the Declaration of Independence: “We truly are talking about the optimism of the U.S. The ingenuity. And even the position that the three of them are in is rather ingenious. There’s resonances of this pursuit of happiness.” This point is perhaps driven home at a different moment during the same threesome when, in the context of a complicated sexual position, Jamie delivers what one critic calls a “proctological rendition of the ‘Star Spangled Banner,’” singing the national anthem while performing analingus on Ceth. It is in this way that *Shortbus* enacts a radical or reinvented patriotism, connecting the imaginativeness of queer public sex to the revolutionary founding of America itself.

To establish this theme, the film’s opening shots pan across an animated model of the New York City landscape, lingering on body of the Statue of Liberty. After this prolonged gaze at one of our most recognizable national icons, the viewer (rendered infinitely mobile by the camera’s panoramic gaze) is transported into and out of the windows of multiple apartments where a series of frustrated sex acts are taking place in isolation. These short sexual vignettes serve as our introduction to all of the principal characters. James attempts, in a series of gymnastically impressive positions, to fellate himself; Severin exchanges a set of caustic remarks

with the client she is pleasuring; and Sofia and her husband copulate in a series of urgent and comically acrobatic positions. Between two of these bedroom vignettes, the viewer is reminded that this New York cityscape is one that is uniquely shaped (and damaged) by the 9/11 attacks. Moving across the city from James' bedroom, the frame stops for several seconds on an animated facsimile of Ground Zero. During this brief gaze at the two visible spaces where the towers used to stand, the animation dissolves into realism, and Ground Zero comes into clear photographic focus. Panning upwards to a neighboring window, we witness the encounter between the dominatrix Severin and her client, Jesse, who between the cracks of the whip engages her in a discussion of the Iraq War. Thus, while on one level the isolated nature of these opening vignettes demonstrates sex without connection and pleasure without intimacy, they also suggest a body politic hopelessly fragmented by a set of national and even global traumas. Psychological wounds become associated with the scarred New York landscape and sexual alienation is mapped seamlessly onto Bush-era political apathy.

It is precisely this set of early associations that allows Mitchell and his ensemble to present the literal space of *Shortbus* as both a sexual and political antidote to this apathy and alienation. While there is no question that the *Shortbus* salon is presented as a site of sexual liberation, it is also presented, more subtly, as a utopian space of radical democratic citizenship. If sex between couples, in private, isolated bedrooms signifies political apathy, then the public nature of sex in *Shortbus* begins to look a lot like revolution. Perhaps the most immediate connection between political resistance and public sexuality is the "Sex-Not-Bombs Room," the most explicit site of sexuality within the *Shortbus* salon. As Sophia enters the room for the first time, both she and the viewer are confronted with an amorphous mass of limbs; dozens of bodies intertwine in ways that are complicated and disorienting while simultaneously maintaining a sort

of cooperative unity. Indeed, while other rooms within the Shortbus salon often witness misfired communication between friends and lovers, this public, fleshy paradise at the heart of the Shortbus salon is peaceable and serene, an edgy reinvention of the idealistic 1960s slogan “Make Love, Not War.” In its dissolution of “bodies” into “flesh” and its commitment to networked subjectivities and (literally) intersecting corporealities, the queer multitude that populates Shortbus becomes a sort of cipher for how democratic citizenship might be reinvented in the age of multinational global capitalism.³⁵

Tobias, the elderly former mayor of New York (a character likely based on former mayor Ed Koch), becomes the spokesperson for this version of sexual ethics during an intimate pedagogical moment with Ceth. After Ceth meets Tobias during a technological mishap involving Ceth’s mobile device and Tobias’s pacemaker, the two begin an intimate conversation in which Tobias reflects:

But you know what’s the most wonderful thing about New York? It’s where everyone comes to get fucked. No really. It’s one of the last places where people are still willing to bend over, to let in the new—and the old...New Yorkers are, um, permeable, you know what I mean? Therefore, we’re sane. Consequently, we’re the target of the impermeable and the insane. And of course New York is where everyone comes to be forgiven.... People said I didn’t do enough to help prevent the AIDS crisis because I was in the closet. That’s not true. I did the best that I could. I was scared and impermeable. Everybody knew so little then. I know even less now.

Here, Tobias articulates a vision of queer citizenship in which sexual intimacy is not only healthful, restorative (keeping one “sane”) but also—and perhaps more importantly—the key to both personal and collective renewal. Indeed, we might similarly observe the sexual terms in which James’ spiritual and psychological isolation is framed. Reflecting on his relationship with Jamie, James confesses, “I never let him fuck me. I never let anyone fuck me,” confessing later to Caleb that all of the love he sees around him “stops at my skin. I can’t let it inside.” To allow

yourself to be fucked is to exchange a stubborn commitment to the autonomous self for a more liberating and dynamic commitment to queer interrelationality. Looking backward toward the legacy of AIDS death and mourning, Tobias nonetheless articulates a forward-looking vision of queer “contact” that echoes Delany’s model of anti-prophylactic citizenship in the post-AIDS era. It’s, of course, important to qualify here that all of the *Shortbus* actors got HIV tests before filming and make explicit a commitment to safe sex within the film itself—everyone uses, and is encouraged to use, condoms. Like Delany, Cameron Mitchell is not literally advocating bug chasing but mobilizing, rather, a crip metaphors of transmission and infection.

Indeed, what is both exciting and troubling about the film is its mobilization of disability as a metaphor for queer interrelationality and kinship. When Justin Bond welcomes Sofia into the *Shortbus* community, he gives a brief explanation of the space she is entering: “Do you know what a shortbus is? You’ve heard of the big yellow school bus. Well this is the short one. It’s a salon for the gifted and challenged.” On some level, the reclaiming of this disability icon may be an attempt at speaking back to the historical legacy that institutionalized, treated, and medicalized in various ways the “sexual perversions” defiantly on display in the *Shortbus* salon. However, if the film is attempting to build upon the shared history of queerness and disability, it ultimately falls short of forging the connections that its vocabulary so suggestively gestures toward. Instead, the vocabulary of disability seems to simply provide additional rhetorical currency to the film’s narrative of queer resistance. Though this queer utopia is rhetorically established on the principle that a radically resistant sexual space is needed for the “gifted and challenged,” it ultimately becomes clear that all of the characters who have access to this particular fleshly paradise did in fact ride the “big yellow school bus” that *Shortbus* takes as its foil.

Indeed, the few glimpses of physical disability we do get are brief and perplexing. A man identifying himself as an albino recognizes Jamie from the sitcom that Jamie had starred in as a child. But the repetition of Jamie's catch phrase "I'm an albino!" feels more like comic relief than social commentary. And while Tobias's pacemaker malfunction throws him into the arms of young and able-bodied Ceth, the arguably crip kiss they share remains relatively chaste, with Ceth saving most of his actual bending over for his encounter with James and Jamie later that night. Furthermore, as the camera traverses the spaces of the salon, the bodies that we see are, for the most part, young and fit, often displaying feats of impressive flexibility and athleticism. One notable exception to this homogeneity of body types occurs when the camera briefly lingers on a sexual pairing between a fat individual and thin one. But, tellingly, both individuals are shot from the neck down, revealing their bodies but not their faces. Given how frequently the camera seems to linger on faces throughout the film (often sealing a set of intimate bonds between characters via the exchange of long, wordless looks), these faceless bodies stand out as being outside of its erotic fold, objects rather than subjects. We might almost read their presence as a kind of superficial "proof" of the film's commitment to diversity, eccentric furnishings that decorate rather than truly inhabit the space of the salon.³⁶

From a disability studies perspective, I am also interested in the film's obsessive interest in Sofia's sexual dysfunction—as well as her rehabilitation (via queer sex) into new state of health and wholeness. Presented as the central problem that the narrative must solve, Sofia's non-orgasmic body, I would contend, exposes the extent to which able-bodiedness, as a compulsory system, requires its subjects to be adequately sexualized. Given this seeming resistance to the usual pornotopic narrative of orgasmic abundance, the film's overall emphasis on the crucial importance of achieving sexual climax is striking. Early in the film, gay couple

James and Jamie meet Sofia, a sexually-frustrated couples counselor whose inability to experience orgasm has created tension in her own marriage to her husband. In an attempt to help her experience her first orgasm, the two invite Sofia to attend the Shortbus salon. It is here that Sofia meets and develops a friendship with a dominatrix named Severin who attempts to guide Sofia in her quest for an orgasm. Though Severin's guidance proves to be mostly ineffective, Sofia does finally experience her first orgasm during the exuberant orgy that concludes the film.

