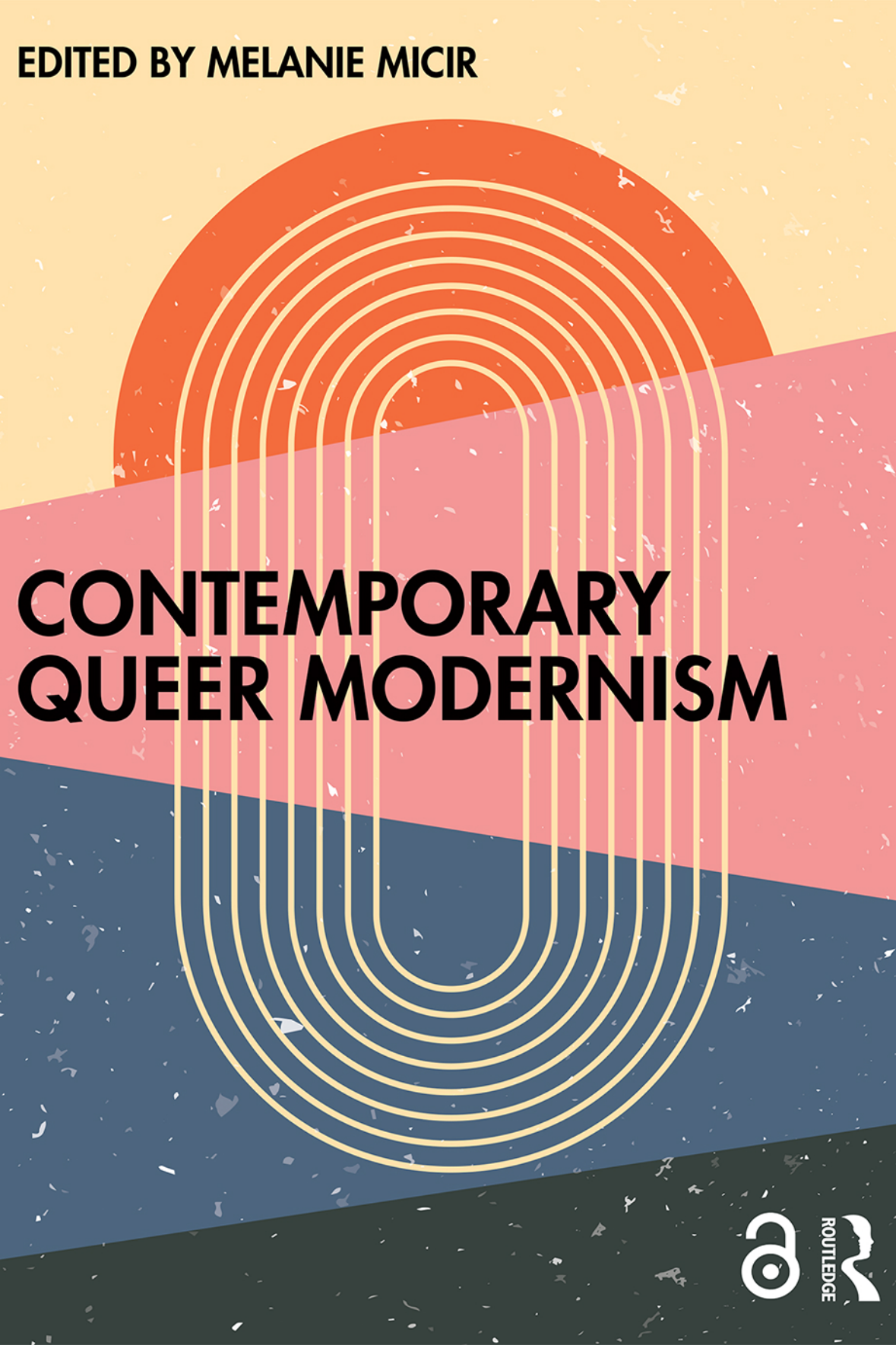
EDITED BY MELANIE MICIR

CONTEMPORARY QUEER MODERNISM



ROUTLEDGE

CONTEMPORARY QUEER MODERNISM

Contemporary Queer Modernism offers a fresh, interdisciplinary approach to the study of the intersections of queer studies and modernist studies.

The theoretical expansiveness and mutual overlapping of these still-growing fields is both introduced and complicated in the pages of this volume. Presenting a wide range of critical perspectives, the collection brings together original scholarship from both emerging and established scholars that, when read together, demonstrates the continued vitality of queer modernist studies. The book is divided into five parts:

- Temporality
- Form
- Embodiment
- Networks
- Affect and Atmosphere

Contemporary Queer Modernism is a foundational collection that will be invaluable to scholars and students studying modernism and queer theory across a range of disciplines, including gender and sexuality studies, literary studies, cultural studies, and performance.

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Edited by Melanie Micir

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In memory of Glyn Salton-Cox


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INTRODUCTION

Melanie Micir

In an oft-quoted 1906 letter to John Maynard Keynes, Lytton Strachey fantasized about a world "about a hundred years hence, when preparations will have been made, and compromises come to," such that their private correspondence could finally be made public.[1] When he died, in 1932, most of Bloomsbury seemed to agree with this timeline, with Virginia Woolf noting, in her diary, that they couldn't be published "for 50 years, if at all."[2] Such revelations—about "buggery," and about what we might now consider the general queerness of the Bloomsbury Group, and modernism writ large—had to wait, with E. M. Forster's *Maurice*, for the nearly mythological "Happier Year" of that novel's infamous dedication. And while we may now hesitate to claim happiness itself, even as we move ever beyond Strachey's forecasted "hundred years hence," few would now hesitate to proclaim modernism's queerness. As Heather Love once asked, "is *queer modernism* simply another name for modernism?"[3]

One way to trace the contours of this fundamental queerness is with reference to the recognizably LGBTQ+ gender and sexual identities and practices of modernist writers and artists—to think, in other words, of modernism's queerness as tied to authorial identity. Another viable method would entail mapping the representation of queer acts and identities across modernist literature, art, and culture. And yet another might historicize the emergence of modernism alongside the transformation and reorganization of sexual identities and categories around the turn of the twentieth century. In every case, as Benjamin Kahan has suggested, queer modernism "imagines queerness to be utterly pervasive," in large part due to the "scandalous visibility" of sexological theory, decadent writing, and the legal trials of both Oscar Wilde and Radclyffe Hall.[4] To study modernism is to see queerness around every corner and on every page.

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If we think about this pervasiveness alongside what Love would go on to describe as "the air of inevitability" surrounding the idea of queer modernism, we might wonder about what is left lurking in the queer modernist archives for future students and scholars to discover. Turning the title of this volume into a question, we might ask: what is *contemporary* about queer modernism? What can we do with queer modernism now?

Contemporary Queer Modernism is divided into five parts that address both the foundational past and provocative futures of queer modernist studies. These sections—on temporality, form, networks, embodiment, and affect—neither strive for an encyclopedic, exhaustive account of the history of queer modernism nor seek to delineate the boundaries of a queer modernist canon. The forms examined in the second section, for example, are hardly the only texts and figures significant to queer modernist studies, but they provoke particularly relevant questions about the history, methodology, and future of the field. Rather than reify a model of queer modernism that focuses on significant individuals or texts, the chapters in this collection are organized thematically in order to encourage connections between fields and traditions that often appear as discrete areas of study. In Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's now classic formulation, queerness signifies an "open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning," and, for Lauren Berlant, the ongoing project of queer theory asks us to attend to "patterns of attachment we hadn't even yet known to notice, patterns in which sexuality and intimacy are enacted in a broad field of social relations that anchor us to life."[5] In its insistent focus on relationality rather than individuality, this volume demonstrates the open-meshed pattern of queer modernism across identity formations, national traditions, temporal borders, and disciplinary divides.

However pervasive or inevitable we might find the idea of queer modernism today, there is always more to learn to notice. And so, in addition to building on foundational scholarship in queer modernist studies written during eras when the field seemed neither pervasive nor inevitable, this volume attends to the continued insistence by contemporary writers, artists, and scholars that queer modernism remains crucial to their work in the present. Several contributors to this volume write explicitly about queer modernism in the context of contemporary figures like Renee Gladman, Alan Hollinghurst, and others; still others offer meditations on contemporary audiences and recent archival discoveries. What is clear throughout is that the forms and figures of queer modernism remain a lodestar for writers and artists both within and beyond the academy, and I offer the following vignettes—of Shola von Reinhold's *Lote* (2020) and Paul B. Preciado's *Orlando: My Political Biography* (2023)—as brief examples of the force of queer modernism's continued presence in contemporary intellectual and artistic life.

First, *Lote*. In 2019, the writer Shola von Reinhold began an essay about the state of contemporary Black British avant-garde fiction writing by confessing the "Bloomsbury reverie" that had both captivated and alienated them for years:

> When I turned 17 I started fantasising vividly, almost involuntarily, about meeting Virginia Woolf. We'd be gossiping, chain-smoking and downing glasses of champagne at her Mecklenburgh Square flat in London, obviously. Sometimes Duncan Grant (with whom, like many other queer teens, I was having a passionate affair) would be there, sometimes EM Forster or Ottoline Morrell. Then one day, Woolf looked at me and delivered a stream of racist abuse in front of everyone. Everyone laughed (even Duncan) and I was expelled, abruptly, from my own daydream.[6]

But instead of turning away forever from the possibility of the queer modernist reverie, von Reinhold writes their way into it with the publication of *Lote*, a novel that is at once an indictment of and "ambivalent love letter to" modernism.[7]

Lote brings us the story of Mathilda, a queer Black trans-femme intellectual of the present day who is transfixed by the Bright Young Things and various figures in what we might now consider the canon of queer modernism. Drawn toward this history while outraged and alienated by its omissions, Mathilda stumbles across an unknown figure while working through archival materials and begins to uncover and piece together the life of Hermia Druitt, a queer Black modernist poet of Scottish descent whose work—and, indeed, entire life—had been buried by generations of white writers, literary historians, and archivists. Von Reinhold's novel exposes and condemns this history while changing it—in dizzyingly opulent historical fiction, at least—by weaving Hermia Druitt into the pages of queer (and trans) modernist literary history. For example, in a fictionalized academic monograph on *Black Modernisms* that appears in occasional excerpts throughout the novel, von Reinhold includes a selection about Druitt's intention to publish her (fictionalized!) lost masterpiece, *The Fainting Youth*, with Nancy Cunard's (real!) Hours Press, alongside a comparison with Woolf's *Orlando*, Hope Mirrlees's *Paris*, and Cunard's *Parallax* (all, of course, very real):

> On the subject of her poetry, the minuscule run of the long work she was to print via Nancy Cunard's Hours Press, under the title *The Fainting Youth*, has proven impossible to recover. Possibly, a volume or two lies in an archive or attic somewhere in Europe. … By all accounts, *The Fainting Youth* was a long, formally innovative work concerned with androgyny and was much influenced by what it would not be too anachronistic to describe as the "queer femme society" in which she often found herself. It

> appears to feature, like its near-contemporary, *Orlando*, a transfiguration, though this is from woman to man to both to neither. … The existence and subsequent neglect of such a poem to the point of potential irretrievability is unsurprising when the likes of Hope Mirrlees' long poem *Paris*, an influence on *The Wasteland* [sic], only properly came to critical attention in 2006, while Nancy Cunard's *Parallax* has gone largely unacknowledged.[8]

This is, in Juno Richards's apt assessment, an "exquisite, dazzling response to the historical violence of archival erasure, one that lives in and amongst the violence of the present."[9] Rejected by that which they had long desired in those youthful Bloomsbury reveries, von Reinhold still maintains a serious attachment, however complicated and shape-shifting, to queer modernism.

I turn next to *Orlando: My Political Biography* (2023), the cinematic debut of philosopher, writer, and trans activist Paul B. Preciado, in which Virginia Woolf's 1928 novel, *Orlando: A Biography*, is resurrected and transformed anew. Years earlier, when Preciado had been approached by filmmakers who wanted to make a documentary about his life, he adamantly refused, ultimately suggesting that they should make a "documentary adaptation" of Woolf's *Orlando* instead. A version of this origin story makes it into the film's voiceover: "Someone once asked me: why don't you write your biography? I replied: because fucking Virginia Woolf wrote my biography in 1928."[10] One might reasonably object that this is, strictly speaking, impossible. But that should not stop us from attending to the significance of Preciado's impassioned claim. Memorably, the protagonist of Woolf's novel undergoes a "change of sex" at the age of thirty years old, and, despite the starkly sudden nature of the initial change, the novel actually preserves a much longer and more open-ended process of transition: "Whether, then, *Orlando* was most man or woman, it is difficult to say and cannot now be decided."[11] It is not difficult to read Woolf's *Orlando* as a proto-trans narrative, as many have done, but Preciado's film goes further: the title role is shared by Preciado and twenty-five other trans and non-binary performers. In Preciado's hands, *Orlando* becomes a collective history of trans experience, then and now.

Preciado's insistence on Woolf's continued relevance to his life—he even began to carry a small portrait of Woolf around with him during interviews and press events for the film[12]—suggests that there is a necessary and sustained connection between modernist literature and culture and contemporary trans studies, queer studies, and gender and sexuality studies. To group these latter terms together is not to conflate them simplistically but to recognize their inextricable and long-standing interrelatedness. As Celia Marshik and Allison Pease observe about the project of Woolf's *Orlando*, Woolf "wanted her readers to think about biological sex *and* gender *and* sexual orientation" at the same time.[13]

And, and, and: the difficulty of thinking about the various possibilities of queer modernism without resolving those possibilities into orthodoxies *is* the project of queer modernist studies. Can we think about sex and gender and sexual orientation (and so much more) at the same time, while holding space for historical opacity—for what we imagine might have happened alongside what we know to have happened, for what we are still learning to notice alongside what we now regard as inevitably pervasive? Throughout this collection, the answer is emphatically yes, especially if we take seriously Love's suggestion that this is inevitability brought into being by the definitional instability of both "queer" and "modernism" as key theoretical terms: "the indeterminacy of *queer* seems to match the indeterminacy, expansiveness, and drift of the literary—particularly the experimental, oblique version most closely associated with modernist textual production."[14]

The working definitions and uses of both "queer" and "modernism" have shifted quite a bit over the last several decades. As Sedgwick observed more than thirty years ago, "queer" can sometimes seem simply to indicate sexual object choice that is anything other than heterosexual, and she cautioned that, "for anyone to disavow those meanings, or to displace them from the term's definitional center, would be to dematerialize any possibility of queerness itself."[15] At the same time, much scholarship in queer studies "spins the term outward along dimensions that can't be subsumed under gender and sexuality at all: the ways that race, ethnicity, postcolonial nationality crisscross with these *and other* identity-constituting, identity-fracturing discourses."[16] In 1993, Sedgwick described this expansion as "exciting," and it remains exhilarating to see the field twist and torque in response to more contemporary conversations and events. At the same time, other scholars within queer studies have expressed frustration with this apparent displacement of sexuality, despite Sedgwick's earlier warning. As Octavio R. González wryly notes in the opening pages of 2020's *Misfit Modernism*, "much ink has been spilled in trying to retain *queer* as an enabling critical term. … Now, queer studies studies everything *except* sex. (I exaggerate only slightly.) Queer studies has bigger realms to conquer."[17] And while, despite this mock exhaustion, it remains fair to say that queer studies retains a foundational investment in gender, sex, and sexuality, it is also the case that the work published under the big tent of queer studies is increasingly diverse in both subject and method.

Modernist studies, too, has only broadened in scope. Indeed, as Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz observe in their influential 2008 assessment of the "expansive tendency" of what they called the New Modernist Studies: "Were one seeking a single word to sum up transformations in modernist literary scholarship over the past decade or two, one could do worse than light on *expansion*."[18] In their reading of the field, this sustained trend appears most clearly along three distinct but often overlapping axes:

temporally (before and beyond the "core period of about 1890 to 1945"), spatially (beyond a long-standing focus on Anglo-European modernism), and vertically (beyond the supposed boundary between high art and popular culture).[19] And, as in the case of queer studies, not everyone welcomes this definitional expansion. Responding to the "unprecedented geographical, temporal, and cultural diffuseness" of modernism in the contemporary moment, David James and Urmila Seshagiri argue for a return to a "historically conditioned and culturally specific" understanding of modernism.[20] "Without a temporally bounded and formally precise understanding of what modernism does and means in any cultural moment," they warn, "the ability to make other aesthetic and historical claims about its contemporary reactivation suffers."[21] And Pardis Dabashi, speaking on a roundtable about academic precarity and modernist studies at the 2019 Modernist Studies Association conference, called attention to how the continuous expansion of the field puts an unfair burden on graduate students and early career scholars, who are implicitly but insistently asked to expand their domains of expertise despite the contraction of institutional support for that expansion—in short, to do ever more with ever less.[22]

In each case, we see that the definitional instability and indeterminacy of both "queer" and "modernism"—the underlying sense, in other words, that the power of each term continues to be connotative rather than denotative in nature—leads directly to the generative, if sometimes problematic, expansiveness of both queer studies and modernist studies as fields of scholarly inquiry. In Paul Saint-Amour's analysis of the relationship between modernism and modernist studies, a "weak theory" of modernism, one that is less set on "gatekeeping criteria and canon building," has given rise to a "strong field—populous, varied, generative, self-reflexive—in proportion as its immanent theory of modernism has weakened and become less axiomatic, more conjectural, more conjunctural."[23] As a thought experiment, if we replace the central terms here with "queer" and "queer studies," we can see the same basic relationship at work: the relative weakening of "queer" (and, by extension, queer *theory*) as a stable definitional term leads to a stronger, more diverse, and theoretically open field of queer *studies*.

In this light, the appearance of *Contemporary Queer Modernism*, as a collection of current scholarship cutting across and joining together both modernist studies and queer studies, is a material sign of the intellectual robustness of both fields, even as the definitional boundaries of their central theoretical terms continue to trend toward porousness. The original framing of this project was as a "companion to queer theory and modernism." And while this volume evolved to foreground more current nomenclature, it also refuses to completely jettison the two organizing terms of its original title—Queer Theory and Modernism—despite the growing sense that they have become somewhat outmoded. As perfect examples of what Saint-Amour

would describe as strong theories, they sit a bit askance of contemporary critical conversations. As field-defining terms, they seem to point (and, perhaps, feel) backward, as though their invocation pulls us away from the current discourses of queer studies and sexuality studies, on the one hand, and modernisms or modernist studies, on the other, toward a temporal setting long since passed, if surely ever relevant. But rather than dismiss the '90s-era flavor of queer theory or capital-M Modernism, we should remain attentive to what we might still learn to notice about them, both individually and together, just as Elizabeth Freeman, in her preface to *Time Binds*, narrates her reimagination of "the point of queer" as becoming "willing to be bathed in the fading light of whatever has been declared useless":

> At one point in my life as a scholar of queer culture and theory, I thought the point of queer was to be always ahead of actually existing social possibilities. On this model, it seemed that truly queer queers would dissolve forms, disintegrate identities, level taxonomies, scorn the social, and even repudiate politics altogether. … Now I think the point may be to trail behind actually existing social possibilities: to be interested in the tail end of things, willing to be bathed in the fading light of whatever has been declared useless.[24]

If we allow ourselves, as critics and students, to be bathed in the fading light of Queer Theory and Modernism, to linger with critical terms that have been amended, surpassed, and/or declared useless, what might we learn?

As one possibility among many, we might better attend to the institutional beginnings of the "pervasiveness" and "inevitability" of queer modernist studies. As discussed earlier in this introduction, we usually think of modernism's general queerness as stemming from some combination of the queerness of authorial identity; the artistic representation of queer people, relationships, and practices in modernist art and literature; and the historical transformation of sexual identities immediately preceding and during the era of modernist artistic production. And this all still feels accurate. But I want to suggest that this sense of a perfect fit—queer modernism as modernism itself—is also due in part to the near-simultaneous institutional emergence of their respective scholarly fields.

Although queer theory, a discipline born from activism around the HIV/AIDS crisis in the 1980s and 1990s, entered the academy just before the "new" and "bad" modernisms of the early twenty-first century exploded and revised the purview of modernist studies, we do not always consider the mutual influences and intersections of modernism, sexuality, and queer theory.[25] And we should: as fields of study, queer studies and what would become known as the new modernist studies were institutionalized at virtually the same time (though, of course, there had been foundational work

appearing in and around each field for decades). Their flagship journals—*GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* and *Modernism/modernity*, respectively—were first published within a month of one another in November 1993 and January 1994.[26] As a field, queer studies was thinking with and alongside modernism from the start: the very first essay in the inaugural issue of *GLQ* was Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's "Queer Performativity: Henry James's *The Art of the Novel*," a piece that, in in Rachel Walerstein's estimation, remains significant

> "not just for the theory of shame it puts forward but for the way … Sedgwick makes it possible to read queer theory as a genre engaged in the figuration of the queer … in [modernist!] literature especially."[27]

And by its third issue, *Modernism/modernity* published Barbara Spackman's "Mafarka and Son: Marinetti's Homophobic Economics," in which she engages queer theoretical arguments from not only Sedgwick but Donna Haraway, Jonathan Dollimore, and Joseph Bristow, among others.[28] We can thus trace an ongoing investment in queer modernism back to the early days of both queer studies and modernist studies.

Put differently, we might say that queer studies and the contemporary iteration of modernist studies grew up together—or grew sideways, as Kathryn Bond Stockton would have it—in the contemporary academy. In the decades since those early essays, each journal has continued to publish work on what we might now consider queer modernism, making it impossible to think about modernism without thinking about sexuality. *Contemporary Queer Modernism* continues that work into the present, providing a foundational collection of research into these intertwined fields of study. And what the new scholarship in this volume shows us is that this is neither a lament nor an elegy. With an eye to some of the most vibrant critical conversations in each field, the contributors to this collection offer a non-chronological, thematically oriented set of possibilities for understanding the continued cross-pollination of queer studies and modernist studies today. Criticism in queer theory, modernism, and queer modernist studies is continuing to grow, even as some of it might be "declared useless," and the contributors to this volume are continuing to direct our attention to those patterns of attachment we are always still learning to notice.

Notes

1 Qtd. in Holroyd, *Lytton Strachey: A Critical Biography*, 185; and Holroyd, *Lytton Strachey: The New Biography*, 92.
2 Woolf, *Diary*, vol. 4, 72.
3 Love, "Introduction: Modernism at Night," 744. In their introduction to *Queer Bloomsbury*, editors Madelyn Detloff and Brenda Helt echo the implication in

Love's query: "The very phrase 'queer Bloomsbury' is in its way redundant, implying that there could somehow be a neutral or 'unqueer' Bloomsbury. We think such a separation impossible" (5).

4 Kahan, "Queer Modernism," 353. For more on the "scandalous visibility" of queer modernism, see Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism*; Medd, *Lesbian Scandal*; and Sinfield, *The Wilde Century*.
5 Sedgwick, "Queer and Now," 8; Berlant, "Lauren Berlant," n.p.
6 von Reinhold, "What happened," n.p.
7 Bateman, *Queer Disappearance*, 175.
8 von Reinhold, *Lote*, 69–70.
9 Richards, "Trans Femme Air-Kiss," n.p.
10 Preciado, *Orlando*.
11 Woolf, *Orlando*, 102, 140.
12 Preciado, Interview.
13 Marshik and Pease, *Modernism, Sex, and Gender*, 2.
14 Love, "Introduction: Modernism at Night," 745.
15 Sedgwick, "Queer and Now," 8.
16 Sedgwick, "Queer and Now," 9.
17 González, *Misfit Modernism*, 9–10.
18 Mao and Walkowitz, "The New Modernist Studies," 737.
19 Mao and Walkowitz, "The New Modernist Studies," 738. For a representative example of this multi-layered expansiveness, see Friedman, "Periodizing Modernism."
20 James and Seshagiri, "Metamodernism," 88.
21 James and Seshagiri, "Metamodernism," 88.
22 Dabashi, "Cultures," n.p.
23 Saint-Amour, *Tense Future*, 40–41.
24 Freeman, *Time Binds*, xiii.
25 See, for example, Mao and Walkowitz, "The New Modernist Studies"; and Mao and Walkowitz, eds., *Bad Modernisms*.
26 While the subtitle of *GLQ* is "A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies," the journal's founding editors, Carolyn Dinshaw and David M. Halperin, immediately make clear that the *Q* in the title "takes us in two directions at once": "Towards the academic legitimacy of *quarterly*, with all the genteel associations that centuries of critical quarterlies guarantee. And in the opposite direction, towards the fractious, the disruptive, the irritable, the impatient, the unapologetic, the bitchy, the camp, the *queer*" (iii–iv).
27 Walerstein, "On Enduring Eve Sedgwick," 19.
28 Spackman, "Mafarka and Son," 91, 103.

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CHAPTER SUMMARIES

1 The Queerness of Modernist Temporality: Modernist Literature, Sexual Science, and Queer Temporality

Jana Funke

This chapter explores the intersections between modernist temporalities and sexualities. As other scholars have acknowledged, modernist attempts to resist and subvert conventional understandings of time as linear, sequential, progressive, or teleological anticipate queer scholarship on temporality that has emerged since the early 2000s. The chapter demonstrates that such explorations of queer temporalities were central to both modernist literary experimentation and sexological writings from the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century. Funke explores how the sexual scientific theorizations of hormones, heredity and memory, and rhythm and periodicity resonate with literary works by Bryher, E. M. Forster, Radclyffe Hall, D. H. Lawrence, and Virginia Woolf. As a result, the chapter positions sexology as a regulatory and disciplinary field of knowledge that is deeply entangled with modernist literary explorations of queer temporalities and sexualities.

2 Dream Friend: Sexology, Child Study, and the Queer Imaginary Companion

Ellen Crowell

This chapter explores how a pathologized and sexualized conception of imaginary companions within the late nineteenth-century "Child Study" movement was countered by a prevalent and lasting counter-discourse on

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queer childhood undertaken within gay male writing from 1889 to 1918. In the work of John Addington Symonds, Oscar Wilde, Siegfried Sassoon, E. M. Forster, and H. N. Dickinson, we find imaginary friends functioning not as harbingers of a deviant future, but as salutary facilitators of queer maturation—a shadow tradition within gay writing, in which imaginary companions are pointedly and repeatedly constructed in counterpoint to homophobic conceptions of normal childhood development.

3 Paris Was a Lesbian: Women's Liberation and the Re-Queering of Modernism

Jaime Harker

In 1973, experimental novelist Bertha Harris published a love letter to the many experimental writers in Natalie Barney's coterie. Harris bragged of stalking Djuna Barnes on her daily walk and stuffing her mailbox full of flowers, all part of an attempt to create a usable past for her radical feminist present. Harris's devotion was extreme but not unique; the women expatriates of Paris were an important source of inspiration to Harris and her posse, which included Jill Johnston, Esther Newman, and Louis Fischer. Unlike the more respectable academic recuperation, however, which emphasized their gender, the vanguard of lesbian feminism embraced their deviant sexuality, their separatism, their creation of lesbian identity as a transnational site of resistance. This chapter explores the recuperation and enlistment of queer modernism in the creation of lesbian nation and the feminist avant-garde, feeling backward to experimental novelists Bertha Harris and June Arnold, and then back further to their inspirations, including Djuna Barnes, Virginia Woolf, and Natalie Barney.

4 Posthumous Queer Modernism

Jodie Medd

In the context of queer theory's interest in temporality, this chapter considers how gender and sexually non-conforming modernist writers actively imagined and archivally curated their queerness in relation to a future after their own deaths. In doing so, these writers critically and creatively shaped a temporally suspended ontology by anticipating a posthumous future in which their writing might circulate and their queerness achieve its public becoming. Drawing examples from the Bloomsbury group, the chapter acknowledges how status, resources, and an initially individual or coterie focus inform the shape and reach of such queer posthumous becomings. It also asks: as much as these writers needed to imagine "us" as the future receptive readers of their

posthumous revelations and queer becoming, how might we also turn to them and the lessons of their resistant temporalities to help us sustain our own future possibilities?

5 The Translucent Closet

Benjamin Kahan

This chapter charts the affordances of the "closet" for queer theory and modernist studies while recognizing the limitations of the trope as an anachronism, as putatively white, and Western. In light of these limitations, the chapter retrofits the trope by recovering an alternative set of modernist logics— discretion, masks, double lives, and riddles—that have often been understood as closetedness, theorizing their differing ways of imagining and contouring desire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By more rigorously historicizing the closet, we are able to revisit a range of familiar and less familiar queer texts and see them anew.

6 Queer Formalism as Modernist Form, Modernist Form as Queer Formalism

Octavio R. González

Intersectionality is a key aspect of queer modernism, particularly for Black modernists like Nella Larsen, Richard Bruce Nugent, and Wallace Thurman. Their works are part of a queer literary genealogy that includes Oscar Wilde and Virginia Woolf, characterized by a longing for form and a re-creation of queer identities on the page. This queerness is presented via manipulation of forms, indicating how queerness as a subject of literary history depends on experimental rupture as much as on thematic homoeroticism and gender nonconformity. This chapter provides a necessary corrective to the underexplored significance of Black and biracial intersectional modernists in developing this aesthetic and aestheticizing tradition within queer modernism.

7 The Lyric of Queer Modernisms

Julia Bloch

This chapter identifies several sites at which to map the forms of queer modernist lyric, arguing first for the use of lyric studies as a way to read queer poetic form. Lyric studies has recalibrated the way we understand the relationship between gender, sexuality, and expression in twentieth-century poetry, from protomodernism (Emily Dickinson's hermetic lyrics, Walt

Whitman's syncretic ones) to high and postwar modernism (H.D.'s lyricized feminist epics, Hart Crane's lyrics of the cruising straphanger). This chapter concludes with readings of a number of writers whose queered lyric forms offer counterhegemonic takes on temporality, historicity, desire, and subjectivity.

8 "The first duty in life is to be as artificial as possible": Queer Subversions of Life Writing

Todd G. Nordgren

Following Oscar Wilde's aphorism from *Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young* (1894) – "the first duty in life is to be as artificial as possible" – this chapter explores the impulse among some queer modernist authors to embrace their notoriety as sexual and gender outcasts. Tracing a legacy that begins with Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis* (1905), this chapter follows the path of queer modernist "autobiografiction" through the letters and avant-garde poetry of Wilde's nephew, Arthur Cravan, to Quentin Crisp's first memoir, *The Naked Civil Servant* (1968). These works undermine the possibility of capturing a true account of their authors' lives, however deeply scrutinized they may be, using modernist tactics of pseudonymy, heteronymy, and multi-identitarian claims to refashion the presumed infamy of queer lives into a kind of conspicuous celebrity. This chapter reconsiders an array of queer modernist life writing under these new terms, proposing that queerness's performative quality allowed writers to reimagine how their lives would be perceived by the broader public. Rather than hiding from the effects of discrimination and criminalization, many authors embraced a desire to be famous that fell outside both the history of pride and queer negative affects including shame and despair.

9 Geometric Kinship: Sensuous Abstraction and the Accumulation of Forms in Black Queer Kinaesthetics

Teagan Bradway

In an extended engagement with Renee Gladman's multi-genre experimental writing and accompanying ink drawings in *Calamities* (2016) and *Prose Architectures* (2017), this chapter explores the relationship between the legacy of modernist aesthetics and contemporary theories of queer kinship. In this light, queer relationality is not only a material, social reality but a formal question. Can abstractionist aesthetics be a protest against racist and homophobic regimes of representation rather than a turn away from political critique and social engagement? Reading Gladman's work as an example of

"sensuous abstraction" that illuminates the formal principles at work in the arrangement of kinship into various social shapes, this chapter develops a theory of Black queer kinaesthetics.

10 "A Queer Indefinite Way": Richard Bruce Nugent, Nella Larsen, and New Negro Indeterminacy

GerShun Avilez

The Harlem Renaissance, or the New Negro Movement, of the 1920s and 1930s has become a significant site for examining Black same-sex desire and gender non-conformity. The critical community has begun to appreciate how the New Negro is also often the "Queer" Negro. However, it is not only non-normative expressions of desire that make possible this assessment. Throughout the work of the period, there is a sustained questioning of the normative structures of desire that shape Black subjectivity as well as the assumed parameters of this re-defined identity space. At the precise moment that there is a declaration of the New Negro, there are anxieties about the means for articulating Black embodiment. This chapter uses the paradigms of Black queer studies and Queer of Color Critique (QOCC) to explore the cautious embracing of the trope of the New Negro in Richard Bruce Nugent's "Smoke, Lilies, and Jade" (1926) and Nella Larsen's *Quicksand* (1928). The QOCC perspective illuminates how Nugent and Larsen show how gender ideologies undergird the articulation of the New Negro and how ideological critique is a defining component of Black modernism.

11 So Queer Yet So Straight: Japan's First Female Director(s)

Xinyi Zhao

This chapter explores the complex relations between queer theory and women's film history through the lens of Japan's first woman director, Sakane Tazuko. Despite a career that spanned prewar Japan, colonial Manchuria, and Communist China, Sakane has long been marginalized in the dominant narratives of Japanese film history. Taking the understudied queer aspect of Sakane's life and career as a vantage point, the chapter aims to contextualize her cross-border filmic activities and theorize the mutual imbrications of colonialism, feminism, and her (in)visibility in film historiographies. Invoking queer theory's reimagination of historical time, it argues Sakane's queerness lies not only in her resisting and readdressing traditional gender roles through filmmaking, but also in her unsettling the normative assumptions of "historiographic knowability" that rendered her invisible in conventional historical narratives. Finally, it reconsiders how her queer indeterminacy may open up

the possibility of an alternative film historiography, one that not only writes "her-stories" back into histories but also acknowledges the instability of historical knowledge.

12 They Were Right There Together: Black Abundance in *Home to Harlem* and Vernacular Indifference to Sexological Expertise

Emma Heaney

Drawing on Kiese Laymon's contemporary theorizations of "abundance" and "meagerness," this chapter offers a new reading of Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem* (1927) that places McKay in conversation with both psychoanalytic and sexological thought. The novel demonstrates the contrast between the meagerness of such expertise, with its understanding of queerness as tragic lack, and the abundance of Black vernacular knowledge of bodies, genders, sexualities, and social bonds—both in and beyond the world of the novel. *Home to Harlem* reflects a landscape of gender, sex, and sexuality that displaces the entrenched taxonomy of identities. In this way, the chapter argues, McKay's work provokes a revised understanding of modernist sexuality writ large.

13 Queer Modernist Animals

Cliff Mak

This chapter argues that queer modernists invoke animals and animality because they allowed works of art and literature to operate both concretely and abstractly. Most signally, texture, the tactile feeling of animal bodies, carries a palpable erotic charge, engaging concrete senses of pleasure and pain. At the same time, the muteness of animals and the epistemological opacity of animal instinct engage the idea of the animal as surface in a more figurative sense and make them readily available to modernist protocols of impersonality. Easily fetishized, animal surfaces thus trouble the ontological, sexual, and/or racial distinctions between surface and depth, exterior and interior, subject and object, colonizer and colonized, shaper and shaped. Additionally, this chapter briefly examines how animal figures help clarify the boundaries between queer modernism and other adjacent disciplinary and cultural formations, including Victorian realism, children's literature, and postmodernism. Writers and artists discussed include T. S. Eliot, D. H. Lawrence, Samuel Beckett, Rudyard Kipling, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Mark Doty, Marianne Moore, Glenway Wescott, Gertrude Stein, J. M. Barrie, Oscar Wilde, and Andy Warhol.

14 The Rediscovery of Margaret Hoening French

Scott Herring

This chapter surveys queer modernist artwork produced by Margaret Hoening French (1906–1998). French was a member of PaJaMa, a US-based avant-garde trio that included her husband Jared as well as Paul Cadmus. While scholars have produced a significant amount of research about the latter two, less has been written about Margaret's life and her experimental aesthetics. Rectifying this oversight, this chapter concentrates on French's complex relationship to modern gay subcultures in the 1930s and 1940s via her painting, photographs, and archival practices. Often treated as ancillary to queer male environments, French in fact made important contributions to them while they simultaneously nourished her social, psychic, and creative life.

15 Out of Alignment: Queer Modernism's Anarchist Legacy

Eric Keenaghan

Critical of centralized authorities like the state and religious institutions that suppressed individuals' freedoms, anarchism offered a philosophy or worldview supporting queer modernists' efforts to connect their art to their own gendered and sexual experience. Queer modernists who were unaligned leftists or self-identified anarchists developed their aesthetic visions and creative experiments out of philosophical anarchism, an often "unpolitical" brand of libertarianism emphasizing politicized ethics. By reimagining community and social relations, they hoped to transform readers' consciousnesses and inspire them to pursue principles of mutual aid maximizing individual freedoms, including sexual ones. This chapter examines queer American unaligned leftist and anarchist modernists from the interwar and Cold War periods: Margaret Anderson, Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, Hart Crane, Robert Duncan, Muriel Rukeyser, and Allen Ginsberg. Continuing a queer libertarian line of modernist anarchism begun by Walt Whitman, these authors bridge the Old and New Lefts. Their Whitmanic libertarian line suggests queer modernism's unacknowledged influence on the personal politics of later gender and sexual liberation movements.

16 The Pauper's Salon: Modernism, Queer Theory, and the Lumpenproletariat

Glyn Salton-Cox

This chapter argues that Marx's figure of the lumpenproletariat—part mere slur, part descriptor of individuals and communities choosing to live outside the dominant relations of production—must be foregrounded in any

discussion of queer modernism in the UK, the US, and Germany. For the lumpen is always already racialized, queered, and/or feminized as opposed to the sturdy working man: the abject remainder in Marx and Engels's construction of the proletariat as a normative category. In readings of novels by John Henry Mackay, Claude McKay, and Djuna Barnes, the chapter demonstrates that liminal figures such as sex workers, fraudsters, and hustlers of all shapes and forms constitute a much-maligned social formation that was crucial to the emergence of a queer modernist literary canon—and to the development of the radical strains of queer theory that continue to revitalize twentieth-century studies today.

17 Modernism and the Queer Theory of Diaspora

Nadine Attewell

This chapter draws on recent developments in queer of color, queer diasporic, and postcolonial queer studies to reflect on the queerness and modernism of early twentieth-century diasporic cultural formations. On the one hand, the complex sexual stylings of diasporic writers like Langston Hughes and José Garcia Villa have received increased attention as part of efforts to queer diasporic literary canons. On the other hand, scholars have sought to account for the marginalization of queer (and) diasporic subjects in our archives of cultural production by challenging assumptions about what counts as cultural production in the first place. Both approaches inform this chapter's focus on the fictions of Black Jamaican writer Claude McKay as a theorist of queer diasporic life and literary modernism in their intersections and discontinuities. In *Home to Harlem*, *Banjo*, and *Romance in Marseille*, McKay gives literary expression to the queer forms of working-class diasporic sociality generated by histories of transoceanic and transcontinental labor migration, which he renarrates as histories of gender and sexual experimentation. As the chapter argues, however, McKay's novels also point to their own classed and gendered limits as an archive, their modernism a prompt to look elsewhere for the traces of women's practices of queer relation.

18 On *View*: A Queer Theory of Modernist Practice

Tirza True Latimer

This chapter reads *View* magazine, edited by Charles Henri Ford and Parker Tyler from 1940 to 1947, as a map of the queer cultural networks that animated modern art scenes from Paris to New York, and further suggests that its queerness resides not only in the identities of its contributors and subjects, but in its editorial practice. Rather than claiming art's autonomy, *View*

explored its imbrication in both social and sexual life; rather than espousing notions of medium-specific purity, it privileged the disciplinary promiscuity offered by theater, interior décor, and fashion. And rather than bow to the dominant nationalism of the period, *View* expanded creative energy to expand and sustain creative partnerships across territorial borders. Looking at midcentury modernism through the lens of *View*, this chapter argues, reveals the practice of collaboration as a significant aspect of cultural production often ignored by conventional historical accounts. Re-viewing *View*, in other words, makes visible modernism's debt to queer relationality.

19 Queer or Describe? Alan Hollinghurst and the Bloomsbury Group

Charlie Tyson

This chapter reads Alan Hollinghurst's *The Stranger's Child* (2011) in the context of both theories of historical fiction and recent debates about the role of description in literary criticism. The novel revisits the Bloomsbury Group, a site of English modernism that would seem to need no "queering." Yet Hollinghurst, known for helping to import frank gay sex into literary fiction, here shies away from explicit sexual description; the erotic "unmuting" that is a standard feature of queer historical fiction is, in *The Stranger's Child*, achieved only partially. This, the chapter suggests, marks a gentle turn away from queer historical fictions that seek to subvert or revise the past, to fill in archival silences in the history of human feeling. Instead, in a revision of Lukács's famous provocation, this chapter demonstrates that Hollinghurst's salute to modernism's queer legacies does not "queer" Bloomsbury so much as describe it.

20 Promiscuous Spaces: The Bookshop and Queer Eclecticism

Huw Osborne

This chapter examines the queerness of modernist independent bookshops before they could be unproblematically understood in such terms. After an opening discussion of bookshops as modern queer spaces, the chapter provides a case study of Charles Lahr's Progressive Bookshop in interwar London. It closes with an analysis of Rhys Davies's "Wigs, Costumes, Masks," a short story by one of the Progressive Bookshop's most faithful customers. Davies's story dwells on the same threshold between public commerce and private desire that one finds in the queer bookshop, ultimately providing a vivid example of the incoherent queerness of modern(ist) London.

21 Vaporous Vows: Queer Weather in Claude Hartland's *Story of a Life*

Benjamin Bateman

Drawing upon the critically neglected and earliest known American gay autobiography—Claude Hartland's *Story of a Life* (1901)—this chapter argues for the weather as an underappreciated support for queerness. Hartland makes numerous vows to abstain from sexual intercourse with other men, and although he upbraids himself for violating those vows, he also invokes ideas about the atmosphere to explain and partly excuse his transgressions. Weather, in this autobiography, provides a model for mutability and supplies a rhythm to the vicissitudes of desire. Revisiting Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's early ruminations on queer performativity and connecting them to Sedgwick's later writings on weather and atmosphere, the chapter concludes that of equal importance to the conditions enabling a performative's success are the conditions that enable its demise and, in doing so, enable a queer person to continue in all their delicious contradictions.

22 Queer Affective Labor in Elizabeth Bowen's *Friends and Relations*

Tiffany D. Ball

While questions of affect are now ubiquitous in studies of queer modernism, affect has not been discussed explicitly in terms of emotional labor and feeling work. This chapter aims to move conversations about affect from questions of identity and libido toward those of labor and sociality. Applying Arlie Hochschild's feminist theories of emotional labor, it argues that Elizabeth Bowen's blasé female protagonists in *Friends and Relations* (1931) and *To the North* (1933) expose the work that goes into propping up social relations and illustrate phenomenological ways for knowing affect as a form of labor. For Bowen, this labor is central to both heteronormative femininity and queer sociality and, thus, offers a way of thinking about intimacy that is eccentric to the hetero-homo binary. Moreover, moving from a psychoanalytic lens to a Marxist feminist one enables readers to see Bowen's emotionally distant women not as traumatized or stunted but as refusing the emotional labor of femininity. For Bowen, whether gay or straight, love is just too much work.

23 Funny Emotions: Queer Theory, Affect, and Poetry

Brian Glavey

In his elegy for his friend Frank O'Hara, Allen Ginsberg described the New York School Poet as a "curator of funny emotions," a phrase that Henry Abelove, who took the title of his book *Deep Gossip* from Ginsberg's elegy, understands as a resonant description of the project of queer scholarship in general. This chapter considers the prominence of O'Hara and other New York School poets in important theoretical work by figures including José Esteban Muñoz and Maggie Nelson and suggests that an important strain of queer work on affect might be seen as a continuation of a set of ideas about aesthetics and sexuality found in a particular form of queer late modernism. Tracing the late modernist roots of queer theory's thinking about funny emotions helps to clarify a number of ongoing critical debates about potentiality, attachment, and relatability.

PART ONE
Temporality


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1

THE QUEERNESS OF MODERNIST TEMPORALITY

Modernist Literature, Sexual Science, and Queer Temporality

Jana Funke

Whether it is the radical slowness of Gertrude Stein's continuous present, the spontaneous re-emergence of individual and collective memories in Virginia Woolf's moments of being, or the transgressive diversion of Djuna Barnes's episodic fiction, modernist authors frequently engaged in radical experimentation with temporality. Challenging Enlightenment ideals of time as sequential, teleological, and progressive, modernist literature exposed the "tyranny of clock time" and resisted conventional understandings of chronological time as a linear progression from past to present to future.[1]

The modernist fascination with temporality anticipates queer scholarship on time that has emerged since the early 2000s.[2] Encompassing a range of approaches, work on queer temporalities has explored constructions of time that are non-normative in the sense that they oppose ideals of linearity, sequentiality, (re)productivity, progress, and teleology. Such temporalities hold queer potential, for instance, because they resist developmental timelines according to which individuals are expected to grow up to be (often married and monogamous) heterosexual adults, as Jack Halberstam and Kathryn Bond Stockton have shown.[3] In addition, queer scholars have debated the concept and value of futurity. Lee Edelman has called upon queers to reject what he describes as reproductive futurism, a socially valorized vision of the future associated with biological reproduction and the figure of the child.[4] José Esteban Muñoz, while sharing Edelman's scepticism regarding biological reproduction, has also argued for the continued value of futurity as a "horizon of possibility" that holds particular importance for queer and trans people of colour.[5] Turning their attention towards the past, theorists like Carolyn Dinshaw and Heather Love have examined how attempts to "touch" historical figures or periods can lead to unexpected or disturbing

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processes of queer identification.[6] Queer scholars have often associated queer temporality with same-sex desires or gender non-conformity, suggesting that straight time is linked to heterosexuality and cisgender identities. Yet, as Nguyen Tan Hoang has argued, gay and lesbian subjects often do participate in linear and progressive timelines.[7] Conventional coming out narratives that put pressure on individuals to claim a visible and proud gay or lesbian identity, for instance, are straight in the sense that they are linear and teleological. Conversely, as discussed further below, it is important to ask to what extent heterosexual individuals might, at least partially, be able to exist in a queer relation to straight time.

The rich resonances between modernist and queer temporalities have not gone unnoticed. Joseph Allen Boone's *Libidinal Currents: Sexuality and the Shaping of Modernism* (1998), published shortly before queer theorists began to explicitly explore questions around temporality, charts the links between modernist experimentations with narrative, time, and queerness. Building on this work, Kate Haffey's more recent *Literary Modernism, Queer Temporality: Eddies in Time* argues convincingly that modernist literature offers "some of the foundations of what has come to be known as queer temporality."[8] In addition, Haffey shows how reading modernist temporalities as queer can yield important new insights into the ways in which modernist authors sought to challenge conventional understandings of both narrative and sexuality.[9]

This chapter extends existing scholarship by arguing that explorations of queer temporalities were central to both modernist literary experimentation as well as sexual scientific writings from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. As is well known, "the temporal imaginary of modernism" developed through sustained dialogue between literature and science.[10] New understandings of time provided by the human and natural sciences, including anthropology, archaeology, maths, physics, and psychology, shaped (and were in turn shaped by) literary engagements with temporality.[11] Scientific models of sexuality originating within the loosely defined, interdisciplinary field of sexology also demonstrate a sustained preoccupation with questions of time: sexual scientists investigated how hormonal accounts of sexual development troubled linear trajectories of sexual development; they examined how inherited traits and memories connected the individual with the deep past in ways that could disrupt stable notions of identity; they also studied the rhythms of sexual desire and theorized intense moments of pleasure. While often aiming to discipline sexuality to ensure heterosexual and reproductive outcomes that were frequently aligned with eugenic principles, sexual scientific writings also provided ways to disrupt linear and teleological patterns. As such, sexual science was deeply regulatory while also making it possible to imagine different ways of being and desiring in the world that resonated with modernist literary explorations of queer temporalities and sexualities.

Hormonal Development and Sideways Growth

Sexual science was a taxonomic project that provided new identity categories,[12] such as the homosexual, the sadist, the masochist, and the transvestite. Personal accounts published in the form of case studies played an important role in allowing sexual scientists to provide evidence for the new sexual types introduced in their works. Anticipating later coming out narratives, case studies often presented a linear form of development that resulted in the establishment of a stable and coherent identity.[13] Because influential sexual scientists like Havelock Ellis in Britain or Magnus Hirschfeld in Germany tended to present sexual identity as largely congenital, individual development could be understood as the teleological unfolding of inborn tendencies.[14] At the same time, sexual scientists recognized that sexuality was shaped by a variety of factors that went far beyond a congenital predisposition, which troubled strictly linear and teleological narratives.[15]

Hormonal frameworks that emerged in the early twentieth century further complicated such models of sexual development. Although scientific interest in glandular secretions had arisen earlier, the term "hormones" was formally coined by British physiologist Ernest Starling in 1905, and endocrinology emerged as a discipline in the 1910s and 1920s. Sexual scientists like Ellis, Sigmund Freud, and Hirschfeld believed that hormones were responsible for regulating "not only primary, but also secondary sexual characteristics as well as sexual orientation and even certain forms of behaviour, speech or thoughts that could be read as gendered."[16] They hoped that endocrinology could provide new scientific explanations of what was, at the time, understood as the nexus of sex, gender, and sexuality, cutting "across the psyche-soma boundary."[17] To some extent, hormonal technologies were popular because they held out the promise of controlling the human body: in the interwar period, sexual glands were implanted or surgically manipulated in other ways to regulate hormonal secretions and try to restore youth, change sexual orientation, or carry out gender affirming surgeries.[18] These medical interventions suggested that it was possible to regulate and, if necessary, correct supposed deviations in sexual development, thus reinforcing linear and teleological models of development. At the same time, the idea that a delicate mixture of constantly shifting internal secretions shaped the individual's mind and body drew attention to the fact that sexual and gendered traits were open to change and could not easily be labeled or categorized on the basis of rigid taxonomic systems.

This uncertainty regarding the trajectories of individual sexual development is articulated explicitly in the article "Intersexuality and the Endocrine Aspect of Sex," published by geneticist Richard Goldschmidt in the inaugural issue of the journal of *Endocrinology* in 1917. Goldschmidt used the term "intersex" to refer to moths that combined male and female characteristics as

a result of cross-breeding. Some of these moths initially developed as female and then as male, whereas others started out as male and then developed as female.[19] This observation raised fundamental and as-yet-unanswerable questions about how and why sexual differences developed over time.[20] Comparing the process of sexual differentiation to a railway system, Goldschmidt maintained that much was known about:

> the system of tracks and switches within a railroad station, which direct the trains into different directions. But this knowledge does not furnish any information about the material, the destiny, the loads, or the moving power of the trains.[21]

According to Goldschmidt, science had provided a solid understanding of the different possible trajectories of sexual development. The reasons why an individual organism might develop in different directions, at different speeds, and with different possible end goals, however, was little understood. Although Goldschmidt's work was focused on the study of physical sex differences in non-human organisms, his findings were applied more widely, as Ina Linge has shown.[22] Hirschfeld, for instance, believed that Goldschmidt's work could be used to understand homosexual desires in humans. As such, endocrinological frameworks presented all sexual development as a mysterious and potentially open-ended process that was not necessarily linear or teleological.

This hormonal model resonates with literary attempts to queer the process of sexual development. Queer modernist Bildungsromane, such as Bryher's autobiographical novels *Development* (1919) and *Two Selves* (1923) or Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928), for instance, open up queer possibilities by slowing down or delaying the process of maturation, thereby resisting the ideal of developmental closure or achieved Bildung.[23] These texts also suggest that the ultimate goal of gender and sexual identity formation is fundamentally unknowable. In 1918, Ellis started corresponding with Bryher and recommended the third revised edition of his book *Sexual Inversion* (1915), which explicitly mentions recent advances in endocrinological research.[24] *Development* and *Two Selves* mainly focus on the childhood and adolescence of Bryher's alter ego, Nancy, who is assigned female at birth, longs to be a boy and desires women. Key to Bryher's narrative is a sense of anticipation and incomplete yet ongoing development: as the identification with the figure of the boy signals, Nancy does not simply grow up, but remains invested in childhood, a period associated with imaginative freedom and creative growth. Bryher's celebration of the figure of the child and open-ended development resonates with the concept of "sideways growth" introduced by Stockton in her work on the queer child. Stockton uses the term to describe "ways of growing that are not growing up"—forms of

development that do not involve the "vertical movement upward (hence, 'growing up') toward full stature, marriage, work, reproduction and the loss of childishness."[25] Bryher suggests that Nancy's path of individual development with its many delays and detours and its uncertain endpoint is productive precisely because it does not follow a predetermined trajectory. Growing sideways also allows Nancy to resist any sense of a fixed sexual or gender identity that could easily be labeled on the basis of well-known sexological taxonomies. Still, by placing emphasis on the unpredictable directions and speeds of individual development, Bryher's autobiographical fiction echoes endocrinological frameworks that were increasingly discussed in sexual scientific works in the 1910s.

In *Orlando*, Woolf similarly resists scientific attempts to label gender and sexual identity. For this reason, her work has been read as an attempt to subvert the classificatory systems of sexual science.[26] Yet, as Benjamin Kahan has rightly pointed out, the novel can also productively be read in dialogue with sexual scientific understandings of sex, gender, and sexuality, with which Woolf and other members of the Bloomsbury Group, including Vita Sackville-West, who famously inspired the book, were familiar.[27] Woolf's mock biographer realizes that "[d]ifferent though the sexes are, they intermix," and the novel charts the twists and turns of Orlando's sexual development across the centuries in ways that speak to sexual scientific debates.[28] As indicated above, endocrinologists acknowledged that the precise reasons why changes in sexual characteristics might occur were largely unknown, which resonates with the sense of mystery behind Orlando's physical transformation. Woolf also queers an argument that was occasionally presented by sexual scientists like Freud and Ellis, namely, that women entered an allegedly more mature and stable female heterosexual identity at the age of thirty.[29] While the novel does suggest that Orlando "becomes" a woman at the age of thirty, Woolf renders absurd the very idea of a clearly defined developmental turning point by stretching out the process of Orlando's maturation across several centuries and by presenting their sexual and gender identity as constantly evolving. Like Bryher, Woolf associates developmental delay with opportunities to "grow sideways" and concludes the book with a celebration of the multiple sexed and gendered selves that the individual can explore over the life course. Indeed, there is no suggestion that Orlando has completed their development by the end of the novel.

While pushing the implications of sexual scientific research to extremes, Woolf's and Bryher's non-linear and non-teleological narratives of development resonate with endocrinological writings from the 1910s and 1920s. The modernist period needs to be understood as a moment in which scientific and literary writers explored different developmental models and timelines, often challenging the assumption that sexual development had to follow a linear and teleological trajectory.

Ancestral Memory and Feeling Backward

Whereas endocrinological accounts of development focused on the individual life course, debates about ancestral memory connected the individual subject to the deep collective past. The concept of ancestral or organic memory emerged in the nineteenth century and proposed that memory was inherited organically. Presenting memory in biological terms as a form of heredity, this materialist approach placed history within the individual body.[30] Philosopher and psychologist Théodule Ribot, for instance, declared in his 1873 work *Heredity* that "[m]an inherits from his ancestors certain modes of sensation and thought."[31] Ancestral memory could provide a sense of continuity and genealogical certainty for individuals and communities, suggesting that people contained the history of their ancestors within their own bodies. This embodied understanding of memory offered a powerful basis for self-definition, serving national, colonial, and racist purposes.

Sexual scientists like Ellis, Auguste Forel, and Freud were also inspired by the idea that individuals might have inherited memories from their ancestors. Freud famously endorsed Ernst Haeckel's theory that all people recapitulated different stages of cultural development. In this scheme, so-called sexual perversions were associated with an earlier "primitive" level of development that all people remembered, but most were able to outgrow.[32] Similar arguments were presented by Ellis, who discussed the possibility of "race memory" with Bryher, suggesting "it is possible that some experiences are common to the race … and that the more sensitive inherit a knowledge of emotional states that they have not felt themselves."[33] Bryher's life-long partner, H.D., who was friends with Ellis and was analyzed by Freud in the 1930s, held similar beliefs and insisted that she had access to memories from the deep past.[34] For Bryher and H.D., ancestral memory also provided a means to connect what they saw as their inborn creative powers and their deep connection to the past with their own sense of queerness. H.D., for instance, maintained that her ability to access the past, in particular Ancient Greece and Egypt, through visions and the imagination was closely tied to her "primitive" bisexuality.[35]

Yet, the modernist impulse to feel backwards, as Love has shown,[36] could also have a more unsettling impact and disrupt stable gender or sexual identities. Indeed, modernist texts dealing with the concept of ancestral memory and the related theme of reincarnation often result in an unravelling rather than consolidation of the self. In E. M. Forster's early homoerotic short story "Albergo Empedocle" (1903), for instance, a young privileged English man, Harold, tours Italy on his honeymoon. While visiting the Greek ruins of Akragas in Sicily, he remembers a former life in Ancient Greece. Soon thereafter, Harold begins to lose his command of the English language. He withdraws from the world and fails to recognize the people around him. His

fiancée and her family interpret Harold's behavior as a form of mental illness, and he is institutionalized in an asylum. Only his close male friend, Tommy,

> believe[s] that he has been a Greek—nay, that he is a Greek, drawn by recollection back into his previous life. … [I]f things had happened otherwise, he might be living that greater life among us, instead of among friends of two thousand years ago, whose names we have never heard.[37]

In line with the tradition of Victorian Hellenism, Forster constructs the Ancient Greek past as a time and space of male homoerotic possibility that Harold instinctively remembers. Any queer potential associated with the Ancient past, however, has been irretrievably lost and can no longer be materialised in the present. It is only by experiencing the undoing of the self that Harold can escape his impending marriage and resist the pull of a heterosexual future.

Radclyffe Hall's fiction engaged with the concept of ancestral memory and reincarnation to similar effect. Hall studied sexological writings in the 1920s and famously drew on and popularized sexual scientific knowledge about "sexual inversion" in *The Well of Loneliness* (1928). In other writings, Hall combined sexological knowledge with spiritual approaches, specifically Catholic, Buddhist, and Theosophist belief systems, to explore a range of queer possibilities.[38] In a short story entitled "Miles," for instance, the male protagonist remembers an idyllic past in which he is reunited with a male shepherd.[39] At the end of the story, he literally dissolves and escapes the modern world when a woman tries to kiss him. Hall's better-known short story "Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself" (written in 1926 and published in 1934) also associates queer possibilities with a past that cannot be reconciled with the present. Ogilvy was assigned female at birth, but never fully identifies with the model of heterosexual femininity imposed upon them. Having reached middle age, Ogilvy feels painfully out of place in English society. On a trip to a remote island off the coast of Devon, they remember a former life and find themselves in the youthful male body of the Stone Age ancestor who experiences sexual fulfilment with a female partner. The final section of the story shifts back to the present in which fishermen find Ogilvy's dead body in the cave on the island. Like other queer modernist figures, Ogilvy "turns their back on the future," as Love writes, by accessing memories of a queer ancestral past that transcends their individual lifetime and cannot easily be reconciled with the modern world.[40] Similar to Bryher's exchange about ancestral memory with Ellis, the idea that Ogilvy might have been a man in a former life fulfils a genealogical desire for origins by offering an explanation for their gender nonconformity. Yet, similar to Forster's short story, in Hall's text, this past cannot be accessed without negating Ogilvy's identity in the present.[41]

These literary engagements with ancestral memory draw attention to the ways in which the queer past can negate rather than affirm desires and identities. As Love has argued with regard to the backward temporalities of queer modernism,[42] present-day scholars need to resist the urge to try and rescue these damaged and potentially lost queer figures by integrating them in an affirmative narrative of progress or liberation. Instead, these texts provide opportunities to think through the ways in which queer modernism is constituted by "backward feelings" of shame, suffering, loneliness, injury, and failure that resist the pull of progress and futurity.

Sexual Periodicity and the Queer Moment

The modernist period also witnessed radical changes in understandings of heterosexual desires. Heterosexuality was explicitly discussed as part of wider sexual scientific debates about marriage and birth control in the interwar period, for example. As already shown, sexual scientists frequently suggested that "normal" sexual development should lead to heterosexual marriage and, ideally, reproduction. In line with Edelman's theorization of reproductive futurity, the married heterosexual couple was valorized as the social unit responsible for securing the future of the species and nation. However, sexual scientists also began to argue that heterosexual desire needed to be at least partially detached from reproduction and understood more in terms of pleasure. The fact that at least some middle-class couples began to have access to more reliable forms of birth control in the 1910s and 1920s also made it easier to tease apart heterosexual sex acts from reproduction and to theorize heterosexual pleasure on its own terms. In marital advice bestsellers like *Married Love* (1918), eugenicist birth control advocate Marie Stopes began to consider the heterosexual sex act in isolation. One of Stopes's aims was to regulate reproduction for eugenic purposes, ensuring that only heterosexual couples who were deemed "fit" and "healthy" (because they were white, middle-class, and able-bodied) reproduced at the "right" time and in the "right" numbers. Nonetheless, her writings contributed to shifts in understanding of heterosexual desire by detaching at least some heterosexual sex acts from an immediate reproductive purpose.

More specifically, Stopes's work focused on the physiological and emotional dynamics of heterosexual sex acts, which were presented as moments of intense pleasure. According to historian of birth control Hera Cook, previous marital advice literature had "placed sexual activity in a sequence that included reproductive physiology and menstruation, and continued on to pregnancy, birth and lactation"; in contrast, Stopes argued that "sexual intercourse was presented as an isolated event rather than one of a series of events which were integral parts of the life cycle and a developmental sequence that took place over time."[43] The timing of these moments had to be aligned with what Stopes

understood as the natural rhythmic temporalities of female sexual desire.[44] Drawing on her statistical investigations into what she called the "Periodicity of Recurrence of desire in women," Stopes argued that female sexual desire could be understood in terms of what she called the rhythms of the "sex tide," suggesting that female sexual desire in its natural state was as regular as the rhythms of the lunar cycle with its constant ebb and flow.[45] According to Stopes, women had a fortnightly cycle, relating to their menstrual cycle, during which sexual desire naturally increased and decreased. While her writings provided a new prescriptive framework for heterosexual desire, Stopes also suggested that women's sexual rhythms—rather than male desire—should determine when moments of pleasure occurred within marriage.[46]

Although this was not Stopes's intention, the female-oriented model of pleasure articulated in her work—with its emphasis on rhythmically recurrent moments of heterosexual pleasure—raises the question to what extent heterosexuality can participate in queer temporalities that resist the logic of reproductive futurism and open up alternative expressions of desire. To date, work on the queer moment in modernist literature has largely focused on expressions of same-sex desire, such as the kiss between Clarissa Dalloway and Sally Seton in Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). If, according to Haffey, queer moments "represent whirlpools within the flow of time," to what extent can modernist literary representations of heterosexual desire explore similar disruptions of the conventionally straight temporalities of heterosexual marriage and reproduction?[47]

Glimpses of such queer temporal possibilities can be found in D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928). Like Stopes, whose work he had read and criticized for being too "wise and scientific" about sex, Lawrence draws on the concept of rhythm to explore heterosexual relationships.[48] He focuses on rhythmically repeating and extended moments of intense pleasure that make it possible for Connie and Mellors to imagine a different life for themselves, one that involves transgressing social conventions by entering into an extra-marital and cross-class relationship that is not primarily focused on reproduction. Lawrence's interest in rhythm extends to his use of language when describing heterosexual sex acts:

> Then, as he [Mellors] began to move, in the sudden helpless orgasm, there awoke in her [Connie] new strange thrills rippling inside her. Rippling, rippling, rippling, like a flapping overlapping of soft flames, soft as feathers, running to points of brilliance, exquisite, exquisite and melting her all molten inside. It was like bells rippling up and up to a culmination. She lay unconscious of the wild little cries she uttered at the last.[49]

As Stuart Hall argued, Lawrence "tried to get us to *learn* to read like Connie learned to love."[50] While this partly refers to Lawrence's attempt to strip

away the shame associated with allegedly obscene words like "fuck" or "cunt," reading his writing also gives rise to an arguably queer experience of temporality: through repetition of words ("exquisite" and "rippling") and sounds ("flapping" and "overlapping"), Lawrence slows down the narrative, inviting his readers to focus on the intensity of words and sounds. In so doing, the text temporarily resists the forward movement of narrative just as Connie and Mellors are able to resist the reproductive futurity of "respectable" heterosexual marriage—at least for a moment. As such, Lawrence's conceptualization of the moment of female orgasm, which he likens to "pure deepening whirlpools of sensation," anticipates Haffey's description of the queer moment cited above.[51]

For Lawrence, these moments of pleasure are transformative, allowing Connie and Mellors to carve out new ways of relating to one another as a heterosexual couple. While their relationship entails the possibility of conception, sex extends beyond a reproductive goal: it is a "creative act that is far more than procreative."[52] In this sense, Lawrence's work resonates with a queer modernist project that seeks to imagine "lives that flow in new directions, that move in strange and perhaps aberrant ways."[53] To be sure, these moments of pleasure also serve a deeply restrictive linear and progressive redemption narrative according to which only "the true phallic [heterosexual] marriage" could renew the modern world.[54] This demonstrates yet again that the transgressive queer temporalities of modernist literature and science often existed alongside and in relation to regulatory straight timelines, making it impossible to uphold any clear division between queer and straight time.

As shown throughout this chapter, questions of time were at the heart of modernist literary and scientific writings about sexuality. Notwithstanding significant differences with regard to audience, style, genre, and political purpose, literary and sexological writers shared a fascination with nonconventional temporalities of sexual development, ancestral memory and the rhythms of pleasure to name but a few examples. They believed that temporal experimentation could open up new possibilities with regard to both heterosexual and homosexual desires. As such, the alleged "turn to time" in twenty-first-century queer studies can usefully be reframed as an ongoing engagement with the queer and straight temporalities emerging in literary and scientific writings in the modernist period.

Notes

1 Hasler, "Virginia Woolf," 150. For more on these challenges to Enlightenment thinking about temporality, see Haffey, *Literary Modernism*, 14; Kern, *Time and Space*; Schleifer, *Modernism and Time*.
2 Davies and Funke, *Sex, Gender and Time*; Freeman, "Introduction"; McCallum and Tuhkanen, *Queer Times*.
3 Halberstam, *Queer Time and Place*; Stockton, *Queer Child*.
4 Edelman, *No Future*.

5 Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 97.
6 Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*; Love, *Feeling Backwards*.
7 Dinshaw et al., "Queer Temporalities," 183.
8 Haffey, *Literary Modernism*, 2.
9 Haffey, *Literary Modernism*, 2–3.
10 Armstrong, "Aesthetics of Temporality," 33.
11 Barkan and Bush, *Prehistories of the Future*; Engelhardt, *Fiction and Mathematics*, 24–58; Gere, *Knossos*; Kern, *Time and Space*; Schleifer, *Modernism and Time*.
12 Doan, *Disturbing Practices*, 11.
13 Peppis, *Sciences of Modernism*, 101–47; Rohy, "Queer Narrative Theory," 173–6.
14 Frederickson, *Ploy of Instinct*, 69.
15 Fisher and Funke, "Age of Attraction," 274; Kahan, *Minor Perverts*, 1–10.
16 Sengoopta, *Secret Quintessence*, 3.
17 Hausman, *Changing Sex*, 38.
18 Armstrong, *Technology and the Body*, 131–83; Sengoopta, "Glandular Politics"; Stark, *Cult of Youth*.
19 Linge, "Potency of the Butterfly," 7; Richmond, "Basis for Heredity," 177.
20 Dietrich, "Richard Goldschmidt," 69.
21 Goldschmidt, "Intersexuality," 436.
22 Linge, "Potency of the Butterfly."
23 Castle, "Destinies of Bildung," 483.
24 Ellis to Bryher, December 19, 1918.
25 Stockton, *Queer Child*, 4.
26 Parkes, *Theatre of Censorship*, 146.
27 Kahan, "Queer Modernism," 355–6; Fassler, "Theories of Homosexuality."
28 Woolf, *Orlando*, 181.
29 Bowbly, "Introduction," xlv.
30 Otis, *Organic Memory*, 2.
31 Otis, *Organic Memory*, 1.
32 Otis, *Organic Memory*, 181–213.
33 Bryher, *The Heart to Artemis*, 229.
34 Funke, "Queer Materiality."
35 H.D. et al., *Analyzing Freud*, 132.
36 Love, *Feeling Backward*.
37 Forster, "Abergo Empedocle," 36.
38 Dellamora, *Radclyffe Hall*, 138–64; Dixon, "Sexology and the Occult."
39 R. Hall, *The World*, 107–14.
40 Love, *Feeling Backward*, 8.
41 Buck, "Obstinate Emotion," 186–7; Dellamora, "Engendering Modernism," 98.
42 Love, *Feeling Backwards*, 4.
43 Cook, *Sexual Revolution*, 193–4.
44 For more on Stopes and rhythm, see Marcus, *Rhythmical Subjects*, 35–9.
45 Stopes, *Married Love*, 29, 33. See also Doan, "Rhythm Charts."
46 Jagose, *Orgasmology*, 40–77; Cook, *Sexual Revolution*, 200.
47 Haffey, *Literary Modernism*, 40.
48 Lawrence, "Pornography and Obscenity," 247; Martin, *Rhythms of Sympathy*, 132–87.
49 Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, 133.
50 S. Hall, "Lady Chatterley's Lover," 35.
51 Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, 134.
52 Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, 279.
53 Haffey, *Literary Modernism*, 11.
54 Lawrence, "A Propos," 328.

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2

DREAM FRIEND

Sexology, Child Study, and the Queer Imaginary Companion

Ellen Crowell

In the spring of 1892, Earl Barnes, professor of Education at the newly established Leland Stanford University, published an essay entitled "Children's Imaginary Companions," in the journal *The Pacific Coast Teacher*. This essay is the earliest scholarly inquiry into imaginary friendship, a subject that subsequently garnered significant interest within the emerging discipline of Child Study, a field that took the complexity of children's emotional lives as a serious object of study. The Child Study Association of America, founded in 1888 by pioneering American psychologist Granville Stanley Hall, promoted case-study investigations into all aspects of childhood experience. Some of these investigations focused on defining the parameters of normal childhood development and developing strategies to discourage deviation, and Barnes's essay was reprinted frequently in both American and British Child Study journals. In "Children's Imaginary Companions," Barnes surveys a range of case-studies into imaginary friendship and speculates upon the extent to which parents and educators should discipline this childhood propensity. He observes that that any inquiry into children and imagination poses an "intellectual difficulty, for if we discourage these spontaneous activities of the imagination we are in danger of becoming Gradgrinds, and our children will become prosaic and unlovely fact-hunters. Is not," Barnes asks, "the natural play of the imagination one of the greatest blessings given to man?"[1] Yet despite such Arnoldian sentiments, Barnes's essay ultimately concludes it best to discourage any play of the mind excessive in its freedom.

In an intellectual and moral climate increasingly invested in establishing developmental norms, the imaginary friend was a figure of fascination, a problem to be solved. Barnes's essay ultimately pathologizes "extreme cases" of imaginary friendship. Such companions may expand the "spontaneous

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activities of the imagination," but to avoid later developmental problems, Barnes writes, the child must "be led as early as possible to distinguish the real from the fanciful; he must be assisted in the construction of his real world."[2] If allowed to linger too long as a child's sole intimate companion, the imaginary friend, Barnes warns, will exert a perverting force:

> One of the leading specialists in nervous diseases tells me that he should expect to find abnormal nervous conditions accompanying extreme cases of imaginary companionship; and that certainly if such a belief is carried on for some months or years it must leave the mind especially susceptible to hallucinations and superstitions in later life.[3]

If allowed to progress unchecked, imaginary friendships threatened to compromise a child's ability to mature—morally, socially, and sexually. Fusing imagination and intimacy, such relationships threaten to destabilize a child's sense of the rational world and instead incubate an unsettlingly erotic fantasy realm. The imaginary friend, routinely characterized as endemic to isolated children of nervous temperament, thus becomes both marker of and warning sign for future deviance. By thus conceptualizing "extreme cases" of imaginary friendship as developmental markers of future deviance, Barnes obliquely links Child Study with the concurrently emerging field of sexology, in which one also finds the imagination identified as breeding ground for abnormalities. In this early essay on imaginary friendship, Barnes inaugurates a tendency amongst late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Child Study investigators to warn against imaginary companionship in language that echoes early sexological descriptions of deviant developmental trajectories.

Yet in its oblique fusion of imaginary companionship with nascent erotic deviance, Barnes's essay also echoes another fin-de-siècle discursive field in which the imagination was claimed as the psychic space where sexual difference thrives. In late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century gay male writing, we find a focused countertradition in which the imaginary companion is embraced as a sign of healthy queer maturation. A typo, allowed to creep into Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurt's anthology *The Fin-de-Siècle Reader*, productively illuminates what this essay will argue was a persistent embrace of the invisible companion in late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century gay writing. The typo appears in the anthology's selection from John Addington Symonds's 1896 treatise, *A Problem in Modern Ethics*. The selection begins:

> There is a passion, or a perversion of appetite, which, like all human passions, has played a considerable part in the world's history, for good or evil, but which has hardly yet received the philosophical attention and the scientific investigation it deserves.[4]

A few sentences later, the typo appears: "We cannot take up the religious books, the legal codes, the annals, the descriptions of manners of any nation … without meeting with this person in one form or another."[5] Symonds's transtemporal "passion" suddenly becomes a "person," a typographical error that nonetheless amplifies the extended personification that follows, in which Symonds asks us to imagine the historical persistence of homosexuality through the figure of an invisible companion—one endowed with a "chivalrous enthusiasm" in Ancient Greece and a "calm and dignified attitude of conscious merit in Sparta, Athens, Thebes." This companion lies "wrapped in wolves' skins" around the campfires of Celtic warriors and traverses "the sands of Arabia, where the Bedouin raise desert dust in flying squadrons." Although "[i]t once sat, clothed in Imperial purple, on the throne of the Roman Caesars," Symonds writes, in his own day this personage "skulks in holes and corners, hiding an abashed head and shrinking from the light of day." Here, an invisible homosexual presence is transformed into a powerful rhetorical device: a transnational, transtemporal companion whose spectral presence, Symonds argues, "in spite of all that has been done to suppress it," exposes the "form and symptom" of a pervasive, structural homophobia.[6]

In personifying queer desire as a tactile and sentient presence accompanying all human experience, Symonds echoes Oscar Wilde's conception, explored in both *The Portrait of Mr. W.H.* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*, of the invisible companion's role as a subtle guide—leading his initiate toward either an apprehension of a communal queer identity, or a rejection of normative monotony. This essay explores how a pathologized and sexualized conception of imaginary companions within the late nineteenth-century "Child Study" movement was countered by a prevalent and lasting counterdiscourse on queer childhood undertaken within gay male writing from 1889 to 1918. In the work of John Addington Symonds, Oscar Wilde, Siegfried Sassoon, E. M. Forster, and H. N. Dickinson, we find imaginary friends functioning not as harbingers of a deviant future, but as salutary facilitators of queer maturation—a shadow tradition within gay writing, in which imaginary companions are pointedly and repeatedly constructed in counterpoint to homophobic conceptions of normal childhood development.

Stranger Child

In Heinrich Kaan's foundational sexological study, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1844), standard injunctions against childhood onanism are expanded to include suspicion of the imagination as gateway to deviant sexual desires and practices. Kaan's text was, in the words of Michel Foucault, "the first treatise of psychology to speak only of sexual psychopathology,"[7] and in his 2016 critical introduction to the first English translation of *Psychopathia Sexualis*, Benjamin Kahan explores what makes this largely forgotten text both

foundational for and unique within the field of sexology. Two aspects of this 1844 study are important for how imaginary friendship gets linked to sexual deviance: Kaan's inquiry into the role the imagination plays in the structuring of sexual instinct and his focus on childhood "as a privileged developmental stage for sexual etiology."[8] For Kaan, the sexual instinct is always already abnormal, "always overflowing its natural aim towards procreation in the form of what [Kaan] calls 'imagination.'"[9] Kaan's conception of "imagination" functions, as Kahan observes, as a "constitutive abnormality" at the heart of sexuality, an auto-erotic capacity always edging into, or acting as gateway for, the allo-erotic.[10] Virtually no one, Kaan argues, is "entirely immune from this disease," whose cause," he contends,

> [I]s not located outside us but within us; it is a diseased imagination that creates a premature sexual desire and seeks means and paths for consummating the sexual drive. Once it is fulfilled in a manner other than the natural one, our nature becomes accustomed to this method, which, repeated under the stimuli of a libidinous imagination, becomes a firm habit.[11]

"Therefore," he concludes, "in every distortion of the sexual instinct, it is the imagination that supplies the path that fulfills it."[12] Although, as Kahan observes in his introductory essay, one could not call *Psychopathia Sexualis* an antihomophobic or queer treatise, Kaan's conception of the imagination as always already abnormal does seem to posit a "universality of queerness in the sexual instinct"—even if that very universality makes the imagination, in this foundational text in the history of sexology, a dangerous breeding ground.

The imagination is likewise cast as the path to distorted sexual instinct in early, influential essays emerging from the fin-de-siècle Child Study movement. In the language of Child Study inquiries into imaginary friendship we again and again find a decisive linkage between imagination and deviance. By embracing his imaginary companion, the imaginative child enters an unregulated, concealed world where both moral ambiguity and gender indeterminacy thrive. In *The Queer Child*, Kathryn Bond Stockton asks us to consider this inner world as always already queer: that "from the standpoint of 'normal' adults," the child "is always queer," and that "queer temporalities haunt all children."[13] Within such a framework, the figure of the imaginary friend—as pathologized form and symptom of multiple deviancies—lights up within the historical record. A doubly queered presence in studies of late-Victorian childhood, the imaginary friend becomes what Stockton terms the "ghostly gay child" of history,[14] emerging from the late-Victorian Child Study movement and then stretching out over fin-de-siècle and early modernist sexological and literary discourse.

Child Study migrated to Britain through the work of the American psychologist Granville Stanley Hall, founder of both the *American Journal of Psychology* (1887) and the Child Study Association of America (1888). A survey of his early findings on the imaginary friend appears in his influential 1904 study *Adolescence*, in which these companions are identified as early indicators of compromised physical and moral hygiene.[15] If today Hall is best remembered for facilitating Sigmund Freud's only lectures in America (presented at Clark University in September 1909), it is perhaps more important for this essay's purposes to note Hall's significant correspondence with Havelock Ellis. Hall assisted Ellis by providing case study research undertaken at Clark University upon which Ellis drew for his third (1915) edition of *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Sexual Inversion*. In an appendix to this edition, entitled "The School-Friendships of Girls," Ellis notes that "Clark University … sent out a *questionnaire* to over 800 teachers and older pupils dealing with various points connected with adolescence and received answers from 91 persons which bore on the present question [of nascent sexual inversion]"[16] "These answers," Ellis writes,

> "were from young people between 16 and 25 years of age. Two males and 7 females have loved imaginary characters, while 3 males and not less than 46 females speak of passionate love for the same sex. Love of the same sex … though not generally known, is very common; it is not mere friendship; the love is strong, real, and passionate. It may be remarked that these 49 cases were reported without solicitation, since there was no reference to homosexual love in the *questionnaire*."[17]

Here, Ellis implicitly connects survey instances of imaginary friendship with declarations of adolescent homosexual attraction. Thus we can see that in Ellis's collaboration with Clark University researchers led by Granville Hall, we find a direct overlap between studies of imaginary friendship and sexual inversion.

Although Child Study scholars were alert to the natural and necessary aspects of imaginative play in childhood, they sought to differentiate between normal manifestations of such phenomena and extreme cases. In "Children's Imaginary Companions," Earl Barnes notes that such "extreme cases" occur most often when a child feels painfully "unlike" other children and thus creates an imaginary friend "like himself." Most such "strongly developed" cases involve imagined companions of the same sex who accompany a child "brought up alone, away from other children, and so I think," Barnes writes, "we can safely say that the extreme cases are caused by a craving for congenial companionship."[18] Such cravings, Barnes observes, often provoke inexplicable yet acute feelings of discomfort in the adult observer:

> The child accepts [his imaginary friends] so positively, and they are so opposed to our wide experience of what really is, that they seem mysterious and occult; one often has a feeling creeping over him as he watches a child at play with an invisible companion floating over him in the air that possibly spirits may be visible to those who have lately come out of the great unknown.[19]

Here, imaginary friendship becomes suspect precisely because as a phenomenon it intertwines an unnatural (or supernatural) intimacy with a rejection of the rational world. This "creeping" feeling, one provoked by imagining a presence "floating over" a child at play, overrides one's certainty about "what really is" and introduces instead a layer of perception ineffably erotic.

A second essay on imaginary friendship appeared in 1895, written by Clara Vostrovsky. Vostrovsky graduated from Stanford in May 1895 with a BA in Education, where she studied childhood development under Earl Barnes. Her essay "A Study of Imaginary Companions," published in the Boston-based monthly magazine *Education*, amplifies her mentor's concern over extreme cases of imaginary companionship.[20] Echoing Barnes's "mysterious, occult" image of the floating companion as a foil for reality, Vostrovsky's study suggests that dreaming too long with "shadow people" retards healthy development. Although she allows that these companions "are not the result of a 'defective organization,' [as] shown in their being found in active, healthy children" and that because they fuel "the inventive faculty" such companions can lead children "beyond dull facts," Vostrovsky nonetheless senses no small degree of peril in such intimacies.[21] Drawing upon multiple case studies, her essay seeks to typify the child most susceptible to developing imaginary companions. "Naturally," she writes, the "simple and common" cases are not of the most interest. Instead, her essay treats those "complex and mysterious" instances of imaginary companionship, "where one or more of these creations … becomes a part of the environment of the child for a greater length of time—sometimes for years," with the most attention.[22] "Most susceptible" to imaginary friendship, Vostrovsky notes, are children "of nervous temperament, who [are] thrown largely on [their] own resources."[23] Here we again find the lonely child characterized as meeting the "needs and desires of child life" through spectral intimacy, a majority of the cases cited being of children choosing imaginary companions of the same sex.[24] Such ideal friends fill a "desire for company, for sympathy, for being understood." The most "extreme cases," as Vostrovsky observes, pose the most difficulty for the researcher, since "older persons who have had [imaginary companions] feel, often, a strange reluctance about bringing them to light." "Extreme case" children eventually grow ashamed of their companions; this shame leads them to "keep their fancies to themselves—a dangerous thing." To help this necessary process of detachment along, Vostrovsky concludes,

> [l]et the child fancy, but see that his fancy is healthy. … Do not rudely forbid his imagination play, but bring him more into contact, without his suspecting the reason, with the real companions and the healthy out-door play he needs.[25]

Here again, regular and salutary contact with the material world is posited as antidote to a suspect imaginative inner life.

Another early essay on imaginary friendship was published the following year in 1896, when E. V. Bohannon, a Psychology fellow at the newly established Clark Graduate University in Worcester, Massachusetts, collaborated with his mentor Granville Stanley Hall to publish a study titled "Peculiar and Exceptional Children."[26] Bohannon draws clear correlations between dreamy, nervous children and a "susceptibility" to imagined companions, and traces firmer lines between imagination, effeminacy, and moral "peculiarity." One case study, a boy of ten, is presented as "peculiar and exceptional" on the basis of being "a *real girl-boy*," who sews "tiny doll dresses, cuts and fits them, sews on sleeves and puts on belts." This only child begs to remain home "to help sew" rather than attend school, which he "does not like." He "seldom plays with boys," claiming that they are "too rough and [they] fight, and are not nearly so nice to play with as girls." "He is very different," the observer concludes, "from other boys." Such children, Bohannon maintains, "are unmistakably below the average in health and vitality. Mental and physical defects of a grave character are much more common among them than among children generally." In such children, "[n]ervous disorders seem to be unusually common," and "they do not join in games so readily or often as do other children of corresponding ages." These "peculiar" children are often subject to "unusual and unpleasant attention": "their more effeminate ways cause them, in the language of some of the persons reporting, to be 'made fun of,' 'called a girl boy,' 'used as a foot-ball,' etc." Many of these children were accompanied by imaginary friends.[27]

In Bohannon's evolving taxonomy, then, nervousness, effeminacy, and physical frailty are all early predictors of a propensity toward over-indulgence in what this essay terms "Imaginativeness." "Imaginativeness" becomes the prevailing characteristic of the lonely child who "resorts" to imaginary companionship, "indulging" in this desire for congenial intimacy. In Bohannon's study, such children develop "an enlarged personality, and become deceivers, if not liars"—indeed, for Bohannon, "[l]ying seems to be nearly related to imaginativeness," and a "dependence upon the imagination" predisposes children to "[d]isorder, disobedience, bad temper, [and] stealing," as well as "constitutional instability, a want of proper balance and self-control."

As Sally Shuttleworth has argued, by the end of the nineteenth century, "[f]antasy, conflated with the inability to tell the truth, [had become] a form of pathology: one of the key symptoms of moral insanity in the child was

lying."[28] Lying, therefore, was understood as just one symptom of a much wider moral derangement, one that without careful control could spread into other related realms of secrecy and duplicity—namely, sexual behavior and expression. "To depart from the realm of truth," Shuttleworth observes,

> whether in acts of the imagination or in masturbation, was to enter a "secret" world not amenable to adult control. The preoccupation with that hidden "viper" of lying or sexuality was central to the middle-class will to control, which repeatedly found itself baffled by the hidden, indecipherable inner world of the child.[29]

Dream Friend

This persistent fin-de-siècle and early twentieth-century equation of imagination with degeneracy was transformed by a group of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writers, in whose work we find the figure of the "imaginary friend" embraced as a harbinger of alternative, even progressive visions of child development. First published in 1897 as a joint effort between John Addington Symonds and Havelock Ellis, the landmark study *Sexual Inversion* offers a transition between these two opposing uses of the imaginary friend figure, for although Ellis later supplemented his study with data on imaginary companionship obtained from Child Study expert Granville Stanley Hall, *Sexual Inversion* approaches the phenomenon neutrally, focusing on imaginary companionship as one possible stage in queer childhood development. Two case studies in particular—printed back to back in the expanded second edition Ellis published in 1901 with the Philadelphia-based F. A. Davis & Co—present the childhood experiences of two literary men: the first, John Addington Symonds (co-author of *Sexual Inversion*), and the second unnamed. By focusing on imaginary or fantasy friends as avatars for homosexual longing, these two case studies foreground the imagination as central to the development of queer identity. In one case study, the respondent's narrative includes the words "imagined" or "imaginary" eight separate times; he describes how his "imagination spent itself in a fantastic worship of every sign of masculinity"; how his "imaginary lovers immediately became numerous," and that "[s]uch images seemed to come independently of my will": "in one case I imagined we stood face to face in our night-gear."[30] Whereas here, the respondent's "imaginary lovers" seem to cathect a frustration that real lovers are unavailable, in Symonds's case study we find a more pointed rejection of the pathologizing discourse surrounding the imaginary friend within Child Study and child psychology approaches of the period. The case study presents a boy prone to visions: "[H]e enjoyed visions of beautiful young men and exquisite Greek statues; he often shed tears when he thought of them. He was often visited in nocturnal visions by a beautiful

ideal youth, who clasped him round."[31] Of these case studies, Ellis writes that he is "indebted" to the detailed way these subjects "describe[e] [their] emotions and experiences in childhood, which I regard as of very great interest, not only as a contribution to the psychology of inversion, but to the embryology of the sexual emotions generally."[32]

Symonds's *Sexual Inversion* case-study paraphrases and condenses the rich imaginative childhood experience Symonds describes in his memoirs, composed between 1889 and his death in 1893. Whereas the *Sexual Inversion* case-study seems to describe erotic fantasies—albeit in language that suggests encounters with imagined companions—in the *Memoirs* we find a more complex evocation of imaginary erotic companions. "[B]efore I was ten years old," Symonds writes, Shakespeare's version of Adonis

> gave form, ideality and beauty to my previous erotic visions. Those adult males, the shaggy and brawny sailors … began to be superseded in my fancy by an adolescent Adonis. The emotion they symbolized blent with a new kind of feeling. In some confused way I identified myself with Adonis; but at the same time I yearned after him as an adorable object of passionate love.[33]

This yearning for Adonis was, for Symonds, a purifying attraction, lending "form, ideality and beauty" to what had until then manifested as baser erotic daydreams. From Adonis, Symonds moved to Apollo; at thirteen, the "kernel" of his erotic imagination centered on the "radiant figure of the young Apollo, doomed to pass his time with shepherds, serving them, and loving them. A luminous haze of yearning emotion surrounded the god. His divine beauty penetrated my soul and marrow." These visions are described as "vague awakenings of my essential self. For the most part I remained inactive, impotent, somnambulistic, touching life at no edged point, very slowly defining the silhouette of my eventual personality."[34] During long walks in the country, the pre-adolescent Symonds would "stretc[h] out my arms to [Apollo] in worship." [35] Apollo was eventually replaced by another ideal companion who visited via "recurrent dream"—

> It was the beautiful face of a young man, with large blue eyes and waving yellow hair which emitted a halo of misty light. He bent down, gazing earnestly and tenderly, until his lips touched my forehead. Then I woke and beheld the aureole fading in the darkness.[36]

Although here we see what Barnes, Vostrovsky, and Bohannon and Hall might term an extreme case of perverse imaginativeness, Symonds quite decidedly embraces these hallucinatory experiences as key to his aesthetic, moral, and sexual development. In direct contrast to a definition of the imagined companion as both form and symptom of deviance, Symonds

recasts his "boyish visions" as having formulated key life "principles" that now inform a fully realized "philosophy":

> By means of this philosophy I have been enabled to revive from mortal sickness, and what is perhaps more, to apprehend the religious doctrine of democracy, the equality and homogeneity of human beings, the divinity enclosed in all. It was not, therefore, by accident, I think, that the prolonged daydreams of Apollo in exile haunted me during my somnambulistic boyhood. Temperaments of my stamp come to themselves by broodings upon fancies which prefigure the destiny in store for them, and are in fact the symbols of their soul.[37]

Here, the imagined or ideal companion is understood by the adult not as a sort of compensatory dream, but instead as a profound "symbol of the soul," a transhistorical presence that facilitates physical, spiritual, civic, and ethical development to the highest degree, even while retaining clear homoerotic meaning for "temperaments" of Symonds's "stamp."

In the second, expanded version of "The Portrait of Mr. W.H.," composed sometime between the story's first publication in 1889 and 1894, roughly contemporaneous with Symonds's *A Problem in Modern Ethics*, Oscar Wilde likewise draws upon the image of the invisible friend to revalue the role imagination plays in the realization of one's own queer subjectivity. In the story's final section, the unnamed narrator experiences an epiphanic illumination of self through the recognition that an "invisible friend" had been with him always: "I had never seen my friend, but he had been with me for many years." This "presence," he finally realizes, had been

> beside me always. Its silver feet had trod night's shadowy meadows, and the white hands had moved aside the trembling curtains of the dawn. It had walked with me through the grey cloisters, and when I sat reading in my room, it was there also. What though I had been unconscious of it?