Eunjung Kim has remarked upon the ways that individuals thought to possess inadequate levels of sexual drive are "subject to a pathologizing framework that demands a 'cure' and 'help' under the premise that sexual desire is universally and constantly present in adult life and that its absence reflects pathology or causes harm." Despite an increasingly visible asexual community that rejects medical labels in favor of more affirmative models of minority identity, psychiatric professionals nonetheless persist in interpreting the asexual disinterest in sex as a sign of repression, traumatic avoidance or other forms of psychological blockage. Diagnostic labels include "hypoactive sexual desire disorder," "sexual aversion disorder," and "inhibited sexual desire disorder," among others. Ela Przybylo adds to this research by exploring the peculiar style of Foucauldian "confession" that attends the medicalization of asexuality. In these dynamics, she observes, "absence" itself transforms into a tangible lack that must not only be confessed but mobilized into discourse.³⁷ This is precisely the sort of confession that Sofia presents to Jamie and James when they first visit her for a couples' therapy. The session starts out well enough, but a disagreement between Sofia and Jamie suddenly transforms into a screaming match. Once things have calmed down, Sofia delivers a mortified apology to her clients, followed by the explanation: "I'm pre-orgasmic." Jamie responds supportively but warily, "Does that mean you're about to have one?" The forward-looking teleology of Sofia's

phrasing, coupled with the comic misunderstanding that it produces in Jamie, are telling. Sofia *is* in fact pre-orgasmic, as her confession of sexual dysfunction initiates a sequences of rehabilitative interventions that will indeed, by the end of the film, result in her first orgasm. It is a confession, in other words, that always already anticipates the orgasm/cure that will usher her presently-lacking body into a future state of physical and emotional wholeness.³⁸

Indeed, in a dynamic which on some level rehearses the historical narrative of the frigid woman who places her sexually-dysfunctional body in the capable hands of male doctors, James and Jamie “prescribe” for Sofia a visit to the Shortbus salon—a space which itself opens up new opportunities for confession and therapeutic intervention. First there’s Shabbos Goy, the self-identified “orgasmic superhero” who informs her that he finds her lack of orgasm “unacceptable” and offers to help her “turn on [her] lights.” Then there’s Justin Bond who asks her how the “big O is coming” and reassures her that she “has what it takes” if she would only “loosen up.” And finally there’s Severin, who probes for the traumatic root of Sofia’s disorder by grilling her about her childhood.

Perhaps the most striking parallel, however, between Sofia’s queer sex therapy and conventional medical accounts of diagnosis and treatment is Kaplan’s 1979 description of the asexual as a someone who “behaves as though his sexual circuits have been ‘shut down’” (qtd in Kim). As Kim puts it, “[i]n these discourses, sexuality was imagined as kind of electricity and the human body as a series of circuits that responded to a certain stimuli; in this rhetoric, the asexual individual becomes a broken system.” Interestingly, Shortbus presents us with a nearly identical account of Sofia’s problem when Justin Bond, seeming to ventriloquize Kaplan’s description of the asexual as a set of broken circuits, encourages Sofia to view her body as “magical circuit board, a motherboard, filled with desire that travels all over the world, that

touches you, that touches me, that connects everybody, you just have to find the right connection.” This image is soon literalized in the blackout that—at the moment of Sofia’s most intense sexual frustration—abruptly blankets the city in darkness. Conversely, when Sofia finally experiences her orgasm/cure, the camera cuts to an aerial shot of the city where lights radiate geographically outward from the site of the salon, signaling the end of the blackout, the end of the film, and the end of Sofia’s dysfunction. As the credits roll, the lyrics of the accompanying soundtrack (“Surgery” by Scott Matthews) leave no doubt that Sofia has indeed just experienced a life-saving medical intervention.³⁹

As the lights radiate outwards, we are presented with a vision of sexual “healing” not unlike Delany’s utopian sexual schematics; though contact begins with a singular “connection,” it ultimately has the potential to expand outward, “giv[ing] one a faithful and loving attitude toward one’s neighborhood, one’s city, one’s nation, the world” (126). Considering Delany’s utopian ripple effects alongside of Mitchell’s account of queer sexuality is a cipher for “ingenuity,” “optimism,” and the “pursuit of happiness,” we might thus be in a better position to disentangle the film’s ambivalent and intertwined investments in what Heather Love calls “compulsory happiness,” what Robert McRuer calls “compulsory able-bodiedness,” and a system that I would term “compulsory *sexuality*.” If for Rich, feminist resistance to patriarchy is partially expressed in “lesbian resistance” to heterosexuality, might we also conceive of “*asexual* resistance” to a much broader set of compulsory systems governing erotic identification—systems that even queers may sometimes find themselves complicit in?⁴⁰

Indeed, the act of forging successful sexual connections with others is frequently described, in the film, in terms that sound more like civic duty than individual fulfillment.⁴¹

Though the *Shortbus* salon is presented as a sexually democratic landscape where all variations

are accepted and encouraged, there is at the same time, an implicit judgment of those unwilling or unable to open themselves up to sexual pleasure. Within this model, one person's blown fuse short circuits the entire system, leaving little room, ultimately, for erotic refusal and asexual agency. Sexuality, in this context, appears to be compulsory, framed as part of a larger political and ethical imperative to "bend over and let in the new." Both Sofia's sexual dysfunction and James's unwillingness to be penetrated are given as examples of the many prophylactic "short circuits" on the Shortbus's dynamic and interrelational "motherboard"—both are diagnosed with the personal and political symptoms of an "impermeability" that needs "fixing."⁴²

Thus there is a certain paradox inherent in both Delany and Mitchell's prizing of physical permeability. Infectiously crip, on the one hand, and rehabilitative on the other, "contact" and "permeability" function respectively, in both works, as a sort of inverted health balm. Like the ALAS virus in Brin's story, they emblemize an outbreak of sentiment that, in infecting the wider culture, simultaneously cures it of its ills. Conversely, Forry's refusal to either give or receive the "gift" of blood donation transforms mark him as a paragon of American individualism. But is there a way to understand this sort of refusal as something other than a commitment to capitalist competition, and corporate privatization? Can such anti-social gestures be understood, instead, as an ambivalent expression of queer subjectivity and feminist solidarity?

Such sites of queer refusal, I want to finally suggest, are not impossible to locate in Mitchell's film, brief as they are. Though Sofia generally plays the role of the willing patient, she is not entirely uncritical of the way ideologies of compulsory sexuality circulate, reflecting at one point to Jamie and James: "You know I feel like we're inundated by images of these super deluxe babes in the throes of the ultimate orgasm. I think it's just some myth to sell more magazines." The subtle gender critique embedded in this reflection (women as sexualized

objects of consumer desire), takes an even more explicit form when, during an intimate discussion with a small group of lesbians and transmen, Sofia is asked what sex feels like to her. Though her reply begins with a false enthusiasm, it soon unravels into a narrative of female alienation. She says:

Sex is really awesome. I love sex. We all know that sex feels terrific. I love it, love it a lot. It's a great work out. It feels good. And I love, you know, loving my husband. It's just, you know, there just comes a point sometimes where it gets to be a lot of pressure and it feels like "ah!" like someone's going to kill me and so I just have to smile and pretend to enjoy it, and that way I can survive.

Sofia's extremely unconvincing insistence that she "loves sex" exposes it as pure performance, while at the same time revealing the extent to which compulsory sexuality is wedded to a narrative about health ("it's a great workout"). Also, in framing her sexual experiences in terms of a perceived violence, she echoes radical feminist theories about phallogentric sexuality, observations that—while often deeply problematic and dubiously enacted in the legal sphere—are also perhaps too quickly dismissed in our current era of "sex-positive" queer liberation. Perhaps most striking, though, is the way that Sofia's monologue brings to a screeching halt the room's previously cheerful utopian vibe. While the queers in the room are not exactly unsupportive, there is also a sense that her confession, in disrupting the harmony of the space, has crossed a line.

As everyone stares at Sofia with a kind of dumbfounded horror, Severin snaps a picture of Sofia with her Polaroid camera. Though she is immediately chastised by everyone in the room, including Sofia, for her rude behavior, we might understand her inappropriate photography at this moment as an attempt document, preserve and ultimately respect the feminist epiphany she has just witnessed. Presenting the photograph to Sofia later with the word "sorry" inked over it, Severin enacts a form of anti-social behavior that gestures, at the same time,

toward the possibilities of feminist collectivity. Severin may, in fact, occupy the most interesting site of asexual—or at the very least autoerotic—resistance in the film, as she is constantly turning away from the various forms of sexual relationality she is presented with.⁴³ When asked by Jesse, her repeat client, to describe her last orgasm, she responds, “[i]t was great. It was like time had stopped and I was completely alone.” Sexuality, for Severin, is not about solidifying the bonds of queer community but about cultivating for herself a space of sexual privacy. Furthermore, if Sofia’s performance of compulsory sexuality includes a reassurance that she “loves loving her husband,” then Severin’s acts of autoerotic resistance are edged with an unapologetic dismissal of phallic sexuality. When Jesse asks Severin what “superpower” she most desires, she sardonically replies, “the power to make you interesting.” Thus Severin’s boredom carries with it a feminist edge. From a crip-feminist perspective, I find this boredom compelling, as it seems to have the potential to cut through a set of post-sex-war binaries that tend to categorize approaches to sexuality as unreservedly “pro-sex” on the one hand or prudishly “anti-sex” on the other. Severin may not fit easily under the banner of sex-positive feminism but neither is she framed by the radical feminist language of the always-already exploited sex worker. Her avoidance of sexual relationships is not a matter of trauma or fear, but merely indifference.

Severin is also indifferent to treatment—though she makes a set of half-hearted attempts throughout the film to change her autoerotic ways, by final scene, she remains the only “broken” character who remains stubbornly unfixed. This is reflected in the orgy/singalong that concludes the film, where Severin, though present, is the only character who is unmoved to participate. Observing the scene, instead, from an armchair in the corner of the room, she ends the film with one last gesture of erotic refusal—though she does find other, non-sexual ways to join in the

revelry. When a small marching band strolls past her, she playfully swats one of their cymbals. A minute later, as the music swells to a crescendo, she opens her mouth to emit what appears to be a gleeful scream. Though that scream is soon eclipsed by Sofia's orgasm (which, in ending the film, effectively takes the "last word"), these moments might perhaps be understood as providing a subtle reminder that empowered connection to oneself and others can be found not only through the act of saying "yes" to sex but also through the act saying "no."