It is to this friend's presence that the narrator credits his vibrant intellectual life, his "passion for Greek thought and art, and indeed all of my sympathy with the Hellenic spirit." But also, this friend is understood as a manifestation of the narrator's core identity—his soul: "the soul had a life of its own," he observes, "and the brain its own sphere of action." He continues:

> There was something within us that knew nothing of sequence or extension, and yet, like the philosopher of the ideal city, was the spectator of all time and existence. It had senses that quickened, passions that came to birth, spiritual ecstasies of contemplation, ardours of fiery-colored love. It was we who were unreal, and our conscious life was the least important part of our development. The soul, the secret soul, was the only reality.[38]

Here, Wilde elevates the world of the imagined, invisible, and unconscious over and above that of the rational and visible. "Conscious life" is accorded a lesser role in one's development; instead, Wilde situates the invisible companion as an ideal mentor—a spirit guide into the alternative reality of the queer "secret soul."

Wilde, of course, gave the fin-de-siècle its most memorable literary example of the queer imaginary friend: Bunbury. Although Wilde chooses the word "invented" rather than "imaginary," *The Importance of Being Earnest* is clearly invested in rescuing imaginativeness from moralizing and pathologizing discourses, and the primary vehicle through which this revaluation occurs is the imaginary friend. In his 1907 estimation of Wilde's play, Guy Thorne (writing under the pseudonym Leonard Cresswell Ingleby) recognized Bunbury as an "imaginary friend," writing that "[t]he Earnest of the punning title is an imaginary brother, very wicked and gay," and that his friend Algernon has

> likewise has invented a fictitious personage, a sick friend, visits to whom he makes serve as the reason of his absences from home. He has given this imaginary friend the name of Bunbury, and designates his little expeditions as "Bunburying."[39]

When Algernon exposes Jack as "a confirmed and secret Bunburyist" and "one of the most advanced Bunburyists I know,"[40] we hear traces of sexological discourse—his is an "advanced" case of Bunburyism. What we may not yet have heard in Wilde's use of "Bunburying" as a stand-in for illicit homosexual practice is the intensifying effect achieved through this emphasis on the invisible companion—who turns out to have been real all along. "Being Earnest," or "being Bunbury," for that matter, turns out to be vitally important to one's development.

The dream friend is certainly vital to the developmental trajectory of E. M. Forster's queer Bildungsroman *Maurice*, written in 1912–13 but not published until 1971. In the novel's "childhood" section, the narrator tells us: "When all is obscure and unrealized the best similitude is a dream. Maurice had two dreams at school. They will interpret him."[41] Here, the ten-year-old Maurice dreams of an ideal friend whose presence will hover over and structure the remainder of the novel. In this dream, "Nothing happened. He scarcely saw a face, scarcely heard a voice say, 'That is your friend,' and then it was over, having filled him with beauty and taught him tenderness."

> He could die for such a friend, he would allow such a friend to die for him; they would make any sacrifice for each other, and count the world nothing, neither death nor distance nor crossness could part them, because "this is my friend." Soon afterwards he was confirmed and tried to persuade himself that the friend must be Christ. But Christ has a mangy beard. Was he a Greek god, such as illustrates the classical dictionary? More probable, but most probably he was just a man.[42]

This dream of a friend is elevating, both aesthetically and ethically. "Such a friend" fills the child with a desire for beauty and teaches him "tenderness." During daydreams in school, Maurice returns to the voice of his friend, and it becomes

> more real than anything he knew … he would reimbibe the face and the four words, and would emerge yearning with tenderness and longing to be kind to everyone, because his friend wished it, and to be good that his friend might be fond of him.[43]

Forster thus falls in line with both Symonds and Wilde in his choice of the imagined friend as marker of queer temperament; like Symonds and Wilde, too, Forster revalues this friend as an ennobling presence—both form and intimation of "Maurice's secret life" to come.[44]

Of course, in *Maurice*, the imagined companion arrives in physical form—albeit in a scene that remembers J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* (1904). While visiting the country estate of his first love—who has since married a woman—Maurice runs into the estate gamekeeper during an evening walk on the grounds. Later, having turned in for the night, Maurice acutely senses the unreality of the world he finds himself in, and insists that

> [t]here was something better in life than this rubbish, if only he could get to it—love—nobility—big spaces where passion clasped peace, spaces no science could reach, but they existed for ever, full of woods some of them, and arched with majestic sky and a friend.[45]

Then, sleepwalking, he walks to the window and "[flings] wide the curtains with a cry of 'Come!'" The sound jolts him awake and he feels foolish. But suddenly:

> a little noise sounded, a noise so intimate that it might have arisen inside his own body. He seemed to crackle and burn and saw the ladder's top quivering against the moonlit air. The head and the shoulders of a man rose up, paused, a gun was leant against the windowsill very carefully, and someone he scarcely knew moved towards him and knelt beside him and whispered, "Sir, was you calling out for me? … Sir, I know … I know," and touched him.[46]

Alec, as a real and not imagined lover, significantly emerges from Maurice's dreams—not merely the one he has on this night, but all such dreams that reassured him, "This is your friend." Forster makes this connection clear by foregrounding this first sexual experience with Maurice's frustrated sense that somewhere, one might be able to find "big spaces where passion clasped

peace, spaces no science could reach, … and a friend." When, in the morning, Maurice asks, "'Did you ever dream you'd a friend, Alec? Nothing else but just 'my friend, he trying to help you and you him. 'A friend,' he repeated, sentimental suddenly. 'Someone to last your whole life and you his,'" he concludes his question with fatalism: "'I suppose such a thing can't really happen outside sleep'"[47] Yet the novel swerves toward woods and majestic sky—the imagined friend finally flesh and blood—in Forster's words, "And now we shan't be parted no more, and that's finished."[48]

Maurice was a carefully circulated private text: only members of Forster's intimate circle were invited to read and comment on the novel. In 1920, the poet Siegfried Sassoon was brought into this select group. Sassoon had initiated a correspondence with Forster in 1918, after reading *Howard's End*. In one of his first letters to Forster, written after his return to the Front after a period of institutionalization for shellshock, Sassoon comments on Forster's invisibility: "It is a queer thing to write intimately to a man with no face! Could you send me a small photograph of your face (if you have one)?"[49] Two years later, after Sassoon had returned the manuscript of *Maurice* to Forster with comments, Forster responded, asking Sassoon to elaborate on whether he felt that the "crescendo-fortissimo of [Alec's] arrival up the ladder, and the subsequent dialogue," was "well contrived." "I am glad I have got this stuff off my chest," he continues, "It is done as well as I can do it, and I know nobody else who has done it."[50] He concludes by encouraging Sassoon in his own work: "I much hope that you will finish what you have begun." Whether Forster is here encouraging Sassoon's poetry or his prose is unclear, yet just over eight years later Sassoon published *Memoirs of a Fox Hunting Man*, his first prose narrative.

In this book, we again find the imaginary friend—the "man with no face"—functioning as a mentor and guide at the start of a queer childhood. "My childhood was a queer and not altogether happy one," begins *Fox Hunting Man*. "Circumstances conspired to make me shy and solitary … I was an only child, entrusted to the care of an unmarried aunt who lived quietly in the country."[51] As Sassoon's main character—his autobiographical avatar George Sherston—admits,

> it is no use pretending that I was anything else than a dreaming and unpractical boy. … Perhaps my environment made me sensitive, but there was an "unmanly" element in my nature which betrayed me into many blunders and secret humiliations.[52]

From the novel's outset, then, George presents as a textbook case of a child predisposed to imaginary companions: a sensitive, effeminate only child, raised in seclusion, "strictly forbidden to 'associate' with the village boys," "awkward and uncomfortable" with a shyness exacerbated by a "sense of

inferiority to other children."[53] Early psychologists working in the field of Child Study would not be surprised to find, three pages into this narrative, an account of this queer child's solution to his isolation:

> As a consequence of my loneliness I created in my childish day-dreams an ideal companion who became much more of a reality than such unfriendly boys I encountered at Christmas parties. … The "ideal companion" probably originated in my desire for an elder brother. When I began these reminiscences I did not anticipate that I would be describing such an apparently trivial episode … but among a multitude of blurred memories, my "dream friend" has cropped up with an odd effect of importance which makes me feel that he must be worth a passing mention.[54]

The narrative's semi-dismissal of this "ideal companion" as "apparently trivial" and worth only a "passing mention" belies the clear weight Sassoon gives to this "dream friend." The imaginary friend begins the narrative; he is—as in Forster's *Maurice*—asked to "interpret" the main character.

Walter Pater's 1878 essay "The Child in the House" begins with a similar meditation on the way certain sensory memories stand in for whole systems of experience, and can thus open up deep seams of childhood memory in which we find prefigured our adult "powers, manifold experiences" as well as our individual "susceptibilities." "This or the other well-remembered place in the material habitation," Pater writes, gradually becomes "a sort of material shrine or sanctuary of sentiment; a system of visible symbolism interweaves itself through all our thoughts and passions; and, irresistibly, little shapes, voices, accidents … become parts of the great chain wherewith we are bound."[55] For Sassoon, it is the "dream friend" that acts as the (in) visible symbol of the great chain to which he is bound. "The fact is," his narrator admits,

> as soon as I began to picture in my mind the house and garden where I spent so much of my early life, I caught sight of my small, long-vanished self with this other non-existent boy standing beside him. And, though it sounds silly enough, I felt queerly touched by the recollection of that forgotten companionship. For some reason which I cannot explain, the presence of that 'other boy' made my childhood unexpectedly clear, and brought me close to a number of things which, I should have thought, would have faded forever.[56]

Even though Sherston's imaginary companion, so present in the first pages of *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*, does not again appear in any overt way in the narrative, he is coded as precursor, as "visible symbol," as preparation for a later attraction. George soon falls into a sort of fascination-at-first-sight

with an older, aloof, fashionable boy named Denis Milden. Already a master at the hunt, Milden is a "boy to be imitated,"[57] a boy "I couldn't forget,"[58] a boy easily slotted into the place George's imaginary friend once filled. "Already I was weaving Master Milden into my daydreams," Sassoon writes, "and soon he had become my inseparable companion in all my imagined adventures, although I was hampered by the fact that I only knew him by his surname."[59] Although Sassoon ends this section with George remembering his infatuation with Denis as "the first time that I experienced a feeling of wistfulness for someone I wanted to be with,"[60] in fact the novel has quite clearly marked out this attraction to Denis as George's second experience of "inseparable companionship"—here, as in Forster's *Maurice*, the imagined, ideal friend prepares the ground for an emotional, intellectual, and sexual development classified not as degeneration, but evolution.

Memoirs of a Fox Hunting Man is the first of three volumes in an autobiographical trilogy that traces the collapse of upper-class Edwardian culture in the wake of World War One. This first volume ends with George at the Front, avoiding his fear of annihilation by returning, in his mind, to the experience of fox hunting with Denis: "I would go solemnly through a wood," George recalls, "cheering imaginary hounds. After an imaginary fox had been found, away we'd scuttle, … making imaginary casts after an imaginary check, and losing our fox when the horses had done enough galloping." As he did as a child, George balks at the idea of the kill. Even though here the fox is imaginary, an "imaginary kill didn't appeal to me somehow."[61] This repetitive stress on the word "imaginary" seems calculated to bring us back to George's imaginary friend at the start of the novel. The pacifism that is here bound up with the "imagined" world is another way in which Sassoon correlates the imagined world with an ideal world, one wholly preferable to the real.

In this way, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* echoes the sentiments with which Forster crafted the "happy" conclusion to *Maurice*: "I was determined," he writes in the novel's Terminal Note, "that in fiction anyway two men should fall in love and remain in it for the ever and ever that fiction allows."[62] Such a determination, of course, made the novel unpublishable in Forster's lifetime, and in his letter to Sassoon concerning the novel he observes that it is possible another, more fully realized novel of ideal queer companionship exists somewhere: "possibly the real right thing, shaming our clumsy efforts, lies buried in a hundred drawers."[63] In one such drawer the grieving parents of Humphrey Neville Dickinson found the manuscript of *Thompson's Friend*, a novella written contemporaneously with Forster's *Maurice* in 1913, but published only after Dickinson, a lieutenant with the Royal West Kent Regiment, was killed at the Western Front in October 1916. A graduate of Balliol College, Oxford, Dickinson published several novels before the War, the most famous of which was the 1907 *Keddy: A Story of Oxford*, a vaguely homoerotic novel of Oxford life with a conventionally moral ending. When

posthumously published in 1918 by Arthur Humphreys, Dickinson's *Thomson's Friend* included a preface written by his mother, which begins:

> My son wrote this story some four or five years ago, but it has not been published before. … Last summer, before leaving for France, he told me how little store he set by his books, and that the only thing that gave him any satisfaction was *Thomson's Friend*, which lay forgotten in his desk.[64]

The "friend" of the title is wholly imaginary; Dickinson, thirty-two and unmarried when he left for the Front, was most satisfied with a brief narrative in which a "dark and delicate boy" with "soft eyes," often the target of bullies who "perversely seek out the timid," finds protection, refuge, and ultimately a spiritualized, all-consuming love in an imaginary companion named Oscar.

Thomson, a boy who "could tell at a glance the lusty sort of boy dangerous to himself," develops a "taste for walking unpersecuted," which is only enhanced by his "positive liking for long and lonely journeys." It is on one of these journeys, contrived as a way of avoiding assault by lusty boys, that he first encounters the "tall Eton schoolboy" who will become the prototype for his imaginary friend. A group of "foes" encounter him on the High street and kick his books out of his arms. Thompson escapes lightly this time, and as he stoops to collect his books, he finds that one has landed at the feet of a "civil, good-natured boy" standing outside a candy shop, "watching the entertainment."[65] Thompson never saw this boy again, but, in the narrator's words, "the incident had a curious sequel."[66] From the raw materials of this encounter, Thompson fashions an ideal companion, a "big friendly boy" who will protect him from harm but also inspire him to greater bravery, honesty, integrity. Dickinson's narration of the creation of this companion is striking in its deliberate wish-fulfillment:

> He walked all the way to Burnham Beeches handling this idea. According to habit, he made it as concrete as he was able; the boy was to be a particular boy, an Eton boy, whom he would first meet by just such a chance as that which had actually occurred; his name was to be Oscar, because Thompson had liked it in a book he had been reading; he was not merely to pick up Thompson's book, but to take off his jacket and gloriously thrash Thomson's assailants till they howled and howled and howled. Afterwards he and Thomson were to swear eternal friendship.[67]

This deliberate daydream is enlarged to include all aspects of Oscar's persona—his "boyish beauty, his strength, wealth, possessions, titles, influence, and affection above all."[68] As his imaginary Oscar takes shape in his mind, Thompson feels more and more "the perpetual pride of being intimate with the boldest and strongest and handsomest of boys."[69]

Such "strenuous pretending that Oscar was beside him" slowly seems to will his friend into being. Thomson finds himself "half-believing that his dream was true, that Oscar in some fashion was actually present—invisible, inaudible, intangible, but real," and slowly but surely, the "pleasure and comfort of this fancied intercourse became the most material circumstance of his life."[70] Thomson becomes, in his own words, a "creature of dreamland," reveling more and more in this imagined intimacy. He and Oscar fight—over Thomson's vanity, his pride, even his alcohol consumption—but when they make up, their intimacy is only stronger. "The most splendid boy in England" in fact pushes Thomson to be his best self. In a passage that seems to make fairly clear which Oscar Dickinson might have had in mind when writing his story, Thomson wonders how he might best show his "gratitude for Oscar's goodness to him."

> What could he do? What could he say? Wildly daring, he put the question mentally to Oscar, ready for any answer, careless of the consequences, passionately desirous to be more worthy of his friend. Immediately his heart gave him the answer from Oscar, who remained more gay and strong and kind than ever at the sweetest moment of the past: the answer was that Thomson should walk home with the other boys and defend himself against persecution.[71]

This Oscar inspires "wildly daring" passion; and requires in return that Thomson fight what feels like an inborn passivity or effeminacy. Rising to Oscar's request, Thomson faces down the gang of bullies that had tormented him in the past; the injuries he sustains are "painless compared with those he had once taken passively." "The spell of persecution had dissolved," Dickinson writes, "and he earned in its place the unspeakable pleasure of Oscar's approbation."[72]

Thomson's healthy development is noticed by others, although they are unaware of the cause:

> All who were in contact with Thomson marked how his nature had changed. The alteration occurred by fits and starts, with many a relapse, but his progress in the main was steady. Spirit woke in him, and a fearless honesty, and a kindly regard for other people's feelings, and a resolve to make some use of his schooling. Alongside these he acquired a cheerful countenance and an approximation to the ways of normal boys, though he did not lose his love of lonely walking.[73]

Although the "inward history would fill volumes with … all that passed between Oscar and himself," Thomson's outward, social persona is engaged, upstanding, strong, studious: from the outside, he is a "normal boy"—or at least a close approximation.

Dickinson's narrative follows this relationship unto death. At thirty, he takes Oscar on a romantic trip to the seaside, near where "Oscar somewhere possessed a castle and a park." Thomson's intimacy with Oscar only grows: this trip "made a further stage of intimacy, a thing that hardly seemed possible." He is now able to "lovingly recall Oscar young and merry in his long driving coat" and compare that memory with the same face, "now grown inflexibly manly and serene with the mastery of all knowledge," and "the beauty of his friendship made Thomson wiser than the aged."[74] Far from inhibiting development, in Dickinson's narrative the imaginary friend is the ultimate facilitator of a fully realized emotional life. "What would his life have been without Oscar!" Thomson exclaims. "What an abject boyhood! What a dreary round of toil! What a despicable character! What empty, aimless days! What an unspeakable lack of the bliss and boons so freely poured on him! What a death in place of life!"[75]

In a reversal of the homophobic discourse of Dickinson's day, the "unspeakable" is, in *Thomson's Friend*, reclassified as a life *without* queer intimacy. Thomson dies a bachelor at thirty—his perfect lifelong partnership unbroken by any other intimate relationship. A clergyman visiting Thomson on his deathbed is privy to the dying man's rapturous ramblings and is "inclined to think that in Thomson he had found a rare specimen of religious genius, a man who had lived eighteen years in unbroken spiritual communion with a benign, perhaps and angelic personality."[76] The clergyman is troubled, however, by the unorthodox nature of this communion. Why is this angel named Oscar, he wonders? "Why also was 'Oscar' so handsome that Thomson said no words could describe his comeliness? … Why, above all, had he never told Thomson to go to church?"[77] Thomson's final words before he died, recounted by the dead man's mother, confirm for the clergyman that "the case was the strangest he had met":

> "Oscar," he says.
>
> Oh Oscar, Oscar! Oh, mother, Oscar says it's all right. He will be there. We shan't be parted. Oscar will go on just the same as before. Oh, he is stronger than death. Isn't he glorious? Isn't he wonderful? He's going to stay with me for ever and ever.[78]

The rapturous embrace of the imagined companion in *Thomson's Friend* is certainly not the novel of gay life Forster imagined lying "buried in a hundred drawers," waiting to be discovered in the "happier year" to which Forster dedicated *Maurice* in 1913. But in many ways Dickinson's novella pushes the queer embrace of the imaginary as antidote to a stultifying real to its most extreme iteration. It might thus come as no surprise to note that Dickinson's fantastical portrait of a nervous, isolated boy who develops a lifelong obsession with an invisible friend named "Oscar" is one included in Uranian

publisher Francis Murray's secret and selective 1924 *Catalogue of Books […] of Boyhood, Youth, and Comradeship*,[79] bringing full-circle this late-Victorian discourse and counter-discourse on the queer imaginary friend.

In 1895, Max Nordeau's *Degeneration* rejected the idea that decadence as a movement was in any way progressive or future oriented. Instead, the decadents are the degenerates—willfully retrogressive beings who may "wish to be the future" but instead embody,

> in all individual cases … not the future but the most forgotten, far-away past. Degenerates lisp and stammer, instead of speaking. They utter monosyllabic cries, instead of constructing grammatically and syntactically articulated sentences. They draw and paint like children, who dirty tables and walls with mischievous hands.[80]

This striking image from 1895, that of the "degenerate" as a dirty, mischievous child, returns us to the pathologizing rhetorical nexus of sexology and child study with which this essay began. Yet in Oscar Wilde's essay *The Decay of Lying* we find a powerful, queer counter argument to this one-to-one correlation between imagination and degeneration.

In language that borrows from and upends the moralizing discourses of both Child Study and sexology, Wilde observes:

> Many a young man starts in life with a natural gift for exaggeration which, if nurtured in congenial and sympathetic surroundings, or by the imitation of the best models, might grow into something really great and wonderful. But, as a rule, he comes to nothing. He either falls into careless habits of accuracy … or takes to frequenting the society of the aged and the well-informed. Both things are equally fatal to his imagination, as indeed they would be fatal to the imagination of anybody, and in a short time he develops a morbid and unhealthy faculty of truth-telling, begins to verify all statements made in his presence, has no hesitation in contradicting people who are much younger than himself, and often ends by writing novels which are so life-like that no one can possibly believe in their probability.[81]

The naturally imaginative child is here cast as the ideal; the perverting influences which this child might "fall into" include "careless habits of accuracy" and a "morbid and unhealthy" adherence to truth which will one day prove fatal. Wilde's extended satire of pseudo-psychological inquiry concludes by warning that "[t]his is no isolated instance that we are giving," but "simply one example out of many." If left unremedied, this social problem will grow "monstrous," until finally "Art will become sterile and beauty will pass away from the land."[82] The imaginary friend of Dickinson's novella—significantly,

an imaginary friend named Oscar—functions as a redeemer of sorts, one who preserves a world of beauty and intimacy for those children who, "nurtured in congenial and sympathetic surroundings," choose to frequent an ideal society—a place where "no science could reach, … arched with majestic sky and a friend…"[83]

Notes

1 Barnes, "Children's Imaginary Companions," 343. Here, "Gradgrind" refers to Charles Dickens's hyperbolically rigid Utilitarian school superintendent Thomas Gradgrind in *Hard Times* (1854).
2 Barnes, "Children's Imaginary Companions," 343.
3 Barnes, "Children's Imaginary Companions," 344.
4 Ledger and Luckhurst, eds., *The Fin de Siècle*, 307.
5 Ledger and Luckhurst, eds., *The Fin de Siècle*, 308. Emphasis added.
6 Ledger and Luckhurst, eds., *The Fin de Siècle*, 308.
7 Quoted in Kahan, "The First Sexology," 1.
8 Kahan, "The First Sexology," 17.
9 Kahan, "The First Sexology," 15.
10 Kahan, "The First Sexology," 15.
11 Kaan, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, 82.
12 Kaan, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, 82.
13 Stockton, *The Queer Child*, 7.
14 Stockton, *The Queer Child*, 3.
15 Hall, *Adolescence*.
16 Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, 381.
17 Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, 382.
18 Barnes, "Children's Imaginary Companions," 343–344.
19 Barnes, "Children's Imaginary Companions," 341–342.
20 Vostrovsky, "A Study of Imaginary Companions," 393–398.
21 Vostrovsky, "A Study of Imaginary Companions," 397.
22 Vostrovsky, "A Study of Imaginary Companions," 394.
23 Vostrovsky, "A Study of Imaginary Companions," 396.
24 Vostrovsky, "A Study of Imaginary Companions," 395.
25 Vostrovsky, "A Study of Imaginary Companions," 398.
26 Bohannon, "A Study of Peculiar and Exceptional Children."
27 Bohannon, "A Study of Peculiar and Exceptional Children," 493–4.
28 Shuttleworth, *The Mind of the Child*, 60.
29 Shuttleworth, *The Mind of the Child*, 65–66.
30 Ellis, *Sexual Inversion*, 96.
31 Ellis, *Sexual Inversion*, 144.
32 Ellis, *Sexual Inversion*, 90.
33 Symonds, *Memoirs*, 101.
34 Symonds, *Memoirs*, 114.
35 Symonds, *Memoirs*, 114.
36 Symonds, *Memoirs*, 117.
37 Symonds, *Memoirs*, 115.
38 Wilde, *Complete Works*, 344.
39 Ingleby, *Oscar Wilde*, 85–86.
40 Wilde, *Complete Works*, 361.
41 Forster, *Maurice*, 22.
42 Forster, *Maurice*, 22–23.

43 Forster, *Maurice*, 23.
44 Forster, *Maurice*, 23.
45 Forster, *Maurice*, 191.
46 Forster, *Maurice*, 191–192.
47 Forster, *Maurice*, 197.
48 Forster, *Maurice*, 240.
49 Lago and Furbank, eds. *Selected Letters of E.M. Forster*, 294*n*.
50 Lago and Furbank, eds. *Selected Letters of E.M. Forster*, 316.
51 Sassoon, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*, 9.
52 Sassoon, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*, 18.
53 Sassoon, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*, 10.
54 Sassoon, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*, 11.
55 Pater, *Imaginary Portraits*, 86.
56 Sassoon, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*, 11.
57 Sassoon, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*, 34.
58 Sassoon, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*, 37.
59 Sassoon, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*, 40.
60 Sassoon, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*, 40.
61 Sassoon, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*, 284.
62 Forster, *Maurice*, 250.
63 Quoted in Furbank, introduction to *Maurice*, xi.
64 Dickinson, *Thompson's Friend*, 5.
65 Dickinson, *Thompson's Friend*, 13.
66 Dickinson, *Thompson's Friend*, 14.
67 Dickinson, *Thompson's Friend*, 13.
68 Dickinson, *Thompson's Friend*, 14.
69 Dickinson, *Thompson's Friend*, 15.
70 Dickinson, *Thompson's Friend*, 15–16.
71 Dickinson, *Thompson's Friend*, 21.
72 Dickinson, *Thompson's Friend*, 22.
73 Dickinson, *Thompson's Friend*, 22.
74 Dickinson, *Thompson's Friend*, 32.
75 Dickinson, *Thompson's Friend*, 32–33.
76 Dickinson, *Thompson's Friend*, 35.
77 Dickinson, *Thompson's Friend*, 36.
78 Dickinson, *Thompson's Friend*, 38.
79 Murray, *A Catalogue of Selected Books*.
80 Nordeau, *Degeneration*, 555.
81 Wilde, *Complete Works*, 1073–4.
82 Wilde, *Complete Works*, 1074.
83 Forster, *Maurice*, 191.

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3

PARIS WAS A LESBIAN

Women's Liberation and the Re-Queering of Modernism

Jaime Harker

In 1973, experimental novelist Bertha Harris published a love letter to what has been called, in subsequent scholarly ruminations, "lesbian modernism," "Sapphic modernism," "queer modernism," and more prudently, the "gender of modernism."[1] Unmoved by tenure committees and disapproving deans, Harris's homage was personal, provocative, hyperbolic, and very possibly apocryphal:

> Now I am 35 and have a penchant for old ladies; but then I was 21 and had a penchant for old ladies.
>
> I was 21 and fresh out of The Woman's College of the University of North Carolina … but then it was a woman's college and called itself one … Among the native pop it was called a hotbed of lesbianism.
>
> This rumor, thank god, was true.
>
> I was fresh out of the arms of the hotbed of lesbianism and out of the clutches of the closet-sado ex-marine Dean and on the streets of New York: the summer of 1959. And when I was not at my $55.00 a week job I was hanging out on the corner of Patchin Place—not, under any circumstances, to catch a glimpse of e.e. cummings—but waiting for Djuna Barnes to take her afternoon walk and, with all discretion, follow her—moved the way she moved, turn the way she turned, hold my head like her head. As often as I could (and with discretion) I followed her and, trailing her, received the silent messages about my past I needed and she could give: and never once during our exchange did I encroach upon her lordly solitude to give her my name. The name she made up for me was my real name; and it was the name she used, when, in my fantasy, she would stop and take my hand to thank me for all the flowers I daily stuffed into her mailbox in Patchin Place and then tell me how it was to be a dyke in Paris, in the Twenties.[2]

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Harris's devotion to Barnes mentions nothing about her aesthetic experimentation (though Harris embraced that mode of writing wholeheartedly); it was her life experimentation, if you will, that inspired Harris to somewhat creepy stalking. Harris's love for Barnes was personal; her "penchant for old ladies" made her shadow Barnes in erupting desire. "Tell me how it was to be a dyke in Paris, in the Twenties," she pled (using a term that Barnes rejected throughout her life)—but what she meant was this: "tell me how to be a dyke in New York RIGHT NOW." Rejecting the disembodied, de-contextualized critical mode of reading known as "New Criticism," Harris's reading is invested in what was termed the "affective fallacy." Taught to appreciate modernism as a masculine, intellectual exercise, Harris, instead, through Djuna Barnes, desired a modernism immersed in lust, drama, and rebellion.

In this chapter, I examine how women's liberationists reread modernism in the 1970s and consider what was lost as we moved from DIY mimeographed feminist magazines to respectable scholarly academic journals. For seventies' women's liberation pioneers, modernism provided role models and ammunition in the glorious fight against the heteropatriarchy. It was, in a visceral, personal way, at once revolutionary, essential, feminist, and queer. What would modernism look like if this version had become the standard narrative? What if we started, not with James Joyce, but with Bertha Harris, with her moxie, swagger, and bitchy camp? Troll through feminist periodicals in the 1970s, and you start to get an idea.

To start, let's return to Bertha Harris's famous essay in *Amazon Expedition*, because she is the writer (along with Daughters Inc. founder and novelist June Arnold) most associated with the feminist avant-garde—a wave of women's liberation that rejected linguistic, sexual, and cultural conventions. *Amazon Expedition* is one of the earliest artifacts of lesbian feminism, and it—along with the periodical *Amazon Quarterly* and the feminist press Daughters, Inc.—insisted on the creation of a revolutionary culture to replace heteropatriarchy. Lesbian feminism has gotten a reputation as anti-sex and anti-trans, as well as being self-righteous, vegetarian, and overly invested in women's folk music. Its earliest iterations in the 1970s, however, were experimental and avant-garde—deeply invested in aesthetic forms and innovation, simultaneously formal, cultural, and sexual. The back of the special issue of *Amazon Expedition: A Lesbian Feminist Anthology* framed its lesbian feminist philosophy (in all capital letters):

> WHEN LESBIANS WITHIN THE GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT SYNTHESIZED GAY POLITICS WITH FEMINISM, THEY STARTED A SEPARATE POLITICAL/CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT WHICH THOUSANDS OF WOMEN, MANY OF WHOM HAD NOT PREVIOUSLY RECOGNIZED THEMSELVES AS LESBIANS, BEGAN TO IDENTIFY WITH. LESBIANISM WAS LIBERATED BY FEMINIST

> CONSCIOUSNESS FROM THE CLOSETS, DEFINITIONS AND LIFESTYLES IMPOSED BY THE HETEROSEXUALLY DOMINANT SOCIETY, AND FEMINISM WAS INVIGORATED AND MADE WHOLE—LIBERATED BY LESBIANISM FROM THE LIMITS OF MAKING CHANGES ONLY IN RELATION TO MEN.
>
> THIS IS WHAT THIS ANTHOLOGY IS ABOUT. CULTURE, HERSTORY, POLITICS, CELEBRATION. LESBIANFEMINISM—ONE CONCEPT: THE NEW WOMANITY.[3]

It was a revolutionary understanding of culture—a queer rejection of heteronormativity, to use the terminology of queer theory. The anthology was co-edited by Esther Newton, later to become famous for her book on drag, *Mother Camp*. Another co-editor was Jill Johnston, the dance editor for the *Village Voice*, whose stream-of-consciousness essays in the 1960s marked her as a member of the avant-garde. Johnston's coming out escapades at the end of the 1960s were among the most confrontational and hilarious of the period: she showed up at a NOW fundraiser in the Hamptons, took off her shirt, and swam laps in the pool; she participated in Norman Mailer's Town Hall on Feminism and made a mockery of the proceedings, refusing to leave the stage when Mailer tried to police her time and rolling around the stage with two friends (commemorated in the documentary *Town Bloody Hall*); she wrote one of the most confrontational books of early women's liberation, *Lesbian Nation*, in which she argued that the solution to patriarchy was for every woman to become a lesbian. Newton, Johnston, and Bertha Harris were part of a lesbian group that spent weekends in the country in an early part-time lesbian commune, later commemorated by Harris in her 1976 novel *Lover*.

One would think such a group wouldn't have time or interest in literary recuperation, but their intense interest in art made them look for lesbian feminist genealogies and seek role models. Harris's essay made modernism ground zero for lesbian feminism. She names writers and editors who have since become key touchstones for scholarship: Djuna Barnes, Colette, Gertrude Stein, Alice B. Toklas, Sylvia Beach, Radclyffe Hall, and Natalie Clifford Barney, whose famous salon was a center of women's art, culture, rebellion, and transgressive sexuality. Barney's story has been told in numerous biographies, documentaries, and books of literary criticism.[4] Born to a wealthy family, Natalie Barney earned her reputation as the most notorious lesbian Lothario of her era, seducing the most famous courtesan in Paris, Liane de Pougy, the "Sultana of Sex," at the age of twenty-three;[5] Pougy's novel about their affair, *Idylle Saphique*, was a best seller in France and was reprinted seventy times in its first year.[6] Barney's conquests were legendary, including a long-term relationship with the painter Romain Brooks but including short-term affairs with dozens of women; no one, including

ostensibly heterosexual women, could seem to resist her spell. Pauline Tarn, who wrote under the pen name Renée Vivien, died not long after their affair ended, giving Barney a literal reputation as a lady-killer. Barney's weekly salon was hugely influential; she promoted women writers, supported many of them financially (including Djuna Barnes, a former lover whom she helped during her long life in Greenwich Village). Many women writers read at her salon for the first time. She also created the Academie des Femmes, an alternative to the all-male Academic Francaise;[7] Colette and Gertrude Stein were among the first to be honored by her new academy. Barney's own writing in French was widely read in Paris, and some of the most famous French literary critics admired her.

Back in the United States, in the 1960s, Bertha Harris learned about Barney and other literary Paris lesbians, not at the Women's College at the University of North Carolina (where she majored in English and edited the literary journal) but from the owner of "the Phoenix Bookshop on Cornelia Street."[8] Harris's embrace of these writers was intense and rhapsodic:

> Like every other dyke with a book in her hand, I know that these are the women our fathers stole from us. … They were American and English and French but mostly American but with the father's nationality in effect wiped out by the more profound nationality of their lesbianism.[9]

Harris refuses the careful delineations, the objective distancing, the neutral boring claims that define academic literary criticism and would come to define feminist and queer scholarship as it sought academic respectability. I love how personally she takes lesbian modernists' omission from the modernist canon: "these are the women our fathers stole from us," like Jacob had just stolen our birthright. Nor does she worry about whether "dyke," or "lesbian," can be legitimately applied to queer women of an earlier era, whose sense of identity and political commitments differed profoundly from the ethos of 1970s Manhattan. She sought a usable past and had no compunction about drafting modernist women to the cause; if she called them dykes, they *were* dykes. Lesbianism was a cause, a creed, a way of life, a *nationality*—one that trumped one's country of origin.

Indeed, in a number of places, Harris draws direct parallels between lesbian Paris in the early 1900s and lesbian feminist Manhattan in the 1970s. "Colette," she explained,

> created sensations also on the public stage, sensations which have found political fulfillment only in our time during such events as Jill Johnston's famous zap on Mailer & Co. at Town Hall. On January 3, 10–9, Colette, with her lover the Marquise de Belboeuf, created the Scandale du Moulin Rouge. At the climax of their performance in a pantomime ("Reve

> d'Egypte") there was a kiss between the two women of such explicitness that it brought not only the roof of the theatre down but also an injunction from the police against further performance.[10]

These explicit parallels between Johnston's political performance art from the 1970s and Colette's public display at the turn of the century justify radical lesbian feminism's provocations: Harris drafts lesbian Paris into 1970s revolutionary fervor. In another passage, Harris discusses Colette's devotion to the tuxedo-wearing, cigar-smoking Marquise, and her rhapsodic description of their double bed, clearly showing their intertwined sleeping and lovemaking, and concludes: "A long way from the 'Lesbians Ignite' sign on the living room wall but, perhaps, its necessary precedent."[11]

Despite Harris's delightful commitment to the "dykeification" of modernism, if you will, she understood that these women were not all liberated role models. Renée Vivien, Harris writes, had

> her life and sexuality, as a woman, as a lesbian, … suffocated by a vicious moral code which caused in her—as in millions of other women—the need to enact as quickly as possible the death which a sexist world insisted it must have in sacrifice.[12]

And Radclyffe Hall and Una Troubridge, in her telling, embraced "heterosexist-induced masochism," which was in her mind "even more revolting than their elitism, their decadence, their snobbery, to the revolutionary dykedom of today."[13] But they remained important for Harris, because

> these women represent practically the only available expressions of lesbian culture we have in the modern western world: and, if women as a whole have scant history of themselves, lesbians are even more bereft of such bridges on which they can make their transitions from past to future.[14]

This embrace of lesbian Paris was essential for Harris "as the originally all-female world reasserts itself by making love to itself"; Harris's contribution, "the primary gesture toward the making at last of a decent literature out of the experience of a decent world," was, perhaps, "a woman like myself following a woman like Djuna Barnes, and all she might represent, down a single street on a particular afternoon."[15]

Harris would make an even more potent contribution to "the making of a decent literature out of the experience of a decent world" in her literary tour de force, the 1976 *Lover*. It is a novel clearly influenced not only by *Nightwood* but also by *Ladies Almanack*, of which Harris wrote, "this little book not only satirized such famous figures of the inner circle as Radclyffe

Hall and Una Troubridge … it is also in its way and for its time, a document of lesbian revolution."[16] In *Lover*, Harris created an elaborate prose poem of female sexuality and agency, with an all-female household that makes a mockery of patrilineal descent, and links the portraits of mothers, daughters, aunts, grandmothers, and lovers with sketches of female saints. *Lover* is one of the literary masterpieces of women's liberation, but in its deconstruction of virtually every convention that defined the realist novel, it is also the literary offspring of lesbian modernism.[17]

Bertha Harris was deeply invested in queer modernism as an inspiration and a model. Her 1977 essay in *Heresies* made the case even more directly: lesbian literature that accepted the conventions of romance and realism wasn't literature at all. Only the radical deconstruction of the real was worthy of the lesbian literary: "Lesbians, instead, might have been great, as some literature is: unassimilable, awesome, dangerous, outrageous, different: *distinguished*. Lesbians, as some literature is, might have been monstrous—and thus have everything."[18] But Harris was not an anomaly.

Those lesbian feminists in the 1970s wanted to uncover, or invent, an autonomous lesbian feminist culture, unbeholden to established, patriarchal institutions. And they meant *culture*, in its literature-art-music definition, as well as a sustaining and autonomous worldview. Their notion of culture inextricably linked with the modernism they had learned in classrooms in the 1950s and 1960s. It is remarkable how much of the energy of early women's liberation was linked to the invention of culture, and how seamlessly it blended with the larger political aims of the movement.

We now associate women's liberation with realistic consciousness-raising novels, but much of its early literary energy placed modernism, however reimagined, at the center. In *This Book Is an Action*, Cecilia Konchar Farr and I argue that women's liberation produced "texts of an influential and inventive American renaissance."[19] A prime motivation for that renaissance was lesbian modernism.

One sees this influence in the career of novelist and publisher June Arnold, who would become Harris's co-conspirator by the mid-1970s. Arnold had lived in Greenwich Village since the 1960s and published an experimental novel in 1966, but it was women's liberation that transformed her as a writer. A participant of the Fifth Street Takeover (in which a group of women's groups occupied an abandoned city building in New York to establish a community center that included a battered women's shelter, daycare, and LGBTQ center before they were arrested and ejected), Arnold wrote a book about the experience entitled *The Cook and the Carpenter*, in which she uses gender neutral pronouns, *na* and *nan*, combining political, cultural, and linguistic revolution. When Arnold couldn't get a mainstream press to publish it, she started her own press. Daughters, Inc., was, as critic and poet Julie Enszer tells us, explicitly modeled on the Hogarth Press: "Daughters, Inc. would do

what Virginia Woolf's press had done for her books for the Women's Liberation Movement. It would introduce to the world a different kind of novel that would change consciousness."[20] Daughters, Inc. became one of the most respected presses of women's liberation, publishing Rita Mae Brown's iconic *Rubyfruit Jungle*, as well as Bertha Harris's *Lover* and Arnold's own *The Cook and the Carpenter* and *Sister Gin*.

Arnold remained committed to the revolutionary, world-making possibility of literature—and was particularly interested in the experimental. Her many essays and presentations in the 1970s made this argument.

> "One of the things we have noticed in reading women's press writings is a change in the language … we've experimented with unpatriarchal spelling and neuter pronouns. I think we've changed our sentence structure, and paragraphs no longer contain one subject," Arnold argued, because women writers aimed for "the inclusiveness of many complex things."[21]

Arnold described feminist literature as

> experience weaving in on itself, *in*clusive, not ending in final victory/defeat but ending with the sense that the community continues. A spiral sliced to present a vision which reveals a whole and satisfies in some different way than the male resolution-of-conflict.[22]

Arnold's 1975 novel, *Sister Gin*, embodied this combination of multiple narrators, stream-of-consciousness narratives (one of which inspired the title of Bonnie Zimmerman's book on lesbian literature, *The Safe Sea of Women*). She ended the novel in a meta-narrative critique, in which a white woman's attempt to narrate an African American woman, Miss May, is rejected by the voice of the feminist unconscious, Sister Gin. After two attempts, the novel ends with Sister Gin's judgment: "You just can't speak for Miss May, that's all. Let her go on out the door. And she doesn't need you to hold it for her, either."[23]

I discuss these writers, and more, in my book *The Lesbian South*, but here I want to emphasize how modernism, particularly queer modernism, was an inspiration for aesthetic creation and revolutionary action. Women's liberationists in the 1970s sincerely believed that books could change consciousness, and thus change the world. It shows how seriously they took their Cold War educations; they had learned that modernism was a radical departure, and they linked it explicitly with their world-making revolutionary fervor. You see the reach of this idea everywhere—in *Amazon Quarterly*, which regularly featured modernist figures like Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap; in *Sinister Wisdom*, which transcribed MLA special sessions on lesbian literature, and dialogues between June Arnold and Bertha Harris, in a journal ostensibly for general lesbian readers; even in Barbara Grier's Naiad Press, which would

become known as a trashy resource for lesbian romance and mystery, but which reprinted both Gertrude Stein (*Lifting Belly*) and Renée Vivien.

These radical lesbian feminists debated aesthetics like their lives depended on it. What was at stake for them in this reclamation/invention of lesbian modernism wasn't just expanding the modernist canon, or getting tenure, but changing the world and saving our lives. Their investment in queer modernism was intensely personal and profoundly political. And if these terms seem melodramatic and slightly hysterical, it is because we are so far removed from the political and cultural moment that first brought these writers out from second-hand bookshops and stodgy archives and drafted them as soldiers in the revolution: "a dyke with a book in her hand," ready to throw, like a rock. (One of Rita Mae Brown's essay collections was called "The Hand that Cradles the Rock.") Modernist lesbians, for these radical lesbian feminists, were revolutionaries, radically remaking societal restrictions around women's sexuality, agency, and identity. Of course, this characterization isn't true—Romaine Brooks and Natalie Barney, for example, had fascist and anti-Semitic tendencies, and the politics of many Paris lesbians were fairly despicable—but such careful delineations and cautious claims were for boring academics. What mattered to these seventies radicals of women's liberation was how lesbian modernism could inspire and transform the present. Their utopian belief in the power of literature to change the world—so prevalent both in lesbian feminism and in the Women in Print movement as a whole—may be the quality that seems most foreign to us now, fifty years on, in a world that seems less revolutionary than ever.

This chapter, so far, has considered the legacy of modernism in 1970s women's liberation, especially the creation of radical lesbian feminism. There is another interesting story to be told about the canonization of lesbian modernism in the academy in the 1980s. A few with ties to that early activist movement translated that passion into academic careers.[24] The most influential academic canonizers, however, were not revolutionary dykes but heterosexual women. In books like Shari Benstock's ground-breaking *Women of the Left Bank*, Jane Marcus's *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy*, Bonnie Kime Scott's *The Gender of Modernism*, Marianne DeKoven's *Rich and Strange: Gender, History, Modernism*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's three-volume *No Man's Land*, the documentary *Paris Was a Woman*, and many more essays, journals, and special issues, feminist scholars rewrote the narrative of modernism. This work was important and influential, including for me personally; Rachel Blau DuPlessis's work on modernist poets first drew me to Temple University in 1993 for my PhD.[25] Feminist scholars brought modernist women writers back into print, so they could be studied and taught. And this recovery work laid the foundation for continued work in feminism and queer modernism, which is still growing new journals, conferences, and studies.[26]

In that translation from DIY feminist periodicals to academic respectability, however, something has been lost, and it isn't just the willingness to write "super-Prick," though the loss of the polemic profane is a shame.[27] What we also lost was "lesbian." We no longer understood Barney, Stein, Barnes, Hall, and others as "dykes in Paris." These carefully rehabilitated writers were reimagined and made safe with a closeting find-and-replace: from "lesbian" to "woman." On the first page of *Women of the Left Bank*, Benstock lists twenty-one names and claims that "these women discovered themselves as *women* and *writers* in Paris, charting experiences that were significantly different from those of their husbands, brothers, and male Modernist colleagues."[28] Thirteen of those names, of course, were women who discovered themselves to be women who loved other women. Though this fact is acknowledged inside Benstock's book, as it is in so many other of these academic recuperations, these feminist critics did not consider "the profound nationality of their lesbianism." They use euphemisms like "friend," and they make the sexuality of modernist lesbians peripheral, not central.

I must confess, after the bracing, confrontational bravado of a Bertha Harris, these peer-reviewed scholarly interventions are sometimes maddening. Sure, they seem to say, the vast majority of these women were lesbians, some of whom made it their life's mission to have sex with every woman within their orbit, declared orientation and marital status be damned; and sure, these lesbians—sorry, *women*—knew every single "significant" modernist of Europe and the United States, and schooled most of them; and yes, they also formed a coherent community, based on their correspondence, inquired after friends' current lovers, and supported each other, both emotionally (after Alice B. Toklas's unexpected widowhood) and materially (Natalie Barney's monthly allowance to Djuna Barnes in her long miserable Greenwich Village sojourn), decades after that famous high point of the 1920s in Paris. But their proclivities, these breakthrough feminist texts seemed to say, were certainly accidental, and unfortunate; what mattered was that they were *women*, and women who proved that they deserved to be in the male modernist club. If we lop off their bowlers, and place them in gender-appropriate flapper dresses, and make them keep their hands strictly to themselves, and bid them sit at your male modernist table, deferring properly to the patriarchs at its head, won't you pretty please let them in the back door, keep them in print, and mention them occasionally—*after* the male geniuses have been given their due?

The answer, of course, was no. Even this cautious, de-queered version of modernism was too much for the literary establishment. The version of modernism that Bertha Harris encountered at North Carolina Women's College still dominates the standard narrative of modernism. Gertrude Stein and

Natalie Barney are marginal, at best; Djuna Barnes might be mentioned as a minor writer, given legitimacy through T. S. Eliot. All that caution got some women scholars tenure, but it didn't transform the modernist canon. We let proponents of Cold War modernism set the terms of the debate, and we respected their rules too much. That got us a Modernist Studies Association honoring male geniuses and bemoaning feminist popular culture, and a queer modernism that still seems to prefer men to women.

I couldn't have articulated this back in graduate school in the 1990s. I just knew that feminist modernist scholarship, so carefully argued and respectful of precedent, didn't interest me, and didn't undo my impression of modernism's elitism and misogyny. It wasn't until reading the incendiary musings of radical lesbian feminists during the last ten years, intoxicated by seventies feminists' lack of concern for respectability, that I caught the fever. I am now as far removed from the hyperbolic, fire-breathing legacy of lesbian feminists as Bertha Harris was from the world-making "lesbian culture" of Natalie Barney and Gertrude Stein, and I find myself as entranced with their moxie and world-making as Harris was by her beloved Paris dykes. These are the women my academic fathers stole from me. "Dykes in Paris" in the early 1900s and revolutionary dykes in Manhattan in the 1970s reframe modernist legacies in queer, feminist, and activist ways.

Maybe it's time to forget the nice-girl, carefully modulated feminist criticism and start from scratch. My students are increasingly unfamiliar with any version of modernism; they have no male modernist tradition to modify. What if we re-queered the Paris dykes? What if we re-dyked queer theory, while we are at it? Brought back the radical lesbian feminists who are the invisible foundation on which Judith Butler and Eve Sedgwick built? We are, perhaps, in a moment of cultural upheaval and radical movements that will allow us to recognize, and appreciate, the radical lesbians of the 1970s and the "wild" women of Paris who inspired them. We could create a radical genealogy that ties queer modernism to #MeToo and #BLM.

What might that afterlife of re-queered modernist writers mean for the literature of women's liberation, for subsequent writing by queer women, and for modernism as a literary movement? What might the reclaiming of "lesbian" as a representation of queer women's insatiable desires engender? It may be impossible to recapture the power, transgression, and campy verve of the term "lesbian" today, but that radical lesbian feminist reclamation of modernist "dyke" forbears gives one a glimpse of a merry band of performative provocateurs, as deserving of our commemoration as queer theory's canonical ancestors. Let's take the labrys to the root of the tree. If Paris was a lesbian, how might that transform our understanding of modernist aesthetics, and maybe culture itself?

Notes

1 For a few examples, see Jay, "Lesbian Modernism"; Nair, *Secrecy and Sapphic Modernism*; Hovey, *A Thousand Words*; and Scott, *The Gender of Modernism*.
2 Harris, "The More Profound Nationality of Their Lesbianism," 77.
3 Birkby, Harris, Johnston, Newton, and O'Wyatt, *Amazon Expedition*, back cover.
4 For more on Natalie Barney, see Jay, *The Amazon and the Page*; Souhami, *Wild Girls*; and Rodriguez, *Wild Heart*.
5 Rodriquez, *Wild Heart*, 88; 92.
6 Rodriquez, *Wild Heart*, 91.
7 Rodriquez, *Wild Heart*, 252.
8 Harris, "The More Profound Nationality of Their Lesbianism," 78.
9 Harris, "The More Profound Nationality of Their Lesbianism," 79.
10 Harris, "The More Profound Nationality of Their Lesbianism," 83.
11 Harris, "The More Profound Nationality of Their Lesbianism," 84.
12 Harris, "The More Profound Nationality of Their Lesbianism," 86.
13 Harris, "The More Profound Nationality of Their Lesbianism," 87.
14 Harris, "The More Profound Nationality of Their Lesbianism," 87–8.
15 Harris, "The More Profound Nationality of Their Lesbianism," 88.
16 Harris, "The More Profound Nationality of Their Lesbianism," 81.
17 For more on *Lover*, see Harris's introduction to the 1993 reprint; Gable, "Bertha Harris's *Lover*;" and Freeman, *Time Binds*.
18 Harris, "What We Mean to Say," 6.
19 Harker and Farr, *This Book Is an Action*, 2.
20 Enszer, *The Whole Naked Truth of Our Lives*, 105.
21 Arnold, Boucher, Griffin, Kay, and McDaniel, Judith, "Lesbians and Literature," 28–9.
22 Arnold, Boucher, Griffin, Kay, and McDaniel, Judith, "Lesbians and Literature," 29.
23 Arnold, *Sister Gin*, 215.
24 Karla Jay, a member of the radicalesbians and instigator, with Rita Mae Brown, of the "lavender menace" zap at NOW, would go on to become a consistently stalwart voice for the Paris lesbian modernists; she brought Renee Viven's short stories back into print, and wrote a book on Natalie Barney and Renee Vivien, *The Amazon and the Page* (1988). Catherine Stimpson was less involved in radical activism but knew Bertha Harris from the Gay Academic Union in New York. Stimpson became one of the leading experts on Gertrude Stein in the academy. And Esther Newton, who was part of Bertha Harris and Jill Johnston's circle, became the renowned anthropologist whose book *Mother Camp* was one of the first studies of drag culture and who also wrote an influential essay on Radclyffe Hall, "The Mythic Mannish Lesbian."
25 DuPlessis, *The Pink Guitar*.
26 For a few examples, see the new journal *Feminist Modernist Studies*, the conference Queer Modernism, and Elizabeth English's study of lesbian genre fiction, *Lesbian Modernism*.
27 Harris, "The More Profound Nationality of Their Lesbianism," 81.
28 Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank*, ix.

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POSTHUMOUS QUEER MODERNISM

Jodie Medd

For a long time now, queer scholars have been thinking about time: queer temporalities, queer relations to the past, temporal drag, feeling backward, queer memory, queer (a)historicism, queer anachronism, queer historiography.[1] And of course, heated debates over the future — from Lee Edelman's influential indictment of heteronormativity's reproductive futurism to José Esteban Muñoz's complexly hopeful queer critical utopianism of the not-yet-here.[2] As someone who has worked at the intersection of queer theory and modernist studies throughout such temporal debates, I, like others in this volume, have been particularly attuned to the question of queer *modernism*'s relation to time, not least its shifting relation to our time. Certainly, as our own times have changed over the course of these temporal deliberations, the question of how modernism's "then" relates to our "now" has also changed, and will continue to do so.

Given queer modernism's many forms and the differences among its practitioners, it should go without saying that that there is no singular timescale for modernism; it dwells in various temporal modes. One of its most pronounced and distinctive temporalities, I argue here, is queer modernism's posthumous relationship to its imagined future. Modernist archives abound with writers anticipating a posthumous future when their queerness will become publicly manifest. Indeed, these queer futures are consistently, and pointedly, predicated upon the death of those imagining them. Consider E. M. Forster's iconic comment to T. E. Lawrence, with whom he shared his "unpublishable" gay fiction, that "when I die and they write my life they can say everything."[3] Or, Sam Steward's recollection of Gertrude Stein in 1939 insisting that all their "good friends" knew "all about everything" between her and Alice B. Toklas, but "considering Saint Paul it would be better not to

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talk about it, say for twenty years after I die, unless it is found out sooner or times change."[4] In 1906, Lytton Strachey likewise predicted to Maynard Keynes (both of the Bloomsbury group) that "our time will come about a hundred years hence … at the publication of our letters";[5] we see similar projections in the queer memoirs of J. A. Symonds and Vita Sackville-West.[6] And, of course, Oscar Wilde's self-regard as "a man who stood in symbolic relations to the art and culture of my age" was not only a comment on his contemporary notoriety, but a prediction of his queer posthumous influence that has proven more prescient than even he could have imagined.[7]

Queer theory and modernist studies jointly acknowledge that the historical transition between sexual epistemes, which saw the elaboration of modern sexual identity categories in the West, coincides with the time of what is now considered literary high modernism.[8] I am interested in how gender and sexually non-conforming writers who lived through and contributed to these transitional decades actively imagined their queerness in relation to a future after their own deaths. In doing so, they critically and creatively shaped a temporally suspended ontology by anticipating a posthumous future of their public queer becoming. Their futural imaginings, in turn, brought that queer public into being.

In fact, it is tempting to presume that the rise of queer theory and queer studies at the turn of the twenty-first century—with its outpouring of scholarship and archival recovery work, not to mention hard-fought political visibility—in conjunction with the new modernist studies brought about the conditions to fulfill Lytton Strachey's hundred-year prophecy. Perhaps something of the time of our queer present constitutes the future they had imagined: *we* are the receptive public destined to fulfill their queer becoming. Through us, their time has come.

And yet, this temporal longing is a reciprocal one, given our own affective attachment to modernism's past. To be sure, ongoing interchanges between the entangled time-scapes of modernism and queer theory perpetually reconfigure how we think and feel about "now" and "then," "us" and "them." Insofar as today's queer scholars continue to debate queer relations to the past, to temporality broadly speaking, and to the future, we also know that foundational white-authored queer theory from the 1980s and 1990s largely derives from readings of modernist authors and texts: whether Eve Sedgwick on James, Melville, and Cather; Leo Bersani on Genet, Gide, and Proust; Judith Butler on Larsen and Cather; or Michel Foucault's fixation on the late-nineteenth century—not to mention Oscar Wilde's dominion over Western historical, literary, and theoretical accounts of "queer."[9] Meanwhile, popular and critically acclaimed contemporary queer literature by writers such as Sarah Waters, Alison Bechdel, Michael Cunningham, Monique Truong, Alan Hollinghurst, Jamie O'Neill, Nalo Hopkinson, and Shola von Reinhold continually returns to the modernist past for inspiration. We seem to need

modernism's queerness as much as its practitioners needed to imagine us as the future receptive readers of their posthumous revelations. I think, in fact, we may need them now more than ever. Indeed, our increasingly perilous and precarious times compel us to turn longingly to these modernists and their resistant temporalities to sustain our own future possibilities.

This chapter, then, charts the distinct temporal mode whereby modernism's sense of its queerness was predicated upon not only feeling backward (pace Heather Love), but also looking forward. Prominent high modernists foresaw a posthumous queer future in which their writing might circulate and their queerness might achieve its public becoming. I draw my examples from the Bloomsbury group and its milieu, focusing first on the literary career and posthumous publishing life of E. M Forster, second on the Bloomsbury group's Memoir Club, and finally, on Vita Sackville-West's ostensibly "private" memoir about her affair with Violet Keppel (later Trefusis).[10] These examples all share a queer posthumous future temporal mode that critically refuses normative timescales, or what Elizabeth Freeman calls "chronormativity," and creatively circumvents the systematic repression and social death of non-normative genders and sexualities.[11] Access to this temporality, however, depends upon a wealth of cultural, symbolic, and financial capital. Bloomsbury's immense privilege—as affluent, valued, and influential cultural producers who inhabited and benefited from the very social systems they critiqued and circumvented—expressly facilitated their posthumous temporality of queer becoming.[12]

E. M. Forster's Queer Literary Afterlife

E. M. Forster may present modernism's most conspicuous investment in a posthumous queer future tense. He dedicated his posthumously published overtly gay novel, *Maurice* (1971), "To a happier year," an ambiguous reference that scholars have variously interpreted as looking both backward and forward—was this happier year in the past, or yet to come? Forster completed the novel's first draft in 1914, declaring it "unpublishable until my death or England's."[13] And yet, he protected the typescript, continued to revise it throughout his life, and made arrangements for its publication after his death. Meanwhile, at the age of forty-five and the height of his career as a successful novelist, Forster decided to stop publishing novels, fed up by the restraints of the heterosexual romance plot. Unwilling to force his fiction into publishable sexual norms, and unable to publish the fiction he wanted to write, he confided to Siegfried Sassoon while struggling to complete *A Passage to India* (1924), "I shall never write another novel after it—my patience with ordinary people has given out. But," he added "I shall go on writing. I can't feel any decline in my 'powers.'"[14] He continued to publish literary criticism and political essays, but also continued to compose his "unpublishable" gay

fiction, particularly short stories. Sharing this writing with select friends, he speculated in his diary that it "might see the light of night after my death."[15]

And indeed, *A Passage to India*—the last novel Forster published in his lifetime—concludes prophetically, as the Englishman Cyril Fielding and the Indian Dr. Aziz debate the (im)possibility of their friendship, in a scene that redoubles the novel's mapping of same-sex intimacy onto Anglo-Indian colonial relations. In a final confrontation with both men on horseback, Aziz rides against Fielding "furiously … half kissing him" as he insists they cannot enjoy a friendship as equals until India has driven "every blasted Englishman into the sea." Fielding, "holding [Aziz] affectionately," pleads "'Why can't we be friends now?' … 'It's what I want. It's what you want.'" But everything surrounding them—the animals, the earth, and all the signs and representatives of the imperial system answer back with a collective refusal and deferral: "No, not yet … No, not there."[16] As much as these closing words are an indictment of the imperial system, they also constitute a poignant commentary on Forster's literary production and career: the final passage of his final novel concedes the "not yet" and "not there" of queer possibilities in print in the 1920s.

Instead, Forster became increasingly involved in civil liberty causes, including anti-censorship campaigns from the 1928 obscenity trial of *The Well of Loneliness* to the 1960 trial of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, as well as quiet public support of the Wolfenden Report.[17] In effect, by closeting his queer writing, Forster maintained his status as a respected literary authority, which in turn legitimated his protest against the very laws that rendered his own queer fiction unpublishable and his own public queerness untenable. We might consider his activism as a means of creating the social and legal conditions of possibility for that future "happier year," when he would become a public queer writer, even if it was predicated upon being a dead one.

Memorializing Bloomsbury's Sexual Revolution in the Drawing Room

This posthumous queer temporality also informs the Bloomsbury group's Memoir Club, established in 1920. Bloomsbury—an influential cultural group that publicly denied it *was* a group—met in the privacy of members' homes to read prepared reminiscences about themselves as a community, thereby consolidating and memorializing Bloomsbury *as* a group. Club membership was carefully policed and "papers were not to be mentioned outside of meetings," granting members "complete freedom to say what they pleased."[18] And yet, the papers were also intended as chapters of "what was to become a full-length" candid, collaborative autobiography of the group.[19] In other words, the Memoir Club memorialized Bloomsbury's collective private memories of its not-so-distant past while projecting a legacy toward an

indefinite—but likely, if not inevitably, public—future. These memoirs, then, may have been ostensibly addressed to an exclusive coterie of contemporaries, but they also presumed their eventual public circulation. Bloomsbury members were remembering themselves into a future that would want to remember them.[20]

Notably, this collective autobiography did not materialize during Bloomsbury's time, and any Memoir Club writings that were eventually published came out posthumously. In fact, some of the best known, most frequently reprinted contributions—those by Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey—contain sexual disclosures that rendered them scandalously unpublishable at the time.[21] For, as much as Bloomsbury extolled its open sexual conversations and practices, the group also discreetly protected itself from contemporary public scandal, preserving its sexual disclosures for a future public beyond them.

Woolf's well-known Memoir Club piece "Old Bloomsbury" delightfully recounts the sexual revolution that occurred when Lytton Strachey came upon Woolf and her sister Vanessa in their drawing room at 46 Gordon Square, pointed at a stain on Vanessa's dress, and uttered "Semen?" "With that one word," Woolf declares,

> all barriers of reticence and reserve went down … Sex permeated our conversation. The word bugger was never far from our lips. We discussed copulation with the same excitement and openness that we had discussed the nature of good.[22]

By openly speaking sex, Woolf claims, Strachey inaugurated a whole new "chapter" in Bloomsbury and achieved "a great advance in civilisation." Consequently, "there was nothing that one could not say, nothing that one could not do, at 46 Gordon Square," a point Woolf emphasizes with a waggish reference to queer gossip:

> It may be true that the loves of buggers are not—at least if one is of the other persuasion—of enthralling interest or paramount importance. But the fact that they can be mentioned openly leads to the fact that no one minds if they are practised privately. Thus many customs and beliefs were revised. Indeed the future of Bloomsbury was to prove that many variations can be played on the theme of sex.[23]

And while this sexual revolution was confined to a Bloomsbury drawing room, it was also hurled into a public posthumous future, when the group's memoirs and other private writing would circulate, and their sexual disclosures would accrue broader effect, *after* the group itself was gone. Now, a century later, such publications have definitively shaped our sense of

Bloomsbury's queerness.[24] Perhaps only now, with us, has the sexual revolution in the drawing room achieved its public becoming, albeit one conditioned upon Bloomsbury's very absence.

Thus, rather than thinking of Bloomsbury sexuality as a Bloomsbury*buried* sexuality—an inert past that we dig up and expose, we might think of it as a posthumous sexuality that perpetually and performatively comes into being through its anticipatory address to an imagined future public:[25] The Memoir Club's ostensibly "private" writings in fact embed and anticipate us as their future readers, the readers who live after the death of the "society of buggers."[26]

The Public Futures of Vita Sackville-West's Private Memoir

We find a similar anticipation in my final example: Vita Sackville-West's 1920 memoir of her earlier affair with Violet Keppel. Sackville-West's son discovered and published the memoir in the 1970s, when he felt "that an experience of this kind need no longer be regarded as shameful or unmentionable."[27] Indeed, as much as the memoir is staged as a private confession, it also anticipates future public readers, at the very moment of disclosing its queerest details. Determined to tell the "complete" and "*entire* truth" of the affair, Sackville-West claims she "shall be able to trust no one to read it."[28] And yet, she justifies recording the explicit Sapphic details by predicting their future cultural value and heralding her memoir as the first, non-pornographic "truthful record of such a connection":

> as centuries go on, and the sexes become more nearly merged on account of their increasing resemblances, I hold the conviction that such [same-sex] connections will to a very large extent cease to be regarded as merely unnatural, and will be understood far better, at least in their *intellectual* if not their physical aspect … I believe that then the psychology of people like myself will be a matter of interest, and I believe it will be recognized that many more people of my type do exist than under the present-day system of hypocrisy is commonly admitted. I am not saying that such personalities, and the connections which result from them, will not be deplored as they are now; but I do believe that their greater prevalence, and the spirit of candour which one hopes will spread with the progress of the world, will lead to their recognition, if only as an inevitable evil.[29]

Initially defending her explicit disclosure through an avowal of truth-telling entrusted to a strictly private document—she *can* tell all because no one will read it—Sackville-West also positions her private confession within a broader, future history of public discourse—she *should* tell all because it will facilitate future awareness and understanding of such relationships. She even

self-identifies as an expert whose lived experience renders her as qualified as any sexologist to record, analyze, and theorize her own gender-sexual case study for posterity:

> I advance, therefore, the perfectly accepted theory that cases of dual personality do exist, in which the feminine and the masculine elements alternately preponderate. I advance this in an impersonal and scientific spirit, and claim that I am qualified to speak with the intimacy a professional scientist could acquire only after years of study and indirect information, because I have the object of study always to hand, in my own heart, and can gauge the exact truthfulness of what my own experience tells me.[30]

The text justifies itself by imagining a progressive future that needs such disclosures, thereby implying the future anterior logic of its posthumous publication: By detailing queer sexual and gender transgression in her (private) text, Sackville-West helps to bring into being the future (public) legitimacy of such relationships, subjectivities, and texts.

Posthumous Queer Becoming

Each of my examples is oriented toward a posthumous future when transgressive sexuality achieves its becoming. Favoring death as a requisite rite of passage toward queer becoming, these modernists foresaw a future of their absence, as the time when their queerness would achieve public presence. In this way, modernism's queerness was always a *becoming* in temporal suspension, inscribed with and dependent upon traces of posthumous futures, futures that believe in and rely upon us. Certainly, these writers bequeathed to us some of the most exciting and reaffirming gifts of queer archival discovery, as promises or open potentialities addressed to us.[31] As these writers left us their queer future, they also left us with a choice. On the one hand, we might regard posthumous queer modernism as a temporal dislocation that marks the tragic erasure of sexual subjectivities—that is, for these writers, queerness was literally unlivable during their lifetimes. And yet, on the other hand, we might (also) consider this temporal mode as a poignant *refusal* of a queer death sentence, a becoming achieved by stubbornly projecting texts and identities toward a "happier year," while shaping the conditions for the actualization of their queer future, our queer now.

I prefer this more positive reading, even though positive affective positions are often unfashionable in queer theory circles and increasingly hard to maintain in the political "now" of my writing. Admittedly, yoking together queerness, futurity, and a willing drive toward death inevitably conjures up Lee Edelman's anti-social polemic of queer negativity, which has held sway over these terms. However, the posthumous queer future I have been outlining

here—in which modernism's queerness is predicated upon the very death of the "society of buggers"—is a queer relation to the death drive that is strikingly different from Edelman's account in *No Future*. As a mode oriented to and dependent upon death, posthumous queer modernism may be animated by a kind of death drive, but it is also propelled toward a futural mode of becoming.[32] My deliberate choice of the term "becoming" to describe queer modernism's posthumous temporality leans gratefully upon Elizabeth Grosz's philosophical reflections on time and becoming. Grosz's work in this field, first published contemporaneously with Edelman's, offers a feminist temporal antidote to his polemic.[33] From such a vantage point, we can see how queer modernism's textual anticipations of the future perpetually and performatively revive and sustain queer modernist potentiality, bending time to reconfigure ontology as a temporally open-ended becoming that exceeds the natural life of the body. In this way, perhaps these modernists enact a kind of death drive toward a reparative future.[34] We might even call it a drive beyond queer theory's negativity principle.

All this to say, posthumous queer modernism need not (only) be regarded as a death sentence of abjection, defeat, or social death (the "history of injury" addressed by Butler, Brown, and Love), nor even a death-drive refusal of social reproductivity as promoted by Edelman.[35] Rather, it might (also) be understood as an expansion of transformative queer potentialities. As such, it shares something of Muñoz's sensibility in *Cruising Utopia*. I'd maintain, however, that insofar as modernism's posthumous future mode embeds a sense of hopeful expectation, it does not qualify as a utopic vision, not even a "critical utopianism" in Muñoz's sense: first, because this queer modernist temporality hinges on a dry-eyed will toward death, and second because it serves the categorically individual aspirations and self-cultivation of these writers and their projected reputations (*I* will fulfill my public queer becoming after *my* death)—or, at best, it extends only so far as the exclusive (counter-)public of Bloomsbury's group identity.[36] For these reasons, modernism's posthumous queer temporality qualifies as a creative, critical, and even willfully playful confounding of normative temporality, albeit with a limited ambition. These writers do not chase a broadly collective, communal, or relational utopic vision, but still resourcefully harness the future as the(ir) time of queer presence.

Such a posthumous futurity, then, is a privileged mode of temporal refusal that brashly projects queer becoming beyond the bounds of conventional life narratives, the biological necessities of the mortal body, and the biopolitics that inscribe queer life under erasure. In fact, Bloomsbury exemplifies this temporal mode precisely because its members knowingly and deftly inhabit, manage, and exploit temporality—and the archive—as resources of the privileged. As Raymond Williams observes, the Bloomsbury group constituted an influential "class fraction" of the British social and literary elite.[37] As such, its

members and associates were confident that their private archives of letters, memoirs, and "unpublishable" writing would be institutionally valued and protected, held in trust for future sympathetic and interested readers. By strategically managing information about their sexuality during their lifetime, they protected their symbolic and cultural capital, not to mention their literary reputations, in turn ensuring future interest in their posthumous disclosures. This imagined future constituted a time—our time, perhaps—when their queerness would achieve its becoming. Modernism's queerness takes shape through a proleptic attachment to and anticipatory shaping of our contemporary moment—its queerness comes into being as and through our own.

But that's not quite the end of the story. These modernist writers not only reach out to us in a queer touch across time, we also turn to meet them.[38] Their audacious refusal of any chronobiopolitics that would confine sexuality to the time of the living body—in conjunction with the lives they lived, the afterlives they projected, the friendships they nurtured, and the communities and networks they built—may now offer us inspiration for our own future of resistant possibilities, our own unfolding of queer becoming and survival, especially in these daunting and increasingly unbecoming times.[39] This was first poignantly apparent to me at the Modernist Studies Association conference in November 2016, held in California just a week after the US presidential election. As a Canadian citizen living in Canada, I stepped into a traumatized scholarly community, weary from individual election efforts, and collectively reeling from the aftershocks. The unprecedented affective environment for this MSA conference was characterized by tears, despair, and the jettisoning of planned academic papers in exchange for extemporaneous emotional reflections. I was there to participate on a roundtable panel with other contributors to the edited volume *Queer Bloomsbury*. In that room, on that day, we all shared a palpable sense that Bloomsbury's queer configurations—not just in terms of their sexual practices, but also their social formations, modes of intimacy, friendship, affective alliances, ways of being otherwise, all lived out during England's most politically tumultuous and socially anxious decades of the twentieth century—offered us something we desperately needed: a hopeful model for conviviality in a time of political despair.[40] Bloomsbury didn't need our queer rescue; we needed them as our collaborators. The twenty-first century continues to be a heartbreaking time of global disruption and uncertainty, extreme ecological and human suffering, war, inequity, systemic injustice, violence, and in my moment of writing, authoritarian and "anti-gender"[41] attacks on education, libraries, books, progressive public discourse, reproductive justice, and 2SLGBTQIA+ livability. Such a stifling context renders more starkly how Bloomsbury's protective privileges facilitated their queer lives and afterlives, and expanded their capacities into the future.

And so, as time passes, queer theory and modernist studies will continue to revise how we think and feel about the relational flows between modernism's pasts and presents. For myself, coming of age as a graduate student in the queer 1990s, I once imagined that we, the "new" queer readers, were just what Bloomsbury needed to finally fulfill its own queer becoming; we were the future they had been anticipating and waiting for that could publicly affirm them. But now, today, I think instead of what their archive might provide to us, as a resource of sustaining possibilities and collaborative support as well as a lesson in the limits, exclusions, and conditions of such provisions, as we undergo our own unexpected transformations, not only in gender and sexuality, but also forms of relationality, critical self-reflection, survival, and collective flourishing and care during our own harrowing times.[42] How might the posthumous temporality of queer Bloomsbury—and queer modernism more broadly—continue to reach and teach us, for our own survival and sustenance, and for imagining potentialities of *our* becoming otherwise?

Notes

1 In addition to the work directly cited in this chapter, see for example, the foundational work of Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*; Doan, *Disturbing Practices*; Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern*; Freeman, *Time Binds*; Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*; Jagose, *Inconsequence*; Love, *Feeling Backward*; Rohy, *Anachronism and Its Others*; Nealon, *Foundlings*; Traub, *Thinking Sex with the Early Moderns*; and the "Queer Temporalities" special issue of *GLQ* edited by Elizabeth Freeman.
2 See Edelman, *No Future*; and Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*.
3 This is the epigraph to P. N. Furbank's biography of Forster, from Forster's letter to Lawrence. Forster's handwriting in this letter has recently been transcribed as: "But when I die and they write My life they can say Everything." Lawrence, *Letters*, 117.
4 Steward, "The Memoir," 56.
5 Strachey, letter to Keynes, in Holroyd, *Lytton Strachey*, 92.
6 Morris Kaplan claims that Symonds "imagined his memoirs as a case study for future, less prejudiced generations." Kaplan, *Sodom on the Thames*, 13. I discuss Sackville-West's memoir later in this chapter.
7 Wilde, *De Profundis*, 57.
8 This is, of course, an over-simplification. We know that epistemological shifts are uneven processes: one regime does not instantly supersede the next, and contradictory conceptualizations exist side by side in any era. Indeed, this is what renders the time of modernism so rich for queer studies. Sharply aware of the perils of doing so, I also use "we" throughout this chapter to address a readership with shared interests in modernist studies and queer theory.
9 See Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, and *Tendencies*; Bersani, *Homos*; Butler, *Bodies that Matter*; and Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*.
10 I recognize that, by many accounts, Sackville-West was not a "member" of the Bloomsbury group; however, I am including her as an associate of Bloomsbury and part of its milieu.
11 Freeman, *Time Binds*.
12 I am grateful to Alicha Keddy's reflections on the availability of political refusal and resistance to those with existing privilege in her dissertation, "'Go for the

failure': Modernist Feminist Failure and the Fiction of Vita Sackville-West, Sylvia Townsend Warner, and Jean Rhys."

13 Moffat, *A Great Unrecorded History*, 111. Furbank dates Forster's first writing of "erotic short stories" at 1911, just after the publication of *Howard's End*. Furbank, *E. M. Forster*, vol. 1, 200.

14 Forster, *Selected Letters of E. M. Forster*, 45.

15 Forster, *The Journal and Diaries of E. M. Forster*, 134. Forster did publish a collection of short stories in 1928, but he wrote them all at least a decade before his 1924 decision to stop writing novels. He did not expect to publish any new fiction in his lifetime.

16 Forster, *A Passage to India*, 289.

17 Forster was involved in the National Council for Civil Liberties, from 1934 to 1948, including serving as its first president in 1934, and he led the British delegation to an International Congress of Writers in Paris in 1935. Moffat notes Forster's 1959 letter to *The Times* "protesting the treatment of a seventeen-year-old … suspected of homosexual offenses who committed suicide as he awaited trial," as well as Forster's financial support of the Homosexual Law Reform Society. Moffat, *A Great Unrecorded History*, 309.

18 Boyd, *Bloomsbury Heritage*, 111. Leonard Woolf qualifies the commitment to candor in his autobiography:

> [Memoir Club members] were all intimate friends, and it was agreed that we should be absolutely frank in what we wrote and read. Absolute frankness, even among the most intimate, tends to be relative frankness; I think that in our reminiscences what we said was absolutely true, but absolute truth was sometimes filtered through some discretion and reticence.

See L. Woolf, *Downhill All the Way*, 114. My discussion of the Bloomsbury Memoir Club draws upon my earlier work in *Lesbian Scandal and the Culture of Modernism*, 152–60. S. P. Rosenbaum's posthumously published *The Bloomsbury Group Memoir Club* provides a more detailed and nuanced account of the origins, circumstances, intentions, and activities of the Memoir Club.

19 See V. Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, 23, note 9.

20 It is important to clarify that the Memoir Club memoirs were not preserved together to form an intentional collection for future publication. Of the estimated 125 memoirs written over more than forty years (with membership changing as members passed away), Rosenbaum explains that some memoirs "have been lost," some "can no longer be identified," and others were indistinguishably embedded into "longer autobiographies or essay collections." Of roughly ninety identified memoirs, the majority are published "in scattered places, ranging from diverse collections of memoirs to the appendices of collected works," while "at least twenty-five … remain unpublished" (in identified archives), and others "may emerge as more collections of papers become available." At the same time, Rosenbaum's book—itself posthumously published in an unfinished but deeply valuable form—argues for the importance of reconstructing and appreciating the Memoir Club writings as "a considerable corpus of twentieth-century life-writing that needs to be considered together as a complex whole and not just as body parts of biographies." Rosenbaum, *The Bloomsbury Group Memoir Club*, 18. In this way, Club members were indeed remembering themselves into a future that would want to re-member them.

21 See for example V. Woolf, "22 Hyde Park Gate" (which includes Woolf's revelation of sexual assault by George Duckworth) and "Old Bloomsbury," discussed below. See also Strachey, "Lancaster Gate."

22 Woolf, "Old Bloomsbury," 195–6.

23 Woolf, "Old Bloomsbury," 196–7.
24 See not only the chapter on Bloomsbury in this volume, but also the collection *Queer Bloomsbury*, a term its editors maintain is "redundant, implying that there could somehow be a neutral or 'unqueer' Bloomsbury." Detloff and Helt, *Queer Bloomsbury*, 5.
25 Adams et al. address "anticipation" as an "*affective state … a way of actively orienting oneself temporally*. Anticipation is a regime of being in time, in which one inhabits time out of place as the future." Adams et al., "Anticipation," 247, emphasis in original. Their work is concerned with how anticipation is mobilized in "health, medicine, technoscience and biopolitics," particularly through fear and anxiety; however, they also recognize how anticipation has "long been a component of political practice" from decolonization to feminism, which "all rely on conjuring the possibility of new futures." Adams et al., "Anticipation," 248. See also Muñoz on the "anticipatory illumination of art" in *Cruising Utopia*.
26 Woolf, "Old Bloomsbury," 194.
27 Nicolson, *Portrait of a Marriage*, viii–ix.
28 Sackville-West, Untitled Memoir, 3; 105. Sackville-West makes an exception for her husband, Harold, who also had same-sex affairs. Sackville-West, Untitled Memoir, 3.
29 Sackville-West, Untitled Memoir, 105–6.
30 Sackville-West, Untitled Memoir, 106.
31 Both Muñoz and Grosz, discussed below, engage with "potentialities" as a specific term.
32 Of course, Edelman deploys the term "death drive" within his own specific definitions of the term via Lacanian psychoanalysis.
33 See Grosz, "Becoming … An Introduction"; "Feminist Futures?"; *The Nick of Time*; and "Thinking the New" in both *Becomings* and *Future Crossings*. This work is contemporaneous with Edelman's first elaborations of "no future." See Edelman, "The Future Is Kid Stuff," and "Post Partum." Grosz's feminist philosophy endorses a notion of open-ending futural becomings. While the concept of "becoming" is most associated with Deleuze and has been taken up in many queer theory contexts, including thinkers cited elsewhere in this chapter, I choose here to reference Grosz's work for its intellectual depth, lucidity, and feminist investments.
34 See Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading," and Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*.
35 Butler, *Bodies that Matter*; Brown, *States of Injury*; and Love, *Feeling Backward*.
36 Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 12.
37 Williams, "The Bloomsbury Fraction."
38 On queer touches across time, see Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*.
39 On chronobiopolitics, see Luciano, *Arranging Grief*.
40 See Detloff and Helt, *Queer Bloomsbury*.
41 See Butler, *Who's Afraid of Gender?*
42 My gesture here is intentionally open-ended, but I'd point to Paul B. Preciado's 2023 documentary, *Orlando, Ma Biographie Politique* (*Orlando, My Political Biography*) as one recent, direct example.

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PART TWO

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5

THE TRANSLUCENT CLOSET

Benjamin Kahan

The phrase "modernist closet" is an oxymoron. As George Chauncey explains, the concept of the "closet" does not "appear before the 1960s in the records of the gay movement or in the novels, diaries, or letters of gay men and lesbians."[1] Concurring with Chauncey's assessment, Craig Loftin contends that "the contemporary concept of the closet as a metaphor for hiding one's homosexual identity from others or one's self did not emerge until the late 1960s and early 1970s."[2] I have argued elsewhere that the earliest known usage of the term "closet" in the context of homosexuality is a one-sentence letter that the visual artist Ray Johnson wrote to his friend William S. Wilson in 1962: "Bill, / I'm back in the closet again, / Out where a friend is a friend, R."[3] Rewriting the opening lines of Gene Autry's "Back in the Saddle Again" by replacing the word "saddle" with the word "closet," the letter animates the now familiar dichotomy of closetedness and outness, suggesting its homosexual content.[4] Whether Johnson's letter continues to be the earliest known usage of the term or not, what is clear is that the metaphor of the closet was not available to modernist writers and artists prior to the 1950s (at the earliest).

In spite of this anachronism, the concept of the closet has proved remarkably durable and generative for modernist scholarship with innumerable works deploying the tropes of closetedness and outness.[5] The pluripotential of the closet for modernist scholarship might be explained, in part, by high modernist style itself. That is, if paradigmatically modernist style—that of, say, the late Henry James or Marcel Proust—can be said to function "tactically" or "defensive[ly]" as a mechanism for concealment, then it operates in ways that are structurally homologous to the closet.[6] In this reading, modernist style is itself a protective closet (though not necessarily one that contains

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queerness). Richard Bozorth's account of W. H. Auden's work exemplifies this understanding of the queerness of modernist style:

> Auden's embrace of modernism … embodies an intricate response to a problem many other writers have faced: how to write public poetry out of the closet … Auden developed and put into practice a poetic of self-conscious coding to negotiate the closet as a structure both psychic and social.[7]

Kevin Ohi makes a similar claim about James: "The daunting complexity of James's writing *is* its queerness: the erotic in his work can be most fully understood when it is considered in linguistic rather than representational terms."[8] Both Bozorth's account of Auden's "coding" and Ohi's analysis of James's "daunting complexity" point us not just to their closeting effects, but to their powers of articulation. Along these lines, Allon White contends that modernist style "never ceases to represent or to mean, but that a major means of its representation is obscurity."[9] This speaking through obscurity enacted by modernist style, we might term the "translucent closet."[10]

Though Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *The Epistemology of the Closet* deploys the rhetorics of opacity (silence) and transparency (the "glass closet") to characterize the closet, translucency more nearly matches her theorization of its contours. That is, despite its tropological implications of transparency, Sedgwick's figure of the "glass closet"—which for her characterizes the condition of closetedness in general—is equated with the open secret as she refers to "the 'open secret' or glass closet."[11] This simultaneous openness and concealment suggests the partial vision of the translucent, one that befits what she calls "the very equivocal privacy afforded by the closet."[12] In the translucent closet outlines and borders are not clearly delimited; only a general shape can be apprehended without details or full understanding. Moreover, translucency captures the bidirectionality of the closet, the way individuals can neither see clearly into nor out of the closet. Narrating just such occluded sightlines in relation to the closet, Sedgwick describes "the radical uncertainty closeted gay people are likely to feel about who is in control of information about their sexual identity."[13] The trope of translucency highlights the braiding between knowledge and ignorance that are constitutive of the closet.

In drawing out such translucency, I hope also to respond to one of the central challenges to theorizations of the closet: namely, Marlon Ross's contention that "white (queer) theory and history are beset by … a fixation on the closet function as the grounding principle for sexual experience, knowledge, and politics."[14] Ross understands this fixation to shroud the mechanisms of racial ideology and processes of racialization. In particular, he argues that closet epistemology does not apply to black subjects who exist "on a continuum of knowing that persists at various levels according to the kin and friendship relations within the community."[15] In contrast to what Ross characterizes

as the imprecision of the "open secret," Ross's theorization of "a continuum of knowing" for black subjects suggests an already-knowingness, something taken for granted, something "impossible *not* to know … among those who know you well enough."[16] This already-knowingness is proximate to my recasting of the closet as translucent. With this in mind, I hope to make a double gesture: on the one hand, seeking to de-whiten the concept of the closet to attune its geographies to the dynamics of race and racialization, and on the other hand, to take Ross's cue that theorizing sexuality outside and beyond the closet is crucial.[17] Modernism's existence in a time before the closet offers a rich set of resources for just such theorizations. In particular, I will examine two social formations which are often discussed as versions of the closet within modernist scholarship, but which actually operate according to different social logics: namely, discretion and riddles. Recovering these alternative logics is both more historically accurate and more fully captures the affective experience of the modernist past for as Loftin argues, "the closet metaphor implies that gay people consciously denied their authentic selves, and it eliminates the historical agency of an entire generation of gay men and lesbians to define their own sexual identities."[18]

Discretion, Masking, and the Double Life

In an important and underappreciated essay "'But we would never talk about it': The Structures of Lesbian Discretion in South Dakota, 1928–1933," Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy describes "discretion as a distinct social formation" that enabled women in the 1920s and 1930s to live "active and full lesbian li[ves] while not being public."[19] Taking a wealthy white woman named Julia Boyer Reinstein as her case study, Kennedy argues "Julia's discretion, her not being 'obvious,' was governed by two rules—first, to publicly behave as a respectful heterosexual daughter, to the extent that that was possible without marrying, and second, to never talk about lesbianism."[20] Kennedy traces how Reinstein's family and wealth facilitated her happy sexual life and protected her from exposure. Similarly, Henry Abelove has charted the ways in which the famous literary critic F. O. Matthiessen also rigorously adhered to a code of discretion and reticence.[21] He scrupulously avoided proclaiming his sexuality "from the house tops" to prevent "a great deal of uncomprehending opprobrium."[22] Instead, Matthiessen explains to his partner how he tells his "very closest friends" about his sexuality but that he refrains from "telling the part that touches you. For that is not my life, but our lives together."[23] Here, Matthiessen describes both how his discretion dictates who he divulges his sexuality to (his "very closest friends") and how that narration is delimited to facts about himself (rather than encompassing facts about his partner). This kind of discretion runs through modernism and is also called "wearing the mask" (we might think of Oscar Wilde's "The Truth of

Masks" [1891], Paul Laurence Dunbar's "We Wear the Mask" [1896], Picasso's "Gertrude Stein" [1905–6]) or "living a double life" (we might think of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* [1886], Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* [1891], Ralph Werther's *Autobiography of an Androgyne* [1919], and Nella Larsen's *Passing* [1929]). Wearing the mask or living a double life provided, as Loftin argues, "gay people with the necessary security that *allowed* them to consciously identify as homosexual and participate in a subaltern, camouflaged gay public sphere."[24]

While this discretion seems more available for white and upper-class people like Matthiessen and Reinstein and her circle, Kennedy argues that such social formations may have had a wider reach, taking up the example of the often-impoverished poet Elsa Gidlow. In Gidlow's autobiography, she retrospectively describes her life in the 1920s and 1930s thusly:

> I am not saying it was better then, although it some ways it was more comfortable. Perhaps it was the San Francisco circles we moved in, but it did seem that in those days civilized persons respected one another's privacies. Some may call this elitist. I can only say, if live-and-let-live good manners are elitist, let's learn from elitism.[25]

Fascinatingly, even as Kennedy and Gidlow attribute discretion to the tolerance of bohemianism (the "San Francisco circles" she moved in), Gidlow responds to the imagined charge of elitism. This implicit connection between her discretion and the manners and breeding of a more elevated social station suggests, as Kennedy has argued, that perhaps discretion was not limited to well-to-do people even if such practices of discretion were associated with such people.

But the question of how available such practices of discretion were to nonwhite subjects remains. The famous examples of Langston Hughes's coyness about his sexuality and Countée Cullen's marriage to Yolande Du Bois (W. E. B. Du Bois's daughter) suggest that such strategies may very well cross the color line. However, "Prove It on Me Blues" (1928) by the legendary blues singer Gertrude "Ma" Rainey might instead imply that it was the social station of Hughes and Cullen within the black community that permitted them access to such discretion. Moreover, discretion may have been unavailable or even undesirable to less-well-heeled African American people. Jonathan Ned Katz describes Rainey's track as "an assertive song of lesbian self-affirmation and defiance," and Erin D. Chapman similarly understands it to evince "a modern individuality and commitment to self-determination":

> Went out last night, had a great big fight
> Everything seemed to go on wrong
> I looked up, to my surprise
> The gal I was with was gone.

Where she went, I don't know
I mean to follow everywhere she goes;
Folks say I'm crooked.
I didn't know where she took it
I want the whole world to know.

They say I do it, ain't nobody caught me
Sure got to prove it on me;
Went out last night with a crowd of my friends,
They must've been women, 'cause I don't like no men.
It's true I wear a collar and a tie,
Makes the wind blow all the while
Don't you say I do it, ain't nobody caught me
You sure got to prove it on me.
Say I do it, ain't nobody caught me
Sure got to prove it on me.
I went out last night with a crowd of my friends,
It must've been women, 'cause I don't like no men.
Wear my clothes just like a fan
Talk to the gals just like any old man
'Cause they say I do it, ain't nobody caught me
Sure got to prove it on me.[26]

While Katz and Chapman largely read the song as one of brash daring, I would suggest that its relation to, what Michael Warner calls, "sexuality as an expressive capacity" is significantly more complicated.[27] On the one hand, Rainey's song might be said to renarrate her arrest for "running an indecent party," flaunting both her same-sex desire and its cultural trappings in several registers.[28] For example, as the song opens Rainey is "with" a "gal" who she "would follow everywhere she goes" (echoing the biblical account of Ruth's words to her mother-in-law Naomi "whither thou goest; I will go").[29] Similarly, Rainey describes talking "to the gals just like any old man," suggesting both that her ways of desiring might resemble masculine modes of desiring ("like any old man") and her resemblance to a man (which is highlighted by her playful confession "It's true I wear a collar and a tie"). That is, she does not "like no men" because she is attracted to women. Rainey emphasizes this attraction to women when she repeats the sexual gossip that "Folks say I'm crooked" (with its implications of queerness, perversion, bentness, and criminality), but rather than validating or denying the rumor, she says, "I want the whole world to know."