Severin's boredom with the structures of compulsory sexuality might even, I would speculate, productively extend recent scholarly conversations—both within and outside of queer theory—regarding the political value of seemingly negative affects. Against the positive affects and vision of queer futurity that underlines Cameron Mitchell's American "optimism" or Delany's "loving attitude" toward one's community, Severin's refusals lay bare the bitter underside of the American "pursuit of happiness" and the less utopian possibilities of contact. But like Heather Love's notion of "feeling backwards," Judith Halberstam's illustration of "shadow feminism," and Sianne Ngai's extended meditation on "ugly feelings," this refusal can be understood not an endpoint but as the opening up of new forms of collectivity and alternative ways of knowing—epistemological forms that rely neither on the normalizing frameworks of futurity nor on the psychoanalytic embrace of the Freudian death drive.⁴⁴

Occupying the major space of queer refusal in the film, Severin is constantly chastised for what other characters perceive as her anti-social behavior. Yet it is precisely these refusals that open up a space for her and Sofia to experiment with their own form of homosocial bonding, one that is rife with generative failures. Though Severin approaches Sofia with the hope that "I can help you have an orgasm, and maybe you can help me have a real human interaction with someone" this ultimately turns out to be a botched pedagogical project; Sofia does not succeed in

teaching Severin to open up to others any more than Severin succeeds in helping Sofia produce her first orgasm. And yet, it may be precisely this failure to connect as student and teacher—and the film’s willingness to showcase that failure—that may open up a space for thinking through alternatives to both Rich’s and Delany’s utopian sexual projects. By continuing to contend with the difficulties of coalition-building, and by remembering the ways in which identities are intersectional rather than additive, we may yet enact a revised vision of a sexual democracy—one that is accessible to everyone.

¹ See Eric Rofes, *Dry Bones Breathe: Gay Men Creating Post-AIDS Identities and Cultures* (1998); Andrew Sullivan, “When Plagues End” (1999); and David Roman, “Not About AIDS” in *Performance in America: Contemporary U.S. Culture and the Performing Arts* (2005).

² See Douglas Crimp, “Mourning and Militancy.” *October* 51 (Winter 1989).

³ Andrew Ross, “Epilogue: Calculating the Risk” in *Policing Public Sex*. Eds. Dangerous Bedfellows. New York: South End Press, 1996.

⁴ The scholarship on the relationships between AIDS, politics, and mourning is rich and varied. For some key accounts, see Douglas Crimp’s “Mourning and Militancy” (1989); David Roman’s *Acts of Intervention: Performance, Gay Culture and AIDS* (1998); Ann Cvetkovich’s *Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Culture* (2003); and Sarah Brophy’s *Witnessing AIDS: Writing, Testimony and the Work of Mourning* (2004).

⁵ For a comprehensive account of the United States’ political responses to the AIDS crisis, see Jennifer Brier, *Infectious Ideas* (2009).

⁶ See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford UP, 1998.

⁷ We may here recall the political and ideological work that mourning played for the late nineteenth-century “national man,” described in my earlier reading of *The Sea Wolf*. In blocking Hump from the “ceremonial” practices of mourning which make life “sacred,” Wolf ends up opening up a much different world of queer/crip utopian brotherhood.

⁸ While some gay men participated in these public health crusades (including Gabriel Rotello’s inflammatory *Sexual Ecology*), others within the gay community published work on safe sex practices that theorized “how to have sex” and “how to have promiscuity in an epidemic.” See, in particular, Richard Berkowitz and Michael Callen’s pamphlet, “How to Have Sex in an

Epidemic: One Approach.” News from the Front Publications, 1983; and Douglas Crimp, “How to Have Promiscuity in an Epidemic.” *October* 43 (1987).

⁹ Indeed, it is in almost classically Derridian terms that Crimp points out the movement through which the sex toy, in the era of AIDS, has transformed from a “supplement” into “substitute.” For Derrida’s full critique of Rousseau, see Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974.

¹⁰ Dennis Altman, *The Homosexualization of America, The Americanization of the Homosexual*, New York: St. Martins Press, 1982: 79-80.

¹¹ Indeed, by the time that Delany was writing his essays, many queer scholars and activists had already begun to frame the gradual shutdown of gay bathhouses and other cruising venues as a form of cultural genocide. Some activists attempted a compromise by promoting safer sex practices, circulating condoms as well as educational materials on how to best to prevent transmission. As Phillip Alcabes reflects, “when we progressives in the public-health field embraced the safe- sex campaign, we also implicitly endorsed the message of individual accountability that the health narrative of the day proffered. Resisting moralism about homosexuality and promiscuity, we instead promoted a new dogma about individual responsibility: Safe sex. Personal risk reduction” (30).

¹² “Although from one perspective,” Dean writes, “fucking without condoms represents sex at its most mundane, from another perspective, the history of AIDS has made gay sex without condoms extraordinary, endowing bareback sex with enormous significance” (47).

¹³ In using the term “biosociality,” Dean is following the work of Paul Rainbow and Nikolas Rose. Citing Rabinow, Rose describes biosociality as the “forms of collectivization organized around the commonality of a shared somatic or genetic status,” groupings whose national and political implications can even expand into what Rose terms “biological citizenship” (134). For more on biosociality, see Paul Rabinow, “Artificiality and enlightenment: From Sociobiology to Biosociality.” *Essays on the Anthropology of Reason*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1996: 91–112, and Nikolas Rose, *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2007.

¹⁴ See Claire Laurier Decoteau, “The Specter of AIDS: Testimonial Activism in the Aftermath of the Epidemic.” *Sociological Theory* 26.3 (2008): 230-257.

¹⁵ Dean also discusses the way that men on the down low have been frequently characterized as “transmission bridges between gay men and straight women,” their illicit activities leading them to “bring home” STDs to their unsuspecting wives (42). Pointing out the way that the “stereotype of the black bisexual man... has been scapegoated for a host of other factors that contribute to increasing rates of HIV infection in minority populations,” Dean argues that [b]ehind the epidemiological concern with transmission vectors lies broader cultural anxieties about how masculine nonwhite men’s sexuality remains insufficiently indentifiable or locatable... “Down low” erotic practices, like those

associated with barebacking, generate quintessentially permeable subcultures that thereby resist surveillance and discipline” (43)

While I find Dean’s cultural analysis here extremely compelling, it is notable how quickly Dean dispatches with the question of women’s health, moving instead to a celebration of the way both male subcultures embrace an ethics of permeability. While I have no wish to contribute to the process of racial scapegoating that Dean so eloquently outlines, I believe that we do, at the same time, need to take seriously these moments in which queer masculine sexual liberation comes into conflict with women’s abilities to make informed choices regarding their physical health. I elaborate on these conflicts in more depth during my discussion, later in the chapter, of second wave feminism and the sex wars.

¹⁶ In his description of the new Times Square, Delany frames it almost in the language of a ghost town: “patrons walked up to the theaters to find the gates down over the glass, the ticket sellers’ booth shadowed and vacant” (91). For a more thorough account of the effect of zoning laws on New York City’s queer sexual subcultures, see Michael Warner’s *The Trouble With Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1999.

¹⁷ My use of the term “crip” here derives from Robert McRuer’s book *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* (2006) in which he defines “crip” as a set of subjectivities and practices whose significations and effects resist institutions and norms of “compulsory able-bodiedness.”

¹⁸ Thus Delany provides an ethics of citizenship that emerges in stark opposition to the values of privacy and privatization that prop up the neoliberal subject. If neoliberalism rests on the institutional integrity of marriage, requires the separation and stratification of economic classes, and expresses itself through continual intrusion of corporate capital over previously public spaces, then Delany’s model of “contact” offers instead unconventional forms of cross-class intimate exchange that challenge these pre-established hierarchies.

¹⁹ Indeed, Lisa Duggan and Nan Hunter document the ways in which some of the early efforts to outlaw pornography mobilized homophobia. They recount, for example, the way in which Kathleen Mahoney mobilized the judges’ “homophobic panic” in her successful 1992 bid to shift change Canadian obscenity laws by showing them “degrading gay movies” in which “the abused men...were being treated like women.” As Duggan and Hunter note, Mahoney “did not seem to recognize the elasticity of terms like ‘degrades’ or ‘dehumanizes,’ nor their easy applicability by homophobes to gay sexuality” (9).

²⁰ For an excellent account of lesbians’ often unacknowledged involvement in AIDS politics and activism, see Lisa Diedrich, “Doing Queer Love: Feminism, AIDS and History.” *Theoria* 54.112 (April 2007): 25-50.

²¹ There have been some recent revivals of the issue, however, including Ariel Levy’s 2005 polemic *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture*.

²² As Dariek Smith observes in his reading of Delany's pornographic novel *The Mad Man*, Delany's preoccupation with sexual debasement in the novel (character fantasies that involve urination, domination, and even rape) ultimately has much less to do with gender dynamics than it does with a painful U.S. legacy of racial domination, a legacy that his characters negotiate (and, in some qualified way claim) by engaging in a complicated dialectic between humiliation, abjection and pleasure. For another excellent analysis of the entangled relations between blackness, shame, and abjection, see Kathryn Bond Stockton, *Beautiful Bottom, Beautiful Shame: Where Black Meets Queer*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2006.

²³ In *The Queer Art of Failure*, Judith Halberstam lists Delany's *Times Square Red*, *Times Square Blue* among a set of works by gay men in which "utopian joissance seems primarily available only in relation to male-male anal sex between strangers... while I am sympathetic to this project of not tidying up sex, I am less than enthusiastic about the archives upon which these authors draw and the resolutely white utopias they imagine through the magic portals of tricking" (150). While I would say that Delany differs from Edelman and Dean in his attention to race and his emphasis on practices other than anal sex, I am fully in agreement regarding his masculine and homosocial bias.

²⁴ Delany delivers an early version of this analysis in his essay "On the Unspeakable," in *Shorter Views: Queer Thoughts & the Politics of the Paraliterary* (1999).

²⁵ As John Ellis points out, the presence of "dildos and other substitute penises [in pornography] is quite marked" ensuring that "a male presence is maintained even within scenes of masturbation or lesbianism" (42). Dildos, of course, need not be exclusively understood as a "male presence"—academic work on female masculinity and butch sexuality (not to mention the emergent genre of queer porn made for queer audiences) has made a convincing case against seeing these sex toys merely as "substitute penises." Nonetheless, Delany's unwillingness, in this moment, to engage with either body of scholarship is troubling.

²⁶ With this "sexual education" in mind, Delany thus wonders: "Is it a place where someone like Rannit might be socialized out of an annoying habit?" (88). Rannit's habit, of course, is more than merely "annoying" and to make the claim that straight 1970s porn might socialize a street harasser out of a patriarchal mindset requires, I believe, at least some engagement with the arguments made by anti-pornography feminists of the 1970s and 1980s.

²⁷ Linda Williams makes a similar observation in her reading of *Deep Throat* when she argues that "the perverse implantation of the clitoris in Deep throat represents something more than simple horror at the freakishness of female sexual 'lack.' She represents a phallic economy's highly ambivalent and contradictory attempt to count beyond the number one, to recognize, as the proliferating discourses of sexuality take hold, that there can no longer be any such thing as fixed sexuality—male, female, or otherwise... [A]s discourses of sexuality name, identify, and ultimately produce a bewildering array of pleasures and perversions, the very multiplicity of these pleasures and perversions inevitably works against the older idea of a single norm—and economy of the one—against which all else is measured" (115).

²⁸ In an interview on his book *The Mad Man*, Delany provides a similar—though somewhat less utopian—account of sexuality in his definition “pornotopia”:

Pornotopia is not the “good sexual place.” It is simple the ‘sexual place’ – the place where all can become apocalyptically sexual... the place where any relationship can be sexualized in a moment with the proper word or look – where every relationship is potentially sexualized even before it starts.” (183)

Delany’s admission here that a pornotopia is not necessarily the “good sexual place” is important for understanding sexuality’s power relations. *The Mad Man*’s unrelenting portrayal of racialized sexual abjection, several scholars have observed, is productive precisely because it allows Delany’s characters to claim their sexuality while at the same time resisting a utopian framing of that sexuality. But if *The Mad Man* is “apocalyptically” sexual, then *Times Square Red*, *Times Square Blue* paints a very different portrait—framed in unequivocally “pleasant terms,” the porn theaters are given as precisely the “good sexual place.”

²⁹ It’s important to mention, here, that this framing differs from some of Delany’s earlier writing. In his 1988 memoir *The Motion of Light in Water*, for example, Delany maintains that he is “not trying to romanticize that time into some cornucopia of sexual plenty. Its densities, its bareness, its intensities of both guilt and pleasure, of censure and of blindness... were grounded on a nearly absolutely sanctioned public silence” (175-176). This earlier observation seems more in line with the power dynamics he later explores in *The Mad Man*; however, by the time we get to *Times Square Red*, *Times Square Blue* such encounters are given as being exclusively pleasant and endlessly bountiful.

³⁰ Rich elaborates: “Women learn to accept as natural the inevitability of this ‘drive’ because we receive it as dogma... hence the psychological as well as economic imbalance of power between husband and wife, male employer and female worker, father and daughter, male professor and female student.”

³¹ See Eve Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia UP, 1992. For a compelling account of male homosocial desire and its relation to the sex industry, see Katherine Liepe-Levinson, *Strip Show: Performances of Gender and Desire*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

³² It might, of course, be argued that the absence of the woman in this context frees her from having to occupy her usual position as a relay point the homosocial triangle. Whereas her presence is absolutely necessary for the “plausible deniability” that Jenkins describes in the *Penthouse* letters, the worlds that Delany describes (as well as the subcultures of barebacking that Dean documents) make women an unnecessary part of the biosocial/homosocial exchange.

³³ Dean demonstrates a parallel pedagogical imperative in an own anecdote he recounts, ironically, about his experience teaching *Times Square Red*, *Times Square Blue*. “Repeatedly,” Dean writes, “my straight female students assure me that the kind of contact with strangers advocated by both Jacobs and Delany is too dangerous for women” (182). Rather than take these objections seriously, however, Dean uses a passage from Jane Jacobs’ 1961 book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* to simply reiterate Delany’s point about the pleasures of contact.

Jacobs' recognition that "strangers traversing the street make it safe, especially at night when foot traffic otherwise would diminish," Dean observes, demonstrates precisely why a place like "the White Horse exemplifies the kind of institution necessary for a vital public sphere, and thus for democracy" (183). Published two years before Betty Freidan's *The Feminine Mystique*, Jacobs pre-second wave text seems to here provide Dean with a strange way out of addressing the second wave concerns that drive his students' objections. Pointing out that Jacobs is both "a wife and mother," Dean implies that if Jacobs can manage to get behind stranger sociality, then his female students should follow suit. Mapping Jacobs's (arguably) pre-feminist observations onto Delany's more contemporary queer sexual ethics, Dean thus evacuates the entire intellectual and activist history of radical feminism. In this way, Dean deftly switches the terms of the debate, replacing his students' legitimate feminist concerns with the trump card of "democracy." Ultimately, this moment seems like a missed opportunity for an even more radical pedagogical exchange, one in which Dean might have opened himself up to being educated by, as well as educating, these straight female students.

³⁴ For an in-depth exploration of radical feminist sex cultures, see Pat Califia's *Public Sex: The Culture of Radical Sex*. Berkeley, CA: Cleis Press, 1994.

³⁵ I am here thinking of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's recent theorization of what they term the "multitude." For Hardt and Negri, the multitude is the only political figure that can effectively speak back to power and reclaim democracy in the 21st century. When command was more centralized, they argue, the people banding together in a single unified revolutionary effort made sense. But in an age where corporate power is distributed among a set of global networks, the body politic must be refashioned into a similarly networked consciousness in order to succeed at bringing about any kind of meaningful rebellion. Drawing from Bakhtin's notion of the "carnavalesque" they suggest that "[a] democratic multitude cannot be a political body, at least not in the modern form. The multitude is something like a singular flesh that refuses the organic unity of the body" (162). In their invocation of a type of networked and mobile political "flesh," Hardt and Negri promote a form of intersectional politics in which various citizens of diverse backgrounds can come together to form temporary strategic coalitions that cluster around particular nodes of oppression, forming and disbanding as necessary. For the multitude, internal differences within the larger group become a strength rather than a liability; it is through those differences that the act of political resistance is able to metamorphose into a limitless set of multiple and shifting forms. The queer multitude that populates Shortbus, in its dissolution of "bodies" into "flesh" and its commitment to networked subjectivities and (literally) intersecting corporealities, thus provides a visual analog to Hardt and Negri's description, becoming a sort of cipher for how democratic citizenship might be reinvented in the age of multinational global capitalism. But though the "multitude" rests on "difference" and "singularities," it is exactly the conflicting political agendas that arise from such differences that are ultimately elided by the Hardt and Negri's suggestion that the flesh of the multitude will unproblematically cohere around important issues of reform. In this respect, Hardt and Negri seem to revert to the classical Marxist paradigm that they initially sought to revise.

³⁶ This absence of physically disabled bodies from the Shortbus salon appears to participate in what some scholars have referred to as the “desexualization of disability”—an ideological process whereby people with disabilities represented as being uninterested in or incapable of sexual expression.

³⁷ Przybylo helpfully uses the term “sexuosociety” to refer to the ubiquity of practices, representations, compulsions, and repetitions designed to naturalize sexuality as an innate human drive and stigmatize those who fail to adequately perform their sexuality.

³⁸ As Przybylo observes, though asexuality may be “threatening to sexual subjects, it also works to resuscitate sexuality, calling for future articulations of sexuality” and “coercing us into a defence of sexuality.” In other words, the asexual body is always already understood within the medical imagination as a body that is either pre-sexual or post-sexual, its lacking present defined against a past or future mythic wholeness. Sofia confession is, of course, all the more scandalous since she is herself a “sex therapist.” While on the one hand, we might read the scene as offering a compelling critique of medical authority, the result is a simple role reversal in which the doctor becomes the patient.