But these seemingly straightforward admissions or declarations of female-female desire stand co-present with gestures that repeatedly call such forthrightness into question. For example, Rainey's embeddedness in a uniformly

homosocial and perhaps lesbian world is undermined by its conditional logic: "Went out last night with a crowd of my friends, / They must've been women, 'cause I don't like no men." The obligatory force of the sentence's "must've" fades as it becomes a logical deduction based on her dislike of men. Moreover, her fellow revelers are "friends" rather than explicitly lovers. Likewise, the confessional mode summoned by "It's true" that Rainey wears "a collar and tie," with its implications of gender nonnormativity is immediately undercut in the next line by "Makes the wind blow all the while." Here, the tie shifts from encoding a nascent lesbian semiotics to something like a weathervane that is as meaningless and common as the wind blowing. This telling and hiding, to borrow C. P. Cavafy's language, reaches its apotheosis with Rainey's recurrent invitation and dare to "prove it on" her: "Say I do it, ain't nobody caught me / Sure got to prove it on me."[30] Where earlier instantiations of this challenge use the evidence of not being caught as offering a plausible deniability, a translucent closet, this reconfiguration also might be read as a hypothetical statement—"Say I do it"—as well as an imperative. The lack of evidence countermands the condemnatory force of hearsay. Rainey glories in this missing juridical proof as she marshals all the circumstantial evidence for her listeners. Never has the translucent closet been so fun!

If Rainey simultaneously refused and deployed discretion, anthropologists in the early twentieth century aimed to impose it on what they called the "institutionalized homosexuality" of native peoples.[31] Ruth Benedict contends that "On the Plains of North America, the transvestite, a male who assumed women's clothes, occupations, and lived as wife with a husband, is an accepted institution."[32] Likewise, C. Daryll Forde's "Ethnography of the Yuma Indians" (1931) describes "male and female inverts" as "recognized."[33] In these examples and many others, anthropologists conscript "native sex/gender systems" into "Euramerican sexological categories." [34] For instance, Forde chronicles "casual secret homosexuality among men and women" and A. B. Holder describes a person he identifies as a "bote" (meaning "not man, not woman") as "ha[ving] me promise that I would tell nothing to the authorities nor to any of his tribe" before he would submit to examination.[35] Here, the damaged archive of white anthropology strives to locate so-called institutionalized homosexuality within the grid of discretion, mistaking secrets of esoteric knowledge or ritual practice for sexual secrets.

The Epistemology of the Riddle

One commonality between discretion and the closet is that they share a delimitable object—homosexuality—that is being hidden. This is not the case with another pervasive pre-closet model of understanding sexuality: namely, the riddle. The conception of sexuality as a riddle abounds in sexological texts;

for example, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs titles his life's work *Research on the Riddle of "Man-Manly" Love* (1864–1880) and Edward Carpenter's *The Intermediate Sex* (1912) refers to "those whose deepest feelings are destined from the earliest days to be a riddle and a stumbling-block, unexplained to themselves, passed over in silence by others."[36] Similarly, Iwan Bloch's *The Sexual Life of Our Time* (1909) and La Forest Potter's *Strange Loves: A Study in Sexual Abnormalities* (1933) both contain chapters titled "The Riddle of Homosexuality."[37] Bloch explains that he considers homosexuality

> "a riddle," because, in fact, the more closely in recent years I have come to know it, the more I have endeavoured to study it scientifically, the more enigmatical, the more obscure, the more incomprehensible, it has become to me. But it exists. About that there is no doubt.[38]

The vernacular sexologist Ralph Werther likewise terms the final volume of his autobiography *The Riddle of the Underworld* (1921).[39] The trope of the riddle was also pervasive in queer literature with Stephen in *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) referring "to the riddle of her unwanted being" just before the famous library scene, Blair Niles's *Strange Brother* (1931) terming homosexuality "the riddle which modern science had failed to solve," and a character in *Goldie* (1931) describing queerness as "part of that larger riddle that science has yet to solve."[40] Moreover, the trope of the riddle continued to be a way of conceptualizing sexuality through midcentury as the same-sex desire of Emily Dickinson and Shakespeare was explored respectively in *The Riddle of Emily Dickinson* (1951) and *The Riddle of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (1962).[41]

I draw attention to the prevalence of the riddle in order to begin to think about the differences between the epistemology of the closet and the epistemology of the riddle. In what is undoubtedly one of the most famous riddles in Anglophone literature, Lewis Carroll's [Mad] Hatter asks "Why is a raven like a writing-desk?"[42] While the riddle originally was written without an answer in mind, Carroll eventually offered the following answer: "because it can produce a few notes, although they are very flat, it is nevar [never/raven spelled backward] put with the wrong end front."[43] Over the years, many other possible answers have been given: "The notes for which they are noted are not noted for being musical notes," "Poe wrote on both." "Bills and tales are among their characteristics," and "because there is a 'b' in both and an "n" in neither" offer a small sampling of the possible answers.[44] Rather than being interested in the specificity of these answers or of Carroll's riddle, I want to suggest that the epistemology of the riddle differs from the epistemology of the closet inasmuch as it does not have any *one* answer and may not have an answer at all.[45]

With this in mind, I want to turn to the text which receives the most famous reading in Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet*—Henry James's

"The Beast in the Jungle"—in order to consider how thinking about the text in terms of riddles rather than closets might revise Sedgwick's understanding of the text and our own sense of modernist queerness before the advent of the closet. The text features an encounter between two acquaintances—John Marcher and May Bartram—who have not seen each other in nearly a decade. Marcher does not remember the details of their original meeting, particularly that he divulged his most closely guarded secret which Bartram summarizes as:

> You [Marcher] said you had had from your earliest time, as the deepest thing within you, the sense of being kept for something rare and strange, possibly prodigious and terrible, that was sooner or later to happen to you, that you had in your bones the foreboding and the conviction of, and that would perhaps overwhelm you.[46]

Marcher is gladdened by the knowledge of his admission and asks Bartram to keep his secret and to watch with him for the catastrophe that the story nominates the beast in the jungle.

In arguably the most influential critical reading of the story, Sedgwick speculates that "to the extent that Marcher's secret has *a* content, that content is homosexual."[47] One basis for this claim is that the "quasi-nominative, quasi-obliterative" figure of preterition that characterizes Marcher's secret has also historically been used to unspeakably speak of sodomy ("'that sin which should be neither named nor committed'").[48] The figure of the mask that I have been arguing offers a different description, ontology, and phenomenology of what would, in part, come to be called the closet also plays a key role in James's story and further underlines the "homosexual content" of Marcher's secret:

> What it had come to was that he wore a mask painted with the social simper, out of the eye-holes of which there looked eyes of an expression not in the least matching the other features. This the stupid world, even after years, had never more than half-discovered.[49]

We might extrapolate from Sedgwick's reading that Bartram functions as a mask, helping Marcher "to pass for a man like another."[50]

While the mask serves as one available trope for Marcher's queerness, I propose that Marcher's "long riddle" might provide a more elastic and fitting figure for its multiplicity.[51] In particular, the epistemology of the riddle might help us to understand as Sedgwick implies and Christopher Looby spells out that "Marcher's sexual secret *changed*"; Looby contends that it "was one thing at one time in his life, under one set of historical circumstances, but it was another thing later, under a different set of historical circumstances."[52]

An epistemology of riddle captures both the movement in and transformation of "the answer" to the question of Marcher's fate, but also the way that Marcher and Bartram at different times feel Marcher's riddle to have many different (non-definitive) answers.

In addition to this pluripotentiality, an epistemology of the riddle offers, modifying Christopher Lane, "an intermediary category between knowledge and personal truth."[53] Where an epistemology of the closet takes the relation between knowledge and ignorance as its purview, the riddle injects personal truth into the binary, accounting for what Sedgwick describes as the shifting "balance … of cognitive mastery over the secrets' meanings" between the two characters.[54] That is, because the riddle's secret is, in part, dependent on personal truth rather than objective knowledge it remains inscrutable to Bartram and Marcher as each tries to persuade the other of the truth of their position. A riddle contains truth but not necessarily the truth of the self. While the story's quasi-adversarial struggle for mastery certainly characterizes the epistemological advantage that so often striates the closet, the riddle also coagulates the pair together, binding them and providing the glue without which Marcher initially fears that their meeting "would simply and rather awkwardly close."[55] The mutual search for answers furnished by the riddle foments community or as André Jolles puts it in a different context, "The closer we come to the riddle … the better we can understand it as a password permitting initiation into a particular community."[56] The frisson of Marcher's riddle roots its sense of community not just in the "excessively refluent and dangerous maelstrom of eroticism" that Sedgwick understands as characterizing homosexual panic, but in the mysterious inscrutability itself, what Jolles calls "the requirement" that all riddles "be answered."[57]

The riddle's demand to be answered suggests an additional difference between its epistemology and that of the closet. Sedgwick's epistemological approach explicitly forecloses the question of etiology: "gay-affirmative work does well when it aims to minimize its reliance on any particular account of the origin of sexual preference and identity in individuals."[58] But conceptualizing Marcher's secret as a riddle permits us to ask not just what effect the secret has (as Sedgwick does), but what the nature of the beast, so to speak, is? What makes the beast "inevitab[ly] spring?"[59] Or to rephrase then in terms of personal knowledge, what do Marcher and May think the nature of the beast is and what do they believe makes him inevitably spring? These questions of etiology make the content of the secret less singular, less delimitable and hopefully enrich the ways in which we can think about James's short story.

In thinking then about the legacies of the closet, modernist and queer theorists alike have long known that the closet metaphor is a historical anachronism. But I hope that this chapter is a prompt to thicken, deepen, and texture our models—discretion, masks, double lives, and riddles to name but a

few—of queer life before the mid-twentieth century and to seek out new, hitherto unknown models of queer existence. In particular, we must heed Ross's admonition that we attend more carefully to the racialization and class-stratification of the operation of sexual-knowledge and secrecy and adumbrate sexual models with these social formations in view. Rather than looking beyond the closet, however, as Ross prescribes, I hope to have demonstrated that searching for it in unexpected places and shapes continues to illustrate the vibrancy and explanatory power of modernism's closet before the closet.

Notes

1 Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 6.
2 Loftin, *Masked Voices*, 10.
3 Johnson to William S. Wilson, March 15, 1962. For a fuller discussion of this letter and also possible antecedent usages of the term "closet," see Kahan, "Ray Johnson's Anti-Archive," 71.
4 On Gene Autry's complex relationship to normative gender and sexuality, see McGillis, *He Was Some Kind of Man*, 83–103.
5 See, for example, Bauer, *Houses, Secrets, and the Closet*; Kishi, "'More than Anything Else, I Like My Closets'"; Winning, "Lesbian Modernism"; Salvato, *Uncloseting Drama*; Papanikolaou, "'Words that tell and hide'"; and Boucai, "Topology of the Closet." In addition, I have used the title "The Walk-in Closet" for one of my chapters in *The Book of Minor Perverts*.
6 I borrow the terms "tactically" and "defensive[ly]" from George Steiner and Allon White respectively. Steiner, "On Difficulty," 270; White, *The Uses of Obscurity*, 3.
7 Bozorth, *Auden's Games of Knowledge*, 19.
8 Ohi, *Henry James and the Queerness of Style*, 2.
9 White, *The Uses of Obscurity*, 17.
10 I am not the first person to use the term "translucent closet" and have found usages as far back as 1982: Hall, "The Translucent Closet," 18. See also Kramer, *Opera and Modern Culture*, 94; Jones, "The Stained Glass Closet," 152.
11 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 164. Describing the centrality of the open secret to the closet more generally, Sedgwick contends that "same-sex desire is still structured by its distinctive public/private status, at once marginal and central, as *the* open secret." Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 22. For a theorization of the transparent closet, see Švab and Kuhar, "The Transparent and Family Closets," 15–35. On the opacity of the closet, see De Villiers, *Opacity and the Closet*.
12 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 71. On the complicated relationship between sexual privacy and the closet, see Howard, *The Closet and the Cul-de-Sac*.
13 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 79.
14 Ross, "Beyond the Closet as Raceless Paradigm," 162.
15 Ross, "Beyond the Closet as Raceless Paradigm," 180.
16 Ross, "Beyond the Closet as Raceless Paradigm," 180.
17 On the specific connection of the closet to the Global North, see Tinsley, *Thiefing Sugar*, 25–27.
18 Loftin, *Masked Voices*, 11.
19 Kennedy, "'But we would never talk about it,'" 16; 33.
20 Kennedy, "'But we would never talk about it,'" 34.

21 Abelove, "The Closet," February 27, 2014. On discretion, see also McCune, *Sexual Discretion* and Gutterman, *Her Neighbor's Wife*, 49–76.
22 Matthiessen and Cheney, *Rat and the Devil*, 87.
23 Matthiessen and Cheney, *Rat and the Devil*, 87.
24 Loftin, *Masked Voices*, 11.
25 Gidlow, *Elsa*, 302.
26 Katz, "Ma Rainey's"; Chapman, *Prove It on Me*, 3.
27 Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 287.
28 Quoted in Lieb, *Mother*, 17.
29 Ruth 1:16 (KJV).
30 Papanikolaou, "'Words that tell and hide,'" 235.
31 Devereux, "Institutionalized Homosexuality," 498–527.
32 Benedict, "Sex in Primitive Society," 572.
33 Forde, "Ethnography of the Yuma Indians," 157.
34 Rifkin, *When Did Indians Become Straight?* 7.
35 Forde, "Ethnography of the Yuma Indians," 157. Holder, "The Bote," 623; 624.
36 Ulrichs, *The Riddle of "MAN-MANLY" Love*; Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex*, 24. Stekel also calls it a riddle in *Bi-Sexual Love*, 32.
37 Bloch, *The Sexual Life of Our Time*, 487; Potter, *Strange Loves*, 3.
38 Bloch, *The Sexual Life of Our Time*, 489.
39 Werther, "The Riddle of the Underworld."
40 Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*, 203; Niles, *Strange Brother*, 307; Bruce, *Goldie*, 91.
41 Patterson, *The Riddle of Emily Dickinson*; Hubler, *The Riddle of Shakespeare's Sonnets*.
42 Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*, 55.
43 Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*, 55.
44 Another famous example of a riddle with many answers is: "What's black and white and red all over?"
45 On the possible emptiness of the closet, see Kahan, *Celibacies*, 3.
46 James, "The Beast in the Jungle," 309.
47 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 201.
48 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 203; quoted in Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 202.
49 James, "The Beast in the Jungle," 315.
50 James, "The Beast in the Jungle," 320.
51 James, "The Beast in the Jungle," 322.
52 Looby, "John Marcher's Queer Timing," 266.
53 Lane, *The Ruling Passion*, 73.
54 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 205.
55 James, "The Beast in the Jungle," 306–7.
56 Jolles, *Simple Forms*, 111.
57 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 209; Jolles, *Simple Forms*, 104.
58 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 41.
59 James, "The Beast in the Jungle," 313.

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6

QUEER FORMALISM AS MODERNIST FORM, MODERNIST FORM AS QUEER FORMALISM

Octavio R. González

Richard Bruce Nugent's poetic short story, "Smoke, Lilies and Jade" (1926), was published in the first and only issue of *Fire!!*—the first independent "little magazine" created by, for, and about Black Americans. "Smoke" is as distinguished an example of modernist stream-of-consciousness monologue as Molly Bloom's soliloquy in Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922). But Nugent's story is hardly ever considered an exemplar of modernism, tout court.[1] Indeed, most genealogies of modernism, including queer modernism, remain segregated canons, eschewing contributions from queer—and queer-adjacent—*modern* writers of color. Harlem Renaissance writers, such as Nugent, Wallace Thurman, Nella Larsen, and Zora Neale Hurston, routinely challenged the color line to which literary history has largely confined them since the Renaissance.

The queerness of many Renaissance authors is no longer in dispute.[2] What is in dispute is how intersectionality is woven into the fabric of queer modernism, when practiced by Renaissance and other culturally marginalized writers. Ironically, these creators' intersectional standpoints remain in tension with their modernist idioms, as novelists, essayists, dramatists, and poets. For example, before becoming well known as a writer, Nugent distinguished himself first as a visual artist and then as an actor (not to mention his bohemian self-fashioning as a dandy, which flouted New Negro norms of masculinity and respectability).[3]

That is the first point. The second is building on my definition of *queer form* as a queer formalism, as the desire for form—an urgent need to engage with language in innovative ways, ways that reflect queer writers' relation to *queerness itself as a literary genealogy*. And by this, I mean that queerness is nonfilial, historically speaking. Despite the recent extension of marriage, adoption,

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and other nuclear familial forms to queer and trans folks, these central institutions of heteronormativity serve to exclude queerness by their very constitution as "the social" itself. By this I echo the twin arguments of Michael Warner, on the one hand, and Lee Edelman and Leo Bersani, on the other. Warner's Introduction to *Fear of a Queer Planet*—a title that demonstrates the disavowed blackness at the heart of one of Queer Theory's founding texts—shows how NASA's "Adam and Eve" diagram of humanity, beamed to the corners of our galaxy in search of extraterrestrial life, exposes naturalized heterosexuality and binary gender as foundational to our notion of human existence itself. By equating heterosexuality and its civil institutions as "the social itself," queers are always born orphans. Historically alienated, if not totally excluded, from monogamous marriage, the nuclear family, and blood kinship—along with other hallmarks of heteronormative society—queers find models of themselves largely in the pages of literature, rather than in the spaces of home. These literary friends and relations are a who's who of queer predecessors and contemporaries who made queerness visible and legible—including the likes of Walt Whitman, Oscar Wilde, E. M. Forster, and Walter Pater, on the one hand, and Sappho, "Michael Field," Willa Cather, Virginia Woolf, Djuna Barnes, and John (Radclyffe) Hall, on the other. Note that these names define as much a horizontal as vertical genealogy; their dispersal is the wild trace of sexual and textual transmission, not the bloody chains of hetero genealogy.

In a wonderful expression of this argument, Matthew Lopez's award-winning play, *The Inheritance* (2018), which features Forster as one of its characters, demonstrates in its title the essential force of literary lineage for the construction (and continuation) of queer community. *The Inheritance* begins by giving Forster's ghost grief for only publishing *Maurice* posthumously; Forster's *Howard's End*, meanwhile, forms the narrative structure that the play follows. And Lopez's drama is a powerful commentary on the AIDS crisis. But *The Inheritance* decisively draws the parallels between modernist and contemporary queer community, mediated—with all its tensions and gaps in representation and divergence in political commitment—through literary genealogy. That genealogy is, precisely, "our" inheritance. Scare quotes around "our" inheritance because, despite Lopez's Latinx heritage, *The Inheritance* is centered on white gay genealogy. And I use "gay" pointedly here because there is not a single female character in the play. The play thus seems like a throwback to an older paradigm of single-identity "gay" community ("male" being understood as the default), belying the vast differences within that monolithic term even for those living in the same queer time and place. But facing the AIDS crisis, and the legacy or inheritance of gay modernism, Lopez's strategic choices are just that: strategic. And to understand these choices is to think through the terms of identity, community, and cultural inheritance—as often as not, literary-cultural inheritance, for a certain subset of queers—to which I devote the remainder of this chapter.

For writers of color navigating the waters of white gay cultural genealogies—such as, to an extent, Thurman and Nugent—Forster's name, along with that of other modernists, exists in a kind of rogues' gallery. The whiteness of the Anglo modernist canon culturally marginalizes these QOC writers and artists. And of course both branches of this queer rhizome are already excluded from genealogical belonging given their relative distance from heterosexuality.[4] Two complications arise from this framework: (1) Are all queers then literarily inclined? The quick and dirty answer is, if not literarily, then at least discursively. Think, for the moment, of the determinative force of psychoanalysis and sexology in defining—some would say, constituting—nonnormative sexual and gender experiences. Or the other textual institutions by which queerness is defined, often defiled: I remember distinctly, as a gay adolescent immigrant, opening the door for Jehovah's Witnesses. Two brown women handed me pamphlets, one of which contained a drawing that is to this day tattooed in my memory. Two seemingly white men kissing, drawn to their torsos, with an intense caption expressing the disgust and such an abomination should invoke. The drawings of Tom of Finland exist alongside this ersatz portrait of queer male deviance in my mind. (And so does the International Male "Undergear" catalog, the source of many a queer boy's masturbation fantasies in the 1980s.) Both formulate normative cultural imaginaries about homosexuality—one hetero-, the other homo-normative. Both are discursive constructs.

Historically, queerness is fixed and formulated, wriggling on the page, in aesthetic and other discursive forms, being encountered outside the social world of the family, the home, and the church. Being silenced, if not banished, outside the home; but flourishing (even if unacknowledged) in same-sex schools and in military institutions, in imperial colonies, in hospitals and prisons, and other circumscribed spaces.[5] None of these forms the center of the heteronormative social matrix, which follows the grid of family lines and their descendants. One looks outside the grid: for expert discourses both literary and medical, religious and juridical, aesthetic and discursive, and finds distorted or partial mirrors of deviates and sodomites; of congenital inverts and Boston marriages; but also of Tom of Finland and *Beebo Brinker*; of Wilde and Bosie, Woolf and Sackville-West, Djuna Barnes and Thelma Wood, Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas; of Natalie Barney and the thousand women who loved her, whom she loved? Even, indeed, of Shakespeare and Socrates, of Achilles and Antinous—or is it Hadrian and Patroclus? (No, dear reader, apparently it's Achilles and Patroclus; Hadrian and Antinous; not the other way around.)

The latter rhetorical flourish speaks to (2), the double exclusion from Eurocentric literary genealogies for queers belonging to different racial, ethnic, regional, linguistic and cultural spaces and histories. Even as culturally savvy queers have reconstructed cultural and literary genealogies of queer couples

and figures—part of the hungry search for forbears, which all socially benighted groups share—these queer canons are again filed away. It takes one to know one, indeed; and if one's never been to Ischia, or worn a Vicuna sweater, how is one to imagine one's queer self, if those cultural signifiers are bound to Anglo-European gay cultural narratives? Where is the equivalent canon of Brown and Black queer writers? The problem of visibility, a hallmark of the forcible erasure of queerness from history, is redoubled in the invisibility of queerness in heteronormative traditions outside the Anglo-European literary genealogy. For queer modernists like Nugent, this double displacement entails borrowing Wilde's dandyism and aestheticism as a model and as an ideal, as inspiration and aspiration, as we see in the character of Paul Arbian, stand-in for Nugent, in Thurman's roman à clef *Infants of the Spring* (1932). Or as we see in the invocations of Wilde in Nugent's own "Smoke, Lilies and Jade." Part of the work of this chapter—and that of my monograph, *Misfit Modernism*—is to enrich the literary genealogy of queerness by expanding it with the names of these Renaissance modernists. So that some future brown or black child will read Nugent in canons of queer modernism, alongside Stein, Forster, and Isherwood, alongside Dickinson, Whitman, and Wilde.

More to the point: writers that I'm calling intersectional queer modernists—or misfit modernists, for short—borrow and steal these improper cultural and literary touchstones. Like Prometheus stealing fire from the gods for humanity, they have racially reconfigured the Wildean aesthete as Paul Arbian, or indeed as Richard Bruce Nugent himself. The rich archive of visible black cultural queers exists mainly in this Renaissance coterie and in the blues women tradition. Both overlapped with modernism's rise itself, as well as the rise of the American music industry, on the one hand, and African American literary modernism, on the other. But note how many texts are being rediscovered or even (allowed to be) published for the first time by queer black writers of the Renaissance; or narratives of same-sex desire being unexpurgated, following the constant hunger for queer antecedents in the (literary or discursive) pages of history? It is this constant hunger for textual markers of same-sex longing, for nonbinary gender experience, that defines queer form as queer formalism, and queer formalism as queer form.

And, of course, queer modernist formalism defines queer modernist form. The broadest argument in this chapter is that this romance with formalism defines a longue durée of queer experiments with textual form that both predate and supersede modernism itself.[6] This essay builds on a set of related trends in literary criticism: (1) the renewed attention to form and formalism, (2) especially with regard to literature written from the margins—in contrast to the focus on content that usually attends writers of color.[7] And (3), redefining "queer" and queerness as always-already intersectional constructs, reflecting lived realities of racialized sex-gender systems and histories of settler colonialism and neocolonialism.

Decadent Aestheticism and the Harlem Renaissance

The end of Wallace Thurman's *Infants of the Spring* emblematizes this literary genealogy as it intersects with queer lived reality. The novel, a roman à clef about the Younger Negro Artists of *Fire!!* who all lived and worked in the same Harlem "manor," stars the fictional avatar of Nugent, Paul Arbian (the name is an anagram: "Arbian" stands for "R.B.N.," or Nugent's initials). The ending of Thurman's satirical novel is a caustic commentary on the unfulfilled promise of the Renaissance. This unfulfilled promise is encapsulated in the title and echoed in the novel's epigraph. Both are drawn from Laertes' speech to Ophelia, in which he warns her against requiting Hamlet's advances, lest she lose her virginity before marriage and thus ruin her reputation: "The canker galls the infants of the spring / Too oft before their buttons be disclosed." (In a rather vulgar metaphor, the "canker" is a worm, phallic symbol for ruining Ophelia's "budding" sexuality.) In Thurman's climactic ending, Paul Arbian is found dead in a Village apartment, signifying the queer and bohemian excesses he is known for throughout the novel. Paul is openly gay: the novel opens with sarcastic comments on his wall display of "erotic drawings," described as "obscene" for being "nothing but highly colored phalli."[8] (More explicitly, Paul parades around with one of his male conquests at a rent party.) His not being in Harlem is emblematic of how far Paul has strayed from the promise of the Renaissance as an authentic Black arts movement. Indeed, Adrienne Brown summarizes Paul's alienation as allegorized in the ending as follows: "Thurman's description of his narrator's sensational experience of melting into a skyscraper marks his alienation from both physical masses and black collectives demanding his absorption."[9] Brown's synopsis encapsulates the double alienation of Arbian—from the queer village in which he commits suicide, and from the Harlem community from which he had fled. The main protagonist, Raymond, Thurman's stand-in, witnesses the scene in the free-indirect style:

> No one had been prepared for the gruesome yet fascinating spectacle which met their eyes.
>
> Paul had evidently come home before the end of the party. On arriving, he had locked himself in the bathroom, donned a crimson mandarin robe, wrapped his head in a batik scarf of his own designing, hung a group of his *spirit portraits* on the dingy calcimined wall, and carpeted the floor with sheets of paper detached from the notebook in which he had been writing his novel. He had then, it seemed, placed scented joss-sticks in the four corners of the room, lit them, climbed into the bathtub, turned on the water, then slashed his wrists with a highly ornamented Chinese dirk. When they found him, the bathtub had overflowed, and *Paul lay crumpled at the bottom, a colorful, inanimate corpse* in a crimson streaked tub.

> What delightful publicity to precede the posthumous publication of his novel, *which novel, however, had been rendered illegible* when the overflow of water had inundated the floor, and soaked the sheets strewn over its surface. *Paul had not foreseen the possible inundation, nor had he taken into consideration the impermanency of penciled transcriptions*.
>
> Artie Fletcher had salvaged as many of the sheets as possible. He handed the sodden mass to Raymond. *Ironically enough, only the title sheet and the dedication page were completely legible*. The book was entitled:
>
> Wu Sing: The Geisha Man
> It had been dedicated:
>
> To
> *Huysmans' Des Esseintes* and *Oscar Wilde's Oscar Wilde*
> *Ecstatic Spirits with whom I Cohabit*
> And *whose golden spores of decadent pollen*
> *I shall broadcast and fertilize*
> It is written
> Paul Arbian.[10]

This tableau is a tour de force. Ending his novel in this frozen scene of deluge, Thurman mobilizes—or rather immobilizes—the figure of Paul Arbian, stand-in for Nugent, as a cautionary tale of the "Younger Negro Artist."[11] Of course, Nugent outlived Thurman by more than five decades. But Arbian isn't Nugent; he is an avatar for Thurman's thesis about the New Negro artist in the (queer) bohemian mold, and Nugent was the poster child (then as now) for his sexually liberated persona. (As seen in "Smoke, Lilies and Jade," famously about loving two people, one a man, the other a woman.) Nugent's own account of his own racial and sexual escapades, and that of his avant-garde coterie, including Thurman, *Gentleman Jigger*, was published posthumously in 2008; but even so, Thurman's novel is an ideological satirical instrument. Nugent's unfinished novel lacks the seriousness of Thurman's philosophical and social critique in *Infants*, especially in this indelible ending.

Indelible indeed, and ironically so, since, given the "inundation," the pages of Paul Arbian's novel "had been rendered illegible." Thurman's narrator, focalizing Raymond, describes the lack of foresight in Paul's suicide. The "delightful publicity" Paul Arbian had sought to achieve with his highly aestheticized suicidal gesture, indicative in the elaborately orchestrated mise en scène, proved impossible to attain. What fame comes from an illegible work of art? Far from the permanency of gesture that self-imposed death implies, Paul Arbian's is defined by its impermanence. No aesthetic monument of Paul's creation will outlast him, not least the novel he had intended to launch

with his own dispatch. The tableau is thus the visualization of a double tragedy: the infant of the spring has been "blasted" "in the morn and liquid dew of youth." But the intention is as important as the outcome, given Paul Arbian's careful orchestration of his fatal vision. The epigraph to his now-illegible novel invokes two "Ecstatic Spirits with whom I Cohabit / And whose golden spores of decadent pollen / I shall broadcast and fertilize." And these two spirits are "Huysmans' Des Esseintes and Oscar Wilde's Oscar Wilde." Huysmans being the father of French decadence, and Wilde the poster child—not unlike Nugent himself—for a certain flamboyant aestheticism coded as the epitome of queer self-fashioning. Of course, Des Esseintes and not Huysmans is the spirit with whom Paul "cohabits": the fictional antihero of *A Rebours* (*Against Nature*), Des Esseintes is an aristocratic aesthete whose extremity of sensation-seeking is legendary; he also has a thinly veiled episode with a young man, coded as sexual. The location of *Against Nature* in the canon of queer modernism is not in doubt. But Paul invokes "Oscar Wilde's Oscar Wilde" as well. The implication being that, like Huysmans's decadent creation in Des Esseintes, Oscar Wilde's (public) persona was a grander than life self-creation, made even more public and queerly significant given his trial for "gross indecency" and his imprisonment. Oscar Wilde is the emblematic precursor for Paul's fatal vision; he is the inspiration for this tableau, the tragic realization of "Paul Arbian's Paul Arbian." And, as with Wilde's suit against the Marquess of Queensberry for accusing him of "posing as a sodomite," Paul's doom is tragically avoidable and self-inflicted. Thurman aligns Paul Arbian's persona with that of Wilde in this eternal moment, the climax of the stunted vision of the New Negro artist during the Renaissance.

But the cautionary tale is stratified. One cautionary tale regards the hypervisibility of their queerness as self-aestheticized public spectacles. In both cases, Paul's and Wilde's, the outcome is the truncation of great aesthetic promise. (Wilde's imprisonment ended his dazzling playwrighting career, and he wrote little during or after it.) Racial difference, however, is yet another dimension of premature decease for the modernist queer artist. Thurman's cautionary tale about the "Paul Arbians" of the Renaissance—and this figure stands not only for Nugent, but for Thurman himself—indicts the invocation of figures like Wilde and Huysmans as partly the problem with, the reason for, New Negro writers' premature "blastment" "before their buds be disclosed." Indeed, to go back to the biographical, Thurman died but two years after the publication of *Infants*, due to severe alcoholism: Thurman's death, too, was self-inflicted and avoidable. Wallace Thurman's Paul Arbian, then, stands for the coding of the tableau as a self-portrait. Arbian then becomes the Renaissance queer writer whose choice of theme and whose fatal vision means his end while still an "infant," before he can produce mature flowers of evil.

Yet, the fault in this scenario is not simply Paul Arbian's, nor, by extension, Bruce Nugent's, nor Wallace Thurman's (nor Oscar Wilde's). The tragic outcome of Paul Arbian's artistic vision, embodied in his self-aggrandized aesthetic persona, is also due to a toxic American cultural scene and anti-Black society, with its "foundation … composed of crumbling stone." And here is where the final passage in the novel is made manifest:

> Beneath this inscription, he [Paul] had drawn a distorted, inky black skyscraper, modeled after Niggeratti Manor, and on which were focused an array of blindingly white beams of light. The foundation of this building was composed of crumbling stone. At first glance it could be ascertained that the skyscraper would soon crumple and fall, leaving the dominating white lights in full possession of the sky.[12]

Like Paul Arbian's body, which "lay crumpled at the bottom" of the tub, "a colorful inanimate corpse," the skyscraper that stands for their Harlem "manor" also will "soon crumple and fall."[13] Many critics have rightly read the "dominating white lights" as racial symbols of the literary publicity machine.[14] This publicity, the first time that African American artists and writers were granted real commercial opportunity, was due to the concerted efforts of James Weldon Johnson, Alain Locke, W. E. B. Du Bois, and other major figures of the New Negro establishment. These figures sought, through their patronage and that of white "Negrotarians," to enact the aesthetic program now known as the Harlem Renaissance. But Thurman's novel is a scathing cautionary tale about the drawbacks of receiving such notoriety before these "buds be disclosed": that is to say, before the artists had matured. Thurman, like his peers Hurston and Hughes, also flagged the ambiguous influence of even the most well-meaning white patrons (such as Carl Van Vechten), calling them "Negrotarians." The white patronage system's luminous attention was short-lived, and their influence is symbolized by the sinister "white lights" placed in front of Younger Negro artists. The ending of *Infants* emphasizes that these white lights would outlast the artists themselves, and take "full possession of the sky" upon their death. The allure of these lights proved fatal, even: in Thurman's view, the lure of publicity and immortality, no less than the decadent example of Wilde, caused hyper-self-consciousness among these younger writers. They were valued more as avatars for the program of "civil rights by copyright," in Levering Lewis's words, than for their own authentic, individual visions.[15] Despite the brief flash of publicity, the attention paid to Black writers would lapse, and this is exactly what happened. Thurman foresees the instability and impermanence of a social and aesthetic monument—the so-called Manor, metonym for the Renaissance idea as a whole—built on the foundations of white patronage and propagandistic expectations (uplifting or respectable stories only, please). Queerness

was not in the brief for the Renaissance, and this narrow view of Black artistic life in the modern city was also a reason that the whole thing would "crumple and fall." Thurman himself crumpled and fell.

What of the other dimension of the racial allegory projected in the final *Infants* tableau? Is Thurman indicating the genealogical impossibility of being a Black Oscar Wilde, a white Paul Arbian / Bruce Nugent / Wallace Thurman? Is he insisting on the mutual exclusion of "Euro-" and "Afro-"? Is his authorial eye blaming Paul Arbian for his invocation of these "Ecstatic Spirits" with whom he "cohabited," "whose golden spores of decadent pollen" he had sought to "broadcast and fertilize"? Is Paul Arbian's intersectional, cross-racial, transnational identification with these decadent "spirits" of queer modernism to blame for his self-fashioned suicide and its sterile issue, an illegible novel? (Perhaps there is a promise in unfulfilled potential: a queer promise, proving the queer art of failure?)[16] Ought he, like Nugent (and Thurman) himself, have seized on Black American "spirits" with whom to "cohabit" instead? The quick answer is, their spirits already "cohabited"; Thurman and Nugent shared a room in this same Manor. And they, not unlike Hughes, Countee Cullen, Harold Jackman, and Alain Locke, were relatively free to share in their Black and mixed-race queer world-making, in letters, salons, and endless parties, as long as it was discreet in the public eye. (Locke famously tried to seduce Hughes, to no avail.) Their queerness was always impurely mixed racially, but racially mixed insofar as it was queer. If the fatal vision of Arbian is also Thurman's, it also owes something to their shared cross-genealogy with Wilde and "Huysmans' Des Esseintes," no less than to their horizontal genealogies with Hughes, Hurston, Gwendolyn Bennett, and other younger artists. But the metaphor is changed from the "buds" of *Hamlet*'s Ophelia, to the "decadent pollen" Paul Arbian sought to "broadcast and fertilize." As the narrator flatly states, "Paul had not foreseen the possible inundation, nor had he taken into consideration the impermanency of penciled transcriptions." The inundation, like the "dominating white lights," is a symbol of excess that turns grimly fatal. But the "impermanency of penciled transcriptions" is what interests me, in tying this death scene to the genealogy it itself invokes as a reason for the aesthetic brilliance and ironic futility of the scene. The "impermanency of penciled transcriptions" bespeaks the precarious nature of the aesthetic project of Paul Arbian—and his real-life authors, Nugent and Thurman, a co-creation akin to queer procreation. (Nugent famously accused Thurman of stealing his words and ideas, not to mention his persona, in this novel.) The irony inherent in the scene, at first glance, inheres in Paul's poor planning: "Paul had not foreseen." What he had not foreseen is how the queerness of his attachments almost guaranteed their impermanency, their instability, because of their queerness. Paul Arbian's faith in a relatively liberated, openly queer, decadent aestheticism, in the "spirits" of Wilde and Des Esseintes, blinds him to the

tragic destiny of Wilde, the arid fictionality of Des Esseintes. Wilde's pitiless sentence was two years' hard labor in Reading Gaol. It is Paul's "spiritual" faith in queer aestheticism, his bold and public invocation of this queer literary genealogy, personified in the public image of Wilde, that does him in; queer re-creation is sterile, its "blastment … imminent." Or is it?

And here the further irony of the ending appears. Paul Arbian's novel is illegible; *Infants of the Spring* is quite legible, thank you. Its message quite clear. As a satirical salvo against the public excess of the "Harlem vogue," which in Thurman's words yielded little of aesthetic import or literary merit, *Infants* is the novel of an enfant terrible. The uncanny doubling of Nugent and Arbian mirrors the uncanny doubling of Nugent and Thurman. Yet, Thurman had not foreseen that Nugent, for all his bohemian flamboyance and femme-queer visibility, would outlive him. One in life, and another in art: their shared same-sex destiny could not be more fitting for an unwitting disciple of Oscar Wilde—and Oscar's *Dorian Gray*. If Paul Arbian is a Dorian Gray figure—or rather, *Infants of the Spring* reimagines the "spirit" of Wilde in his most famous novel, and re-creates it in Thurman's—then the genealogy is further enmeshed, further dramatized *and immortalized*, rather than simply satirized. Immortalized in an image of decadent queer suicide, one that follows on Wilde's Dorian Gray as well as Willa Cather's Paul in "Paul's Case," to name just two. This vision of queerness, this queer vision, as fatal immortality is the opposite of the reproductive futurity that Lee Edelman argues is the image of society's self-renewal, its continued worldmaking. Another vision of futurity, a queer one, no less than a queer Black vision, that remains in the impermanency of "penciled transcriptions." The printer's ink of Thurman's queerest novel is as durable, as futural, as the penciled transcriptions of his character's final words are impermanent, illegible. The love child of Thurman and Nugent, Paul Arbian—the reigning "spirit" of *Infants of the Spring*—is another queer icon in the literary genealogy that both Thurman and Nugent sought to "cohabit," "broadcast," and "fertilize." They did it the way they knew how: by having literary children together. And, just as queer modernists embrace Dorian Gray and Oscar Wilde's public "persona," no less than that of John (Radclyffe) Hall or Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf, so should we rethink the pantheon of Nugent's and Thurman's wondrous queer creations.

And those creations may be most wondrous at the level of queer formalism, or the queer longing for form. For what is the hyper-aestheticized suicide of Paul Arbian but an instance of decadent aestheticism: "What delightful publicity to precede the posthumous publication of his novel"?[17] An instance that "invokes" those "spirits" in a synchronous gesture of queer world-making and self-unmaking, a blaze of decadent glory. One formal idiom that ties Paul Arbian to his real-life inspiration, Richard Bruce Nugent, no less than those decadent icons of queer world-making and self-unmaking like

"Oscar Wilde's Oscar Wilde," is Camp. And Nugent's campy persona was legendary; so is Paul Arbian's. Thurman's seriousness in crafting *Infants of the Spring*—in contrast to Nugent's own *Gentleman Jigger*—is in tying this idiom to the other cultural dimensions and pressures of the "Black Mecca," as he lived and experienced it, as a Younger Negro Artist. It is in the aesthetic amalgam of *Infants*, moving past but centrally lighting the iconicity of Paul Arbian, that Thurman sought to articulate a queer Black modernism at the center of Harlem modernity. It is for this reason that the racial discourse in the novel seems to fall flat; it seems like a chore for Thurman's Raymond to deal with anti-Black American culture, whereas his outlaw desire is to be openly in love with his white lover. As Thomas Wirth writes, in *Infants of the Spring*,

> Thurman's biographical character, Raymond, forms an intense, interracial friendship with Stephen Jorgensen, the fictional counterpart to Thurman's white lover, Harold Jan Stefansson, but the sexual aspect of the relationship is carefully disguised, with only the subtlest hints of an erotic attraction—"something … too preposterous and complex to be recognized or considered."[18]

My point in this chapter is that this "something" is more than simply "same-sex desire": it is a literary genealogy, perpetuated through the "penciled transcriptions" of queer figures and formal mirrorings of these figures. And the re-transcriptions of said queer figures and formal preoccupations in later and earlier queer imaginative writings.

Flowers of Evil: "Smoke, Lilies and Jade" and *Looking For Langston*

Just as Thurman and Nugent invoked spirits of transatlantic queer modernisms, Isaac Julien crossed the Black Atlantic to craft an imaginative meditation on the Harlem Renaissance in *Looking for Langston* (1989), invoking the queer Black American spirits with whom he cohabits. The Langston Hughes estate blocked Julien's intention to quote Hughes's poetry in the film, so he did the next best thing: a male British voice recites passages from Nugent's "Smoke, Lilies and Jade." In one sense, the queer formalism as modernist form inheres in Nugent's stream-of-consciousness representation of Alex, a liberated, queer Black character. Alex's dilemma is that he is a penniless artist, but doesn't mind that; he negates the obligations of income, productivity, and family support that are one hallmark of New Negro respectable masculinity. But Alex's real dilemma is not about being bourgeois enough to compete with his younger brothers in his mother's eyes; it is about being able to love more than one person at the same time. Famously, the "novel"—never finished—describes Alex's love affair with Beauty, or Adrian, a handsome Spaniard. But Alex is already dating Melva, and he doesn't wish to relinquish

one lover for another. Curiously, Julien's film elides Melva, and leaves only the same-sex attraction between Beauty and Alex. The larger point, however, is how Julien, out of necessity perhaps, draws on Nugent's proudly liberated Black queer narrative to re-animate a genealogy of Renaissance writers and thinkers, artists and lovers, friends and frenemies. While the Hughes legacy remains contested, other similarly positioned literary Harlemites like Nugent and Thurman exposed the queer worlds they "cohabited." In this sense, the sketch of queer formalism I've written is instantiated through these writers' deployment of recognizably queer figures and languages: in the decadent avatars and aesthetic idioms of queer modernism and modernity, from decadent aestheticism, to Wilde and Huysmans, to, in Nugent's story, a one-night stand between men that turns into a love affair. Perhaps most fundamentally, the form that all of these queer modernist (and post-modernist) creators invoke and co-habit is the form of living with and as queers themselves: Thurman and Nugent sharing a room, if not a bed; Countee Cullen and Harold Jackman as lifelong companions, if not lovers; Isaac Julien's Langston and Alex, no less than Baldwin, as the spirits his film invokes, with whom his spirit cohabits.

These Black queer writers and narratives articulate in various modes and genres of modernist form the impetus of queer formalism: to re-create the world as queer through queer form. Those queer forms sometimes mimic those that all the world knows, such as the couple or the coterie; but at times, they also invoke, sharply, the essences of queers transmuted into aesthetic form. Just as Thurman re-creates Nugent as Paul Arbian; and just as Richard Bruce Nugent created Richard Bruce Nugent. And, to cite another dear example, just as Christopher William Bradshaw Isherwood created "Christopher Isherwood" and "William Bradshaw," and even the fictional persona of the author behind the autofictional eponyms, "Christopher Isherwood's Christopher Isherwood." Perhaps Paul Arbian is a queer precursor to *Berlin Stories*. In any case, both queer writers, and their fictional personas, populate the aesthetic imagination of modernist and contemporary queers alike in the paradoxically indelible "penciled transcriptions" they leave in their wake.

I leave it to others to trace the filaments of queer modernism beyond this narrow web (such as Nella Larsen's queer afterlife after the Renaissance, when she was part of the H.D./Bryher circle, in the 1930s). Other Black sapphic modernists, including Black blues musicians, are only now being repositioned as queer; but they were that from the get-go. Are all queer writers thus one grand "family"? If so, then it's a family that extends generations; that breaks the linearity of genealogies while insisting on a broader genealogy, though one traced in pencil, not in the ink of heteronormative futurity. To go back to the future: if the claim here is "Shakespeare was gay," I'm only making an embarrassing return to the oldest impulse of "gay and lesbian studies": the reclamation of the dead as avatars of queer lives lived, which survive only in art, in writing, in the aesthetic imagination, and in the ever-shifting

desires for that queer past, those queer spirits with whom to cohabit. As Hilton Als puts it in his portrait of Dorothy Dean in *The Women*, queer childhood is a solitary one; the only way to become socially queer, romantically queer, "community queer," is through these insubstantial queer forms: Sapphic salons, Harlem rent parties, 1920s speakeasies; but also, Columbia Dances (oh, the 1990s!), Community Centers; Dorian Grays, Paul Arbians, Orlandos. As Sedgwick memorably argues in *Epistemology of the Closet*, not only have there been a gay Shakespeare, Michelangelo, and Plato; but their names *were* Shakespeare, Michelangelo, and Plato. And perhaps that is both the simplest and most profound sense in which queers long for form, in which queers are defined by our seeking of form in the absence of dictated and circumscribed forms, or their sharp absence (as in marriage, until recently). To fill those forms with the content of queer selfhood, it takes an entire and ever-growing diachrony and synchrony of formal gestures and precursors. Modernist form is, was, one instantiation; but today there are many others, such as the rise in LGBT fan fiction: Finn and Poe in the *Star Wars* sequel trilogy. If there is one thing that defines queers, it's the desire to make things, people, objects, experiences, spaces, queer. And that is as fundamental a definition as is possible, even including biological reproduction. Queers, in this sense, are destined, tragically or not, to live within the aesthetic, and the aesthetic's wide-ranging domains: domains as ephemeral and durable as social forms, like the couple or the throuple, the House of Extravaganza or *Heather Has Two Mommies*. We remind the world that the world is made of forms. In sum, as Caroline Levine argues about literary critics, I argue about queers under the social and historical pressure of human existence: we grab and adapt forms, we become formalists, and we propagate aesthetically, rather than reproductively. (Though we do that too, now, but only as an addendum to our traceable formalist histories and progenies.)

Notes

1 A notable recent exception is Jeremy Braddock's "Race: Tradition and Archive in the Harlem Renaissance," which lines up Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) with James Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912). Braddock, "Race," 91.

2 A notable exception is Langston Hughes, whose estate legally prohibited Isaac Julien's landmark film *Looking for Langston* (1989). For more on the battle Julien fought with the Hughes estate, see Hemphill, "Looking for Langston: An Interview with Isaac Julien."

3 Nugent's most famous role was in the Broadway production of DuBose and Dorothy Heyward's *Porgy*, the basis for Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*. Wirth, introduction, 15. For more on Thurman's bohemianism and dandyism in the Renaissance, see Ganter, "Decadence, Sexuality, and the Bohemian Vision of Wallace Thurman," and Glick, "Harlem's Queer Dandy." For more on Nugent, see Wirth's introduction to *Gay Rebel of the Harlem Renaissance*.

4 This double exclusion, or double exile, in the context of intersectional queer modernists, is the theme of my monograph, *Misfit Modernism*. I use the term "rhizome" to indicate a non-hierarchical, "horizontal" or multi-lateral figure for queer genealogy, which the arboreal metaphor precludes. For more on the rhizomatic organization of knowledge, see Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*. As mentioned, the literariness of queer tradition entails mutual influences not simply vertically, across time, but also horizontally, in the same era. (This is a feature of literary influence shared by more than just queers; but of course queers are largely restricted to the aesthetic and cultural dimension in propagating ourselves into history.)
5 For more on situational and other "aberrant" forms of queerness beyond homosexuality, see Kahan, *The Book of Minor Perverts*.
6 González, "Queer Formalism as 'Queer Form.'"
7 For more on the rise of critical formalism, see the *PMLA* special issue on Caroline Levine's *Forms*, including Levine's "Three Unresolved Debates," *PMLA* 132, no. 5 (2017): 1239–43; for more on the lack of attention to form in criticism on writers of color and belonging to other marginalized groups, see Amin, Musser, and Pérez, "Queer Form."
8 Thurman, *Infants of the Spring*, 11–12.
9 Brown, *The Black Skyscraper*, loc. 456.
10 Thurman, *Infants of the Spring*, 282–4, emphasis added.
11 The watery destruction of Paul's work echoes the fiery immolation of the journal *Fire!!*, which never saw a second issue. But a facsimile of the premier issue was reprinted in 1982, with an insert documenting the journal's production and circulation and a memoir by Nugent. My thanks to Melanie Micir for this insight.
12 Thurman, *Infants of the Spring*, 284.
13 Thurman, *Infants of the Spring*, 283.
14 See, for instance, Herring, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Manor."
15 Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue*, xxiii.
16 My thanks to my editor for this insight. See also Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*.
17 Thurman, *Infants of the Spring*, 283.
18 Wirth is quoting David Blackmore's groundbreaking article on the queer subtext of Ray's and Stephen's deep friendship. See Blackmore, "'Something … Too Preposterous and Complex to Be Recognized or Considered.'"

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7

THE LYRIC OF QUEER MODERNISMS

Julia Bloch

In a 1917 poem called "Pygmalion," the modernist writer H.D. depicts a mythic sculptor whose crisis of identity manifests in material descriptions of the art object. The poem zeroes in on those materials: the art object's flint, dust, light, plinth. In Ovid's telling, Pygmalion falls in love with the sculpture he's created, inciting the intersubjective complications of a sculptor's work coming to life. But H.D.'s poem foregrounds the sculptor's own contested subjectivity, beginning with the poem's opening lines: "Shall I let myself be caught / in my own light? / shall I let myself be broken / in my own heat?"[1] Affective attachment to the art object spurs the sculptor to endless self-scrutiny:

> Which am I,
> the stone or the power
> that lifts the rock from this earth?
> am I the master of this fire,
> is this fire my own strength?
>
> am I master of this
> swirl upon swirl of light?
> have I made it as in old times
> I made the gods from the rock?
>
> have I made this fire from myself?
> or is this arrogance?
> is this fire a god
> that seeks me in the dark?[2]

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The sculptor dwells on the materiality of the statue's flesh, staying its inanimacy and instead questioning their own materiality as a crisis of self: "I made image upon image for my use, / I made image upon image, for the grace / of Pallas was my flint," they lament: "fire has shaken my hand, / my strivings are dust" (49). The distinction between artist and art object blurs, and the poem questions not only the materiality of its speaker but the very materials of art itself: fire, rock, marble, light. This dual crisis of subjectivity and artmaking leads the poem, finally, to a metaphysical quandary: "am I the god? / or does this fire carve me / for its use?" (50). The poem performs a central critique of the materiality of aesthetic production, but its appropriation of the myth of Pygmalion also raises a host of other, related issues around samesex desire, subjectivity, and identity.[3] The poem's first-person address constellates these conceptual vectors around a lyric countermeasure to the enthralled classicism which H.D. and other modernist poets embraced. That lyric countermeasure invites a larger reading of queer modernism.

A discussion of queer modernist lyric could begin with the sensual lesbian verses of Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons* or with the cruising gay vectors of Hart Crane's *The Bridge* or even with the tender laments of Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art." But this discussion begins with H.D.'s mythically inflected persona poem about a statue, and in doing so it places three terms at the center of its inquiry. These three terms—materiality, the subject, and gender—undo some of the assumptions that attend the word "lyric." Lyric studies frequently centers the question of the individual and the social: Adorno insists, in a well-known formulation, that the lyric poem represents not "the poet as a private person" but rather "a philosophical sundial telling the time of history."[4] Poems such as H.D.'s complicate lyric studies' preoccupation with the subject by recalibrating critical focus to the notion of making. "Pygmalion" dramatizes the investments modernist poetry, especially, makes in the materiality of language itself: its tendency to foreground the practice of *poiesis* rather than the supposed consciousness, presence, or expressive qualities of its speaker. H.D.'s poem takes on added depth by enacting an explicit inquiry into the subject's making in the poem's own structures.

By focusing on making, H.D.'s mythopoeisis spurs an examination of how queer lyric animates notions about identity, presence, and the subject. Beginning with a crisis of subjectivity—"for I was a man and they my work; // and now what is it that has come to pass?" (49)—the poem invokes a tension between queer theory's investments in the textures of the self and modernism's affinity for textual opacities that efface subjective presence. Modernist poetry's principles of collage, fragmentation, intertextuality, polyvocality, and linguistic innovation foreground poeisis rather than expression—but these innovations, even as they refuse to express a voice, a self, or a subject, still reveal something about the relationship between language and the self. Central to that relationship are the histories of gender and sexuality

sedimented in theories and practices of lyric. To begin this discussion with H.D.'s poem, then, suggests that a study of queer modernist lyric necessarily intervenes into and complicates modernism's own putative antilyricism—an antilyricism fundamentally grounded in the opacities and fragments of modernist form yet complicated by antilyricism's rejections of feminine tropes and subjectivities. In its turn from cultural narrative to singular remembrance, a form of expression driven by sense-memory, "Pygmalion" enacts the expressive turn that is typically recognized as something called lyric at the same time that it calls attention to the conflation of the female subject with expression.[5] A discussion of the queer lyric of modernism, then, also has to be taken up alongside feminist interventions into the modernist subject.

A turn in recent decades toward "new lyric studies" has signaled both a return to genre critique in literary studies and a renewal of debates over identity and the literary. Lyric studies, the field that seeks to complicate essentialist and exceptionalist theories of the lyric self and instead to theorize and historicize lyric as a reading practice, has recalibrated the way scholars understand the relationship between materiality, the subject, and gender in poetry. Lyric studies' major contribution has been to reveal lyric not as a transhistorical genre of private expression but, rather, as a practice of reading. That practice of reading equates the private speaker with the transcendent one, what Virginia Jackson describes as "the voice that speaks to no one and therefore to all of us."[6] As Walt Hunter has shown, the anglophone discourse of lyric studies has emerged alongside a long-standing European discourse on lyric as a matter of collective subjectivity, a discourse that pairs theories of poetry with theories of the ethical and sociopolitical self.[7] In its efforts more rigorously to historicize poetic genre, the new lyric studies could also be said to parallel the temporal and spatial expansion that characterizes the "new modernist studies" that emerges around the same time, in that both scholarly developments recalibrate literary studies' relationship to periodization.[8] However, as Kamran Javadizadeh has pointed out, lyric studies also has a tendency to reinscribe a universalizing whiteness to the lyric subject even as it punctures lyric's own claims to unmediated identity.[9] And, in part because its archive tends toward the nineteenth century, lyric studies has had little to say about reading practices in or the subject of modernism, despite the vast numbers of modernist poets who refuse, draw on, or outright embrace lyric as a mode, structure, or concept, and despite work by queer modernists whose experiments with how language can shape the subject offer interpretive arguments about what lyric is and what it does.[10]

The word "lyric" can attach to a wide range of nineteenth- and twentieth-century queer poetry, from the expressive tonalities of queer protomodernism—Emily Dickinson's hermetic lyrics, Walt Whitman's syncretic ones—to the layered subjectivities of high and postwar late modernism—H.D.'s lyricized feminist epics, Stein's wry lesbian repetitions, Hart Crane's verses of the

cruising straphanger—to postwar and contemporary queer poetry that tests the limits of language to shape the subject—Jack Spicer's effusive laments, Robert Duncan's polysemous struggle to confront the real, Adrienne Rich's feminist anti-imperialism, Erín Moure's poetry of bodies as "lived apparatuses,"[11] Syd Zolf's anticolonial poethics. Lyric across works such as these is a matter of craft, as in H.D.'s deliberation on the physicality of the maker and the stone materials of art. Lyric is also a matter of expression: lament, affection, interrogation. The "also" between these two assertions—one an assertion about poesis, the other an assertion about subjective presence—is a kind of slippage between different ways of reading (and writing) a poem. That slippage brings together the discourse of aesthetic form with the discourse of the subject—and with the subject's variable relationships to identificatory structures like race and gender. Considered in the context of queer modernisms, the slippage between making and the subject is not a slippage at all. As H.D. writes in "The Wise Sappho," "Sappho for us has become a name, an abstraction as well as a pseudonym for poignant human feeling, she is indeed rocks set in a blue sea"; as Stein writes in "A Little Called Pauline," "A little called anything shows shudders"; as Robert Duncan writes in *Bending the Bow*, "Forbidden intensities convert the personal."[12]

If H.D.'s queer lyric breaks down poetic making into its constituent materials, Stein's queer lyric performs a different kind of dismantling of language, unmooring words from their referents in order to restage the intimacies between them. The exuberant textual materiality of works across her enormous corpus, which includes more or less explicitly queer works such as *Q.E.D.* and *Tender Buttons*, feeds Stein's ongoing inquiry into language, but it is in *Lifting Belly*, written between 1915 and 1917, that Stein seems especially interested in the erotics of the queer lyric subject in language that is by turns playful, inquisitive, and thrillingly slant in its experiments with how to make language as precise as possible. *Tender Buttons* is often cited as Stein's most explicitly lesbian masterpiece as well as a discourse on vision and perspective. But *Lifting Belly* also forms an inquiry into lesbian erotics set against the catastrophic disruptions of World War I. The poem's opening lines dash the routines of the daily household against the dynamics between lovers:

> I have been heavy and had much selecting. I saw a star which was low. It was so low it twinkled. Breath was in it. Little pieces are stupid.
>
> I want to tell about fire. Fire is that which we have when we have olive. Olive is a wood. We like linen. Linen is ordered. We are going to order linen.
>
> All belly belly well.
>
> Bed of coals made out of wood.
>
> I think this one may be an expression. We can understand heating and burning composition. Heating with wood.

> Sometimes we readily decide upon wind we decide that there will be stars and perhaps thunder and perhaps rain and perhaps no moon. Sometimes we decide that there will be a storm and rain. Sometimes we look at the boats.[13]

Stein's prose paragraphs jam the imperatives of narrative against ellipsis, parataxis, and syntactical irreverence, the "selecting" of the first line indicating both the picking through of a household's linens and coals and wood and the sorting out of the poem's own lines, diction, and breaks. "I think this one may be an expression"—as if the speaker were picking out a piece of coal and contemplating its representative function as well as its metaphoric one—enacts and queries the expressive turn that is recognized as something called lyric. The songlike short line "All belly belly well" inaugurates a refrain that will formally dominate the remainder of Stein's fifty-page poem. *Lifting Belly* goes on to swerve further from the temporal demands of prose, breaking into lines that dwell on sexual desire while also allowing the poem to decline climactic, even orgasmic, resolution:

> Lifting belly is delightful.
> Lifting belly is so high.
> To-day.
> Yes to-day.
> Do you think that said yesterday.
> Yes to-day.
> Don't be silly.
> In that we see that we can please me.
> I don't see how you can write on the wall about roses.
> Lifting belly a terminus.
> What is there to please me.
> Alright.
> A pocket.
> Lifting belly is good.
> Rest.
> Arrest.[14]

The iambic rhythms of a line like "In that we see that we can please me" suggest the collation of the lovers' breath as well as the paired project of sexual pleasure: not an I pleasing the you, but a we pleasing the I and, by implication, a we pleasing you the reader. The abounding sound of Stein's longer lines glances off the staccato impact of short vibrational ones, the wondering in "I don't see how you can write on the wall about roses" then breaking into fragments: a vaginal "pocket," a "rest" that is both pause and remainder.

The excerpt from *Lifting Belly* included here happens to end on the word "arrest," but it is, after all, just an excerpt: Stein's lines go on and on. *Tender Buttons* takes on the structure of lyric address only to speak back to its assumptions by torquing notions of intimacy and subjectivity by undoing the address, questioning the representational function of words, and turning away from assumed relationships between narrative temporality and sexual desire. The effort to enact language's difficulty in representing the world may be a paradigmatically modernist one, but the difficulty in Stein enacts also the kind of openness that Lyn Hejinian describes as a "sensuous involvement with the materials of language," a sensuousness that pairs with queerness's capacity to unlock narrow definitions of desire.[15]

Desire is unlocked, too, in another modernist poetic sequence whose lyric form enacts the halting subjective fragmenting of mass transit. In "The Tunnel" section of *The Bridge*, which he began writing in 1926, Hart Crane crosses the anonymity of faces riding the New York City subway with the flowing motions of the East River:

> And so of cities you bespeak
> subways, rivered under streets
> and rivers … In the car
> the overtone of motion
> underground, the monotone
> of motion is the sound
> of other faces, also underground—[16]

It is not difficult to conceive of the subway poem as depicting an urbanized, modernized version of hell, and epic descent typically invokes eschatological themes of the end of history. But in its apostrophic address, Crane's poem offers a lyric countermeasure to this teleology. Crane's lines enact the movement of the subway by contrasting the overtone of its motion with the monotone of its inhabitants, the din of chatter subsuming the melody rung by the subway's momentum. The synaesthesic slide enacted by these descriptions of movement and sound, as well as the citing of the "sound / of other faces," as if a visage held speech, gives rise to imagined conversation, allusive encounters, projective intimacy—what several critics have pointed out as the hallmarks of gay cruising. "The Tunnel" participates in a field of modernist poetic encounters with the subway that treat it as a site of contrasts: between fractured community and cohesive systems; between intimate public spaces and anonymous urban masses; between present modernity and a haunted past (a famous passage in "The Tunnel" asks, "Whose head is swinging from the swollen strap?"[17]). Crane's lyric dwells in the gaps between those contrasting terms with a cruising poetic subject whose expressions of desire and intimacy find their fullness in suggestive possibility:

> The phonographs of hades in the brain
> Are tunnels that re-wind themselves, and love
> a burnt match skating in a urinal—
> Somewhere above Fourteenth TAKE THE EXPRESS
> To brush some new presentiment of pain—[18]

Modernist poems of underground transit frequently figure the body as an object exchanged between past and present, an exchange determined by forces of appropriation and exclusion (consider Ezra Pound's orientalist "In a Station of the Metro," or Louis Zukofsky's anticapitalist "Mantis"). Crane's queer subway poem upends the romantic cliché of lovers skating on ice via the rather more squalid image of love as a burnt match circling the urinal's drain—but to a queer reader, the urinal reads as site of one of the speaker's imprinted memories of desire and contact. "The Tunnel" employs a poetic line that itself skates back and forth between voices and subjects, foregrounding the constructedness of social encounter in closed spaces.

Much as the new lyric studies creates exciting connections beyond a US-centric or Anglo-centric canon of modernist poetry, tracing connections to those writing in the decades after World War II opens our understanding further of the relationship between lyric and queer poetic speech. Crane's queer poetic subject may dwell in moments of alternating desire and pathos, its instant of love quickly eclipsed by "some new presentiment of pain," but for queer poets writing in the wake of modernism, the poem also becomes an opportunity for ever more heightened investigations of the constructedness of the I. The San Francisco Renaissance poet Jack Spicer ponders the making of the subject in graphic terms in the eighth section of his poem "Graphemics," which appears in his 1965 book *Language*:

> *I* am I—both script i and cursive i. Rolled into one rug, one
> grapheme from whose colors stem, phonemes, morphemes,
> unusual birds. Even—if you put a dot or dash with it :
> syntactic structures.
> In between
> The spaces on a paper the letters grow like palm-trees in a cold wind
> *I* —
> lands of thought within thought within thought. Those cold spaces.
> *I* within I within I etc.
> Flowering, all-one. Ein
> Eichenbach steht einsam. Old
> Senses in new thongs.[19]

Spicer opens with an ornament—a large cursive capital "I"—before diminutizing it: lowercase "i" is only a letter of the alphabet, a mere grapheme

distinct from sound or meaning. And yet in metaphorizing the I "rolled into one rug" or imagining how from it "colors stem," Spicer's poem enacts how the I comes into meaning in its relationship to other parts of speech. The I is itself always already a syntactic structure. Playing further with the German word for "one"—"Ein"—and its rhyme with the English "I," before offering the observation that the solitary I stands lonely ("steht einsam"), Spicer ends on a suggestively libidinal note: "Old / Senses in new thongs." In a poem titled after the units of a writing system, the use of "thong" here linguistically puns both on the combination of vowels and on the queer communicative mode of lisped speech. As John Emil Vincent has argued, lisping can perform an anti-queer epithet, but it can also serve as a poetic technique that reappropriates queer speech and the meanings that unfold in a polyvalent text such as Spicer's.[20] Old senses take shape in new song via the lisped "thongs," and Spicer's line in turn queers both physical senses and the making of syntactical sense.

Poems that foreground matters of making, such as H.D.'s, Stein's, Crane's, and Spicer's, make formal arguments about queer identity, presence, and the subject, revealing how against the putative antilyricism of modernist form, queer lyric countermeasures create exciting opportunities to investigate the relationship between language and the self. A number of other poets writing later in the century align these kinds of examination with the concerns that animate the new modernist studies, particularly investigations into the global processes of colonialism, commodification, and precarity.

For several lesbian feminist Canadian poets writing in the late twentieth and the twenty-first century, the linguistic innovations of French feminism and a trenchant critique of settler colonialism overlay in texts that extend and complicate modernist inquiries into the making of the queer subject. Writing under the influence of 1980s gynocritics such as Nicole Brossard, Daphne Marlatt, Betsy Warland, and Gail Scott, as well as in the wake of modern and contemporary formal innovations across a spectrum of Anglophone and European aesthetics, contemporary poets such as Erín Moure, Syd Zolf, and Dionne Brand engage in poetic investigations of the queer subject in forms that are productively difficult, politically invested, and aesthetically urgent. The intertextuality and translingualism[21] of writers such as these, especially, form an intensive queering of poetic form.

Moure's experiments as a poet and translator working in English, Galician, French, Spanish, Portuñol, and Portuguese have frequently been compared to the syntactical difficulties of Stein. In her 2002 book *O Cidadán*, she writes:

> It is citizenship's *acts* I dream of, acts not constrained or dilated by *nation*, especially as *nation-state* and its 19th c. model of sovereignty. Rather, *acts* as movements or gestures across a differential plane, not tied solely to ideology's (history's) rank function.[22]

Moure's extended investigation into citizenship animates lyric, essayistic, and procedural modes that include a series of lesbian love poems—the "Georgette" sequence that recurs throughout *O Cidadán*—whose sensuality and intimacy reconfigure the book's political inquiry into lyricized lines:

> to core distinguish
> fabric's ceremony
>
> the document of language
> elect
> difficulties without my terrain
>
> subjection's turn (flaw)[23]

Imagining the subjection of the nation-state as a lover turning toward or away from the beloved, Moure's lines trace an arc between queer desire and the desires that animate belonging and exclusion, forming a feminist critique of citizenship as a set of relations and acts rather than naturalized assumptions of belonging that have historically led to atrocities in the name of the nation-state.[24]

Syd Zolf's 2014 book *Janey's Arcadia* engages the history of colonial genocide, centering Indigenous lives as grievable lives and the ongoing crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Zolf, like Moure, employs libidinally subversive poetic techniques in order to puncture narratives of the nation-state, but their poetry takes on a particularized intertextual quality by drawing on two figures whose imagined encounter also queerly undoes narratives of white feminism. As Zolf describes in the book:

> Emily Murphy, a "Famous Five" first-wave feminist (not to mention eugenicist), who successfully fought for certain women to be deemed "persons," also wrote under the pen name of the plucky white-supremacist settler, Janey Canuck. *Janey's Arcadia* seeds a savage, fleshy rendezvous between Janey Canuck and punk pirate Kathy Acker's guerrilla icon Janey Smith. What pops out skewed-wise is Janey Settler-Invader, a fracked-up, mutant (cyborg?) squatter progeny, slouching toward the Red River Colony, 'Britain's One Utopia,' in the company of 'white slave' traders.[25]

Zolf's work demonstrates how a lyric focus on the making of the subject necessarily must reckon with the making of the structures that give rise to modern selfhood. *Janey's Arcadia* crucially aligns lyric's capacity to investigate the self with the critiques of globalization that have come increasingly to characterize studies of modern and contemporary literature—and that literature's capacity both to represent and to speak back to forces of subjectification that might seem otherwise inevitable.

Poetry that foregrounds the making of the self or the subject, particularly poetry that queerly experiments with forms of representation, voice, intertextuality, or historicity, has the capacity to puncture assumptions about the structural forces that both eclipse and effect subjective presence—leading to exciting new considerations of what it is we do when we read modernist poetry for its queerness. Eric Keenaghan has suggested the usefulness of the word "subjunctive," or what is imagined or possible or otherwise speculative, in the act of reading for queerness in literary studies:

> The past is not a passive receptacle on which we impose our critical frameworks and judgments. Instead, poetry speaks back to us, helping retheorize queer desire or past institutions' adverse effects on gender and sexual construction of *all* subjects.[26]

A "subjunctive dialogue" with texts, Keenaghan writes, illuminates as much about our past as it does about our present. Reading queer modernist lyrics for what they have to say about their own making, and for what they have to say about the historical, ideological, and formal precedents and countermeasures that inform that making, invites ever more questioning of the relationships between language and the queer self—and of the capacity of poetry to enact the slant textures of queerness.

Notes

1 H.D., *Collected Poems*, 48.
2 H.D., *Collected Poems*, 49.
3 H.D.'s uses of Hellenist statuary to explore transgressive desire are discussed thoroughly by Cassandra Laity in *H.D. and the Victorian Fin de Siècle*. The speakers of H.D.'s early poems "Pygmalion," "Red Roses for Bronze," and "Charioteer," Laity writes, are properly understood as "explicitly or implicitly male speakers" who, as sculptors, "dwell lovingly on the bodies of their male subjects" (68).
4 Adorno, "On Lyric Poetry and Society," 46.
5 For example, T. S. Eliot associates poetic feeling with the feminine: "The craving for the fantastic, for the strange, is legitimate and perpetual; everyone with a sense of beauty has it. The strongest, like Mr Joyce, make their feeling into an articulate external world; what might crudely be called a more feminine type, when it is also a very sophisticated type, makes its art by feeling and by contemplating the feeling, rather than the object which has excited it or the object into which the feeling might be made" ("London Letter," 216). See also Pound's uses of the sexualized and gendered terms "hard" and "soft" in his argument against the emotion of French poetry: as Jane Malcolm argues, Pound's invocation of descriptive "slush" and emotional "slither" serves to "encode a universalizing literary masculinity grounded in the metaphors of hard and soft." See Pound, *The Literary Essays*, 285–89, and Malcolm, "Hard Women, Hard Modernism," 12. Emma Heaney's readings of the trans feminine allegory in modernist fiction offer an invaluable historicist and feminist revision of gynocritical modernist readings of femininity and the figure of the new woman in particular.

6 Jackson, *Dickinson's Misery*, 128. Probably the most frequently cited and challenged text in the new lyric studies is Jackson's, which claims most centrally that the lyric is best understood as an act of reading, one that activates the fallacy of poetic speech as something private that the poem makes available to the reader.
7 Hunter, "Lyric and Its Discontents," 81. In *Forms of a World*, Hunter usefully dislodges an undertheorized notion of subjectivity that characterizes much of lyric studies, arguing instead that "the terms that we use to think about poems are just as much products and producers of the liberal discursive frameworks of subjectivity, freedom, humanity, and intimacy" (5).
8 Temporal and spatial expansion as characteristics of the new modernist studies are terms described by Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz in "The New Modernist Studies."
9 Javadizadeh, "The Atlantic Ocean Breaking on Our Heads," 476.
10 Jackson's 2023 book *Before Modernism: Inventing American Lyric* posits a history for American lyric grounded specifically in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Black poetry and argues that the "lyric social imaginary" is "racialized to its core" (47).
11 Moure, *O Cidadán*, 51.
12 H.D., *Notes on Thought and Vision and the Wise Sappho*, 67. Stein, *Tender Buttons*, 27; see also "Read her with her for less" (60). Duncan, "Passages 30 Stage Directions," 131.
13 Stein, *Lifting Belly*, 1.
14 Stein, *Lifting Belly*, 7–8.
15 Lyn Hejinian describes the "narrow definition of desire" that is problematized by texts that foreground their own making in "The Rejection of Closure," 55–56.
16 Crane, *The Bridge*, 118.
17 Crane, *The Bridge*, 118.
18 Crane, *The Bridge*, 118.
19 Spicer, "Graphemics," 401.
20 Vincent, *Queer Lyrics*, 192n1. Vincent suggests that Spicer's lines serve as an example of what Lee Edelman in *Homographesis* calls the elasticity of homosexual meanings.
21 As Sarah Dowling notes: "While the term *multilingual* is typically positioned as the alternative to *monolingual*, it is increasingly critiqued because it simply describes the coexistence of languages in space and time and is generally silent about the relationships between them. I use the term *trans*lingual, which has gained currency in applied linguistics, in transnational and diasporic literary studies, and in composition and rhetoric because it describes the capacity of languages to interact, influence, and transform one another." See Dowling, *Translingual Poetics*, 4.
22 Moure, *O Cidadán*, 42. Original emphasis.
23 Moure, *O Cidadán*, 38.
24 Dowling reads *O Cidadán* in the context of feminist critiques of citizenship, including Lauren G. Berlant, Alison Jaggar, Marilyn Friedman, Rian Voet, and Iris Marion Young, and shows how Moure's critique of citizenship is developed by an examination of desire: "While the citizen's desire is figured primarily as a want of greater porousness in the state's borders, enabled by citizens and aimed at combatting exclusion, this desire is described primarily as a kind of homoerotic excess." Dowling, "'It is citizenship's acts I dream of,'" 4.
25 Zolf, *Janey's Arcadia*, 117.
26 Keenaghan, "Queer Poetry in the Long Twentieth Century," 594.

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8

"THE FIRST DUTY IN LIFE IS TO BE AS ARTIFICIAL AS POSSIBLE"

Queer Subversions of Life Writing

Todd G. Nordgren

At some point, almost all queer literature has been read as if it were life writing. How often have we all, as casual or professional readers, speculated about the sexuality of an author, a character, a plot, or a figure? As gleefully or generously done as this practice may be, its critical value is always under contention. While scholars and the public scour queer authors' literary production for coded bits of biography squirreled away in fiction and non-fiction alike, queer theorists have variously termed these methods "paranoid," "suspicious," or "symptomatic" readings, those which seek signs of an author's queerness obscured by (self-)censorship, secrecy, and historical difference.[1] Often, in these cases, authors from past eras have been held to the standards of our own era's forms, their works compared to the now ubiquitous coming-out story, as readers look for overt signs that authors celebrated their queerness. Contemporary readers sometimes condemn writers who do not meet this standard, equating an author's secrecy with inauthenticity in his or her works.

An inverse issue also arises in scholarship on queer modernism, in which some critics assume that because queerness was condemned, illegal, and underground for much of the twentieth century, queer authors censored sexual and gender deviancy in their fiction for fear that it would be read autobiographically. Georgia Johnston, for example, argues that lesbian modernists used such tactics as "multiplying their 'I's, manipulating subject and object divisions, undermining boundaries between writer and audience, and using repetition and masks" to "code and expose erotic moments" in their life writing.[2] Brian Loftus, writing about queer modernist autobiography in 1999, asks "how can a text consolidate a subject on the grounds of sexuality when that sexuality has no history to document, no proper cultural space and

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no symbolic categories?"[3] For Loftus, queer modernist autobiography simply cannot exist, and he argues, instead, that early twentieth-century autobiographies tended to exclude any mention of sexuality, evacuating the means by which the law or the public could interpret their author's illicit desires. Examples of this abound, such as that of South African–born novelist and poet William Plomer, who left all mention of his sexuality out of his *Autobiography* (1975) despite his deep investment in the topic in his novel *Sado* (1930), his early poetry, and his pursuit of numerous same-sex sexual encounters during his youth. Plomer also destroyed letters from his homosexual friends, including J. R. Ackerley, E. M. Forster, Christopher Isherwood, John Lehmann, and Stephen Spender, after he solicited sex from an Allied sailor who turned him over to the police.[4] For Plomer and many others, an unpleasant run-in with the law, or even its specter, prompted relative silence on matters of homosexuality for the rest of his career.

What forms of life writing were available to queer modernists who wanted to address their non-normative sexuality directly? And how should we proceed when we encounter openly queer life writing? This essay argues that some modernists explored a third possibility in spite of the legal and social dangers, opting neither for buried confession nor self-censorship. Instead, they capitalize upon the very scandal of queer sexuality to make shockingly overt what others kept covert, brashly claiming, broadcasting, and even exaggerating the signs of their sexual deviancy as a means to gain or magnify their fame, adapting old practices of autobiography and biography for a new form of queer life writing that flourished in the modernist period. Honoring the spirit of Oscar Wilde's aphorism from "Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young" (1894) that "the first duty in life is to be as artificial as possible,"[5] queer modernist authors including Wilde himself and twentieth-century flaneur Quentin Crisp experimented with ways of making their mundane biographies sensational through art and performance. Moreover, I will show how these techniques were adapted by ostensibly heterosexual authors, such as Wilde's nephew Arthur Cravan, who combined their desires for celebrity and fame with queer styles.

In doing so, the letters, memoirs, and essays I consider in this chapter embrace overt claims to sexual deviance or "vice" in autobiography, broadcasting and amplifying their difference in order to glamorize their subjects rather than attending carefully to facts and evidence as conventional forms of auto/biography would. Rather than settling the conflict between historicizing claims and contemporary politics, these works offer new avenues for thinking about the desires their subjects had for recognition and fame because, not in spite, of their sexuality and gender performance. Exploring these works also asks us to reconsider a long-standing debate in queer theory in which modernism acts as the exemplary site both of resistance to a politics of futurity, figured as antisocial and negative orientations, and of utopian desires for

a better life and politics to come. Instead, these queer modernist forms of life writing suggest that some queer modernists worked openly to make their legacy known in their own present moment.

Broadly speaking, modernist auto/biographies regularly renege on the pact between author and reader that Philippe Lejeune uses to describe an "autobiography" as "a retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality."[6] For Lejeune, "what defines autobiography for the one who is reading is above all a contract of identity, sealed by the proper name,"[7] but modernists were happy to exploit this assumption while maintaining its forms. Out of an explosion of modernist experiments with life writing arose queer authors who remade autobiographic and biographic forms to explore the production of the self, practicing a provocative version of what Max Saunders calls "auto/biografiction." In Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928), the biographer describes how the eponymous protagonist has not only been a man and a woman but also

> had a great variety of selves to call upon, far more than we have been able to find room for, since a biography is considered complete if it merely accounts for six or seven selves, whereas a person may well have many thousand.[8]

Likewise, at the conclusion of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933), Gertrude Stein unveils that she is in fact the author, not Toklas herself:

> About six weeks ago Gertrude Stein said, it does not look to me as if you were ever going to write that autobiography. You know what I am going to do. I am going to write it for you. I am going to write it as simply as Defoe did the autobiography of Robinson Crusoe. And she has and this is it.[9]

When Stein cites the eighteenth-century style of play between fact and fiction in this passage to explain her autobiographic caper, she unsettles the notion of who is a real person (Stein, Defoe, and Toklas) and who is a fictional character (Crusoe). Stein's comparison of Toklas to Crusoe implies that the voice of the text's authority, Toklas, is fictional at the very moment it seems to be revealing the text's secret. The narrative's confession of the couple's same-sex romance and domestic life mingles with the text's playful take on life writing, pulling the rug out from under a variety of assumptions a reader in 1933 might have had about a book that plays with expectations about Stein and Toklas's relationship.

These experiments reveal the way that fictional autobiography and autobiographical fictions troubled conventional classifications, as encapsulated

by the term "autobiografiction," first written about in a 1906 essay by Stephen Reynolds.[10] Charles Swann has explained that Reynolds coined his neologism to distinguish a new form coalescing at the turn of the century from older forms of fact-based autobiography and fictional novels alike.[11] Neither autobiographical fiction, which Reynolds defined as "fiction with a good deal of the writer's own life in it," or the accidental fictions that arise from "lapses in fact" found in all autobiographies, Reynolds saw the need for the "rather dreadful portmanteau-word" to "connote shortly a minor literary form which stands between those two extremes."[12] In many ways, then, queer works that would have otherwise faced censorship, such as *Orlando* and *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, benefit from the already blurred line between fiction and fact found in this "minor literary form." Taking this blurring as an a priori, some queer life writing in the early twentieth century proposed that, since revealing the mediated status of a life story can undercut its authenticity, so, too could a life story be authorized through the power of mediation that looked autobiographical. The letters, essays, and memoirs of Wilde, Cravan, and Crisp draw upon the playful muddle that arose from these experiments, positing life writing as an ideal queer form because of its ability to merge fiction and fact, allowing one to not only take back control over the story of one's own life, but to amplify it in the face of oppression and the threat of censorship.

Letter Writing after the Fall: Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis*

During his first trial, Oscar Wilde struggled to keep his fiction from being read autobiographically, learning the hard way how the overlap between life and literature could prove dangerous for queer people. The Marquess of Queensbury's infamous accusation that Wilde was "posing somdomite [sic]" afforded his lawyer, Edward Carson, a simple task.[13] He had to prove that the words Queensbury had written were true; that is, that Wilde did *pose* as a sodomite. Carson's probing cross-examination equated Wilde's literature with the facts of his affairs with young men. Carson's and Wilde's interactions succinctly dramatize how Wilde's trials would shape queer life and literature for decades to come. At one juncture, Wilde and Carson debated a passage of *Dorian Gray* that appears only in the serialized version published in *Lippincott's* in 1890, in which Basil Hallward confesses "I have worshipped you [Dorian] with far more romance of feeling than a man usually gives to a friend."[14] When Carson asked Wilde to account for "his words" here and elsewhere, Wilde responded "keep your own words to yourself. Leave me mine. Don't put words to me I haven't said."[15] Of course, the argument Wilde staged over his and Carson's "words" was more than one of literary interpretation; it had severe legal consequences. The outcome of Carson's mixing of art's moral and autobiographical qualities would haunt

writers in the early twentieth century as much as Wilde's eventual punishment for gross indecency. The firmly held belief that art could reveal its creators' unconscious or repressed secrets or, in the case of literature, might be barely concealed autobiography, kept authors such as Forster from publishing works celebrating fictional queer life, as in the well-documented cases of *Maurice* (1914/71) and *The Life to Come and Other Stories* (1972).[16]

Out of his abject position, however, Wilde looked to actively adapt the Victorian dandy's self-fashioning into a queer modernist method of celebrity making through forging new life writing techniques. In his long prison letter, *De Profundis* (1905/62), Wilde grapples with the way that the trials had twisted the celebrity he had so carefully cultivated over a decade and a half of success. At times, he fears his fame would no longer arise from his art and personality, but from his sexual notoriety:

> The poor thieves and outcasts who are imprisoned here with me are in many respects more fortunate than I am … for me "the world is shrivelled to a handsbreadth," and everywhere I turn my name is written on the rocks in lead. For I have come, not from obscurity into the momentary notoriety of crime, but from a sort of eternity of fame to a sort of eternity of infamy.[17]

Wilde's fears were not misplaced, but rather than shying away from the limelight in *De Profundis*, Wilde instead forges a new form of queer celebrity autobiography as much as he crafts a long letter to his lover, Lord Alfred Douglas.[18] Resisting the law's efforts to suppress him, Wilde looks to amplify the long arc of sexual notoriety stretching before him in *De Profundis* and, thus, does not cut off, redirect, or deflect the marks of infamy through confession and performative reformation. He writes that "to regret one's own experiences is to arrest one's own development" in response to those who urged him to forget his time in prison, for "to deny one's own experiences is to put a lie into the lips of one's own life. It is no less than a denial of the soul."[19] Since the letter in full includes detailed accounts of and reflections upon his time with Douglas in the years before the trial, depicting their romance in explicit, though not sexually graphic, terms, we might imagine that Wilde believed that to hide his sexuality would also constitute "a denial of the soul." However, his refusal to "lie" does not mean that he did not carefully craft his image in *De Profundis*. Indeed, he finds capturing his own life story difficult, if not impossible: "the final mystery is oneself. When one has weighed the sun in the balance, and measured the steps of the moon, and mapped out the seven heavens star by star, there still remains oneself. Who can calculate the orbit of his own soul?"[20] For Wilde, autobiography upholds the essence of his experiences but also embellishes his life with the magical powers of art where "calculation," or pure facts, would surely fail.

Laying his soul bare while undercutting its coherence at the same time, Wilde recognizes that the stakes for a celebrity who plays with the meanings and signifiers of their own deviant sexuality necessarily differed from those celebrities for whom sexual and gendered normativity were assured. Wilde acknowledges—and mythologizes—his own fame in *De Profundis*, outlining precisely what he had to lose in regard to his literary and cultural status:

> The gods had given me almost everything. I had genius, a distinguished name, high social position, brilliancy, intellectual daring: I made art a philosophy, and philosophy an art: I altered the minds of men and the colours of things: there was nothing I said or did that did not make people wonder: I took the drama, the most objective form known to art, and made it as personal a mode of expression as the lyric or the sonnet, at the same time that I widened its range and enriched its characterisation: novel, drama, poem in rhyme, poem in prose, subtle or fantastic dialogue, whatever I touched I made beautiful in a new mode of beauty … I treated Art as the supreme reality, and life as a mere mode of fiction: I awoke the imagination of my century so that it created myth and legend around me: I summed up all systems in a phrase, and all existence in an epigram.[21]

Wilde knows that his fall was all the greater for his celebrity before the trials, and his subsequent notoriety could not be wiped away as the disgrace affirmed much of what had already been widely suspected. But not all was lost. As he writes in *De Profundis*, "between the famous and the infamous there is but one step, if as much as one,"[22] and for other queer modernists following his model, infamy would do just as well as fame.

Avant-Garde Self-Fashioning: Arthur Cravan's Many Scandalous Selves

Critics and biographers alike face a nearly insurmountable predicament as they attempt to assemble Arthur Cravan's erratic biography into a cohesive whole. Nearly all of the sparse scholarship on Cravan struggles to bring his work to light while simultaneously trying to make sense of the patchwork legacy he left behind. Theories as to why Cravan dropped out of his central place in the avant-garde canon range widely—from blaming his mysterious disappearance in the waters off Mexico in 1918 to the relative obscurity of his wife, the poet Mina Loy, who was his biggest promoter in the years following his death.[23] However, the central issue at hand is Cravan's own tireless efforts to leave behind a scandalous and flamboyant legacy that is all too easily read as fiction. Cravan used a variety of poems, performances, and marketing techniques to gain star status during his lifetime, launching a short-lived tour de force career that built upon the notorious infamy advanced

by Wilde, who was his paternal uncle. In a study that proposes Cravan as a precursor to the Dada artists, Manuel Grossman explains that "it is difficult to separate the real from the legendary Arthur Cravan. Even after the disparate elements of his life have been pieced together, we are left with an inexplicable ambivalence."[24] His poetry and performance together allowed him to achieve an almost mythical celebrity, one which mixed masculine avant-garde brutishness with the effeminate styles of the dandy.

Rather than attempt to reconstruct the details of Cravan's life out of his piecemeal work and the remembrances of others, I argue that we should instead recognize that much of Cravan's entire career was oriented toward playing with autobiographic expectations in order to leave behind a "legendary" legacy. In fact, "Arthur Cravan" can be said not to exist, technically speaking. A poet, boxer, and nephew of Oscar Wilde, Cravan wrote and lived under a pseudonym that was somehow less campy than his given name: Fabian Avenarius Lloyd. But more than just writing under the guise of a pseudonym, Cravan constantly inhabited different roles, making his life a performance while still insisting upon its "realness." Because he always went by a pseudonym—both a nom de plume and an alias—after leaving his hometown in Switzerland for Paris in 1909, the public and the state could only ever hail what was a work of imagination. What's more, he did not settle for one false identity, but proliferated heteronymic positions to occupy. In the five volumes of his self-published little magazine *Maintenant*, all of the poems, essays, and stories were written by Cravan, but many are ascribed to a total of six other names: W. Cooper; Edouard Archinard, Claude Chéreau, Jérôme Tharaud, Robert Miradique, and Marie Lowitska. Cravan's oeuvre represents an extension of Wilde's queer dissembling in life writing, one which merged Wilde's notorious past with Cravan's own scandalous present.

In her biography of Loy, Carolyn Burke observes that being Oscar Wilde's nephew contributed to Cravan's reputation among the Paris literati, but they questioned his claim to fame after he began publication of the scandalous *Maintenant*.[25] An announcement Cravan wrote for the third conference of the Soirée Parisienne in the section "Spectacles et Concerts" in the *Petit Journal* on March 6, 1914, catalogs how Cravan couched his claims of kinship with Wilde as an inheritance of Wilde's aesthetic program. The announcement begins:

> Oscar Wilde a laissé des œuvres posthumes dont la plus curieuse est son neveu, le seul, l'authentique neveu, le prince de la box, licencié ès lettres, directeur de *Maintenant*, revue a gros tirage, enfin Arthur Cravan [Oscar Wilde left posthumous works, of which the most curious is his nephew, the only authentic nephew, Prince of boxing, Bachelor of Arts, Director of *Maintenant*, a magazine with wide circulation, that is, Arthur Cravan].[26]

More than claiming kinship, Cravan professes that he is one of Wilde's posthumous works, as if Wilde had instructed that he be released after his death along with the manuscript of *De Profundis*.

Cravan's love for such artistic autobiographical play and Wildean subversions of expectations overlapped often. The most famous instance was his account of an interview with Oscar Wilde, fictitiously conducted in 1913, published in two parts in his magazine and given the newspaper headline title: "Oscar Wilde est Vivant!" In the piece, "Oscar Wilde est Vivant!" Wilde immediately inquires after Cravan's mother. Cravan writes "cette question me causa un bizarre effet physique, car, à plusieurs reprises, ne m'avait-on pas instruit à demi sur ma naissance mystérieuse … en me laissant supposer qu'Oscar Wilde pouvait être mon père." ["This question caused me a strange physical effect, because on several occasions, had we not half discussed of my mysterious birth … leaving me to believe that Oscar Wilde could be my father."][27] When Cravan wrote this fictional piece, he resuscitated Wilde for multiple reasons, not only in order to play with the possibilities of his paternity. In the story Wilde calls himself by the pseudonym that he adopted after his self-imposed exile to France following the end of his prison sentence, "Sebastian Melmoth." Cravan endeavors to draw a clear kinship between his own pen name and Wilde's own pseudonym—a kind of figurative begetting. Although Wilde had died in 1900, the interview was apparently convincing enough to inspire the *New York Times* to send a reporter to search the streets of Paris for the undead Oscar Wilde. The reporter returned to New York empty-handed but wrote an article in December of 1913 with the headline, "No One Found Who Saw Wilde Dead."[28] In this way, Cravan proved that literary play could have serious consequences, particularly when it relies upon the potential for uncovering more sexual scandal. Cravan becomes an impossible character in his own life story as much as the undead Wilde was.

As Cravan remade the symbols of dandy for his purposes in the 1910s, he vacillated between brutish masculinity and an effeminate love of beauty. In his essay "L'Exhibition des Independants" in 1914, he includes a postscript with the short recollection: "l'un d'eux disait à ma femme: 'Que voulez-vous, Monsieur *Cravan* ne vient pas assez parmi nous.' Qu'on le sache un fois pour toutes: Je ne veux pas me civilise" ["One of them said to my wife: 'What do you expect, Monsieur Cravan doesn't spend enough time with us.' I wish to state once and for all: I do not want to civilize myself"].[29] This account is based on a lie: there was no "Mrs. Cravan" at the time as he had not yet married Loy. Furthermore, Cravan's insistence that he will not civilize himself clashes with our traditional understanding of the hyper-civilized dandy. In her long poem about her husband, "Colossus," Loy described Cravan as a "dragonfly in the carapace of a tortoise."[30] This image is remarkably fitting. In it, Cravan at once appears brutish as well as glittery, at once ancient and newly made, outmoded and vibrant, a literary celebrity made queer by his

extension of his uncle's mode of life writing and his figuration of himself as Wilde's literary successor.

Post-War Queer Exposure: Quentin Crisp's *The Naked Civil Servant*

Quentin Crisp's *The Naked Civil Servant* (1968) depicts sixty years in the life of an English eccentric who presented himself as a flamboyant spectacle from a young age. Written the same year that the Sexual Offenses Act passed in the United Kingdom, which legalized private sexual encounters between men, and published on the eve of the Stonewall riots in the United States, Crisp's version of queerness already seems anachronistic in 1968. The narrative opens with Crisp's birth and years at school, where he describes a scene that shapes how he understands queerness: a boy is caught sneaking into another boy's dormitory to have sex—an action Crisp believes he conducted "in order to defy the authorities with all the world on his side,"[31] as it occurred in the school building rather than in some hidden place on the grounds. The Headmaster beats the delinquent student in front of the school, but Crisp feels that "no one seemed to regard what they had seen as right."[32] The lesson the students learned was not that one must conform or face violent consequences, but that difference, even if it breaks the rules, makes one stand out. Rather than acquiescing to authority's power, Crisp and other lads instead "enshrined the culprit in our hearts as one of the saints of Aphrodite."[33] Immediately after graduating, his education continues on the streets. Crisp recalls worrying that his difference was more extreme even than those other boys in his school, explaining that

> I was now eighteen and beginning to feel really uneasy about the future—openly on the grounds that I was so inadequate to earn a living, and secretly because I suspected that sexually I was quite unlike anyone else in the world.[34]

Upon seeing a male prostitute on the corner in London, Crisp "learns" that he is "not alone" when the prostitute introduces Crisp to his friends. Crisp "took to them like a duck to ducks," adapting the idiom "like a duck to water" to frame queerness as a formal similarity rather than a shared eroticism—a system that operates on the edges of the social order.[35]

These important lessons learned—that queerness can make one an icon, and that there are other queers like him—Crisp takes on the task of creating the possibility for himself and his fellow "ducks" to live in 1920s London, which he portrays as an environment ill-suited for him. He writes that at this early age, he accepts that his difference will always mark him, so rather than attempt to hide it he "desired to represent it," through which he "managed to shift homosexuality from being a burden to being a cause" by going "about

the routine of daily living looking undeniably like a homosexual."[36] The memoir not only tells the story of Crisp's self-fashioning as a "self-evident" homosexual who cut a striking and memorable figure on the streets of London, it also endeavors to produce the larger-than-life version of Crisp that will turn his local celebrity into a wider fame.[37] Just as there is no real Arthur Cravan, there is no real Crisp. Christened Denis Charles Pratt, Crisp never narrates a coming-into this persona. In fact, he uses his memoir to demonstrate his adherence to a performative identity from the moment of his birth. The book begins, "From the dawn of my history I was so disfigured by the characteristics of a certain kind of homosexual person that, when I grew up, I realized that I could not ignore my predicament."[38] Addressing the institutions of marriage, education, war, the police, state bureaucracy, and more in terms at once flippant and incisive, Crisp's autobiography describes his life lived as constant spectacle, setting him up for a celebrity prefigured from his birth.

Other critics have interpreted Crisp's desire for fame, garnered through open gender and sexual deviance, as a danger to his life and livelihood, putting forward the argument that Crisp's memoir reveals the oppressive history of queer existence. They align Crisp's project with theories of queer negativity, drawing upon Crisp to define a "politics of the past" that resists the politics of pride. Bill Harrison writes that "*The Naked Civil Servant* documents how celebrity of even the meanest form places the dandy within the reach of structural violence."[39] Certainly, Crisp provides candid evidence of both the structural and physical violence he claimed to face regularly. As he explains, "the mysterious thing … was not that strangers, sometimes without a word being uttered on either side, attacked me. It was that they never killed me," a chilling appraisal of his own danger that also indicates the frequency with which he claims it occurred.[40]

Likewise, Crisp shows how his position in British society is precarious, adding that he lives barely above the poverty line without stable housing or the ability to regularly buy food. He explains in the opening lines of the book that his wholehearted embrace of his queer persona left him without security:

> As soon as I put my uniform on, the rest of my life solidified around me like a plaster cast. From that moment on, my friends were anyone who could put up with the disgrace; my occupation, any job from which I was not given the sack; my playground, any café or restaurant from which I was not barred or any street corner from which the police did not move me on.[41]

For Crisp, queerness vacillates between being a choice and a birthright—both a uniform one must put on and an everlasting injury the world has inflicted upon one's body. Describing himself as being born broken, in which his life

"solidifie[s] around [him] like a plaster cast," frames queerness as a disability that requires accommodations from the social and physical world. However, while his difference is marked in and on his body, accommodations are forthcoming from a select community that supports him in spite of his outsider status and spaces in which he can thrive. Here, we can consider what it meant for queer modernists to claim their sexual difference as a mark of distinction worth celebrating, rather than a sign of failure. Eveline Kilian argues that the memoir depicts Edelmanian failure, negativity, and anti-sociality, and she suggests that Crisp practices the theory of living against the social order by "becoming a living exhibition of the marginalized other."[42] For Kilian, "failure for Crisp becomes a mode of existence," but this analysis misses the purpose of Crisp's brazenly flamboyant lifestyle.[43] As much as the list above defines the limits within which Crisp lived, it also enumerates exactly those places and people who allowed him to pursue his eccentricity, framing his life through opportunity rather than limitations.

Crisp does not shy away from representing the oppression and pain that shapes both queer theories of negativity and Jose Esteban Muñoz's theory of utopian hope, but he refuses to accede to either position.[44] For Crisp, adversity makes opportunity in the moment itself. He writes that "crippling disadvantages gave my life an interest that it would otherwise never have had."[45] Instead of representing failure, Crisp's memoir celebrates his resiliency and his ability to adapt his own body, style, and behavior to make possible a more fulfilling queer life. He explains that his desire for recognition extends to great lengths:

> exhibitionism is like a drug. Hooked in adolescence, I was now taking doses so massive that they would have killed a novice. Blind with mascara and dumb with lipstick, I paraded the dim streets of Pimlico with my overcoat wrapped around me as though it were a tailless ermine cape.[46]

This image not only portrays his ability use makeup and a simple overcoat to gain the glamor he desires, but also his commitment to standing out for queer reasons. After World War II, another homosexual criticizes his habit of dyeing his hair red with henna, assuming he does so to cover his advancing age. Crisp, annoyed at his misrecognition, adapts the tactic without succumbing to shame, writing that "I set about forcing red out and forcing blue in."[47] His change from red to blue sends two messages: one, to other queer people including the man who accused him of vanity, asserts that he values a performative effeminacy that was quickly falling out of fashion in the 1950s and 1960s; the other, to the heterosexual world, reasserts his role as a spectacle that represents a campy and celebratory version of queer life. Red hair was perceived as putting "a lie to the lips" of his life; blue hair made his queer intentions clear.

Crisp's politics often seemed not only passé, but abrasive and hostile to the efforts of the gay and lesbian movements of the latter half of the century to which theories of negativity or utopian hopes respond. When asked to comment on the AIDS crisis in the 1980s, he joked that it was only "a fad" and presumed that, as with other such affectations, gay men would move on to other recreations.[48] The quip angered many men who had previously held him in esteem. Likewise, his association of effeminate homosexuality with inferiority, as in his early claim in *The Naked Civil Servant* that he found himself "disfigured by the characteristics of a certain kind of homosexual person," seemed increasingly tactless as gay pride became central to the mainstream movement. Ten years after his death, John Hurt reprised his earlier role as Crisp in a film that covered the years he lived in the United States, *An Englishman in New York* (2009). The British gay rights activist Peter Tachell took the film's release as an opportunity to criticize Crisp himself. Tachell draws a clear distinction between Crisp and the gay rights movement Tachell wants to represent:

> I only ever met Quentin Crisp once. It was a brief encounter in Charing Cross road in 1974. I was 22 and wearing a gay liberation badge, which prompted Quentin to retort: "What do you want liberation from?" He continued in a similar vein, dismissing the idea of gay pride: "What is there to be proud of? I don't believe in rights for homosexuals."[49]

Calling Crisp "an often self-hating, arrogant, homophobic gadfly," Tachell proposed that Crisp "turned bitter" because of his "jealousy," conjecturing that "he resented the fact that he was no longer unique—no longer the only visible queer in town." Tachell's criticism makes clear how far Crisp's position diverged from the politics of gay liberation, pride, and rights. But he also misrecognizes the incongruence of their goals. Crisp's politics and style predate gay liberation and its emphasis on rights, and pride, and he works toward escaping the social and representational order these goals signify. Social integration through what we now call homonormativity—marriage, steady employment, children, social respectability, and stable friendships—were never made available to him, but they also held no allure.

Instead, looking to these three versions of queer modernist life writing demonstrates how to embrace a politics that sees possibility, potentiality, and hope in the complex conditions of the present moment. As Crisp found, adapting conventions could force others to conform to that adaptation in the present moment. When one of Crisp's friends worried about his vulnerability to violence and legal punishment, exclaiming "well, Quentin has a problem of adjusting himself to society," another retorted, "I don't agree. Quentin does exactly as he pleases. The rest of us have to adapt ourselves to him."[50] He learned, like Wilde and Cravan, that people might act as if you are all in water together if you make clear just how much of a duck you are.

Notes

1 Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus call "queer symptomatic readings" those analyses that "might interpret the closet, or ghosts, as surface signs of the deep truth of a homosexuality that cannot be overtly depicted." Best and Marcus, "Surface Reading," 3.
2 Johnston, *The Formation of 20th Century Queer Autobiography*, 2.
3 Loftus, "Speaking Silence," 31.
4 Alexander, *William Plomer*, 245–6.
5 Wilde, *Epigrams*, 141.
6 Lejeune, "The Autobiographical Pact," 4.
7 Lejeune, "The Autobiographical Pact," 19.
8 Woolf, *Orlando*, 309.
9 Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, 310.
10 Reynolds, "Autobiografiction," 28.
11 Swann, "'Autobiografiction,'" 29.
12 Reynolds, "Autobiografiction," 28.
13 Quoted in M. Holland, *Irish Peacock & Scarlet Marquess*, 4.
14 M. Holland, *Irish Peacock & Scarlet Marquess*, 250.
15 M. Holland, *Irish Peacock & Scarlet Marquess*, 90–3.
16 Max Saunders writes that legal interpretations that took art to be autobiographical shaped the literature of fin-de-siècle writers, who were already reluctant to reveal their sexuality after the passage of the Labouchere Amendment in 1885. For example, Saunders proposes that John Addington Symonds's disinclination to publish his *Memoirs* during his lifetime shows how "after the trial[s] of Wilde in 1895, British society had become even less tolerant of homosexuality and of the aestheticism that had been associated with it," arguing that "this intolerance is the most compelling reason why aesthetes tended to avoid autobiography." Saunders, *Self Impression*, 75.
17 Wilde, *De Profundis*, 63–4.
18 Other evidence supports this supposition, including the fact that Douglas apparently was never sent a copy (and certainly not the original) and he spent years fighting Ross for rights to the manuscript, as his son Vyvyan Holland pointed out in the preface to the 1949 edition. Holland, Preface to *De Profundis*, 9.
19 Wilde, *De Profundis*, 62.
20 Wilde, *De Profundis*, 87.
21 Wilde, *De Profundis*, 57–8.
22 Wilde, *De Profundis*, 64.
23 For more on this see Conover, "Mina Loy's 'Colossus'"; Jones, "To Be or Not to Be … Arthur Cravan"; and Nicholl, "The Wind Comes Up Out of Nowhere," 8.
24 Grossman, *Dada*, 29.
25 Burke, *Becoming Modern*, 234.
26 Quoted in Borràs, *Arthur Cravan*, 100.
27 Cravan, *Œuvres*, 50. Since much of Cravan's materials remain untranslated or incompletely translated, translations throughout are mine.
28 "No One Found Who Saw Wilde Dead."
29 Cravan, *Œuvres*, 79.
30 Loy, *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, 112.
31 Crisp, *The Naked Civil Servant*, 12.
32 Crisp, *The Naked Civil Servant*, 13.
33 Crisp, *The Naked Civil Servant*, 13.
34 Crisp, *The Naked Civil Servant*, 18.
35 Crisp, *The Naked Civil Servant*, 20, 22.
36 Crisp, *The Naked Civil Servant*, 27.

37 Crisp, *The Naked Civil Servant*, 1.
38 Crisp, *The Naked Civil Servant*, 1.
39 Harrison, "Violence, Dandyism and the Literary Self-Portraiture of Quentin Crisp," 211.
40 Crisp, *The Naked Civil Servant*, 61–2.
41 Crisp, *The Naked Civil Servant*, 1.
42 Kilian, "The Queer Self and the Snares of Heteronormativity," 177–8, 179.
43 Kilian, "The Queer Self and the Snares of Heteronormativity," 173.
44 For more on Muñoz's orientation toward utopian politics, see *Cruising Utopia*.
45 Crisp, *The Naked Civil Servant*, 2.
46 Crisp, *The Naked Civil Servant*, 43.
47 Crisp, *The Naked Civil Servant*, 169.
48 Quoted in Tatchell, "Quentin Crisp Was No Gay Hero."
49 Tatchell, "Quentin Crisp Was No Gay Hero."
50 Crisp, *The Naked Civil Servant*, 193.

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9

GEOMETRIC KINSHIP

Sensuous Abstraction and the Accumulation of Forms in Black Queer Kinaesthetics

Teagan Bradway

What shape can queer kinship take? This may seem like a strange question, given that queerness is often thought to elude, trouble, and subvert legible social forms, like the couple or the nuclear family. Yet queer theory has always been fascinated by the prospect of new relational forms that could live aslant of those demanded by white patriarchy and cis-heteronormativity. This possibility inspires Judith Butler's enduring question: "Is kinship always already heterosexual?"[1] It can be heard, too, in Michel Foucault's desire for a "different economy of bodies and pleasures" to arrive in the future, and in Fred Moten's attunement to resonances "from the way back and way before wounded kinship, forced and stolen labor, forced and stolen sexuality."[2] Here, queer theories of kinship reach out from the present in search of alternative designs for intimate and social belonging. They reject universal accounts of kinship, like the US Supreme Court's (2015) affirmation of marriage as the foundation of social stability.[3] Such accounts naturalize heteronormativity, unleashing violence on those that fall outside of kinship's authorized terms as well those forced to live within them. Thus, queer kinship theory attunes us to the contingency of the cultural arrangements that order and reproduce social relations across time.

By thinking of queer kinship as a problem of shape—geometric and otherwise—we begin to see the abstract designs that give form to relationality. The couple, for example, becomes less enshrined as an exceptional social unit, less bound to romantic plots (*Soul Mate, Mr. Right, My Person, The One*). Instead, it appears as a numerical pair that coordinates intimacy and labor across shifting lines of privacy and publicity. In this way, relational formalism furthers queer theory's effort to demystify heteronormative ideologies.[4] But it also reveals kinship's fundamental dependency on aesthetics, like the marriage

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plot, to forge and cohere bonds. Perhaps the most canonical aesthetic figure for heteronormative kinship is the genealogical "family tree," organized through lineal descent. Yet, as Elizabeth Freeman shows, *kinaesthetics* are no less important for queer and trans bonds, precisely because they afford an "embodied means of formalizing those very relationships that do not count as lawful kinship."[5] Queer kinship may live aslant of heteronormative kinship structures, but it, too, needs forms to extend itself over time. Queer kinaesthetics search for these forms by approaching relationality as an unfolding process of *taking shape* in and around authorized structures of kinship.

What, then, can modernist abstraction bring to queer kinaesthetics, particularly for writers and artists of color confronting kinship's dual imbrication with white supremacy and heteronormativity? In asking this question, I draw inspiration from queer theory's recent reinvigoration of formalist methods and aesthetic archives.[6] In their landmark special issue, "Queer Form: Aesthetics, Race, and the Violences of the Social," Kadji Amin, Amber Jamilla Musser, and Roy Pérez argue that the aesthetic experimentations of queer artists of color are often marginalized due to racist and colonialist expectations that their art must authentically represent the experience of oppression. These expectations demand that minoritized artists testify to "the sociological conditions of their own disempowerment … [by] producing art that transmits information rather than pushing aesthetic boundaries."[7] Yet, as Amin, Musser, and Pérez stress, formal experimentation is often "the very *substance* of many of these artists' engagement with legacies of social violence."[8]

In this respect, abstract forms do not necessarily signal a turn away from social engagement or political critique. Nor do they passively register oppression as form rather than content. Rather, they use form to intervene in the ways that the social world racializes knowledge, experience, and power. This is why Phillip Brian Harper, for example, champions African American "abstractionist aesthetics," which throw a wrench in white supremacy's naturalization of racial difference as definitively visual, as an essence that reads off the skin.[9] As Harper shows, these forms challenge the "maw of abstraction" that entraps Black subjects—the demand for "positive" representation, the figural logics of chattel slavery, the dehumanization of racist caricature, and the transformation of human beings in exchangeable commodities. Abstractionist aesthetics not only unlock new idioms for Black political critique—they also redraw the racialized boundaries that delimit art's engagement with the social world.

If abstractionist aesthetics contest racist regimes of representation, how might they also unfold queerer designs for belonging? Here I am not thinking of the complex affective relationality that queer experimental aesthetics weave among spectators, readers, and audience members.[10] Rather, I attend to the ways that abstract forms pull focus from subjects to structures, representations to designs, people to shapes.[11] How do these forms trace new lines for relationality? To be sure, queer theory often looks to modernist and

experimental aesthetics to theorize what Leo Bersani calls a new "model of relations."[12] Bersani even beckons us to theorize subjectivity through a language of pure form—as "line, shape, composition, color."[13] Doing so enables us to glimpse a queer "correspondence of forms," a pleasurable solidarity "not of identities but of positionings and configurations in space."[14] Here, geometric imagery points up the affordances of abstraction for queer social imagination.[15] Yet, by reducing race to identity, Bersani makes it difficult to trace where and how the lines of queerness and race may correspond, twine, spiral, or fold within the aesthetic. After all, as queer of color critique contends, race is never simply an identity but also an affective and social relation.[16] Abstraction does not need to transcend sexuality and race to arrive at a queer sociality, then. It can figure unfolding lines of belonging shaped by the inseparable intimacies of queerness and Blackness.

To demonstrate such kinaesthetic work, I turn to Renee Gladman's recent experimental writing, particularly *Calamities* (2016) and *Prose Architectures* (2017). *Calamities* narrates mundane experiences of everyday life and meditates on the affective relations between writing and drawing. *Prose Architectures* collects Gladman's ink drawings, which she creates while writing *Calamities* and which resemble architectural blueprints and a nearly legible linguistic script. Taken together, these texts exemplify a mode of *sensuous abstraction* that burrows into the present of the queer racialized body to configure lines of relation that cross, loop, fold, furrow, and stretch. Linework, in Gladman's hand, frees the line, as an aesthetic form, from its entrenchment in racist and patriarchal logics of lineality. Gladman's lines instead gather into queerly abstract shapes of belonging. Yet, as *Calamities* underlines, these shapes are affectively oriented by Gladman's position as a Black lesbian—a position, she notes, never centered in the Western philosophical, linguistic, or historical imagination. By foregrounding the racialized dispossessions of kinship wrought, in part, through language, Gladman reimagines queer theory's "correspondence of forms." Her linework yearns for such correspondences, but it also underscores the racialized violence that imprints their emergence. Rather than a "correspondence of forms," then, Gladman attunes queer theory to the *accumulation of forms*—a serial and iterative practice of linework that formalizes an open-ended search for belonging within the folds of the present. The accumulation of forms counters queer theory's anti-formalist aesthetics of rupture, and it centers the desires and dislocations of Blackness at the very heart of queer kinship.

From Lineage to Linework: Sensuous Abstraction and Post-abducted Subjectivity

Renee Gladman's experimental writing has long probed the kinship between forms. Although often described as poetry, Gladman's writing is genre-curious.[17] It moves promiscuously across the boundaries of poetry and prose.

In a recent interview, Gladman refuses to "make a distinction between poetry and narration because I find language inherently narrative, occurring in the instance of the word or even the letter."[18] Gladman does not conceive of experimentalism as a transgression of formal limits. Rather, she sees experimentalism as an active exploration of the unarticulated intimacies between forms. As she explains, "I focus on what lies between two discrete categories and what secretly binds them."[19] Reflecting on her recent experiments with the continuity between writing and drawing in *Prose Architectures*, for example, Gladman foregrounds the line as their shared essence. Both the prose line and the drawn line "bear within a desire or necessity for movement and articulation."[20] At a certain threshold, too, the line discovers a "convergence (in the space of drawing) where language blurs into abstract notation and, somewhere father along the line or visual plane, returns to language."[21] Gladman's purpose is not to rupture language or shatter meaning, which she understands as irreducibly narrative even in its infinitesimal units. Rather, experimental writing affords a zone of sensuous abstraction where the affective kinship between language and other forms can be apprehended. This is why the *fold* is an exemplary aesthetic and conceptual form in Gladman's work. On a long enough line, language folds back onto itself, becoming visual, and the visual folds back yet again, becoming linguistic. Their mutual desire for movement meets in the fold.

Folding takes time—lots of it. This is why Gladman's recent work is particularly focused on serialized accumulations of form, or aesthetic iterations that approach the same terrain again and again, from different angles, trajectories, or points on the line. Indeed, alongside *Calamities* and *Prose Architectures*, Gladman writes four novels, all set within the fictional, vaguely Eastern European city of Ravicka: *Event Factory* (2010), *The Ravickians* (2011), *Ana Patova Crosses a Bridge* (2013), and *Houses of Ravicka* (2017). Ravicka suffers from an unspeakable crisis: people disappear, buildings move, and a yellow fog consumes the landscape. In each novel, a narrator moves through the city, attempting to document their experience of Ravickian culture, language, and people.[22] Some narrators are indigenous to the city whereas others are tourists, such as the "linguistic-traveler" that orients the perspective of *Event Factory*. Yet all the texts struggle with the same problem of translating Ravicka's ineffability into a language that could be read by others.

That ineffability is due, in part, to the fact that Ravickian is a gestural language. Words cannot be extracted from their affective, sensuous, and social contexts without losing meaning. This loss generates an uncanny and unlocatable eeriness—an abstraction that registers in the body more than in words. As Mark Fisher notes, eeriness "entails a disengagement from our current attachments," which is often experienced as serenity or calmness.[23] The Ravickian novels are disorienting precisely because some link between

event, language, and affect has been severed, or at least threaded in a way that readers cannot fully understand. In a quite literal sense, the experience of reading Gladman's fictive foreign language in an English "translation" engenders an eerie "release from the mundane."[24] Yet Gladman's texts are not so much seeking to "escape from the confines of what is ordinarily taken for reality."[25] Escape is not the endgame. Rather, sensuous abstraction forces a reckoning with the ordinary strangeness of language's fundamental entwinement with the body's senses.

Gladman's synesthetic theory of art points up her modernist influences. For example, *Event Factory* begins with an epigraph from Samuel Beckett, and Gladman cites Anne Carson, Julio Cortázar, Samuel R. Delany, and Gertrude Stein, among others, as inspirations. In *Calamities*, Gladman explicitly reflects on the implications of sensuous abstraction when discussing her ink drawings:

> Sometimes the drawings were ugly because what I'd done was take the concept of the cross-out, magnify it by ten and remove it from context such that there was no cause for elision, no evidence of a relation to the elided, just cross-outs.[26]

Here abstraction elides its own cause and context. This does not mean Gladman's marks have no intention; this is not automatic writing or action painting. But cause and context have been pushed to the margins of readability by the magnification of the line's desire for movement. Notably, Gladman stresses the anti-aesthetic nature of linework. It is not pretty. Or, more precisely, her linework does not result in the clean, ordered "grid lines" that "would have been beautiful and made you think of Agnes Martin."[27] This is because another movement emerges in the process, something "swirling underneath like broken dances being written about in cursive language broken already in the hand before the hand wrote, so needing to be appended."[28]

This image is, at once, sensuous and opaque, visceral and impersonal: a language broken in hand before the hand can write—appended to a broken appendage. This language takes the abstract yet affective form of a swirl, of a stuttering broken dance. The corporeal analogies obscure the reference as much as they seem to clarify it. This is because sensuous abstraction is shaped by the racialized dispossessions of language itself, a history of violence that language obscures yet also encrypts. In an aptly titled essay, "The Sentence as a Space for Living: Prose Architecture," Gladman explains how this paradox haunts her work. She writes:

> For all my writing life I have been fascinated with notions of origin and passage, though rarely in terms of ancestry—since I don't know where I'm from. I don't know the languages or landscapes that precede the incursion

> of English and what is now the United States into my lineage. Yet, the violence of that erasure—all the inheritances interrupted—is as foundational to my relationship to language and subjectivity as is grammar. There remains some aspect of my speaking that expects a different mode of expression than English provides.[29]

Gladman invokes the metaphors of white hetero-patriarchal kinship—ancestry, lineage, inheritance—only to mark their inaccessibility. The violence of chattel slavery, settler colonialism, and linguistic imperialism renders Gladman what she calls a "post-abducted subject in language."[30] Recall Gladman's description of abstraction as providing "no evidence of a relation to the elided." Here, too, she has no legible relation to the "languages or landscapes" the preexist the "incursion" of English and the United States into her lineage. Of course, that elision is not a coincidence. As Hortense Spillers shows, captive and enslaved people were "culturally "unmade"" and subsequently enclosed by "the grid of associations … the semantic and iconic folds buried deep in the collective past, that come to surround and signify the captive person."[31] In short, the absence of a legible "relation to the elided" for Gladman is, itself, evidence of the legacies of white supremacy and anti-blackness that live in language.

Sensuous abstraction registers this violent erasure without representing it directly. And yet, its affective movements literalize and materialize the shapes that Spillers so vividly invokes—the grids, the folds, the burrows of collective memory that endure in the face of wounded kinship. In part, then, sensuous abstraction is a symptom of Gladman's "double consciousness," of what she describes as the experience of moving through language while simultaneously perceiving herself as doing so.[32] Double consciousness affords a measure of fugitive potentiality, which is not necessarily reparative. In fact, fugitive potential can be just as confusing for the writer as the elision that conditions it. In Gladman's words:

> What disorients my narrators, what creates the obstacles they endure, are, in fact, these revenants of other possible stories that hide within language. There is a trace of a bridge or a memory of a bridge without there ever having been a bridge in that story.[33]

The aesthetic harbors queer traces of relationality that, strictly speaking, never existed. The pressure of these stories hidden within language is the reason why Gladman finds herself "expect[ing] a different mode of expression than English provides."[34] They are real, albeit inaccessible. Importantly, Gladman does not "comb [her] mind for their traces" of her "displaced origins, that unmappable first land and unutterable first language."[35] Instead, she focuses on the "structural and philosophical implications of their absence.

How these ghosts make voids and reflective surfaces within language, the very means of one's self-determination."[36] This is why, when reflecting on Gladman's work, Fred Moten asks: "Is there refuge in the sentence? Is there an underground railroad in the sentence?"[37] These are open questions for Gladman, too. This is also why her sensual abstraction moves "not so much into incomprehension but into an exploration of comprehension's stakes and chances."[38] Gladman does not throw up her hands—in relief, or in horror—at the chaos of signification. Rather, as Moten contends, she probes how language's insubordination might be "in the interest of the common or of the undercommon, each part subordinate to the other, indebted to the other."[39] The problem of relationality is thus key to Gladman's sensuous abstraction—the relations of poetry to prose, word to image, language to subjectivity, present to past, Blackness to queerness, self to other, and so on.

Of course, these are all distinct relations, but Gladman's linework draws our eye to the figures of relationality that underlie and arrange these terms. This is why, for example, she is acutely interested in the "fold" as a shape that emerges through a material (like paper) or a practice (like drawing). Folds create creases, bends, and lines. They demarcate a terrain, but they also laminate layers onto one another. Sensuous abstraction slows the temporality of this process. The accumulations of linework, in this stretched temporality, make apparent thresholds of convergence between language and other forms—visual, cognitive, corporeal, and social. As Gladman writes in *Calamities*, "drawing was a way to think with the body and writing was the story of the body in thought."[40] At the same time, sensuous abstraction expresses the affective disorientations of the Black queer writer, abducted into a language that severs her kinships with Black histories, stories, subjects, and tongues. Linework traces the imprint of this foundational and ongoing erasure.

As we will see in the next section, linework also unfurls queerer figures for kinship in the folds of the present. To be sure, abstraction gives precedence to forms over people, but depersonalization also makes the shapes of belonging more apparent. In this regard, Gladman recalls Gilles Deleuze's description of minoritized art in which "the people are missing."[41] When the colonizer declares, "There have never been people here," the missing people "invent themselves, in shanty towns and camps, or in ghettos, in new conditions of struggle to which a necessarily political art must contribute."[42] The absence of people, selves, or subjects, then, may not be a refusal of social engagement but an attempt to conjure collectivity in a different forms. Note that Ravicka "wanted to be land first, then environments, then people. It wanted to be architecture then people. It wanted trees, architecture, people. Building first, then people."[43] Linework does not retreat into the cold disembodiment of Euclidean geometry; it yearns for people, but it foregrounds the formal preconditions for their gathering into a legible collectivity. By rendering people

in the abstract, Black queer kinaesthetics attunes us to the shapes of belonging, which—as it knows all too well—can be drawn otherwise.

Queer Throughlines and Kinship in the Fold

At one point in *Calamities*, Gladman asks a group of her ex-lovers to "map a problem of space."[44] But before they can tackle the problem of space, another problem arises. The problem is not "the anxiety of whether they could or could not draw," nor whether "it was even possible to translate 'problems' into lines."[45] Linework, in other words, is not the problem. It is whether or not, as one ex insists, "the 'point' should be our vehicle of expression ('not the line') since it was the point that was the base of all communication."[46] Gladman wants to agree, given that the point "seemed to be the originary gesture of all movement."[47] Yet she observes that "though the point may be the base of all communication, it could not function *as* the base, because most people did not begin looking at points until they became lines."[48] Points may or may not have ontological priority, but we only perceive them once they are lined up, or as a line moves across them. The point is not the throughline. It becomes visible by virtue of a throughline's trajectory across time and space.

Of course, queerness is often thought to oppose such geometric forms. After all, what could be straighter than a straight line? Lines are thought to "straighten out" queer kinks in chronology.[49] Points on a line become an endpoint—a future-oriented, reproductive telos which queerness, in turn, shatters, fissures, or explodes.[50] Yet the throughline points beyond individual bodies and single events toward their unfurling movements—to gestures and articulations that create relationality over time. By privileging the line over the point, then, Gladman rejects a static and bounded economy of individualism; instead, the line foregrounds the dynamic shapes that accumulate through bodies in relation.

These shapes offer a linearity without lineage; they trace geometric kinships outside heteronormative genealogy, as *Calamities* suggests by grounding its theory of linework within a queer gathering of exes. Crucially, the geometric does not stand still, frozen above the field of relation—it moves. For example, Gladman wakes beside her lover, Danielle, and narrates the moment as "lying beside something that was geometric but also a poem."[51] Gladman then describes herself as "a shape but one where everything inside me was in motion and I was trying to hold it mathematically, trying to be a pattern in the world."[52] In these moments, the specificities of race, gender, and sexuality, among other vectors of embodied relation, are opaque. Yet sensuous abstraction also captures the fraught and complicated pleasures of being in relation and attempting to find kinaesthetic figures that do not reduce its affective potential.

This tension between figuration and affect is especially clear when Gladman depicts herself walking with friends toward the subway after dinner. She observes:

> Somehow it was only the black people who'd been in attendance that remained in our group. We walked along 23rd Street and I called a person and counted off the number of black people with me. I counted seven, narratively. This was astounding, but I didn't tell the other black people what I was thinking, only that person. This was anti-narrative. But clearly I was happy, as this configuration of blackness did not occur for me in the lonely little white city that I'd fled, thus was narrative. But within that, an anti-narrative moment, when I had to remind myself that it wasn't the little city that was white but rather the neighborhood in which I'd chosen to live. Imagine my surprise when I found it was possible to be both narrative and anti-narrative at the same time, which was like being a little overwhelmed in a large crowd. I was again pointed to a problem of time, or rather, space in time (it was hard to figure).[53]

In this scene, Gladman delights in a momentary and surprising respite from the suffocating omnipresence of whiteness. This unexpected "configuration of blackness" takes the shape of a countable group walking together in public. Yet the kinaesthetic struggles to hold on to the group as a form before it is lost in the crowd. Gladman never quite defines narrative or anti-narrative and the terms become increasingly abstract as they accumulate. But their collision demonstrates how it is "hard to figure" relationality in time and space without one collapsing into the other. Indeed, Gladman asks "How would I escape this crowd, but just to get outside it?"[54] The calamity ends with her "looking literally into the face of the question of narrative, which was the emptiness of my apartment and the long stretch of day that lay ahead."[55] In the present, Gladman is back in the "lonely little white city" and literally alone in her apartment. The question of narrative, here, is how to extend the queer and distinctively Black pleasure of a briefly happy group, all too quickly dispersed.

If kinaesthetics stress the ephemerality of belonging, they can also capture the historical durability of a particular mode of queer engroupment. Take, for example, another important scene of eating and socializing. Gladman brings Danielle to a cookout with her exes, but Danielle struggles to understand the relational economy around the table. Gladman tries to explain

> What it was like to be a lesbian in the 90s and why there were so many ex-girlfriends around who were often in committed relationships with other ex-girlfriends of yours as well as one or two others in the room, these others also being ex-girlfriends of other friends there, not friends you ever

> slept with but friends between whom floated some strange tension, residual of something that happened fifteen years ago, which no one remembers but which everyone holds vigil. And how one of these people might suddenly grill peaches with mint, causing us all to gather around the table.[56]

As Gladman's dependent clauses cascade, they figure the dependencies that give form to queer kinship. These relations are sensuously abstract—their events are not legible or recollected as memory, yet an affective residue remains alive and strangely palpable through their unfolding. The queerness of kinship does not only lie in the mixture of sex and friendship, or eroticism and care, or their unofficial and unsanctioned temporalities. It also resides in the throughlines that cross each relationship, that spread the economy of relation, almost exponentially, across time. Danielle does not understand this relational economy because she "[grew] up with better boundaries in another part of the country."[57] As such, she cannot understand how it was to live in a "decade where we just couldn't burn our bridges, where we built bridges on top of ruined bridges, and lived in an elaborate architecture of trying and failing to try then at the last minute trying."[58] Here, the language of architectural design highlights the accumulation of forms—of bridges ruined and rebuilt, again and again, out of historical and political and interpersonal necessity. The bridge becomes a path to somewhere else, a throughline, suspended and sustained in the elaborate crossings of people that gather into relation with one another.

Queer kinship is thus marked by a necessary ineffability. This is not to say it lacks form—on the contrary, it needs form, but these forms may not always be legible as kinship. This ineffability demands queer modes of sustenance over time, ways of navigating conflict that also preserve—if not resolve, repair, or redeem—relationality. In other words, kinship needs dependence and durability more than its needs legibility or recognizability, and the latter do not guarantee the former. At the cookout, "a person who was now in love with my best friend's ex-lover, my best friend who was once an old love, but is now my friend Chubby who has Kristy and kids" prepares grilled peaches with a balsamic reduction.[59] Note that, in Gladman's hands, people are palimpsests—marked by folds of relationality that change shape without, precisely, shattering. The continuous torsion on the throughline is more important than where it appears to begin or end, arrive or recede. Chubby is absent at this gathering, but "wanted to be remembered and placed fondly in the center of any photos that were taken and was happy to be a cardboard cutout in these photos."[60] Chubby is content to "to get a smear of the peaches, even just a whiff of the ribs."[61] Presence or absence are less important to queer kinship than the kinaesthetic gestures that fold bodies into the scene of relation. A sensuous smear of balsamic peaches on the lips of an abstract cutout may do just as well as actually eating the food.

Calamities goes so far as to suggest that sensuous abstraction can illuminate the latent queerness of relational economies that might otherwise pass as heteronormative or simply bureaucratic. For example, Gladman finds herself in a university meeting where "everyone had been with everyone and was now with someone else in the room."[62] She wonders about "all the people who were outside of the room, who also could be added to this map of loving or sexing, who were not here because they didn't belong to this institution yet belonged to this network of lovers."[63] Gladman fantasizes about bringing this network into the room, so they can be "together with the stories of their past relations."[64] In one of many hilarious asides, Gladman observes: "I had a quest, and it was in service of my colleagues, but it was not the kind of service valued by the university."[65] *Calamities* figures the university as a bureaucratic space for endless and seemingly pointless meetings, a "series of gates" that disorient some and necessarily exclude others, and a place where classes are fraught with passive aggression and confusion, for students and teachers alike.[66] Yet throughout *Calamities*, Gladman has intimations of alternative maps of relationality, sensual and intimate, which could be folded on to the seemingly disembodied relationality dictated by the university. If she fulfills this quest, however, Gladman wonders where this will leave her as a Black queer woman, given that she has not slept with these people, or read the books that document their affairs. "What would I do while they were reminiscing," she wonders, "and what would I do?"[67]

At stake in this question is the racialized and gendered relationship between insiders and outsiders to the map of lovers and to its accumulations of form. Does one stand outside of it, like Gladman does in this instance or Danielle does at the cookout? Or does one become a part of it simply by narrating it, or being narrated in relation to it, even if this may dissolve the group back into a crowd? Gladman does not provide an answer. This is key, because sensuous abstraction enables us to perceive the tensions on the throughlines of Black queer kinaesthetics. Gladman's kinaesthetic keeps open the expansive possibilities of relationality while insisting, too, that dislocation and disorientation are irreducible—and unevenly distributed—facts of social belonging.

The Accumulation of Forms

Gladman's work always seems to outgrow her design. First described as a trilogy, the Ravicka project now numbers four novels, and it may be ongoing. *Calamities* contains what Gladman calls (after Rosmarie Waldrop's misremembered translation of Edmond Jabès) a "book at the back of the book."[68] The last forty pages of *Calamities* are labeled "The Eleven Calamities," but the chapters actually total fourteen. If this is a paradox, it is a paradox of shape—of things not quite fitting into the forms one anticipates. As the

writing or drawing accumulates, these forms re-form—not into a shapelessness but into different shapes, different organizations. The accumulations of form remind us of the queerness of desire: it never quite results in what we expect.

For Gladman, the accumulation of form is definitive of the aesthetic's relentless desire to move—to trace lines that live and bind fields we tend to think are distinct. This aesthetic ontology is especially evident when Gladman describes the language that emerges through drawing. It unfolds a "language with its skin peeled back."[69] In Gladman's words:

> It was like a live wire set loose, a hot wire, burning, leaving trace. If you looked into language this way, you saw where it burned, the map it made. The wire was a line, but because it was electrified it wouldn't lie still: it thrashed, it burned, it curled and uncurled around itself. It was a line but one that moved, sometimes forward, but mostly up then back then over itself then out then up then curling in one place until the mark grew dark then out forward and up into a rectangle then inside the rectangle and around, circling with small, tight movements.[70]

This figure for language recalls Gladman's desire for "a book about prose, pleats between sentences, the lip of a paragraph, the loose skin of reading."[71] She hopes that Deleuze's *The Fold* will be this book, but she is confused and disappointed after reading it. Perhaps this is because Deleuze's lines are lines in flight and on the run, while Gladman's curl—like lips, like pleats—becoming rectangles and circles and other geometric structures of relation as they fold back over and accumulate traces. These lines cannot "be read," but as Gladman stresses,

> I felt the story in my body. It was as experimental as everything else. I made the line while talking in my head, which was what I did while I wrote. So I was writing, but it was drawing that had accumulated.[72]

Here the accumulation of forms makes palpable the intimacies of writing and drawing—their story becomes sensed through the body, opening it up to new angles of relation.

If linework is "as experimental as everything else," then the queer relationality of writing and drawing is not just similar to the relationality of kinship: they quite literally depend on one another.[73] They share a *kinaesthetic ontology*; their lines uncurl and twist together and unfurl strange designs that archive the social lives of relationality. Sensuous abstraction makes these queer lines of belonging apparent. At the same time, it underlines that Black queer kinaesthetics cannot be untethered from their histories of violence and stigma, of desire and dependence. Those histories may not be read—but their traces accumulate and take shape nonetheless.

Notes

1 Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 102.
2 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 159; Moten, *In the Break*, 192.
3 *Obergefell et al. vs. Hodges, Director, Ohio Department of Health, et al.*, 576 U.S. 644 (2015).
4 On relational formalism, see Bradway, "Queer Narrative Theory and the Relationality of Form."
5 Freeman, *The Wedding Complex*, 98. On queer kinaesthetics, also see Freeman, "Queer Belongings"; Freeman, *Beside You in Time*; and Bradway and Freeman, eds., *Queer Kinship*.
6 See also Doyle and Getsy, "Queer Formalism"; and Fawaz, *Queer Forms*.
7 Amin, Musser, and Pérez, "Queer Form," 227.
8 Amin, Musser, and Pérez, "Queer Form," 227. Original emphasis.
9 Harper, *Abstractionist Aesthetics*. On the queer work of abstraction, also see Getsy, *Abstract Bodies*; and Ashton Cooper et al., "Queer Abstraction: A Roundtable." For a brilliant analysis of queer of color aesthetics that contest the visual logics of white supremacy, see Musser, *Sensual Excess*.
10 On these relations, see Bradway, *Queer Experimental Literature*.
11 On the importance of abstraction to political formalism, see especially Kornbluh, *The Order of Forms*, whose incisive discussion of "social geometry" resonates with mine below.
12 Dean, Foster, and Silverman, "A Conversation with Leo Bersani," 11.
13 Kaja Silverman quoted in Dean, Foster, and Silverman, "A Conversation with Leo Bersani," 9.
14 Kaja Silverman quoted in Dean, Foster, and Silverman, "A Conversation with Leo Bersani," 13, 14.
15 For a convergent analysis of geometric forms, see Snediker, "Is the Rectangle a Grave?".
16 See Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*; Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*.
17 Gladman cites a vast number of modernist and postmodernist influences on her work, including writers such as Samuel Beckett, Anne Carson, Samuel Delany, Julio Cortázar, Gail Scott, Michal Ajvaz, and others noted below. Her attention to the phenomenology of language recalls feminist experimentalists such as Gertrude Stein and Lyn Hejinian. Her fascination with the intersections of narrative and poetry, particularly their sensual and queer dimensions, echoes with the New Narrative movement, exemplified by writers such as Kathy Acker, Robert Glück, and Chris Kraus.
18 Chevaillier, *Divergent Trajectories*, 73.
19 Chevaillier, *Divergent Trajectories*, 73.
20 Chevaillier, *Divergent Trajectories*, 73.
21 Chevaillier, *Divergent Trajectories*, 73.
22 On queer form in the Ravicka series, see McCallum.
23 Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 13.
24 Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 13.
25 Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, 13.
26 Gladman, *Calamities*, 112.
27 Gladman, *Calamities*, 112.
28 Gladman, *Calamities*, 112.
29 Gladman, "The Sentence," 92.
30 Gladman, "The Sentence," 100.
31 Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 72, 69.
32 Gladman, "The Sentence," 93.

33 Gladman, "The Sentence," 101.
34 Gladman, "The Sentence," 92.
35 Gladman, "The Sentence," 93.
36 Gladman, "The Sentence," 93.
37 Moten, "Afterword," 112.
38 Moten, "Afterword," 111.
39 Moten, "Afterword," 114.
40 Gladman, *Calamities*, 90.
41 Deleuze, *Cinema II: The Time-Image*, 217.
42 Deleuze, *Cinema II: The Time-Image*, 217.
43 Gladman, *Calamities*, 52.
44 Gladman, *Calamities*, 17.
45 Gladman, *Calamities*, 17.
46 Gladman, *Calamities*, 17.
47 Gladman, *Calamities*, 17.
48 Gladman, *Calamities*, 17. Original emphasis.
49 See Hanson, "Kink in Time."
50 See Edelman, *No Future*. For a relevant alternative reading of linearity, see Brinkema, *The Forms of the Affects*.
51 Gladman, *Calamities*, 60.
52 Gladman, *Calamities*, 60.
53 Gladman, *Calamities*, 9–10.
54 Gladman, *Calamities*, 10.
55 Gladman, *Calamities*, 10.
56 Gladman, *Calamities*, 83.
57 Gladman, *Calamities*, 83.
58 Gladman, *Calamities*, 83.
59 Gladman, *Calamities*, 84.
60 Gladman, *Calamities*, 84.
61 Gladman, *Calamities*, 84.
62 Gladman, *Calamities*, 79.
63 Gladman, *Calamities*, 84.
64 Gladman, *Calamities*, 80.
65 Gladman, *Calamities*, 79.
66 Gladman, *Calamities*, 66.
67 Gladman, *Calamities*, 80.
68 Gladman, *Calamities*, 108.
69 Gladman, *Calamities*, 102.
70 Gladman, *Calamities*, 103.
71 Gladman, *Calamities*, 84.
72 Gladman, *Calamities*, 105.
73 Gladman, *Calamities*, 105.

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PART THREE

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10

"A QUEER INDEFINITE WAY"

Richard Bruce Nugent, Nella Larsen, and New Negro Indeterminacy

GerShun Avilez

In recent scholarship, the Harlem or New Negro Renaissance of the 1920s and '30s has become a significant site for examining Black same-sex desire and gender nonconformity. The critical community has begun to appreciate how the New Negro is also often the "Queer" Negro. However, it is not only nonnormative expressions of desire that make possible this assessment. Throughout the work of the period, there is a sustained questioning of the assumed parameters of this space of re-defined racial and gender identity. At the precise moment that there is a declaration of the New Negro, there are anxieties about the means for articulating Black embodiment. I turn to the fiction of Richard Bruce Nugent and Nella Larsen to think through the significance of queer desire and to examine how investigations of gender ideologies undergird the articulation of the New Negro. This newness is not just about a desire for a different self; it is a demand for new ways of expressing personhood. In this chapter, I use the recently emerged paradigm Queer of Color Critique (QOCC) to illuminate the complex ways Black Modernist writers approached questions of desire and identity. The basic contention of QOCC is that there is a dialectical relationship between racist discourses and gender and sexual ideologies: "racist practice articulates itself generally as gender and sexual regulation" and "gender and sexual differences variegate racial formations."[1] Adding to this understanding of the mutually constitutive synergy among race, gender, and sex, QOCC uses same-sex desire and the positionality of the nonnormative figure to evaluate social dynamics and ways of reading bodies that inform these dynamics. It is through a focus on desire and positionality that I reveal a narrative emphasis on indeterminacy—meaning being not definitely determined or fixed, which gets figured as the questioning of conventions and the rejection of definitive boundaries of

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identity.[2] This indeterminacy becomes a defining element of the New Negro Renaissance. Although it can appear to suggest a flouting of restriction, indeterminacy is often shaped by gender ideologies, as I will illustrate through a comparison of the writing of Nugent and Larsen. These writers use indeterminacy to craft queer characters and grant them a kind of social freedom, but one comes to find that the access to this freedom has parameters imbued with questions of sex and gender.

The New Negro Renaissance was a period from around 1920 through the years surrounding the Great Depression, and it marks a significant shift in African American expressive culture. Regardless of the designation, it is arguably one of the most well-known and most-studied periods of Black artistic production in the United States. It describes the art, activism, and social activities by African Americans attempting to re-imagine Black identity, undermine White supremacy, and garner recognition of Black intellectual and creative ability. Following the Great War (1914–1918), there was a general sense of liberation and newness that permeated US culture, and this feeling was especially apparent among African Americans. The Great Migration (1916–1940), the movement of African Americans out of the south to urban centers in the north and midwest US, enhanced this post-war feeling of possibility. The new opportunities, both imagined and real, lay at the foundation of the exact notion of the "New Negro," which writer and art patron Alain Locke used to describe the artwork of this time period in 1925.[3] That being said, the New Negro formulation is not necessarily about mere optimism and limitless possibility for Black subjects. It is more about a yearning for a new sense of identity: a "New" social conception in place of an "Old" one readily linked to stereotypes and restricted life choices. We can think of the protagonists of Nugent's and Larsen's fictions as attempts to query the possibilities for a New Negro subjecthood through unconventional subjects and desires.

Richard Bruce Nugent was born in Washington, DC, on July 2, 1906, into a "high-pedigree" and light-complexioned family on his mother's side (The Washington Bruces), who had been free since the 1700s, and a slightly darker-complexioned family on his father's side, who were formerly enslaved and had been cut off from near kin by slave sales and had not been part of Washington society. At a young age, he got introduced to important African American artists and socialites including Alain Locke and Georgia Douglas Johnson in DC and Langston Hughes, Wallace Thurman, and Carl Van Vechten after his mother moved him and his brother to New York. Biographer and close friend Thomas H. Wirth describes Nugent as "a young, eccentric genius struggling for recognition" during the early period of the Renaissance.[4] As he made his way in and out of circles of artists and socialites, he did little to hide his sexual attraction to men, and he tended toward the scandalous. His writing and visual art, published and unpublished, consistently explores

eroticism and questioned the conventions that govern social relations. His most publicized and recognized piece is his short story "Smoke, Lilies, and Jade," which appeared in the magazine *Fire!!* in 1926. This magazine, which was the brainchild of Nugent and Langston Hughes, was meant to feature the work of younger artists and showcase writing and art that would push the boundaries of what was considered respectable in the Black public media. The group of collaborators, which included Nugent, Hughes, Thurman, Aaron Douglas, Zora Neale Hurston, Gwendolyn Bennett, and John P. Davis, were out to challenge and upset the realm of Black aesthetic production.[5]

Nugent's contribution, "Smoke, Lilies, and Jade," is a remarkable experiment in narrative form as well as a frank treatment of homoeroticism and bisexuality. The primary narrative follows the character Alex as he goes about his life. His father has just passed away, and he is attempting to come to terms with this loss and make sense of his relationship with his mother. He is also negotiating his multiple paths of desires, and he comes to understand himself as a budding artist in the context of many famous artist friends. Alex is a bit of a flâneur, who moves without definite purpose through different spaces quite rapidly—the transitions between spaces often feel imperceptible so that space, like time, feels compressed. Desire and self-determination are the central concerns of the piece.

The search for self is presented through a curious narrative structure. Nugent relies on a stream-of-consciousness style that creates a quick pace and a feeling of uncertainty about the actions of the central character. In addition, this style is made possible by the heavy use of ellipses throughout the story. The piece is filled with these punctuation marks; there are some on every line. The segments of text that the ellipses interrupt does not necessarily form complete thoughts or specific images. They haltingly break up the prose making the piece as a whole difficult to read. There is no other form of punctuation in "Smoke, Lilies, and Jade," particularly no periods. The piece does not seem to have end points or clear transitions in time or space outside of vague descriptions of movement. This lack of temporal clarity makes Nugent's short story have the hazy uncertainty of a dream throughout—there is a section that seems to be an actual dream.[6] Adding to this sense of near atemporality and the lack of closure is the fact that the short story ends with the statement "… *To Be Continued* …," which is italicized in the original, drawing textual emphasis to the fact that there is no end to the search for desire. The piece exists somewhere in the murky terrain between a short story and a prose poem. The experimental structure, particularly the play with syntax, stream of consciousness, and temporal confusion that suggests the notion of a continuous present, is highly reminiscent of Gertrude Stein's writing in *The Making of Americans*, which was published in 1925. Like Stein, Nugent sought to manipulate traditional narrative structure in his approach to his subject, which for him was Black identity.

One of the most important elements of this short story is the elliptical representation of sexual intimacy between two men. While walking along the street, Alex meets an enchanting man named Adrian, whom he refers to as "Beauty" throughout most of the narrative. Their intimacy becomes the focus of the piece as well as a means for Alex's rumination on his sense of self:

> Alex turned in his doorway…up the stairs and the stranger waited for him to light the room…no need for words…they had always known each other… …as they undressed by the blue dawn…Alex knew he had never seen a more perfect body…his body was all symmetry and music…and Alex called him Beauty…long they lay…blowing smoke and exchanging thoughts…and Alex swallowed with difficulty…he felt a glow of tremor… they talked and…slept…[…] he felt the bed sink as Beauty lay beside him…his lips were dry…hot…the palms of his hands so moist and cool… Alex closed his eyes…from beneath his lashes he could see Beauty's face over his…nearer…nearer…Beauty's hair touched his forehead now…he could feel his breath on his nostrils and lips…Beauty's breath came short… breathe normally Beauty…breathe normally…Beauty's lips touched his… pressed hard…cool…opening slightly…Alex opened his eyes…into Beauty's parted his lips…Dulce…Beauty's breath was hot and short…Alex ran his hand through Beauty's hair…Beauty's lips pressed hard against his teeth…Alex trembled…could feel Beauty's body…close against …hot… tense…white…and soft…soft…soft……[7]

Without ever saying it directly, Nugent represents same-sex physical intimacy. It is important to take note of the nicknames that Alex and Adrian have for each other. Alex calls Adrian "Beauty" and Adrian call Alex "Dulce," which in Spanish can mean sweet, candy, or gentle. Both sobriquets emphasize the sensorial, the visual in terms of "Beauty" and the gustatory and tactile in terms of "Dulce." The focus on the sensorial is a way to highlight the body, the space surrounding it, and the intimate interaction of bodies. A central concern of QOCC is how to make sense of the queer body as it moves through space and engages other bodies. In thinking about this emphasis on bodies, I describe this passage as having frank eroticism, while also acknowledging the purposeful obscurity that is juxtaposed with direct descriptions of physical closeness. Nugent approaches directness ("lips touched," "pressed hard against his") short of being absolutely direct. The ellipses take the place of more explicit presentations of body parts and sensuality while also enhancing the intensity of the moments through sudden breaks and suggestions. We see this intimacy, but we see it as if through a cloud of the titular smoke. Certain actions and moments are obscured while others catch our eyes, titillating and teasing the reader through acts of showing and cloaking moist flesh. Nugent uses the short story as an opportunity to offer an extended

portrayal of male same-sex intimacy. However, his narrative method is one that relies upon indeterminacy.

This same-sex intimacy functions to quell or at least displace some of Alex's anxieties. Alex is a character with a number of concerns. Most prominently, the story opens with the memory of the death of his father, when his mother told him that he now had to be a "little man." Alex remembers not feeling right about the death; he did not feel "at all [how] one should feel when one's father died."[8] He keeps emphasizing that it does not feel "tragic" and that there is nothing "dramatic" about this loss. I read this emphasis on the lack of tragedy and dramatic loss as a purposeful allusion to William Dean Howell's assessment of Charles Chesnutt's work as "touching all the stops of real tragedy, comedy and pathos" in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1900.[9] Howells, the novelist and literary critic known as the "Dean of American Letters," was incredibly influential to many writers including Chesnutt, who was one of the most prominent African American writers before the New Negro Renaissance. His assessment of Chesnutt's work would later inform James Weldon Johnson's reading of late nineteenth-century African American writing as well as other understandings of the major features of this writing as the new century emerged. Nugent's references to tragedy and pathos at the beginning of the story are purposeful. He recalls Howells's praise of Chesnutt's work as the story begins to stage a rejection of older critical conceptions of African American writing through his protagonist's uncharacteristic affective response. It is the veritable "old Negro" (the father) that passes away making space for a "new" one (the son) in the death that opens the story, signaling a transition to a new era of representation, but not one without possible challenges. The framing of the story represents a call for a new subject as well as a demand for new ways of reading Black subjectivity.

It is also worth noting that upon the death of the father, Alex's mother puts certain gender expectations on him. He must become a "little man." This assertion suggests the end of childhood and the cessation of a sense of play, pleasure, discovery, and adventure to take up responsibility. However, it also indicates the need for conforming to a certain gender role. The loss of the father is a loss of gender possibilities and flexibility to be replaced by a stable and set heteropatriarchy. This command sends Alex running as his thoughts depart from family and transition to friends, dreams, and jewelry and eventually just unrestrained movement along a street. He appears to escape the impress of her wishes. One way of reading the story is as a textual attempt to move away from this primal command that seeks to define and confine Alex's identity in relationship to his departed father toward a more undefined and unmoored life. This rejection that emerges as mobility reflects a desire not to be determined by gender and kinship parameters; he seeks indeterminacy or a space away from tradition and propriety. In fact, the narrative form itself might be read as registering on the page the exact notion of

disconnection in hopes of creating space—as the ellipses create excessive space on the page—for a different and perhaps "queer" (in contemporary parlance) sense of self.

Nugent is most interested in creating narrative space for alternative modes of Black being, which begins in terms of emotional reaction but transitions to being about sensory perception and embodiment. At one point, Alex reflects on the experience of passing by a woman—likely a sex worker—on the street. As he walks by her, a waft of her perfume draws his attention. The text explains,

> the breeze gave to him a perfume stolen from some wandering lady of the evening…it pleased him…why was it that men wouldn't use perfume… they should…each and everyone of them liked perfume…the man that denied that was a liar…or a coward…but if ever he were to voice that thought…express it…he would be misunderstood.[10]

Once again, Nugent turns to the sensorial, here the olfactory, to draw attention to the body and physical intimacy. Alex opines that if men like perfume—the fact that they are drawn to it serves as evidence of this fact—it is curious that they do not choose to wear it themselves. He does not understand why they would deny themselves pleasure or make that pleasure dependent upon someone else's decision to wear perfume. He asks, why not give yourself control of your desire? In making his statement, Alex situates the circuit of desire that perfume initiates and embodies within the space of the male body solely rather than in a dual-sexed circuit. By wearing perfume, a man would encircle his desires around himself; the male body would be the source *and* object of attraction. This point about men wearing perfume with its rerouting of desire through sensation toward the male body foreshadows the male same-sex intimacy featured later in the story.[11]

In insisting that men should wear perfume or at least state the wish to do so, Alex is not only pushing for desire centered around a male body; he is also imagining the possibility of cross-gender identification. His point is not that men should use scented oils (colognes) and potions, but that men should wear *perfume*, which we understand socially to be a product for bodies that we align with femininity and feminine expression. From a heteronormative standpoint, there is something nonsensical about a man wearing perfume because cisgender male identity is most often defined in contradiction to notions of femininity. It is for this reason that Alex is certain that a man who voices a desire to wear perfume would be "misunderstood." Here, "misunderstood" connotes being unrecognizable and even illegible because of our common ways of reading gender expression on bodies. He is saying that the person and their body would be mis-read. A man wearing perfume blurs the boundaries that we have for gender expression. The story intimates that there

is a dearth of language for a desire that materializes cross-gender identification. What Nugent is pointing to is a nonnormative expression of identity. The statement gestures toward gender nonconformity as well as nonnormative desire. "Smoke, Lilies, and Jade" questions the protocols of gender expression and, in doing so, creates an opportunity to use a trans analytic to assess elements the story. My goal is not necessarily to read Alex as a trans figure. Instead, following the insights of C. Riley Snorton, I want to argue that this artistic interrogation of gender expectations attempts to ungender Blackness, meaning to make it "differently conceivable as a kind of being in the world where gender—though biologized—was not fixed but fungible, which is to say, revisable, within blackness, as a condition of possibility."[12] Nugent's Alex desires this condition of possibility through a fungible gender expression.[13]

What Nugent's work teaches us is that sexual desire and nonnormativity become important paths for articulating the New Negro. Elsewhere I have discussed the reluctance on the part of African American writers during the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century to talk about Black sexual desire because of stereotypes of Black subjects as overly sexual or as sexually perverse.[14] There is a genuine shift at the beginning of the twentieth century to re-imagine Black identity through transgressive acts. One can locate a desire to question and undermine the politics of respectability that had informed much of African American cultural production and activism.[15] A. B. Christ Schwarz insists that the editors of *Fire!!* wanted to voice their dissatisfaction with conservative and traditional ways of rendering Blackness, were interested in the transgression of "moral and aesthetic boundaries," and believed that transgressive sexuality offered one device for doing that kind of work.[16] Therefore, redefining the ways of representing "the Negro" meant embracing sexual expression and eschewing conventional ideas about morality and foregrounding physical pleasure. In other words, the "New Negro" was in many cases not just a queer one but a *queered* one.

Part of what queering the "Negro" as a frame for reading Black bodies and articulating Black identity means is embracing and valuing indeterminacy. The openness and fluidity explored in the piece in terms of form and content become representations of the very notion of queer as it is often used today, but more importantly through these elements, Nugent makes the case for the value of indeterminacy. For Nugent, indeterminacy becomes a means of freeing oneself from more restrictive notions of masculinity and desire. It is important to note that although Alex has an intimate encounter with Beauty, he is also attracted to and kisses the woman character Melva. As the story draws to its end, he says "one *can* love two at the same time" after Melva kisses him.[17] His physical encounters with both Beauty and Melva reflect bisexual desire and perhaps identity, but more importantly, illustrate an investment in openness and possibility and an insistence on freedom to do

as one wishes regardless of what might be deemed to be socially acceptable or respectable. Nugent emphasizes the word "can" as a declaration of the ability to decide for oneself how one moves through the world. Indeterminacy, which I insist is a key feature of the story, here has less to do with that which is unknown and more about a wish to transgress or defy boundaries that define identity and circumvent willfulness and paths of desire. Again, Alex is a flâneur. He is characterized by movement and motion throughout "Smoke, Lilies, and Jade." He is not working. He avoids familial obligations. He is an artist but not yet recognized for his talents, so he is frustrated. Accordingly, he seeks out satisfaction through physical intimacy, intimacy that might be considered to be socially unacceptable. He is in constant motion away from any person or social expectation that might seek to control him. Nugent crafts a character of indeterminacy to imagine a measure of freedom for this Black male character. The ellipses make manifest the exact notion of indeterminacy (something may be missing) while also creating space for possibility (there are limitless options). Alex has an open-ended freedom of movement that contributes to his queer sensibility. He is a figure of indeterminacy through which Nugent can question convention and imagine new ways of writing Blackness in the twentieth century.

Although she is older than Nugent and not a part of the *Fire!!* clique, Nella Larsen produces fiction that also contains elements of queer desire and reflects a narrative investment in indeterminacy.[18] In her writing, circuits of desire and nonnormative bodies become devices for critiquing traditional ways of thinking while gesturing toward new possibilities for Black subjects. However, Larsen is a bit more cautious about the possibilities for the New Negro framework, especially in regard to the lives of women. Larsen was a figure defined by self-fashioning and was sometimes shrouded in mystery—of her own creation. According to the biographical statement published alongside her first novel, she was a "mulatto, the daughter of a Danish lady and a Negro from the Virgin Islands," and was born in 1891. She published her first novel *Quicksand* in March 1928 and quickly followed with her second *Passing* in April 1929. This level of productivity, two novels in just over a year, made her one of the most successful and acclaimed Black novelists of the period. Larsen was a key novelist of her historical moment, and she wanted people to think of her that way—she publicly called herself a "novelist" well before she had anything written.[19]

Larsen's novels are vital to understanding the goals of the New Negro aesthetic. One finds in her fiction an identification with and critical appraisal of the concept of the New Negro and the gendered ideas that buttress it. She presents this dual investment through images of Black female indeterminacy, a technique that challenges the hold of heteropatriarchy while also undermining the modernist investment in the "new" as something that might not be possible. Larsen queries whether such "newness" is available to all bodies.

Specifically, the novel *Quicksand*, published two years after "Smoke, Lilies, and Jade," reveals the period's complex thinking around racial, gender, and sexual embodiment and proposes ideological critique as the defining component of Black modernism. In the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss both *Quicksand* and *Passing*, but will spend more time talking about Larsen's first novel and its portrayal of the queerness of New Negro womanhood.

Like Nugent, Larsen engaged the ideas and artistic strategies of Modernist artists such as Gertrude Stein, James Joyce, and Joseph Conrad. In addition, developing ideas in psychology about unconscious drives, instinct, and impulses by thinkers such as Sigmund Freud and Otto Rank had a significant influence on the thinking and approaches of artists of this period generally and Larsen specifically. In fact, Larsen's fictions have often been considered to be psychological novels.[20] *Passing* reflects this turn to drives and interiority and actively alludes to the motif of racial passing, which had recurred in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century African American literature. Passing as a literary device is significant because it created the opportunity to explore the boundaries of racial identity, anti-miscegenation attitudes/laws, economic pressures that shape identity, and desires that may defy social custom. These are all ideas that emerge in Larsen's novel even though the novel does not limit itself to the act of racial passing. The novel hearkens back to this tradition, but takes the motif in different directions. *Passing* is less about the dilemmas of passing per se and more about the mental anguish of competing desires.

Adding to this point, both *Passing* and the earlier novel *Quicksand* build on but move dramatically away from the nineteenth-century trope of the "tragic mulatta/o" in African American fiction. Historically in literature, this mixed-race figure has been represented as being destined for death and devastation because of the embodied mixture of disparate, antagonistic bloods.[21] The character is bound for tragedy precisely because her bloods are imagined as being at war within her. The mixed-race or biracial figure in the twentieth century and in Larsen's fiction in particular is not one fated to a tragic destiny, though such outcomes do seemingly lie in wait for some of them. Instead of an emphasis on blood fate, twentieth-century authors explore the social dynamics that vex the lives of mixed-race figures. They are not tragic, but instead are placed in constricting and oppressive circumstances because of social investments in particular ideologies of race and gender. Larsen actively summons the historic understanding of the tragic mulatta in *Quicksand* only to dismiss tragedy as a way of reading the biracial figure. When she is in Denmark, the painter Axel Olsen creates a portrait of the protagonist Helga Crane, describes it as "the true Helga Crane," and says that, like her, it embodies "tragedy."[22] Helga angrily rejects this way of describing the painting and insists that it looks nothing like her. She proclaims that she is not tragic. Larsen repudiates the tragic mulatta paradigm in hopes of a new way

of reading minority womanhood, but she uses a racially indeterminate figure to do that cultural work. The narrative questions the inherited ways of reading biraciality and critiques dominant ideologies. Instead of using the biracial figure to illustrate an internal dilemma, Larsen turns outward to expose gender and racial ideologies that restrain identity.

One of the dominant features of Larsen's protagonist in *Quicksand* is that she is restless. In the novel, Helga is in search of a sense of self-definition and freedom, and every time she moves to a new place to discover it, she ends up being forced to confront someone else's expectations for her, and she becomes dissatisfied with where she is. She begins in Naxos (a school where she is teaching in Alabama) then moves to Chicago, then New York City, then Denmark, then back to New York, and ultimately to a tiny unnamed town in Alabama. On a grander geographical scale, she moves through space in a way similar to Nugent's Alex. I read Alex's movement as an indication of his nonnormative desire and embrace of indeterminacy. Similarly, Helga's movement helps to constitute her as a socially nonnormative or queer person. Her movements across different geographical spaces always derive from her refusal of conventional understandings of her gender and racial identity. She moves to elude the damaging presumptions about her as a Black woman, which is how she is read by society regardless of her heritage. Ideas and desires get projected onto her, and she responds by traveling. However, this representation of a queer movement, a movement away from expectations and convention, which seems to mirror Alex's own, features a difference in Larsen's novel that has everything to do with Larsen's sex, a contention to which I will return below.

Again, Helga's restlessness derives from the fact that she is seen as a queer figure. Queerness quite literally surrounds her. The word "queer" appears at least ten times in a novel that is about 130 pages long, and the word often appears in direct relation to Helga. Early on in the narrative, when thinking about her place at the school where she worked, she says that she "knew, in a queer indefinite way, [that she was] a disturbing factor."[23] Helga disturbs those spaces she inhabits because of her nonconformist behavior, which can be read as her queerness. This queerness ostensibly has less to do directly with transgressive desire than with the fact that her presence and way of being push against gender conventions. Much of the narrative is about her reluctance to follow established notions of womanhood and get married. She continually rejects the heteronormative impulse to marry and have children until the very end of the novel. In the third chapter, when the school principal Dr. Anderson tries to convince her to remain teaching at Naxos, he first appeals to her aesthetic sensibility (her "appreciation of the rarer things of life") to convince her of her value to the community.[24] This appeal begins to work because Helga is very concerned with aesthetic expressions of identity. However, Anderson goes on to add that Helga is a "lady" with "dignity and

breeding," who will be a good influence on the students. With these assertions, her decision to leave is made.[25] The calls to respectability and gendered propriety to her are loathsome because they simplify her identity, define her from without, and establish her identity as being dependent upon others.

Most of her actions in the novel involve her repudiation of any expectations of gendered decorum for middle-class and middle-class-aspiring women. However, the novel ends with her marrying a preacher and settling down to the exact kind of life that she had actively been avoiding. Exhausted by years of running from social expectations, she marries out of a desire to find some kind of happiness that she felt was eluding her for years. Helga ends up being saddled with children and trapped in her marital bed, stuck between her husband's unwanted sexual intimacy and a seemingly never-ending series of childbirths. The roles of wife and mother stop her movement literally. Motherhood and conventional femininity constitute the titular "quicksand" that subsumes her autonomous identity.

That being said, Larsen's novel is less a rejection of motherhood than an exposing and unsettling of the social expectations of women and what Ann DuCille would call the "coupling convention" or marriage plot that takes away options for women's lives while offering them to men.[26] Sex might be freeing for Nugent's Alex, but it carries a different kind of risk for Helga. Larsen reinforces that sexual desire may involve pleasure, but for women it may yield pregnancy as well as other obligations. Indeterminacy, the flouting of boundaries and conventions, ultimately is not a genuine possibility for Helga. She gets defined by a totalizing gender role and is unable to evade family expectations the way that Alex does. The impeding of her movement because of her gender curtails her social queerness.

Helga's disruptive social positionality is not the only source of her queerness. Larsen also uses the suggestion of same-sex attraction in her fiction to craft her characters. Deborah McDowell has famously made a convincing case of same-sex desire in Larsen's second novel. She argues that the novel, in part reflecting Larsen's interest in psychology, tracks the character Irene's repressed desire for Clare in *Passing*. According to McDowell, "Larsen envelops the subplot of Irene's developing, if unnamed and unacknowledged, desire for Clare in the safe and familiar plot of racial passing."[27] There are subtle suggestions of female same-sex desire in her first novel that find more narrative development in the second. We can see the emergence of this desire as Helga is dancing at a club in New York and then sees her old supervisor and possible suitor Dr. Anderson dance with another woman, Audrey Denney:

> She danced with grace and abandon, gravely, yet with obvious pleasure, her legs, her hips, her back, all swaying gently, swung by that wild music from the heart of the jungle. Helga turned her glance to Dr. Anderson. Her disinterested curiosity passed. While she still felt for the girl [Audrey]

> envious admiration, that feeling was now augmented by another, a more primitive emotion [desire]. She forgot the garish crowded room. She forgot her friends. She saw only two figures, closely clinging. She felt her heart throbbing. She felt the room receding. She went out the door. She climbed endless stairs. At last, panting, confused, but thankful to have escaped … A taxi drifted toward her, stopped. She stepped into it, feeling cold, unhappy, misunderstood, and forlorn."[28]

Helga has unresolved feelings for Anderson, but in this moment, she is drawn to both the man and the woman. She envied and admired Audrey, but the "more primitive emotion" that Larsen alludes to is sexual desire. She is attracted to them both as she watches their two bodies intertwine on the dance floor. Her heart begins to race and she feels as if she must leave the room. Here we find an awakening of complex multi-directional desire that is too frightening for Helga to countenance—or for the narrative to linger upon. The next chapter begins with her having left the country for Denmark. To use McDowell's language, Helga "retreats from sexual feelings,"[29] but what might get lost or overlooked is that it is her desire for *both* Anderson and Audrey that frames her fleeing of the US.

In "Smoke, Lilies, and Jade," Alex's bisexual desire gets connected to his indeterminacy and ultimately his narrative freedom. As he asserts, he *can* love two people, meaning he has the freedom and power to occupy multiple circuits of eroticism. In contrast, Helga's arguable bisexual desire is not freeing. It is frightening and short-lived. Sexual desire of any sort feels risky and dangerous. There is the possibility of pregnancy discussed earlier, but even beyond that, sexual desire between women is imagined as upsetting. Larsen is making a larger point about how women's social mobility and affective access might be constrained. Even though Helga is always in motion, she continually bumps up against racialized and gendered impediments that redirect her movement. Her anxiety about the social significance of female same-sex desire and bisexuality sends her running. She is not presented as having the same access to sexual social freedom as Alex in this period of the New Negro. Larsen offers a narrative investigation of the paradigm of the New Negro: she articulates a desire for this refreshed sense of self, but she makes clear how there might be gendered parameters limiting the conceptualization of the new possibilities of the era. In this sense, we might say that Larsen provides a narrative disidentification with the New Negro concept in her fiction.[30] She identifies and seeks to claim this new positionality, but recognizes and critiques the social ideas about womanhood that make the New Negro appear disturbingly familiar and less new for women.

Nugent's and Larsen's fictional texts draw attention to the value of indeterminacy to conceptualizations of the New Negro, but together their works also intimate the imaginable limits of racial representation. Larsen's texts ask us to

think carefully about what possibilities will exist for the New Negro woman, who in some ways may be as queer as the same-sex desiring New Negro man. To add to this, what remains unspoken in Nugent's elliptical short story is the fact that the man who wears perfume or has cross-gender identifications may face certain kinds of social threats. Alex says that this man might be a "coward," but this figure might not speak out of a genuine fear of what the expressed desire might result in. Nugent is invested in claiming freedom and may overlook or choose not to explore some of the challenges that a man with desires like Alex's may face. There can be a price to indeterminacy, the refusing to follow conventions. Larsen makes this idea her focus. She paints a vivid picture of the parameters placed on the freedom of women figures. Nugent and Larsen's shared use of queerness probes the meaning of the "New Negro." Their texts in their textual indeterminacies are more interrogations than declarations of the "New Negro." Together, Nugent and Larsen ask: if the New Negro is queer, how might that queerness, in its multiple levels of meaning, create alternative paths for identity while also putting pressure on the possibilities embedded in the period's heavily sought after "newness"?

Notes

1 I build on the analysis of Roderick Ferguson, who offers a useful explanation of queer of color critique in *Aberrations in Black*, 3.
2 This understanding of indeterminacy mirrors the language often used to describe queerness.
3 See Locke, *The New Negro*.
4 Wirth, Introduction, 3.
5 Wirth, Introduction, 13.
6 Nugent, "Smoke, Lilies, Jade," 1366–7.
7 Nugent, "Smoke, Lilies, Jade," 1366–9.
8 Nugent, "Smoke, Lilies, Jade," 1360.
9 See Howells, "Mr. Charles W. Chesnutt's Stories," 700.
10 Nugent, "Smoke, Lilies, Jade," 1363.
11 One might also read turning of attraction onto the male body as a way to figure onanistic self-love, but I turn to same sex desire to connect this moment to the later one in the story.
12 See Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*, 59.
13 Siobhan Somerville makes the argument that the mixed-race figure is also understood to be a mixed-gender figure in African American literature at the beginning of the century in her discussion of Pauline Hopkins. Hopkins's approach to her female characters may help to set the course for Nugent's later exploration of gender expression. See Somerville, *Queering the Color Line*.
14 See Avilez, "African American Writing until 1930."
15 See Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*.
16 Schwarz, *Gay Voices of the Harlem Renaissance*, 144.
17 Nugent, "Smoke, Lilies, Jade," 1370, emphasis in original.
18 In advancing a reading that explores Larsen's use of Helga in terms of queerness and indeterminacy, I am building on Keguro Macharia's exploration of Larsen's critique of normative understandings of race and sexuality in "Queering Helga Crane."

19 See Davis, *Nella Larsen*.
20 See Davis, *Nella Larsen*; McDowell, "'That Nameless … Shameless Impulse;'" and Wall, *Women of the Harlem Renaissance*.
21 See Davis, *Nella Larsen*, 253; and Wall, *Women of the Harlem Renaissance*, 88–9.
22 Larsen, *Passing*, 91.
23 Larsen, *Passing*, 12.
24 Larsen, *Passing*, 23.
25 Larsen, *Passing*, 24.
26 See DuCille, *The Coupling Convention*.
27 McDowell, "'That Nameless … Shameless Impulse,'" 93.
28 Larsen, *Passing*, 64.
29 McDowell, "'That Nameless … Shameless Impulse,'" 84.
30 For a discussion of disidentification, see Muñoz, *Disidentification*.

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11

SO QUEER YET SO STRAIGHT

Japan's First Female Director(s)

Xinyi Zhao

"Who was the first female director in Japan?"[1] When you ask around, perhaps nine out of ten people in the film industry would say "Tanaka Kinuyo," and the last one would shake his head and say that he didn't know. Tanaka Kinuyo, the actress-turned-director, had a blessed career that spanned the silent and sound eras with more than 250 credited films. As a director, her debut *Love Letter* (1953) even broke into the 1954 Cannes Film Festival. Tanaka went on to make another five films while continuing her acting career. However, as successful as she was in front of and behind the camera, Tanaka was in fact *not* the first female director in Japan. Seventeen years before Tanaka's directorial debut, Sakane Tazuko was already working on her first film at Shochiku Studio in Kyoto. Before her directorial debut, Sakane worked as Mizoguchi Kenji's screenwriter, editor, and assistant director on multiple projects. Despite being the only female film director working in a critical period of silent-sound transition, Sakane has long been marginalized, if not entirely erased, from the history of Japanese cinema.

This near absence of Sakane from Japanese film history is all the more notable given how visibly Tanaka has been credited as Japan's first female director. By the time she began directing in the 1950s, Tanaka had already achieved the status of a "national actress," retaining a star persona defined as traditional, virtuous, and subservient. The gap between who was the first female director (Sakane) and who is credited as such (Tanaka) evokes anthropologist Michel-Rolf Trouillot's discussion of "two historicities": namely, "what happened" and "that which is said to have happened."[2] What led to this gap between the two historicities? Why was Tanaka credited as Japan's first female director even while Sakane was still alive?

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To address these curious questions entails examining these two figures through their biographies which, as I will elaborate, do not only show their life stories but also *how they are narrated* into linguistic existence. Japanese journalist Ōnishi Etsuko was among the first biographers who have ever directed attention to Sakane. In Ōnishi's semi-fictional biography of Sakane, titled *The Woman Who Loved Mizoguchi Kenji* (1993), she is framed as Mizoguchi's appendage, deprived of agency, and belittled as someone whose career was entirely at the mercy of Mizoguchi's patronage. I call Ōnishi's Sakane biography "semi-fictional" not only because of its inexcusably misleading book title, but also because her narrative is structured around Sakane's "romantic relationship" with Mizoguchi, with each chapter titled as follows: Chapter 1. First Encounter with Mizoguchi; Chapter 2. Becoming Independent from Mizoguchi; Chapter 3. Going to Manchuria; Chapter 4. Back to Mizoguchi. Crucially, although Ōnishi obsessively detailed their intimate interactions throughout the book, no evidence of this supposed Mizoguchi-Sakane "romance" is provided. During a research trip to Kyoto, I consulted a large amount of correspondence between Sakane and Mizoguchi, as well as Sakane's diaries, that testified that their relationship was perfectly professional. While there are numerous moments in the book when Ōnishi blames the male-dominant society that was saturated with sexist values, it is also clear that she herself could not avoid this structural misogyny, and the biography is structured precisely along the same lines as the stereotypes imposed on Sakane during her lifetime.

Compared to Sakane, Tanaka enjoyed more visibility in Japanese cinematic discourse, yet the way she is narrated is equally problematic in the sense that stories about her also reduce her to the status of male auteurs' appendage. In writings on Japanese film history that reference Tanaka, she is usually introduced in one of two ways: either as Mizoguchi's Muse, or as Mizoguchi's lover, or sometimes both.[3] Her directorial work itself, on the contrary, has received insufficient critical discussion.[4] Juxtaposing the biographies of the two female directors, Colleen Laird rightly points out the centrality of Mizoguchi in virtually all the narratives about these two women's lives and careers. In other words, the two historicities—Japan's first female director (Sakane) and the director most often described as Japan's female director (Tanaka)—overlap in such an ironic fashion, revealing the fact that being Japan's first female director isn't sufficient to situate either one of them in the dominant narrative of Japanese film history. Sakane's recent recovery is particularly significant because her structural absence from film history poses a series of unsettling questions regarding the way "we talk about (and, again, more often don't talk about) women" in Japanese film history.[5]

As it stands, Sakane's "rediscovery" has become an exciting and intriguing process with revelations that raise more questions. For all discussions about Sakane, one striking aspect of her persona has largely been ignored. The



FIGURE 11.1 Sakane Tazuko. Courtesy of the Museum of Kyoto.

numerous photographs of her housed at the Museum of Kyoto capture a woman who favored a style clearly connoting queerness, evocative of two famous lesbian directors on the other side of the world: Dorothy Arzner and Esther Eng (Figure 11.1).[6]

Why, then, have scholars remained unanimously silent about the queer aspect of Sakane's persona, particularly the possibility of her being a lesbian director? Scholars don't say because they don't know, but here we encounter a theoretical question about historical writing posed by Jane Gaines: "Is there a way to 'say' without claiming to know?"[7] Hence, the challenge we face is not simply writing "her stories" back into history, but rather to write a film history that reconstructs the past while making appropriate acknowledgment of the many blind spots— or in Gaines's term, the "unknowability" of history.[8] Building on Laird's comparative biographical studies of Sakane and Tanaka while embracing "unknowability" as a critical stance, this chapter situates queer sexuality at the heart of historiographic inquiry in order to move beyond the language of historical in/visibility and to explore its methodological value for alternative film historiographies.

In queer theory's inception as a mode of critical inquiry, it often focused on *space*—queer culture *in* Japan, for instance—instead of *time*. Taking Sakane's life story as a departure point, I refrain from making a local

argument about queer modernism *in Japan*, and instead seek to mobilize the concept of queer temporality to make a historical argument, that is, about her place *in historical time*. According to Jack Halberstam, the term "queer temporality" refers to the alternative temporalities created by queer subcultures, illuminating possible futures "imagined according to logics that lie outside of those paradigmatic markers of life experience—namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death."[9] While Halberstam primarily discusses queer communities in Western contexts, I suggest that the queer rendering of time is just as revealing and fundamental in understanding Sakane's precarious and elusive position in Japanese film history. As I will elucidate in the pages to come, the interrelation between Sakane's forgotten historical status and her embodied queerness offers a distinct vantage point from which to "queer" film history, which means not only "looking for alternative sexualities in the past" but also "resisting the strictures of knowability itself."[10] Drawing on queer theory's reimagination of historical time, I seek to elucidate the interrelation between her queer indeterminacy and historical unknowability in order to open up new horizons in alternative feminist historiographies. In what follows, I provide a "standard" narrative of Sakane's personal history as a point of departure for alternative ways of engaging these biological events.

At the historical juncture when cinema started to entwine with nationalism in Japan in the early 1900s, Sakane was born in Kyoto, a city dubbed "Japan's Hollywood." Sakane's father was a wealthy inventor and businessman with connections to the film industry. As a young child, Sakane developed her cinephilia through frequenting cinemas with her family. She went to Doshisha Women's College to pursue a degree in English literature at a time when only one percent of Japanese women received higher education, yet her stepmother forced her to quit college in her second year.[11] At the age of twenty, Sakane's parents arranged for her to marry a gynecologist. Four years later, her marriage ended with her divorcing her husband, who had been found disloyal.[12]

After her marriage broke up, Sakane decided to obtain a job instead of getting remarried, an unusual decision for an upper-class woman in those days. In 1929, Sakane's father helped her join Nikkatsu Studio as Kenji Mizoguchi's assistant. At the time, Japanese cinema had just entered a prolonged silent-to-sound transition (1929–1935), during which both silent and sound films were produced and exhibited.[13] Sakane's first work was taking notes when the crew brainstormed the story for *Mistress of a Foreigner* (1930), a film with partial sound, also known as a "part-talkie." She was also responsible for helping actors memorize lines, so that their lip movements would correspond to the content of the spoken dialogue. Although she remained unpaid for the first six months, Mizoguchi was quick to appreciate her potential, and kept her working as his assistant for *Fujiwara Yoshie's*

Hometown (1930), *And Yet They Go On* (1931), and *The Man of the Moment* (1932). On set, Sakane's work entailed such tasks as climbing ladders and crouching behind set pieces, responsibilities that were highly inconvenient to perform in a kimono. As a result, she cut her hair short and started wearing tailored pants and suits, which not only allowed her mobility, but also helped her blend into the male-dominated working environment.

In 1932, Mizoguchi moved to Tokyo and joined Shinko Kinema, and Sakane followed. In those days, when the director transferred to another studio, it was very common for him to take his disciple along. She notably edited Mizoguchi's *The Water Magician* (1933), which was the first film on which she worked as an editor. Eventually, having assisted Mizoguchi on more than ten films as assistant director, screenwriter, and editor, Sakane started to plan her own directorial debut based on Jean Webster's 1915 novel *Daddy-Long-Legs*, and she applied for a promotion to director. Virtually overnight, rumors spread throughout the studio: her co-workers suspected that Sakane was having an affair with Mizoguchi in order to get the promotion. Sakane's petition for promotion was eventually rejected by the studio executives.

In 1936, Mizokuchi and Sakane transferred to Daiichi Eiga in Kyoto, where Sakane was eventually given an opportunity to direct, albeit without the freedom to choose the subject matter. The first film project that the studio assigned to her was *New Year's Finery* (1936), a period drama adapted from a *shinpa* play (early modern drama) that reflected upon the social obstacles of free love through the unlikely and finally soured romance between a geisha-to-be and a Buddhist candidate. To better promote the first film by Japan's first female director, the studio published an article that focused on Sakane's private life. Written in a mocking tone, it mentioned her divorce and even questioned if she was still a virgin. The reception of the film was far from universal acclaim. Japanese critics at the time—predominantly male—denounced her work as "simply imitating the deficiencies of Mizoguchi films" while being short of what they called "female sensibilities." Sakane herself recalled her first film with regret in her seventies: "I really wished to make a film about female students … I was unlucky because it was far from the film that I truly wanted."[14] The negative reviews tarnished Sakane's reputation as a new director. Unable to get another project from the studio, she was demoted back to Mizoguchi's assistant director and editor. Despite her unsuccessful debut, the later two Mizoguchi films with which Sakane was involved as editor, namely *Osaka Elegy* (1936) and *Sisters of the Gion* (1936), both won the Kinema Junpo Best Ten Films of the Year. Upon Daiichi Eiga's collapse in 1937, Sakane moved to Shinko Kinema with Mizoguchi, where she edited *The Straits of Love and Hate* (1937).

In July 1937, the Second Sino-Japanese War broke out, leading to a tightened censorship enforced by the state. Three years later, Sakane left Mizoguchi

and joined Tokyo Riken Film Company, where she was assigned to make a documentary on the Ainu of northern Japan, an indigenous ethnic minority group. She spent eight months in Hokkaido documenting Ainu customs, daily habits, festival celebrations, and Ainu women in particular.[15] However, her film *Fellow Citizens in North* (1941) was initially denied release, as the studio had envisioned a film that promulgated the "one nation, one people" ideology that asserted Japan as ethnically homogeneous, not one that mourned the loss of native cultures. Sakane had to return to Hokkaido for another month of shooting additional footage, including scenes of a young Ainu soldier, in order to make her film usable as war propaganda. This re-editing, however, resulted in narrative inconsistencies that subjected her work to scathing criticism yet again.

In February 1942, aware of the multifarious constraints that confronted her as a woman filmmaker in wartime Japan, Sakane decided to relocate to the Manchukuo Film Association (aka Man'ei), a "national policy company" in the Japanese "puppet state" Manchukuo (today's Northeastern China).[16] Sakane joined the education section, which was responsible for producing documentaries, cultural films, and educational shorts to educate and enlighten the Manchukuo populace. Contrary to Man'ei features that targeted both male and female audiences, their educational films barely addressed female audiences until Sakane's arrival.

> "Although I joined Man'ei as a female editor in the beginning, given the necessity to make films for women in the [Greater East Asia] Co-Prosperity Sphere, and that only women can make films for themselves, I was promoted again to director," said Sakane in a 1942 interview.
>
> "At this point my work mainly targets Chinese women, but in the future I would love to expand my audience to Japanese women in Manchuria, and introduce their life to other ethnic groups in the [Greater East Asia] Co-Prosperity Sphere."[17]

During her four years at Man'ei, Sakane made fourteen films for both Japanese and Chinese viewers, female viewers in particular. Among the films, only the short documentary *Brides of the Frontier* (*Kaitaku no Hanayome*, 1943) is known to be extant. The film was a propaganda film made to entice young Japanese women to settle down in Manchuria as farmers' wives, against the background of a severe labor shortage in Manchuria. Featuring Japanese men and women performing household activities side by side in the idyllic countryside, the film carved out a utopia seemingly intact from war mobilization and a land of gender equality that was unimaginable in Japan. In addition to *Brides of the Frontier*, Sakane made thirteen educational shorts that provided essential knowledge of everyday life, such as vegetable preservation, indoor gardening, and heater usage.

In August 1945, Japan's defeat in the Asia-Pacific War coincided with Man'ei's collapse, simultaneously terminating Sakane's two ongoing film projects. The Soviet Red Army quickly took control of Man'ei, followed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), turning the site into Northeast Film Studio, also known as "the cradle of new China's cinema."[18] Alongside other Japanese staff who opted to stay in China, Sakane joined the newly founded Chinese studio. She trained Chinese film workers, most of whom had no filmmaking experience, and cooperated with them in making propaganda films for the CCP's newborn regime. In September 1945, Sakane was invited by the Red Army to make a documentary on Sino-Soviet friendship, yet this film too is no longer extant. "I don't have any political leaning, nor am I affiliated to any party," Sakane wrote in her diary in 1945. "I am only a film worker."[19]

Sakane went back to her homeland in October 1946, which ironically marked the very end of her directorial career on the grounds that she had to have a college degree to be a director in postwar Japan. Sakane was forced, at age forty-two, to return to Mizoguchi as his assistant—the only position available to her–and help him on a number of critically acclaimed films, including *The Love of Actress Sumako* (1947), *Women of the Night* (1948), and *My Love Has Burned* (1949), to name but a few. In 1962, Shochiku dropped the retirement age from sixty to fifty-five, and the fifty-seven-year old Sakane retired from the studio, ending a career that spanned thirty-three years. After retirement, she continued to work as a freelance scriptwriter for the Daiei Company until her death from gastric cancer in 1971 at the age of seventy.