³⁹ I want to clarify that it is not my intention to make any sort of “asexual” identity claim regarding Sofia. There are simply too many ways that which her story undermines such a claim—she is, after all, actively interested in forming erotic and sexual relationships with others and appears to be genuinely frustrated by her inability to have an orgasm. It goes without saying, too, that there is an enormous difference between sexual dysfunction and asexual identity and it is not at all my desire to conflate the two. Indeed, many asexual individuals will affirm that they certainly can experience orgasm—they just prefer not to (unlike Sofia who seems to desperately want to but can’t). However, I would argue that by locating Sofia on an “asexual continuum,” we may learn much about the film’s ambivalent and intertwined investments in compulsory-able-bodiedness and a system that I would, borrowing from Adrienne Rich, term “compulsory sexuality.” As Eunjung Kim argues in a forthcoming essay:

Understanding asexuality as the total absence of all kinds of sexual attraction throughout an individual’s lifetime... may not be helpful in formulating questions about how sexuality is regulated through discourses... Moreover, the attempt to differentiate asexuality from other political and cultural practices such as celibacy, as well as from biological “dysfunctions” such as impotence or the inability to experience orgasm, reduces asexuality to a single entity and simplifies sexuality, thereby reinforcing the explanatory power of medical discourse over an individual’s diverse experiences.

With these observations, Kim challenges the identitarian model embraced by AVEN (the Asexual Visibility and Education Network and the most prominent public voice of the asexual community). While there may be a number of strategic advantages to defining, as AVEN does, an “asexual” as “someone who does not experience sexual attraction” and defining asexuality as “an intrinsic part of who we [the asexual community] are,” resisting such models can open up exciting possibilities for alliance between disabled, queer and feminist communities.

⁴⁰ In a recent commentary in *Feminist Studies*, Karli June Cerankowski and Megan Milks have explored the complicated relationship between asexuality and queer politics, observing that while asexuality certainly fits the model of sexual non-normativity, and might therefore be embraced as “queer,” the political valorization of sexual culture as *the* key to solidifying the bonds of queer community might also have an exclusionary effect on those who do not see sexuality as central to their lives.⁴⁰ Milks and Cerankowski suggest that a serious consideration of asexuality in fact has the potential to “challeng[e] many of the basic tenets of pro-sex feminism—most obviously its privileging of transgressive female sexualities that are always already defined against repressive or ‘anti-sex’ sexualities.” They ask:

How might asexuality fit into a community where sexual culture is at the center? Paradoxical as it may seem, is it possible that not desiring sex can be part of that radical sexual culture? In short, does the asexual person threaten to remove sex from politics all over again, or does she or he challenge the ways we think about sex and desire even within queer communities?

Cerankowski and Milks are, of course, careful to acknowledge that asexuality does not automatically map onto radical feminists’ converse claim that sees the “politicization of asexuality as a way out of phallocentric sexuality.” The point here, rather, is to understand the intersection between asexuality and feminism as one possible site at which we might both “critique the liberatory rhetoric by which sex is still to a large extent framed within feminism” while at the same time “theoriz[ing] modes of asexuality that are or can be feminist, likely beginning by extending the work of radical feminists.”

⁴¹ This collective interest in transforming Sofia into a sufficiently sexualized being seems to retain uneasy elements of a past ideology that saw the sexually frigid woman as a threat not only to her own marriage, but to the larger institution of marriage itself. If, as Kim observes, the benefit of treating the “the sexually inadequate woman” was that she became “a better and happier wife and mother,” then Sofia’s treatment, in parallel form, seems to transform her into a better and happier queer citizen.

⁴² As Linda Williams puts it, *Shortbus* is a “quintessentially American sex film” about characters “whose impermeability needs fixing” (294, 287).

⁴³ In one of the first essays to treat asexuality as a lifestyle variation, rather than as pathology, Myra T. Johnson proposes the existence of “two invisible groups”: “asexual women” and “autoerotic women.” Severin might be understood as occupying the latter category; we learn that she enjoys masturbating but is much less thrilled about sex with a partner. Furthermore, considering Sofia and Severin as an asexual/autoerotic pairing suggests another interesting variation on Rich. If “lesbian resistance” and the “lesbian ‘continuum’” involve women bonding in ways that involve varying levels of eroticism, then we might even understand Sofia and Severin’s markedly non-sexual friendship existing not on a lesbian continuum but on an asexual continuum—their pairing does, after all, seem to open up some interesting alternatives to the ethic of compulsory heterosexuality that dominates the rest of the film.

⁴⁴ See Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011); Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*. (2007); and Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (2005).

CITED LITERATURE

- Agamben, Giorgio. *The State of Exception*. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 2005. Print.
- Alcibes, Phillip. "The Ordinarity of AIDS." *The American Scholar* 75.3 (2006): 18-32. Print.
- Altman, Dennis. *The Homosexualization of America, The Americanization of the Homosexual*. New York, St. Martins Press, 1982: 79-80. Print.
- Baldwin, James. *Another Country*. New York: Vintage, 1992. Print.
- . *Giovanni's Room*. New York: Penguin, 2001. Print.
- . *Notes of a Native Son*. Boston: Beacon, 1994. Print.
- Balfour, Lawrie. *The Evidence of Things Not Said: James Baldwin and the Promise of American Democracy*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2001. Print.
- Bayer, Ronald. *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry: The Politics of Diagnosis*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1987. Print.
- Bederman, Gail. *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1996. Print.
- Bell, Chris. "I'm Not the Man I Used to Be: Sex, HIV and Cultural 'Responsibility.'" *Sex and Disability*. Ed. Robert McRuer and Anna Mollow. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2012. Print.
- Berlant, Lauren. *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2008. Print.
- Bersani, Leo. "Is the Rectum a Grave?" *October* 43 (1987): 197-222. Print.
- Bierce, Ambrose. "Letter to George Sterling, Feb. 18 1905." *A Much Misunderstood Man: Selected Letters of Ambrose Bierce*. Ed. S. T. Joshi, Tryambak Sunand Joshi, David E. Schultz, Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2003. Print.
- Bland, Lucy and Laura Doan, eds. *Sexology Uncensored: The Documents of Sexual Science*. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1998. Print.
- Boudreau, Kristin. *Sympathy in American Literature: American Sentiments from Jefferson to the Jameses*. Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2002. Print.
- Brandt, Allan M. *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States Since 1880*. New York: Oxford UP, 1987. Print.
- Brier, Jennifer. *Infectious Ideas: U.S. Political Responses to the AIDS Crisis*. Chapel Hill, U of North Carolina Press, 2009. Print.

- Brin, David. "The Giving Plague." *Otherness*. Silverthorne, CO: Spectra, 1994. Print.
- Brophy, Sarah. *Witnessing AIDS: Writing, Testimony, and the Work of Mourning*. Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 2004. Print.
- Browner, Stephanie P. *Profound Science and Elegant Literature: Imagining Doctors in Nineteenth-Century America*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press, 2005. Print.
- Brucoli, Matthew J. *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur: The Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald*. 2nd Edition. Columbia: U of South Carolina Press, 2002. Print.
- Bruhm, Steven and Natasha Hurley, Eds. *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2004. Print.
- Califia, Pat. *Public Sex: The Culture of Radical Sex*. Berkeley, CA: Cleis Press, 1994. Print.
- Cerankowski, Karli June and Megan Milks. "New Orientations: Asexuality and Its Implications for Theory and Practice." *Feminist Studies* 36 (Fall 2010): 650-664. Print.
- Chauncey, George. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. New York: Basic Books, 1994. Print.
- Chesler, Ellen. *Woman of Valor: Margaret Sanger and the Birth Control Movement in America*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992. Print.
- Clare, Eli. *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness and Liberation*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1999. Print.
- Clark, Keith. *Black Manhood in James Baldwin, Ernest J. Gaines, and August Wilson*. Champaign: U of Illinois Press, 2004. Print.
- Clark, Suzanne. *Sentimental Modernism: Women Writers and the Revolution of the Word*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1992. Print.
- Cline, Sally. *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise*. New York: Arcade Publishing, 2002. Print.
- Combahee River Collective. "Statement." *Feminist Theory: A Reader*. 2nd Edition. Eds. Wendy K. Kolmar and Frances Bartkowski. New York: McGraw Hill, 2005. Print.
- Crimp, Douglas. "Mourning and Militancy." *October* 51 (1989): 3-18. Print.
- Cruz, Denise. "Reconsidering McTeague's 'Mark' and 'Mac': Intersections of U.S. Naturalism, Imperial Masculinities, and Desire Between Men." *American Literature* 78.3 (2006). Print.

- Cvetkovich, Ann. *Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Culture*. Durham: Duke UP, 2003. Print.
- Davis, Lennard. *Bending Over Backwards: Disability, Dismodernism & Other Difficult Positions*. New York: New York UP, 2002. Print.
- Davis, Lennard J. *Enforcing Normalcy*. New York: Verso, 1995. Print.
- Dean, Tim. *Unlimited Intimacy: Reflections on the Subculture of Barebacking*. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 2009. Print.
- . *Beyond Sexuality*. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 2000. Print.
- Decoteau, Claire Laurier. "The Specter of AIDS: Testimonial Activism in the Aftermath of the Epidemic." *Sociological Theory* 26.3 (2008): 230-257. Print.
- DeGout, Yasmin Y. "Dividing the Mind: Contradictory Portraits of Homosexual Love in *Giovanni's Room*." *African American Review* 26.3 (1992). Print.
- Delany, Samuel R. *The Motion of Light in Water: Sex and Science Fiction Writing in the East Village, 1957-1965*. New York: Arbor House, 1988. Print.
- . *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*. New York: New York UP, 1999. Print.
- D'Emilio, John. *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970*. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1983. Print.
- Derrick, Scott. "Making a Heterosexual Man: Gender, Sexuality, and Narrative in the Fiction of Jack London." *Rereading Jack London*. Ed. Leonard Cassuto and Jeanne Campbell Reesman. Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 1996: 120-22. Print.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1976. Print.
- DeShong, Scott. "Toward an Ethics of Reading Faulkner's *Sanctuary*." *The Journal of Narrative Technique* 25.3 (1995): 238-257. Print.
- Diedrich, "Doing Queer Love: Feminism, AIDS and History." *Theoria* 54.112 (April 2007): 25-50. Print.
- Dieveler, James. "Sexual Exiles: James Baldwin and Another Country." *James Baldwin Now*. Ed. Dwight A. McBride. New York: New York UP, 1999. Print.
- Dill, Elizabeth. "That Damned Mob of Scribbling Siblings: The American Romance as Anti-novel in *The Power of Sympathy* and *Pierre*." *American Literature* 80.4 (2008): 707-738. Print.