Today, studies of Sakane cannot afford to ignore the historical context where she emerged as a professional working woman. Around the late 1920s and early 1930s, Japan witnessed a flowering of women stepping out of the domestic sphere to seek such employment opportunities as sales clerks, teachers, office workers.[20] In the following section, I place Sakane at the intersection of gender and politics during a period in which established assumptions about gender were tremendously disrupted. To be sure, almost all occupations taken by women at the time had one point in common: women were regarded as sex objects or commercial come-ons. The addition of women to the workplace livened up the atmosphere, providing an audience for men and an incentive for them to perform better, as Kitamura Kaneko, a pioneering woman journalist observed: "Men in the office are so sexually stimulated by just having them around."[21] Much of the prejudice faced by professional working women in the city had its roots in the conviction that women belonged at home, and that women and men inhabiting the same working environment could possibly cause a decline in feminine morality.

This fear was even more exaggerated in the film industry. Film was often viewed as vulgar entertainment or even the source of cultural and moral

degradation, and film workers received neither social respect nor decent salaries. Situating Sakane within this historical context, we see that a female director, like women in other professions, may have been ascending in the gender hierarchy, but she was still constrained within a social framework that sought to eroticize, if not entirely efface, her presence. For Sakane, who desired public attention for her work instead of her looks, cross-dressing was arguably a personal strategy for survival by distancing herself from the sort of conventional femininity that too often falls prey to male eroticization and patriarchal exploitation.

In spite of her subversiveness, in the end, Sakane was not fortunate enough to circumvent many obstacles associated with being a woman director. As I have mentioned, she was denied promotion to director at least twice due to a studio executive's gender discrimination. She suffered from gossip circulated within the studio saying that she was having an affair with Mizoguchi in order to obtain directing opportunities. During her first directorial project, *New Year's Finery*, Sakane was greeted with passive-aggressive behaviors from male crew members due to their considerable reluctance to work under a woman. The studio exploited the fact of her gender and her private life as a promotional technique to win over an audience, showing no hesitance in publishing articles that mentioned her divorce and speculated on her virginity.

As the only female director who ventured into the male-dominated world of filmmaking, as Hikari Hori notes, Sakane was "always requested to speak about her 'feminine' sensitivity or her 'difference' from male directors," to the degree that "her presence as a director, her works, and her private life were reduced to the question of whether she had insufficient or excessive femininity."[22] According to Hori, such a public obsession with Sakane's femininity in Japanese film criticism was driven by male critics' anxiety over Sakane's gender nonconformity. Hori's argument casts important light on the gender dynamic underlying the discursive formation of historical knowledge about Sakane. If the masculinity-femininity binary opposition reinforced the boundaries of gender identities and channeled discussions about her into very narrow passages in her time, how do we employ gender analytically so as to write film history differently? This is not an easy task given how little we know about Sakane's sexuality. To be sure, Sakane did not leave behind any personal belongings that could help us affirm her lesbian identity, so any speculation about her sexuality can be made only tentatively. All we know is that she rejected an arranged marriage by divorcing her husband, and that she was quite open about her interest in lesbian literature and cinema.

Crucially, Sakane grew up amid a bursting forth of a large lesbian subculture in Japan, including most notably the publication of Japanese lesbian literature and the emergence of the Takarazuka Revue, an all-woman theater troupe with actresses playing both the male and female roles. Meanwhile, the

Japanese neologism *dōseiai* (literally translated as same-sex love) was coined to describe homosexual relationships.[23] The most influential author in lesbian literature was Nobuko Yoshiya, whose body of work features strong emotional and often erotic bonds between schoolgirls. Domestic influences aside, female auteurs outside Japan—in particular Leontine Sagan—also had an intimate part to play in Sakane's path *en route to becoming* a feminist filmmaker. Like many other feminists at the time, Sakane was outspoken, romantic and idealistic, opposed to outdated models of a woman's proper place, as she once recounted in an interview:

> I often got asked, "why would a woman want to be a film director?" I believe, however, that there is nothing one cannot do just because she is a woman. I wish to portray the world seen from women's eyes without disguise or obfuscation. Even if I may not be as great as Leontine Sagan, I hope more women screenwriters and camerawomen will enter the industry, working side by side to make films that only women can make.[24]

After watching Sagan's *Mädchen in Uniform* (1931), a fairly radical German lesbian film, Sakane envisioned a Japanese version of it, a film about the bonds between schoolgirls. Not surprisingly, her proposal did not get approval from the studio. Nonetheless, the underexplored queer aspect of Sakane's life and career and her near absence in Japanese film history provides an entry point to bring a queer perspective into our film-historical imagination. For instance, if Sakane had been allowed by the studio to make the film about schoolgirls, would it have become the first queer film in Japanese film history? Was it her unspoken lesbianism that kindled her interest in representing women, a group so central to her oeuvre? Did her female and feminist perspective—or what those early film critics derisively called her "female sensibility"—have an influence on her mentor Mizoguchi Kenji, who was famed for making "woman's film"?

Given how scant and vague the existing record is, definitive answers are impossible to reach, but addressing these issues may help explain Sakane's absence from dominant narratives of Japanese film history. As a figure who assumed a masculine persona to resist the sexist and constricting roles forced by Japanese society almost vengefully upon women, she embodied a queerness so subversive that it threatened any sense of cis-hetero-masculine superiority. Sakane's presence was so queer, not only for her "masculine" attire and short hair, but also for the way she ventured upon a profession that was deemed impossible for women. Yet the ways in which she is discussed (and more often overlooked) have been astonishingly "straight," as the Mizoguchi-centered narratives indicate. With hindsight, the erasure of Sakane seems to reflect on what might be retrospectively regarded as historiographical and

methodological homophobia within the discipline of film history. In their extreme eroticization of her presence and her subordination under Mizoguchi, the male auteur, both Sakane's contemporaries and contemporary biographers participate in the patriarchal negation of her embodied queerness.[25]

Quite apart from her possible lesbianism, Sakane's cross-border filmmaking in the Japanese-occupied region of Manchuria as a Japanese female director is arguably another reason why she has been written out of history for decades. Sakane's involvement in the colonial film industry alerts us to reconsider the complex and difficult ways that imperialism and colonialism can intersect with female concerns and women's film history. As Japanese scholar Ikegawa Reiko aptly put it at the Makino Symposium at Columbia University in 2012: "Sakane joined the endeavor of invading China by making propaganda films for Japan, yet she made films from a feminist perspective, a position that must have been beyond the understanding of any male directors at the time."[26] Extant footage from *Brides on the Frontier* and the subject matters of her other films are illustrative of this point: by intentionally downplaying the war-related content in her films, Sakane tactfully maintained a distance from the increasingly militarist and fascist mainstream Japanese film industry.[27] While the Japanese Empire took advantage of Sakane for the purpose of war mobilization, Sakane was also aligning with the empire to advance her directorial career, rather than passively working along the policies implemented by the regime beyond her control.

The nuanced combination of female self-empowerment and Japanese wartime collective action colonialism could also be seen in other recently rediscovered Japanese female film pioneers in the colonial era, such as Atsugi Taka (1907–1998) and Irie Takako (1911–1995).[28] The belatedness of their rediscovery prompts us to reconsider the too-much taken-for-granted opposition between female authorship and the institutional power associated with the film industry and the nation-state that are habitually gendered masculine. Theories of colonialism, as Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel write, "have stressed its 'masculine' nature, highlighting the essential components of domination, control, and structures of unequal power," reinforcing the common belief that colonies were no place for women. The "masculine" attributes of colonialism pose a distinct challenge to studying female film pioneers who made films to bolster imperial and colonial endeavors while such roles of authority in colonial society were typically reserved for their male counterparts. By aligning with the state film industry, female directors like Sakane become invisible precisely because such notions as nationalism and militarism are heavily gendered masculine. Subscribing to a binary logic of "male-oppressor" versus "female-victim," some feminist historical narratives perform a highly selective approach by centering on the female film workers who staged a radical rebellion against the mainstream film industry, yet overlook those who operate "invisibly" within it.

In light of Halberstam's conception of queer temporality, I argue a queer perspective of historical imagination could be effectively brought to bear on the spatial logic of "invisibility" here. With a career spanning imperial Japan, colonial Manchuria, communist China, and postwar Japan, Sakane embodies a queerness that is ultimately beyond gender terms, evident the way she transgressed geographic, political, and time borders. However, the normative frames of historiography operate with a set of hard binaries between, for instance, masculinity versus femininity, collaboration versus resistance, Japanese versus Chinese, and prewar versus postwar. Although these frames can be conceptually useful, they are also complicit in erasing Sakane's presence from the dominant narratives of film history inasmuch as she resists capture by such binary terms. Moreover, Sakane's "border-crossing" and the way she challenges the series of normative assumptions—both spatially and temporally—about film history (e.g., there were no women making films in pre-war and wartime Japan) also extends Halberstam's notion of "queer temporality" from subjective experience of time to alternative film historiographies.

It would be fair enough to frame my conclusion as one not simply of feminist/queer intervention, but also of history. For queer and feminist film historians, Sakane's unspoken queerness and female (in)visibility illuminates a shift from the Foucauldian history of sexuality to the gender and sexuality of history: from the idea that sexuality is historically constructed to the notion that history is also sexually constructed, and that history of early cinema can be profoundly rewritten from a queer perspective. The belated rediscovery of Sakane opens onto a refreshingly provocative opportunity to interrogate the totalizing impulse of normativity and knowability in historical writing. Instead of "rescuing" her from the liminal position of invisibility, it is perhaps more productive to take her queer indeterminacy seriously and to acknowledge the very "unknowability" of her—and by extension, the unknowability of history. By questioning the normative assumptions in historiography from a queer perspective, we may arrive at a fuller understanding of Sakane's uneasy position in historical time, not just by writing "her stories" back into history, but by questioning the "historiographic knowability" that renders her invisible.

Notes

1 The author generously thanks Jane Gaines, Louisa S. Wei, and Yuka Kanno for their inspiration and continuous support of this project.

2 Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 2.

3 Laird, "Sea Change," 57.

4 Shindo Kaneto's *A Novel about Tanaka Kinuyo* (Shōsetsu Tanaka Kinuyo), for instance, frames Tanaka as a scandalous and dangerously manipulative woman who used the renowned directors such as Mizoguchi and Shimizu Hiroshi to advance her career.

5 Laird, "Sea Change," 59.
6 See the entries for Dorothy Arzner and Esther Eng in Gaines, Vatsal, and Dall'Asta, eds., Women Film Pioneers Project.
7 Gaines, *Pink Slipped*, 1.
8 Gaines, *Pink Slipped*, 3.
9 Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 14.
10 Goldberg and Menon, "Queering History," 1609.
11 Ikegawa, *"Teikoku" no Eiga Kantoku Sakane Tazuko*, 7.
12 McDonald, "Daring to Be First," 129.
13 For the silent-sound transition of Japanese cinema, see Kinoshita "The Benshi Track," 4.
14 Ikegawa, *"Teikoku" no Eiga Kantoku Sakane Tazuko*, 25.
15 Ikegawa and Ward, "Japanese Women Filmmakers in World War II," 261.
16 For a more extensive overview of the Manchukuo Film Association, see Li, "A National Cinema for a Puppet State."
17 Ikegawa, *"Teikoku" no Eiga Kantoku Sakane Tazuko*, 26–27.
18 Zhang, *A Companion to Chinese Cinema*, 165.
19 Ōnishi. *Mizoguchi Kenji*, 172.
20 For thorough studies on the emergence of professional women and gendered labor in modern Japan, see Freedman, Yano, and Miller, eds., *Modern Girls on the Go*.
21 Quoted in Sato, *The New Japanese Woman*, 125.
22 Hori, "Migration and Transgression," 91.
23 Sang, "Translating Homosexuality," 278.
24 Ikegawa, *"Teikoku" no Eiga Kantoku Sakane Tazuko*, 26.
25 For further discussion about the auteur's queer identity in relation to feminist film historiography, see Gaines, "Dorothy Arzner's Trousers."
26 See Reiko Ikagawa's presentation at Makino Symposium at "Reiko Ikegawa," YouTube, last modified December 11, 2012: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G97MMeKzQuU&t=801s
27 For an in-depth analysis of the film, see Ikegawa, *"Teikoku" no Eiga Kantoku Sakane Tazuko*.
28 For further information about Atsugi Taka, see Hori, "Migration and Transgression." For Irie Takako and her film, see Kinoshita, "In the Twilight of Modernity and the Silent Film."

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12

THEY WERE RIGHT THERE TOGETHER

Black Abundance in *Home to Harlem* and Vernacular Indifference to Sexological Expertise

Emma Heaney

What do we know about the invert after encountering them in Freud's writing? In *Three Essays on The Theory of Sexuality*, Freud tells us that while conventional wisdom understands the invert to be a particular type of man—a female soul sadly trapped in a male body—in fact we all begin life as genderless lovers attaching to caring objects, and we have all made inverted object choices in our unconscious. Inversion is, therefore, not a quirky attribute, but a universal hurdle to overcome. In "The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman," he provides the corresponding account of a female invert, a young woman pining after an older, who when faced with her parents' scorn and beloved's indifference, flings herself onto a railway line. Freud identifies the psychic disruption that stalled her development at the stage of lesbian attachment, likewise doing away with the idea of an innate and categorically distinct lesbianism. Across his writing on subjects who express same-sex desire or gender non-conformity, Freud's object keeps disappearing into a concept; he sets out to explain the invert but finds that he can ultimately only theorize inversion as a relational form that marks the psychic life of all people, attainting primacy in those unfortunates who get stuck and stunted and are therefore called inverts. These inverts are in an unfortunate, if natural, situation. They are scared, isolated, and either desirous of change or resigned to the impossibility of change. Normal people, who have successfully psychically adapted their inverted desires to affix them to opposite sex objects, are rewarded with a recognized place in the social order. Freud thus converted the textured stories of various inverts' lives—their disparate tales, usually of woe—into a singular figure that was workable as a conceptual tool for crafting a theory of sexual subjectivity.

Freud built this understanding on a sexological narrative frame that modernist writers inherited. Notable works of modernist fiction cast characters in

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the image of the sexological invert; consider a cross-dressed Leopold Bloom cowering at the feet of a dominatrix or Stephen Gordon, lonely tortured invert, who think of themselves as a tragic victim of an innate disposition. As Anna Katharina Schaffner observes, these writers were attracted to perversion as it was presented in psychoanalysis and sexology because it "[challenged] conceptions of … seemingly 'natural' standards."[1] Depicting inversion, masochism, and other perversions allowed modernists to "revalorize conceptions of the perversions at the beginning of the twentieth century, paving the way for a shift from the notion of sexual *deviance* to that of sexual *difference*."[2] Both psychoanalytic and sexological theories emerged from and continued to reinforce social recognition, community, and social legibility as the conduits to happiness. But the ideas of normativity and deviance that provide the ground on which psychoanalytic and sexological thinkers worked are culturally relative. If modernist writers revalorized the supposedly valueless, what about works of literature that didn't operate according to those norms and so therefore didn't need to overturn them?

To think about this juxtaposition between a modernism of norm engagement and a modernism of norm disengagement, I draw on Kiese Laymon's concepts of "abundance" and "meagerness" outlined in his 2018 memoir *Heavy*. Laymon takes the term "abundance" from his middle school friend LaThon who uses it to signify everything beautiful and full about Black sociality and cultural production; the teenaged Laymon starts using "meager" to signify everything white and regulatory that operates to control Black abundance. This chapter will consider Claude McKay's 1927 novel *Home to Harlem* as a demonstration of the relation between the meagerness of the expert distillation of queerness as tragic lack and the abundance of Black gender and sexual understanding in the world of and beyond the novel. McKay's novel can help us understand the extent to which sexological texts are class and racial manuals, teaching readers the techniques through which heteronormativity and gender conformity are enforced by bourgeois families and doctors. If, for Freud, sexology's sad inverts can help us to see the universality of inversion as a psychic structure, McKay contrariwise reveals the universal truth that sex and sexual norms are a constantly failing and nervously enforced racial and class structure. In Freud, queer life is the cold outside of the normative, that happy place. McKay elects to write about a world where such norms don't rule and therefore were not plump with the potential for transgression.[3] It's as if McKay is saying to Freud: I contend that real life is right here, too.

Sexology, Psychoanalysis, and Bourgeois Social Forms

The central sexological texts of the nineteenth and early twentieth century share a narrative structure. They start with introductions that theorize the findings of the study, followed by case study narratives of individuals

presented as representative of this or that perversion; these accounts purportedly provided the evidence on which the study's author based their analyses. The case study subjects are, in general, drawn from one of two groups. The first were patients who sought help from the sexologist author or who were compelled by family members to do so. The second group were subjects who were referred to sexologists by police or other juridical authorities who were unsure whether the behaviors of the subjects constituted crimes or were, rather, expressions of unfortunate innate natures: crimes or illnesses, in effect. There is a marked class distinction between the two groups, the former being typically bourgeois and the latter working class. All are American or European, although some are racialized as Jewish, Irish, or in other categories of minoritized Europeans. These white individuals were sorted according to their desires and gender identities into discrete categories: fetishist, invert, masochist, necrophiliac, onanist, extreme invert, and more.

In contrast, these classic sexological texts treat non-white and non-Euro-American subjects as populations, with collective sexual abnormality. These texts present "races" as internally homogenous populations that span whole continents. Asians, Africans, and Indigenous people the world over have, in different terms, the status of sexual and more broadly civilizational retrogrades in the work of Richard Von Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis, Magnus Hirschfeld, and others. This structure presents non-whiteness itself as a perversion. As Siobhan B. Somerville has observed, "anatomical investigations" of people of color provided the template for investigation of sexual minorities and therefore the ideology of sexual perversion was "driven by racial ideologies already firmly in place."[4] In other words, sexological inquiry treats white deviants as individual cases whose personal problems might be explained through racial analogy. In the sexological record, one of the things that makes you white is that your sexuality is viewed as an individual as opposed to a racial characteristic.

Home to Harlem and Vernacular Non-engagement with Sexual Science

The characters in McKay's *Home to Harlem* don't speak about sexuality and gender identity in terms provided by sexology and psychoanalysis, either the individualizing diagnostics or the categorical racial theories. Rather, the novel operates within a social world in Harlem that doesn't sort out queer and gender nonconforming people as separate species and in which the fantasy of whiteness as a civilizational horizon bears no weight. The novel tells the story of the free-spirited sailor Jake who returns to Harlem after the 1919 Armistice of "the white folks' war."[5] He galivants through the rollicking social world of the jazz clubs, bars, and buffet flats of Harlem and Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhoods. Jake and his best buddy Zeddy work

intermittently as longshoremen and railway stewards, very pointedly as a way to fund what they consider the real work of living: socializing and pursuing love and sex. The novel is McKay's most beautiful investigation of the relationships between these most all-consuming activities of most young lives—work and love—with a fidelity to queer Marxism. As Gary Edward Holcomb observes: "the novel's most noteworthy accomplishment is to visualize the intellectual work of the black Trotskyist full-blown revolution as already taking place, in the form of *dreaming* queer Black transformation."[6]

The material reason that this revolution is "already taking place" in *Home to Harlem* is that its setting lacks the economic structure that undergirds the cis and heterosexual gender binary in the bourgeois white society prized by sexology and psychoanalysis as the goal of individual and collective life. The entire novel takes place in "what they called in print and polite conversation 'the underworld.'"[7] The women in Jake and Zeddy's social circle are more likely than the men to have economic stability; Wayne F. Cooper describes this gendered economics: "the women with whom they became involved have their own incomes as cooks, domestics, entertainers, waitresses, or clerks; some work as part time prostitutes."[8] Absent the male breadwinner, historical materialism asks, whither the male as such?

Another way McKay queries the relation between economic roles and gender roles in this milieu is in the novel's depiction of sex work, which is a part of this world, not a shady realm underneath or at the outskirts, as the spatial metaphors often go. Jake takes the woman who becomes his great love, Felice, to a "buffet flat on One Hundred and Thirty-Seventh street," owned by a woman, "the proprietress," with the mutual understanding that theirs will be a commercial sexual experience.[9] Felice likes Jake enough to decide that she doesn't want to take his money, a move which would entrench their sexual encounter as transactional, and in fact offers to support him financially, preserving their relation as genuine love. Felice says that "'if you'll be mah man always, you won't have to work,'" but Jake turns her down, saying he's "'never been a sweetman yet. Never lived off no womens and never will. I always works.'" Felice replies, "'I don't care what you do whilst you is mah man. But hard work's no good for a sweet-loving papa.'"[10] His refusal to take money from her is a way of affirming that they are not betrothed to each other. These and other instances in the novel show that sex work doesn't operate according to taxological principles; contrary to bourgeois projections about prostitutes, sex work doesn't make you a separate type or species. Sex work is something that women do to survive and that labor is just a part of their lives; their lives are not reducible to that labor.

Felice's offer and Jake's refusal represent a larger gendered financial structure between "sweet men" and patron women. Some of the women in the novel own homes, the gold standard of social and economic stability. The men often live with the women that they're dating for short periods of time

and always at the lady's pleasure; they risk certain eviction from their temporary living quarters if they anger the women by flirting with others or staying away too long. Zeddy, unlike Jake, is interested in this situation. For a time, he lives with a woman named Gin Head Susy, who hosts regular parties at her Bed-Stuy home and who bankrolls the lives of the men she keeps as sexual partners. Zeddy's role as a sweetman or skirt man keeps him in a subordinate position in relation to Gin Head Susy and the community recognizes and enforces this subordination:

> Zeddy discovered that in his own circles in Harlem he had become something of a joke. It was known that he was living sweet. But his buddies talked about his lady riding him with a cruel bit. "He was kept, all right," they said, "kept under 'Gin-Head' Susy's skirt. He had had to fight a fellow in Dixie Red's pool-room for calling him a 'skirt-man.'"[11]

Skirt man is a social role that is formed by its relation to a feminizing association with women's economic subservience. Zeddy can be shamefully "kept" and Susy an agent of control, but he is also able to enact revenge by leaving her, as he ultimately does. In this sense Zeddy can be the object of misogynist denigration from members of his community without being a woman or thought of as sexually different, as, for instance, a homosexual or an invert. The categories man and woman simply are not grounded in the bourgeois distinction between a powerful male wage earner and a resourceless and therefore dependent and disempowered woman. This inverted gendered division of resources makes for a set of gender relations wherein the economically precarious men are nimble and free while the property owning women are stable and powerful. These women are also often lonely, as they pursue and provide for men but can be, and often are, abruptly abandoned by these men. The women of means are the lovers. This analysis confirms that "inversion in Harlem culture is reflected by straight society as well."[12]

These inverted gender roles among heterosexuals exist in relation to the way that sex and gender work for recognizably queer characters. The Congo, a nightclub in Harlem, is the central stage for this relation. This club was

> a real throbbing little Africa in New York. It was an amusement place entirely for the unwashed Black Belt. Or, if they were washed, smells lingered telling the nature of their occupation. Pot-wrestlers, third cooks, W.C. attendant, scrub maids, dish-washers, stevedores.[13]

The owner doesn't allow white people and even "'high yallers' were scarce there." The one exception to this rejection of whiteness and lightness is "such sweetmen that lived off the low-down dark trade."[14] These prohibitions protect the space, to a certain extent, from the social norms of white society and

from the pressure, common in that time and place, of falling under the gaze of white patrons who visited Harlem to observe Black people on stages and in audiences.

In the Congo's purposefully all-Black environment, "dandies," "pansies," and other queer people are social types as scrutable as any other: "all around the den, luxuriating under the light-colored lights, the dark dandies were loving up their pansies."[15] Observe the activity of these queer people: "luxuriating" and "loving up" on their partners. They are not merely present in a heterosexual environment; they have equal access to the sexual sociality of the bar. McKay shows us that, like their peers with opposite sex objects, the dandies and pansies are there to be together: "Feet tickling feet under tables, tantalizing liquor-rich giggling, hands busy above."[16] They can be recognized as having culturally specific meaning without being thought categorically different in kind. McKay's Congo Club is a site of diversity, not a heterosexual norm and its constitutive queer outside. This principle of diversity is also reflected in the way that race operated in this bar and in the novel as a whole—indeed in many of the works of The Harlem Renaissance. There is no legalistic Black-white binary in McKay's Harlem; rather, the community members, including the "dandies and pansies," recognize gradations of "chocolate, chestnut, coffee, ebony, cream, yellow," and in that diversity "everybody was teased up to the high point of excitement" together.[17]

Zeddy's status as a skirt man is observed by one of these queer character—Billy Biasse, nicknamed "Billy the Wolf"[18]—whose social experience is formed by another gender category that is not reducible to woman or man: the wolf. While many working-class men would partner with feminized people called pansies (as above), fairies, or boys, "wolf" was the term for "a more distinctive character" who preferred these partners over (or to the exclusion of) cis women.[19] Wolves were not considered queer or categorically distinct from men who partnered with cis women. George Chauncey explains that this is because wolves had "a marked masculinity. None of them behaved effeminately or took feminine nicknames [and] the very appellation, *wolf*, evoked the image of the predatory man-about-town." The wolf thus indicates "the absence of a sharp hetero-homosexual binarism in their culture."[20]

McKay's novel further elaborates this understanding of gender and sexuality in its depiction of the good-natured tension between sweetman Zeddy and Billy the Wolf. Billy mocks Zeddy for being "Sweet with the bit in you' mouf."[21] Zeddy retorts by asserting an injured heterosexual prerogative over Billy's masculine queerness: "What's the matter with you niggers anyhoe? … "Ain't it better than being a wolf?"[22] This is the negotiation that is at the heart of the non-heterosexual and non-cis operation of this social sphere: to be a henpecked man who must be sheltered and supported by a woman is in some ways to be a woman. But is it less womanly than being a dominant man on the prowl for girly or young men? Is it the skirt man or the wolf who is the affront to

manhood? This is still an open question in The Congo Club. Later in the century, object choice increasingly eclipses gender roles, and all men who aren't interested in cis women come to be regarded as homosexual by straight society. In this world, however, McKay shows us how this wolf comes down on the question as to what kind of social role is best: "'Ise a Wolf alright but I ain't a lone one,' Billy grinned. 'I guess Ise the happiest well-feddest wolf in Harlem.'"[23] Billy is content, cocky even, about his sexual practice: its abundance.

When we consider McKay's depiction of the feminine people on whom Billy "feeds," we see the place where sexual non-binarism becomes gender non-binarism. Billy's non-queerness can co-exist with his disinterest in "women": "Billy boasted frankly that he had no time for women. Black women or the whole diversified world of the sex were all the same to him."[24] Rather he is interested, specifically, in boys who paint their faces. This preference for trans feminine boys marks him only as having a distinct sexual taste, as a Wolf, but not as a wholly different species of man, not as a homosexual. This reality rests on the social recognition of his partners as something other than men. What are the social codes through which these "other than men" are understood? McKay shows us a person who Zeddy calls Billy the Wolf's "doll baby" at the Congo Club in Harlem:

> Billy Biasse was there at a neighboring table with a longshoreman and a straw-colored boy who was a striking advertisement of the Ambrozine Palace of Beauty. The boy was made up with high-brown powder, his eyebrows were elongated and blackened up, his lips streaked with the dark rouge so popular in Harlem, and his carefully-straightened hair lay plastered and glossy under Madame Walker's absinthe-colored salve for "milady of fashion and color."[25]

McKay pays careful attention to the aesthetics of the doll baby's self-presentation: his skin, powder, and eyebrow grooming express to the reader his fundamental and unabashed feminine ornament. He is sitting at the same table as a longshoreman, reflecting the integration of queer and trans people into working-class social spaces. The novel presents the "straw-colored boy" and other femmes as distinct from normal men, but as a recognized part of a social fabric that includes dominant boss women of the Gin Head Susy type, sweet men, and Wolves, all types that reflect the non-binary and non-cis operation of gender in the world they inhabit.

McKay presents this doll baby as intimately in sync with cis women. Rose, a cis women who works at the club, pulls the Ambrozine advertisement look-alike onto the floor and they begin to dance, mirroring each other:

> there was no motion she made that he did not imitate. They reared and pranced together, smacking palm against palm, working knee between knee, grinning with real joy. They shimmied, breast to breast, bent

> themselves far back and shimmied again. Lifting high her short skirt and showing her green bloomers, Rose kicked. And in his tight nigger-brown suit, the boy kicked even with her. They were right there together, neither going beyond the other.[26]

They then leave the dance floor and commence sucking on the straws of their crème de menthe cocktails. McKay's careful depiction shows us the mutual gendered recognition between these two people: the doll baby and the cis woman. The choreography, in which sameness not difference organizes the relation of their bodies, where "neither goes beyond the other," gets at the heart of the abundant way that identity is lived in this bar. These people recognize each other, ontologically, in the flesh, and enact their mutuality in movement. Remember here how forcefully Billy the Wolf distanced himself from all women. In doing so he instantiated a social distinction, a sexed distinction, between himself and women in general. The doll baby lives in this same world and its rules draw him to move with women, unfettered by cis ideas about bodies and bodily mutual recognition.

In *Black on Both Sides*, C. Riley Snorton documents the refusal of several early twentieth-century African American trans historical figures who were brought before juridical authorities and compelled to defend their identities and lives. An Oxnard, California, woman named Lucy Hicks Anderson was brought before a court in 1945 on charges related to the fact that she was trans and had married a cis man. She was extensively interrogated about her body, but when asked by the prosecutor about her genitals, "'Lucy refused to answer the question.'"[27] Another of Snorton's examples is the life of a gender non-conforming person who went by both James McHarris and Annie Lee Grant and who, in 1954, was put in prison for unclear reasons following a traffic stop. Upon release the prison superintendent called after McHarris/Grant to start dressing in feminine clothes and "doing the things a woman oughta do!" McHarris/Grant simply replied: "I don't see it like that."[28] In *Home to Harlem*, McKay shows us a precedent for a Black social structure in which queer and trans people are not offered or denied social recognition by straight society, but rather exist within a society not segregated by sexual typology. In regard to the people and communities that Snorton considers in his book, he says that "trans—in each of its permutations—finds expression and continuous circulation within blackness."[29] That circulation is precisely what McKay narrates in the novel.

Queer Modernism: Abundance and Meagerness

The part of my first book *The New Woman: Literary Modernism, Queer Theory, and the Trans Feminine Allegory* devoted to literature dealt with depictions of trans femininity by white modernist writers, the majority of

whom—James Joyce, Aldous Huxley, T. S. Eliot, and Djuna Barnes—engaged inversion as a conceptual spur, just as sexology and psychoanalysis had prepared them to do. That book is about the historical process through which the diversity of trans femininity is contained into a medical model premised on the idea that trans people are sadly trapped in the wrong bodies and so need medical intervention to free them: it is, to put it simply, about the invention of cisness. What that book doesn't say and this chapter has attempted to demonstrate is that any adequate historical account of this process, the diagnostic singularization of trans femininity, must also observe that it is part of the foliation and recontouring of whiteness that is the ideological corollary to the sexological cum psychoanalytic invention of cisness.

From the perspective of McKay's African American and global Black modernism, we see that inversion was a conceptual contradiction within whiteness that emerged in the late nineteenth century, setting the terms of modernist transgression. One of the implicit questions that sexology asked was: How could this atavistic, uncivilized, filthy quality be present in otherwise upstanding bourgeois Europeans and white Americans? This contradiction was spackled over by the creation of expertise around the reality that people of the same sex desire, copulate, and create kinship together. Those perverted whites are just different than normal ones, the sexological expert line went, different like the masses of the racialized. It was Freud who told us not to be so sure about that formulation. Freud insisted that the primitive sexual lurked within every psyche, while reaffirming that the viability of the social as such depended on the majority of civilized people denying and containing that primitive threat within.

With this argument in mind, we can return to Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*, which I first discussed in *The New Woman*, and find something new. The novel is a swirl of all the different queer and trans vernacular forms of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the United States and Western Europe. It begins with a couple composed of a woman of fascistic masculine "strength and military beauty" and a man whose dandified schnapps-plumped belly bears an "obstetric line."[30] The primary focus of the novel is two women whose mutual obsession recalls the extremes of nineteenth-century female-female passion that mark historians' descriptions of nineteenth-century female marriages and romantic friendships.[31] The seeming ease with which women who seem heterosexual can partner with "boyish" Robin recalls Emily Skidmore's 2019 book *True Sex* which focuses on trans men living conventional lives, partnered with women, in the early twentieth century. Finally, and most memorably, there is the central character, a trans feminine doctor, Matthew O'Connor, who "haunts the *pissoirs*" and is well-versed in "Sodomites."[32] The *demimonde* through which these characters traipse feels familiar to any reader of the available queer histories of the period, except for one detail: there is no joy there. Barnes's characters are resoundingly stuck, lonely, and miserable. In accord with sexological

expectation, they seem ontologically tethered to misery. Following Freud the novel suggests that their miseries are indexical of the general psychic catastrophe of human sexuality. As inverts, these queers must realize that it is their job to represent this general disaster because "no man needs curing of his individual sickness; his universal malady is what he should look to."[33]

There is one spectral character in this novel who enjoys himself. Dr. O'Connor, in one of her theatrical monologues, remembers Nikka, a Black performer in the Cirque de Paris. O'Connor describes Nikka's body in vivid detail; Barnes is writing the body on the page. O'Connor remembers the performer "crouching" all over the stage, naked save for a "loin-cloth all abulge as if with a deep sea catch."[34] The text then works over the performer's body:

> tattooed from head to heel … garlanded with rosebuds and the hackwork of the devil … at a stretch [his penis] spelled Desdemona … over his belly was an angle from Chartres; on each buttock, half public, half private, a quotation from the book of magic … across his knees … "I" on one and on the other "can" … across his chest beneath, a beautiful caravel in full sail, two clasped hands, the wrist bones fretted with point lace. On each bosom an arrow-speared heart, each with different initials but with equal drops of blood; and running into the arm-pit, all down one side, the word said by Prince Arthur Tudor … on his wedding night … The legs … were devoted entirely to vine work, topped by the swart rambler rose … over his *dos*, believe it or not … a terse account in monkish script … of the deplorable condition of Paris before hygiene was invented.[35]

This delicate portrait of a body painted with "rosebuds" and "point lace" blends ornament and flesh by inking "drops of blood" on Nikka's "bosom." The fleshly citation of Desdemona recalls the Shakespearean reference point for black love and sexuality, the figure of Othello. Nikka is the only character that the novel presents as serene and beautiful. He is also the only Black character, indeed the only nonwhite character, although the period's shifting terrain of the racial identities of Jews, Italians, and Irish people is one of the novel's preoccupations. O'Connor goes on to recall asking Nikka about his choices in decorating his body: "I asked him why all this barbarity; he answered that he loved beauty and would have it about him."[36] For Barnes, Nikka represents the ability to both experience and enjoy bodily difference, rather than having the beauty seep out of the pain as with every other character in the novel, all of whom, as the doctor puts it, have, at best, "the extraordinary need of misery to make beauty."[37] Ultimately, *Nightwood* gestures toward the burden of bourgeois nervousness around queerness and gender non-conformity. That's the difference between Barnes and McKay. A black character for Barnes represents that freedom. A Black world for McKay simply holds and produces it.

In the modernist period, bourgeois life and queerness were incompatible; Freud was not wrong about this.[38] In that time people often aged out of queerness in their late teens or divided their adult lives between a working-class queer component and a straight bourgeois component—literally, in the case of New Yorkers, riding the subway between their two lives.[39] This is something much more serious and much sadder than slumming. It is the bifurcation of a life and a subjectivity that straight, white, bourgeois society made compulsory. The psychoanalytic account of inversion is about growing up: training yourself to express, repress, or sublimate desires and bodily impulses, to manage yourself in a way that will allow for social recognition. History indicates that Freud wasn't wrong there either; that is how bourgeois society defines adulthood, as meager. Freud did not know about the abundant world that McKay documents. He did not imagine the analogous spaces in the European cities in which he lived and wrote. In Wayne F. Cooper's estimation, the characters in McKay's novel "are lost in enjoyment of themselves,"[40] and it is in this depiction of abundance that *Home to Harlem* "envisages *being* at the frontier of social insurgency."[41]

This is not a counter-sexology; this social sphere does not rage against cis and heterosexual definitions of gender, sex, and sexuality. Wolves and doll babies, as member of the underclass, were never called to testify before a sexological scientific establishment which was only interested in the aberrant white bourgeois exceptions predicated on the rule that non-white and non-bourgeois populations were collectively sexually aberrant. As a result, sexological science will never incorporate them as subjects who are regrettably barred from the healthy choices of cis and straight life. For this reason, the world of McKay's novel is indifferent to whiteness, bourgeois mores, and the scientific diagnosis of sex and sexual roles as healthy or diseased. When notorious New York City bon vivant and artist Richard Bruce Nugent explained that in the Harlem and Greenwich Village of the early twentieth century "there wasn't any closet," he also meant this: in clubs like "the Congo" there was no bourgeois stigma like the one that sent Freud's female patient over a wall and onto a railway line because her parents found out she was in love with another woman. Rather, people like Rose and the doll baby are "lost in enjoyment" of each other, a relation made possible by the abundance of the Black underworld club where they dance together.

Notes

1 Schaffner, *Modernism and Perversion*, 4.
2 Schaffner, *Modernism and Perversion*, 4.
3 This is not to say that those norms did not exist just outside the frame of the novel's plot, in Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant; if general readers know one thing about *Home to Harlem*, that one thing is probably that W. E. B. DuBois hated the novel and said that it made him feel like taking a bath. Quoted in Vogel, *The Scene of the Harlem Cabaret*, 132.

4 Somerville, "Scientific Racism," 64.
5 McKay, *Home to Harlem*, 8.
6 Holcomb, *Claude McKay*, 92.
7 McKay, *Home to Harlem*, 224.
8 Cooper, Foreword, xxi.
9 McKay, *Home to Harlem*, 13.
10 McKay, *Home to Harlem*, 40.
11 McKay, *Home to Harlem*, 87.
12 Holcomb, *Claude McKay*, 115. McKay depicts all social roles in *Home to Harlem* as fundamentally materialist. Race too is reproduced materially. When Jake is approached by a white worker and told that he has been working as a scab, crossing the picketline of a wildcat strike, he quickly vows to not scab, but when the white worker attempts to make common cause by suggesting that his solidarity reflects the fact America is a land of equality for all workers "no matter what race or nation he belongs to," Jake quickly disabuses him of this view. He says that while he "won't scab … I ain't a joiner kind of fellah … I ain't no white folks' nigger and I ain't no poah white's fool. When I longshored in Philly I was a good union man. But when I made New York I done finds out that they gived the colored men worser piers and hold the bes'n a' them for the Irishmen. No, pardner, keep you' card." McKay, *Home to Harlem*, 45.
13 McKay, *Home to Harlem*, 29.
14 McKay, *Home to Harlem*, 30.
15 McKay, *Home to Harlem*, 31.
16 McKay, *Home to Harlem*, 31.
17 McKay, *Home to Harlem*, 32.
18 McKay, *Home to Harlem*, 88.
19 Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 102.
20 Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 104.
21 McKay, *Home to Harlem*, 88.
22 McKay, *Home to Harlem*, 88.
23 McKay, *Home to Harlem*, 88.
24 McKay, *Home to Harlem*, 88.
25 McKay, *Home to Harlem*, 91.
26 McKay, *Home to Harlem*, 93.
27 Quoted in Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*, 151.
28 Quoted in Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*, 174.
29 Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*, 2.
30 Barnes, *Nightwood*, 1.
31 See Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*; and Marcus, *Between Women*.
32 Barnes, *Nightwood*, 91; 93.
33 Barnes, *Nightwood*, 32.
34 Barnes, *Nightwood*, 16.
35 Barnes, *Nightwood*, 17.
36 Barnes, *Nightwood*, 17.
37 Barnes, *Nightwood*, 124.
38 Chauncey for instance argues that "gay life was more open in working-class than middle-class society." Historians long assumed that change in attitudes concerning sexuality began in the middle class in the 1910s and 1920s and only later percolated down to the more "rigid" working class, but in fact queer styles and social mores "among middle-class youth in the twenties were modeled on that of working-class youth, who were generally more direct about sexual matters than bourgeois reticence allowed." Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 283; 284. Or consider the fact that Oscar Wilde, the most flamboyantly joyful of sodomites, sued when publicly accused of posing as such. Another way of making this point is to

consider Virginia Woolf and, indeed many of her Bloomsbury siblings, whose heterosexual marriages were the bourgeois public face that masked insupportable queer realities. Another way still is to consider Gertrude Stein, whose intensely erotic partnership publicly followed the script of a bourgeois marriage, was among the last generation with some dwindling access to a pre-sexological model, in which homosexuality could attain some modicum of public view, without destroying a bourgeois reputation. It was not until the 1990s that social codes shifted again to allow a new form of bourgeois homosexuality.

39 See Chauncey, *Gay New York*, or, for a firsthand account, Werther, *Autobiography of an Androgyne*.

40 Cooper, Foreword, xxiv.

41 Holcomb, *Claude McKay*, 92.

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13

QUEER MODERNIST ANIMALS

Cliff Mak

In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick shows us how the advent of modernism in the late nineteenth century paralleled the installation of the male body, in place of the female before it, as the "exemplary instance of the sentimental."[1] Insofar as figuration or the protocols of realist representation more broadly came to be associated with kitsch and sentimentality, and insofar as the desired male body, under the closet logic of the "open secret" and turn-of-the-century homosexual panic, could only be invoked indirectly or via negation, "what represented 'representation itself' came at the same time signally to be a very particular, masculine object and subject of erotic desire."[2] Modernism, that is, was recognizable as itself to the degree that it abjected the desired male body and the attendant, inextricable practices of sentiment and representation, embracing instead a poetics of self-reflexive abstraction, iconoclastic antifigurality, and anti-sentimentalism. Rare, however, was the modernist who trafficked in no sentimentality whatsoever; even rarer the modernist who represented not a single body. For even in the most stridently impersonal and anti-humanist of modernists, there is detectable a kind of queer, sentimental leakage. And more often than not, such leakages coalesce in animal figures, whose definitional embodiedness made them especially available for either figuration or abstraction, and for being the object of desire or the subject or circuit for different affects, and whose nonhuman speechlessness made them exemplarily suited to function as poetic surrogates for what both avowedly and disavowedly queer modernists saw as the unspeakability of queer desire.

This triangulation is apparent in none other than T. S. Eliot, champion of modernist impersonality, whose work performs a kind of anti-expressive, anti-sentimental "continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of

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personality," while nevertheless continually indulging in insipid, morbid, even childish sentiment.[3] And with a not-unsurprising density, Eliot populates his work with animals and animalized images, planting them frequently in positions where their bodies and behaviors can figure an array of feelings that consistently shrinks back from naming itself:

> The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
> The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,
> Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
> Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
> Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
> Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
> And seeing that it was a soft October night,
> Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.[4]

A metonym for the modern urbanite's general experience of alienation, Eliot's memorably catlike fog also more specifically embodies the "overwhelming question" into which Prufrock, in the first stanza, apophatically implores the poem's second-person walking partner not to inquire and around which the rest of the poem discursively revolves. Like the question itself, the fog is appropriately speechless in its zoomorphism and just as irresolvable, requiring the same amount of endless time as Prufrock's neurotic self-fashioning:

> And indeed there will be time
> For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,
> Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;
> There will be time, there will be time
> To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;[5]

New Critical "impersonality" is thus a startlingly insufficient explanation for the poem's rhetorical and affective bandwidth, either not fully accounting for or confusing the function of the animality and the sentiment present in it. The fog, already an impersonalizing image, does not have to be feline to convey impersonality. If anything, its feline quality re-personalizes the disenchantment and reintroduces on a different poetic level what cannot otherwise be said aloud—namely, Prufrock's homosexual desire.

Unwilling to be "fix[ed] … in a formulated phrase" while nonetheless admitting that he has intimated a truth about himself, however ambiguously—"That is not what I meant at all; / That is not it, at all"—Prufrock provides what Sedgwick calls a "manifesto of male homosexual panic," the true content of what Eliot frames as a "love song."[6] Here is Prufrock vocalizing Eliot's own aversion to representing personality, and by extension sexuality: the anxiety is one of being ruthlessly, clinically known,

taxonomized by the modern medical-scientific gaze and Foucauldian will to knowledge that famously frames the poem from the start: "Let us go then, you and I, / When the evening is spread out against the sky / Like a patient etherized upon a table."[7]

But just as the poem's opening nevertheless avows a sentimental and erotic pleasure in the clinical image—despite, that is, that very image's status as one of the most cited examples of modernist antirepresentationist defamiliarization—so it is the image of Prufrock as a bug, an entomological specimen "formulated, sprawling on a pin, / When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall," that fittingly avows a pleasure that follows the initial anxiety.[8] Prufrock may be averse to being named or formulated in language or under the visual gaze of others, but we can still detect a libidinal charge in the way his language, in the act of specifying what he ostensibly doesn't want to experience, moves swiftly, metonymically, and with a lattice of internal rhymes from the verbal and visual senses to the brutally corporeal and twitchily textural and tactile. He is wary of "all" the eyes, but that same paranoid sense of the overwhelmingly total slides into the physical pleasure of "sprawling," as if letting it all hang loose under pressure; even the "wall," one half of the instrument of his brutalization, is the surface on which his wormy body gets to get down to "wriggling" with relish. And if it weren't gay enough for the "all" of the fixing eyes to finally transmute itself into the "all" of the "butt-ends of [his] days and ways," the preposition "in" by which the eyes fix him is gradually built out into "pin" and then the climactic, final "pinned"—its penetrative nature so irreversible, and the attendant pleasure presumably so conclusive, that Prufrock is left to ask how he might possibly "begin" again in any fashion, even if only to narrate his "butt-end" dalliances. "And how should I presume"—when there is nothing left to presume?[9]

In this sense, the entomologizing figure of Prufrock-as-bug makes more explicit the homoeroticism of the similarly nonhuman but far-more sentimental figure of the catlike yellow fog. The function of both is to give Prufrock a vehicle through which to express an erotics of corporeal texture and tactility which he is otherwise unable to fully broach as a human man. Like Prufrock-as-bug's "sprawling" and "wriggling," the yellow fog "rubs its back" and "rubs its muzzle," "lick[s] its tongue," enjoys the sensation of soot falling "upon its back," and cozily "[curls] once about the house" before falling asleep. Each image is characteristically modernist in its binding of apparent contraries: Prufrock's experience as a bug is one of constraint and compression yet squirmingly pleasurable, peristaltic, and anal; the yellow fog indexes the pleasure of being in a liminal state between the substantial and insubstantial (anticipating Eliot's more plodding reflection in "Burnt Norton" that love only has anything to do with desire when "in the aspect of time / Caught in the form of limitation / Between un-being and being").[10] Texture itself—and specifically a kind of *animalized* texture—is thus the medium of

Eliot's poetic solution to the problem of modernist impersonality and antirepresentationism: unable or unwilling to fully commit to depersonalization, the poet finds recourse to texture, the pleasure of rubbing up on surfaces and skin, as a half-measure at precisely the limit between the external pressures of a depersonalizing, disenchanted, and deterministic modernity and the internal pressures of demonstrating interiority and autonomy. And because these creatures of texture lack speech, they function not only as the embodiment of Prufrock's "overwhelming question" but also, as suggested by its structural apposition in the poem, the unspoken answer itself.

In this animal texture, modernist impersonality thus all too easily finds a way to avoid answering for its own inconsistencies. It is as if we were to take seriously the biological and geological dimensions of Eliot's metaphors in his call for the "continual extinction of personality" and that "personality" synecdochally contained the whole human species—only to find that what is left behind after annihilation is not the treasured "shred of platinum" but a spread of animal pelt instead.[11]

In other words, one of the affordances of animal figures in modernist literature is the ability to index the ethical bearings of any modernist text in which they appear toward the queer dimension of modernism itself. If, as Sedgwick explains, the desired male body as the "exemplary instance of the sentimental" was never *named* as such, it still ably "*embodie[d]* for an audience that both desires and cathartically identifies with him, a struggle of masculine identity with emotions or physical stigmata stereotyped as feminine."[12] What animal figures offered many modernists was a proxy by which to further distance embodiment from naming: one could still disingenuously express an embodied erotics whole hog, as it were, without having to actually herald it and avow its queer dimension. The figure of animal texture is the sentimental residue of modernism's bad faith, its cozy compromise.[13]

Conversely, the figure of the animal need function sentimentally no more than it must index a form of modernist bad faith. The numerous animals in Kafka and Beckett, for example, primarily figure a modernist commitment to thinking beyond the anthropocentric: what they bring to the fore is the often-uncanny nature of bare life itself when stripped of sentimentality and other cultural (humanistic, anthropocentric, anthropomorphizing) codes. Sexuality and the erotic, however queer, are laid plain and treated as unexceptional: the pleasures of the flesh are no more or less heightened or remarkable than the pains of bare survival. As Beckett's Mercier and Camier realize, for example, upon almost-too-felicitously reuniting after a series of all-too-slapstick missed connections (Beckett has, of course, bathetically deflated the felicity in advance: "What stink of artifice"), having romantically sought shelter from an abrupt rain, and being interrupted by two buggering dogs: "The dogs for their part were already copulating, with the utmost naturalness."[14] For Beckett's good-faith modernism, unlike Eliot's bad-faith modernism, it is not

that personality must be loudly expunged (only to sneak back in): rather, it is that personality, sexuality, and sentimentality themselves are no more remarkable than (though often just as absurd as) two dogs fucking. ("They begin astraddle, said Camier, and finish arsy-versy.")[15]

Similarly, where sentimentality is mobilized by the high "hard" modernists, it is often expressly the thematic subject of the modernist work itself and therefore functions mainly to be defamiliarized. D. H. Lawrence's poem "Snake," for example, stages a scene familiar in its coziness (the speaker is comfortably "in pyjamas") but unfamiliar in how its erotic energies swirl around the textures, tactility, tautness of the male snake's skin, interior flesh, and length (he "trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied down, over the edge of the stone trough"; "He sipped with his straight mouth, / Softly drank through his straight gums, into his slack long body, / Silently").[16] The speaker is given immediately to sentimentality and attraction ("But must I confess how I liked him, / How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet, to drink at my water-trough"), but where, for Eliot, the animal's silence and absence of speech absolves Prufrock of the need to avow explicitly the erotic appeal of the animal body, for Lawrence, the snake's silence occasions the ingress of the multiple "voices of [his] accursed human education." Channeling both an anthropocentric humanism and homosexual panic, they pressure the speaker to murder the snake, as if its appearance alone challenged modern man's eminence over the non-human world *and* the integrity of his heterosexual, anti-sentimental body: "And voices in me said, If you were a man / You would take a stick and break him now, and finish him off." And when the speaker capitulates to these received cultural pressures and chucks a log at the snake, his regret is immediate, and he considers his action "paltry," "vulgar," "mean," and, in the final line, "[a] pettiness"—which, even if the speaker never names his desire for the snake as such, nevertheless honestly names the bad faith by which modernist masculinity actively disavows the sentimental and the erotic even as it seeks it, here figured through the uncanny grace of the animal.[17]

For Lawrence, pettiness is indeed the opposite of grace insofar as both concepts name the joining of aesthetic and ethical principles, a joining that is thrown into high relief by the unique way in which animal figures can attract through their bearing of seemingly instinctual self-sufficiency, which engenders a superadded beauty or ugliness, a kind of asymmetrical ethical attention (hospitality, for Lawrence's speaker) that can generally not be returned in kind or explained by the animal itself. ("The cat makes no boast of his pre-eminent position," writes Carl Van Vechten in 1920, the same year Lawrence writes "Snake"; "he is satisfied to occupy it. He does not call man a 'lower animal' although doubtless he regards him in this light.")[18] To recognize one's ethical, aesthetic, and erotic continuity with animals, the poem suggests, is to become open to a kind of grace queerly beyond human

language—an opening that is, perhaps, itself that grace—but to refuse that continuity on the slimmest of pretexts, precisely because the erotics of animal grace instinctually challenges and demands language the speaker is unwilling to give, can only ever be a kind of pettiness. (Can animals be petty? Pets, perhaps.) Contrast Lawrence's speaker with Prufrock, who makes a farce of the ethical considerations occasioned by a queer animal erotics: instead of the middle ground of "insidious intents" at which he hints but upon which he never expounds, Prufrock too quickly rejects the hyperbolic idea of being Hamlet—though nobody asked—before turning the scope of his ethical deliberation down to the other extreme, that of the supremely trivial—his famous trousers to roll, his hair to part, his peach to eat, and so forth.

On the other hand, we might also interpret the "pettiness" of Lawrence's speaker in another way. If the difference between the human and the animal is ultimately trivial—the human speaks, the snake does not—and to make that difference constitutive of a hierarchy of domination is a form of pettiness, the murderous impulse toward which the speaker is driven in the name of that species hierarchy is itself animalizing. While the speaker is ostensibly acting on behalf of human civilization, culture, and rationality, his actions seem anything but deliberate and reasoned: he throws the log out of a "sort of horror"; the "voices of [his] accursed human education" ultimately function as a phantasmatic objectification of an unthinking, even irrational, instinct out of place under the rubric of masterful masculinity. The speaker "look[s] round" for the log to throw, echoing the same movements of the snake, who "look[s] around like a god, unseeing, into the air."[19]

Thus depictions of violence also index how the bad faith that modernists might bear toward their own queerness can loop back around into good-faith (or nearly there good-faith) avowals. For a writer like Rudyard Kipling, for example (not generally considered a modernist but also not *not* a modernist), whose authorial voice and style, especially in his children's fiction, might be said to epitomize the aesthetic of coziness, violence runs parallel to homoerotic intimacy and indeed often seems to substitute for, or more precisely, sublimate it. In particular, his *Jungle Book* stories together imagine a world in which a subaltern, feral child might be morally educated and socialized (read: colonized) not just out of but also dialectically *through* the instinctual brutality of jungle beasts in such a way that education is internalized *as* instinct. Mowgli reaches developmental maturity and human self-consciousness not just by having the Law of the Jungle didactically imposed upon him by a coterie of almost exclusively male alpha beasts but also by submitting himself to the unforgiving rigors of a natural world, red in tooth and claw, becoming seemingly more of an animal himself than the actual animals around him. By the penultimate story in his cycle within the *Jungle Book* stories, Mowgli has become the jungle's apex predator and ultimate evolutionary endpoint by absorbing the instincts of the other beasts into his

own hybrid human-animal body, complete with an emphatically deadly prosthetic, syntactically capped with relish:

> "Mowgli the Frog have I been" said he to himself; "Mowgli the Wolf have I said that I am. Now Mowgli the Ape must I be before I am Mowgli the Buck. At the end I shall be Mowgli the Man. Ho!" and he slid his thumb along the eighteen-inch blade of his knife.[20]

Insofar, however, as Mowgli's zoomorphic *Bildung* and the narratological pedagogy of Kipling's presumed child reader allegorize each other, it becomes apparent that the work's central pedagogical conceit—the notion that deterministic animal instinct might not, as a model for agency, be opposed to entry into a liberal, self-determining subjectivity but rather be the very basis for it—can only go so far. Or rather, instinct outruns itself as a formal conceit. In "The Spring Running," the final story in the Mowgli cycle, the inhabitants of the jungle grow sexually excited and "run" with each other during the mating season that they call the "Time of New Talk." Kipling does not explicitly name this season for the reader, as Mowgli himself—and presumably also Kipling's child reader, who will at some point inevitably be too old for the fantasy world—does not understand or know how to handle the kind of instinctual longing he is for the first time experiencing. "The Jungle People are very busy in the spring, and Mowgli could hear them grunting and screaming and whistling according to their kind," Kipling suggestively writes; but for Mowgli, these carnal pleasures produce in him only "a feeling of pure unhappiness."[21] With no suitable mate, Mowgli can only expend his bourgeoning sexual energy by running wildly through the jungle and is eventually drawn, under a narrative pretense of aimlessness but basically instinctually, back to human civilization. If the fantasy of a human assimilating animal instinct is what initially motivates the *Jungle Book* stories, it is also, when brought to its logical conclusion, what effectively closes the same book.

Once it is made clear that the fantastic space of pedagogy in the *Jungle Book* stories cannot actually proceed further under a reproductive logic, the unspoken energy sustaining that impossible space becomes more legible as a queer erotics.[22] The through line of Mowgli's education—on one hand an indoctrination into the Law of the Jungle, on the other an experiential exposure to violence—turns out to be a kind of intimacy of minds and bodies that Kipling, while never fully naming, still never quite disavows (not just a Victorian, after all, and not quite a modernist either), even, in at least one disarming moment, giving expression to it. Where the possibility of a wild Mowgli thrilling to the relatively stuffy language of the Law, delivered to him through the queer configuration of his multiple surrogate father figures, might prove to be too much of an imaginative impediment for the reader (even beyond the fantastic premise that beasts might speak!), Kipling provides an answer in the figure of Kaa the snake, in whose body lies the

explanatory source of homoerotic attraction. All of Mowgli's relationships with the other alpha beasts are clarified in an unguarded moment with Kaa, where Kipling's own understanding of the erotics of pedagogy seems laid plain. In a rare pause from the *Jungle Book*'s relentless action, after Kaa completes a periodic molting of his skin, he and Mowgli bathe and wrestle together, the erotic delight of the scene palpable and joyous:

> Mowgli ran his hand down the diagonal checkerings of the immense back. "The Turtle is harder-backed, but not so gay," he said judgmatically. "The Frog, my name-bearer, is more gay, but not so hard. It is very beautiful to see—like the mottling in the mouth of a lily."[23]

As in Eliot and Lawrence, Kipling's initial point of erotic access is tactile and textural. The self-rejuvenating quality of the ancient snake's skin becomes an apt image for Kipling's own curious position as an older man narrating the wisdom of experience to children in a way that should stay perennially fresh, the dead skin of his authorial evasions and obscurations no longer a source of resistance but an object of delight in itself. Kaa, too, more than the other beasts, is perhaps the most essential to Mowgli's education: the oldest creature in the jungle, he brings immeasurable experience to the table; closest to the ground, he musters incomparable minutiae for Mowgli's use. But crucially, this knowledge is not just imparted didactically but exchanged through the catalyzing erotics of aggressive play. It is only after Kaa and Mowgli wrestle, their bodies becoming intertwined and Kipling's prose reaching a rare level of lyricism—"They would rock to and fro, head to head, each waiting for his chance, till the beautiful, statue-like group melted in a whirl of black-and-yellow coils and struggling legs and arms, to rise up again and again"—that, now at a new point of intimacy, vulnerability, and reflectiveness—"They lay still, soaking luxuriously in the cool water"—Kaa communicates to Mowgli what he needs to know for his next feat of adventure and development.[24] Though Mowgli and Kaa here engage in violent exertion that resembles the action typical to the *Jungle Book* stories, the erotic intimacy enabled by that violence is now avowed. As though they were lovers, relaxing in the refractory period after sex, Kaa even asks Mowgli if the Jungle has given "thee all that thou hast ever desired." Violence for Kipling is no longer merely sublimating one's desires under the cover of sentimental narratorial coziness. Rather, it clears the ground for actual subjective probing and the unburdening of interiority—that which should have been enabled by coziness all along. By touching (on) the surfaces of our bodies, which Renu Bora has described as the medium for the circulation of pleasures, the hard oppositions between human and animal, inside and outside, subject and object, living thing and just … thing are softened, confounded, even made, at some level, interchangeable.[25]

Modernists at various points along the spectrum of bad faith, in the act of trying to set themselves apart from the desired same-sex body, inevitably

summon into language, when the logic of their anxiety is fleshed out to its full length, the very desires they were attempting to abject. In each case, the animal figure stands in for that which modernist masculinity cannot fully control or absorb into his own agency: that which must be mastered, dominated, murdered, exhausted, and almost never named, let alone given its own voice, but which might still be silently enjoyed for those very same reasons. But just as the erotics of tactility, far from solely allowing one to possess another's body, can remind us that our own bodies and energies are not always our own, that what we consider extensions of our own subjectivity are often felt as foreign, recalcitrant objects—"I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day," writes Gerard Manley Hopkins of his own inexpressible, beast-flavored queer sexuality, "God's most deep decree / Bitter would have me taste: my taste was me"—so the animal body, which stands in for the disavowed but desired human body, complicates and, even, dispossesses the modernist of his monadic selfhood.[26] In this way, too, modernism's bad faith unexpectedly arrives at the felicities of its good-faith counterparts.

Where modernism most ably avows queer desire, and where its experimental affordances have persisted most vitally into the present, is where its iconoclastic antifigurality eases up and it finds a way to integrate the concrete and the sentimental into its program of abstraction. Indeed, precisely because the animal is so readily available for a bad faith figuration of the erotic, it is also the most effective figure for such a dialectical rapprochement. Because the animal does not speak, it can neither choose to differentiate itself from that which it is not nor claim any independence from its literary instrumentalization as a figure. But because it is also invoked as instinct embodied as all flesh, it is also the ripe concretization of a kind of absolute sentimentality, the feeling of being all feeling and nothing but. All that's required is to avow that the kinds of desire most facilitated by modernist abstraction lend themselves not to coherent liberal selfhood but to the confounding of individuality entirely. Actual good-faith impersonality, it turns out, is perhaps only possible upon surrendering to sentiment. As Mark Doty puts it, notably reflecting on a "display of mackerel"—in a manner heavily indebted to modernist poetics and Wallace Stevens in particular—

> Splendor, and splendor,
> and not a one in any way
>
> distinguished from the other
> —nothing about them
> of individuality. Instead
>
> they're *all* exact expressions
> of the one soul,
> each a perfect fulfillment

of heaven's template,
mackerel essence.[27]

Because the singular noun "animal" covers innumerable differences between different types of animals—simply because, as a function of anthropocentric language, it is not the "human"—and because even the individual animal depicted in the imaginative medium of literature is rarely singled out as nontrivially different from the rest of its species, the animal as embodied instinct is granted the burden of standing instinctually and invariably in for its whole species, sometimes even for the whole animal kingdom, just as any consideration of a single unit of an animal's texture—say, a feather, scale, or hair—instantly tessellates the whole wing, skin, or hide. In other words, to invoke the animal in its concrete being necessarily occasions the most unstable of abstract signifiers—animality itself. To figure oneself and one's desires through the animal thus seems inevitably to undo any attempt to consolidate the self as unitary and unique.[28]

For this reason, when animal figures do appear in the work of queer modernists more properly, it is in their capacity (*a*) to embody an erotics of texture and (*b*) to be interchangeable with other animals. Marianne Moore, for example, whose poetics of restraint both fulfills and revitalizes the modernist doctrine of impersonality—"The deepest feeling always shows itself in silence; / not in silence, but restraint," she quotes her father—allegorizes the aesthetic submersion of her own erotic desires through the figure of the frigate pelican, that "marvel of grace" and "this most romantic bird," by metonymizing the texture of his flight and comparing it to a different bird altogether:

He glides
a hundred feet or quivers about
as charred paper behaves—full
of feints; and an eagle

of vigilance…. *Festina lente*. Be gay
civilly? How so?[29]

As if figuring the character of her queer desire too directly would be a crime against civility (even the paper both behaves and *behaves*), Moore routes her poetics through various other animal figures—here an eagle, elsewhere a "swan's-down dress" and even a python—declining to isolate to the pelican alone, however rhapsodic, the qualities of his romance in a one-to-one fashion. For Moore, the process of poetic signification is not a simple matter of obstinately individual will or mastery—that is, "unlike the more stalwart swan" that pops up in this poem and others as a figure for stubborn,

single-minded determination.[30] Instead, Moore more modestly recognizes that any sentiment is immediately multiple—romance is here refracted through gaiety, levity, majesty, mundanity—and that one requires, like the pelican himself, a series of "feints" by which to approach the feeling indirectly—as if the flight pattern of the poem's images were itself possessed of a fluttering texture, each image a paper-like feather quivering in tandem with the whole wing and thereby embodying the desire that would otherwise be too much to name.

Glenway Wescott, too, does both at once when likening the neck of his avowedly "Named Flamingo" to a "snake of snow"; the flamingo himself, moreover, seems to have textural and meta-bestial tastes: "Hard bird, he prefers / with his eye / the oiled silk leaves, the dome, and clouds like fur."[31] In his even-more-gaily titled poem "Men Like Birds," the "elaborate kites" in question are disarticulated with clarity and without any insipidness into

> … a drapery of light, elbow of wing
> on a rigid elbow of wing, tier on tier
> of claws, jungle of quills …[32]

Wescott's erotic sentiment is unabashed (the following lines have a seminal note) even as it is difficult to articulate in full, refusing to be mastered by syntax. As the poem itself puts it, their quality of transcendence is a kind of "fore-being," "all inexplicable, / save by their forebears"—the explicating agents here being, of course, other animals, and in this case, reptiles, birds' spiritual ancestors: a "sublime alligator," but also a toad, a turtle-like stuffed bird, and even a snake, all sacred.[33] But where for other modernists such as Eliot, such transcendent zoomorphic erotics would mark an unwillingness to have one's attraction to modern bodies be named even as one affects one's alienation from them (to be in the world but not of it), Wescott's birds bridge the gap between abstraction and concrete immanence: they "revert, without pain, / from the theoretic ether, the apocalypse, / to squat in tin-cans and lilies" and are "at peace, placed in the literal." It is *because* their inexplicable beauty can only be explained by way of fragmentation that they are at home in a fragmented, modern world. (Hopkins, again, on a happier note: "Flesh and fleece, fur and feather, / Grass and greenworld all together.")[34]

To "be at home": even this amelioration of modern alienation, finally, returns us to the trope of a cozy domesticity. And what Wescott's "tin-cans" suggest is that any good-faith modernist queer erotics must also avow its inextricability from the commodity form upon which domestic life is built, with all its excess, waste, and fungibility. This account of queer modernist animals thus turns next to Gertrude Stein, whose *Tender Buttons*, even just in its economical title, lays out a poetics of fetishistic texture, sentimental domesticity, and thereby also of commodification *as* eroticization. In that

volume, replete with food items and animal products, it is the figure of the animal that most signally defamiliarizes the easy and seemingly "natural" way in which social relations are reified by capital as relations between things. The poem "Suppose an eyes," for example, moves through a collection of markedly tactile items, beginning with the sentimental delicacy of lace and ending with the lumpen dullness of mutton and leather, bluntly reminding the reader of the material fate of animal bodies under industrial capitalism. But Stein here is not merely registering, as Eliot might, a modernist angst in the face of modernity's alienating banalities. Rather, between the lace and the leather is the poem's erotic center: "Go red go red, laugh white. / Suppose a collapse in rubbed purr, in rubbed purr get."[35] A rubber dildo, obscene synecdoche of imperialist exploitation par excellence (the poem is here violently "gored," Chad Bennett suggests in light of the poem's soldier), is punningly domesticated into a soothing synesthesia of touch and sound: the eroticized commodity vocalizes back as a cat, without any of the plausible deniability of Eliot's speechless feline yellow fog.[36] The poem thus avows the "potential slippage between mutuality and domination," between a sentimentalized vision of "natural" sexuality and intimacy extricated from the vitiating instrumentalizations of capital and the pleasure that can still adhere not despite but *in* an objectively depersonalized world.[37]

Stein thus not only entertains the inherently nonconsolidated nature of animality as an abstract signifier for sexual selfhood but more consequentially returns animality as a poetic figure to the realm of the everyday *real*. That is, queer desire is not, for Stein, simply so excessive or transcendental that only the figural tessellations of animality are found poetically suitable. Rather, as animal bodies constitute the material of the uncanniest commodities—insofar as commodity fetishism animates things with a sense of "life" (or eco-social relation), so even more can once-living animal products not help but seem *re-animated*—so sexual desire is resilient enough to find a way to survive and be reasserted even amidst the ruins of objectification. That it can and does so—uncannily, queerly—thus not only marks a correction to the bad-faith symptomologies of modernist abstraction but also indexes the last dimension that animal figures and a queer erotics share: the indestructability—because of its tactility, because of its interchangeability, because of its self-abnegation unto non-singularity, and therefore because of its destructibility—of the body.

By way of conclusion, finally, I suggest that we can also use the figure of the animal to think about the boundaries of queer modernism as a cultural and historical inflection. If, in addition to our running definition of modernism as antirepresentational, we also see it as particularly centered around the thematics of temporality, we can see how the animal gives us purchase on a number of figures hovering on the edges of modernism as traditionally conceived.

Out of and in response to the straight time of bourgeois modernity, modernists were drawn to the "elegiac mysteries of *durée* and memory"; with the arrival of what used to be more widely called "postmodernism" in the second half of the twentieth century, the diachronic was replaced by the synchronic and spatial: so begins Fredric Jameson's definitive work on the latter formation, starting with his well-known reading of the difference between Vincent Van Gogh's *A Pair of Boots* (1887) and Andy Warhol's *Diamond Dust Shoes* (1980).[38] Warhol, of course, is submitted as a signal example of the thematization of commodity fetishism under late capitalism, but what Jameson leaves notably unremarked—Warhol's queerness—also provides a line back into the heart of modernism, complicating any stark period division (which is not necessarily Jameson's own). What we have been discussing as the indestructibility of the body in Stein, for example, not only resonates with the Warholian celebrity-as-image (though the latter is far less cozy and domestic) but is also opened up dimensionally by that resonance: in addition to the diachronic dimensions of Stein (generally, her poetics of cognitive *texture*; specifically, the life cycle of the commodity as re-animated animal body), we also observe the indispensable spatial dimension of *Tender Buttons*' synchronic cubist gaze ("a spectacle and nothing strange a single hurt color and an arrangement in a system to pointing").[39]

Such a switch point can open up queer modernist inroads into adjacent domains as well: the most puzzling animalities of certain works of children's literature, for example, rarely remarked upon outside that field, become legible when we apply the tandem analytics of textural erotics and temporality. If we see J. M. Barrie's *Peter and Wendy*, for example, as a mythologization of the processes by which diachronic reproductive futurity is frozen, resolved into its antinomic opposite, the eternal childhood of Peter Pan, the interrelated function of its zoocentricity and queerness becomes apparent. The novel's famous conclusion—where Peter returns to find Wendy grown old and now a mother, only to take her daughter Jane away (and eventually Jane's daughter Margaret, and so on)—reveals the haunting quality of that bifurcated temporal structure: on one side, the bad infinity of an endless generational march; on the other, a boy who forgets each companion as soon as she ages, each adventure as soon as it ends, who cannot keep straight the difference between reality and make-believe; and in between, a yawning emptiness marked by the nursery window, as if the strangeness of the very processes that feed and fetishize his fantastic existence were utterly inexplicable to each. In other words, heterofuturity is queerly recast in ecological, even cybernetic, terms: for Barrie, incomprehension is always bestial, instinctual. As he writes of the crocodile, doomed by the end of the novel always to chase after the sound of its ticking clock, a walking embodiment of the horizon-less abjection of evolutionary time: "like all slaves to a fixed idea, it was a stupid beast."[40]

Meanwhile, the "elegiac mysteries of *durée* and memory" are flattened and flipped inside out in the figure of Peter in a way that rescues poignancy from abjection. Memory-less, Peter is ever compared to a newborn chick ("I'm youth, I'm joy … I'm a little bird that has broken out of the egg," he himself cries at Hook), and it is the delicate destructibility of his boyish being that serves as the medium for what little he can grasp of diachronic subjectivity.[41] Carol Mavor has, following Jules Michelet, described Peter's expenditure as like to that of a bird building its nest out of what is essentially its own body, and the climax of his epistemological attenuation, experienced as a kind of embodied, animalistic being-toward-suffering, comes in the form of a prosopopoetic internalization.[42] For it is not Peter himself but his heart, the "drum beating within him," that utters the iconic line: "To die will be an awfully big adventure"—as if queerness (here the incipient sense that one is only ever the ritualized exhaust of the heteroreproductive system) were a truth *felt from the inside*, both, like the ticking clock in the crocodile, as a kind of internal psychic or spiritual texture and as a registration of the whimsicality of subjectivity's concepts and themes (time, sentiment) being objectified, made into things.[43] In this way, Barrie's modernism peeks through as he stages—queerly, bestially, ambivalently—the simultaneous possibility and impossibility of bourgeois children's literature's didactic aim: the happy inscription of the child reader into straight developmental time.[44]

Similarly, birds, texture, and time lead us back to one of the earliest transitional zones of queer modernism: Oscar Wilde's aestheticism. In his fairy tale "The Happy Prince," in particular, the shift from bourgeois realism's didactic extraction (where suffering and sentiment find their proper, sensible, and useful place in the temporality of bourgeois routinization) to the aesthetic autonomy of modernism takes place on the terrain of queer, texturally erotic animality. When the Swallow and the Prince die (the Swallow of exhaustion and cold, having loved the Prince "too well," and the Prince-as-statue immediately of grief), they are divinely elevated to Paradise—but only as inert, mute matter on the dust-heap, no longer useful to the townsfolk:

> "Bring me the two most precious things in the city," said God to one of His Angels; and the Angel brought Him the leaden heart and the dead bird.
>
> "You have rightly chosen," said God, "for in my garden of Paradise this little bird shall sing for evermore, and in my city of gold the Happy Prince shall praise me."[45]

The abrupt high camp of the conclusion thus antinomically resolves the tale's extractive and autonomous logics: on one hand, the scene of moral approbation is unavoidably suffused with pathos; on the other, its impersonal cast seals that sentiment and moral utility away behind an epistemological opacity structured by discursive and temporal layering (we don't hear the Swallow

or the Prince; we only hear God speak in the future-tense of their song and speech) and eschatological vision (in a realm beyond immediate human imagination). In line with the aestheticism of suffering upon which Wilde meditates in *De Profundis*, the truth of suffering is ultimately inaccessible to outside observers—which is its mystery and beauty both.

By way of the decidedly un-modernist modes of fairy tale and theology, then, Wilde unexpectedly induces a variety of modernist abstraction. Importantly, however, the abstraction, even in its structural inaccessibility, still bears the markings of an erotic map. The fact that the Swallow is to sing and that the Prince will live in a city of gold points backward to the sublime *textural* intermingling of pleasure and pain, beauty and morality, throughout the preceding tale: the "twittering" of the Swallows, the "silver ripples" he makes with his wings on the water as he courts the Reed, the precious exoticisms witnessed on the Swallow's travels (the entombed Egyptian king "wrapped in yellow linen," his hands "like withered leaves"), the seamstress's "coarse, red hands, all pricked by the needle," but also, most importantly, the ruby sword-hilt, the sapphire eyes, and the "[l]eaf after leaf of the fine gold" the Swallow picks off the Prince at the latter's command to give to the city's poor, and finally, internally and prosopopoetically, the "curious crack" of the Prince's heart breaking.[46]

The truth of suffering in the tale is thus never disavowed but made always palpable even in its muteness: the concrete grain and tactility of texture remind us beauty and goodness must be experienced and felt—even practiced, refined, instinctualized. (Ingrained, as it were.) For it is the animal that seems to have special access to this truth, for Wilde: the Swallow dies because "he loved [the Prince] too well," just as he is able to evade the assaults of disrespectful boys because "we swallows fly far too well."[47] But how can one *know* one loves "too well" while in the act of selfless loving? No more, perhaps, than an animal can know it flies "too well" while in the act of flying. Love itself is therefore transitively figured as a kind of instinct ("the body instinct with spirit," perhaps, as Wilde puts it later), with the auto-opacity of the animal here both harmonizing and amplifying the tension between the Swallow's interior and the narrator's extractive free-indirect interpretation (albeit a campily ironized extraction).[48] On one hand, the bourgeois notion that the truth of selfless love can be extracted and declared as a kind of routinizable quantum—even, or especially, as the townsfolk are wont, to the point of sentimental self-regard—and on the other, a queerer notion that love's transcendence lies in its immanence, returning us irrevocably to the granularity and porosity of fungible bodies.

At last, briefly, we can return to Warhol to think about the queer animal at the other end of modernism as it is superseded by the protocols of late capitalism. Where, for many modernists, the promise of textural erotics is one of a potentially transformative totality—a spiritual sublimity in Wilde, a domestic "system" in Stein—Warhol's animalized textures position

themselves after the fact of totality, as that which is left once capitalist society has negated every option by determining it in advance. Hence Sedgwick has written of Warhol's "queer shyness" as a kind of "uncanny and unmistakable presence" that exhibitionistically "wills itself into existence in the flickering, holographic space of [his] hunger to own the rage of other people to describe him—to describe him as if impersonally, not to say sadistically."[49] Sedgwick is here referring specifically to Warhol's musings (with Pat Hackett and Bob Colacello) in *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, told as a phone conversation between himself and an amalgamated interlocutor designated "B." In this conversation, Warhol refers to his popular characterization as a mirror—a surface possessing no significance of its own but the ability to reflect culture back at itself—and wonders what a mirror would see if it were to look at itself in another mirror.[50] For Sedgwick, Warhol's image of his own shyness exemplifies the "taboo of interocular experience" as described by affect theorist Silvan Tomkins: "The taboo is not only a taboo on looking too intimately but also on exposing the taboo by too obviously avoiding direct confrontation."[51] In other words, shyness is structured by a double bind, and when the shy mirror looks at itself in a mirror, it is too shy to recognize itself as a mirror reflecting the truth of society back at itself. Instead, all "birdlike" Warhol sees is animalized texture: "The albino-chalk skin. Parchmentlike. Reptilian. Almost blue …"; "The knobby knees. The roadmap of scars. The long bony arms, so white they look bleached"; "the chalky, puckish mask, the slightly Slavic look …"; and most importantly, pimples to be covered.[52] Sedgwick calls the Warholian pimple a "hysterically condensed form" of the blush: otherwise absent, hidden under Warhol's opaque white pallor, the coloration recalls the Darwinian identification of shame, the "ability" to blush, with "the exact differential between 'white' and 'nonwhite' peoples." Thus Warhol's "reptilian," ethnicized but still "excessively" white skin floats above and works to distinguish itself from the universalized whiteness beneath it. *Un*blushing, as Sedgwick puts it, Warhol's animalistic surface scandalizes *because* it shyly but also shamelessly registers the totalizing determinations of neoliberal capital—determinations that importantly include the fact that the metonyms of his alien image (his "affectless gaze," his "faggy air") take on an appropriative and (dis)identificatory relationship with gay Black masculinity, and thus his "casual and more-than-casual racism."[53]

Where sublime meaning was for Wilde queerly contained "within" the animal, as it were, for Warhol (whose droll aphorisms might fittingly bookend modernism alongside Wilde's, in addition to the birdlikeness, childlikeness, and penchant for prosopopoeia he also shares with Barrie) meaning is ambient and untethered, perhaps indistinguishable from Sedgwick's account of shame as an autonomous affect but therefore all the more difficult to derive because it is everywhere, synchronically overdetermined and overdetermining in advance.[54] In this way, "leakage" returns as a trope for the animal

figure: but where for Eliot, say, leakage marked the space of a positive queer desire that had been repressed and disavowed, only to seep inevitably out in the form of animality, animal leakage in Warhol is a question mark, asking what is left of desire in a world where even queer desire can be co-opted and magnetized in advance to processes of domination by the desiring-machines of racial capitalism. A "roadmap of scars," Warhol's embodied animality queries the very meaning of feeling after the utter exhaustion of the human person by capital, especially of the celebrity-as-commodity (the burnout of pop figures like Marilyn Monroe and Edie Sedgwick, for example), asking whether the "strange, compensatory, decorative exhilaration" evoked by the texture of so many of Warhol's images were any different, at the end of the day, from the fumes of exhaustion itself.[55]

Notes

1 Sedgwick, *Epistemology*, 146.
2 Sedgwick, *Epistemology*, 167.
3 Eliot, *The Sacred Wood*, 47.
4 Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays*, 13.
5 Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays*, 13–14.
6 Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays*, 14, 16; Sedgwick, *Epistemology*, 240.
7 Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays*, 13.
8 Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays*, 14.
9 Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays*, 15.
10 Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays*, 175.
11 Eliot, *The Sacred Wood*, 48.
12 Sedgwick, *Epistemology*, 146. Original emphasis.
13 It is difficult not to connect this triangulation to *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, indisputably Eliot's *coziest* work by far, where the cats stand in for a kind of homosexual panic now at least *a little* more at peace with its own unknowability. Here, some kind of desire is avowed, or at least the *possibility* of naming is avowed, even if the name itself is still ultimately "ineffable." Indeed, the work's famously cozy affect, thrown with surprising facility into high relief by its Broadway adaptation, is a function of precisely this tension between the knowable and unknowable mystery of cats (as a culture, as individuals, as bodies), a tension erotically charged by the hum of the cat's self-satisfied, knowing purr:

> The name that no human research can discover—
> But THE CAT HIMSELF KNOWS, and will never confess.
> […]
> His mind is engaged in a rapt contemplation
> Of the thought, of the thought, of the thought of his name:
> His ineffable effable
> Effaineffable
> Deep and inscrutable singular Name.
> From "The Naming of Cats," in *The Complete Poems and Plays*, 209.

For other discussions of Eliot in relation to closet logic, see Cole, Lamos, and Dean.
14 Beckett, *Mercier and Camier*, 2–3.
15 Beckett, *Mercier and Camier*, 4.

16 Lawrence, *Birds, Beasts, and Flowers*, 113.
17 Lawrence, *Birds, Beasts, and Flowers*, 114, 116.
18 Van Vechten, *The Tiger in the House*, 305.
19 Lawrence, *Birds, Beasts, and Flowers*, 115.
20 Kipling, *The Second Jungle Book*, 263.
21 Kipling, *The Second Jungle Book*, 293, 294.
22 The *Jungle Book* stories here structurally register the impasse of heteronormative reproductive futurity against which Lee Edelman has notably polemicized. Allen MacDuffie, meanwhile, observes that the Lamarckian inheritance paradigm central to the *Jungle Book* stories, despite its prevalence in Victorian evolutionary discourse, nevertheless bottoms out into the "troubling possibility" that "the only available form of reproduction for Mowgli is fictional, through the potentially inexhaustible variations of his childhood adventures." Diegetically, Mowgli's development is stopped and modulated into a bad infinity just as it reaches the horizon of Victorian sexual chauvinism. Metadiegetically, the potentially endless but fundamentally static seriality of Kipling's narrative parameters opens up a space for understanding textuality *as* the infinite planar texturality of queer desire. See Edelman, *No Future*; and also MacDuffie, "*The Jungle Books*," 32.
23 Kipling, *The Second Jungle Book*, 162.
24 Kipling, *The Second Jungle Book*, 163, 164.
25 Bora, "Outing Texture," passim. We might also see the function of the erotics of cross-species texture in Kipling as that of what Christopher Lane has called "colonial metalepsis," a kind of "metonymic substitution" that "betrays the social and psychic proximity between the colonizer and the colonized." See Lane, *Ruling Passion*, 36.
26 Hopkins, *Major Works*, 166.
27 Doty, *Atlantis*, 14.
28 It is difficult not to see Doty's "Nocturne in Black and Gold" as, in part, a direct response to Eliot. The poem, which advances a vision of the non-consolidated self as "one continuum / *sans* coast or margins" ends on the image of being "*loose as air again, unfettered / freshness, atmosphere / and aria, an aspect of fog // manifest, and then dissolving, / which you could regret / no more than fog*." Unlike Prufrock, Doty's speaker here eschews the closet logic of regret: it is the promise of self-dispossession that is promised by the figure of fog. See Doty, *Atlantis*, 97–98; and also Jarraway, "'Creatures of the Rainbow,'" for an explication of Doty's modernist inheritance via Stevens.
29 Moore, *Complete Poems*, 91, 25–26.
30 See also Moore, *Complete Poems*, 38.
31 Wescott, "Named Flamingo," 264.
32 Wescott, "Men Like Birds," 95–96.
33 Wescott, "Men Like Birds," 96.
34 Hopkins, *Major Works*, 139.
35 Stein, *Tender Buttons*, 29.
36 Bennett, "Scratching the Surface," 29.
37 Bennett, "Scratching the Surface," 30. Regarding the erotics of power and difference in *Tender Buttons*, Sianne Ngai has gone further, suggesting that the "cuteness" of consumable commodities "incites a fantasy of the cute object's capacity for retaliation." This retaliation might be primarily linguistic—"it names an encounter with difference that alters the speech of the subject attempting to manage that difference by imposing cuteness on the object"—and in this way provides and effective characterization of the "difficulty" of Stein's modernist poetics, or "art's ability to transform itself into something slightly less easy to consume." Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories*, 88, 93.

38 Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 16.
39 Stein, *Tender Buttons*, 11. In *Ida: A Novel*, Stein depicts how a cognitive texture (the texture of Id(e)a(s)) might become organized around an equal-parts stabilizing and destabilizing never-ending series of dogs.
40 Barrie, *The Collected Peter Pan*, 249.
41 Barrie, *The Collected Peter Pan*, 257.
42 Mavor, *Reading Boyishly*, 177.
43 Barrie, *The Collected Peter Pan*, 213.
44 On the double bind of children's literature as exemplified by *Peter & Wendy*, see Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan, or, The Impossibility of Children's Fiction*. On the genderqueerness of Peter Pan, see Mavor, *Reading Boyishly*, and on the specific queerness of Captain Hook as an unmarried man who embodies a "drive toward death that entails the destruction of the Child" who "marks the fetishistic fixation of heteronormativity," see Edelman, *No Future*, 21.
45 Wilde, *Major Works*, 34, 35.
46 Wilde, *Major Works*, 28, 30, 34.
47 Wilde, *Major Works*, 30, 34.
48 Wilde, *De Profundis*, 67.
49 Sedgwick, "Queer Performativity," 137.
50 Warhol, Hackett, and Colacello, *Philosophy*, 7.
51 Silvan S. Tomkins, *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness*, quoted in Sedgwick, "Queer Performativity," 141.
52 Warhol, Hackett, and Colacello, *Philosophy*, 8–10, 62, 72. "Birdlike" is Silver George's word in Warhol and Hackett's *POPism*, quoted in Sedgwick, "Queer Performativity," 136.
53 Sedgwick, "Queer Performativity," 139. Warhol, Hackett, and Colacello, *Philosophy*, 10. And once again, Silver George in Warhol and Hackett, *POPism*, quoted by Sedgwick, "Queer Performativity," 135. See also José Esteban Muñoz's essay on "disidentification" and Warhol's relationship to Jean-Michel Basquiat, in the same volume, *Pop Out*, 144–179.
54 As Sedgwick further explains, "shame, like other affects, is not a discrete intrapsychic structure but a kind of free radical that (in different people and also in different cultures) attaches to and permanently intensifies or alters the meaning of—of almost anything: a zone of the body, a sensory system, a prohibited or indeed a permitted behavior, another affect such as anger or arousal, a named identity, a script for interpreting other people's behavior toward oneself." Sedgwick, "Queer Performativity," 141.
55 Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 10, 14. We might also detect this texturized sense of affective puzzlement in Warhol's drawings of cats in his self-published *25 Cats Name[d] Sam and One Blue Pussy* (recently collected in *Andy Warhol: Seven Illustrated Books: 1952–1959*, ed. Reuel Golden, 82–123). Sharing some of the garish colors of his later works but mostly, on the whole, gentler, Warhol's cats seem to blush with their whole body, the watercolor warmth of their blushes mostly covering but not quite lining up with the exquisitely drawn and hatched textures of their hair and fur. And though the affective expressions of the cats are not consistently readable, the general air of bemusement with which they confront Warhol's naïveté speaks to his sense of the potential of animality to disidentify with the moralizing determinisms that seek to animate them and make them more than bare, fungible material, just ink and paint on the page. For more on Warholian animality, see also Anthony Grudin, *Like a Little Dog: Andy Warhol's Queer Ecologies*.

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14

THE REDISCOVERY OF MARGARET HOENING FRENCH

Scott Herring

I've always been taken by a few passing remarks in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's classic essay "The Beast in the Closet" that aren't between men. In the midst of her deconstruction of Henry James's "The Beast in the Jungle" as a keyhole into the "chronic, now endemic crisis of homo/heterosexual definition," she turns away from John Marcher and concentrates on his companion May Bartram.[1] In an "indicatively male"–centered monograph Sedgwick asks at length about one female's psyche.[2] "What does she want, not for him, but for herself, from their relationship?" she ponders. "What does she actually get?"[3] Both remain necessary questions for those of us who study queer male modernist subcultures, and Sedgwick's invitation "to imagine some female needs and desires and gratifications that are not structured exactly in the image of Marcher's or of the story's own laws" is one I keep close.[4]

"The Beast in the Closet" roared back to me while researching the artwork of another woman, Margaret Hoening French (1906–1998), whose life often triangulated queer men. Part of a trio of artists known as PaJaMa that included her husband Jared (or Jerry) and his lover Paul Cadmus, Margaret French has been, for the most part, largely overshadowed within our accounts of US modernism, US surrealism, US magic realism, modernist photography, modernist portraiture, and queer US modernity, even though she was a willing and eager participant in twentieth-century aesthetic experimentation. If and when cited today, she appears as a third wheel in this long-standing threesome based predominantly in and around New York City.

Before I turn to her work, a brief introduction to PaJaMa may be helpful to readers unfamiliar with their art. As a unit, the Frenches and Cadmus are perhaps best known for their self-photographs taken while cruising queer utopias in natural environments such as the Fire Island National Seashore,

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where they "summered together" from "1937, [when] French married Margaret Hoening" to "the next eight years."[5] According to Cadmus,

> [Margaret] had a Leica camera and she began taking pictures of us [Jared and Paul] in the subway and to circuses we'd go to. And then, when we went to Fire Island in 1937 for the first time, we all were using the same camera and taking pictures with it … The first initials of my name (Paul), the first initials of Jared (JA) and Margaret (MA). So we became PAJAMA. Which Jerry got rather sick of later on. The reason we did this was so often we couldn't tell who had taken which picture unless sometimes by the subject matter.[6]

Realistic yet uncommitted to verisimilitude, PaJaMa's photographs adhere to conventions of the magic realism movement prominent in the United States between the 1930s and '40s. Many of these photographs were only made public after Margaret's estate donated five boxes to the Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM) in 1999 that "arrived in green 'marbled' paperboard with [an] orange spine, [and] metal closure" and "in poor condition."[7] SAAM subsequently digitized and uploaded a fair number of these pictures onto the Internet.

While "the three were inseparable for many years to come," appreciation of PaJaMa mostly centers on Cadmus and French, about whom we thankfully have plenty: *The Rediscovery of Jared French*, *Paul Cadmus: Yesterday and Today*, and *Jared French's Myths*, to cite three titles.[8] Scholars praise Cadmus for depicting what historian George Chauncey memorably termed "the gay male world," an interracial and cross-class social, sexual, and artistic urban ecosystem that thrived well into the Great Depression.[9] Acknowledged as a model—literally and figuratively—for his lover, French also facilitated this world with paintings and craftwork such as his costume designs displayed recently at the Museum of Modern Art.[10]

Margaret, however, recedes in this socio-historical background. She receives passing mention, for example, as "an observer and a supporter" in David Leddick's otherwise comprehensive *Intimate Companions: A Triography of George Platt Lynes, Paul Cadmus, Lincoln Kirstein, and Their Circle*.[11] Even when its appreciators fete PaJaMa with a glossy art book like *Collaboration* (1992); or an exhibition at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library titled "The Art of Collaboration" (2018); or a "Modern Couples: Art, Intimacy and the Avant-Garde" exhibition at the Barbican Art Gallery in London (2018–2019); or a MoMA exhibition focused on Kirstein and his compeers (2019), Margaret stands as one of American modernism's "lesser-known relatives of well-known artists."[12] Worse, we commend her accommodating sexual liberalism regarding Jared's proclivities: "his wife was always protective of him and seems never to have taken offense at his many affairs and sleep-overs with other men."[13]

After reviewing acquisitions comprising the Jared French Papers that the Beinecke bought in 2009 and 2013 as well as PaJaMa materials donated to SAAM, I want us to give more thought to Hoening French in our queer studies of American modernism. With Sedgwick's comments in mind, I am as interested in individuation within this throuple as I am their collective achievement as PaJaMa. So I spend my allotted word count thinking more about her given the emphasis already placed on Cadmus, her husband, and their relations with Kirstein, Lynes, George Tooker, Monroe Wheeler, and Glenway Wescott. Focusing on her contributions to PaJaMa from the late 1930s to her SAAM bequest, I argue that PaJaMa also testifies to one woman's underreported artistic contributions as well as her misrecognized queer desires. More than a bizarre love triangle, this three-person slice of the modernist metronormative gay male world paradoxically provided Margaret Hoening French access to her own non-normativity through an opposite-sex marriage. I contend that she, like her husband and like Cadmus, both evidenced the gay male world and made space for herself within it. In so doing she queered that world with her own "needs and desires and gratifications"—inserted herself in it, widened a small piece of it, and made it strange yet welcoming. Tracing what Robyn Wiegman calls "the complexity of normativity" that present-day LGBT/queer studies has yet to exhaust, I present a married and then widowed French as a neglected contributor to fairly white, fairly privileged queer male scenes largely during the 1930s and '40s.[14] While she may have embraced the role of the supportive wife, Margaret made a claim for herself within what Sedgwick might have termed the story of PaJaMa's own laws.

[I]

What did Margaret want? A member of the white socioeconomic elite, she spent her young adulthood at 809 Castle Point Terrace in Hoboken, New Jersey. She graduated from Smith College in 1927, where her extracurricular activities included a turn as an Assistant Art Editor as well as membership in the Studio Club.[15] She later enrolled at the Art Students League where "[Margaret, Jared, and Paul] all shared similar interests in art and became friends" (see Figure 14.1).[16] Margaret and Jared married in 1937 and the two did not part ways after he took up with Roberto Giannotta for much of his later life in Rome and rural Vermont.

Few pictures of her in the last half of her life publicly circulate, but semi-secretive PaJaMa photographs of and by her in her thirties are divine. Featuring themselves in pairs or alone or with friends, the three would pose clothed, partially clothed, or naked with swaths of fabric, by an abandoned automobile, in breaking waves, next to hurricane-damaged houses, in dunes, by ruins. Queer strains of British, Irish, and French literary modernism



FIGURE 14.1 Photograph of Margaret French, ca. 1930s–40s, Jared French Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

bolster these visuals with Cadmus admirably citing André Gide, E. M. Forster, and James Joyce as forebears. One scholar notes for French as well that the "tenor of [his] work is inspired by readings of modernist literature, particularly D.H. Lawrence."[17] How they initiated their photographic techniques remains uncertain, but popular guidebooks such as *The Leica Manual* published in 1935—two years before the three began their project—may have aided their experimental productions.[18]

Beholden to international modernism, their PaJaMa photographs are also of a piece with queer American male modernism of the 1930s and '40s, an era often mythologized as the heyday of realist documentary photography such as that of Walker Evans. I am hardly the first to note such links. The threesome's photos signify on "the neoclassical pretenses of George Platt Lynes," as Douglas Crimp once described the latter's stylistics.[19] Others such as Richard Meyer, Justin Spring, and Thomas Waugh agree, linking the photos to "Lynes's studio precision of choreography and gesture."[20] Spring directly traces PaJaMa to "the modernist avant-garde": "since both Jared French and George Platt Lynes also exhibited work at the Julien Levy Gallery during the 1930s, it seems likely that Cadmus was aware of the art photography being exhibited there."[21]

These findings are invaluable as they survey how PaJaMa enriched queer male experimentalism in the United States and negotiated Depression-era proletarian modernism and its attendant homophobia. There remains more to be said about its queer male domesticity and its historical anticipation of gay and lesbian vacationlands on the Eastern Seaboard. But how, exactly, was PaJaMa queer for Margaret as a woman? Waugh mentions "the presence on-camera and off-camera of Margaret French, who appears variously either as a bisexual option within a scenario of choice, or as a kind of feminine eye enacting a voyeuristic relationship with the same-sex male couple."[22] Scopophilia does not, however, exhaust her investments in PaJaMa's experimentalism. Take but one scrapbooked page of black-and-white photographs held at SAAM dated approximately 1940. Listed as "D12" in the threesome's coding, the page consists of seventeen photographs of Margaret identified in pencil with the initials "MF" (see Figure 14.2). She is nude in each. She stands tall and she kneels, sometimes with a plain white cloth as a shroud, sometimes not. In one picture she stands behind sea grass, her arms open, gazing into the heavens. She's a deity with a discarded wrap amidst "vestiges of a primal landscape" in "a remote, timeless world."[23] She is not subsidiary but self-centered in her prime.

Was she also in her prime element? We know that by the time PaJaMa shot and printed these photographs that she sought relief from a stale life. "Margaret would have married anyone to get away from home," Cadmus tells us.[24] From what? Her father? Her mother? Life in Hoboken? Life as a female in Hoboken? Gendered norms in general? Taken either by Cadmus or her husband or both—"they all took turns creating the photographs and pressing the camera button," remember—other exemplary PaJaMa photographs show her sunbathing in the nude; reading with Cadmus; standing with Cadmus; posing with Jared.[25] It's interpretive indulgence but I risk projecting her psychic life into these visuals. They strike me as akin to "the exuberance and fantasy" that Lynes found for himself and that critics read into his own experimental photography.[26]

In a complementary vein, Meyer has brilliantly argued that the artwork of these men functions

> as highly crafted responses to both lived conditions and constraints that governed their historical moment. Cadmus, French, and Lynes provide us, then, not with authentic transcriptions of the homosexual past but with pictures of queer possibility that, but for the efforts of these artists, might never have been visible at all.[27]

We could say the same for Margaret's relation to restrictive forms of modern female heteronormativity in twentieth-century America. What you cannot find in the available archives at the Beinecke and at SAAM—a picture of the



FIGURE 14.2 PaJaMa (Paul Cadmus, Jared French, Margaret French) gelatin silver prints from Box D, ca. 1940, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC.

Frenches sitting for a family portrait with infant in lap—is as important as what you do. Even PaJaMa portraits taken in her Hoboken residence render the domestic an unexpected space: "velvet draperies create capes and heavy oak paneling a background for beautiful and eerie pictures."[28] PaJaMa, critics such as Meyer correctly assert, is non-normative fantasia, which is also to say that it removed itself from the constraints of Hoboken. I say this not to deny marital vexation between the Frenches, but rather to make clear that she used photography (and Paul and Jared) to grasp at release from normativity from within the confines of a modern marriage. In so doing she staged a classic modernist break from standardizing notions of white bourgeois femininity within this long-term coupling.[29] As Leddick writes, "the many photographs taken by Paul Cadmus and Jared and Margaret French during their summer vacations of this period testify that reality *was* magical for them."[30] For her, too, I would emphasize.

Thus, as she captured Jared waking a napping Cadmus, or the two men standing in the ocean, she was not solely a bystander and her portraits should not be reductively read as voyeurism (see Figure 14.3). She was a queer modern who, like Lynes and like her husband, chronicled the gay male world for her own gender non-conformist ends. Indeed, it is not too far a stretch to say



FIGURE 14.3 Margaret French, photograph of Jared French and Paul Cadmus, n.d., Jared French Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

that Margaret French repurposed homoerotic male experimentalism into a useable aesthetic for herself. As she, Cadmus, and her husband recorded the gay male world with their vanguard photography, she recoded it, and PaJaMa insists on a place for her amidst that world's appreciation for the effeminate fairy, the transgender invert, the unknowing wife of the closeted gay husband, or the knowing beard.

That she sustained agency within a queer marriage nestled within this gay male world is to remind ourselves that women always played elemental roles in these sexually experimental spaces. Recall Fania Marinoff and Carl Van Vechten, or Yolande Du Bois and Countee Cullen (however short-lived their marriage) or Grace Marr Nugent's intimacy with Richard Bruce Nugent.[31] French's union with Jared was not a cover for Jerry and Paul's queer intimacies but one that offered her self-liberation—perhaps also from the demands of childrearing—as she nourished her dyad within their threesome. I honestly have little insight into what aggravations she may have experienced within this marriage as the two inhabited residences in downtown New York City; a farmhouse on Cotton Hill Road in Hartland, Vermont; and an apartment at Piazza Cuchi 3 in Rome during and after their time on Fire Island. I have no quick read on "the psychological complexity that lurked within this unusual arrangement."[32] I only intuit that she radiates triumph on paper that has yet to fade.

[II]

For some time, then, her magic realist art matched her magically real existence. Recently sold by the New York City-based Gitterman Gallery to Jack Shear to be donated to the Whitney Museum of American Art, her *The Moon by Day* (1939) confirms this insight (see Figure 14.4). Featuring five white males in various stages of undress in front and to the side of a ramshackle building on a beach, the painting is signed "M.H. French" in its lower right-hand corner. Boarded up with several broken windows and a crumbling chimney, the structure looms large. With its stylistic similarities to many of her American contemporaries, *The Moon by Day* is a fine entry into the pantheon of magic realism, a movement popularized by Alfred H. Barr, Jr. in 1942 when he defined it as "a term sometimes applied to the work of painters who by means of an exact realistic technique try to make plausible and convincing their improbable, dreamlike or fantastic visions."[33] A year later this definition became central to a vanguard MoMA exhibition entitled *Americans 1943: Realists and Magic Realists*. Cadmus and Jared French were both featured, with the former contributing sixteen pieces and the latter showcasing eight. Margaret, predictably, was MIA.

Still, *The Moon by Day* converses with a complementary piece, *Summer's Ending*, painted by her husband that same year and featured in the *Americans 1943* exhibition (see Figure 14.5). In Jared's painting two humans gaze out



FIGURE 14.4 Margaret French, *The Moon by Day*, 1939, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Promised gift of Jack Shear.



FIGURE 14.5 Jared French, *Summer's Ending*, 1939, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

onto a horizon as four others retreat into the background. While the painting's title suggests the close of a season, its mood seems more unnerving than wistful, and it exemplifies Barr's working definition of magic realism. Similarly staged, Margaret's painting signifies on a commonplace but uncanny astronomical event of the nocturnal moon's appearance during daylight amongst clear skies. A sense of the realistically unreal likewise appears in social disconnects between the men featured in her painting. When one scans the canvas from left to right, each seems singular. Any sense of an all-male beach party or a coterie of sunbathers doesn't fit this scene.

The Moon by Day's male world is sexualized, but I do not think the painting is especially invested in male homoeroticism. Each turns away from the viewer as well as each other. No women appear in this painting, but neither can you find a trace of heteronormative female domesticity. Featuring "an empty but somehow symbolic and meaningful beach world" that one critic identifies as a core setting for PaJaMa, the main focus of this painting is an abandoned building that is likely a station house or a life-saving station.[34] French based this painting on PaJaMa photographs of a strikingly similar structure, and to me this building materializes as the most central feature of her magic realist painting (see Figure 14.6). With its vacated built environment, *The Moon by Day* paints over—rather than realistically depicts—what we would today call domestic cisgender white womanhood, and her erasure of women is not at all an erasure of her selfhood. Concentrating on a derelict scene, she instead paints liberation from restrictive built environments such as her former life in Hoboken, New Jersey. The painting is best read as the modern gay male world queered by one of its modern female participants, one that facilitated a sense of self-fulfillment.[35]

A complementary portrait of Jared French signed and dated 1944 by Margaret similarly showcases how much more interested she was in queering marital domesticity—of figuratively not keeping house or imaginatively experiencing home life otherwise (see Figure 14.7). Included in the French Papers and held in a folder titled "PaJaMa drawings/undated" alongside photographs of *The Moon by Day*, a black-and-white photograph of the painting shows her husband centered but he is not, I would argue, centralized. Jared sits nude on a chair in a sunroom and seems preoccupied with drafting or drawing. He does not look at the painter even though the perspective homes in on him. A door opens onto this scene, but the jamb obstructs the viewer's ability to see what, exactly, he writes or observes. The doorway thus becomes as important a visual as Jared. It offers the painter a window into the magically real world that was PaJaMa summers. Like *The Moon by Day*, it is a queered domesticity.[36]

After citing the roles of unreal structures as well as magically real male bodies in these two works, would it be overreaching to also understand them as artist statements? As in *The Moon by Day*, Margaret is not present in her portrait of Jared but she does place her name into PaJaMa space with her



FIGURE 14.6 PaJaMa (Paul Cadmus, Jared French, Margaret French) gelatin silver prints from Box C, ca. 1939, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC.

signature "M. French" written—carved with paintbrush—in the wooden frame on the left of the painting. She is present via her absence, and vice versa. Unlike Cadmus, she never titled any painting *What I Believe*. *Art International* never asked her—unlike her husband—for a personal statement (Jared submitted short paragraphs to the journal in 1968). Nor would she be featured, like



FIGURE 14.7 Photograph of untitled painting dated 1944, by Margaret French, Jared French Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

Jared, in *International Who's Who in Art and Antiques* in 1976. No one asked for her perspective on the modern art world, but these paintings offer us one. Her portrait of Jared French is a portrait of her viewpoint into an environment that she cohabited with him, Cadmus, and, at times, other men as well as Paul's sister Fidelma Cadmus Kirstein. It's a portrait of her point of view.

Pushing the signatory logic of this argument one step further, what if we considered *The Moon by Day* and her painted portrait of Jared as self-portraits? I have elsewhere suggested when interpreting Charles Demuth's *My Egypt* (1927) as a response to modernist metronormativity and regional disability cultures that this Precisionist painted himself departing from urbane scenes in New York City for compensatory pleasures to be found in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Personalized by Demuth into an extended metaphor of queer crip life beyond the metropolis, the region's grain elevators symbolized this break necessitated by his incapacitating frustrations with type 1 diabetes.[37] For French, however, East Coast environs provided a way into her queer feminism whereby she abandons home and hearth for different worlds.[38]

Though she seemingly absents herself from these all-male scenes, her desire for non-normativity is again her primary theme. She did not simply subordinate herself in her marriage or excuse her husband's relationship with Cadmus and other men. She used its psycho-social space to transform herself into queer modern art as well. To again invoke Sedgwick, perhaps that's what she actually got out of PaJaMa starting in the 1930s.

[III]

And the years thereafter. The three remained in contact with each other in one form or another. Margaret's later life became Rome, New England, hotels in New York City. She remained married to Jared, who died with his wife watching over him in the Eternal City.[39] Thereafter she acquired a new identity—a widow—who kept ties to the early- to mid-twentieth-century gay male world. In the same decade that queer modernist studies began to cohere as a legitimized subfield in academic circles she archived these spaces at SAAM.

Margaret, apparently, held on to her share of PaJaMa photographs after Jared's death. Cadmus, again: "I think Jerry kept a fairly complete file of the pictures. They're probably in storage somewhere in New York, I'm sure. Pictures not only of Fire Island, but of our trips to Europe and of various friends too."[40] It's unclear when Jared gave them to Margaret or if they were always a shared possession and Cadmus's recollection is mistaken. We do know that half a year after French's death, Charles J. Robertson, deputy director of the National Museum of American Art (now SAAM) wrote to Margaret's law firm on August 3, 1988. He praised her legal counsel "for forwarding the copy of the codicil to Mrs. Jared French's will" and conveyed that "the National Museum of American Art is deeply grateful for Mrs. French's generosity in ultimately placing her husband's work here in the nation's capital."[41] "Ultimately" is key. Margaret's estate would, I mentioned earlier, donate five boxes of PaJaMa photography to SAAM a year after her death. Lest we need reminding, these were her works too.

At the time they were posthumously gifted the boxes were alphabetized A through E and the museum's archivists catalogued them in the order in which they received them.[42] SAAM cannot precisely identify who compiled them in this manner, and when I visited in the fall of 2018 I requested and reviewed the entirety of boxes A, B, and E.[43] Many are gelatin silver prints glued onto white paperboard. Others are cut-out contact sheets rearranged onto black construction paper with three-ring holes punched through individual pages. Images in Box A, for instance, are posted on mostly black 28.4" by 21.5" construction paper, save for a few. Many of these approximately date to 1937. Someone had cut the images out of contact sheets and arranged them thereafter. Someone had also ranked many of the pages with numbered gold stars (see Figure 14.8).



FIGURE 14.8 PaJaMa (Paul Cadmus, Jared French, Margaret French), images from Box A, ca. 1937, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC.

My own wishful magic realism—I don't really know who rated these pictures with stars or why or when they thought to do so—likes to imagine that it was Margaret reevaluating life decades after PaJaMa's summers. Maybe she did this act sometime during the years following Gay Liberation when the Equal Rights Amendment was a too real possibility for American women. I only know that she showed generosity in placing her work in national

archives since these images are her own as much as they are Jared's or Paul's, and that she consequently archived herself into queer American art history.

In a fortuitous extension of her earlier investments, Margaret in her afterlife inserted herself and announced herself as a modernist artist within modern gay male world-*remaking* thanks to this bequest. As all of my scholarly citations throughout this chapter and its endnotes attest, PaJaMa documents and artifacts have become a lodestar for late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century social historians, art historians, queer theorists, gallery owners, and lay critics. Margaret Hoening French accelerated this process as much as any oral history by Cadmus in his mid-eighties, and her own non-normative desires should be considered elemental to the gay male world's renewal. "I think Margaret would like to have been more settled, but she always did what Jerry wanted," Cadmus once affirmed.[44] "Her life seemed to revolve about him, whatever he did and wherever he was," another tells us.[45] Maybe so, maybe not. Surely, not always. Hers was not a life unlived nor was it an unlived life. Easy yet difficult at the same time—like the life spans of so many peripheral moderns—her desires for artistry, alterity, non-domesticity through marriage, fantasy, and something different shine through in photography, painting, and institutions such as SAAM across the long twentieth century.[46]

True, she was rather hesitant to part with her husband. True as well that her *New York Times* obituary was a brief paid notice: "FRENCH-Margaret Hoening. On November 18, 1998. Artist and widow of artist Jared French. Reposing Walter B. Cooke Funeral Home. Burial private."[47] But as much as she later identified as a widow to her better-known husband, in life and in death she also claimed the mantle of artist as a descriptor of her world—and the life of her work as well. Hence when we consider genealogies of twentieth-century queer American women traversing queer male worlds, we should continue to lament, as Sedgwick did for John Marcher, "the chill of his egotism" when we only mention them in passing, or as by-standers, or as enablers.[48] Simpatico with Sedgwick's account of May Bartram, Margaret Hoening French's artwork reminds scholars that when we study cross-gender modernist collaborations such as PaJaMa, we remain "careful to remember that [women such as Bartram and French] had also a life of her own, with things that might happen to *her*."[49] As holdings at the Beinecke and SAAM testify, things certainly did happen to Margaret French.

I am the first to admit that I have only skimmed the historical surface of what Sedgwick calls "the paths of her own desire" by tracing her movements from Hoboken to Smith College to New York City to Fire Island to archives in Washington, DC.[50] I am more than happy to be proven wrong on these interpretive claims for her place in queer American modernism. Nonetheless, it seems irrefutable to me that paths she shared with her husband and with Cadmus—and the experimental paths she cleared—enabled her own desires. Hoping against hope that this piece's intellectual egotism warms rather than chills future reception, my own longing for the person who gave PaJaMa its third syllable is that her rediscovery will remain ongoing.

Notes

1 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 1.
2 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 1.
3 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 209.
4 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 199.
5 Grimes, *Jared French's Myths*, x.
6 Cadmus, interview.
7 Denise D. Wamaling, email to author, September 10, 2018.
8 Leddick, *Intimate Companions*, 116. See also Grimes, *Jared French's Myths*; Wechsler, "Jared French"; Sachar, "Jared French's *State Park*"; Cole, "Jared French (1905–1988)"; *Collaboration*; Eliasoph, *Paul Cadmus*; Spring, *Paul Cadmus*; Ataide, "IotD"; and Silver, "Homo Erectus and His Discontents."
9 See Chauncey, *Gay New York*.
10 See Meyer, "Lookout," for a definitive account of French on this matter. In his earlier *Outlaw Representation*, Meyer also notes that "according to Cadmus, Jared French served as the model for" the former's artwork. Meyer, *Outlaw Representation*, 76. For contextualization of MoMA's 2019 exhibition, see Friedman and Hauptman, *Lincoln Kirstein's Modern*.
11 Leddick, *Intimate Companions*, 194.
12 Vartanian, "Not as Famous."
13 Leddick, *Intimate Companions*, 225.
14 Wiegman, "Eve's Triangles," 66.
15 These references to collegiate activities can be found in *Smith College Class Book 1927*, 208; 189.
16 Leddick, *Intimate Companions*, 116. Cole writes that "Margaret French attended the League from 1933 to 1936." Cole, "Jared French (1905–1988)," 84. See also French's embedded biography in Morgan, "French, Jared."
17 Cole, "Chronology and Selected Exhibition History," n.p.
18 See Morgan and Lester, *The Leica Manual*. Cole also rehearses Margaret's camera use. Cole, "Jared French (1905–1988)," 85.
19 Quoted in Crimp, "The Boys in My Bedroom," 344.
20 Waugh, *Hard to Imagine*, 125. See also Meyer, *Outlaw Representation*, 57–93.
21 Spring, *Paul Cadmus*, 30; 30–1. See also Crump, "Photography as Agency," for more on Lynes's engagements with modernism. Links likewise abound to the queer experimentalism of Carl Van Vechten. Smalls details "white European and Euro-American elites [that] included the French filmmaker, visual artist, and writer Jean Cocteau, the surrealist painter Salvador Dalí, the photographer Man Ray, the artists Pavel Tchelitchew, Paul Cadmus, Jared French, and a host of others." Smalls, *The Homoerotic Photography of Carl Van Vechten*, 3. See also Waugh, *Hard to Imagine*, 127.
22 Waugh, *Hard to Imagine*, 125.
23 Grimes, *Jared French's Myths*, x. Grimes observes that her husband's photography "frequently portrays his women as potent goddesses," but Cadmus may have taken these visuals too. Grimes, *Jared French's Myths*, xvii.
24 Quoted in Leddick, *Intimate Companions*, 116.
25 Leddick, *Intimate Companions*, 116.
26 Pohorilenko, "The Exuberance and Fantasy," 8.
27 Meyer, "Lookout," 445. See also Meyer, "Threesomes," 103, on "alternative arrangements of social and sexual life;" and Brown, "Queering Glamour."
28 Leddick, *Intimate Companions*, 116.
29 Cole claims that "Jared and Margaret French remained psychologically distant despite their decades of marriage." Cole, "Jared French (1905–1988)," 95. I'm not quite as confident but I introduce this assessment as a possibility.

30 Leddick, *Intimate Companions*, 184.
31 Also see Bayley, "PaJaMa."
32 Katz, "Hide/Seek," 32.
33 Barr, Jr., "Magic Realism," 16.
34 Leddick, *Intimate Companions*, 184. Leddick suggests it may be "perhaps a coast guard station." Leddick, *Intimate Companions*, 182.
35 Gopinath's analysis of semi-vacated contemporary topographies imbued with queerness in *Unruly Visions* guides my reading of French's painting with its focus on "a queer optic that brings into focus the bodies of the disappeared and the dispossessed." Gopinath, *Unruly Visions*, 15.
36 See Fraiman on "*desire for nonextremity*" that French too championed. Fraiman, *Extreme Domesticity*, 196. For the most influential historical overview of queer domesticity to date—and from whom I borrow the phrase—see Shah, *Contagious Divides*, 77–104. For a post–Second World War account of queer domesticity in the United States, see Vider, *The Queerness of Home*.
37 See Herring, *Another Country*, 43–52.
38 My thinking on queer modernist feminism has been steered (and stirred) by Micir, *The Passion Projects*; and Farfan, *Performing Queer Modernism*.
39 See Cole: "While lying in a hospital bed, with his wife sitting by his side, reading to him and holding his hand, Jared French died at the age of eighty-three." Cole, "Jared French (1905–1988)," 322–3.
40 Cadmus, interview. See also an unattributed claim made in *Collaboration* that "Kodachrome slides were saved by Margaret French."
41 Robertson, letter to Frederick R. Van Vechten.
42 Wamaling, personal email.
43 According to a Collections Manager at the Smithsonian Archives of American Art after I inquired into their provenance and accession: "These boxes were a bequest of Margaret French. They were received from the Estate of Margaret French. No other details were given in the accession file as to the photographer or who mounted the photos. Not many details were known at time of donation as these were a private collection of photos." Wamaling, personal email.
44 Cadmus, interview.
45 Leddick, *Intimate Companions*, 225.
46 One scholar who saw this achievement—Moffat—makes a convincing case for considering these artists as both within and outside the avant-garde when she writes that "they were impossible to label, but it was clear they did not care to work *à la mode*." Moffat, "A New Bloomsbury?," 31.
47 "Paid Notice: Deaths FRENCH, MARGARET HOENING."
48 James, "The Beast in the Jungle," 113.
49 James, "The Beast in the Jungle," 70.
50 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 209.

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15

OUT OF ALIGNMENT

Queer Modernism's Anarchist Legacy

Eric Keenaghan

Historically, queerness—or, actual or perceived nonconforming sexual and gender identification or expression—has posed problems for the American left. Revolutionary politics tend to privilege the transformation of the state's political economy over the ethical and social aspects of everyday life. Queer marginalization and oppression are sidelined as secondary concerns. Such bias dates back to at least the Bolshevik Revolution. Desire was thought private and individualist, thus a bourgeois concern. That presumption, combined with the sciences' treatment of sexual and gender nonconformity as deviances, caused Vladimir Lenin to deem earlier German libertarians' advocacy of free love and homosexuality as irrelevant to the newborn Soviet state. Only for a short period, between 1922 and 1934, did the Soviet Union decriminalize male homosexuality and approve gay liberation as part of its revolutionary experiment. (Female homosexuality had not been legislated.)[1] Elsewhere, international socialism and most leftist organizations affiliated with the Communist International maintained their respective states' and national cultures' heteronormative and heterosexist standards.

In the United States, such prejudices continued to haunt radical politics after midcentury, as the Old Left became the New. So, when various lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other queer (LGBTQ+) liberation movements were sparked after New York City's Stonewall uprising in June 1969, leftists—even queer ones—were surprised. For future gay liberationist Allen Young, who was working with Students for a Democratic Society and the Liberation News Service, Stonewall came as a shock, disrupting his received notions of what was deemed revolutionary. "I couldn't have handled this swift coming together of the personal and the political," Young remembered. "America—and the movement—had taught me too well how to make the separation."[2]

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Even when organizations advocated personal politics, as the liberal women's movement had, gender and sexual nonconformity still were deemed off-limits. Charlotte Bunch, a cofounder of the lesbian separatist group the Furies, noted that her experience with liberal feminists had taught her that "lesbianism is not only a threat to men, but also to many heterosexual women."[3] Betty Friedan, the National Organization for Women's president, drove that lesson home when she denounced lesbians as the Lavender Menace.

Five months after Stonewall, in a rare display of solidarity, the War Resisters League amplified LGBTQ+ voices through a special issue of its magazine, *WIN*. Paul Goodman, a bisexual author and anarchist theorist, was a contributor. Since the Second World War, his literary work had joined anarchist philosophy with modernist innovation, exemplifying a libertarian spirit of unfettered individualism. He once wrote the following of Horatio, the protagonist of his epic novel cycle *The Empire City* (1942–1959): "If out of the darkness of original desire should come to him a little hint, he would unrestrainedly blow the fabric of society to smithereens."[4] The same could be said of Horatio's creator, who also believed that desire was inherently revolutionary, at odds with social strictures. However, Goodman doubted that the New Left would accept its queer comrades. "Frankly, my experience of radical community is that it does not tolerate my freedom," he charged.[5] He even eschewed homophile activism and "Gay Society" because they attracted the same sort of "in-group fanatic[s]" as the rest of the New Left; instead, he favored "social space to live and breathe," to explore one's desires and find new intimacies, a more individualist ideal that need not adhere to minoritizing group identifications based on "defiant pride and self-consciousness."[6] Such queer anarchism anticipates later gay liberationists' rhetoric about promiscuity's revolutionary potential and, still later, queer theorists' reclamation of power through sex-positivity in the face of the AIDS crisis and as a refutation of liberal lesbian and gay activism's assimilationist homonormativity.[7]

Goodman personally embodied the intersection of anarchism, modernism, and queerness. Since the early twentieth century, he and many other queer leftists self-identified as anarchist or remained unaligned from radical parties and organizations *because* of their marginalization by the progressive and revolutionary political organizations and cultures that adopted scientific Marxism.[8] Writing of the period leading up to the First World War, historian Terence Kissack characterizes anarchism as "the only political movement of the time to treat issues of sexual liberation as fundamental to the project of human emancipation," and that connection owed to how "anarchists were associated with revolt in matters social, as well as political."[9] Such social revolt was embodied by figures like turn-of-the-century English writer Edward Carpenter, who, inspired and mentored by American poet Walt Whitman, joined anarchist socialism with the queer activism of his moment. Carpenter advocated for what he called a "New Morality" that treats ethics

as "not a code" but instead as the means of "liberat[ing] this instinct of the Common Life, freeing it from hard and cramping rules."[10] Only then could society "take its own form or forms—grafted on and varied of course by the personal and selective element of Affection and Sympathy."[11] Love, desire, and affection, when unconstrained by custom and convention, supply "the hope … for the solution of all sorts of moral and social problems."[12]

Such ideas associated with anarchist politics and philosophy emerged contemporaneously with modernism. And just as modernism and queerness both often frustrate critics' attempts to define them, anarchism also is a slippery term, subject to nomenclatural debate.[13] It continues to suffer from wild, fear-driven misunderstandings, which equate all anarchist anti-authoritarianism with violence and terrorism. Such paranoiac fantasies date back to the dawn of modernism. Just think of the portrayals of anarchists as villains and terrorists in Henry James's *The Princess Casamassima* (1885–1886) or Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907). Unlike their fictive counterparts, most anarchists historically have not advocated what is called propaganda by deed, or the violent overthrow of the state and its institutions. Here, I use the term *anarchism* specifically to describe an ethico-political and sociopolitical worldview whose first principle is the maximization of individuals' freedoms and growth in social environs. "Creeds and castes, and all forms of intellectual and emotional grouping, belong to the past," British polymath Herbert Read wrote during the Second World War. "The future unit is individual, a world in himself, self-contained and self-creative, freely giving and freely receiving, but essentially a free spirit."[14] Anarchists believe such individualism is supported by a socialist climate of mutual aid, so they often distrust hierarchical institutions like the church and the state. French theorist Daniel Guérin, a contemporary of Paul Goodman and a forerunner of today's queer anarchism, states it clearly:

> Anarchism is really a synonym for socialism. The anarchist is primarily a socialist whose aim is to abolish the exploitation of man by man. Anarchism is only one of the streams of socialist thought, that stream whose main components are concern for liberty and haste to abolish the State.[15]

We now tend to call this position libertarian socialism. During the height of modernism, between the World Wars, it was variously labeled as *personalism*, *libertarianism*, *philosophical anarchism*, or, as Read called it, *the politics of the unpolitical*.[16]

For anarchist-leaning modernists, certain sociopolitical outcomes, including the decentralization of social institutions and government, are believed to attend the fuller realization of individuals' freedoms. However, political economic revolution does not need to precede that social and psychological objective. Molar changes in sociopolitical contexts might follow

transformations of human subjectivity and relations. Thus, even though many of its adherents also participate in activist culture, philosophical anarchism is best conceived as an ethical—rather than political—revolution, executed through theory and art. The artist is the exemplary libertarian since she is "always an individualist," as Read asserts, and her freedom is exemplified through her foregrounding of pleasure since "the enjoyment of life is the activity of life."[17] Her singular perspective gives her "an individual sense of rhythm or harmony" through which she realizes her "two principal duties: to mirror the world as it is, and to imagine the world as it might be."[18] In such visionary efforts, "there is no uniformity of desire."[19] Since one's singular desire is the motivator for aesthetic activity, there are as many catalysts and visions for change as there are artists.

Although Read was not LGBTQ+-identified, his ideas about desire, art, and individual freedom shed light on the queer connections between anarchism, as an ethico-political formation, and modernism, as a socio-aesthetic one. Both attracted queer writers since each valued individuals' freedom and desire. Of course, not all queer American leftist modernists were, perforce, unaligned with other leftist political parties. As just one example, we might consider the flamboyant, presumably queer poet John Brooks Wheelwright.[20] As the Great Depression wore on, he shifted from a politically unaligned "anarchopatrician point of view" to a fervent Trotskyism and an active membership in the Socialist Party.[21] Notwithstanding such exceptions, queer leftist modernism does have strong libertarian leanings, enough to cause me to wonder: What would happen if we read much queer modernism as the legacy of some artists' crossing of aesthetic experimentalism with philosophical anarchism's libertarian strains? How might that narrative change our thinking about art's political potential? Finally, how might such inquiries expand modernism's historical boundaries, stretching them past the Second World War into the New Left era of the 1960s and 1970s? As historian Andrew Cornell has traced, political and philosophical anarchisms experienced persistent "continuity and change" during "the supposed interregnum—the period between 1920 and 1960—when no movement is thought to have existed" in the United States.[22] Modernism emerged precisely during that period; and queer subjectivity as a social construct also transformed then, shifting from an isolating psychopathological affliction policed by repressive and ideological state apparatuses to a social minority identity through which individuals claimed a community. Some might think these are merely historical coincidences, but I prefer to treat them as mutually affecting factors that influenced the reshaping of queer artists' sense of self and its relationship to both their political and aesthetic visions.

In this chapter, I offer brief treatments of a few key queer unaligned modernists from the two ends of the period's historical spectrum, during the interwar and the Cold War moments. Others beg to be studied in this context, too:

Jamaica-born Harlem Renaissance writer Claude McKay, whose biographer describes his revolutionary politics as a form of queer anarchism even though he was a Trotskyite in name and founded the Communist Party–allied African Blood Brotherhood;[23] Berkeley Renaissance poet Jack Spicer, who early in his career was a self-described anarchist and one-time member of the Mattachine Society, the first and, initially, most radical of the Cold War homophile organizations; Julian Beck, a bisexual and avowed anarchist who originated postwar American avant-garde performance art through his Living Theatre; original Beat Generation writer William S. Burroughs, whose anti-statist libertarianism, tempered by unadulterated misogyny, poses serious questions about philosophical anarchism's limits; Beat-adjacent poets Harold Norse, John Wieners, and Diane di Prima, who came to different understandings of anarchist activism and poetics at different stages in their lives and careers; and the staunchly apolitical but anarchist-identified New Music composer and poet John Cage. Although I cannot explore these writers here, the others I do address bring to light key critical possibilities and problems resulting from the intersection of philosophical anarchism, modernism, and queerness.

The Queer Embodied Poetics of Modernists in Whitman's Libertarian Line

In the United States, the intersections of queer modernism and anarchism begin with Walt Whitman—a nineteenth-century figure who predates modernism and who was queer but did not identify as homosexual, per se, and who was progressive but did not identify as an anarchist. Two other of his contemporaries could be upheld as progenitors of queer modernism's anarchistic legacy—Arthur Rimbaud, whose poetics of a derangement of the senses has been linked to what he witnessed during the Paris Commune (1870–1871), and Oscar Wilde, whose "Ballad of Reading Gaol" (1897) and essay "The Soul of Man under Socialism" (1891) influenced US-based anarchist organizers and theorists like Emma Goldman and Benjamin Tucker.[24] But Whitman had an especial significance for later modernists. Kenneth Rexroth, a (straight) anarchist poet and founder of San Francisco's Libertarian Circle, active during the 1940s and 1950s, once described him as "the poet of revolutionary hope."[25] American modernist poetry's "Populist-Socialist-anarchist style" owed much to Whitman, and "had to fight its way against greater opposition from the taste of Left politicians and bureaucrats than ever it met from bourgeois editors."[26] Part of other leftists' resistance stems from how many anarchist socialists worldwide, including the previously mentioned Englishman Edward Carpenter, a disciple of the Good Gray Bard, connected Whitman's ideas to free love politics, including the tolerance of homosexuality. Whitman himself made these connections, too. In "Poetry To-day in America—Shakspere—The Future" (1881), he advocated for new

poetic forms less concerned with beauty and more with individuals' "free expression of emotion," to better address "the central identity of everything"; therein lies the power "to arouse and initiate, more than to define or finish," and thus promote America's ever-evolving democratic promise.[27] Such a poetics is queerly exemplified by "bards of adhesiveness," a period term he used to signal same-sex attraction and eroticism.[28]

Anarchist feminist Emma Goldman helped popularize Whitman as the standard bearer for sexual liberty, of all kinds. For her, he specifically modeled an embodied poetics. As critic Timothy Robbins notes, she understood that "the primacy of the body" in Whitman's poetry was implicitly politicized, for "sensual touch must always be recognized as a model for political love."[29] In an early lecture, Goldman celebrated Whitman and his *Leaves of Grass* as "un-American"—that is, for its presentation of an image and voice for "the whole of man," including desires running counter to the country's heteronormative and Puritanical imperatives, which were then being policed by Anthony Comstock's Society for the Suppression of Vice.[30] She even used Whitman's state-offending model of sexual liberty to promote her magazine *Mother Earth*, by offering *Leaves of Grass* as a gift to new subscribers. This offer was fitting for a magazine intent on challenging heteronormative institutions and mores since Whitman, Goldman boasted, "has undermined puritanism and helped to free people from the oppressive prejudice pertaining to sex."[31]

When Margaret Anderson launched her trailblazing modernist magazine *The Little Review* in 1914, she promoted a philosophical anarchism directly influenced by Goldman's own Whitmanic variety. The premiere issue opens with an unsigned statement announcing Anderson's intentions to present "vital" works of literature and criticism that demonstrate how "Art" keeps "close to Life—so close, from our point of view, that it keeps treading on Life's heels."[32] Describing her venture as a "personal enterprise," she made no bones about the fact that *The Little Review* would be "feminist," like herself.[33] In the third issue, Anderson sang Goldman's praises for "preach[ing] and practis[ing] the philosophy of freedom."[34] She reproduced swaths of Goldman's recent lecture "Victims of Morality," and echoed its argument for liberating self and desire from heteronormative and patriarchal constraints.

Anderson published articles about political and philosophical anarchism in *The Little Review* for its first three years, and the magazine was investigated for seditious activity because it supported Goldman's opposition to the war-state's conscription laws.[35] Later, Anderson, along with her gender nonconforming co-editor and life partner jane heap [*sic*], continued to infuse Goldman's libertarian spirit into their modernist enterprise, whose subtitle became the motto "Making No Compromise with the Public Taste." Because critics most usually consider this magazine through the editors' association with its foreign correspondent Ezra Pound, no friend of anarchism or Walt Whitman, the indebtedness of *The Little Review*'s literary experimentalism

to its editors' queerness and philosophical anarchism is often overlooked. The uncompromising nature of Anderson and heap's magazine was not just stylistic. Often it was tied expressly to popular associations of literary experimentalism and difficulty with sexual and gender freedom. What Suzanne Churchill has noted about the modernist free-verse magazine *Others* could be extended to *The Little Review*: both magazines simultaneously "preserved the great American tradition of democratic individualism" by advocating writers' stylistic freedom; yet each "nevertheless acquired a public image as a 'queer' space that defied both poetic and sexual propriety."[36] Indeed, *The Little Review* was more infamous for sexual license than *Others*, a result of the obscenity trial that ensued during Anderson and heap's serialization of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1918–1921). Though short on same-sex content, the way Joyce's novel flaunts heteronormative sexual mores was queer, in spirit.

The same could be said of a frequently featured contributor whom Anderson and heap championed, German-born Dadaist poet and performance artist Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven. The Baroness, as she was known, was not a self-designated anarchist, but her life was, we might say, anarchist-adjacent, through both her close friendship with the editors and her work as an artists' model at Greenwich Village's Ferrer School, an anarchist educational center. Her sexually explicit writing often elicited subscribers' vitriolic condemnation, which Anderson and heap gleefully published. In "The Modest Woman" (1920), an invited artist's statement responding to such criticisms, the Baroness herself makes no apologies for how either her poetry or Joyce's fiction celebrated "that indecent machine—your body" in all its functions, from the alimentary to the excremental to the sexual.[37] She felt that Americans were alienated from their bodies and desires, a consequence of their devotion to modern technologies like indoor plumbing. "America's comfort:—sanitation—outside machinery—has made American [*sic*] forget own machinery—body!"[38] Like Whitman before them, *The Little Review*'s editors and most notorious contributors, in their insistence on both individual freedom and art's socially and ethically transformative potential, queered moral standards that constrained expressions of gender and sexuality. They helped revolutionize society and culture in a philosophically anarchist way, simply by rejecting the lenses and expectations of right and wrong and instead relying on their own individual experiences and perceptions. In this way, as the Baroness put it, they fulfilled their "holy office" as artists, "[t]o show [the] hidden beauty of things," whether banal or taboo.[39]

Whitman's queer modernist and anarchist legacy carried beyond *The Little Review*. Most famously, he influenced Hart Crane, a self-identified homosexual poet who epitomized the idea that art must originate in the artist's own singularity, inclusive of queer embodied desire and pleasure. Crane was reluctant to call himself a revolutionist. He wrote friends during the Great Depression, shortly before his death, about anti-capitalist politics. "I'm

convinced of the logic of it all—perhaps also the inevitability," he said, "but it runs so against my precious individualistic 'grain' (if I have any left) that I can't really feel very stertorous about it."[40] Even though Crane opposed Communism's basis in class consciousness, he did demonstrate a philosophically anarchist disposition and affiliation. His first published poem, "C33" (1916), appeared in *Bruno's Weekly*, a libertarian venue whose editor, Guido Bruno, regularly championed Goldman, Greenwich Village anarchists, and free love. The lyric's title signals outlaw queerness through an allusion to Oscar Wilde's cell number at Reading Gaol. Crane also respected self-professed anarchists, including the poet Lola Ridge, whose collection *The Ghetto and Other Poems* (1919) he favorably reviewed as a volume of aesthetically accomplished political verse. His Danish lover Emil Opffer's father was also an anarchist organizer, an activist commitment Crane admiringly believed to be prestigious.[41]

A libertarian ethos runs through Crane's own oeuvre. He was a signatory of Eugene Jolas and Elliot Paul's "Proclamation" (1929), also known as "The Revolution of the Word." That manifesto posits that social transformation is secondary to, yet can result from, the artist's freedom of expression and imagination.[42] The following year Crane echoed these sentiments in a letter to Allen Tate, describing his poetics as "too personal to 'answer the call.'"[43] He explicitly notes that characteristic was influenced by Whitman's democratic and visionary precedent. Such a personal quality is not rooted in self-conscious expression of ideology or opinion, but instead in his whole-bodied, affective, and emotional response to social stimuli. As Crane put it in his essay "General Aims and Theories" (1925), the ideal poet "react[s] honestly and to the full extent of his sensibilities to the states of passion, experience, and rumination that fate forces on him, first hand[,]" and thereby taps "a sufficiently universal basis of experience."[44] Homoeroticism inflects such "passion" and "experience," as is evidenced by "Voyages" (1926), a suite about his affair with Opffer. Its intensely metaphorical language doubles as a textual body that affects and moves readers. Crane thus attempts a form of seduction. As the narrator pleads in one section's closing line, "Permit voyage, love, into your hands"[45] Such a lure can change readers' individual eroticized relationships to language and communication, shifting their consciousness and modes of sociality, no matter their sexual identifications. By simulating intimacies, Crane heightens readers' sense of connection, much as Whitman did with his appeals to his "camerados" throughout *Leaves of Grass*.

The Problem of the Unpolitical in Cold War–Era Queer Unaligned Leftist Modernism

For queer poets coming of age during the Great Depression, when vibrant revolutionary and progressive modernist poetic traditions had flourished, the governmental crackdown on, and the culture's antipathy toward, leftism

during the McCarthy era revived modernist libertarianism. Many progressive and radical artists fell out of alignment with leftist organizations. When faced with the Lavender Scare that accompanied the Red one, anarchism's relationship to unaligned leftist LGBTQ+ writers' art posed additional challenges. Once active in leftist politics and cultures, queer late modernists gravitated even more toward the philosophical end of anarchism's spectrum. They overtly championed art's transformational potential, sometimes more than earlier high modernists like Crane had, but they vociferously insisted that their literary work should not be mistaken for revolutionary propaganda. What could be changed by their poetry was the individual, not social institutions or political or economic systems.

The limits of the Cold War swing toward what Herbert Read called the politics of the unpolitical is exemplified by the anarchist-identified poet Robert Duncan. At the end of the thirties, during his college years, he had belonged to the American Student Union, an antiwar Trotskyite-socialist organization.[46] In 1940, after moving to New York City, though, Duncan, like many young leftists, renounced Marxism in response to the recent German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact. He hotly debated organized revolutionary politics in his correspondence with his then-Marxist friend and future film critic Pauline Kael.[47] For a few years, he resided in anarchist communes in upstate New York and northern California. Out of those experiences he developed his landmark essay "The Homosexual in Society" (1944), which appeared in Dwight Macdonald's anarchist-leaning magazine *politics*. Not only is this momentous essay the first signed American article wherein an author self-identifies as homosexual, but it also embodies the intersection of anarchist political philosophy and queer modernist poetics. Duncan rejected the rubric of "homosexual" as defining his poetry. Indeed, in "The Homosexual in Society," he argued that, to maintain "a devotion to human freedom, toward the liberation of human love, human conflicts, human aspirations," artists "must disown *all* the special interest groups (nations, churches, sexes, races)" by eschewing any identity markers that signify "the old protective associations."[48] Art must represent only the individual. Only then can it facilitate the evolution of all human commonality, not just voice a single group's oppressions or ambitions.

When he returned to his native California, Duncan lived in anarchist communes and communal houses in the Bay Area. He also attended anarchist poet Kenneth Rexroth's Libertarian Circle in San Francisco. This reading and discussion group, consisting of artists and laborers, was a hub in an international late modernist network, connecting Bay Area writers with anarchist authors in Canada, the United Kingdom, Greece, and Egypt. Through those affiliations, Duncan was directly part of a tradition of philosophical anarchism to which Herbert Read contributed and about which he theorized.[49] Out of the Libertarian Circle, a single issue of the anarchist literary magazine

ARK appeared in 1947, edited by Duncan's friend Sanders Russell, another homosexual anarchist poet. In its pages, modernists not associated with the group—including William Carlos Williams, e. e. cummings, and New Directions publisher James Laughlin—appeared alongside self-identified anarchists. "At an Anarchist Meeting" (1945), one of the issue's four featured poems by Duncan, suggests how he imagined his own early philosophical anarchism. At a discussion group like Rexroth's, a "clamour of voices, / traffic of love, chatter of anger" pervades the room, and the narrator feels lost in this "disorder," at least until "A single voice / rises to cast a fragment of a song" and gives him something to latch on to.[50] With that anchor, he weaves the other voices into a pattern and new order. Art's power resides in how it gives the individual poet freedom and agency to make a collective whole out of the seeming chaos of an activist scene's plurality.

For about a decade, until the Korean War, Duncan combined a communalist anarchism with literary shamanism, treating art as a kind of social healing. Thus, he explored the intersection of politicized libertarian life practice and visionary poetics. Then, things changed. He entered a domestic partnership with painter Jess Collins, who had been a chemist working on the Manhattan Project. He also became affiliated with the experimental little magazines *Origin* and *Black Mountain Review* and their associated poets, who constituted the so-called Black Mountain School. Duncan became increasingly adamant that poetic and sociopolitical matters were distinct. Despite the fact that he protested US encroachments on Southeast Asia during the Vietnam Conflict, he insisted that his poetry ought not be read as antiwar or revolutionary. Even an incendiary poem like "Up Rising, *Passages* 25" was not against the war. As he saw it, war was an unending metaphysical condition. A poem could only explore and present the poet's individual experience of personal growth in the face of that unpleasant, transcendental truth.[51]

A closer look at his writings during his formative activist period reveals that his turn toward the unpolitical really was long in coming. In 1938, Duncan wrote Sanders Russell that he hoped to fuse poetry, his desire for his then-boyfriend Ned Fahs, and political revolution. But the primacy of art had to be protected, above all else. "Marxism destroys art just as Protestantism and Fascism and Democracy and any other Dogma destroys art," especially if one forgets that the aesthetic originates in one's "personalized cosmos," where the individual is "creator."[52] Anarchism offered an alternative, but its political varieties ventured too close to the dogma limiting other forms of radical organization. If we reconsider "At an Anarchist Meeting" in that light, Duncan there seems to signal his sense that an anarchist poetics, paradoxically, must remove the author from social and historical immediacies. Making art out of the meeting's disorder helps his narrator create a time for himself wherein everything becomes ordered, "Silently time / falls into place"; however, the narrator also is set apart since he notes, when referring to the

other attendees who are stuck in history's disorderly currents, "They have no time."[53] History is foundational to the Marxist politics and aesthetics Duncan rejected, but he feared that even in anarchist political contexts it might intrude and limit the artist's creative freedom and ability to discover new truths.

Even when other midcentury queer unaligned leftists and late modernists did not reject history so strongly, many still similarly distrusted literature's potential to function as a form of direct action politics. I have in mind two friends and associates of Duncan—Muriel Rukeyser and Allen Ginsberg. Unlike Duncan, neither Ginsberg nor Rukeyser identified as anarchist or libertarian. The former did express anarchist sympathies at points in his career; the latter felt a lifelong connection to the Spanish antifascist struggle, of whose epicenter she once wrote, "Catalonia is anarchist country, the first I have ever seen."[54] Nonetheless, both were unaligned leftists, expressing affinities for libertarian values in individual freedom so as to promote mutual aid and a common good. Like Paul Goodman, Ginsberg and Rukeyser sought to translate into a Cold War context wartime leftism's ideals and interwar modernism's aesthetic ambitions. Thus, they influenced New Left activists, particularly in the antiwar movements and gay and lesbian liberation.

Muriel Rukeyser was the older of the two. As a student, she was active in the Depression-era Popular Front. Her political commitments deepened as a result of what she witnessed firsthand in Spain at the outbreak of its Civil War. She later carried her antifascist ethos and politics into her work for the Office of War Information's Graphics Division, where she designed prodemocracy and antifascist propaganda poster campaigns and book exhibits, while opposing the agency's preference for jingoist, hawkish, and often racist propaganda. With the rise of McCarthyism, Rukeyser's work did continue to reflect her antifascism and progressivism, though it often was more mythopoetic and frequently moved away from her better-known earlier documentarian poetics. Her bisexuality or pansexuality remained an open secret. Such self-protective closeting was necessary in a hostile environment where leftist writers were targeted by the state, and outing herself would have been a personal and professional risk she could not afford as a single mother. Rukeyser knew the price of writing as a leftist woman. She was subject to harassment by local anti-Communist leagues while teaching at Sarah Lawrence College in the late 1950s. An early feminist essay about women's writing also was suppressed by *The Nation*, a supposedly progressive periodical.[55] Rukeyser, like Duncan, maintained throughout the 1960s and 1970s that no identity marker ought to define one's sociopolitical or poetic efforts, so she distanced herself from both liberal feminism and the more revolutionary gay and lesbian liberation movement. Her earlier experiences of adversity, faced with both leftist and conservative forces, certainly informed her belief that individualism is paramount.

However, unlike Duncan, Rukeyser believed that artists' individual freedom is only worthwhile if they at least *try* to transform social conditions through their work. Such transformation happens indirectly. Consequently, one cannot turn one's back on history or on one's social contexts as Duncan had attempted. This philosophically anarchist belief is a cornerstone of her socio-aesthetic treatise *The Life of Poetry* (1949), where she wrote that "[t]he tendency of art and religion, and the tendency of poetic meaning, is toward the most human."[56] That book partly originated in a series of courses called "Poetry and the People," offered at Columbia University's extension school and San Francisco's California Labor School. The latter institution was founded in 1942 as a workers' college, fiscally supported by labor unions. That politicized leftist context informs how *The Life of Poetry* levies a defense of poetry and the imagination through an idiosyncratic synthesis of sources from Marxist socialism, philosophical anarchism, pragmatist and process philosophies, and psychoanalysis.[57] Rukeyser formulates that "a poem invites a total response" from its audience, and such a response is reached "through emotion, through what we call feeling."[58] In today's theoretic parlance, we would describe her poetics affective. Artists plumb what she calls "our emotional life," and readers are intellectually, bodily, and emotionally reached through and responsive to the resultant work.[59] "Both artist and audience create," Rukeyser insists, "and both do work on themselves in creating."[60] That is, art is a process of imaginative and emotional transformation—of self, other, and human commonality—stemming from the communication of a need and a desire to change. Such efforts transpire because of "the consciousness of both [artist and audience], their common factor through which they communicate and share."[61] As in any anarchist-leaning socialist effort, individuality is paramount; but, for Rukeyser, one's singular freedom is the means for rediscovering the commonality underlying everyone's life. As she wrote in her great New Left–era poem "Breaking Open" (1972–1973), "In facing history, we look at each other, and in facing our entire personal life, we look at each other."[62] The historical and the personal, the public and the private are not distinct, for everything and everyone exists in intersubjective relation.

Rukeyser's belief in poets' ability to use their art to cultivate a people's shared consciousness is queer late modernism's clearest expression of philosophical anarchism. The relation such an attitude has to activist culture is best embodied by Allen Ginsberg, who would become one of the most visible and celebrated writers in the free speech, antiwar, ecological, and gay liberation movements. In 1961, two years after the Cuban Revolution, he wrote of his ideal for leftist political culture as the pursuit of "[s]omething broader than formalistic anarchism."[63] He was skeptical about legally codifying social morality—as already had begun under Fidel Castro's revolutionary government—because eventually someone's individual liberty would be impeded.

A decade later, Ginsberg recalled in an interview that in 1946, while studying at Columbia University, he "immediately questioned the whole structure of Law and immediately apprehended the basic principles of philosophical anarchism."[64] He attributed that lesson to Walt Whitman, who "all along had said that private consciousness is public consciousness, that the State doesn't exist (as a living Person), only people exist through their own private consciousness."[65]

Like his nineteenth-century predecessor, Ginsberg sought to intervene poetically, on the level of consciousness. For instance, take "Howl" (1956), a landmark text in the queer modernist canon because of its stylistic innovation, frank treatment of sexual nonconformity, and subjection to state censorship for its supposed obscenity. A philosophically anarchist outlook is written explicitly into the poem's first typescript draft (1955), where Ginsberg describes having shared his generation's experience of "pass[ing] through universities / with radiant cool eyes hallucinating / anarchy & Blake-light tragedy / among the post-war cynical scholars." He struck the word "anarchy," and wrote in "Arkansaw" instead.[66] That change seemingly erases the bugaboo allusion to political leftism in a McCarthy-era poem. However, it actually concretizes, albeit allusively, what he meant by the word *anarchy*. Ginsberg's replacement, if read as a portmanteau word rather than a misspelling, suggestively invokes and conflates a visionary poetics ("saw") and the recently passed Little Rock Blossom Plan ("Arkansas") for the gradual reintegration of public schools in the wake of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954).

Such visionary anarchism was a mainstay of Ginsberg's later poetry, too. But paradoxically when he was most visible as an activist-poet, he cautioned others about the *limits* of a philosophically anarchist art's transformative properties. The poet's role is to "CLEARLY, publicly, and consciously" express his desire for social justice, "to make that same unconscious awareness and desire appear up front in the public mind," as Ginsberg would say about his antiwar Vietnam-era poem "Wichita Vortex Sutra" (1966).[67] "In other words," he clarified,

> it isn't necessary for my word to like quote *overwhelm* or *convince*, unquote, anybody else, it's just necessary for me to place my word out there, not to overwhelm but to clarify other people's sane thought, or to make conscious or to bring it to the surface of their minds.[68]

As a form of political engagement, such poetic anarchism is transformational but not revolutionary. Instead of inciting systemic shifts or motivating revolutionary politics, the poet's art supplies an ethico-political model for audiences to follow … or not, as they choose.

During the long modernist period—from Margaret Anderson through Allen Ginsberg—a constant first principle runs through the various

intersections of philosophical anarchism and queerness: the belief that literature is an ethico-political tool that maximizes individual freedom and expands consciousness. Rooted in an embodied practice, affective and desiring, that transformational property of modernist LGBTQ+-identified and -perceived artists' work is a form of queering. However, there is a limit to their endeavors to transform or queer otherwise marginalizing and often dehumanizing social and ethical norms. In the end, these anarchists are all of the "philosophical" sort. Systemic change and social justice will never be de facto results of their aesthetic efforts. But their art can spur the transformation of other individuals' consciousness, by deepening their feeling for our shared humanity. Even when they are out of alignment with leftist organizations, or at odds with direct action organizing, these modernists still put their bodies and emotions on the line. Invited into new intimacies by imagining and drawing close to these embodied aesthetic practices, readers cannot help but see and feel the world differently. In his paean "Song of the Open Road" (1856), Walt Whitman expresses this principle best: "I and mine do not convince by arguments, similes, rhymes, / We convince by our presence."[69]

Notes

1 See Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia*, 110–125.
2 Young, "Out of the Closets, into the Streets," 7.
3 Bunch, "Learning from Lesbian Separatism," 434.
4 Goodman, *The Empire City*, 151.
5 Goodman, "Memoirs of an Ancient Activist," 4.
6 Goodman, "Memoirs of an Ancient Activist," 5.
7 For a liberationist argument, see Shively, "Indiscriminate Promiscuity as an Act of Revolution." Early sex-positive queer theory includes Bersani, *Homos*; Duggan and Hunter, *Sex Wars*; Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*; and Warner, *The Trouble with Normal*.
8 Political anarchism did not always prove welcoming for queer-identified activists, either. Today, LGBTQ+ activists still argue against other anarchists' marginalization of them. See Daring, Rogue, Shannon, and Volcano, eds., *Queering Anarchism*; Heckert and Cleminson, eds., *Anarchism and Sexuality*; Nicholas, "Gender and Sexuality"; and Shannon and Willis, "Theoretical Polyamory."
9 Kissack, *Free Comrades*, 24, 25.
10 Carpenter, *Civilisation*, 251.
11 Carpenter, *Civilisation*, 251.
12 Carpenter, *Civilisation*, 251.
13 On the global history and varieties of political anarchism, see Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*. For a historical survey linking art to political and philosophical forms of anarchism, see Cohn, *Underground Passages*.
14 Read, "The Philosophy of Anarchism" (1940), in *Anarchy and Order*, 39.
15 Guérin, *Anarchism*, 12. Also see Guérin, *Essai sur la révolution homosexuelle après Reich et Kinsey* and *Homosexualité et révolution*.
16 See Read, *The Politics of the Unpolitical*.
17 Read, "Poetry and Anarchism" (1938), in *Anarchy and Order*, 79, 87.
18 Read, "Poetry and Anarchism" (1938), in *Anarchy and Order*, 76, 74.

19 Read, "Poetry and Anarchism" (1938), in *Anarchy and Order*, 88.
20 Alan Wald argues for exercising caution when labeling Wheelwright's nonconforming erotic life and desires. See Wald, "Wheelwright and His Kind."
21 Wald, *The Revolutionary Imagination*, 38.
22 Cornell, *Unruly Equality*, 6.
23 Holcolm, *Claude McKay, Code Name Sasha*, especially 13–14, 68–70. Holcolm also has recovered and co-edited McKay's purportedly overtly queer anarchist novel *Romance in Marseilles*, composed between 1929 and 1933 and first published in 2020.
24 On Rimbaud and the Commune, see Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space*. On Wilde and turn-of-the-century American anarchists, see Kissack, *Free Comrades*, 43–68.
25 Rexroth, *American Poetry in the Twentieth Century*, 20.
26 Rexroth, *American Poetry in the Twentieth Century*, 25.
27 Whitman, *Specimen Days and Collect*, 294.
28 Whitman, *Specimen Days and Collect*, 297.
29 Robbins, "Emma Goldman Reading Walt Whitman," 94, 98.
30 Goldman, "Walt Whitman," n.p.
31 Unsigned [Emma Goldman], "Notice," 2.
32 Unsigned [Margaret Anderson], "Announcement," 1.
33 Unsigned [Anderson], "Announcement," 2.
34 Anderson, "The Challenge of Emma Goldman," 6.
35 See Borghi, "The Anarchist (M)Other"; and Lappin, "Jane Heap and Her Circle."
36 Churchill, "Making Space for *Others*," 62.
37 von Freytag-Loringhoven, "The Modest Woman," 38.
38 von Freytag-Loringhoven, "The Modest Woman," 38.
39 von Freytag-Loringhoven, "The Modest Woman," 39.
40 Crane, *O My Land, My Friends*, 520.
41 Mariani, *The Broken Tower*, 152.
42 Jolas, Paul, et al., "Proclamation," 13.
43 Crane, *O My Land, My Friends*, 432.
44 Crane, *The Complete Poems and Selected Prose*, 218.
45 Crane, *The Complete Poems and Selected Prose*, 37. Original ellipsis.
46 Jarnot, *Robert Duncan, The Ambassador from Venus*, 48–49.
47 Duncan, Correspondence with Pauline Kael, 1940 to 1946.
48 Duncan, *Collected Essays and Other Prose*, 11. Original emphasis.
49 See Gifford, *Personal Modernisms*, 118–148, 229–234.
50 Duncan, *The Collected Early Poems and Plays*, 67–68.
51 See Keenaghan, "Life, War, and Love."
52 Duncan, Letter to Sanders Russell, December 1938, in "Ten Letters," n.p.
53 Duncan, *The Collected Early Poems and Plays*, 68.
54 Rukeyser, "We Came for Games," 194.
55 Rukeyser, "Many Keys" (1957), in *The Muriel Rukeyser Era*, 232–241. On the essay's historical significance, see Keenaghan, "There Is No Glass Woman."
56 Rukeyser, *The Life of Poetry*, 41.
57 See Keenaghan, "The Life of Politics."
58 Rukeyser, *The Life of Poetry*, 11.
59 Rukeyser, *The Life of Poetry*, 17.
60 Rukeyser, *The Life of Poetry*, 50.
61 Rukeyser, *The Life of Poetry*, 51.
62 Rukeyser, *The Collected Poems*, 523.
63 Ginsberg, "Prose Contribution to Cuban Revolution" (1961), in *Deliberate Prose*, 137.
64 Ginsberg, "*La Nouvelle Conscience*," 285.

65 Ginsberg, "*La Nouvelle Conscience*," 282.
66 Ginsberg, *Howl*, 12.
67 Ginsberg, "Improvised Poetics," 154.
68 Ginsberg, "Improvised Poetics," 154.
69 Whitman, *Leaves of Grass and Other Writings*, 131.

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16

THE PAUPER'S SALON

Modernism, Queer Theory, and the Lumpenproletariat

Glyn Salton-Cox

If it has become neither defensible to discuss modernism without some knowledge of queer theory, nor tenable to consider literary modernity while overlooking queer writers, this essay offers a new imperative. In what follows I argue that Marx's concept of the lumpenproletariat—part mere slur, part descriptor of certain individuals and communities living outside the dominant relations of production—must be foregrounded in any discussion of queer modernism. For the lumpen is always already racialized, queered, and feminized as opposed to the sturdy working man: the abject remainder slewed off from Marx and Engels's construction of the proletariat as a normative category. It might seem somewhat quixotic to dust off this much-maligned Marxist category in the service of queer literary studies, but this chapter argues that it also functions as an important, related pivot point in the development of nascent gay and lesbian subjectivities. For orthodox Marxism and mainstream gay and lesbian politics alike, the lumpenproletariat represents an assemblage of unruly life that must be cast off in the name of respectability, the "passive dungheap" that fails to fit into new paradigms of gay and/or proletarian responsibility.[1] The modernist novel plays a key role in these intertwined developments. Caught between the bourgeois pathologization of lumpen queer life and the uneven promises of normalization, writers such as John Henry MacKay, Djuna Barnes, and Claude McKay all negotiate the lumpen subject as an unavoidable presence in the emergence of a distinctly queer modernist canon. The novel will be the focus throughout this chapter because it is in narrative fiction that the possibility of the normativization of queer life becomes most apparent in the midcentury, a process perhaps best exemplified by the reception of Christopher Isherwood's *A Single Man* (1964), a text celebrated by the Violet Quill Group for its portrayal of a

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sober(ish) middle-class white gay man as opposed to the freakish queers of earlier literary history.[2]

But that is surely not the only story to be told about the queer novel. For a start, Isherwood was deeply engaged with a far rowdier set of characters in his time in Weimar Berlin, and this chapter will begin with this site of queer lumpen life. Through a reading of John Henry Mackay's *The Hustler* (1926) alongside key figures of the homosexual emancipation movement in Weimar Germany, I explore how the push-pull of queer expression and early forms of normalization play out in the figure of the teenage sex worker, canceled out and yet preserved in Mackay's tale of intergenerational love. This chapter then moves from the streets of Berlin to the Marseilles docks as a site of Black Atlantic queer lumpen life with a discussion of Claude McKay's *Banjo* (1929). McKay's novel offers a thoroughgoing reevaluation of "vagabond" life as offering particularly vital and distinctly queer forms of agency. Next, I explore Djuna Barnes's lesbian classic *Nightwood* (1937), paying particular to the "mountebank" doctor, a figure on whom recent scholarship has focused as an early instance of the depiction of gender dysphoria, but who also represents the threat, and the promise, of queer lumpen knowledge. Finally, this chapter considers how queer theory itself approaches the lumpenproletariat as part of its rejection of the normalizations of both orthodox Marxism and mainstream gay and lesbian formations. But before turning to these texts, a brief discussion of the emergence of Marx and Engels's concept of the lumpenproletariat is in order.

The term first appears in *The German Ideology* (1845–1846) and is developed in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), but it is not until *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* (1852) that the paradigmatic depiction emerges.[3] Describing the heterogenous mass of guns for hire who, he and Engels claim, supported the forces of reaction during Napoleon III's coup of 1852, Marx inveighs against this motley crew:

> Alongside decayed roués with dubious means of subsistence and of dubious origin, alongside ruined and adventurous offshoots of the bourgeoisie, were vagabonds, discharged soldiers, discharged jailbirds, escaped galley slaves, swindlers, mountebanks, lazzaroni, pickpockets, tricksters, gamblers, *maquereaus*, pimps, brothel keepers, porters, literati, organ grinders, ragpickers, knife grinders, tinkers, beggars—in short, the whole indefinite, disintegrated mass, thrown hither and thither, which the French call *la bohème*.[4]

I cite from the 1888 Moore-Engels translation, rather than Terrell Carver's generally more accurate and lively 1996 version, as it retains the multi-lingual aspect of Marx's original, which is a crucial aspect of what Peter Stallybrass has rightly identified as the concept's heterogeneity. Especially considering

the inclusion of "galley-slaves," this famous passage also indicates how, as Stallybrass has further noted, Marx and Engels often use the term as a racial category, "a nomadic tribe, innately depraved."[5] Following Frantz Fanon's landmark revalorization of this racializing tendency, the unique place of the lumpenproletariat in African American Marxism has more recently been explored in an acute study by Nathanial Mills.[6] The lumpen for Mills, as for the Black Panthers and a number of other Black radicals, is a site of possibility as well as abjection. As we shall see further on in this chapter, Claude McKay's queer Black lumpenproletarians offer a particular avenue of possibility in this regard. For the moment I would like to draw attention to Andrew Parker's critique of *The Eighteenth Brumaire*:

> Marx's and Engels's writings on the lumpen echo strikingly the emerging discourse popularly associated with the gay underworld: the lumpen are "a phenomenon that occurs in more or less developed form in all the so far known phases of society" (10:408); they have "their headquarters in big cities" and are "absolutely venal and absolutely brazen" (21:99); they actively "recruit" new members (10:62); they have "unhealthy and dissolute appetites," and their pleasure "becomes *crapuleux*, where money, filth and blood commingle" (10:50–51).[7]

Parker reveals the ways in which the lumpenproletariat is indirectly figured as queer by Marx's moralizing gaze, a confluence that Parker links both to the misogyny of the text, and to its anti-theatricalism. What is particularly salient for our purposes is that some queer writers have all too often incorporated these overlapping typologies in their work, seeking to expunge the lumpen from a narrative of bourgeois uplift.

To take our first formation: for some members of the Weimar-era German homosexual emancipation movement, the figure of the male hustler was particularly menacing. Magnus Hirschfeld, for instance, was vehemently opposed to the "*pupenjunge*" (literal translation: "fart boys") who worked the streets of Berlin. For Hirschfeld, not only was the male prostitute "bisexual at best," but, perhaps worse, the "scourge" of the "respectable homosexual" who was the putative subject of his blackmail.[8] This position was also taken by a number of other key figures of Weimar homosexual advocacy, including Friedrich Radzuweit and, in a slightly less vituperative register, the novelist and poet John Henry Mackay (1864–1933). Mackay achieved a certain degree of literary celebrity with his early work, with his semi-fictional account of coming to individualist anarchist consciousness *The Anarchists* (1891) propelling his career. His reputation was cemented with the 1898 publication of both his collected poems and his biography of Max Stirner. Since 1899, Mackay had been involved in the homosexual emancipation movement in Germany, and his signature appeared on Hirschfeld's petition

for the repeal of the sodomy statute from that year. But it was in 1905 when Mackay shifted trajectory in his literary career to begin, as his translator Hubert Kennedy put it, "a literary campaign … for the acceptance of man-boy love—Mackay was attracted to boys fourteen to seventeen years old."[9] Following Wilde, Mackay called this intergenerational attraction "the nameless love," and, under the pen name Sagitta [arrow], he wrote a number of books with this title, collected and published together in 1913.

But it was with the publication of his 1926 novel, *The Hustler*, in the original *Der Puppenjunge* (the German title prettifies the usual slang through the addition of a p which renders the hustlers "butterfly boys"), that Mackay's lasting contribution to queer literary history was made: partly through Isherwood's championing of the novel, it has become known as the paradigmatic text of the Weimar Berlin queer underworld. *The Hustler* tells the story of a naïve middle-class man in his twenties, Hermann, who falls for a fifteen-year-old prostitute, Gunther, with disastrous results, for both are imprisoned when the authorities discover their relationship. What is perhaps most striking about the novel on first glance is that Mackay largely views the young street hustlers with contempt. This is surprising given Mackay's anarchism, for, in its inception as a distinct political movement, anarchism has been far more receptive to the agency of the lumpenproletariat than the Marxist tradition. But on closer inspection, Mackay's specifically individualist anarchism—in other words, egoist—philosophy allows for precisely this contemptuous gaze. Gunther is depicted as utterly idiotic, "without thought and without *will*,"[10] and, in a characteristic passage, so are his fellow hustlers tout court:

> They made no resistance of any kind to their life. Wherever it tossed them, there they lay—today here, tomorrow there. They never even made the slightest attempt to get up again. Everything was completely indifferent to them—whether they went entirely to ruin or not. They all were the merest children. In big things and in little: if they had money—"come into a tidy sum"—then it had to be disbursed as quickly as possible and was thrown away in the most foolish way.[11]

Here Mackay's petit-bourgeois moralizing reaches a fever pitch, as the hustlers are cast as a feckless mass, incapable of conscious action and yet utterly venal; the picture is complete with the quotation marks around the idiomatic expression, signifying the patronizing contempt for language associated with sub- or counter-cultural formations. The end of the novel sees Gunther fetched by his guardian and taken back to his home village, still "indifferent and apathetic," and utterly ungrateful for Hermann's attentions: "forgotten was the great and patient love, which had shone over him so long like a warm and bright light and which had still been unable to rescue him, not from himself and not from the others."[12]

By contrast, for the worthy Hermann a new community is in sight, as he is tutored in the nobility of his ephebophilia by his upper-middle-class aunt, herself the wife of a deceased man of the same orientation. In other words, the vulnerable lumpenproletarian is here sacrificed on the altar of nascent homosexual respectability—but this is only part of the story. For the novel's most lively and memorable passages are precisely those depicting the haunts of the young hustlers; despite the explicit moral of the novel, Mackay's writing is unable to register the same degree of excitement for Hermann's newfound acceptance of his orientation as it is for Gunther's seedy world. The exchange between Hermann and his aunt is framed as a Socratic dialogue—with, of course, deliberate irony—but it is related in strangely flat prose: "They spoke further, going from the personal to the general, often and long about this love."[13] [Sie sprachen, vom Persönlichen zum Allgemeinen übergegend, noch oft and lange über diese Liebe].[14] Moreover, it takes up only a few pages toward the end of the narrative. The scenes set in the hustler bars, on the other hand, take up a great deal of the novel, and are related in animated prose: "suddenly there stood behind him, as if shot out of the earth, a tall man, twenty-two or twenty-three years old. It was the one they were expecting: Karl the Great."[15] [da stand plötzlich, wie aus der Erde geschossen, ein großer Mensch von zwei-, dreiundzwanzig Jahren hinter ihm. Es war der Erwartete: Karl der Großer].[16] What we see here is not so much sacrifice as sublation: the hustlers are cancelled out by Hermann's worthiness on the level of Mackay's explicit moral lesson, yet they are preserved as the novel's affective and aesthetic center.

Claude McKay's *Banjo* (1929) is a novel far more invested than *The Hustler* in lumpen life as a site of radical possibility. McKay was born in Jamaica in 1889; following the early success of his *Songs of Jamaica* (1912) he studied in the United States where he went on to become a seminal figure in the Harlem Renaissance. Quickly becoming involved in Black radicalism and Marxism, he joined the Industrial Workers of the World and co-founded a semi-secret revolutionary organization, the African Blood Brotherhood. After a year in London, where he became involved with the magazine *Workers' Dreadnought*, McKay returned to the States, and in 1922 he visited the Soviet Union for the Fourth Congress of the Communist International. During the 1920s McKay lived in Harlem and Marseilles, Morocco, and Spain, and his work throughout this period insistently articulates a Black diasporic perspective, most famously articulated in his two "Ray novels," *Home from Harlem* (1928) and *Banjo*. Both novels feature McKay's fictional alter ego, Ray, a queer leftist Haitian intellectual who, like McKay himself, "lived like a vagabond poet," preferring—in fact psychologically, creatively, and politically *needing*—the company of seasonal workers, homeless men, musicians, prostitutes, and other lumpen figures as opposed to that of condescending white bohemians and intellectuals.[17] While *Home*

from Harlem was a bestseller, it also attracted criticism from some Black reviewers and commentators, who complained that McKay was trading in damaging stereotypes radically at odds with promotion of African-American self-respect. *Banjo*'s reception followed a similar pattern, with McKay's former colleague on the leftist publication *The Liberator*, Mike Gold, also complaining that the novel failed to articulate proletarian consciousness.[18]

While we would not want to endorse Gold's judgment in a normative sense, it is descriptively accurate, as far as it goes. Alongside the diasporic intellectual Ray, *Banjo* features a cast of "beach boys" who live on their wits, panhandling, taking odd jobs here and there, showing tourists around the city for money, and sometimes (it is implied) working as sex workers. The prostitutes in the novel are mainly female, but they and the "boys" have a lot in common as fellow lumpen subjects: "She was accepted. With their wide experience and passive philosophy of life, beach boys are adepts at meeting, understanding, and accepting everything."[19] Much of the novel takes place in the red-light district of Marseilles, known as the Ditch, which holds a particular fascination for the novel's titular character, Banjo: "Every chord in him responded to the loose, bistro-love-life of the Ditch." Banjo is a traveling musician, forever dreaming of setting up an orchestra, and his life, like those of his fellow beach boys, "was a dream of vagabondage that he was perpetually pursuing and realizing in odd ways, always incomplete but never unsatisfactory. He had worked at all the easily-picked-up jobs – longshoreman, porter, factory worker, farm hand, seaman."[20] Ray is strongly attracted to the largely straight Banjo, who returns the affection with interest, persuading Ray at the end of the novel to travel with him as his "pardner," leaving his girlfriend Latnah behind, for "wese got enough between us to beat it a long ways from here."[21] This is emphatically a novel of the queer lumpenproletariat.

Throughout the narrative, telling resonances occur between Marx's famous depiction from *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, and other, broader Marxist lumpen tropologies. Perhaps most salient is McKay's incessant use of lists, whereby "a thousand second-hand things were all mingled together in a churning agglomeration of stench and sliminess"; crucially, "stench and sliminess" are revalorized as "Banjo thrilled to the place."[22] Another significant passage links together a series of lumpen occupations in a list:

> A little flock of pinks from the Ditch floated into the bar. Seamen from Senegal. Soldiers from Madagascar. Pimps from Martinique. Pimps from everywhere. Pimps from Africa. Seamen fed up of the sea. Young men weary of the work of the docks, scornful of the meager reward—doing that now. Black youth close to the bush and the roots of jungle trees, trying to live the precarious life of the poisonous orchids of civilization.[23]

Here white prostitutes ("pinks"), servicemen, and "pimps from everywhere" mingle in a multi-ethnic scene strongly reminiscent of Marx's passage cited above, offering again a thoroughgoing revalorization of Marx: McKay's novel refuses to condemn those who are "weary" of the poor rewards of uncertain employment and choose to make their living in the informal economy. Crucially, it is only when a French pimp attempts to rise to respectability that the text condemns sex work, as Ray articulates a pervasive link between the amassing of European fortunes through "the buying and selling of black bodies" and the attaining of wealth by "the landlords of Boody Lane and the Ditch."[24] Elsewhere Ray does treat a prostitute who attempts to pick him up harshly, but it is not clear whether the narrative voice endorses his rancor.[25]

Perhaps most troublingly for some Marxist readers, many of the text's lists delight in the exchange of commodities. As Ben Etherington has pointed out, "there is a symmetry between the energetic abandon of vagabonds and the frenetic movement of goods, capital, and labor between the colonies and the metropolises."[26] Ray is fascinated by the docks, he even "loved them":

> There any day he might meet with picturesque proletarians from far waters whose names were warm with romance: the Caribbean, the Gulf of Guinea, the Persian Gulf, the Bay of Bengal, the China Seas, the Indian Archipelago. And, oh, the earthy mingled smells of the docks! Grain from Canada, rice from India, rubber from the Congo, tea from China, brown sugar from Cuba, bananas from Guinea, lumber from the Soudan, coffee, from Brazil, skins from the Argentine, palm-oil from Nigeria, pimento from Jamaica, wool from Australia, oranges from Spain and oranges from Jerusalem. In piled up boxes, bags, and barrels, some broken, dropping their stuff on the docks, reposing the warm odor of their rich perfumes—the fine harvest of all the lands on the earth.[27]

It's hard to know exactly what to make of a passage that looks like an exultant hymn to global trade; later on, this becomes more explicit with the ejaculation, "Commerce! Of all words the most magical. The timbre, color, form, the strength and grandeur of it. Triumphant over all human and natural obstacles, sublime yet forever going hand in hand with the bitch, Bawdy."[28] Here the promiscuity of the commodity-form is explicitly linked with the promiscuity of the lumpen, and this is precisely the discomforting association that lies at the heart of orthodox Marxist rejections of lumpen life. That this is a queer linkage becomes clear through Ray's insistence that "there was something sublime about waste," which links non-procreative sex (we might look back to the boxes "dropping their stuff on the docks" at the end of the passage quoted above) with the excess of commodity exchange.[29] McKay's text seems to gather together and intensify all the moral queasiness of orthodox Marxism's rejection of the lumpen.

And indeed, in the face of the Stalinist repression of the 1930s, McKay was himself to become disillusioned with Communism, publicly distancing himself from it in his 1937 memoir, *A Long Way from Home*. Published before his total retraction, but while his enthusiasm for Communism had begun to wane, *Banjo* is therefore a site of critical contention over McKay's political commitment. Gary Holcomb, for instance, insists on *Banjo* as an anarchist, Trotskyist, and Marxist text, while Brent Hayes Edwards argues that the French translation of "common people" as "le prolétariat" represents "an imposition of an explicit Marxist vocabulary onto a text that is nothing if not reluctant to assent to such institutional forms of radicalism."[30] While Edwards is correct that the French translation is inaccurate, his rejection of Marxist terminology is belied by the fact that McKay *does* use the term "proletarian" a number of times throughout the narrative—as we have seen in the passage cited above, but also to describe the "proletarian blue" worn by pimps and other lumpen figures. Conversely, although Holcomb's account is suggestive, his study tends to incorrectly designate the "beach boys" of the novel as "proletarians" when their rejection of forms of organized labor places them outside of normative working-class subjectivity. If, however, we foreground the lumpenproletariat as a key formation for McKay (as both Edwards and Holcombe gesture toward but do not ultimately state), the possibility arises of seeing his novel as a queer revalorization of sex work, waste, and vagabondage.

While also offering a thoroughgoing reevaluation of lumpen tropes, Djuna Barnes's landmark lesbian novel *Nightwood* (1936) is engaged with a rather different sense of the lumpenproletariat. Barnes has been celebrated as a high modernist lesbian writer, and her novel has been praised as a unique exploration of interwar bohemian life; however, no doubt in part because of the wealth of many of the characters, *Nightwood* has never received much attention as a lumpen text, despite the fact that bohemians are in many ways lumpen figures par excellence. Indeed, apart from Jane Marcus's astute but glancing reference to the lumpenproletariat as part of the text's "political unconscious," critics have been largely silent on the issue.[31] But it is important to recognize that for Marx and Engels, the bourgeoisie has its own lumpen formations and figures: most famously the corrupt finance aristocracy of Second Empire France, but also an extended definition including priests, lawyers, journalists, and other figures who do not contribute to the relations of production. In *Nightwood*, the "looter" Jenny Petherbridge could easily be seen as part of the lumpenbourgeoisie in these terms.[32] This is not because she gains her wealth through a series of marriages but instead because of her affective disposition, her readiness to steal not only material objects but ruin lives by "a continual rapacity for other people's facts."[33] At the heart of *Nightwood* lies her "appropriation" of Nora Flood's love for Robin Vote:

> When she fell in love it was with a perfect fury of accumulated dishonesty; she became instantly a dealer in second-hand and therefore incalculable emotions. As, from the solid archives of usage, she had stolen or appropriated the dignity of speech, so she appropriated the most passionate love that she knew, Nora's for Robin. She was a "squatter" by instinct.[34]

"Squatting" is, of course, the most lumpen of modes of dwelling that one would surely not want to condemn, but here it refers to Jenny's emotional rapacity, a readiness to assume, through a form of bad-faith theatricality, the affective lives of others. Less condemned by the text, but equally legible as lumpen actors, are the circus performers (in particular Frau Mann) to whom Felix Volkbein is drawn, and the prostitutes who exercise a fascination for both Robin and the doctor. Nora, meanwhile, holds a "pauper's salon" whose attendees read like a transvalued version of Marx and Engels's list: "poets, radicals, beggars, artists, and people in love; for Catholics, Protestants, Brahmins, dabblers in black magic and medicine."[35] Barnes here inserts "people in love" as form of disintegrating subjectivity, an extension of social typologies that is reiterated in the conjoining of religion, caste, magic, and medicine in the set of appositions which follow. The effect of these lines is that of a dizzying congeries of non-productive yet deeply valorized subjects.

But it is the queer, trans abortionist, and focalizing consciousness of the novel, "Dr. Matthew-Mighty-grain-of-salt-Dante-O'Connor," who is most clearly drawn as part of the lumpenproletariat.[36] While the doctor protests that he "is not a mountebank,"[37]—this word, of course, recalling once again Marx's list from the *Eighteenth Brumaire*—and although his protests are indeed upheld by the narrative's insistence on his discourse as an authentic vocalization of queer experience, he does mount the novel's stage as its most insistent speaker. While Nora and Jenny might be described as lumpen-bourgeois, the doctor's poverty is clear from the depiction of his squalid room: "there was something appallingly degraded about the room, like the rooms in brothels, which give even the most innocent a sensation of having become an accomplice."[38] Again, sex work, poverty, and degradation are linked together, yet the doctor's claim that he does indeed "love my neighbor" is upheld by the brutal consolations of his speech: "like a rotten apple to a rotten apple's breast affixed we go down together."[39] Above all, the doctor's mix of the sacred and the scatological (which is registered as specifically French: "the Frenchman, who puts a *sou* in the poor box at night that he might have a penny to spend in the morning"[40]) places his speech in the locus classicus of the lumpenproletariat, where, as Marx puts it, "money, filth and blood commingle."[41] Marcus is right that *Nightwood* should be read as a French novel in many ways, but it is perhaps the legacy of the Second Empire in particular that haunts the doctor's words.[42] Indeed, he offers a very specific textual echo of the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, in a passage on "wrestling":

> Each race to its wrestling! Some throw the beast on the other side, with the stench of excrement, blood, and flowers, the three essential oils of their plight! Man makes his history with the one hand and "holds it up" with the other.[43]

The doctor directly mirrors Marx's text, with its famous proclamation that "men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please."[44] But the doctor rejects Marx here, proclaiming in the next line that "I am sick of this tirade." Most saliently, this is a transvalued textual echo, for "excrement, blood, and flowers" are distilled into "essential oils," and history is "held up" in theatrical opposition to its making, rather than explicated in Marx's anti-theatrical theoretical mode. If the doctor protests that he "cannot and will not, stand on [his] head," here he makes Marx perform precisely that operation.

Ironically, what the doctor finally offers is a form of collective knowledge that is located precisely in its immersion in the "suppuration" of lumpen life, a knowledge that dwells in his insistence to "never use the derogatory in the usual sense," and which therefore marks itself out as thoroughly queer.[45] This is not merely a case of resignification—it need hardly be mentioned that the term "queer" was first reclaimed with pride in the interwar period—but rather, as I have been stressing throughout this chapter, of a thoroughgoing counter-valorization of lumpen typologies, a project that *Banjo* also performs with élan, and which *The Hustler* projects in spite of itself. Indeed, I might be tempted to conclude with the observation that Doctor Matthew O'Connor was the first queer theorist. For since its inception in the early 1990s, queer theory itself has been carrying its own extended reclamation of lumpen subjectivities: Michael Warner's and Lauren Berlant's erotic vomiting immediately presents itself, to say nothing of the thoroughgoing attempt to revalue sex work that has become one of queer theory's most notable contributions to radical thought.[46] Clearly a reaction to the politics of respectability that marks much of mainstream gay and lesbian thought, this approach to the abject was manifestly a response to orthodox Marxism's often puritanical refusal to countenance sexual dissidence, as we have seen in Parker's critique. A lumpen disposition could also be located in much of early queer theory's immersion in critiques of the subject that themselves have a distinctly lumpen class unconscious. But above all, queer theory must surely trace a major line of influence back to those all too material lumpen formations that have always been a central part of queer cultural history, and which find particularly pungent expression in the modernist novel.

Notes

1 Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 11.
2 See Quinn, "Isherwood and the Violet Quill."
3 For an excellent overview of the evolution of the term, see Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution*, 452–478, and 628–634.
4 Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, trans. Moore and Engels, 75.

5 Stallybrass, "Marx and Heterogeneity," 70.
6 See Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, particularly 63–96; and Mills, *Ragged Revolutionaries*.
7 Parker, "Unthinking Sex," 34–5.
8 Prickett, "Defining Identity," 148.
9 Kennedy, Afterword to John Henry Mackay, *The Hustler*, 298.
10 Mackay, *The Hustler*, 272. My emphasis.
11 Mackay, *The Hustler*, 252.
12 Mackay, *The Hustler*, 293–294.
13 Mackay, *The Hustler*, 288.
14 Mackay, *Puppenjunge*, 333.
15 Mackay, *The Hustler*, 94.
16 Mackay, *Puppenjunge*, 107.
17 McKay, *Banjo*, 65.
18 See Holcomb, *Claude McKay*, 141.
19 McKay, *Banjo*, 31–32.
20 McKay, *Banjo*, 11.
21 McKay, *Banjo*, 326.
22 McKay, *Banjo*, 13.
23 McKay, *Banjo*, 49.
24 McKay, *Banjo*, 288.
25 McKay, *Banjo*, 100.
26 Etherington, *Literary Primitivism*, 150.
27 McKay, *Banjo*, 67.
28 McKay, *Banjo*, 308–309.
29 McKay, *Banjo*, 260.
30 Holcomb, *Claude McKay*, 140–70; Hayes Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*, 217.
31 Marcus, "Laughing at Leviticus," 145.
32 Barnes, *Nightwood*, 98.
33 Barnes, *Nightwood*, 67.
34 Barnes, *Nightwood*, 68.
35 Barnes, *Nightwood*, 50.
36 Barnes, *Nightwood*, 87.
37 Barnes, *Nightwood*, 19.
38 Barnes, *Nightwood*, 79.
39 Barnes, *Nightwood*, 153.
40 Barnes, *Nightwood*, 84.
41 Marx, *The Class Struggle in France*, 247.
42 Marcus, "Laughing at Leviticus," 145.
43 Barnes, *Nightwood*, 88–89.
44 Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire*, trans. Terrell Carver, 32.
45 Barnes, *Nightwood*, 153, 116–117.
46 Berlant and Warner, "Sex in Public," 564–566.

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17

MODERNISM AND THE QUEER THEORY OF DIASPORA

Nadine Attewell

In 1924, Langston Hughes set off from Venice for Toulon, where he hoped to meet with the Jamaican writer Claude McKay and "talk to him about poetry and about Russia."[1] But Hughes, who had only just survived a precarious winter working nightclubs in Paris, was robbed on the train, and had to get off at Genoa. Here he joined "a bunch of resourceful fellows, who had been on the beach in more countries than one, and who knew how to hustle up a few lire almost every day."[2] Eventually, Hughes secured work on a ship bound for the United States, arriving back in Harlem—or so he claims in his 1940 autobiography *The Big Sea*—with a quarter and a few poems.