- Doctorow, E.L. *Jack London, Hemingway, and the Constitution: Selected Essays, 1977-1992*. New York: Random House, 1993. Print.
- Dorr, Gregory Michael. "Assuring America's Place in the Sun: Ivey Foreman Lewis and the Teaching of Eugenics at the University of Virginia, 1915-1953." *Journal of Southern History* 66.2 (2000): 257-296. Print.
- Dudley, John. "Inside and Outside the Ring: Manhood, Race, and Art in American Literary Naturalism." *College Literature* 29.1 (Winter 2002): 53-83. Print.
- Duggan, Lisa. "The Trials of Alice Mitchell: Sensationalism, Sexology, and the Lesbian Subject in Turn-of-the-Century America." *Signs* 18.4 (1993): 791-814. Print.
- Duggan, Lisa and Nan Hunter. *Sex Wars: Sexual Dissent and Political Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1995. Print.
- Dunning, Stephanie. "Parallel Perversions: Interracial and Same Sexuality in James Baldwin's *Another Country*." *MELUS* 26.4 (2001): 95-112. Print.
- Edelman, Lee. *Homographesis: Essays in Gay Literary and Cultural Theory*. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.
- . *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2004. Print.
- Ellis, John. "On Pornography." *Pornography: Film and Culture*. Ed. Peter Lehman. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2006. Print.
- English, Daylanne K. *Unnatural Selections: Eugenics in American Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina Press, 2004. Print.
- English, Deirdre and Barbara Ehrenreich. *For Her Own Good: Two Centuries of the Experts Advice to Women*. NY: Anchor Books, 1978. Print.
- Erickson, Loree. "Revealing Femmegimp: A Sex-positive Reflection on Sites of Shame as Sites of Resistance for People with Disabilities." *Atlantis* 31.2 (2007): 42-52. Print.
- Esposito, Robert. *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2008. Print.
- Faulkner. *The Hamlet*. New York: Vintage, 1991. Print.
- . *Light in August*. New York: Vintage, 1990. Print.
- . *Sanctuary*. New York: Vintage, 1993. Print.
- . *The Sound and the Fury*. New York: Vintage, 1990. Print.
- Felski, Rita. *The Gender of Modernity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1995. Print.

- Ferguson, Roderick. *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2003. Print.
- . "The Parvenu Baldwin and the Other Side of Redemption: Modernity, Race, Sexuality, and the Cold War." *James Baldwin Now*. Ed. Dwight A. McBride. New York, NY: New York UP, 1999. Print.
- Fiedler, Leslie. *Love and Death in the American Novel*. New York: Criterion Books, 1960. Print.
- Field, Douglas. "Looking for Jimmy Baldwin: Sex, Privacy, and Black Nationalist Fervor." *Callaloo* 27.2 (Spring 2004): 457-480. Print.
- Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. New York: Scribners, 1995. Print.
- . *Tender Is the Night*. New York: Scribners, 1995. Print.
- Flynt, Josiah. "Homosexuality Among Tramps." *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*. Ed. Havelock Ellis. F. A. Davis & Co: 1927. Print.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*. New York: Vintage, 1994. Print.
- . *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*. New York, Vintage, 1990. Print.
- Freeman, Chris. "'Something They Did in the Dark': Lesbian and Gay Novels in the US, 1948-1973." *Modern American Queer History*. Ed. Allida M. Black. Philadelphia, Temple UP, 2001. Print.
- Freud, Sigmund. *The "Wolfman" and Other Cases*, New York: Penguin, 2003. Print.
- Galloway, Terry. *Mean Deaf Little Queer: A Memoir*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2009. Print.
- Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Disability in American Culture and Literature*. New York: Columbia UP, 1997. Print.
- . Ed. *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*. New York: New York UP, 1996. Print.
- Gleeson-White, Sarah. *Strange Bodies: Gender and Identity in the Novels of Carson McCullers*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama Press, 2003. Print.
- Gordon, Linda. *The Moral Property of Women: A History of Birth Control Politics in America*. Urbana and Chicago: U of Illinois Press, 2002. Print.
- Greven, David. "Flesh in the Word: *Billy Budd*, Sailor, Compulsory Homosociality, and the Uses of Queer Desire." *Genders* 37 (2003): n. pag. Web. 7 June 2012.

- Halberstam, Judith. "Oh Bondage Up Yours! Female Masculinity and the Tomboy." *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children*. Eds. Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2004. Print.
- . *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2011. Print.
- Halperin, David and Valerie Traub, Eds. *Gay Shame*. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 2009. Print.
- Hardt, Michael. "Take the Revolutionary Road." *The Guardian* July 2007. Web. 2 June 2012.
- Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. *Multitude*. New York: The Penguin Press, 2004. Print.
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The Scarlet Letter*. New York: Penguin, 2003. Print.
- . *Young Goodman Brown and Other Short Stories*. New York: Dover, 1992. Print.
- Henderson, Mae G. "James Baldwin: Expatriation, Homosexual Panic, and Man's Estate." *Callaloo* 23.1 (2000): 313-327. Print.
- Hines, Maude. "Playing with Children: What the 'Child' Is Doing in American Studies." *American Quarterly* 61.1 (2009): 151-161. Print.
- Howard, June. *Publishing the Family*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001. Print.
- Hubbard, "Abortion and Disability: Who Should and Who Should Not Inhabit the World?" *The Disability Studies Reader*. 3rd Edition. Ed. Lennard Davis. NY: Routledge, 2010. Print.
- Inge, M. Thomas. "Fitzgerald, Faulkner and Little Lord Fauntleroy." *The Journal of American Culture* 26.4 (2003): 342-348. Print.
- Irving, Washington. *Salmagundi: or, The whim-whams and opiniosn of Launcelot Langtsaff [pseud.] and others*, Volumes 1-2. Printed by Jules Didot, for A. and W. Galignani, 1824. Print.
- Jenkins, Henry. "'He's in the Closet but He's Not Gay': Male-Male Desire in Penthouse Letters." *Pornography: Film and Culture*. Ed. Peter Lehman. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2006. Print.
- Johnson, David, K. *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government*. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 2004. Print.
- Kafer, Alison. "Compulsory Bodies: Reflections on Heterosexuality and Able-bodiedness." *Journal of Women's History* 15.3 (2003): 77-89. Print.
- Katz, Jonathan Ned. *Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A.* New York: Crowell, 1976. Print.

- Kenan, Randall and Amy Sickels. *James Baldwin*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2005. Print.
- Kent, Kathryn. *Making Girls Into Women: American Women's Writing and the Rise of Lesbian Identity*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2003. Print.
- Kersh, Rogan. "The Rhetorical Genesis of American Political Union," *Polity* 33.2 (2000): 229-257. Print.
- Kershaw, Alex. *Jack London: A Life*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. Print.
- Kim, Eunjung. "How Much Sex is Healthy: The Pleasures of Asexuality." *Against Health: How Health Became the New Morality*. Eds. Jonathan M. Metzl and Anna Kirkland. New York: New York UP, 2010. Print.
- Kimmel, Michael. *Manhood in America: Cultural History*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1996. Print.
- Klein, Marty. "Pornography: What Men See When They Watch." *Pornography: Film and Culture*. Ed. Peter Lehman. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2006. Print.
- Larson, Edward J. "'In the Finest Most Womanly Way': Women in the Southern Eugenics Movement." *The American Journal of Legal History* 39.2 (1995): 119-147. Print.
- Levander, Caroline. *Cradle of Liberty: Race the Child and National Belonging from Thomas Jefferson to W. E. B. Du Bois*. Durham, N.C.: Duke UP, 2006. Print.
- LeVay, Simon. *Queer Science: The Use and Abuse of Research into Homosexuality*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996. Print.
- Levy, Ariel. *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture*. New York: Free Press, 2005. Print.
- Lewes, Kenneth. *Psychoanalysis and Male Homosexuality*. Twentieth Anniversary Edition. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield: 2009. Print.
- Lewis Bradley. "A Mad Fight: Psychiatry and Disability Activism." *The Disability Studies Reader*. 3rd Edition. Ed. Lennard Davis. NY: Routledge, 2010. Print.
- Liepe-Levinson, Katherine. *Strip Show: Performances of Gender and Desire*. New York: Routledge, 2002. Print.
- Linton, Simi. *Claiming Disability*. New York: New York UP, 1998. Print.
- London, Jack. *The Abysmal Brute*. Las Vegas, NV: IAP, 2009. Print.
- . *Before Adam*. New York: McKinlay, Stone & Mackenzie, 1915. Print.