Since the 1980s, the queerness of artists like Hughes and McKay, as well as Gladys Bentley, Angelina Weld Grimké, Alice Dunbar Nelson, Bruce Nugent, and Bessie Smith, has figured centrally in accounts of early twentieth-century Black diasporic cultural production, testifying to the truth of Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s 1993 observation that the "Harlem Renaissance was surely as gay as it was black."[3] Still, as Kathryn Bond Stockton notes, it has not always been easy to know how to "listen for the strains of queerness" running through the works of early twentieth-century Black writers like Hughes: "do the details of writers' lives demand that we find doubled meanings in their work?"[4] My thinking here is indebted to the foundational queer diasporic scholarship of Gayatri Gopinath and others, who regularly move beyond the facts of biography—artists' sexual histories and habits of relation—in considering how diasporic experiments in aesthetic practice challenge norms for the organization of erotic and collective life.[5] But I also take up Hughes's invitation, in episodes like "Beachcomber," to reflect on the relationship of the artist and artistic labor to everyday practices of diaspora.[6] When, in "I Am Your Sister," Audre Lorde identifies Nelson and Grimké as

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"poets of the Harlem Renaissance" who were also "Black Lesbians,"[7] it is in order to recognize the full scope of their contributions (and Lorde's herself) to Black projects of survival, community, and radical thought, *alongside* and also *as* activists, caregivers, or teachers. From one angle, Hughes's time "on the beach" in Genoa represents a missed opportunity for connection with another queer Black leftist writer. However, from another, it highlights Hughes's proximity to other migrant workers and their queer experiments in living along and in defiance of the global color line.[8]

In this chapter, I take my cue from recent work in queer diasporic studies that approaches early twentieth-century cultural production as a rich archive for theorizing how "capital [in conjunction with the white supremacist and colonizing nation-state] produces emergent social formations that exceed the racialized boundaries of gender and sexual ideals."[9] Over the last two decades, feminist and queer scholars like Roderick Ferguson, Saidiya Hartman, Lisa Lowe, Nayan Shah, Christina Sharpe, and Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley have reframed histories of transcontinental and transoceanic labor migration *as* histories of gender and sexuality, placing intimacy at the heart of post-slavery struggles over what it means to be free. The mass migrations needed to fuel capitalist modernity became the targets of projects of sexual normalization and pathologization that racialized non-white migrants as, in Ferguson's words, "eccentric to gender and sexual normativity."[10] At the same time, capitalism's thirst for laboring bodies fostered new (if not always equitable or equitably distributed) possibilities for relation, in part by generating new geographies of encounter: ships, work camps, factories, cafés, nightclubs, studios, political clubs, boardinghouses, brothels, and laundries. These can be mapped across a range of early twentieth-century anglophone cultural texts, including Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906), Sax Rohmer's Fu Manchu novels (1913–1959), Eric Walrond's *Tropic Death* (1926), Hughes's *The Weary Blues* (1926), Nella Larsen's *Quicksand* (1928), Henry Green's *Living* (1929), *Piccadilly* (starring Anna May Wong, 1929), Jean Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark* (1934), *Princess Tam Tam* (starring Josephine Baker, 1935), C. L. R. James's *Minty Alley* (1936), Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), H. T. Tsiang's *And China Has Hands* (1938), William Attaway's *Blood on the Forge* (1941), Carlos Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart* (1943), Ann Petry's *The Street* (1946), and Edgar Mittelhozer's *A Morning at the Office* (1950). Here, I think with Hughes's contemporary and interlocutor Claude McKay, whose fictions enact and theorize the workings of diasporic intimacy as a queer, anti-capitalist modality of relation in especially rich and provocative ways.

McKay worked as a policeman in colonial Jamaica, as a dining-car attendant in the United States, and as a political organizer and journalist for Sylvia Pankhurst's socialist newspaper *The Workers' Dreadnought* in London, before accepting an invitation to spend several months in Russia beginning in

late 1923. He spent much of the following decade in France and Morocco, where he wrote what Gary Holcomb has called his "queer black Marxist" trilogy of novels: *Home to Harlem* (1928), *Banjo* (1929), and *Romance in Marseille* (written in the early 1930s but not published until 2020).[11] In all three novels, men and women from the United States, the Caribbean, southern and western Asia, and northern and western Africa come together in the Atlantic port cities of New York and Marseille, forging communities of belonging that reflect but also defy the cross-cutting regimes of racial exclusion, racial management, and labor exploitation that conditioned how Black and Brown people moved and congregated in this period. McKay devotes particular attention to the erotically charged relationships between Black men, including the Haitian poet Ray and his African American veteran friends Jake (in *Home to Harlem*) and Banjo (in *Banjo*) that he suggests flourished in such milieus. But while migrant (post)proletarian Black and Brown women also participated in such convivial formations, their experiences tend to recede from view, not just in McKay's fictions but in the writings of many of his contemporaries as well.

If, as Ferguson insists in *Aberrations in Black*, novels can "bear witness to the critical gender and sexual heterogeneity that comprises minority cultures" in ways that other methods for knowing and representing cannot, they are nonetheless marked by the conditions under which their authors labored to produce them.[12] In the second part of this chapter, I ask when, how, and why some of the queer affiliative projects common to and constitutive of laboring migrant communities seem more likely to get archived in (or as) literary form than others. In *Banjo*, writing emerges as just one amongst many possible mediums of expression, technologies of relation, and pathways to survival; the gendered, classed, and cultural privilege it both accords and seems to require is a source of anxiety for characters like Ray. To this extent, I argue, the novel also theorizes its own limits as an archive, its modernism a prompt to look elsewhere for the traces of especially women's queer practices of relation.

On the Beach

As Paul Gilroy and others have noted, the experience of labor has long been central to Black vernacular theory and cultural expression.[13] The diasporic encounters that structure both *Home to Harlem* and *Banjo* are enabled by racial capitalist regimes that do not only dictate what sorts of work Black men may do, but regulate whether and how they move. In *Home to Harlem*, it is railway work that, as McKay explains in his autobiography, brings Black men together as part of a "commonalty":[14] Jake first encounters Ray in the railway dining-car where they are both employed as waiters, a workplace relationship that deepens into something more. Both men also have experience working on ships, however, and when Ray grows tired of New York and

his girlfriend's domestic aspirations toward the end of the novel, he hops a freighter heading west, resurfacing in a Marseille café midway through *Banjo*. Having assisted Banjo in a dispute with the owner, Ray is welcomed into the Ditch, one of Marseille's roughest dockside neighborhoods, and the mixed community of dockers, deportees, bums, performers, and sex workers that shelters there. Like Ray, Banjo and his friends have come to Marseille by way of the global shipping trade, some, like Banjo or Ray, more or less by choice; others, like Taloufa, from British West Africa, because they have been taken captive by intersecting regimes of labor and territorial control that prioritize white life, mobility, and profits.[15] As the novel makes clear, Marseille's global reputation as a "marvelous, dangerous, attractive, big, wide-open port"[16] where Black men congregate stems from its proximity to the camps (at Fréjus, for example) where French colonial troops were stationed throughout this period;[17] its importance to merchant shipping routes; and its convenience as a dumping ground for deportees from Britain and the United States: towards the end of the novel, an intensifying campaign to remove "colored subjects" from British ships and port cities becomes the subject of "sharp and bitter discussions in the cafés of Joliette and the Vieux Port," as colonial seamen of color whose British nationality has been declared "doubtful" struggle to either find work or travel home.[18]

As these conversations suggest, however, the proximities into which Black men are recruited or forced by capitalist modernity also serve to foster and make visible transoceanic genealogies of critique and revolutionary practice.[19] To quote Gayatri Gopinath, "desire, identification, and affiliation are central to apprehending [the] indiscreteness of multiple histories, spaces, and temporalities."[20] Although initially dismissive of Caribbean-born Blacks, Jake is intrigued by Ray's command of literary French, which he connects with his own rough knowledge of the language, picked up doing manual labor for the US army in Brest and Havre. In seeking to account for his fluency in French, Ray "opens up the world of black folk" to Jake, who learns about Haiti's history as a revolutionary former French colony and target of US imperial ambitions.[21] As they converse, the dining-car is transformed from a place where Black men work to satisfy white needs and wants into a place where they work to remember, learn, and bond with one another across and also through the wounds of history. Meanwhile, the community that forms in the Ditch, which comprises Black men from the Americas as well as northern and western Africa, is defined by its members' still more radical relationship to capitalist norms of survival, eschewing not so much labor as the alienated forms of relationality into which we are schooled by capitalism, including through our labor.[22] Like Langston Hughes in Genoa, Banjo and his friends sustain themselves "on the beach" by begging, scrounging, and making up to newer, more solvent arrivals in town, for whom they perform

small services. Having blown through his savings, Banjo is introduced to the practice and ethics of bumming by Malty and Ginger, who "bummed [him]" when he was cash-rich and strutting and now aim to return the favor.[23] Banjo is an exceptional figure even within the world of the Ditch: he seeks deportation from the United States as a means of securing passage overseas, knowing that his American citizenship will be restored the moment he asks, and repeatedly refuses the efforts of the American consul to get him regular shipboard work; few of his associates can be said to have chosen expatriation and unemployment in this way.[24] What is more, bumming involves forms of labor that are unpalatable and compromising, as when the men are forced to entertain or otherwise service white travelers. At the same time, it fuels cycles of generosity that help to sustain Marseille's dockside neighborhoods both economically and affectively, binding (post)proletarian Black subjects into relationships of mutual care and dependency.

Like many of the texts Roderick Ferguson discusses in *Aberrations in Black*, then, McKay's fictions help us to see how "the contradictions of state and capital" foster Black working-class diasporic practices of survival that might be termed queer insofar as they yield "radically different forms of intimacy and kinship and association," ones premised on movement and precarity rather than fixity and permanence.[25] Whereas Ray's chauffeur acquaintance "traffick[s] obscenely" in women as a means of accumulating capital for a life in the suburbs, Banjo and his friends largely refuse the sexual and narrative logics of bourgeois heteronormativity.[26] They elevate the ephemeral, distinctly communal pleasures of food, dance, music, sex, and talk—forms of aesthetic experience, as Anthony Reed notes, that "have no alienable value"[27]—over the grotesque requirements and remoter satisfactions of social mobility, financial security, and respectable domesticity.

In both novels, it's true, McKay's characters strive to distance themselves from the more obviously queer forms of masculinity and femininity that flourish in Harlem or the Ditch. Ray explains, for instance, that he doesn't "pal around with rough-trade business, though I appreciate them."[28] Jake, Banjo, and Ray all pursue sexual relationships with women. (By contrast, as we'll see, same-sex couples feature prominently in *Romance in Marseille*.) But Ray's relationships with Banjo and Jake are also suffused with a tender physicality and emotional intensity that threaten, at times, to exceed even homosocial norms at the margins.[29] When Jake first meets Ray, the latter is reading Antoine Daudet's 1884 novel *Sapho*. Although Ray likes the novel, he tells Jake that he "hate[s] the use of Sapho for its title," because Sappho was "a great Greek poet" whose "story gave two lovely words to modern language," "Sapphic and Lesbian," whereas Daudet's novel concerns a French courtesan whose male lovers call her "Sapho."[30] There are no lesbians, no sapphic sisters, in either *Home to Harlem* or *Banjo*.[31] Still, from the

beginning, their friendship is saturated with queer possibility. That night, Ray watches over Jake, "stretched at full length on his side, his cheek in his right hand, sleeping peacefully, like a tired boy after hard playing, so happy and sweet and handsome":[32] according to Ovid, Sappho committed suicide after falling in love with the "beautiful" ferryman Phaon, a rewriting of the Sappho myth that, as Harriette Andreadis notes, helped to contain the more unsettling dimensions of her legacy as an accomplished woman-loving poet, but that is queered here, in the longing look Ray gives his new (ex-sailor) friend.[33]

Jake returns the favor months later, declaring that he "likes [Ray]" while "look[ing] into Ray's eyes with frank savage affection," "like a black Pan out of the woods."[34] However, the occasion is Ray's farewell: whatever possibilities are indexed in this moment have in effect already been foreclosed on. Convinced that Ray is leaving for financial reasons, Jake regrets lacking the skills to pursue a less peripatetic profession, so that "we could all settle down and make money like edjucated people do," instead of going "off to throw you'self away on some lousy dinghy and me chasing around all the time lak a hungry dawg."[35] But "settl[ing] down" does not interest Ray, who fears capture by sedentary office work as well as marriage and babies with his girlfriend Agatha, which he worries he is too bourgeois to refuse.[36] In *Home to Harlem*, at least, Jake's attachment to the United States (the novel opens with Jake recommitting himself to Harlem after two years overseas), which is bound up with his attachment to "brown girls" (like his lover Felice) and to the ideal of financial autonomy (he scorns becoming a "sweetman"), militates against any possibility of a future that could also appeal to the Haitian dissident Ray.[37] By the time Jake too shows up in Marseille, having left Felice and their son back in Chicago, Ray has moved on, into the orbit of the still more charismatic Banjo.[38]

As *Banjo* moves to a close, the loose community of diasporic Africans that had formed around Banjo begins to lose cohesion, as men buckle under the pressure of life at the margins, including the tensions that suffuse this community organized across linguistic and national lines,[39] and are recaptured by the state in close collaboration with capital. In response, Ray once again readies himself to depart—alone. However, Banjo turns out to have accumulated sufficient funds for the two of them to make a break from Marseille together, through defrauding the American consul and reneging on his contract with a Caribbean shipping outfit. In this way, Banjo's willingness to draw on the protections of citizenship and the labor contract without feeling bound by them enables the further development of his intimacy with Ray. Eschewing the heteronormative plot that structures *Home to Harlem*—this is one way to understand the novel's subtitle, "A Story Without a Plot"—*Banjo* ends by adapting the couple form to queer ends, committed only to vagabonding for "as long as the feeling held."[40]

Pals and Gals

Still, something is foreclosed in this moment. As the two pair up to "beat it a long ways from here," Ray wonders whether Latnah, their friend and Banjo's sometime lover, couldn't have come too. Banjo demurs, counseling him not to "get soft ovah any one" woman.[41] The possibility lingers as a provocation. Why not? Of the many women with whom Banjo, Ray, and their friends come into contact over the course of their stay in Marseille, Latnah is the only one to whom they grow close, because she "follow[s] precisely the same line of living as they": although she supports herself through sex work, she comes to the men "as a pal," contributing financially as well as affectively to the networks of care, safety, and pleasure from which they all benefit.[42] Even so, we learn little more about her history and life in the Ditch than we do about Banjo's untrustworthy white lover Chère Blanche. It's only late in the novel, over a pipe of opium, that she tells Ray something of her life story, explaining that she was born at Aden, in present-day Yemen, to a "Negresse" ("Sudanese or Abyssinian") and a man of unknown origins.[43] How might we read her exclusion from the vision of queer (post)proletarian intimacy with which the novel concludes, an exclusion that structures other representations of proletarian life from this period as well?[44]

In William Attaway's Great Migration novel *Blood on the Forge*, for example, the intimate labor of Black, Chicana, and Ukrainian American women is at once central and peripheral to the plot.[45] Set in the years just following the First World War, *Blood on the Forge* follows the three Moss brothers, Big Mat, Melody, and Chinatown, as they go from sharecropping in Kentucky to working in a steel mill in Pennsylvania. Here, they enter into complex forms of community and competition with the other men—Black, Irish, Ukrainian—who, like them, have been brought in to labor in the mill. But Melody's relationships with Rosie, the granddaughter of his Ukrainian co-worker Zanski, and Anna, a Chicana teenager recently arrived from Vaughn, New Mexico, are equally transformative.[46] In their encounters, Melody experiments with different forms of masculinity—during one violent episode, Anna castigates him for his "sissiness"—than the traumatized hardness that eventually kills Big Mat; attending to women's labor as sex workers and caregivers sheds light on his own compulsion to care for Big Mat and Chinatown.[47] Regardless, Melody's primary attachment to his brothers persists, and it is with Chinatown that he flees the mills for Pittsburgh in the novel's enigmatic conclusion.

In both novels, the gender divide is also racialized. Latnah, who disavows her Blackness, carries a dagger for protection, a habit that reminds Malty of "the strange, fierce, fascinating tales he had heard of Oriental strife and daggers dealing swift death," and so unsettles Banjo that his horrified face is said to resemble "an African mask."[48] In part, then, Latnah's sidelining at the end

of *Banjo* reflects histories of Black-Arab or Afro-Asian bad feeling, testifying to the gap between "Arab" and "African" formations of identity.[49] But the few Black women who move through the Ditch garner even less (narrative) attention than Latnah; in *Blood on the Forge*, Black women are largely abject figures, whose brutal treatment at the hands of white and Black men alike the Moss brothers work hard to forget, even when they themselves are responsible. In these texts, both mobility and the freedom to which mobility is imagined to give rise are gendered affordances, as Banjo acknowledges when he tells Ray, "theah's things we can git away with all the time and [Latnah] just kain't."[50] Gendered differences in immigration law, such as women's vulnerability to marital expatriation, are a reminder that social goods like citizenship do not stick to men and women equally, with consequences for their global mobility. Then, too, keying emancipatory projects of social transformation to the feminized, often dangerous and derogated, labor of intimacy and care is far riskier for women than men.

In *Stranger Intimacies*, the historian Nayan Shah shows how the gendered conditions of migrant labor in early twentieth-century California, Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia "created both fleeting and enduring relationships" amongst Asian, Latinx, Black, and Indigenous men and women.[51] What novels like *Banjo* and *Blood on the Forge* suggest, in their turn, is that such relationships have the potential to generate vernacular knowledge about the gendered conditions of migrant labor.[52] If Black writers, to quote Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley, are "theorists of race, gender, and sexuality," they also insist on the everydayness of theory, of knowing gender and sexuality, as a practice of survival.[53] Whether out of affection, a sense of affinity, curiosity, or a nascent commitment to social justice, male characters learn things about the costs and affordances of prostitution from their encounters with women who are engaged in such work. (Naturalized as a compensatory function of women's gendered being and the family form, the sexual and reproductive labor performed by wives, mothers, and other female kin remains something of a blind spot.) When Ray complains about the shady practices of some of the brothels in the Ditch, Banjo reminds Ray that sex work is "hard labor," especially when you can't trust your clients not to cheat or assault you.[54] But if, in these novels, the conditions under which racialized migrants live and toil foster relationships that enable men to see sex work for the "hard labor" that it is, they seem unable, or unwilling, to imagine, let alone craft, new arrangements of labor, sociality, and sexuality in which women as well as men can thrive.

The fictions of McKay and Attaway's African American women contemporaries, like Marita Bonner, Zora Neale Hurston, Nella Larsen, and Ann Petry, testify to the fraught place of sex work and intimate labor in Black women's lives. In Bonner's short stories about Chicago and New York, for example, women who choose or are pushed into forms of sex work are

treated sympathetically, but denied happy outcomes.[55] (Then again, so is everyone else: these are narratives of struggle.) Likewise, in Petry's 1946 novel *The Street*, Lutie Johnson's beauty and the limitations on her employability as a single Black mother make her vulnerable to exploitation by the Black singer (and former porter) Boots Smith and his calculating white patron Junto. Having killed Smith for pimping her out to his boss, she flees Harlem for Chicago, an exercise in "getting away with things" that only underscores how little she has been able to get away with up to that point. Fictions like *The Street* anatomize the entangled workings of white supremacy, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and capitalism, as well as the violence they visit upon Black women, in urgent and devastating ways.

And yet, I'm struck by Latnah's vibrancy and the confidence with which she navigates dockside Marseille, brokering relationships of care, dependency, and dissent with other vulnerable subjects, which testify to different possibilities for survival and queer community-building than either *Banjo*'s movement toward vagabondage or Lutie Johnson's lonely flight at the end of *The Street*. That Latnah is herself a migrant, having moved from Aden to Marseille, seems important as well, opening to view other circuits of movement (around the Mediterranean and Red Seas) in which women participate—sometimes involuntarily—as well as men. Latnah's Adenese birth and Sudanese parentage, even her insistence that she is "no black woman," situate her as part of a fraught Mediterranean–Red Sea history of working-class diaspora and Black-Arab encounter that doesn't often surface in anglophone literature.[56]

Indeed, Black, Brown, and Asian women have always been more mobile than the dominant narratives can seem to imply. When he arrived in Morocco in 1930, Claude McKay was embroiled with Carmina, "a pretty colored lady who had recently deserted the best circles in Harlem for Paris" and soon followed him to Tangier.[57] In Paris, Langston Hughes's first job was at a club owned by a queer Martiniquaise, where he mixed with African American entertainers like Florence Embry; he also became involved with a wealthy Nigerian student named Mary, who shared an apartment in the Latin quarter with a Jamaican woman named Rosalie.[58] For Carmina and Mary as for Angela Murray in Jessie Fauset's *Plum Bun* or Helga Crane in Nella Larsen's *Quicksand*, travel overseas is made possible by money, family connections, or the promise of an education; it forms part of a trajectory of upward social mobility that many of Fauset's and Larsen's characters chafe against, but find costly to abandon. But consider the Black migrant workers, from the Caribbean as well as the United States, whom Janie Crawford encounters during her proletarianizing sojourn on the Florida muck in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.[59] Although Janie, the widow of a prosperous shopkeeper, is "a special case on the muck,"[60] she enthusiastically participates in the raucous gatherings of Black folk that take place in and around her house,

including the Bahamanian dances that get to be a nightly occurrence out back. Janie's association with the communities of the muck ends when Tea Cake dies; she returns to Eatonville, and the pleasures of "self-revelation" in the "kissing, young darkness" with Pheoby Watson.[61] Where, then, might we look for the stories of the migrant women who come to places like the muck to work, live, and love? What freedom projects might they be harboring, and how might we come to know them?

In *Frottage*, Keguro Macharia returns to McKay's early and late "Jamaican" writings, *Constab Ballads* (1912) and *Banana Bottom* (1933), to trace a genealogy of queer intimacy that is rooted in Black women's experiences of labor and punishment in the Caribbean, messing with "the opposition between the normative [feminine] home and a queer [masculine] diaspora" that McKay's 1920s fictions can seem to entrench.[62] Although Macharia's intervention is compelling, I think that something similar is also visible in McKay's last novel about Marseille, the long unpublished *Romance in Marseille*, in which the Black women and same-sex-loving men whom *Banjo* tends to relegate to the background are much more to the fore. *Romance in Marseille* tells the story of Lafala—in outline very reminiscent of Banjo's friend Taloufa—a former seaman from British West Africa whose tour of the "low-down places of many ports" culminates in a lengthy stay in Marseille, where he becomes embroiled with Aslima, a sex worker from Marrakesh whom the narrator describes as "a burning brown mixed of Arab and Negro and other wanton blood perhaps."[63] When Aslima robs Lafala of his savings, he stows away on a ship heading for New York, but is discovered and held in such miserable conditions that his legs have to be amputated upon arrival. Having secured a substantial payout from the steamship company, he returns to Marseille a wealthy man and reunites with Aslima, who is forced into a dangerous game: although Aslima continues to be managed by an abusive white tout named Titin (a version of Ray's chauffeur friend in *Banjo*), she refuses to take money from Lafala, whom she claims to love. Eventually, Lafala decides to return home, but tricks his lover into staying behind, instead supplying Aslima with the cost of her fare back to Morocco. Bereft, she taunts Titin into killing her.[64]

The fictional world of *Romance in Marseille* is hard on women, as Aslima's violent death confirms. McKay is more explicit here about the violence of the conditions under which Aslima, like Latnah, was born to a "robust Soudanese" woman and traveled to Marseille, including enslavement, child theft, and trafficking.[65] At the same time, he takes care to sketch out the complexly diasporic, heterosocial, and multiracial character of the community to which Lafala and Aslima belong, a community shaped by global systems and movements but tethered, in addition, to the distinctive material and social geographies of a Mediterranean port city. If, as Jacqueline Nassy Brown notes, the port is often feminized in the scholarship and cultural production

of the Black Atlantic as "the place continually left behind" (as indeed happens at the end of *Banjo*),[66] then *Romance in Marseille* hints at possibilities for queer diasporic community that are rooted in place—even urban, mixed-up, materially impoverished places like the Ditch—and the knowledges and experiences of queer women of colour and same-sex-loving men.[67] Thus, for example, when Lafala disappears into police custody halfway through the narrative, his West Indian friend Babel, who has just returned to Marseille expressly to see Lafala, is distressed. Babel enlists Big Blonde, "a big firm-footed broad-shouldered" white dockworker "straight out of Joseph Conrad, an outstanding enigma of Quayside," Big Blonde's young sex worker lover Petit Frere (Little Brother), and the Martiniquais activist Etienne St. Dominique, to help discover Lafala's whereabouts.[68] Later, they team up with Aslima's bitter rival, La Fleur Noire (the Black Flower), to scupper Aslima's relationship with Lafala. Although—or perhaps because—La Fleur Noire "doesn't go crazy over men" and is managed by a "Greek girl," suggesting that she prefers women, she spends much of the novel trying to poison Lafala against Aslima.[69] At the end of the novel, however, La Fleur Noire attempts to convince Aslima to save herself from Titin, whose jealousy and rage have turned murderous. As Aslima's death suggests, what Saidiya Hartman calls "the wayward and queer resources of Black survival" bear differently on differently embodied subjects, and are not equally accessible to all.[70] When Lafala embraces the solution of diasporic return, he seals Aslima's fate. And yet, as the novel also suggests, people did and do find ways of making habitable worlds for themselves, even under conditions of comprehensive disregard for the value of Black, queer, and poor life. While the toxicity of patriarchal systems for the extraction and exploitation of women's sexual labor ultimately proves fatal for Aslima, Latnah is more fortunate; and the queer networks that mobilize in support of first Lafala and then Aslima in *Romance in Marseille* indicate that other possibilities for intimate and collective life exist and are even sustainable, at least for a time.

Only rarely do poor and working-class women's experiments in living and loving as members of labor diasporas flicker into view in the literature of this period. Given the material costs and respectability politics of literary production, it is possible that their stories are largely lost to us. Banjo, who feels more sympathy for the brothel workers of the Ditch than Ray, explains this difference by noting that he has lived more "low-down rough-house than [Ray]," whose middle-class origins and fastidious sensibilities tend to distance him from such scenes.[71] At times, Ray's literary training and ambitions alienate him even from Banjo and the other men. Indeed, when Ray decides to write up "some of the scenes of the Ditch," he moves to a more "respectable" part of town in order to do so, only to return following a violent encounter with the French police that seems to mark the end of his writing career (for the moment, anyway).[72] McKay himself continued to write, of

course. Still, both *Home to Harlem* and *Banjo*, neither of which sold well, drew criticism from other African American writers for what W. E. B. Du Bois famously called McKay's "nauseating" portrait of Black licentiousness, while the still more sexually explicit *Romance in Marseille* long languished in the archives.[73] McKay's struggles as a writer testify to literature's disciplinary force as a site where sexual normativity is produced and reinforced. Historically, perhaps, literary production has required a kind of exit from the unrespectability of neighborhoods like the Ditch that Black men have found difficult to navigate, let alone Black women. Even so, it's difficult to imagine McKay's homosocial patronage network of writers, editors, and publishers, Black or white, doing much to foster the artistic ambitions of someone like Lutie Johnson, let alone her sex worker neighbors; although Marita Bonner and Ann Petry lived in heterogeneous Black neighborhoods in Chicago and New York, they came to writing from middle-class careers (in pharmacy and teaching, respectively).

Through reflecting on the conditions under which the would-be modernist labors at his craft, *Banjo* shows how the intimate experiments of the global precariat come to be imagined, represented, and remembered in and as literature, and draws our attention to what is left out. In so doing, the novel raises pointed questions about the relationship of literature to other technologies of expression, innovation, relationality, and advocacy, that might also prompt us to rethink our own practices as critics. Ray may not find the Ditch a conducive environment in which to write poetry, but it is nonetheless a site of creative ferment, its streets, cafés, and rooming-houses hotbeds of dancing, fashion, music, sex, storytelling, and cultural critique (as when Goosey rows with Banjo or Ray over the musical politics of the banjo). Although cultural historians have often turned to the archive of performance in order to tell the story of lesbian Harlem,[74] I don't think this means that a queer history of early twentieth-century Black diasporic cultural production will necessarily foreground (embodied) performance rather than writing.[75] After all, the Ditch is also a site of writing: Ray composes letters on behalf of his friends and himself, to the American consul, for example, or the police.[76] Rather, I'm wondering how we might bring everyday working-class cultures of expression and performance, both written and embodied, into relation with the more specialized archives of literature or even (say) the blues, to evoke the multiplicity of the queer ways in which people came together to make sense of the worlds into which they were displaced.

This question is prompted in part by Saidiya Hartman's extraordinary book, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*, which she describes as an attempt to re-create "the radical imagination and wayward practices" of young Black women in Philadelphia and New York around the turn of the twentieth century.[77] Fronted by a passage from Nella Larsen's *Quicksand*, in which Helga Crane recognizes herself to be, "in a queer indefinite way, a

disturbing factor,"[78] *Wayward Lives* at once testifies to the importance of early twentieth-century African American letters as a political, intellectual, and aesthetic inheritance—Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor has called *Wayward Lives* a modernist text—and meditates on the limitations of this archive.[79] But *Wayward Lives* is not primarily a book of literary or even social critique. Rather, employing a methodology that is literary as much as it is scholarly, or what she calls "close narration," Hartman returns to the archive of pathology—"the journals of rent collectors; surveys and monographs of sociologists; trial transcripts; slum photographs; reports of vice investigators, social workers, and parole officers; interviews with psychiatrists and psychologists; and prison case files"—to craft

> "a counter-narrative liberated from the judgment and classification that subjected young black women to surveillance, arrest, punishment, and confinement, and offer an account that attends to beautiful experiments—to make living an art—undertaken by those often described as promiscuous, reckless, wild, and wayward."[80]

In one chapter, Hartman introduces us to the writings of incarcerated Black women forced to be intimate in print: reformatory inmate Ryan Lane's verse play and "thoughtful, melancholy letters;" the letters Eva Perkins exchanged with her husband Aaron, a boxer; the letters Loretta Michie wrote her girlfriend Catherine.[81] In another, it is Mabel Hampton, who saw in women and the choreography of the chorus line radical possibilities for "living otherwise," who takes center stage.[82]

Hartman describes poor and working-class Black women as "sexual modernists," locating their queerness not just in how they experimented with forms for intimate and collective life, but in a propensity for experimentation that turned living into a form of art under conditions of extreme inequity and precarity.[83] Their stories, as told by themselves, by social workers, police officers, sociologists, and by Hartman, shed light on the limits and aporias of their contemporaries' experiments in using literature to represent and imagine other possibilities for being in relation. But they do not fill those gaps, and should not, I think, be read (or taught) as if they did. Rather, I take Hartman's work as an invitation to reflect on "the politics of our lack of knowledge"[84] and the conditions that helped to produce such gaps in the first place, to which novels like *Banjo* or *The Street* also draw attention. In *Wayward Lives*, Hartman pays homage to Black women's (hi)stories of living and loving differently as an inheritance that cracks open more familiar genealogies of freedom. But the gendered as well as racialized formations of labor, mobility, belonging, and authority that made such experiments in intimacy possible, necessary, and hard either to sustain or recall, persist, too, as problems, which it remains the task of queer theory to figure out how to redress.

Notes

1 Hughes, *The Big Sea*, 190.
2 Hughes, *The Big Sea*, 192.
3 Gates Jr., "The Black Man's Burden," 233. For more on the queerness of Harlem and the Harlem Renaissance, see, among others not cited elsewhere in this chapter, Cobb, "Insolent Racing, Rough Narrative"; Brody, "Queering Racial Reproduction"; Ponce, "Langston Hughes's Queer Blues"; Vogel, *The Scene of Harlem Cabaret*; and Ngô, *Imperial Blues*. This chapter focuses on Black diasporic cultural production. However, the canons of early twentieth-century Asian diasporic cultural production have also gotten queerer over time, the complex personal and aesthetic stylings of artists like Esther Eng, Sui Sin Far, Yone Noguchi, H. T. Tsiang, and José Garcia Villa garnering recognition as artefacts of alienation that are also exemplars of aesthetic innovation and thinking otherwise. Whether modernism is a productive framework within which to consider this work is a matter of some debate. See, for example, the scholarship of Denise Cruz, Andrew Leong, Martin Joseph Ponce, and Amy Sueyoshi, for more.
4 Stockton, "The Queerness of Race and Same-Sex Desire," 121.
5 Gopinath, *Impossible Desires*, 11; see also Gopinath, *Unruly Visions*.
6 I draw here and throughout on Brent Hayes Edwards's reflections on diaspora as a practice or process of "linking or connecting across gaps" in *The Practice of Diaspora*.
7 Lorde, "I Am Your Sister," 29.
8 Du Bois, "The Negro Mind Reaches Out."
9 Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black*, 10.
10 Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black*, 21.
11 Holcomb, *Claude McKay*, 172.
12 Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black*, 24.
13 Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, 200–2. See also Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity*.
14 McKay, *A Long Way from Home*, 19.
15 I depart here from Edwards's reading of the novel, in which he suggests that *Banjo* marks "a shift in McKay's political focus away from the proletariat, traditionally conceived, and toward … cosmopolitan, fleeting communities of men." Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*, 199. It is true that Banjo and his friends are not, or are no longer, proletarian in the conventional sense. But their cosmopolitanism cannot be understood separately from their proletarianism, that is, the conditions under which they labored and continue to be enjoined to labor. It is for this reason that I describe them as (post)proletarian.
16 McKay, *Banjo*, 12.
17 Aldrich, *Vestiges of the Colonial Empire in France*, 95–6; Pattieu, "Souteneurs noirs à Marseilles," 1363–4.
18 McKay, *Banjo*, 311–2. McKay's account is historically precise. See Laura Tabili's work for more on these developments, especially "The Construction of Racial Difference."
19 Lowe, "The Intimacies of Four Continents," 203; see also Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*; and Scott, *The Common Wind*.
20 Gopinath, *Unruly Visions*, 9.
21 McKay, *Home to Harlem*, 132. For a reading of *Home to Harlem* that pivots on Ray's Haitian-ness, see Lowney, "Haiti and Black Transnationalism."
22 See Jodi Melamed's "Racial Capitalism" for a helpful account of racial capitalism as a "technology of antirelationality" that draws on the work of Cedric Robinson and Ruth Wilson Gilmore among others. Melamed, "Racial Capitalism," 78. Melamed also thinks about the political necessity for relation work in *Represent and Destroy*.

23 McKay, *Banjo*, 4.
24 McKay, *Banjo*, 12.
25 Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black*, 15; Hartman, quoted in Siemsen, "On working with archives."
26 McKay, *Banjo*, 288.
27 Reed, "'A woman is a conjunction,'" 758.
28 McKay, *Banjo*, 148.
29 See Newman's "Ephemeral Utopias" for a reading of both novels that locates queer possibility in their itinerant, or cruising, plots.
30 McKay, *Home to Harlem*, 128–9.
31 Although Bessie Smith's "Foolish Man Blues" plays in the background of one of Jake's visits to a Harlem cabaret, neither the song nor the performance is attributed to Smith, whose queer presence is thereby erased from the novel. McKay, *Home to Harlem*, 36.
32 McKay, *Home to Harlem*, 157.
33 McKay, *Home to Harlem*, 128; Andreadis, *Sappho in Early Modern England*, 30.
34 McKay, *Home to Harlem*, 272.
35 McKay, *Home to Harlem*, 273.
36 McKay, *Home to Harlem*, 263.
37 McKay, *Home to Harlem*, 8; 40.
38 McKay, *Banjo*, 292.
39 Edwards elaborates on McKay's skepticism about Black internationalism in *The Practice of Diaspora*, 210 ff.
40 McKay, *Banjo*, 319.
41 McKay, *Banjo*, 326.
42 McKay, *Banjo*, 32.
43 McKay, *Banjo*, 283.
44 As Anthony Reed observes, women are largely sidelined even as music-makers in the Marseille café scene McKay describes in *Banjo*, pointing to their incorporability within the novel's utopian imaginary. Reed, "'A woman is a conjunction,'" 759–62.
45 Set in Allegheny County, Chicago, and Marseille, the fictions I discuss in this section describe working-class cultures of intimacy that are more racially mixed (if in fraught ways) than the ones Benjamin Kahan suggests can be glimpsed in contemporaneous texts set in Harlem.
46 Attaway, *Blood on the Forge*, 72.
47 Attaway, *Blood on the Forge*, 75.
48 McKay, *Banjo*, 30, 176.
49 The distinction and its histories are notoriously complex. Smita Das reads Latnah as Afro-Asian, which I think resolves the problem of her identity instead of reckoning with it.
50 McKay, *Banjo*, 326.
51 Shah, *Stranger Intimacy*, 55.
52 Similar moments of learning punctuate other proletarian fictions from this period as well, like Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* and Carlos Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart*.
53 Tinsley, *Thiefing Sugar*, 28.
54 McKay, *Banjo*, 252.
55 See, for example, "One Boy's Story," "Drab Rambles," and "A Possible Triad on Black Notes," in *Frye Street & Environs*.
56 McKay, *Banjo*, 175.
57 McKay, *A Long Way from Home*, 324; 329.
58 Hughes, *The Big Sea*, 155; 164–5.

59 I am indebted to Martyn Bone's reading of the muck as a site of intimacy between African American and Caribbean migrant workers in "The (Extended) South of Black Folk," 769.
60 Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, 133.
61 Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, 7.
62 Macharia, *Frottage*, 129–30.
63 McKay, *Romance in Marseille*, 4.
64 McKay, *Romance in Marseille*, 130.
65 McKay, *Romance in Marseille*, 44.
66 Brown, *Dropping Anchor*, 229.
67 In his first novel *Black Docker* (1956), the Senegalese writer Ousmane Sembène, who worked on the Marseille docks between 1948 and 1962, sketches what he calls "the little Harlem of Marseille" from a different angle: at the heart of the novel is the relationship between Catherine Siadem, the daughter of immigrants from the former French plantation colony of Nouvelle Calédonie, and the Senegalese dockworker and writer Diaw Falla. Sembène, *Black Docker*, 41.
68 McKay, *Romance in Marseille*, 94.
69 McKay, *Romance in Marseille*, 41.
70 Hartman, quoted in Siemsen, "On working with archives."
71 McKay, *Banjo*, 252.
72 McKay, *Banjo*, 260.
73 W. E. B. Du Bois reviewed *Home to Harlem* alongside *Quicksand* in the June 1928 issue of *The Crisis*. Marcus Garvey castigated McKay for his supposed dependence on white patrons, calling him a "literary prostitute." Garvey, quoted in Moses, *Black Messiahs and Uncle Toms*, 121. In contrast, as Edwards documents, the novel was well received in Black francophone circles, including for its frank celebration of bodily pleasure. Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*, 187–8.
74 See, for example, Rowden's "Harlem Undercover" and Wilson's *Bulldaggers, Pansies, and Chocolate Babies*.
75 The writings of Daphne Brooks on turn-of-the-century Black performances of freedom, Elisa F. Glick and Monica Miller on Black dandyism, and Anne Cheng on Josephine Baker point to the possibilities of such an approach, however.
76 McKay, *Banjo*, 240; 265.
77 Hartman, *Wayward Lives*, xiii.
78 Larsen, *Quicksand*, 8.
79 Taylor, "Saidiya Hartman's 'Beautiful Experiments.'"
80 Hartman, *Wayward Lives*, xiii–xiv.
81 Hartman, *Wayward Lives*, 265–6; 276; 282.
82 Hartman, *Wayward Lives*, 299.
83 Hartman, *Wayward Lives*, xv.
84 Lowe, "The Intimacies of Four Continents," 206.

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18

ON *VIEW*

A Queer Theory of Modernist Practice

Tirza True Latimer

The art journal *View*, edited by Charles Henri Ford and Parker Tyler from 1940 to 1947, highlighted vibrant cultural enterprises that escape notice in formalist taxonomies of modern art. For the first half of the so-called American Century, when distilling the unique characteristics of American modernism preoccupied influential curators and critics, *View* examined cultural life in the Americas from divergent perspectives.[1] Bringing together surrealists, magic realists, neo-romantics, and self-taught artists from Europe and the Americas, *View* cultivated alternative understandings of both the qualifier "American" and the term "modernism."

The artists associated with *View* bucked prevailing professional trends by working collaboratively. Instead of making claims about art's "autonomy" (its absolute independence from social contexts), they explored art's implication in modern social and sexual relations. Rather than espousing notions of medium-specific purity, they privileged interdisciplinary genres, including opera, ballet, theater, and fashion. And, at a time of heightened nationalism, they devoted much of their creative energy to sustaining affiliations across territorial boundaries.

If we take "theory" to indicate a set of principles on which practice is based, then, to justify the claim that *View* materialized a theory of modernism, it is necessary to identify the publication's underlying editorial principles. What values can be distilled from the magazine's eclectic contents? I argue that this question can be answered in two words: diversity and discrepancy. *View*'s editorial eclecticism dramatized modernism's capacious potential and celebrated its generative ability to differ and diverge.

Looking at the mid-twentieth-century artistic scene in America through the lens of *View* magazine, we discover such artists as Charles Henri Ford,

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Morris Hirshfield, Wifredo Lam, Florine Stettheimer, and Pavel Tchelitchew (Ford's lover), who had a significant impact on art in America between the two World Wars but then almost completely disappeared from its history. *View* presented these artists alongside modernists now considered canonical: Alexander Calder created the cover graphic in Spring 1944; a Georgia O'Keeffe painting appears on the cover of the Summer 1944 issue; Isamu Noguchi designed the cover for the October 1946 issue. Seeing these canonical artists in the context of *View* reawakens the strangeness, the nonconformity, of creative practices long since subsumed into a normalized notion of modernism, as defined along narrowly formal lines.

The editors of *View* placed emphasis on ephemeral objects, poetry, music, and performance, as well as the fine arts, to bring together aspects of modernist practice historians typically consider separately but not often together. For the *View* milieu, inter-arts arenas such as theater, opera, and ballet offered generative sites of practice. Tchelitchew, among other artists who contributed to *View*, collaborated early on in his career with Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes in Paris. The spectacular Ballets Russes productions of the 1920s showcased vanguard composers, artists, and choreographers to produce unprecedented works of "total art." Diaghilev commissioned visual artists working in a range of modern vernaculars, including Fernand Léger, Giorgio de Chirico, Marie Laurencin, Jean Cocteau, Max Ernst, and Natalia Goncharova, to design opera sets and costumes, introducing fine artists into the arena of stage decoration for the first time in the history of ballet. In his opera productions, Diaghilev offered more prominent roles to male dancers, premiering such stars as Vaslav Nijinsky, Léonide Massine, Serge Lifar, and George Balanchine, and then launched their choreographic careers. Not the least of Diaghilev's achievements was the creation, in the balletic arena, of a haven for gay artists and spectators.[2] In the company of an openly gay coterie, the choreographer Frederick Ashton (future director of London's Royal Ballet) would "queue for five hours for Ballets Russes tickets" when Diaghilev toured the troupe to London.[3]

In the 1930s, on the other side of the Atlantic, the opera *Four Saints in Three Acts* premiered at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in Hartford, Connecticut, where a collection of Ballets Russes costume and set designs had just been acquired from Diaghilev's heir, Serge Lifar. The opera *Four Saints in Three Acts* featured a libretto by Gertrude Stein, a score by Virgil Thomson, choreography by Frederick Ashton, decor by Florine Stettheimer, and an all African-American chorus directed by Eva Jessye. The production provided a roster of artists from both Europe and the United States with their first opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration. At the same time, the production instated a homophile enclave on the American cultural scene.

Following on the heels of *Four Saints*, the Wadsworth Atheneum hosted *The Paper Ball*, a masquerade extravaganza set in a décor fashioned entirely out of cut-paper by Tchelitchew and featuring paper costumes designed by

him, and other artists who would later contribute to *View*. This event, a one-night-long masquerade ball staged in the atrium of the Wadsworth, was described by the museum director A. Everett ("Chick") Austin as the most successful artistic initiative of his entire career.[4] The future editors of *View*, Charles Henri Ford and Parker Tyler, took part in the costumed procession and, in the 1940s, they carried the spirit of these off-beat collaborative ventures over into the publication arena. By paying serious attention to social life and ephemeral practices dismissed as eccentric distractions in their day, *View* queered the field of American modern art (Figure 18.1).

View's penchant for campiness, commitment to diversity, disdain for categorization and discipline, and defense of the unconventional made the magazine a bit of a potpourri. Thumbing through an early issue of the magazine, one could justifiably wonder about the editorial intent, or raison d'être, of

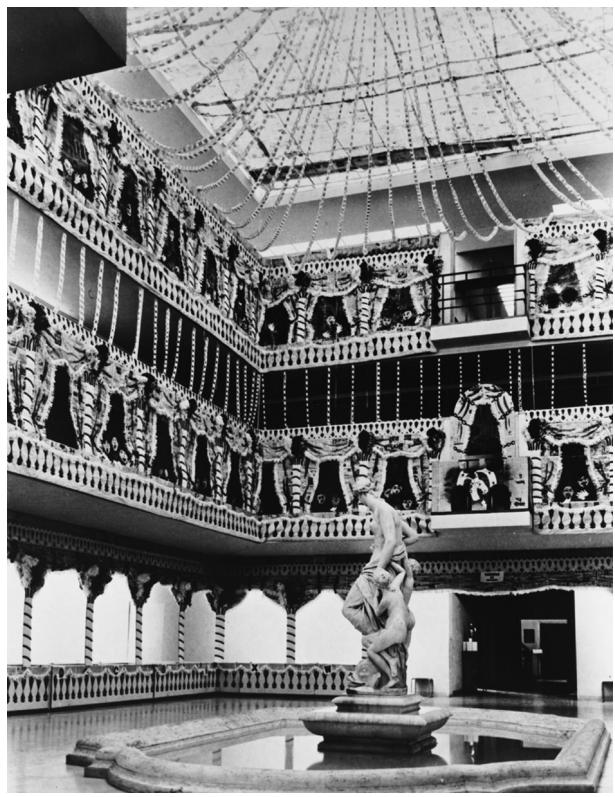


FIGURE 18.1 Pavel Tchelitchew, *Paper Ball Decorations at the Wadsworth Atheneum*, 1936. Digital reproduction of archival print. RG9_1_F374, Photograph Collection, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art Archives, Hartford, CT.

the journal. No organizing logic is apparent. The contents do not appear to cohere around style, genre, medium, discipline, region, national origin, or cultural demographics—the taxonomical frameworks, in short, being mobilized by critics and curators in the 1940s to structure the modern art-world.

The first issues of *View* were printed on newsprint, and contained few illustrations, which made them inexpensive to produce and to purchase, but not all that attractive. The focus was on literature and criticism more than any visual experience, despite the magazine's oculocentric title, *View*, and the motto on its cover: "through the eyes of poets." Among a wide range of contributors, we find both familiar and unfamiliar names. Other than an allegiance to some notion of "the modern" in poetry and the arts, it is difficult to grasp what they have in common.

Volume 1, Number 1 (September 1940) features an interview by Charles Henri Ford with the Hartford, Connecticut–based poet Wallace Stevens. In addition to this interview, page one prominently presents a photograph of Tchelitchew posing with one of his canvases. The photo of Tchelitchew seems gratuitous; it does not relate to any text on the front page or inside the issue, whose contents include contributions by dance critic H. R. Hays, film critic Parker Tyler, photographer Cecil Beaton, poet W. H. Auden, poet/playwright Archibald MacLeish, and Futurist agitator Wyndham Lewis. Although each item contributes to the mosaic of modern creative practice, together they fail to form a legible picture. The overall effect is one of editorial incoherence.

We could turn to another issue, but we would find the next and the next and the next just as unintelligible. Indeed, in subsequent issues where visual contributions gained prominence, the hodgepodge effect becomes increasingly evident. After the first few issues, published on a shoestring, subscriptions and donations enabled the editors to raise the aesthetic stakes. Each year, the journal's paper stock improved and, with the addition of half-tone and then quarter-tone images, color printing, the adoption of a 9" × 12" format, and commitment to commissioning striking cover graphics, *View* showed increasingly well on newsstands and began to accrue a following. It garnered critical attention as well, including recognition for the distinctiveness of its covers. George Sakier, art director for *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*, acknowledged that *View* "had the greatest newsstand appeal" of any contemporary American publication.[5]

If the visual material and improved production values helped to sell magazines, it did nothing to correct the journal's confusing eclecticism. Ford attempted to explain the journal's mission in a fundraising letter. "*View*'s unique contribution," he wrote, "is to give voice to cultural manifestations … not necessarily falling within prescribed modern styles and forms, but always expressing ideas that are vital and out-of-the-ordinary."[6] If *View*'s engagement with the out-of-the-ordinary was fundamental, it also made the magazine appear aimless, and made it hard to brand.

Even issues announcing a thematic focus, normally a unifying organizational gambit, set up an expectation of categorical integrity only to explode it. Several issues have an American emphasis: "Americana Fantastica" (January 1943), "Tropical Americana" (May 1945), and "The American Issue" (October 1945). The first of these explicitly American focused issues features a cover and content by Joseph Cornell that exhibit the hallmarks of the outsider artist's distinctive practice. The cover graphic incorporates elements from Cornell's archive of ephemera to create a panorama of the American popular imaginary: King Kong, Christopher Columbus, Indian chiefs, trapeze artists, tightrope walkers, acrobats, long-forgotten thespians, and contemporary Hollywood stars hover in unnatural colors against the spectacular backdrop of Niagara Falls.

Yet this collage's resonance with surrealist collage is coincidental. A primarily self-taught artist, Cornell had independently explored the haunting aesthetic possibilities of collage before encountering the surrealists in the avant-garde galleries of New York in the 1930s. Emboldened by what he saw in certain gallery vitrines featuring European surrealists, Cornell showed examples of his work to the gallerist Julien Levy. Levy, who espoused a mission to present surrealism "in the language of the new world rather than in the rhetoric of the old," invited Cornell to participate in one of America's first major surrealist exhibitions.[7] Surrealism (as we call it today) had officially made its American debut at the Wadsworth Atheneum a few months earlier, in November 1931, with the exhibition "The Newer Super-Realism," organized by museum director Chick Austin and art historian James Thrall Soby. Levy brought the exhibition to New York, expanded the checklist, and redoubled the promotional efforts. His version of the show opened with much fanfare in January 1932. Cornell's work was featured on the cover of the catalog.[8] It was this catalog, in turn, as well as Cornell's inclusion in the 1936 MoMA exhibition, "Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism," that brought Cornell to the attention of Charles Henri Ford and Parker Tyler. Cornell's self-taught status, common-law kinship with European Dada and surrealism, vast archive of "Americana," intuitive grasp of collage's subconscious power, penchant for outmoded image-making technologies, and appreciation of the paradoxes of photographic reality made this artist the perfect standard bearer for *View*'s vision of America: "Americana Fantastica."

As Tyler points out in his introduction to the issue, "the fantastic" has no proper home of its own. "Americana Fantastica" may occur in and through America but it does not reduce to nationalism. *View*, Tyler clarified, celebrated phenomena that "are not so much indigenous to America as susceptible to it, just as oranges are not indigenous to this country but could grow here."[9] Citing such artists as Cornell and Stettheimer, Tyler further noted that the fantastic "is the inalienable property of the untutored, the oppressed … the anarchic, and the amateur. He stressed, above all, that the fantastic "is never

professional."[10] The fantastic, that is, does not participate in the modern high-art economy. Undermining Clement Greenberg's oppositional representation of the categories "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," Tyler extolled the ability of the unschooled artist to activate popular culture's latent potential for resistance to the forces of order, marketplace criteria, and the imperatives of tradition.[11]

The fantastic did not, according to Tyler, form schools or adhere to disciplines: "The fantastic is an uninterrupted series of exceptions."[12] Tyler's theory of the fantastic highlights the explosive power of the exception, the outlier, the unexpected, to open new perspectives on the unnatural nature of reality. This theory, like Cornell's practice, clearly resonates with surrealist discourse, as elaborated by André Breton and other mainstays of Paris surrealism; yet *View*, rejecting surrealism's hetero-centric dogma, used the fantastic differently. *View* employed the language of the fantastic to spell out its homophile and art-world outsider allegiances.

The "Americana Fantastica" (January 1943) issue of *View* includes a tribute to Virgil Thomson's *Four Saints in Three Acts*, paying homage to a couple of the opera's key artistic collaborators. The issue concludes with Thomson's musical portrait of Florine Stettheimer, who had passed away that spring, along with an easel portrait of Thomson painted by Stettheimer. In this way, the "Americana Fantastica" issue visibly allied *View* with the *Four Saints* circle of artistic collaborators, while reactivating Thomson's fanciful music and Stettheimer's campy magic realism of the 1920s and 1930s era within the 1940s wartime context.

Three years after the publication of Stettheimer's *Portrait of Virgil Thomson* in *View*, the portrait appeared in a posthumous retrospective at MoMA.[13] Reviewing the show, Tyler noted the power of Stettheimer's portraits, and the "pictorial album of family and social life which these paintings comprise," to "cause the real world to disappear and to substitute the world of the artist's imagination, so luminous with super-natural color."[14] While this "world of the artist's imagination" had seemed radical to the producers of *Four Saints* in 1934, and also to the editors of *View* in 1943, by the time MoMA consecrated an exhibition to Stettheimer's oeuvre in 1946, with the "faint continuation of rumbles from Hiroshima and Nagasaki [aggravating] a piercing sense of being in a single moral-esthetic crisis," the artist's aesthetic struck Tyler as out of step with the times.[15] "Stettheimer's paintings are not only fantasy," he concluded, "but fantasy of the 1920s extending its tendril-like arms into the forties."[16] Yet even in the context of the wartime atrocities that marked this decade, the fantastic's disruptive logic and Americana's grassroots ethos retained, in the eyes of *View*, their revolutionary potential. Compared to other publications produced in the United States during an era of escalating nationalist fervor, "Americana Fantastica" seems to anticipate a label viciously deployed by Senator Joseph McCarthy only a few years later to stigmatize and censure all manner of diversity and divergence from norms as "un-American."

One might well rethink Ford's statement about the mission of the magazine—its editorial commitment to "out-of-the-ordinary"—with America's impending crusade against dissenters in mind. Just what did Ford mean by, and others understand about, the "out-of-the-ordinary" advocated by *View*? According to Breton, exiled in New York during the 1940s, *View* magazine was no more than a showcase for cosmopolitan queers—or, as he put it, "pederasty international."[17] Yes, many of the contributors to *View* were gay. But just as many were not. (Breton himself, for example, figures several times in *View*'s table of contents.)[18] Was there more political intentionality behind *View*'s defense of out-of-the-ordinary-ness than Breton was able to recognize or willing to admit? For contemporary viewers, looking back, it is clear that the journal doesn't jibe with the progress narrative of modernism espoused by Clement Greenberg. But could *View*'s embrace of the out-of-the-ordinary be understood as a mode of resistance to the era's narrowing notions of modernism and American-ness?

In the 1940s, before Greenberg's doctrine came to dominate all others in America, *View* represented alternative models of modernist practice already well established in Europe. Charles Henri Ford had an impressive network of international contacts when he founded *View* at the age of thirty-two. He had launched *Blues*, his first publishing venture, when he was barely out of his teens and still living in ancestral Mississippi. *Blues* was one of the first American magazines to publish works by Gertrude Stein, who helped establish the magazine's credentials. *Blues* did not last long but left its mark. Stein, in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, described *Blues* as "the youngest and freshest" of all the little magazines "who have died to make verse free."[19] Critical reception locally, though, was brutal and doubtless contributed to Ford's decision to migrate to New York, and then Paris.

A review by the art critic for the *Nashville Tennessean* typifies the reception of Ford's first magazine. "The contributors to *Blues*," the critic concluded, "repeat the vices and have none of the virtues of the forward and experimentalist cults that wax and sicken on the banks of the Seine."[20] These sentiments would be echoed by New York critics (most prominently Greenberg) in relation to *View*, the successor to *Blues*.

With *Blues*, Ford cemented his allegiances to cosmopolitan taste-makers based in Europe. Indeed, *Blues* served as a passport to expat Paris, where, in the early 1930s, Ford made a name for himself as a writer. In Paris, Ford met the Russian-born painter Pavel Tchelitchew, who became his life-long partner. Tchelitchew, like Ford, had been a protégé of Gertrude Stein. After falling out with Stein, he secured the patronage of Stein's rival, the English poet and patron Edith Sitwell. Thanks in no small measure to these two influential proponents of modernist painting and literature, Tchelitchew's renown spread throughout Europe and among certain influential Europhiles in the United States. Tchelitchew further widened Ford's artistic network on both

sides of the Atlantic. In the meantime, the critic Parker Tyler, a close friend of Ford's who had contributed to *Blues* and co-authored the scandalous autobiographical novel *The Young and Evil* (1933), ensconced himself in New York's Bohemian intellectual community.[21] When Ford joined forces with Tyler in New York, the two expanded and solidified a base of support for a new publishing venture. The co-editors of *View* garnered the support of influential men and women behind the scenes in the arts: among them, the *New York Sun* art critic Henry McBride, the homophile salonnière Florine Stettheimer, the culture broker Carl Van Vechten, the New York City Ballet co-founder Lincoln Kirstein, the gallerist Julien Levy, the director of the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Chick Austin, the Museum of Modern Art director and curator, Alfred Barr Jr., and *New Yorker* magazine art critic Harold Rosenberg. With a diverse roster of contributors, *View* introduced American audiences to Ford and Tyler's cosmopolitan entourage of gay critics and artists, and it contributed to the circulation of Tchelitchew's work in the United States.

From New York, Ford and Tchelitchew maintained loose ties with Paris throughout the 1940s, and with European artists and writers there who might best be described as Surrealism's others. Georges Hugnet, who translated Stein's poetry and embraced collage in both its visual and literary forms, was a member of this extended family, as was Kristians Tonny, who was invited to the States to create the murals for the Wadsworth Atheneum's theater in 1937. Even though these artists repeatedly denied any affiliation with the surrealist movement, and the surrealist movement denied any affiliation with them, they shared Surrealism's fascination with dream states and developed strategies that brought the unconscious to the surface. This is evident in Tonny's fantastical murals as well as in his signature works on paper using gold leaf and the blind drawing "transfer" technique. The latter bear a passing resemblance to surrealist automatic drawing, where parts or the whole is executed without looking, or without lifting the hand from the page. Hugnet experimented with both visual and literary collage. In the oeuvres of both Tonny and Hugnet, incongruent fragments constitute new and powerful wholes without sacrificing their particularities. Forms of displacement and resignification instructed not only the visual practices of the cohort of artists contributing to *View* but also informed the magazine's editorial ethos.

Presenting ill-assorted work by aliens, misfits, immigrants, itinerants, conscientious objectors, autodidacts, free thinkers, and sexual outlaws, *View* magazine represented both America and modernism as spaces of possibility for resisters of artistic and social norms. Most notably, during a decade defined by the war in Europe, *View* emphasized sites, subjects, and mechanisms of cultural production at odds with the formalist and chauvinistic rhetoric on the rise in both American art journalism and the popular press.

Unlike Jackson Pollock, presented by *Life* magazine in 1949 as possibly "the greatest living painter in the United States," the artists showcased in *View* did *not* represent the triumphal New York School (or any school at all, for that matter).[22] Although some of the artists linked with *View* had studios in New York or its boroughs, an equal number practiced in the places like Sarasota, Florida; New Orleans, Louisiana; Taos, New Mexico; San Francisco and Los Angeles, California; Seattle, Washington; Provincetown, Massachusetts; Westport, Connecticut; and Bennington, Vermont. Further, many contributors were not native to North America or necessarily permanent US residents. Whether they hailed from Chile, Mexico, Cuba, Haiti, Russia, Poland, Holland, Greece, France, or the UK, most who found their way to New York in the 1930s and 1940s experienced the advantages and disadvantages of estrangement—as exiles, expats, transients, immigrants, or, like Ford and Tyler, small-town queers who migrated to The City to seek community. Looking with (and for) them from a migrant perspective, outside of nation-state frames, reveals an unfamiliar, highly unstable, and exceptionally diverse modernist landscape.

By collaborating across both territorial and disciplinary boundaries, the artists in *View* openly acknowledged the importance of social networks to their artistic development. This at a time when rugged individualism accrued value as a particularly American attribute and Greenberg's writings shaped new discourses of American modernism based on values that *View* contested. For instance, Greenberg's essay "'American-Type' Painting," first published in the *Partisan Review* in 1955, emphasized the national specificity of color field painting. The essay, moreover, elaborates the development of modern art in terms of purity (the elimination of extraneous or "literary" content) and pictorial flatness.[23] Not surprisingly, *View*, with its disregard for formalist and nationalist taxonomies, as well as its investments in social networking, was, for Greenberg, anathema. You could say that Greenberg formulated his thoughts about modernism (its autonomy, its purity, its seamless integrity) *against View* and all the magazine represented. He vociferously complained that for the *View* milieu art was merely a backdrop for their social (and sexual) life.[24] While the editors of *View* never proselytized about their political beliefs or social values (which included homophilia, anti-racism, and sex-positivity), their activities in the cultural arena made their sexual attachments and social commitments apparent. Neither Ford nor Tyler would have perceived as a mischaracterization Greenberg's critique that *View* identified art inextricably with social life.

Contra Greenberg, *View* saw sociability as one of the magazine's great strengths. Indeed, *View* created a social space of intellectual and artistic exchange for contributors and readers alike. The publication was only one of a number of related *View* enterprises. *View* published books under its imprimatur (including, in 1947, Breton's *Young Cherry Trees Secured Against*

Hares). *View* hosted small exhibitions in the magazine's midtown offices and also partnered with Julien Levy Gallery and Hugo Gallery to present the work of artists *View* featured in its issues. In a few instances, the issues doubled as catalogs for these shows, with Tyler generating critical texts.[25] Ford and Tyler were among the first to organize lavish opening night parties at New York galleries, complete with flower arrangements and champagne. *View* also sponsored Jazz concerts and lectures (including one by Jean-Paul Sartre at Carnegie Hall), and produced experimental theatrical performances.[26] *View* co-founded the off-Broadway Theatre Ubu, where Charles Henri Ford's sister, Ruth Ford, routinely starred. These events, often highlights of New York Bohemia's social season, were advertised and reported on in the pages of *View*, expanding the lively boundaries of the magazine.

But in Greenberg's estimation, *View*'s imbrication in social life trivialized the artistic vocation. "This social life is complicated and satisfying," he quipped. "The gossip is good if you know the names; if you know the people I imagine it might get to be a little too much."[27] Greenberg concluded his coverage of *View*, in an article titled "The Renaissance of the Little Mag," with the over-zealous declaration, "I am for the extinction of the milieu."[28] Does homophobia alone account for the violence of Greenberg's attack? Or was he, perhaps, threatened by the alternatives of modern creative practice that *View*, with its ebullient eclecticism, advanced?

Against the backdrop of the New York School and Greenbergian formalism, the modernists spotlighted by Ford and Tyler in *View* stood apart. They built practices and sustained relationships based on affinities not defined in nationalist or formalist terms. They did not participate in the progress narrative that defined modern art as a long arc toward abstraction, beginning in Paris at the dawn of the twentieth century and reaching an apogee in New York in the wake of America's Second World War victory. The artistic alliances loosely binding *View*'s eccentric modernists together formed, instead, around resistance to categorization, convention, and normativity—as well as the affection (and sometimes desire) they felt for one another and solidarity with all manner of queers and misfits.

By the mid-1940s the journal had changed its slogan from "through the eyes of poets" to "you can't be modern, and not read *View*."[29] And *View*'s "modern" was queer—meaning atypical, idiosyncratic, out-of-the-ordinary, as well as gay. *View* aggressively distinguished itself from other self-consciously modern publications--such as *The Little Review*, *Southern Review*, *Sewanee Review, Kenyon Review*, and *Partisan Review*—by removing the "re" from "view" in its title. *View* did not strive for critical distance, but rather presented culture in all its imminence as an unfolding process, a perpetual present, in which history, represented by anachronistic content that crops up from time to time (a sudden encounter with a Michelangelo or a nineteenth-century lithograph) occurs anew alongside art of the contemporary moment. For the

editors of *View*, every creative act had consequence. Lincoln Kirstein praised *View* for appreciating "that luxurious unimportance without which everything else would seem as dull as it usually is."[30] Otherwise stated, *View* awakened the senses and the mind to the splendor of things deemed unimportant.

Throughout the 1940s, *View* magazine vied with and responded to such influential journals as the *Partisan Review* and Breton's magazine *VVV*. Yet by the 1950s *View* had vanished, leaving behind barely a trace on the historical record. *View*'s "war work," as Ford described it, effectively ended with the shutdown of *View* in 1947.[31] A cultural war in the US had begun, however, and this was not a war that the *View* milieu could win. At that time. But looking back at *View*, contemporary readers will glean an unorthodox theory of modernism and a much queerer history of modern art. They will recognize in *View* models of queer cultural production that remain powerfully in play today: attraction to the ephemeral; cultivation of the "out-of-the-ordinary"; rage performed as outrageousness; consideration for the "unimportant"; the formation of communities (and lineages) based on affection and desire. These modes of queer world-making connect the non-normative, different, divergent, unauthorized, and strange across time, forming a relay that gives the queer past meaning in the present and broadens the horizons of cultural possibility for all of us.

Notes

1 Luce, "The American Century," 64. Henry Luce, creator of the *Time-Life* publishing empire, put the phrase the "American Century" into circulation, writing in his editorial for *Life* that the twentieth century must be, "to a significant degree, an American Century."
2 Acocella,: The Reception of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes," 359. Cocteau (made up with lipstick and rouge) felt sufficiently *chez lui* at the ballet to call out across the theater to his friends and scramble over intervening rows of seats to join them.
3 Kavanagh, *The Secret Muses*, 82.
4 A. Everett Austin is here quoted by Eugene Gaddis, archivist at the Wadsworth Atheneum and biographer of Austin, during an interview about The Paper Ball in the 2001 documentary *Sleep in a Nest of Flames*, directed by James Dowell and John Kolomvakis.
5 George Sakier, quoted in a letter from Harry Bull, editor of *Town and Country*, published in "View Listens," *View* 1 (Spring 1944).
6 Charles Henri Ford, letter to subscribers dated 3 April 1947. YCAL MSS 32, box 4, Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscript Collection, Yale University.
7 Power, "Off the Beaten Track" (presentation).
8 Surrealism had officially made its American debut at the Wadsworth Atheneum a few months earlier, in November 1931, with the similarly titled exhibition "The Newer Super-Realism."
9 Tyler, "Americana Fantastica," 5.
10 Tyler, "Americana Fantastica," 5.
11 Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," 34–49.
12 Tyler, "Americana Fantastica," 5.
13 *Florine Stettheimer*, an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, October 1–November 17, 1946.

14 Tyler, "Stettheimer, Frances, Leonid, Tanguy," 37, 36.
15 Tyler, "Stettheimer, Frances, Leonid, Tanguy," 36.
16 Tyler, "Stettheimer, Frances, Leonid, Tanguy," 36.
17 Polizzotti, *Revolution of the Mind*, 508. My thanks to Michael Taylor for this reference.
18 See, for example, André Breton, "The Legendary Life of Max Ernst Preceded by a Brief Discussion on the Need for a New Myth," trans. Lionel Abel, *View* 2:1 (April 1942); "What Tanguy Veils and Reveals," trans. Lionel Abel, *View* 2:1 (April 1942); "Lighthouse to the Bride," reprint from *Minotaure* 1935, *View* 5:1 (March 1945). In 1947, *View* Editions published and distributed Breton's book *Young Cherry Trees Secured Against Hares*, translated by Edouard Roditi and illustrated by Arshile Gorky.
19 Stein, *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, 199.
20 Donald Davidson, writing for the *Nashville Tennessean*, 3 March 1929, quoted by Charles Henri Ford, typescript, "I Will Be What I Am," Charles Henri Ford Papers, YCAL MSS 32, Box 3, folder 211, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
21 First published in 1933, this work of autobiographical fiction by Charles Henri Ford and Parker Tyler, *The Young and Evil*, explores Bohemian life in Greenwich Village. The book was banned in the United States but it immediately garnered a gay cult following. It was sold under the counter and circulated hand to hand throughout its early history. Gertrude Stein provided the following blurb for the dustjacket of the original edition: "*The Young and Evil* creates this generation as *This Side of Paradise* by Fitzgerald created his generation. It is a good thing, whatever the generation is, to be the first to create it in a book."
22 "Jackson Pollock," 42.
23 Greenberg, "'American-Type' Painting," 179–96.
24 Greenberg characterized the editors of *View* as an "American species" of surrealist that "identifies literature and art with its social life." See Greenberg, "The Renaissance of the Little Mag," 73.
25 The release of the May 1942 Tchelitchew issue, for instance, coincided with a Tchelitchew exhibition at Julien Levy Gallery and a display ad for the show appeared on page 1 of the issue.
26 Film footage of a contemporary reconstruction of Ford's surrealist puppet play, *A Sentimental Playlet*, with music by Paul Bowles and puppets designed by the Swiss Surrealist artist Kurt Seligmann (originally performed at Spivy's Roof nightclub in New York City, in June of 1946) is included in the documentary *Sleep in a Nest of Flames*.
27 Greenberg, "The Renaissance of the Little Mag," 73.
28 Greenberg, "The Renaissance of the Little Mag," 74.
29 *View* flyer, c.1945, Charles Henri Ford Papers, YCAL MSS 32, Box 4, folder 222, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
30 Kirstein, letter to the editors, 41.
31 Wolmer, "Charles Henri Ford," n.p.

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QUEER OR DESCRIBE?

Alan Hollinghurst and the Bloomsbury Group

Charlie Tyson

Cecil Valance, the charismatic bisexual poet at the center of Alan Hollinghurst's novel *The Stranger's Child* (2011), appears first in the imagination of an adolescent girl. Lying in a hammock reading Tennyson, Daphne succumbs to fatigue, sliding down by inches "in small half-willing surrenders" that anticipate her later concessions to domineering Cecil.[1] Her book held over her face, the daylight fades and the words begin to blur. The contents of her mind swell to fill the pink shadows. She pictures Cecil, imagines drinking him in before being introduced. The knock of the gate at the bottom of the garden announces an arrival. Faintly she hears his voice, low, mocking, and decisive against the ringing laughter of her brother George; she sees the pale linen clothes and boater hats of the two figures, their faces hard to make out, the curves of their hats nudging together and overlapping. She notices Cecil's hand on George's shoulder. At last Cecil reaches for her through the shadows, his hand hot and hard, squeezing her sixteen-year-old fingers in his large rough grip. She breathes in his smell of sweat and grass and sour breath.

Cecil Valance's reality, and the difficulties involved in apprehending that reality, forms the main subject of *The Stranger's Child*.[2] Cecil dies in the First World War. But the secret of his omnivorous erotic tastes does not die with him. Sweeping across nearly a century of English history, the novel details the lingering effects of this fictional Rupert Brooke–like poet on many other people—some, like Daphne and George, intimately connected with him, others, like the opportunistic biographer Paul Bryant, more remote.

For Daphne, Cecil is first a mental picture, then a sound (his commanding voice with a note of harshness), next an impressionistic figure (his face indeterminate in the waning light), then a gripping hand, and finally, most intimately, a penetrating scent. Her absorption of Cecil accumulates across multiple

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sensory registers. In the pages that follow these initial impressions, Cecil's slow emergence from fantasy to incontestable, even aversive, physical reality is intensified. During the brief but delicious country-house portion of the novel in which Cecil is alive, vivid marks of his careless activity—"his cream-coloured jacket with grass stains on the elbows," the "scarlet burn" of a cigar tip flaring as he takes a pull in the darkness—make him the most sensuously realized embodied presence in any scene in which he appears.[3] The injuries he inflicts on other characters make his reality still more indisputable. He pushes hard against George's ankle under the table in flirtatious roughness, then makes him yelp with a vicious kick; he kicks Daphne between the ribs as the three of them—Daphne, Cecil, George—tumble out of the hammock; he steps heavily on Daphne's foot, then hurts her with "the hard shape of the cigar case in his trouser pocket thrusting against her stomach."[4] Cecil imprints himself with violence on the persons around him, including many acts of penetration (whether literal or, as in the scene with the cigar case, implied). He dominates the other characters as if clamoring for more space, more life.[5] After his death, this process is reversed. Cecil moves back into the shadows, into unknowability, until he is again just a mental picture, for a time vivid and mythic, then paler, paler, until the picture fades. His presence in the first fifth of the novel is so forceful that it takes four hundred pages—and nearly one hundred years—to forget him.

From the start Alan Hollinghurst has been a historical novelist. This simple fact has been hard to recognize for several reasons. One is his habitual choice of historically proximate (but not contemporary) settings for his early fiction. His debut novel *The Swimming-Pool Library*, published in 1988, looks back five years to gay London life before the AIDS epidemic, a gap small in years but enormous in significance. The novel recounts with gusto "the last summer of its kind there ever was to be."[6] In clubs and locker rooms all through the London gay world, clouds of a fragrance called "Trouble for Men" are in the air.[7] The novel dedicates much of its narrative space to archival materials: Hollinghurst's hero Will Beckwith reluctantly agrees to write the life story of the former colonial officer Charles Nantwich (whom Will rescues after he collapses in a public lavatory) and is given access to Charles's journals from the 1920s, lurid portions of which are reproduced in the text.[8]

Hollinghurst's commitment to historical narrative—and to using fiction to probe the distortions that arise from historical distance—has, in the decades since *Swimming-Pool*, become still more pronounced. *The Stranger's Child* and *The Sparsholt Affair* (2018) are each split into five parts, with years or decades elapsing between each act. Both novels cover generations of English history. Of the two *The Stranger's Child* is more ambitious, wider in its cast of characters (including the young servant Jonah, who plays valet to Cecil at Two Acres and takes the chance to stroke and sniff his silken drawers) and bolder in its analysis of the omissions and indeterminacies of the historical record (the novel ends with a blazing pyre of documents).

As an instance of queer historical fiction, *The Stranger's Child* raises some special interpretive difficulties. It revisits the Bloomsbury Group, a site of English modernism already famous, or infamous, for its queerness.[9] Yet it does so with uncharacteristic modesty. Hollinghurst, known for helping to import candid gay sex into high literature, shies away here from explicit eroticism. The novel's energies are largely descriptive: meticulous accounts of architecture and furniture satisfy robust standards of accurate period detail, and real literary critics and biographers—Michael Holroyd, Jon Stallworthy—drop in and out of the text. At the same time, the novel expresses an intense degree of skepticism about the possibility that description, however exhaustive, can recover the past. Dwelling on *The Stranger's Child*, then, will not only bring into sharper view Hollinghurst's (as yet largely unacknowledged) debts to Bloomsbury.[10] It will also, I hope, help reframe an ongoing set of debates in literary criticism about description. Novelistic description has long been assailed as conservative, clumsy, and unimaginative.[11] In recent years, however, critics have increasingly adopted a more generous attitude toward description. And in these efforts to contest description's devaluation, queer critics and theorists have—perhaps surprisingly—played a large role. What is description good for? And what if anything is "queer" about the ostensibly modest task of describing?

Queer historical fiction undertakes a search for precedent. Whether pulpy and pornographic or learned and literary (or some pleasurable mixture thereof), queer historical fiction is committed to the belief that in the past there lived people whose yearnings are recognizable—whose longings contain, deep down, beneath the cultural shaping to which desire is always susceptible, an element of "queerness" that approximates our own.

Yet the history of same-sex desire is largely unknowable. Even historical sites rich in evidence of same-sex activity—such as the highly regulated system of pederasty in ancient Greece, or nineteenth-century romantic friendships—involve countless gaps and silences in the historical record. We are thus left wondering whether these now-vanished structures of cultural organization are comparable to same-sex eroticism (in all its variants) as we know it today.[12]

In discussing attempts to trace homosexual identity back in time, historians of sexuality tend to stress discontinuity, difference, and incommensurability between present-day conceptions of sexuality and old identity categories and gender systems.[13] Imaginative literature, by contrast, tends to emphasize likeness.[14] To the question of whether same-sex love is a recent invention, queer historical fiction answers, emphatically, "no!" The nearness of all literature to fantasy is especially marked in this genre: these literary texts express a wish not to be alone in history. The most sophisticated and historically scrupulous examples of the genre never let us forget that we are witnessing events from an alien world. The first pages of Mary Renault's *The Persian*

Boy (1972), for instance, introduce us not only to unfamiliar customs—sacrifices at the fire-altar, instruction in a code of honor—but to acts of pitiless mutilation and violence that produce a distancing effect; barely two minutes in reading time after we meet the young protagonist he is abducted, castrated, and sold at auction.[15] Yet even the most deeply researched works of queer historical narrative typically invite an imaginative, even romantic, identification between readers of today and the (fictional or fictionalized) queer people of the past. The external conditions of the characters' situations sometimes differ hugely from our own; the internal life, even if saturated in strange customs and conventions, remains psychologically recognizable, and recognizably queer.

It is easy to see how novels set in a time and place in which same-sex desire is a routine part of the culture, such as Renault's novels of ancient Greece, are working to claim antecedents for today's models of queer intimacy. But the same is true of texts that look back to a context in which same-sex desire is culturally prohibited, as in Sarah Waters's lesbian novels about Victorian England, or Jordy Rosenberg's eighteenth-century romp *Confessions of the Fox* (2018).[16] Such novels reimagine past milieus in which same-sex eroticism was muted from the historical record so as to perform reparative acts of "unmuting." These acts of unmuting provide explicit descriptions of sex, love, and deviance at which the non-pornographic literature of, say, the nineteenth century could only hint.[17]

In his famous essay "Narrate or Describe?" Georg Lukács distinguishes between *narrating* and *describing* in fiction and epic poetry. Description in a novel like Émile Zola's *Nana* (1880) is "mere filler"—little more than a means for Zola to display his virtuosic talent for sensuous and exact detail.[18] Narration, by contrast, advances the plot, tracks change over time, and reveals essential human traits by showing how characters react to the events of their lives. Description offers a static and picturesque "tableau"; narration is active and consequential.[19] Lukács's essay has emerged as a seminal point of reference in recent debates about the practice of description in literary criticism.[20] The animating binary in these arguments might be summarized as: "critique or describe?" In these debates, "description" connotes a concern for surface and detail, a commitment toward a pleasurably "granular, slow, compressed, attentive, appreciative" engagement with the observed object.[21] To its skeptics, description is ideological (in its alleged pretense of objectivity), uncritical, or at best a preliminary step toward interpretation, explanation, or some other argumentative act. Set against description are practices of symptomatic reading and critique, which attempt to dig beneath the surface of the literary text for hidden causes and motives (although description and interpretation, all sides generally agree, are not easily disentangled).[22]

Let's reshuffle the binary once more. Imagine if instead of asking "critique or describe?" we asked: "queer or describe"? Queer readings of literary

texts—for instance, interpreting "the closet, or ghosts, as surface signs of the deep truth of a homosexuality that cannot be overtly depicted"—have been understood as paradigmatic examples of symptomatic reading.[23] The critic undertaking a queer reading looks for absences and latent content, for things unsaid, to rewrite the text's deceptive surface. Thus "to queer" (as in, to perform a queer reading) might seem simply to be a subcategory of critique. To a marked extent, however, it has been prominent practitioners of queer theory and queer studies—most notably Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick with her essay "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading," but also Sharon Marcus and Heather Love—who have raised questions about critique and suggested that critics devote themselves more seriously to practices of description.[24] Meanwhile, such critics as José Esteban Muñoz and Michael Snediker have elaborated optimistic or utopian strains within queer theory.[25] Queer theory, as Love writes, is a "field torn between critique and its others."[26]

So too is much queer historical fiction torn between "queering" and "describing." When does queer historical narrative attempt to "queer" the past? That is, to subvert or revise historical events to draw out non-normative erotic attributes lingering beneath the surface? (Think of Lytton Strachey in his biography of Queen Victoria noting the handsome Prince Alfred's "marked distaste for the opposite sex," and asking of his marriage to the queen: "was he the wife and she the husband?"[27]) And when does it try to "describe" the past—that is, to give a textured, fine-grained account of how people in the past may have lived? Many of the best works of queer historical narrative manage to do both. Are the two procedures at odds?

Talk of "influence" may be unfashionable, but critics have found it difficult to speak of Hollinghurst's work in any other terms.[28] Of the small body of scholarship on Hollinghurst that exists, a large proportion focuses on his appropriations from a small group of male modernists: Ronald Firbank, E. M. Forster, and above all Henry James.[29] The "influence" approach is hard to resist because Hollinghurst has a habit of explicitly alluding to his predecessors. The protagonist of *The Line of Beauty* (2004) is writing a dissertation on James's style, a "style that hides things and reveals things at the same time."[30] In the last pages of *Swimming-Pool* Firbank appears, tottering and marionette-like, in a film reel. Hollinghurst might profitably be understood as a late—very late—modernist, wonderfully out of step with the contemporary, with an artistic sensibility forged in the crucible not just of James but Wagner and Mahler. Yet the view of Hollinghurst as James's "dauphin" has clouded our awareness both of his originality and of what he learned from other writers.[31] These other writers include some fairly obvious culprits—not least the Bloomsbury Group.

Hollinghurst came of age during the "Bloomsbury boom." Elite English literary culture in the late 1960s and early 1970s buzzed with the revelations on display in Michael Holroyd's magisterial and candid life of Lytton

Strachey—published in 1967, the same year the Sexual Offenses Act decriminalized homosexual acts between consenting adults. Holroyd's biography, followed by the posthumous publication of E. M. Forster's gay love story *Maurice* (1971) and the appearance of Quentin Bell's two-volume biography of his aunt Virginia Woolf (1974), made the Bloomsbury Group for a time "a big part of the air one breathes," Hollinghurst recalled in an interview.[32] "Because of their polymorphous sexual lives, it all seemed very interesting and surprisingly relevant in that climate of being able to say things which you hadn't been able to say before." Scholars have readily recognized a Forsterian strain in Hollinghurst not limited to his "Forsterian celebration of masculine physicality."[33] But his engagement with Bloomsbury proper has scarcely been mentioned.

Bloomsbury saturates *The Stranger's Child*.[34] This fact, once recognized, affords the reader the pleasure of following the allusions Hollinghurst drops like jewels across the novel's pages. At Cambridge, Cecil and George are part of the Conversazione Society, where "candour is our watch word"—the very same group that counted as members such Bloomsbury eminences as Strachey, Leonard Woolf, John Maynard Keynes, and Desmond MacCarthy.[35] Stracheyesque slang peppers conversation between Cecil and his lover: they scoff at George's brother as a "womanizer," a favored Stracheyism for "heterosexual."[36] More subtle allusions abound. George's mother and her friend Clara Kalbeck remark that shy, studious George is "blooming … coming into bloom, at last!"[37] And in Mrs. Kalbeck herself—a lonely German woman attached, a bit pathetically, to George's mother—do we detect an echo of *Mrs. Dalloway*'s unfortunate Miss Kilman?

Alongside this playful patter of literary reference are explicit reckonings with the Bloomsbury legacy. The grasping biographer Paul Bryant—keen, nearly seventy years after the fateful weekend that opens the novel, on unveiling Cecil's secrets—has a landlady who gossips daily "about Leonard and Virginia, Lytton and Morgan and the rest," as if they were personal friends; "Duncan and Vanessa strayed into the conversation as easily as customers into the shop."[38] Although Cecil isn't "strictly Bloomsbury," the Bloomsbury set is the cultural location by means of which Paul—and the reader—are led to understand Cecil's position.[39] In other words, Bloomsbury and its clusters of associations enable us to find our bearings within the partially fabricated cultural milieu Hollinghurst is analyzing through invented figures like Cecil.[40] Rupert Brooke and Lytton Strachey are the key foils that orient our understanding of Cecil: Rupert for his good looks, neo-paganism, and war poems, Strachey for his indisputable queerness. An octogenarian George, disinhibited by heart medication, tells Paul: "people thought he was a sort of upper-class Rupert Brooke … Rupert was a flawless beauty, but Cecil was much stronger and more masculine. He had an enormous cock."[41] Cecil, in other words, is a Bloomsbury figure rewritten in the lights of an eroticized masculinity reminiscent of Forster—or, better, Tom of Finland.[42]

The Stranger's Child pays allegiance to Bloomsbury not merely on its surface but in its structure. The jumps forward in time between the sections recall not just *The Portrait of a Lady*'s sudden cut to Isabel Archer's unhappy marriage but the "Time Passes" section of *To the Lighthouse*, a novel Hollinghurst studied for his A Level.[43] And the novel's erotic energies arrange themselves in triangles, that most notorious Bloomsbury configuration.[44] The opening section presents the bisexual conflict of Cecil-George-Daphne as well as the all-male triangle of Cecil-George-Jonah; in the next section Daphne rejects the advances of a female designer and has an affair with the mostly gay Revel Ralph—all this after having married Cecil's brother Dudley, himself aching (it is suggested) for a soldier shot down next to him by a sniper in the War.[45] Daphne's granddaughter summarizes the tangle of claims made in Paul Bryant's biography: "My aunt wasn't really Dudley's daughter, but Cecil's, Dudley was gay, though he managed to father a son with my grandmother, and my father's father wasn't Revel Ralph, who really was gay, but a painter called Mark Gibbons."[46] This litany of lovers amounts to a parody of Bloomsbury's sexual complications, with homoflexible Revel Ralph standing in, perhaps, for Duncan Grant.

Bloomsbury gives Hollinghurst a queer site within English modernism to play with and revise. But he is not "queering" Bloomsbury so much as "describing" it. And even that description is reserved, cagy. The erotic "unmuting" so characteristic of queer historical fiction is cut short. In the country-house section, for example, in what promises to be a climactic sexual encounter of the kind Hollinghurst is so gifted in relating, Cecil reaches out his hands impatiently for George—then, after an abrupt paragraph break, is already standing up and straightening his clothes, muttering rather Englishly, "That was very good."[47] Instead of revisiting a cultural location where same-sex desire is typically muted (e.g., eighteenth-century England) and then unmuting it, as much queer historical fiction does, Hollinghurst chooses nearly the opposite approach. He opts for a subcultural setting—Bloomsbury—famous for its queerness, but cuts away when the clothes come off.

The Stranger's Child thus seems to jettison subversively queer interpretations of history in favor of sober description. Yet this novel at the same time explicitly analyzes processes of queer reading: in particular, methods of reading against the grain to unearth a sexual subtext. And its appraisal of queer reading is far from wholly negative.

Paul Bryant is the novel's consummate queer reader. The novel suggests that he might be overzealous, even paranoid, in his attribution of queerness to nearly the entire Cecil Valance circle. "Paul was something of a fantasist," Daphne's granddaughter reflects in the novel's final section; his biography of Cecil has the equivocal endorsement "Sensational!" printed on its cover.[48] Yet queer reading can be motivated by pleasure as well as suspicion. Consider

the moment when Paul props himself up in bed to look through the Personals section of the magazine *Films and Filming* in 1967:

> The Personals were the climax of his solitary ritual, the words themselves bulging and bending with outrageous meaning: "Undisciplined bachelor (32) would like to meet strong-minded person with modern outlook." "Motorcyclist, ex-Navy, seeks another for riding weekends." It was 6d a word, but some people went on as garrulously as any tapesponder: "Motorcyclist, 30, but still a novice, seeks further instruction and would also particularly like to contact a qualified watersports trainer. North London / Hertfordshire area preferred." Paul read all this with a beating pulse, smiling narrowly, in a sustained state of fascinated shock. Only one man seemed to have completely missed the point, and asked to meet a girl with an interest in gardening.[49]

This Personals section is a linguistic world of naughty suggestion and implication. The words themselves are "bulging," suggestively straining their lexical limits. Is the first "undisciplined" bachelor merely messy and disorganized, or does he yearn to be "disciplined" by a "strong-minded" partner? What kind of "riding" does the motorcyclist have in mind? And the "watersports trainer"—need I go on? The Personals section in this 1960s magazine demands to be decoded. And this act of decoding, of reading between the lines, yields not just accurate comprehension but erotic gratification. The listings here are dirty. The sole exception is that of the lone gardener—the only listing to mention literal dirt. A surface reading misses the point of the game. But just barely. This game does not require virtuosic acts of interpretation. The encodings are in-jokes of a sort, but the barrier to entering this interpretive community is a low one. Once the reader acquires minimal familiarity with the parlance of the Personals, the shallow subtext floats up to the surface.

This fictionalized Personals section dramatizes a mode of queer reading that is campy rather than adversarial. In raking beneath the surface, but only just, we till the ground for the proliferation of jokes, puns, and double entendres that populate the novel. In the first few pages, when George and Cecil are late to arrive, George's mother exclaims: "Oh, who knows what George is doing with him!"[50] A reader familiar with Hollinghurst can guess. From there we move to a series of high camp jokes about anal sex. "Love comes not always in by the front door," Cecil intones homiletically, reciting his poems for George's family.[51] His drafts are even more audacious. In the scraps of paper Jonah—playing valet to Cecil—rakes through in the wastebasket we see the crossed-out couplet: "As wood-lice chew willows, So do mites bite pillows!"[52] In a later section of the novel, Paul and another man are interrupted by a matron who instructs them to change the bed sheets. "I'll leave you to it," she says, handing over the folded sheets and leaving the two

men alone in the bedroom. "Top to bottom."[53] These erotic witticisms, like the personal advertisements, require a minimal degree of interpretation and playful decipherment. But without the minimal decoding that tests who is in on the joke, these lines fail to satisfy. To make this point unambiguous, Hollinghurst puts into place Jonah as a figure for the naïve reader. Jonah finds the pillow-biting line shocking. But this is because he worries that Cecil is suggesting "that there might be mites in the bedding here, in Mrs. Sawle's best goose pillows."[54] Another bit of paper, containing the single word "Viens," Jonah reads as "Veins"—rather than as sexual solicitation from Francophilic George.[55] These events of sexual wordplay are anti-descriptive devices that prompt the reader to root out the erotic meanings hiding behind ordinary—or even pompously homiletic—speech.

Some of the recent debate about critique and description in literary criticism rehearses Susan Sontag's famous distinction in "Against Interpretation" (1964) between a "hermeneutics" and an "erotics" of art.[56] Some scholars have worried that suspicious reading leaves little room for reckoning with the sensual elements of aesthetic experience.[57] Often obscured in this debate is the fairly obvious way in which suspicious reading, particularly in its more lighthearted variants, can be a *route* to pleasure: an erotics by means of hermeneutics. Suspicious reading, perhaps especially queer reading, can be mischievous, even racy. In the case of a queer reading that aims to unearth a sexual subtext, non-literal reading can enable not just demystification but titillation.[58] Michael Warner relegates sexual arousal to the category of "uncritical reading"; and the issue of whether one can produce disinterested or skeptical evaluations of arousing artworks (say, nudes) has long concerned critics working with a range of art forms.[59] But as these examples from *The Stranger's Child* suggest, procedures of suspicious or anti-descriptive reading can be entirely compatible with erotic amusement.

If queer reading is sexy in *The Stranger's Child*, description is at times anything but. One representative figure of the describer is the tedious Madeleine, a historian whom the closeted George marries. Though she is a minor character, her sternness animates much of the novel's rich comic vein. She and George are co-authors of *An Everyday History of England*, a dry-as-dust textbook used in schools. Upon meeting the couple, Paul imagines them "toiling together in an oak-beamed interior, with perhaps a hand-loom of their own in the background."[60] Madeleine's "scholarly firmness," "her cool immunity to all aesthetic sensations," suggest a picture of description as not just antiquarian but disciplinary, flattening out human complexity.[61] So too does George's work as a buttoned-up, purportedly neutral historian suggest that description can be coercive and sanitizing as much as it can be liberating. Cecil's "Georgie" steps behind the authoritative and sexless initials "G. F. Sawle" to publish an edition of Cecil Valance's letters littered with "scrupulous square brackets" that mark omissions, deletions. "What could possibly have offended," Paul

wonders, "sixty years on?"[62] Historical documentation that lacks sympathy, humor, or candor, Hollinghurst suggests, can amount to repression. This is concealment not in the playful style of the Personals—a "style that hides things and reveals things at the same time"—but a concealment that forbids play altogether, with those antiseptic square brackets.[63]

The Stranger's Child, in short, recognizes the limits of description. Standing before the sculpted effigy on Cecil's tomb, George reflects: "Cecil had been much photographed, and doubtless much described; he was someone who commanded description … And yet all these depictions were in a sense failures," marred by ignorance of Cecil's reality, or disfigured by a "courteous saunter round an unmentionable truth."[64] Can queer theory do better? In an amusing dig at queer theory near the novel's end, Hollinghurst introduces a smug English professor whose suit and suntan convey the "sheer superiority of a well-endowed chair at a Southern Californian university."[65] Because of queer theory's distance from "straightforward English," Hollinghurst suggests, this academic discourse promises not clarity but more murkiness; its significance lies chiefly as a path to academic prestige.[66] Thus a novel that interrogates the promise of "queer" and "descriptive" modes of analysis seems to end by rejecting both.