- . "The Mexican." *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, Volume C, Seventh Edition. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007. Print.
- . *The Road*. London: Arco Publications, 1967.
- . "Revolution." *The Radical Jack London: Writings on War and Revolution*. Edited by Jonah Raskin. Berkeley: U of California Press, 2008. Print.
- . "The Salt of the Earth." *The Radical Jack London: Writings on War and Revolution*. Edited by Jonah Raskin. Berkeley: U of California Press, 2008. Print.
- . *The Sea Wolf*. New York: Bantam, 1991. Print.
- . "To Build a Fire." *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, Volume C, Seventh Edition. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007. Print.
- . "What Shall Be Done with this Boy?" *Jack London: The Unpublished and Uncollected Articles and Essays*. Ed. Dan Wichlan. Bloomington, IN: Authorhouse, 2007. Print.
- . "What Socialism Is." *The Radical Jack London: Writings on War and Revolution*. Ed. Jonah Raskin. Berkeley: U of California Press, 2008. Print.
- Love, Heather. *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2009. Print.
- . "Queers _____ This." *After Sex: On Writing Since Queer Theory*. Eds. Janet Halley and Andrew Parker. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2011. Print.
- Lui, Mary Ting Yi. *The Chinatown Trunk Mystery: Murder, Miscegenation, and Other Dangerous Encounters in Turn-of-the-Century New York City*. Cambridge, MA: Princeton UP, 2004. Print.
- Maddock Dillon, Elizabeth. "Sentimental Aesthetics." *American Literature* 76.3 (2004): 495-523. Print.
- Martin, Emily. *The Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1987. Print.
- Martinez, Ernesto J. "Dying to Know: Identity and Self-Knowledge in Baldwin's *Another Country*." *PMLA* (May 2009): 782-797. Print.
- McBryde Johnson, Harriet. "Unspeakable Conversations." *The Disability Studies Reader*. 3rd Edition. Ed. Lennard Davis. NY: Routledge, 2010. Print.
- McRuer, Robert. *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability*. New York: New York UP, 2006. Print.

- McRuer, Robert and Abby L. Wilkerson. "Introduction." *GLQ* 9 (2007): 1 - 23. Print.
- McRuer, Robert and Anna Mollow. "Introduction." *Sex and Disability*. Eds. Robert McRuer and Anna Mollow. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2012. Print.
- Melville, Herman. *Bartleby and Benito Cereno*. New York: Dover, 1990. Print.
- Messenger, Chris. *Tender Is the Night and F. Scott Fitzgerald's Sentimental Identities*. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Michaels, Walter Benn. "Promises of American Life, 1880-1920." *Prose Writing 1860-1920 vol. 3 of The Cambridge History of American Literature*. Ed. Sacvan Bercovitch. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994. Print.
- Mitchell, David T. and Sharon L. Snyder. *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse*. Ann Arbor, MI: U of Michigan Press, 2000. Print.
- . "Narrative Prosthesis and the Materiality of Metaphor." *The Disability Studies Reader*, 3rd edition. Ed. Lennard Davis. New York: Routledge, 2009. Print.
- Mitchell, Lee Clark. "'And Rescue Us From Ourselves': Being Someone in Jack London's *The Sea-Wolf*." *American Literature*, 70.2 (1998): 317-335. Print.
- Mog, Ashley. "Threads of Commonality in Transgender and Disability Studies." *Disability Studies Quarterly* 28.4 (2008). Print.
- Mollow, Anna. "Is Sex Disability?: Queer Theory and the Disability Drive." *Sex and Disability*. Eds. Robert McRuer and Anna Mollow. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2012. Print.
- Moraga, Cherrie L. *Loving in the War Years: Lo Que Nunca Paso por Sus Labios*. Boston: South End Press, 2000. Print.
- Morrison, Toni. "Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature." *Michigan Quarterly Review* 28.1 (Winter 1989): 1-34. Print.
- Mumford, Kevin. *Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in the Early Twentieth Century*. New York: Columbia UP, 1997. Print.
- Munt, Sally. *New Lesbian Criticism: Literary and Cultural Readings*. New York: Columbia UP, 1992. Print.
- Nelson, Dana D. *National Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men*. Durham: Duke UP, 1998. Print.
- Nelson, Dana D. "'No Cold or Empty Heart': Polygenesis, Scientific Professionalization, and the Unfinished Business of Male Sentimentalism." *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 11.3 (1999) 29-56. Print.

- Ngai, Sianne. *Ugly Feelings*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2005. Print.
- Norris, Frank. *McTeague*. New York: Penguin, 1981. Print.
- Oliveri, Vinnie. "Sex, Gender, and Death in *The Sea Wolf*." *Pacific Coast Philology* 38 (Fall 2003): 99-115. Print.
- Ordoover, Nancy. *American Eugenics: Race, Queer Anatomy and the Science of Nationalism*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2003. Print.
- Powers, Peter Kerry. "The Treacherous Body: Isolation, Confession, and Community in James Baldwin." *American Literature* 77.4 (December 2005): 787-813. Print.
- Price, Janet and Margrit Shildrick. "Bodies Together: Touch, Ethics and Disability." *Disability/Postmodernity: Embodying Political Theory*. Eds. Mairian Corker and Tom Shakespeare. London: Continuum Press, 2002: 62-75. Print.
- Prosser, Jay. *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality*. New York: Columbia UP, 1998. Print.
- Przybylo, Ela. "Crisis and safety: The Asexual in Sexusociety." *Sexualities* 14.4 (2011): 444-461. Print.
- Puar, Jasbir. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2007. Print.
- . "The Costs of Getting Better: Suicide, Sensation, Switchpoints." *GLQ* 18.1 (2012): 149-158. Print.
- Rabinow, Paul. "Artificiality and Enlightenment: From Sociobiology to Biosociality." *Essays on the Anthropology of Reason*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1996: 91-112. Print.
- Raskin, Jonah, Ed. *The Radical Jack London*. Berkeley: U of California Press, 2008. Print.
- Reid-Pharr, Robert. "Tearing the Goat's Flesh." *Black Gay Man: Essays*. New York: New York UP, 2001. Print.
- Rich, Adrienne. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." *Feminist Theory: A Reader*. 2nd Edition. Eds. Wendy K. Kolmar and Frances Bartkowski. New York: McGraw Hill, 2005. Print.
- Rofes, Eric. *Dry Bones Breathe: Gay Men Creating Post-AIDS Identities and Cultures*. New York: Routledge, 1998. Print.
- Roman, David. *Acts of Intervention: Performance, Gay Culture and AIDS*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998. Print.

- . "Not About AIDS." *Performance in America: Contemporary U.S. Culture and the Performing Arts*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2005. Print.
- Ross, Andrew. "Calculating the Risk." In *Policing Public Sex: Queer Politics and the Future of AIDS*, edited by Strange Bedfellows. Boston: South End Press, 1996. Print.
- Ross, Marlon B. "White Fantasies of Desire: Baldwin and the Racial Identities of Sexuality." *James Baldwin Now*. Ed. Dwight McBride. New York: New York UP, 1999. Print.
- . "Beyond the Closet as a Raceless Paradigm." *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*. Eds. E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2005: 161-89. Print.
- Robinson, Sally. *Marked Men: White Masculinity in Crisis*. New York: Columbia UP, 2000. Print.
- Rose, Nikolas. *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2007. Print.
- Rosen, Ruth. *Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in American, 1900-1918*. Baltimore: U of Maryland Press, 1983. Print.
- Russell, Emily. *Reading Embodied Citizenship: Disability, Narrative, and the Body Politic*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2011. Print.
- Savran, David. *Taking It Like a Man: White Masculinity, Masochism, and Contemporary American Culture*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1998. Print.
- Samuels, Ellen. "My Body, My Closet: Invisible Disability and the Limits of Coming-Out Discourse." *GLQ* 9.1-2 (2003): 233-255. Print.
- Samuels, Shirley, Ed. *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender and Sentimentality in 19th Century America*. New York: Oxford UP, 1992. Print.
- Sandahl, Carrie. "Queering the Crip or Crippling the Queer? Intersections of Queer and Crip Identities in Solo Autobiographical Performance." *GLQ* 9 (2003): 25-56. Print.
- Saxton, Marsha. "Disability Rights and Selective Abortion," in *Abortion Wars: A Half Century of Struggle: 1950 to 2000*. Ed. Rickie Solinger. Berkeley, CA: U of California Press, 1998. Print.
- Savran, David. *Taking It Like a Man: White Masculinity, Masochism, and Contemporary American Culture*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1998. Print.
- Schoen, Johanna. *Choice and Coercion: Birth Control, Sterilization, and Abortion in Public Health and Welfare*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina Press, 2005. Print.

- Scott, Dariek. *Extravagant Abjection: Blackness, Power, and Sexuality in the African American Literary Imagination*. New York: New York UP, 2010. Print.
- Scott, Evelyn. "On William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*." *William Faulkner*. Ed. John Bassett. New York: Routledge, 2001. Print.
- Scott, James C. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1998. Print.
- Sedgwick, Eve. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia UP, 1992. Print.
- . *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley: U of California Press, 1990. Print.
- . *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2003. Print.
- Shin, Andrew. "Beneath the Black aesthetic: James Baldwin's Primer of Black American Masculinity." *African American Review* 2.32 (1998): 247-261. Print.
- Shortbus*. Dir. John Cameron Mitchell. ThinkFilm, 2006. DVD.
- Siebers, Tobin. "Sex, Shame, and Disability Identity: With Reference to Mark O'Brien." *Gay Shame*. Eds. David Halperin and Valerie Traub. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 2010. Print.
- . "Disability in Theory: From Social Constructionism to a New Realism of the Body." *The Disability Studies Reader*. 2nd Edition. Ed. Lennard Davis. NY: Routledge, 2006. Print.
- . *Disability Theory*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press, 2008. Print.
- Seitler, Dana. *Atavistic Tendencies: The Culture of Science in American Modernity*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2008. Print.
- Smith, Felipe. "The Figure on the Bed: Difference and American Destiny in *Tender Is the Night*." *French Connections: Hemingway and Fitzgerald Abroad*. Eds. J. Gerald Kennedy and Jackson R. Bryer. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998. Print.
- Solinger, Ricki. *Pregnancy And Power: A Short History of Reproductive Politics in America*. New York: New York UP, 2005. Print.
- Somerville, Siobahn. *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2000. Print.
- Stein, Arlene. "Sisters and Queers: The Decentering of Lesbian Feminism." *The Gender/Sexuality Reader*. Eds. R. Lancaster and M. di Leonardo. New York: Routledge, 1997. Print.

- Steinbeck, John. *Of Mice and Men*. New York: Penguin, 1993. Print.
- Stern, Julia. *The Plight of Feeling: Sympathy and Dissent in the Early American Novel*. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1997. Print.
- Stiker, Henri-Jacques. *A History of Disability*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press, 2000. Print.
- Stockton, Kathryn Bond. *Beautiful Bottom, Beautiful Shame: Where Black Meets Queer*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2006. Print.
- . *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2009. Print.
- Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. New York: Penguin, 1986. Print.
- Sullivan, Andrew. "When Plagues End." *Love Undetectable: Notes on Friendship, Sex and Survival*. New York: Vintage, 1999. Print.
- Thomas, Kendall. "Going Public: A Conversation with Liddell Jackson and Jocelyn Taylor." *Policing Public Sex: Queer Politics and the Future of AIDS*. Eds. Strange Bedfellows. Boston: South End Press, 1996. Print.
- Sundquist, Eric. *Faulkner: A House Divided*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1985. Print.
- Terry, Jennifer. *An American Obsession: Science, Medicine and Homosexuality in Modern Society*. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1999. Print.
- . *Deviant Bodies: Critical Perspectives on Difference in Science and Popular Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995. Print.
- Thomas, Calvin. *Masculinity, Psychoanalysis, Straight Queer Theory: Essays on Abjection in Literature, Mass Culture, and Film*. New York: Macmillan, 2008. Print.
- Thomas, Kendall. "Going Public: A Conversation with Liddell Jackson and Jocelyn Taylor." *Policing Public Sex: Queer Politics and the Future of AIDS*, Ed. Strange Bedfellows. Boston: South End Press, 1996. Print.
- Tremain, Shelly, Ed. *Foucault and the Government of Disability*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press, 2005. Print.
- Truchan-Tataryn, Maria. "Textual Abuse: Faulkner's Benjy." *Journal of Medical Humanities*, 26.2 (2005): 159-172. Print.
- Twain, Mark. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. New York: Dover, 1994. Print.
- Quayson, Ato. *Aesthetic Nervousness: Disability and the Crisis of Representation*. New York: Columbia UP, 2007. Print.

- Warkentin, Elyssa D. "Adventure Literature." *International Encyclopedia of Men and Masculinities*. Eds. Michael Flood, Judith Kegan Gardiner, Bob Pease, Keith Pringle. New York: Routledge, 2007. Print.
- Warner, Michael. *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1999. Print.
- Washington, Bryan R. *The Politics of Exile: Ideology in Henry James, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and James Baldwin*. Boston: Northeastern UP, 1995. Print.
- Wendell, Susan. *The Rejected Body: Feminist Philosophical Reflections on Disability*. New York: Routledge, 1996. Print.
- Whitaker, Robert. *Mad in America: Mad in America: Bad Science, Bad Medicine, and the Enduring Mistreatment of the Mentally Ill*. Philadelphia: Basic Books, 2010. Print.
- Williams, Linda. *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible."* Berkeley: U of California Press, 1989. Print.
- . *Screening Sex*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2008. Print.

VITA

EDUCATION

PhD University of Illinois at Chicago, Department of English, August 2012
Doctoral Qualifying Exams passed with Distinction, May 2008
Graduate Concentration in Gender and Women's Studies, completed May 2007

MA University of Illinois at Chicago, Department of English, December 2005

BA Knox College, Literature, Magna Cum Laude, June 2003

FIELD AND INTERESTS

Feminist/Queer Theory; Disability Studies; the History of Sexuality (1800-present); Masculinity Studies; Nineteenth and Twentieth Century American Literature; Film & Visual Culture; Medical Humanities; Literature by Women

AWARDS AND HONORS

2012	Department of English Distinguished Teaching Assistant Award
2011-2012	Dean's Scholar Fellowship
2011	Anne Hopewell Selby Award
2008	Gender & Women's Studies Graduate Award
2006	Sarah Gordon Award
2005	Colby Kullman Prize
2003	Phi Beta Kappa

PUBLICATIONS

“‘Why So Serious?’: Crippling Camp Performance in Christopher Nolan’s *The Dark Knight*.” *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies*. Forthcoming, 2013.

“Crippling Heterosexuality, Queering Able-Bodiedness: *Murderball*, *Brokeback Mountain* and the Contested Masculine Body.” *Journal of Visual Culture* 8.1 (2009).

Reprinted in *The Disability Studies Reader*, Third Edition. Ed. Lennard Davis. New York: Routledge, 2010.

“‘Undisturbed By Colors’: Photorealism and Narrative Bioethics in the Poetry of William Carlos Williams.” *Journal of Medical Humanities* 30.1 (2009).

“Reading Through Spectacle(s): Flannery O'Connor and the Politics of Drag.” *Flannery O'Connor Review* 5 (Summer 2007).

VITA (continued)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Teaching Assistant, Department of English, University of Illinois at Chicago (2003-2011)

Courses designed and taught:

English 111: Women and Literature (Summer 2006, Fall 2008, Fall 2010)

English 117: Introduction to Gender, Sexuality & Literature (Fall 2005, Fall 2007, Summer 2008)

English 161: Academic Writing II: Writing for Inquiry and Research (Spring 2004, Summer 2011)

Section leader:

English 243: American Literature: Beginnings to 1900 (Fall 2009, Spring 2011)

English 240: Intro to Literary Study and Critical Methods (Spring 2008, Spring 2009)

UNIVERSITY AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Academic Advisor, Dept. of English, UIC, Office of Undergraduate Studies (2005-2007, 2010-2011)

Research Assistant, Dept. of English, UIC, Professor Lennard Davis (2008-2009)

Research Assistant, Dept. of English and GWS, Professor Judith Gardiner, UIC (2006-2008)

Graduate Assistant, Dept. of English, UIC, Professor Stanley Fish (2004-2005)

CONFERENCES ORGANIZED

Co-Organizer, *Biocultures: Science, Technology, Culture, Humanities*, Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference held at the University of Illinois at Chicago, November 2007.

PANELS ORGANIZED

Co-Organizer, "Feminist Temporalities, Disabled Bodies: Medicalizing Adolescence in Literature and Culture." National Women's Studies Association Annual Conference, Oakland, CA, November 2012.

Co-Organizer, "Sic/k Chic/k: Crippling Feminist Style." Society for Disability Studies 25th Annual Conference, Denver, CO, June 2012.

SELECTED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

"Queering Reproduction: Faulkner's *Sanctuary* and the American Eugenic Imagination." Modern Languages Association Convention, Boston, MA, January 2013.

VITA (continued)

“Special Affects: Mermaids, Prosthetics, and the Disabling of Feminine Futurity.” National Women’s Studies Association Conference, Oakland, CA, November 2012.

“Compulsory Sexuality and Feminist/Crip Resistance in John Cameron Mitchell’s *Shortbus*.” National Women’s Studies Association Conference, Atlanta, GA, November 2011.

“Porn Theaters, Public Health and the Sexual Politics of Contact: A Feminist Analysis of Samuel Delaney’s *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*.” Health, Embodiment and Visual Culture Conference, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, November 2010.

“‘Why So Serious?’: Crippling Camp Performance in Christopher Nolan’s *The Dark Knight*.” Society for Disability Studies’ 23rd annual Conference, Philadelphia, PA, June 2010.

A Beastly and Inarticulate Thing’: Queerness, Disability and Primitivism in Jack London’s *The Sea Wolf*.” National Association for Humanities Education’s 8th Biennial Conference, Chicago, IL, April 2009.

“Queer Flesh, Disabled Bodies: Sexuality, *Shortbus*, and the Inaccessibility of Democracy.” Society for Disability Studies’ 21st Annual Conference, New York, NY, June 2008.

“Masculinity, *Murderball* and the Rehabilitation of Heteronormativity.” Society for Disability Studies’ 20th Annual Conference, Seattle, WA, June 2007.

“‘Gettin Out While I Still Can Walk’: Masculinity and the Disciplining of Disability in *Brokeback Mountain*.” Entertainment!: The 16th Annual Cultural Studies Conference at Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS, March 2007.

“‘Certain Dangerous Intersections’: Carson McCullers, Deafness, and the Politics of Multiculturalism.” Midwest Modern Languages Association’s 48th Annual Convention, Chicago, IL, November 2006.

“Bender Gender: Unwriting the Body in *The Girl in the Flammable Skirt*.” Women and Creativity VIII: Annual Conference of the Marquette University Women’s Studies Program, Milwaukee, WI, March 2006.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Modern Languages Association
National Women’s Studies Association
Society for Disability Studies