But let us return, for one last moment, to Paul, lying on his bed, turning pages in the Personals section. Engrossed in the advertisements, Paul dreams of a world of London flats, energetic "bachelors," of a "shadowy scene more thrilling and scandalous than anything described in *Films and Filming*—in fact a scene that, as far as he knew, had never been described at all."[67] Recall that it is 1967. For Paul, a twenty-three-year-old bank clerk with a sheltered upbringing, gay sex—not to mention gay love—has never been adequately described. As far as he knows, it is beyond the very capacities of description. Paul's reverie takes place nearly sixty years after Cecil's visit to Two Acres. It occurs long after Strachey, Woolf, and the other Bloomsberries felt an exhilarated sense that they were saying things that had never been said before.[68] *The Stranger's Child* dramatizes the uncertainties and ambiguities of description. But in the end the novel asks us to appreciate description's limits so as to push past them. For under the banner of description it claims a large aspiration. The hope to bring a human experience into view for the very first time—to push it into representation, and hence into shared consciousness—could there be a better way of summarizing the literary ambitions of Hollinghurst, and of Bloomsbury?

Notes

1 Hollinghurst, *The Stranger's Child*, 3.
2 Cecil Valance occupies a different plane of "reality" than do the novel's other characters. He is a fictional character and must be internally plausible as such. But he is also clearly modeled on a historical person (Rupert Brooke). The rest of the novel's population is either purely fictional or, in a few cases, verifiably real (e.g.,

the critic and poet Jon Stallworthy, seen in one scene at an Oxford dinner). For a discussion of the conceptual issues involved see Saint-Amour, "Alternate-Reality Effects."

3 Hollinghurst, *The Stranger's Child*, 9, 26.

4 Hollinghurst, *The Stranger's Child*, 17, 20, 71–2.

5 Alex Woloch in *The One vs. the Many* observes that in Dickens's *Great Expectations* minor characters are often put "in violent relationship" with the protagonist Pip and frequently try to silence him or overwhelm him physically; Cecil's inflictions of pain on other characters might be read along these lines as a bid for narrative centrality. See Woloch, *The One vs. the Many*, 185–6.

6 Hollinghurst, *The Swimming-Pool Library*, 5–6.

7 Hollinghurst, *The Swimming-Pool Library*, 33. On the association of HIV with the "Trouble for Men" fragrance, see O'Leary, "Cinema in the library," 144.

8 For discussion of Nantwich in relation to England's colonial establishment, see McLeod, "Race, empire, and *The Swimming-Pool Library*," 60–78.

9 The canonical critical acknowledgment of Bloomsbury's queerness—published in 1968, well before the consolidation of queer studies as a recognized field—is Carolyn Heilbrun's "The Bloomsbury Group."

10 "Debts" is far too negative a term to describe the inventions that the Bloomsbury Group has made possible for Hollinghurst; one task ahead for literary criticism is to create a more positive vocabulary to talk about literary influence and transhistorical reception, beyond the psychoanalytic vocabulary of "anxiety" or the pecuniary vocabulary of "debts." For a vigorous move in this direction, see Bronstein, *Out of Context*, especially 28–57.

11 Zhang, *Strange Likeness*, 3–21.

12 On male intimacy in nineteenth-century American culture, see Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 75–91; on the history of romantic friendships between women, see Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men*, especially 145–294; and Marcus, *Between Women*.

13 For an excellent overview of the historiographical issues involved, as well as a range of vivid cases from ancient cultures, see Halperin, *How to Do the History of Homosexuality*. For an interpretation of ancient laws governing male same-sex intercourse, see Dershowitz, "Revealing nakedness and concealing homosexual intercourse."

14 So too does much literary criticism (taking cues, perhaps, from its aesthetic objects); Carolyn Dinshaw, for instance, expresses a desire for a "touch across time" and insists on the ways in which the past provides "material for queer subject and community formation *now*" (emphasis mine). See Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*, 21–22.

15 Renault, *The Persian Boy*, 3–7.

16 For a dissenting view that argues that erotic relationships between women were much more widely acceptable in Victorian society than previously thought, see Marcus, *Between Women*, 8–22 and *passim*.

17 See for example Edmund White's *Hotel de Dream* (2007), which brings to life a rumored manuscript—no trace of which in fact remains—for a novel the American author Stephen Crane may have planned to write about male prostitution on the New York streets. In a different medium but with similar effect, Todd Haynes's film *Far from Heaven* (2002) takes on the style of a Douglas Sirk melodrama to tell a story that includes frank portrayals of interracial love and homosexuality, taboo subjects for explicit representation in 1950s cinema.

18 Lukács, "Narrate or Describe?" 110.

19 Lukács, "Narrate or Describe?" 116.

20 See Love, "Close but Not Deep"; Marcus, Love, and Best, "Building a Better Description"; and Schmitt, "Interpret or Describe?"

21 Marcus, Love, and Best, "Building a Better Description," 14.
22 For a linking of description with "surface," see Best and Marcus, "Surface Reading: An Introduction." For a comprehensive, if critical, characterization of critique, see Felski, *The Limits of Critique*.
23 Best and Marcus, "Surface Reading," 3; see also Kahan's critique of queer readings that interpret "absence" (silence, the closet) as "evidence" of same-sex eroticism in *Celibacies*, 3–6.
24 See Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading." For a discussion of how debates within queer theory have "shadowed" the reading method debates, see Love, "Critique Is Ordinary."
25 Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*; Snediker, *Queer Optimism*, especially 1–41.
26 Love, "Critique Is Ordinary," 366.
27 Strachey, *Queen Victoria*, 101, 117.
28 Two of the three published monographs or edited collections on Alan Hollinghurst mention "influence" in the title (Johnson's *Alan Hollinghurst and the Vitality of Influence* and Mendelssohn and Flannery's edited collection *Alan Hollinghurst: Writing under the Influence*); much of the other existing scholarship on Hollinghurst (disappointingly sparse compared to the body of criticism on, say, Ian McEwan, a novelist Hollinghurst outclasses in virtually every respect) takes a similar tack. See Tyson, "The Loneliness of the Gay Aesthete."
29 See, e.g., Horton, "A Conflicted Inheritance"; Rivkin, "Writing the Gay '80s with Henry James"; and Hannah, "The Private Life, The Public Stage."
30 Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, 50.
31 Macfarlane, "Alan Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*," 173.
32 Interview with author, June 25, 2019.
33 Horton, "A Conflicted Inheritance," 45.
34 An imaginative engagement with Bloomsbury is elaborated most fully in *The Stranger's Child* but evident in other novels as well. A key set piece in *The Sparsholt Affair* (2018), for instance, is the "Memo Club," where a group of writers and friends assemble once a month to hear one of their members read a memoir; the most famous Memoir Club in modern English literary history is, of course, that of the Bloomsbury Group. See Hollinghurst, *The Sparsholt Affair*, 87, 160.
35 Hollinghurst, *The Stranger's Child*, 19. At Cambridge, these Bloomsbury men absorbed from the philosopher G. E. Moore a set of ideals prizing friendship and aesthetic experience as the highest of intrinsic goods, and cultivated the friendships and habits of frank conversation that became the basis of Bloomsbury. See Holroyd's discussion of the Conversazione Society in *Lytton Strachey*, 76–87.
36 Holroyd, *Lytton Strachey*, 127.
37 Hollinghurst, *The Stranger's Child*, 8. This botanical descriptor is queer—"both beautiful and vaguely unsettling," George's mother thinks—insofar as it is more typically applied to female physiology; the moniker "Bloomsberries" might be thought similarly feminizing. See King, *Bloom: The Botanical Vernacular in the English Novel*.
38 Hollinghurst, *The Stranger's Child*, 308.
39 Hollinghurst, *The Stranger's Child*, 308.
40 For a useful discussion of cultural "location"—the importance of being able to situate particular elements of culture in relation to other elements, for example books in relation to other books—see Bayard, *How To Talk About Books You Haven't Read*, 10–12.
41 Hollinghurst, *The Stranger's Child*, 351.
42 For an argument that Hollinghurst's fiction incorporates visual ideas from the gay porn-art figure Tom of Finland, see Mendelssohn, "Poetry, parody, porn and prose," 48–56.

43 Interview with author, June 25, 2019.
44 See Marler, "The Bloomsbury Love Triangle."
45 Hollinghurst, *The Stranger's Child*, 164, 306.
46 Hollinghurst, *The Stranger's Child*, 405.
47 Hollinghurst, *The Stranger's Child*, 60.
48 Hollinghurst, *The Stranger's Child*, 405–6.
49 Hollinghurst, *The Stranger's Child*, 222.
50 Hollinghurst, *The Stranger's Child*, 7.
51 Hollinghurst, *The Stranger's Child*, 51.
52 Hollinghurst, *The Stranger's Child*, 40.
53 Hollinghurst, *The Stranger's Child*, 271.
54 Hollinghurst, *The Stranger's Child*, 40.
55 Hollinghurst, *The Stranger's Child*, 38.
56 Sontag, "Against Interpretation."
57 On the enduring echoes of Sontag's argument, see Anker and Felski, "Introduction," 15–16.
58 One memorable example of how suspicious interpretation and sensuality can be allied occurs in Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*. College-aged Alison lies nude with her friend Joan in a bed strewn with books. One panel shows their legs entangled, their feet sweeping against the spines of volumes by Adrienne Rich, Olga Broumas, and Mary Daly. "Some of our favorite childhood stories," Bechdel recalls, "were revealed as propaganda … others as pornography." In a panel illustrating Joan reading aloud from *James and the Giant Peach*, we learn how this is so. "The walls were wet and sticky, and peach juice was dripping from the ceiling," Joan deliciously declaims. "James opened his mouth and caught some of it on his tongue." Bechdel, *Fun Home*, 81. Alison lies prone, Roald Dahl's novel perched on her abdomen, her knees flung over Joan's shoulders, as Joan reads from a vantage point between Alison's legs. See Bechdel, *Fun Home*, 80–1.
59 Warner, "Uncritical Reading," 13.
60 Hollinghurst, *The Stranger's Child*, 244.
61 Hollinghurst, *The Stranger's Child*, 129.
62 Hollinghurst, *The Stranger's Child*, 293.
63 Hollinghurst, *The Line of Beauty*, 50.
64 Hollinghurst, *The Stranger's Child*, 120, 117.
65 Hollinghurst, *The Stranger's Child*, 403. See Rivkin, "*The Stranger's Child* and *The Aspern Papers*," 81.
66 Hollinghurst, *The Stranger's Child*, 408.
67 Hollinghurst, *The Stranger's Child*, 223.
68 See Holroyd, *Lytton Strachey*, 171, for a description of the famous moment, recorded by Virginia Woolf, when Strachey points to a stain on Vanessa Bell's dress and inquires: "Semen?"

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PART FIVE

Affect and Atmosphere


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PROMISCUOUS SPACES

The Bookshop and Queer Eclecticism

Huw Osborne

Today, LGBTQ bookshops are important cultural institutions that facilitate community, knowledge, tradition, protest, and identity within the competing and overlapping demands of business, law, culture, and politics. A few examples illustrate this importance. Toronto's Glad Day Bookshop, now a cooperative non-profit venture, sees its work as happening "between the lines and in the margins."[1] The store provides "a flexible, inclusive space that is being used by the diverse LGBTQ communities of Toronto to amplify creativity, story, sexuality, liberation and love."[2] Similarly, London's Gays the Word, located in Bloomsbury and named after a musical by gay actor, singer, and songwriter Ivor Novello, anchors the store to a long history of queer London culture. Perhaps most well known now as the former political headquarters of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, the store was featured in the film *Pride* (2014), which highlighted the charged intersections between class, nation, city-center, and industrial periphery in the context of Thatcher's neoconservative assault on the welfare state and the growing AIDS crisis, both of which were changing the nature of queer spaces and queer sociability. As one might expect, shops like these were often the sole source of information about queer life and sexuality. Such information, at least in the eyes of conservative critics, was a danger to the public good, and these shops were persecuted for the real or imagined circulation of pornography. This role and struggle are central to the 2019 Netflix documentary on the LA bookshop and pornographic video store Circus of Books, which was among the first distributors of Larry Flint's emerging pornographic distribution. In 2000, the Vancouver bookstore Little Sisters Books and Art Emporium won their Supreme Court of Canada case against Canadian Customs by arguing that the application of the customs legislation had been applied in a

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discriminatory manner.[3] Glad Day won Ontario Press Council complaints against the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star* for refusing to accept the shop's advertisements. These complaints were followed by four censorship-related trials between Glad Day and the federal government.[4] Earlier, Lawrence Ferlinghetti's City Lights Bookstore in San Francisco was a site of alternative publication and protest, with its queer significance coming into sharp focus in the context of the Beat movement and the censorship of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl and Other Poems* (1956). Independent bookshops have generally been at the vanguard of alternative publishing and bookselling, making them important contributors to the fields of queer cultural production both within the shops themselves, where a diversity of queer materials and connections enables eclectic and changeable relations, and beyond the physical boundaries of these shops, where broader interactions shaped queer networks across and between cities. In our current context, it is relatively easy to see how these bookshops challenge the "implication of consumerism in repressive regimes—class, corporate, racial, gendered, sexual, imperial and national."[5] They are spaces that serve as vehicles "for emancipation, for individual identity-making or equitable citizenship."[6] Even when bookshops do not overtly align themselves with queer identities or queer progressive politics, their eclectic textual possibilities, their oblique relationship to commerce and capital, their immersion in tactility and sensuousness, and their fostering of contact in the overlapping experience of the public and the private make them intrinsically queer in ways that few other spaces are.

Nevertheless, one cannot so easily consider independent bookshops of the early twentieth century as queer spaces, no matter how regularly they were frequented by people we might consider queer. As many have demonstrated, our identitarian politics did not exist then as they do today, regardless of how urgent they are to us. Historian of sexuality Jeffrey Weeks explains that the history of sexuality, specifically the social constructivist approach, faced a difficult political and historiographical dilemma:

> Identities were important. But they were troubling, and they caused trouble, they disrupted things. We need them to give a sense of narrative continuity and ontological security. They provide meaning and support. They locate us in a world of varying possibilities. They help to get things done. But identities also had their downside: they were limiting, they fixed you, potentially trapped you, even the new identities that emerged in the wake of gay liberation. Identities were not enough—or perhaps they were too much.[7]

Weeks suggests that we must sometimes make what Butler by way of Spivak refers to as the "necessary error of identity."[8] Recovery, or the act of looking back on the past to find and acknowledge queer sexualities, is important even at the risk of projecting contemporary identities onto that past. These same

contemporary identities, conversely, are limiting in the present: one comes out into an identity that makes sense within a dominant heteropatriarchal order. So, as Weeks further argues, the task was not to "celebrate, but to question, not to confirm a settled history but to problematize, not to systematize the past or order the present, but to unsettle it."[9] In this chapter, I examine the space of the modernist bookshop within this historical and political paradox: to what degree might one identify something queer about modernist independent bookshops before they could be unproblematically understood in such terms? I begin with a general discussion of bookshops as modern queer spaces before turning to the specific example of Charles Lahr's Progressive Bookshop in interwar London. I close with an analysis of Rhys Davies's "Wigs, Costumes, Masks," a short story by one of the Progressive Bookshop's most faithful customers that dwells on the same threshold between public commerce and private desire that one finds in the ("queer") bookshop.

Modern Queer Space

Understanding queer space in the twentieth century requires an understanding of the construction of public and private spaces. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the marginal and outlawed positions of non-heteronormative lives gave rise to a number of spaces on the thresholds between public and private, like parks and public washrooms ("cottages" or "tearooms"). Such public spaces offered just enough privacy to engage in intimate acts that had no legitimate space of expression. Private gentlemen's clubs and costume balls afforded other kinds of queer spaces largely hidden from public view. Conversely, bachelors enjoyed the public freedom of circulation among men at work or in social spheres while raising suspicions about the unrestrained masculine public movement and improper private masculine domesticity of the bachelor apartment.[10] Similarly, women occupied spaces of same-sex desire in lesbian domesticities, "Boston marriages," salons, and epistolary networks that reimagined romantic love and enabled sexual connections in the interstices of public heterosexual institutional relationships.[11]

With such spaces in mind, one may think of queer spaces as those in which capitalism's "gendered logic of the public/private binary" collapses within the experiences of non-normative sexual lives.[12] Such spatial relations accord with Henri Lefebvre's understanding of the production of space through embodied social practice. Lefebvre identifies a contradiction in ideologically dominant space in that it denies sensuality and sexuality while simultaneously centering on genitality through privileging "the family unit, the type of dwelling (apartment, bungalow, cottage, etc.), fatherhood and motherhood, and the assumption that fertility and fulfilment are identical."[13] Biologically reductive spaces overtly reproduce homogenous heteronormative social relations; however, this ideologically dominant space is not independent,

original, or natural. Lefebvre emphasizes that when spaces are embodied, when they are examined "not only with the intellect, but also with the senses, with the total body," one produces spaces of conflict and otherness that explode the normalizing forces of dominant spaces.[14] The uses of space that produce the independent bookshop are precisely those that resist the reductive economies of modern industrial life, especially because they are implicated in those economies. These uses enable experiences and relations in excess of order, category, and authority. As one steps off the spatial and temporal linearity of the city street, one encounters a novel, often idiosyncratic, use of space. It is a space for wandering, musing, touching, and reading. It is a sensuous space of difference in which time loses some of the externality of use-value in favor of "privacy, inner life, and subjectivity."[15] This is why the bookshop is so often that eroticized urban space of social and commercial pleasure that restores the rationalized modern city to ambiguity.[16]

This sensuous and eroticized space is articulated by Sylvia Beach Whitman, the current proprietor of the second iteration of Shakespeare and Company in Paris:

> Working in a bookshop is working in a cultural centre, a theatre, a perpetual tea-party, a lovers' rendezvous, a place that manifests that delectable Cheever quote: "I can't write without a reader. It's precisely like a kiss—you can't do it alone." I feel the same way about selling books and meeting customers.[17]

As commercial spaces, bookshops undermine the strict exchange of capitalist markets by incorporating values and experiences that exceed public transactional relationships. In her study of bookstores, Laura Miller found that people working across the book trade see their commercial activities as unique in capitalist markets because of their aesthetic and political motives: it "engages their creativity and … contributes to the greater good."[18] These "reluctant capitalists," as Miller calls them, consistently characterize books as "sacred products" and are often unwilling to treat them as commercial products at all. Just "as books were believed to have a particular moral worth, bookselling is viewed as an especially moral endeavour."[19] As one independent bookseller put it,

> How is it different? Well, the basic difference is that a book really is a little piece of culture … [I]t has to do with our entire intellectual life, and with our progress, and with our quality of life. Although a grocery store has to do with our quality of life as well, there's simply a bigger difference between any two books and any two different brands of orange juice. It's just a much larger difference. And it's a much more important difference.[20]

On the basis of this common perspective, Miller argues that these stores implicitly "present a critique of prevailing economic and consumer practices."[21] When consumers choose to shop at an independent bookstore when they might instead simply click on Amazon, they "incorporate some understanding of a social benefit to their consumption habits"[22] and practice a form of "consumption that incorporates a political dimension."[23] Bookshops are spaces produced by their proprietors within certain ideological positions in relation to art, the market, and the entire field of literary production within which they operate; however, they are also lived spaces that are reproduced in social practice and embodied encounters. They are qualitative, fluid, dynamic spaces of knowledge and ideology.[24] As merchants of culture, as economic agents who transform an economic exchange into an intellectual or leisure activity in excess of the immediate act of purchasing a book, booksellers fashion spaces that revise the dominant spaces of public activity, and they do so in spaces that are embodied to the extent that they require a social and physical interaction that blurs the distinction between public and private.

Bookshops, then, are spaces that overwhelm the separations between an ostensibly masculine public commercial activity and restrictive feminine private domesticity. They are spaces where the location of trade and business overlaps with the location of rest, leisure, and familiar community. In Lefebvre's terms, the bookshop is a differential space that exposes the contradictions inherent in the tendency of abstract space "toward homogeneity and the elimination of differences or peculiarities."[25] Differential spaces defy the strict separation of, for instance, public and private uses that fragment bodily experiences into the functional "space of genitality as expressed in the family cell and its insertion into the piled up boxes of 'modern' buildings, tower blocks, 'urban complexes', and what have you."[26] Examples of this embodiment and excess that overwhelm strict localization are found in many bookstores. As Ted Bishop has persuasively argued, the multicolored sofas and chairs in Mary Mowbray Clark and Madge Jenison's The Sunwise Turn bookshop fostered a homey atmosphere that was as much or more about creating a leisure space of modern artistic sensibility as it was about sales.[27] Their shop offered a "blending of public and private space" in which "there was a consciousness of the body."[28] Similarly, Osbert Sitwell recalls the "large, comfortable paneled rooms" in Harold Monro's Poetry Bookshop, and Sylvia Beach's Shakespeare and Company was decorated with Serbian rugs and antique furniture.[29] Tellingly, Beach described her shop as a transformatively liminal "place of transition between street and house":

> A shop seemed to us to be a magic chamber: at that instant when the passer-by crosses the threshold of the door that everyone can open … nothing disguises the look on his face, the tone of his words, … and if we know how to observe him at that instant when he is only a stranger, we are able

> now and forever, to know him in his truth … this immediate and intuitive understanding, this private fixing of the soul, how easy they are in a shop, a place of transition between street and house.[30]

Beach characterizes the commercial space of the bookshop as both public (street) and private (house). This threshold space changes relations between strangers, drawing everyone closer and somehow more knowable and understandable. Her description of the magical power of openings, crossings, passings, thresholds, and transitions expresses a modernist fluidity and flux, but also a queer eclecticism that resists conventional stabilities and coherences. Alissa Karl's analysis of Sylvia Beach alongside the works of Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein, Jean Rhys, and Nella Larson addresses just this creative repurposing of commercial culture. Beach's Shakespeare and Company, like many important modernist bookshops,

> pursue[d] relationships with consumer capital that are highly fraught and yet in many ways constitutive of social lives and identities. [These bookshops] engage consumerism not simply as ubiquitous phenomenon, but as a multi-dimensional one that interfaces with social practice at many levels—sometimes innocuous, sometimes highly disruptive.[31]

One such disruptive interface with social practice is implicit in Beach's imagined gaze in the passage above, in which the masculine consumer of intellectual capital is caught within the observing gaze of the women entrepreneurs. They fix him in their discerning observation, and he becomes entirely readable by "the look on his face, the tone of his voice." Even internal and external qualities collapse as the inviolable public masculine consumer of intellectual capital is imagined as known right to the most private regions of the soul. Beach is thus implicitly aware of the gendered implications of the bookshop, but also of the potential for these spaces to subvert the conventional genders that abide within abstract, dominant spaces.[32]

This blurring of public and private spaces illustrates how the eclectic excess of independent bookstores challenges heteronormative binaries. The bookshop confronts one with unstable spaces, not only in terms of the "products" sold, but also in terms of physical constructions, demographic appeals, social interactions, aesthetic tastes, and political cultures. For queer people looking for spaces that might accommodate difference, these bookstores offer alternative spaces of private belonging for those excluded from the increasingly suburban dream of "home and homeliness associated with independence, safety, retreat, rest, family life, privacy, stability, warmth, comfort, separation of the self from other, and of the individual from society."[33] As Matt Cook argues in his discussion of queer domesticities in twentieth-century London,

> the "private" realm of the home was idealized and separated out through politics and action in the "public" world of national and local government, town planning, architecture, commerce, and advertising. That same private space was conversely often marshalled to the public service of broader ideas of Englishness, patriotism, gender roles and much more.[34]

However, as Cook further argues, this shoring up of the divide between public and private was a direct consequence of the porousness of the categories themselves, and "many public spaces served some of the supposed functions of home [for queer people]—in terms, for example, of retreat, relaxation, and intimacy."[35] There is no single mode in which queer people related (or still relate) to the ideas of private home and public identity, but the bookshop was unquestionably a space that complicated these categories in useful ways, especially when so many of these shops were directly engaged in pushing the boundaries of acceptable sexual representation and expression.

The Intimate Eclecticism of Charles Lahr's Progressive Bookshop

Charles Lahr's Progressive Bookshop is an interesting case study in the queerness of the modernist bookshop. On the one hand, there is nothing conventionally queer (a paradox, indeed) about the shop or its owner if we think of this queerness in terms of explicitly nonheteronormative sexualization of space. It was not blatantly *more* queer than any other similar shop, and arguably a bit less. Lahr was at best benevolently homophobic, quick to drop a jocular homophobic slur yet affectionately fond of the queer people who frequented the shop, and he maintained a liberal indifference to the private sexual lives of his friends and associates. However, according to the recollections of those who knew the shop well, it was a space of eclectic incoherence—a charged psychic space on the threshold of the public and private.

Lahr's London bookshop was a counter-commercial space of artistic and political intimacy and exchange that enjoyed its high point of influence during the interwar years until its Red Lion Street location was bombed out of existence in 1940. This shop, like so many prominent shops of the early twentieth century, no longer physically exists, so its spatial and cultural influence must be teased out from the archival ephemera, correspondence, memoirs, and other materials that illustrate its reach and role.[36] The proprietor, Charles Lahr (1885–1971), was himself a figure of unconventional views and identifications. As a German Anarchist who sacrificed his German citizenship and never took British citizenship, he was defiantly stateless. His outsider position made him a figure of suspicion and criminality on more than one occasion. He married an East-End Jewish labor activist and factory worker, Esther Argeband. He was interned in the First and Second World Wars, and was imprisoned for several months in between for the purchase of stolen

books. Lahr courted further criminal charges by his support for and publication of literary voices that risked censorship, banning, and imprisonment. On several occasions, he published materials that had been censored—or would be censored—for their "obscenity," including a pirated copy of D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, an unexpurgated edition of Lawrence's *Pansies* (smuggled across the English Channel by the gay Welsh writer Rhys Davies), and James Hanley's *The German Prisoner*, which was banned along with Hanley's novel *Boy* for its explicit representation of sex between men. Despite Lahr's homophobic tendencies, therefore, the shop became a site for the open expression and discussion of criminalized sexuality within the safety of an artistic community.[37]

For the patrons of the shop, this literary criminality was just another of the "amiable eccentricities" of a man "with the preoccupied look of a laughing fanatic" and "a goatee beard and violently-coloured clothes," as Rupert Croft-Cooke described Lahr.[38] His eclectic wardrobe was matched by the "strangely miscellaneous people who crowded into his shop to talk about themselves," and the shop itself shared this miscellaneous spatial instability.[39] Even the books could not be trusted to keep the material coherence imposed by their publishers, for Lahr had a habit of switching dust jackets and other paratextual elements so that unwary customers in search of wholesome fare would find themselves on suddenly unstable ground. "There were some," recalls Oswell Blakeston, "who were worried by a measure of facetiousness, such as the switching of stickers on books so that it looked as though an archbishop had written a guide to the vice dens of Soho."[40] In his publishing and distribution of censored and sexually explicit materials and in his playful use of books and other bibliographical conventions, such as forged headline placards and parodic Christmas cards, Lahr fashioned a shifting, perverse, and subversive space that consistently undermined conventional pieties. In such ways, the shop refused the arbitrary legal, commercial, and aesthetic separation and categorization of art and bodies.

Physical descriptions of the bookshop reflect and reinforce this sense of unruly diversity. Kenneth Hopkins, for example, lived in a room above the shop for a year in the late 1930s (as did many others, which further blurs the line between public and private), and his description further captures the intimate eclecticism of a space that far exceeds its public commercial function:

> The shop was about ten feet by twelve, and the front wall was all window. The door was at the side opening not into the street but into the passage. As the window was lined floor to ceiling with books, and had also a screen at the back, practically no light penetrated into the shop. The walls were lined with books, and in the middle was a gas radiator over which a rickety arrangement of shelves supported, precariously, great piles of

> periodicals, books, pamphlets, a typewriter, string, about two-thirds of a loaf, several pipes and various oddments of indiarubber, cheese, carbon paper, matches and pipe dottles. These last were close to the radiator, drying for future consumption.
>
> With one thing or another occupying the floor space, little remained save a rectangular area with a slight depression at the back in which [Lahr's] chair was established. The clear space was a bit larger than the top of a dining table, and provided standing space for about four people at a time.[41]

Lahr himself is established in his corner chair, a paternal, pipe-smoking presence that gives the shop an air of domestic familiarity. The passage between street and shop—along with the window-obscuring books that intensify the enclosed private intimacy of the space—suggests a greater remove from the public thoroughfares. At the same time, however, the description signals the importance of "passage" and movement, as seen in Sylvia Beach's descriptions. And while the shop and Lahr are established, they are also characterized by a "rickety arrangement" and precarious supports. Books are not organized so much as piled among the "various oddments" that appear to have no natural connection with each other. The eclecticism of the shop is important, for the space defies the categorization and coherence that upholds dominant spaces. One might, therefore, think of this shop and others like it in terms of a "useful in/stability" [42] as defined by Jen Jack Gieseking, or the camp eclecticism that Matt Cook traces in queer domestic spaces.[43] In their discussion of the Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA), Gieseking locates queer in/stability in spaces that, on the one hand, offer stability, community, and history but that, on the other hand, resist hierarchy, order, and teleology that upholds patriarchal heteronormativity. The LHA occupies a house rather than a commercial or institutional building, and while it houses an archive of lesbian "herstorical" materials, it is organized in idiosyncratic and user-driven ways. The institutionalized knowledge of library cataloging is therefore replaced by the sensuous and spontaneous experience of discovery. This description could well apply to many bookshops, Likewise, Cook refers to Neil Barlett's formation of queer domestic spaces that detached the idea of home from reproductive heterosexuality through a tradition of drag eclecticism, repurposing materials of the past to produce "that kind of decor that creates something out of scraps."[44] Such spaces as these provide "flux in place, creating a stable space from which to remain in that state of flux."[45]

Geographically, Lahr's shop occupied a wider space of diverse social, sexual, political, economic, and cultural life. George Woodcock remembers how the shop was adjacent to Red Lion Square where Conway Hall hosted such dissenters as pacifists, anarchists, and left socialists of the Independent Labour Party. David Archer's communist Bookshop was also in close proximity,[46] as was Theobald's Road where one

> could find cheap if grubby Italian restaurants with dark-eyed pallid waitresses always dressed in dingy black. And North of Theobald's Road Bloomsbury died away in a shabby nest of byways in which decaying eighteenth century houses had been divided into coldwater flats and single rooms with gas-rings where minor poets, and painters too poor for real studios, and Indian students, and failed writers who wrung a living from copying in the British Museum, gathered in a grimy bohemia whose main Thoroughfare was Lamb's Conduit Street, which we called Misconduct Street. To the east, Grub Street was not far off, geographically or in spirit. Nor, to the west, were the pubs and restaurants of Soho and Charlotte Street.[47]

This national, political, intellectual, sexual, and economic diversity was reflected in the space and sociability of Lahr's shop. Its clientele and community were international in nature, including such figures as George Padmore, Peter Abrahams, Chris Jones, Jomo Kenyatta, Krishna Menon, K. S. Bhat, and C. L. R. James, who credits Lahr for providing much of his Marxist education and for informing his description of Hitler's rise to power in *World Revolution*, in particular.[48] The space was open in terms of gender as well. Before the birth of the Lahr children, Lahr's wife, Esther, was a vocal and engaged presence in the shop, and there were many prominent women associated with the space throughout the interwar years, such as Malachi Whitaker, Olive Moore, Beatrice Hastings, and Gay Taylor. Such diverse networks and interactions made the shop an accommodating space for queer figures like Rupert Croft-Cooke, Rhys Davies, Fred Urquhart, Nina Hamnett, Louis Golding, Anna Wickham, John Hampson, Edward Wolfe, and Oswell Blakeston.

The extent of the shop's eclectic diversity is evident in a corresponding paranoia over the gendered and sexual diversity associated with bohemian, artistic, and Bloomsburyite effeminacy. The anarchist activist Albert Meltzer describes the shop in strictly divided spatial terms that seek to shore up the divide between public masculinity and private femininity. Meltzer begins by disassociating Lahr from the aesthetic and literary importance of the shop by suggesting that Lahr's cultural work was an extended act of parody:

> "Bloomsbury" has become a ticket of history, an evocation of time and place which owes a lot of its significance to its "village shopkeeper" of the twenties and thirties, Charles Lahr. But his first and abiding love was not literature at all, but anarchism: and he has an impish sense of humour which found its greatest satisfaction in seeing authority fall over on a banana skin. It is just possible that "Bloomsbury", which is now offered in book after book as an evocation of, above all, "The Thirties", was his most elaborate joke of all.[49]

The motive for reimagining Lahr in these terms is evident in Meltzer's spatial description of the shop, which seeks to inoculate the public political work of the masculine activists from the feminized artists. Specifically, Meltzer recalls the shop as a space divided between, on the one hand, the back room with its circle of political activists, and, on the other hand, the front bookshop where the literary set mingled. Despite describing the back room as a "parlour" and despite the fact that the front space of the shop is closer to the public world of the streets, Meltzer constructs this tension in the shop in terms of a secure world of a public/political/masculine community's primacy over a private/aesthetic/feminine one:

> In the back parlour (surrounded by books which fell on top of us) a few would gather to whom Charlie would apologetically chuckle about his odd customers—I should be able to remember some distinguished names which fluttered about the shop. But I cannot recall any. For Charlie the "Bloomsbury set" was a joke: he presented his writers and artists to us with the deprecatory air of off-duty teacher pointing out his former pupils … But they, the poor devils, will never know how he used to laugh about them and their literary eccentricities when he was among the anarchists again.[50]

There is no supporting evidence of this behaviour in any of the other available materials, including the memoirs and papers of other members of the anarchist set.[51] To the contrary, most merge the political and cultural work of the shop, noting Lahr's generosity in sharing his literary and political books, magazines, and inexhaustible personal knowledge. Meltzer's anxiety over the "fluttering oddness" of the shop (which is suggestive of a negative version of Hopkins's "various oddments") speaks more to the perceived threat of the bookshop's eclectic undoing of the coherences Meltzer's exclusionary spatialization upholds. Metzler's recollection of the shop, therefore, highlights an understanding of the modern independent bookshop in spatial, cultural, and political terms that are expressly gendered. His paranoid resistance to a feminized bohemianism serves only to stress how transgressive such spaces are in terms of the dominant spatial and sexual organization of the modern metropolis.

Rhys Davies and Commercially Queer Products

I have discussed The Progressive Bookshop in terms of an intimate and eclectic excess that is understood in gendered terms. This excess disrupts the gendered codes that organize the public and private spatial organization of modern urban life and, by extension, produces an accommodating space for the formation of queer communities and connections. However, one must

still wrestle with the question of how these purportedly queer people experienced that space in terms of sexual or gendered identity when such figurations of queerness were not part of their sexual or political discourse. As Laura Doan argues, efforts to resist our own political needs in our examination of the history of sexuality are part of a "queer critical history" that resists "identity history."[52] She and others are skeptical of what Matt Houlbrook describes as the "foundational assumptions of an earlier project of lesbian and gay history conceived largely as an exercise in social historical recovery."[53] They therefore apply a practice of "thinking queer" as a method of confounding categorization and resisting normative constructions of time.[54] "Queer critical history," as Laura Doan defines it, operates in the "paradox of not-knowing as a way of knowing," conceiving analytical frameworks alert to meanings outside the context of identity.[55] Echoing Butler's performativity, Doan writes that "[f]or the critical historian … those 'retrospective identifications … are imagined repetitions of imagined resemblances.'"[56] A more appropriate approach to the eclectic excess of the bookshop, therefore, is not to look for an identifiably queer modern space but an unidentifiably incoherent space that plays trickster with dominant sexualities without definitively identifying inexpressible ones.

Rhys Davies's fiction suggests a queer reading of the Progressive Bookshop for three reasons. First, he is a gay man who left South Wales for the more liberating sexual spaces of London (and other locales, such as Berlin, Paris, and the Cote D'Azure). He was familiar with establishments catering to queer people, such as bars and fancy-dress balls, writing perceptively, for example, about a transgender couple he met in Berlin's Eldorado, and he had several intimate relationships with men in London bedsits, cottages, and country estates alike. He is a writer who actively sought out and thought about the queer spaces in public, private, and in between. Second, he was intimately aware of the gendered tensions between commerce and culture, especially as they touched upon his professional identity, whether he was being marketed as a masculine working-class writer, as a prestigiously unmarketable highbrow writer, or as a writer of women's fiction tainted by the unforgiveable sin of popularity.[57] This awareness began at the beginning of his writing career when his first three stories appeared in *The New Coterie*, the little magazine published by Charles and Esther Lahr, which started a loyal friendship that lasted until Lahr's death. In a memoir written after Lahr's death, Davies even hints at the domestic security he gained from Charles and Esther when he recalls Esther as "a shrewd book-loving Jewess, [who] cut through [Lahr's] rhetorical flightiness, sentimentalities and business generosities with the same realistic common sense that my [shopkeeper] mother possessed."[58] This long—almost familial—relationship with Lahr and Esther leads to the third reason for Davies's relevance to this analysis: he was a trusted co-conspirator with Lahr's clandestine publishing activities, especially as concerns the

publication of works by D. H. Lawrence. It was Davies, for example, who smuggled the proofs of *Pansies* from France. As Lahr's friend and confidant, he well knew how "an official eye, however casual, was kept on [Lahr]" because of his association with and support for writers working under the shadow of legal action and censorship like Lawrence, James Hanley, and Count Potocki (Geoffrey de Montalk).[59]

While Davies did not (perhaps could not) write about the Progressive Bookshop as a queer space, he did write about spaces of eclectic and intimate excess on the threshold between commerce and culture, as in the costume shop of his story, "Wigs, Costumes, Masks." These spaces bear striking similarities to Lahr's bookshop space, but in a heightened register that suggests what the conflicted commitments and unruly artistic atmosphere of Lahr's shop could have meant to a gay man like Davies living in the clandestine world of London's queer spaces. Written in 1949, "Wigs, Costumes, Masks" sits dead center within a 1940s and 1950s London in which, as Houlbrook explains, "the queer was a dangerous incursion into the defining space of Britishness," the central site of economic and imperial power.[60] This incursion led "to a culture of knowingness, emphasizing the practical utility of beat officers' immersion into the realities of metropolitan lowlife, crime and vice."[61] Appropriately, the story begins with two detectives, Frank and Jimmy, standing in the shadows casting an official eye on a costume shop in "a district devoted to the night entertainment of the flesh."[62] In this story, the costume shop replaces the bookshop as "a shop in the kingdom of pleasure," and it sells products that similarly exceed an immediately practical market rationale.[63] The shop's bachelor proprietor, Mr. Simon, sells costumes to those "seeking to escape reality for an evening," to people who wish to "become for an illicit night the creatures of their dreams" and who "spread an atmosphere of enchanted liberation as they fled through shafts of changing tints" at a fancy-dress ball.[64] As in the bookshop, no two products are the same, the products themselves are of dubious practical value, and the consumers are transgressive by virtue of their patronage of the shop.

When the detectives enter the shop, they encounter a scene of elaborate incoherent costumed excess that troubles lines of categorization:

> Queen Elizabeth sat on her throne, dressed to receive at least the French Ambassador, her handsome brocades and ropes of pearls perhaps too garish, the pointed face, and even the little hands too rigidly shrewish. A Blackamoor arrayed in scarlet and Prussian blue grinned impudently at the two white men, perched over him, a huge extravagantly-coloured parrot watched them in petrified silence. Everlastingly smiling, a Chinaman stood with hands inside the sleeves of a pretty kimono, quite at home with his companion, a high-wigged Western lady in a lilac Crinoline, who peeped over her fan at the intruders. But most splendid of all was the Fairy

> Queen whose butterfly wings had carried her, in her rose-tulip bodice, pale green gossamer skirt and starlit shoes, to a dais for their inspection; charmingly, she wanted also to touch their raincoated shoulders with her silver blue wand. Withdrawn into the background other presences watched; a Roundhead, a Puritan, a Jack-of-Spades, a monk, a Plantagenet king.[65]

The world of Mr. Simon's shop is a place of flamboyant disguise across gender, race, history, empire, animal, and fantasy. It is "extravagant" in the truest sense of the word, which denotes a wandering outside of bounds, for there are no national, racial, or temporal borders separating these figures of history, fairy tale, and legend who "impudently" "watch" and "peep" back at the policemen, returning and travestying their authoritative male gaze. We begin with Queen Elizabeth, a figure of British national power (and something of a master and connoisseur of national drag herself). The national/sexual cross-dressing Chinaman sits queerly pretty in his Japanese kimono. The Blackamoor looks back at Frank and Jimmy, grinning along the charged boundary of identification that racializes their white national authority. The Fairy Queen's maternal authority (perhaps in fantastical dialogue with the more historical Queen Elizabeth) is composed of two camp names for gay men, and she reaches out to transform the protective raincoats with her magical wand. This queer incoherence of the story exposes and conceals Mr. Simon through camp excess, and the policemen find themselves locked in the denaturalizing gaze of a national and historical kaleidoscope circulating around the queer changefulness of the shop owner. Mr. Simon himself adopts the aesthete's privileging of art over nature, dismissing objective efforts to place him. For instance, he reverses the policemen's fact-finding gaze onto the glass eye of a nude manikin, a casket of fake jewelry, and a wig, suggesting that the policemen's eyes are locked in their failure to see a more general artificiality: "What are facts? … Would these be called facts? For me, yes. Reliable facts. The same as a glass eye is more real than a real eye. It lasts, gentleman."[66] The wax figures and costumes in Mr. Simon's shop, he tells them, "testif[y] to the truth that art can always set nature's deficiencies at naught."[67] This Wildean posture blurs the distinction between natural and unnatural, replacing biologically racialized and sexualized bodies within destabilizing performances of sexual, racial, national, and gendered identities.[68]

Highlighting the ways in which this liminal commercial/cultural business is understood as a criminal affront to heteronormativity, Mr. Simon's first escape from the policemen is affected by disappearing into the expectations of their public gaze. When Mr. Simon fails to return from answering the phone, they seek him out in his office to find an altogether different scene. The detectives enter an inner room in which Mr. Simon has replaced himself with a wax replica dressed "in his rusty black jacket and stiffly formal if soiled white collar and cuffs" with red wool socks on his feet.[69] His

businessman-like appearance is reinforced by his concentration on documents on the desk and a room decked out in the paraphernalia of middle-class masculine mastery, "furnished in a middle-class Victorian style, solid with mahogany sideboard, … basket chairs, oil-paintings of cattle and shaggy dogs."[70] The whole illusion, apart from the red socks perhaps, suggests the sloughed off husk of a private domestic masculinity intent on the good works of public commerce that at least one of the detectives believes on sight. But, of course, its illusory nature places it in the same category as the other costumes and wax figures, just another repetition of a repetition of the conventional spatial relationships that define and restrict sexual and gendered identities. In fact, its drag excess aligns it by contrast to Mr. Simon's counter-commercial commerce: his customers

> did not like him to exist as a business man—and, indeed, to receive a bill from the improbable creature, king of a waxen nation bewigged by his own talented hands, was unnatural. His commercial affairs were never in a healthy condition: the ferocity of the oriental despot was counterbalanced by a royal generosity—particularly to the young, the talented, the "artistic."[71]

This shop, like Lahr's shop, operates within the gendered anxieties associated with commercial spaces within the arts—an association, further, that is assumed to be always potentially transgressive and uncontrollable.

Like Lahr's shop, Mr. Simon's shop caters to an artistic celebrity clientele that earns the scorn of the older detective, Frank, who takes a dim view of actors and the theatre world:

> "All this lot," Frank, with a large gesture which included the framed celebrities, became garrulous, "got something childish in them. I've seen a deal of them, off and on, enquiring and interviewing. They don't seem to grow up properly, only one part of 'em does … Many's the time I've wondered if it's because they're always dressing up and acting in all these Shakespeare plays, always murdering and so on … getting crime on the brain." He stared hard at a famous Hamlet. "When I've gone interviewing them, they just don't seem to understand crookedness properly; sometimes I've had to speak like a schoolteacher. Anyone would think that their brains just can't cope with the laws of the land. More than once it's struck me that they're just naturally loose, in a dotty sort of way … not developed," he insisted.[72]

Frank could just as well be looking at the famous faces of controversial and queer writers on the walls of many prominent modernist bookshops, but this passage introduces a more clearly paranoid reading of Mr. Simon's shop as well as the other queerly enabling public spaces of theatres and fancy-dress

balls. The aptly named Frank reads the scene defensively by reducing everything unfamiliar into one "large gesture" and subjecting the scene to his "hard" stare, which imposes Freudian theories of childhood development and sexuality. He refuses to see anything that falls outside his confinement to "the law of the land." Of course, both Mr. Simon and the policemen are caught in a mutually paranoid gaze of suspicions about capture/evasion. This is why they slip into each other's worlds, Mr. Simon mimicking the public/private image of the masculine businessman illustrated above and the policemen donning costumes to track Mr. Simon at the fancy dress ball.[73] While he registers the fantastic world of childishness and play, he cannot read it reparatively for pleasure, passion, and humor, and productive incoherence. He sees it as a failure of maturity instead of as the "glue of surplus beauty, surplus stylistic investment, unexplained upwellings of threat, contempt, and longing [that] cements together an animates the amalgam of powerful part-objects" making up the "communal, historically dense" nature of camp performance.[74] What Frank sees as childish failure, however, Mr. Simon fashions into fullness and triumph, exemplifying more recent queer theoretical approaches to time, success, and failure outlined by Kathryn Bond Stockton, Jack Halberstam, Elizabeth Freeman, and Heather Love.

Mr. Simon's transgressive and transhistorical world of camp, fairy tale, and the "pantomime kingdom" exploits what Halberstam refers to as the "silly archive," where taking seriously childish and lowbrow cultural materials provide productive spaces of otherness outside dominant regimes of maturity.[75] For instance, fairy tales (taking place *once upon a* time and *far, far away*) lie outside normative place and time are "replete with fantasies of otherness and difference, alternative embodiment, group affiliations, and eccentric desires."[76] Such queer temporalities resist a place and time that is founded upon the reproduction of the patriarchal and heterosexual family in the preservation and control of economic productivity. This national time is what Halberstam calls the "time of reproduction," what Freeman calls the "chrononormative," and what José Esteban Muñoz calls (in a refreshing economy of syllables) "straight time": in all cases, the inheritance across generations of wealth, goods, values, and morals are family ties that connect "to the historical past of the nation, and glance ahead to connect the family to the future of both familial and national stability."[77] Freeman writes of the ways "naked flesh is bound into socially meaningful embodiment through temporal regulation: … the use of time to organize individual human bodies toward maximum productivity."[78] The passage from birth, to adulthood, engagement, marriage, parenthood, and into widower/widowhood binds human bodies into reproductive heterosexuality. Frank looks for the success of maturity, but Mr. Simon exemplifies Halberstam's queer failure: "Failing … allows us to escape the punishing norms that discipline behaviour and manage human development with the goal of delivering us from unruly

childhoods to orderly and predictable adulthoods."[79] This description accords well with his shop, which sacrifices economic health for royal generosity.

The escape from these punishing norms intensifies in Mr. Simon's two subsequent evasions of the policemen. First, dressed immaculately as a bejeweled and turbaned Raja, Mr. Simon moves through a world of a celebrity charity ball, which is as unruly and incoherent as his shop but even more changeful and disorienting. Cavaliers and pierrots brush shoulders with a Medici prince, a Czech peasant girl, and a Turkish odalisk. Amid this costumed variety, Mr. Simon is the "liberating magician" whom the other partygoers, half of whom are clients of his shop, scarcely believe is real.[80] A girl from a Turkish Harem tells him that she has been hearing wicked tales about him, which he relishes while asking "*Wonderfully* bad ones?" He denounces his two pursuers not as policemen but as "*public executioners!*"—again stressing the claims that these two defenders of law and order have over the control of public life and the threat of that control for those who live outside of the public spatial demands of gender identity.[81] The crime that Mr. Simon has ostensibly committed seems to have something to do with insurance fraud, but the more troubling crime is the affront of disrupting the categories that keep bodies identifiable and controlled within the time and space of modern city.

As Mr. Simon's business of extravagant camp artistry makes clear, Davies had a subtle sense of the gendering and sexualization of public/private spaces on the charged threshold between commerce and culture. However, Mr. Simon's third and final escape is both the most vivid and most ambiguous example of how this story engages the question of how we may or may not define Lahr's shop in terms of a queer reading of the bookshop space. This final scene presents a fabulous collapse of success and failure, culminating in the destruction of the fantastically eclectic commercial space of the shop. At the end of the story, Mr. Simon returns to his shop and sets fire to it while he is still inside, burning up all of myriad costumes and wax figures. The flames within the "chamber in the happy dwelling of fantasy" was more "kindred" than "dismaying," and the destruction is a final act of artistic defiance of bodily coherence and legal fact.[82] The mercurial fire offers a last resistance to the detectives when it appears in the vague form of a "doll-like creature" that could be Mr. Simon, his doppelganger manikin, or the Fairy Queen, but which is in fact all and any of the myriad shapes of the shop:

> Even as the group looked at this mystic figure piece, an unknown native of the flames, it exploded into hyacinthine glory, self-consuming, a phoenix death, a bursting figure crested with curly feathers of reddish purple and footed about with swarming dragon-tongues eyed like the tails of peacocks: it gave a last flare of violet, gold and rose, and vanished into smoke.[83]

This many-eyed and self-consuming figure of transformation, transcendence, and rebirth provides a consolation to the more common and factual punishment of gay men in 1940s and 1950s London. The queer figure of Hyacinth who dies in the midst of divine love here finds his timeless "glory," but this coming-out is also a disappearance. This revelation is a concealment. Mr. Simon has not been identified, not simply because Davies could not speak his name in the repressive context of his time, but because Davies was not attempting to establish that identity either. Mr. Simon is instead a "decentering" figure who makes us less uncomfortable in the past. What we get is a fantastical queer mix of commercial and aesthetic tensions that trouble an authoritative impulse to set clear boundaries around the gendered structure of public and private life. This troubling extends into national, historical, racial, and sexual constructions across the "overdetermined structural logic of categorization itself."[84] So while the story is historically situated in London in the 1940s and 1950s at a particular moment of British national and sexual identity, we do not come away with a fully realized (and clearly identified) queer man or community.

So are modern independent bookshops queer spaces? Not in the ways one might like to think in our contemporary context. However, they *are* spaces whose ambivalent position between public commerce and private domesticity, whose tendency toward freedom of artistic expression, and whose fostering of forms of commerce that are eclectic, excessive, and intimate certainly would (and did) attract the urban movements of queer people in search of spaces whose atmosphere of physical, social, political, and creative movement were incommensurable with the dominant heteropatriarchal forms of their larger surroundings. To close, I will return to Lahr, a "liberating magician" of another kind, who, like Mr. Simon, is characterized by an illusiveness within the careers of more famous figures. The closing notes of the second number of the *London Aphrodite* describe a party celebrating the periodical's inception:

> however, several minor reviewers welcomed the rash venture, kind friends did not hesitate to backslap, and for instance Charley Lars [*sic*] sold sixty copies in his sentry-box bookshop in Red Lion Street. Whereupon the Editors and Liam and Charley Lars got drunk in a cellar kept by Louis XVII, other guests being Rhys Davies, who couldn't find the cellar at all; Tommy Earp, who tried to sing "Rule, Britannia" at 3 a.m. on a beer barrel (empty), but overbalanced and broke Louis [Golding's] collarbone; a calm German scholar who had to go early; an Oxford Don who passed out; an ex-member of the I.W.W. with good intentions but a too-small stomach; a bald and cheerful Australian cartoonist; two roaring Irish boys covered in tap-room sawdust; two great policemen; and other Bloomsbury intellectuals. At dawn Charley Lars and the Editors took Liam home,

> where he irrationally began swallowing raw eggs. Then Charley vanished in a mist, and the editors sat down in the gutter, together with a pint of (salvaged) whiskey to reflect upon the Universe.[85]

Lahr is the recurring figure in this wild house of misrule whose "sentry box" shop offered a stable space of instability. Lahr himself, along with the role of his shop in the queer geography of interwar London, disappears into a mist … as perhaps he, and it, should.

Notes

1 *Glad Day Lit*, "About," Accessed 14 July 2020, https://www.gladdaylit.ca/. See also Moldenhauer, "A Literary Breakthrough."
2 *Glad Day Bookshop History*, Accessed 15 July 2020, https://www.gladdaybookshop.com/pages/history.
3 Kendall, *Gay Male Pornography*, 44.
4 Moldenhauer, "A Literary Breakthrough," 159, 161.
5 Karl, *Modernism and the Marketplace*, 80–112, 147.
6 Karl, *Modernism and the Marketplace*, 147–148.
7 Weeks, "Making the Human Gesture," 13.
8 Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 229.
9 Weeks, "Making the Human Gesture," 13.
10 See, for example, Cook, *Queer Domesticities*; Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 188–189; Houlbrook, *Queer London*, 109–134.
11 Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men*; Marcus, *Between Women*.
12 Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 8.
13 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 49–50.
14 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 391.
15 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 393.
16 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 393.
17 Whitman, "Coda," *The Rise of the Modernist Bookshop*, 199.
18 Miller, *Reluctant Capitalists*, 219.
19 Miller, *Reluctant Capitalists*, 219.
20 Miller, *Reluctant Capitalists*, 220.
21 Miller, *Reluctant Capitalists*, 214.
22 Miller, *Reluctant Capitalists*, 200.
23 Miller, *Reluctant Capitalists*, 214.
24 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 41–49. The evolution of Shakespeare and Company is particularly illustrative of a representational space. In its current form, it is a re-representation of an imagined social practice relocated and yet linked to Beach's original store.
25 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 52.
26 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 52–53.
27 Bishop, "The Sunwise Turn," 33.
28 Bishop, "The Sunwise Turn," 33.
29 Qtd in Grant, *Harold Monro and The Poetry Bookshop*, 3.
30 Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 33.
31 Karl, *Modernism and the Marketplace*, 141.
32 Just as women played a large role in editing modernist magazines, so, too, did they represent a significant proportion of bookstore owners.

33 Cook, *Queer Domesticities*, 9–10.
34 Cook, *Queer Domesticities*, 9.
35 Cook, *Queer Domesticities*, 9.
36 The influence of bookshops is traced in the further differential space of the archive, so the space of the archive is methodologically superimposed over the space of the bookshop. Another element of The Progressive Bookshop's queerness is therefore tied to the eclectic ephemera of the archive, for Lahr and his shop are not found in a curated collection but distributed across the collections of other figures in which he appears as a marginal but repeatedly important influencer. And because the bookshop is a hub within wider social, commercial, political, and professional connections, the networks in which the bookshop's influence emerges extend outwards to other metropolitan and nonmetropolitan spaces. Indeed, it is fair to consider the bookshop as a non-metronormative metropolitan space because its networks are so intimately tied to rural and country environments, given the constant correspondence with non-metropolitan customers, writers, and borrowers. See Herring, *Another Country*.
37 For more on the topic of modernist bookshops, censorship, and obscenity, see Thacker, "The Pure and the Dirty."
38 Croft-Cooke, *The Numbers Came*, 128–129.
39 Croft-Cooke, *The Numbers Came*, 130.
40 Blakeston, "Charles Lahr," 3.
41 Hopkins, *The Corruption of a Poet*, 108.
42 Gieseking, "Useful In/stability," 122, 25–37.
43 Cook, *Queer Domesticities*, 55–85.
44 Cook, *Queer Domesticities*, 83.
45 Gieseking, "Useful In/stability," 34. One might further link this in/stability in the archive home to Harry Heuser's queer "recovery" of the space and character of George-Powell of Nant-Eos. This recovery is illustrative of how archival work can refuse the heteronormative coherences of home, nation, and identity. His analysis of Powell's eclectic collection of art, books, and other materials housed in the Aberwstwyrth University archives provides an alternative to a more conventional historicist frame that might domesticate Powell into the national narrative of Wales's great houses. Heuser exploits the enticing contrast between, on the one hand, the grand old family home of Nant-Eos or the national solidity of the Aberwstwyrth University to which Powell bequeathed his collection, and, on the other hand, the disordered, irrational, nationally promiscuous, and sexually perverse nature of the collection itself. In Heuser's hands, Powell's collection is an incoherent record that defies any effort to straighten him out; it demands a queer embrace of diverse cultural materials and represents a kind of posthumous Victorian camp performance. See Heuser, "'Please don't whip me *this* time,'" 45–64.
46 Woodcock, "Memoirs of Red Lion Street," 1.
47 Woodcock, "Memoirs of Red Lion Street," 1–2.
48 James, "Rogues, Scoundrels, and Liars," 1.
49 Meltzer, "Bloomsbury's Anarchist," 1.
50 Meltzer, "Bloomsbury's Anarchist," 6.
51 It is also misleading to characterize them all as anarchists, for they held a diversity of political positions along the spectrum of the left.
52 Doan, *Disturbing Practices*, 61.
53 Houlbrook, "Thinking Queer," 135.
54 Houlbrook, "Thinking Queer," 138; Doan, *Disturbing Practices*, 89.
55 Doan, *Disturbing Practices*, ix.
56 Doan, *Disturbing Practices*, 16.

57 Davies's first London job as a draper's assistant would have added to this consciousness of gendered commercial spaces, a subject which he explores in more detail in his novel, *Rings on Her Fingers* (1930) in the character of Edgar, whose aesthete sensibilities chafe against his earnest business responsibilities. From "pince-nez" to "spats" he "was as elegant as a dolly" (49) and had developed a lisp. Heir to a draper's shop, Edgar is enamored of women's clothing. He longs for a woman "who would know why he loved silks and colours, why he was thrown into ecstatic passion by cunningly woven brocades and women's gowns fragile and delicate as the music of Mozart, why a rich sunset reminded him of garlands of marvellously dyed crepe-de-chine hung in the sky, how he would worship her, this remarkable woman" (66–67). For more on Davies in relation to the literary market, see Osborne, *Rhys Davies*; and Osborne, "'What a fine body of men they are.'"
58 Davies, "Charles' Shop," 7.
59 Davies, "Charles' Shop," 1.
60 Houlbrook, *Queer London*, 24.
61 Houlbrook, *Queer London*, 26.
62 Davies, "Wigs, Costumes, Masks," 372.
63 Davies, "Wigs, Costumes, Masks," 372.
64 Davies, "Wigs, Costumes, Masks," 374, 381.
65 Davies, "Wigs, Costumes, Masks," 373.
66 Davies, "Wigs, Costumes, Masks," 376.
67 Davies, "Wigs, Costumes, Masks," 376.
68 The intersections of race and sexuality merit further discussion, especially in terms of the camp appropriation of racialized bodies. Mr. Simon is especially sensitive to the racial valence of his Raja's costume when he explains to the two policemen that he "had thought to inject [his] skin with a dusky hue, but then [he] decided a pink and white complexion would be nicely *perverse*" (375). Rather than donning the caricature of blackface, he chooses to emphasize his whiteness to accentuate the perversity of the racial incongruity. The camp exaggeration indulges in such popular heroic, erotic, and exotic racial appropriations as T. E. Lawrence, Tarzan, E. M. Hull's *The Sheik*, and Rudolph Valentino's performance of Hull's titular character. For more on the sexualized and homoerotic nature of these acts of Orientalist and imperialist cross-dressing, see Garber, *Vested Interests*, 304–352. For more on the colonial history of the Orient as a locale for the projection of forbidden sexualities onto the "foreign," see Hayes, *Queer Nations*, 23–49.
69 Davies, "Wigs, Costumes, Masks," 379.
70 Davies, "Wigs, Costumes, Masks," 379.
71 Davies, "Wigs, Costumes, Masks," 375.
72 Davies, "Wigs, Costumes, Masks," 378.
73 For more on this slippage in paranoid reading, see Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 126–127.
74 Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 150.
75 Davies, "Wigs, Costumes, Masks," 375; Halberstam, *Queer Art of Failure*, 19.
76 Halberstam, *Queer Art of Failure*, 119.
77 Halberstam, *In a Queer Place and Time*, 5.
78 Freeman, *Time Binds*, 3.
79 Halberstam, *In a Queer Place and Time*, 5.
80 Davies, "Wigs, Costumes, Masks," 381.
81 Davies, "Wigs, Costumes, Masks," 382.
82 Davies, "Wigs, Costumes, Masks," 386–387.
83 Davies, "Wigs, Costumes, Masks," 388.
84 Doan, *Disturbing Practices*, 89.
85 Lindsay and Stephenson, "Ex Cathedra,"160.

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21

VAPOROUS VOWS

Queer Weather in Claude Hartland's *Story of a Life*

Benjamin Bateman

The Roman poet Catullus famously opines that "what a woman says to her passionate lover / she ought to write on the wind and swift-flowing water."[1] Misogynistic suggestions of feminine fickleness aside, the observation posits a tempestuous relationship between a commitment and the climatic conditions in which it is enunciated. What Catullus's lover, Lesbia, actually says is that "she prefers to marry no one / over [him], not even if Jupiter himself should seek her," in which formulation the weather becomes the foe, or at least the uncompliant witness—but also the inescapable environs—of a conjugal performative meant to secure, once and for all, heteronormativity's dyadic bond. After all, no performative utterance issues forth in a vacuum, so there is always the risk of meteorological meddling, be it a future alteration of the atmospheric arena in which the vow was articulated, however earnestly, or a distortion of the vow as it travels across an acoustic time/space distorted by zephyrs and gusts. So messy and volatile is the scene Catullus depicts that there can be no guarantee that the "swift-flowing water" is not itself the product of a gathering "wind" with which it partners in an ecology possibly indistinguishable from Lesbia's tendency (again, misogyny aside) to get out ahead of what she means and of what she thinks she wants. Written on the wind, the marital vow comes to appear more variable and vitiated than when, in its most vaunted version, it is written in the stars, particularly when it is animated by passionate feelings that will, more likely than not, eventually pass. Along these promiscuous lines, the word "spell" can refer both to a temporary period of weather and to an impermanent state of enchantment under which a person falls when falling in love. Add to this elemental and etymological muddle the fact that wind and water, as well as other aleatory aspects of the atmosphere, enter and intrude upon the person,

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making life possible and occasionally precarious, and you are left with felicity conditions—to borrow J. L. Austin's foundational terminology—for Lesbia's declaration that seem not only increasingly unstable but also inseparable from Lesbia herself.

Queer theory has devoted quite a bit of attention to matters of performativity, especially to the conditions of the conjugal promise's success and failure, but even at its recent intersections with ecology, the new materialisms, and the environmental humanities, it has said little about the weather as an enabling or disabling condition of the enunciations by which identities, normative or otherwise, are communicated and consolidated. This chapter seeks to begin to fill that gap by considering the fraught connections between an early twentieth-century vow to abstain from homosexual activity, the experience of libidinal desire as a storm or storm system, and the psychic environment in which this vow and its violation take place. Using as my touchstone the critically neglected 1901 American gay autobiography *Story of a Life*, published under the pseudonym Claude Hartland, I bring together queer theory, critical ecology, and object relations theory. But another and more personal way to put this is that I aim to generate a dialogue between Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's early work on queer performativity and her later and posthumously published essay entitled "The Weather in Proust," where she draws upon Winnicott, Klein, Balint, and others to theorize, in a characteristically spiraling and spellbinding reading of *A la recherche du temps perdu*, the relationship between phenomena such as atmospheric pressure and the inward climate of a person's heart and soul—a relationship volatile and vivifying enough to allow for the possibility of changes in the weather catalyzing rebirth and "awaken[ing] forgotten selves."[2]

While my goal in this short piece is not to offer an extended revision of theories of performativity or an exhaustive probe into object relations theory, I do intend to argue that by framing the performative's inconsistency as a mercurial matter, as quite literally a matter of mercury rising and falling, *Story of a Life* enacts, without actually achieving, an environment amenable to queerness and its incalculable oscillations. And in so doing, this brief but remarkably gripping bit of life writing, situated alternately in the rural south and in the rapidly expanding urban space of St. Louis—which is to say, at both the center and periphery of American modernism—imagines a generous relationship between climate and desire. This relationship is characterized by spacious allowances and affordances whose continuation *as* discontinuity and *as* variability is every bit as imperiled by global warming as are the weather's consistency and predictability, meaning that what we risk losing as the Anthropocene accelerates is not merely the air queerness needs to breathe but also the queerness of the weather itself and its power to model for the creatures it embraces a tendency toward survivable forms of difference, deviance, and even proud and stormy defiance.

The classic song "Blueberry Hill," first recorded in 1940 and covered most famously by Fats Domino in 1956, revives Catullus's ruminations with the sad but fond refrain, "The wind in the willows played / Love's sweet melody / But all of those vows we made / Were never to be."[3] But where Catullus associated the weather's inconstancy with a specifically feminine pathology of infidelity, "Blueberry Hill" implicates both lovers in the marriage vow's abortion, lamenting a "we" whose mutual pledges, a promiscuously plural reminder of the performative's dangerous addiction to repetition, were inspired by the tune of a melodious wind but perhaps carried away and off by it as well. That is to say, the enabling conditions of the vow's articulation also provide the material, or means of conveyance, for its dissolution. As the speaker croons, "Though we're apart / You're part of me still / For you were my thrill / On Blueberry Hill," it becomes less clear who is who and who is where, with the parting of the lovers leaving parts of them with each other and the sense of evanescent abandonment implied by "thrill" more than counterbalanced by the temporal stability of "still" and physical solidity of "hill." A complex entanglement expressed in a rather simple ditty, the lovers and their atmosphere are neither permanent nor impermanent, neither true nor untrue, neither destined to be nor fickly and unfaithfully assembled.

I have digressed into an ancient Latin poem and a modern American song to establish two other cultural reference points for a way of thinking about a dynamic but not determinate relationship between climate and desire—a relationship in which the atmospheric conditions of libidinal tendencies and expressions matter but do not materialize, in the essentialist vein of eugenicist and sexological theories that equated sodomy with tropicality, as obdurate orientations or entrenched identities. To the contrary, these texts consider the weather as an influence on desire but also as a companion to desire's vicissitudes and, consequently, to desire's plasticizing effects on the attributes of will, intention, and internal control that subtend normative and sovereign models of modern selfhood.

Raised in a Christian church and unschooled, as far as we know, in the advanced sexological theories of Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Henry Havelock Ellis, Edward Carpenter, and others that were gaining prominence in Europe during his lifetime, Claude Hartland was left, as presumably many other queers were, to improvise a folk sexology, and indeed he circulated his autobiography both to advertise his lived expertise on the subject and to appeal to sympathetic medical professionals in whom he placed some, but not full, trust to cure cases like his and thus alleviate what he identified as a growing source of discontent and suffering among American men.[4] But because his narrative was not guaranteed an interested audience, and indeed it appears to have quickly fallen out of print only to have been reissued by San Francisco's Grey Fox Press in 1985, it might best be understood as "the book of a minor pervert," to borrow and singularize the title of Benjamin Kahan's recent

monograph, and as an example of what Kahan calls "vestigial models of sexuality" that preceded and were then largely superseded by the consolidation of homosexuality into the modern monolith of sexual identity.[5]

It is easy enough to identify the multiple instances in which Hartland understands his urges within a biblical framework of sin, hellfire, and brimstone, but more interesting are the moments where he considers the physical and climatic context of his unholy stirrings. Paralleling Kahan's probe of alternative histories and etiologies for queerness, Natasha Hurley argues that many nineteenth and early twentieth-century works of fiction conceive of same-sex desire not as an "interior identity" but as "a mode of located sociability" in which space, place, and context exercise important influence.[6] Hartland notes that when he is away from towns and cities, he is "not troubled so much with lustful desires for [his] own sex," but he adds that even in country spaces "sometimes the desire would sweep over [him] like a tempest."[7] So sexuality is both a matter of "located sociability"—the people with whom one comes into contact in rapidly expanding urban spaces—and of environmental exposure of other sorts, and so much so that the arousal of desire feels like a change in the weather. Time and again Hartland speaks of his lust as a "fearful storm … gathering furiously," and in one instance he chastises himself for not seeing the "cloud … that burst forth and swept him into ruin." Interestingly, he narrates the undetected cloud's arrival as "it came," in which formulation the weather's uncontrollable outburst reciprocates his erotic release (a handsome man and masturbation being the "ruin" described), meaning that his misdeed, though regrettable, is not an action altogether under his control or referable to his conscious intention.[8]

It is precisely self-control and conscious redirection that Hartland tries to conjure with his multiple vows of celibacy and abstention from masturbation. These oaths follow on the heels of his spiritual rebirth,[9] setting off a narrative pattern in which vows are made, broken, lamented, and then made again. After the masturbation episode just mentioned, Hartland admits he "broke a solemn vow to God," after which he "wandered about for several hours, praying for forgiveness and strength to renew [his] vows."[10] He describes entering an "empty tomb in which he "prayed as [he] had never prayed before" for God to "give [him] strength to renew and keep [his] vows," but despite the fact that his "pledge was renewed," in the years that follow his "vow again [is] broken" as he reunites with a violinist near his father's home and engages in "more extreme acts of gratification."[11] Upon the death of a friend's child, he "framed a pledge" to God and "placed his vows in one of [the child's] icy hands"—as if the child's innocent touch could consecrate his oath once and for all—acknowledging ruefully that "if [he] could have kept [the pledge], it would have eliminated from [his] life every low and sinful act."[12] But in the next few months, he confesses, in a passive voice that both registers his despairing helplessness and dodges full

responsibility, "the vow was broken again."[13] Worth noting here is the tension between the intended fixity of the vow and the itinerancy of Hartland, a working-class man who moves between rural outposts, small towns, and St. Louis not only to find or escape sexual temptation but also to access temporary sources of employment. As Michael Trask has documented, the lower and working classes lured to large cities by industrialization and other economic transformations became a prime target of psychological and sociological inquiry in the early twentieth century due to what was increasingly perceived as a mutually inflammatory relationship "between eros and motion."[14] The fugitive character of Hartland's teaching and sewing gigs, the former of which allow him sexual intimacy with other male authority figures as well as the "spiritual" (which he contrasts with "animal") companionship of boys and young men, means that his material situation is forever outpacing and exhausting his oath—a tension both invigorating and enervating and imaged vividly in Hartland pacing through the woods, very much an "animal" figure, praying for spiritual constancy's renewal.[15]

Hartland seems sincere in his promises to avoid sexual activity with men, and one of the most remarkable things about his autobiography, which the sexologist C. A. Tripp does not note in his 1985 introduction, is that he manages to fuck his vow six ways from Sunday and yet not undermine its energy or earnestness. In one of the only academic treatments of Hartland's narrative, Adam Sonstegard makes the compelling case for its rhetorical complexity, arguing that Hartland "narrates supposed perversity to a mainstream audience of physicians, while simultaneously winking toward a narrower group who could detect in Hartland's prose a subtler appeal for sympathy" or even a coded personal advertisement outlining his sexual prowess, proclivities, and, given the cruising cartography of St. Louis offered in street names and intersections, places of sexual availability.[16] As Sonstegard notes, the serious "case study" genre Hartland sets for his narrative—and that social circumstances set for him as the only acceptable reason for such scandalous material to circulate—sits uncomfortably with the level of arguably unnecessary detail he provides about his pleasures, disgusts, peripatetic wanderings, and moody flights of fancy and frustration.[17] But if the text's unwieldiness is in part a function of Hartland's felt compulsion to "perform perversity for a normative audience" and to "court that audience's approval by renouncing [his] way of life," it is worth exploring how he is able, at some level, to succeed at that renunciation despite serially and even sometimes indulgently undermining it.[18] Might the comparison of his swelling desire to a gathering storm amount to more than a metaphor and gesture to an environment capacious enough both to support an oath's articulation and to cushion its inevitable unraveling?

Before I proceed to a further elaboration of Hartland's atmospheric discourse, I need to introduce a slightly different sense of "the environment" than the one I have been invoking thus far. In her analysis of Proust's

treatment of "atmospheric pressure," to which I will soon return, Sedgwick cites D. W. Winnicott's idea of the infant's holding environment; that is, the nurturant space between infant and mother in which the vulnerable infant feels secure, supported, and confident that the world can hold up to, and make room for, its polymorphous unruliness. "Holding" here implies being held and continuing to be held despite resistance and bad behavior that might be interpreted as undeserving of unstinting care and devotion. As Melanie Klein notes in her reflections on weaning,

> everything which makes the baby feel that it is surrounded with friendly objects, though these are, to begin with, conceived of, for the most part, as "good breasts", prepares the ground for and contributes to the building up of a happy relation to the mother and later on to other people around him.[19]

To the extent that Winnicott's and Klein's traditional and heteronormative accounts of child-rearing treat the mother as everything to the baby, they frame her as the baby's weather and climate. And if we are to operate in a somewhat less rigidly heteronormative manner, then we would need to say that this mother-weather, no matter how elemental and edifying, must exercise some degree of independent agency and elasticity such that the baby is able, in the style of Freud's fort-da, to trust that the mother's withdrawal is never permanent and that her love, though temperamental, is never merely temporary. That this isn't entirely a question of the mother's physical presence is supported by Michael Eigen who, like Sedgwick, cites Winnicott and Balint in conceiving of an "infinite unknown background that supports existence in a relatively seamless way" and argues that what is ultimately being supported by this "background presence" is "the baby's aloneness," that is, its feeling that it is understood, or stood under, even when it is corporeally distant from those charged with its continuing care.[20] And if the baby can adjust to her aloneness by coming to trust a presence that is there only intermittently, and therefore present in a cloudy way even in its absence, then the baby is learning to tolerate a changing environment on the understanding that this environment can withstand, or again stand under, his own inconsistency and variability.

But what I hope to be illustrating is that this different, psychic sense of environment is really not that different after all. As Sedgwick explains with a brief foray into the history of modern meteorology, "the computer's vast increase of human computational powers" allows "science to conceptualize together the absolutely rule-bound cyclical economy of [feedback] processes, on the one hand, and on the other hand the irreducibly unpredictable contingency of the actual weather."[21] This potent "juncture" of "chaos" and discernible "complexity," Sedgwick elaborates, "is the matrix, the growing point, of

narrative and reflection in Proust," which is to say it is his point of "access to a psychology of surprise and refreshment."[22] Of interest to Proust and Sedgwick is how the weather functions as a continual and supportive presence in our lives whilst simultaneously undergoing and imposing infinite modulations in temperature, wind speed, humidity, dewpoint, and especially "atmospheric pressure," each of which supplies an opportunity for reorientation, refreshment, possible reflection, and even sometimes excited recrudescence.

Probing how Proust's narrator fashions himself an "animated barometer," Sedgwick notes that unlike other aspects of the weather

> air pressure is a subtle, invisible, and indivisibly systemic index of weather. A thermometer responds to a quality, heat, that's easy to perceive and interpret in isolation. The measure of barometric pressure, on the other hand, means nothing at all outside a dynamic interpretive context.[23]

As Judith Butler argues, "at stake" in Proust's and Sedgwick's careful attention to the conditions of breath—their subtle and nonparanoid hermeneutic open to surprise but certainly not, given asthmatic anxieties, unsuspicious or postcritical—is "a basic reordering of how we understand what is most fundamental to being a body in the world."[24] Unlike other objects with which the subject enters into an ambivalent relationship—its desire for them inseparable from its desire to "mangle and maul" them and to "master, devour, and abuse them"—the air cannot be defeated or fully consumed by the subject, with any act of aggression against it depending fundamentally upon its simultaneous incorporation as inhalation, and its enduring survival is what allows the subject to survive as well.[25]

Thinking along similar lines and citing work by German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk that builds on untranslated material from the Austrian philosopher Thomas Macho positing a "respiratory phase" for the infant, Leo Bersani writes that

> the newborn child's first partner in the outside world is the air it breathes, which "possesses unmistakable nobject qualities, as it affords the incipient subject a first chance at self-activity in respiratory autonomy, but without ever appearing as a thing with which to have a relationship."[26]

For Macho, "nobject" refers to an object with no "subject-like counterpart," meaning that the pre-oral stage self does not get or need to enter into a relationship with the nobject—examples other than air include amniotic fluid and the umbilical cord—but instead finds the nobject to be an "intimate augmenter" of its subjective capacities and therefore something like a partner helping to enact or, in a more utopian vein, preview a less defensive, individualistic, and ego-driven mode of subjectivity.[27] Bersani misses some critical

opportunities to imagine the air as an intimate detractor in cases of disease, disability, and environmental pollution, but his reflections on receptivity help us, along with Sedgwick, to imagine the air as a pedagogical instrument teaching patience, surprise, reciprocity, and forgiveness. What we learn from the weather, and learn to appreciate tolerantly in ourselves and in others, is a mutability we can rely on and an errancy we can experience as queerly dependable—if, that is, we follow scholars like Jasbir Puar in conceiving of queerness and queer bodies as, at least in part, "assemblages" that "allow us to attune to movements, intensities, emotions, energies, affectivities, and textures as they inhabit events, spatiality, and corporealities."[28] To Puar's spatially and temporally rich account of a subjectivity that cannot be captured by the "freeze-framing" approach of intersectionality, we might add a climate that is both stable and unstable enough to handle all that Deleuzian and Massumian becoming.[29]

This relative stability/instability returns us to Catullus and "Blueberry Hill" and to the fact that if the weather is the arena in which performatives form and gather force, it is also the environment in which they deform (Sedgwick speaks, in a slightly different way, about "deformatives"), grow hazy, and scatter to the winds.[30] With Andrew Parker, Sedgwick writes of the oblique angles at which queers approach the marital "I do," be it their painfully lived experience of the degree to which the "I" only counts fully as an "I"—to the family, the nation, the church, and many other institutions—when it says, at long last, "I do," or their discomfort bordering on disgust at being compelled to serve as witnesses to a ritual predicated (at least until recently) on their exclusion and on an uncritical identification with a warmongering State invested possessively in whiteness.[31] Sedgwick and Parker do a brilliant job of explaining how the conjugal connection depends on "the bare, negative, potent but undiscretionary speech act of [queers'] physical presence"—a tacit and mandatory agreement of "we don't speak now, we forever hold our peace"—but perhaps part of what helps these queers endure the spectacle is the equally tacit knowledge that there is relief and maybe even freedom to be found in being the sort of I, or not-I, that does not want for itself the scene it is made to survey or that feels that even if it did one day participate in such a scene, it would not experience the encounter as the be-all and end-all of life or as the singular culmination of elective intimacy. Or maybe, and less critically, the queer spectator finds something in the environment that can hold him even when the ceremony cannot, such as the sun glistening on the stained-glass windows of the cathedral or, in the far preferable case of an outdoor wedding, a chill in the air or drop in pressure serving the reminder that, thank heavens, nothing lasts forever. My point is that if there is reassurance to be found in the many supports for a performative's success, normative or otherwise, there is also reassurance to be found in the many supports for its disintegration and demise.

For Hartland, this reassurance attaches not to a vow he makes to a woman but rather to the vow he makes to himself (though we could also say to the missing woman in whom he is supposed to be concentrating his erotic energy) to discontinue his onanism and erotic escapades with men. As I have documented, he betrays this vow time and again and attributes his inconstancy, at least in part, to an overwhelming desire that takes him and his all-too-human willpower by storm. But more often than he speaks of a storm, Hartland speaks less dramatically about a vaporous feeling—not unlike the changes in atmospheric pressure explored by Proust and Sedgwick—that comes over him in the company of men. On one of the first occasions, his "whole being seemed to dissolve into a kind of vaporous film that wrapped itself" around a pupil, referred to affectionately in the chapter title as "My Boy," with whom he shared a bed.[32] Although Hartland insists there is "no passion" in his love for this pupil, the feeling of vaporous dissolution does involve the pupil bestowing a not unwelcomed kiss upon him. But when the "strange, drowsy, vaporous feeling" descends again, this time with an older pupil, Hartland admits it is "strongly colored with lust" and produces a "weight on [his] head" also described as a "pressure on [his] brow," as if lust's advent, like Spring or a change in atmospheric pressure, is heralded by a sinus headache.[33] And later, in a chapter histrionically titled "Four Months of Paradise," Hartland succumbs—after some initial though not entirely believable hesitation—to a man's "vow" that he will love Hartland "as long as he lived," after which "the sweet vaporous feeling of which I have spoken before clung around me all the time and stupefied my senses to all things inharmonious to my musical soul."[34] From within this "invisible veil" supplied by the vapor, Hartland is able to trust the man's vow, though it will prove to be short-lived, just as he is able, despite all the evidence to the contrary, to have some confidence in his own vows of sexual abstention and purity of thought.[35] Of course, "vapor" has connotations of a nervous disorder—and perhaps Hartland had those associations in mind with his repeated use of the term—but in these passages vapor's implication of exhalation suggests that it has something, if not everything, to do with his vows, that is, with his ability to receive and give breath and, when those breaths have expired, to receive and give breath again. If Hartland's vows and desires recede only to appear again, well, then, so too does the weather, and it is precisely their coming and going, their flow and their ebb, that makes them of a piece with his augmenting but certainly not elective respiration. So long as there is vapor, Hartland can vow, and the very vaporous conditions mean that Hartland's vows can be absorbed in all their sincerity and in all their spuriousness.

If I seem without warrant to be conscripting Hartland into environmentalist service, I should conclude by pointing out that the early chapters of the autobiography show a young Hartland engaged in a constant give-and-take with the natural world. Not only are his "playmates the birds and flowers"

but he feels also that "the trees and flowers suffered and rejoiced as [he] did," in which case an admission of being "sensitive in the extreme," intended as proof of effeminacy, doubles as a queer ecological imagination connecting Hartland's vulnerability to the vulnerability of many other creatures.[36] Having "developed an intense interest in all scenes of sorrow and suffering," Hartland becomes an amateur mortician and "constructs coffins of all kinds" that are "varnished and lined with the greatest care, and kept in readiness for dead dolls, fowls, and even animals of a manageable size."[37] A self-described "undertaker," Hartland gives to nonhuman others what he perceives most humans in his life will not give him—a background presence, or holding environment, for his most morbid tendencies.[38] Although his claim of being "helpless" and "powerless" in the face of his homosexuality is no doubt meant to conjure the benevolence of his medical audience and to downplay any sense of choice in his erotic engagements, his words apply also to members of a natural world whose deaths he experiences as miniature versions of his own.[39] To avow that helplessness and that powerlessness is to affirm, acknowledge, and imagine a world that can sustain them and that can supply breath to even the feeblest of vows. That this fragile reciprocity is a matter of life and death is confirmed by Hartland's sense that "the list of suicides without apparent cause" that has "swollen to alarming proportions" in recent years might be fueled by men who desire as Hartland does but who cannot abide their inability to hew to their promises.[40] To these men, Hartland's narrative restores some breath, and its conviction that if the vapors will descend, they will also lift, serves the important reminder that the climate's reliable rhythms, which work to keep the beat of Hartland's "musical soul," correspond and give cadence to the very idea of lability itself—meaning that as humans continue their transformation from biological into destructively geological actors, they risk losing the environmental cues by which they come to learn that change can be tolerated, inconsistency can be weathered, and absence need not be permanent. They risk losing, that is, the seasonality of sexuality and the ambient conditions in which queerness can thrive.

Notes

1 Catullus, 70.
2 Sedgwick, *The Weather in Proust*, 8.
3 Lewis, "Blueberry Hill."
4 Hartland, *The Story of a Life*, 8.
5 Kahan, *The Book of Minor Perverts*, 7.
6 Hurley, *Circulating Queerness*, 14.
7 Hartland, *The Story of a Life*, 28.
8 Hartland, *The Story of a Life*, 51.
9 Hartland, *The Story of a Life*, 33.
10 Hartland, *The Story of a Life*, 52–53.
11 Hartland, *The Story of a Life*, 53–54.

12 Hartland, *The Story of a Life*, 56.
13 Hartland, *The Story of a Life*, 57.
14 Trask, *Cruising Modernism*, 18.
15 Hartland, *The Story of a Life*, 33.
16 Sonstegard, "Performing the 'Unnatural' Life," 546, 561–562.
17 Sonstegard, "Performing the 'Unnatural' Life," 554.
18 Sonstegard, "Performing the 'Unnatural' Life," 553.
19 Klein, *Love, Guilt, and Reparation*, 297–298.
20 Eigen, *A Felt Sense*, 14.
21 Sedgwick, *The Weather*, 4.
22 Sedgwick, *The Weather*, 4.
23 Sedgwick, *The Weather*, 8–9.
24 Butler, "Proust at the End," 63.
25 Butler, "Proust at the End," 64.
26 Bersani, *Receptive Bodies*, 96.
27 Bersani, *Receptive Bodies*, 95–97.
28 Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 215.
29 Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 213.
30 Sedgwick, "Queer Performativity," 3.
31 Parker and Sedgwick, "Introduction," 10.
32 Hartland, *The Story of a Life*, 62.
33 Hartland, *The Story of a Life*, 65–66.
34 Hartland, *The Story of a Life*, 80.
35 Hartland, *The Story of a Life*, 80.
36 Hartland, *The Story of a Life*, 7.
37 Hartland, *The Story of a Life*, 10–11.
38 Hartland, *The Story of a Life*, 11.
39 Hartland, *The Story of a Life*, 16.
40 Hartland, *The Story of a Life*, xv.

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22

QUEER AFFECTIVE LABOR IN ELIZABETH BOWEN'S *FRIENDS AND RELATIONS*

Tiffany D. Ball

In her radio broadcast, "On Not Rising to the Occasion" (1956), Elizabeth Bowen discusses her experiences as a child growing up in the Edwardian era. She recalls that, whenever her family would have company, she was required to be "on view." She was told to "act natural" but discovered that this directive meant something complicated, that she needed to obey a set of rules for appropriate emotions and display:

> One would have to express, to register, something *extra*. Pleasure: "Aunt Emmeline is coming, you know, today: do show her how happy you are to see her." Gratitude, for a present or a party: "And don't just mumble 'Thank you': do smile, too!" Sympathy, with a grief: "Look, here's poor Mrs. X coming down the street: you need not say anything: just let her *see* you're sorry!" Interest, in anything that a senior chose to explain to one, tell one or point out to one. Enthusiasm, for anything one was caused to see—scenery, famous or noble persons, some dreary, intricate curio from the East.[1]

Bowen goes on to say that she doesn't mean that her childhood was an "emotional forcing-house" or otherwise exceptional in any way.[2] These directions for her emotions prepared her for ordinary life, which often turned out to be "a continuous rising to an occasion."[3]

Bowen sees emotions as more than a private experience, something happening in the psyche; feelings are part of social performance and susceptible to management and the will. While "natural" feeling might be considered spontaneous, Bowen demonstrates how much of this behavior is learned, how much of feeling is about being "appropriate to the circumstances,

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predictable, [and] understandable."[4] What Bowen is talking about here, although she doesn't name it as such, is the affective labor we do daily to reproduce social life both inside and outside the family, within the public and the private sphere, on behalf of individuals and institutions. Sociologist Arlie Hochschild's groundbreaking work on the emotional labor of flight attendants defines affective labor as the work required "to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others."[5] Hochschild goes on to say that, of course, we have to abide by certain "feeling rules"—that is, the norms that govern "the duration, strength, time, and placement of a feeling"—in our personal lives but that when we have to do this on behalf of an institution, such as a multinational corporation, we can become alienated from our feelings.[6] While I question the notion of authentic feelings from which the self is alienated, Hochschild's analysis is useful for understanding the work that goes into feeling displays, particularly when the performance of a particular feeling *feels* onerous, instead of "natural," to the affective subject. Bowen is self-aware about these rules because, by her own admission, she wasn't very good at her affective performances; her emotional displays were *off*, too intense in their expression of pleasure or gratitude. Affective labor is only evident when norms of feeling become repetitious and incongruous enough to be denaturalized, when we fail to, in Bowen's terms, "rise to the occasion."

In this chapter, I use the notion of affective labor to examine Bowen's seldom-read second novel *Friends and Relations* (1931) in order to offer some fresh directions for both critical work on Bowen and for the study of queer affect more generally.[7] While questions of affect are now ubiquitous in studies of queer modernism, affect has not been discussed explicitly in terms of work. Rather, affect in queer studies has often been connected to identity—its consolidation or shattering—or considered as part of the libidinal drive.[8] In what follows, I argue that Bowen exposes the affective labor that goes into propping up social relations and making the textual representation of feeling intelligible as narrative. Moreover, I show that, through her use of blasé female protagonists, Bowen exposes not only the emotional demands of heteronormative femininity but also calls attention to the work that goes into forming queer communities among women. Through Bowen, I ask: How might we queer affective labor?

Seeing the "Unseen Director": Feeling Rules and Affective Labor

Told in three parts, Elizabeth Bowen's *Friends and Relations* (1931) opens on a gloomy wedding day in which Edward Tilney marries Laurel Studdart, much to the disappointment of her sister Janet, who seems to be in love with the bridegroom. On the rebound, Janet agrees to marry Rodney Meggatt. The catch is: Rodney's uncle Considine had an affair, years prior, with Lady

Elfrida, Edward's mother, which resulted in Lady Elfrida's divorce. Edward protests the engagement, claiming that he was traumatized as a child by these events, but eventually relents. Janet and Rodney marry, awkwardly uniting the families. The next two parts take place ten years later. The uneasy peace between the Tilney and Meggatt households is broken by Janet and Rodney inviting both Considine and Lady Elfrida to their estate, Batts, at the same time that Laurel and Edward's children are visiting from London. Enraged, Edward rushes off to Batts to retrieve his children but "finds himself overwhelmed instead by his long-suppressed love for Janet."[9] By the end of the novel, Janet and Edward confess their love but choose to return to their families, refusing the model offered by Elfrida's disastrous passion.

One could say, then, that *Friends and Relations* is a novel about Janet's repressed desire, about sacrificing individual want for community need. Ironically, though, one of the major complaints leveled against Bowen's underread work is that it lacks "compelling feeling."[10] Even though the reader is informed from the first chapter "that Janet loved Edward, that his mother preferred Janet; that for Janet this was a day of chagrin, possibly of despair," it is difficult to believe in Janet's love.[11] Maud Ellmann explains this fact by calling Janet "the stillest of Bowen's arrested characters" and attributing her stunted development to "the impasse of … romance [which] has condemned her to a form of living death."[12] This psychoanalytic explanation makes sense in how it accounts for the origins of Janet's blasé characterization, which is described as "blank."[13] But even if Ellmann can explain the source of Janet's emotional impasse and her blank affect, how do we account for its performative effects? What can her blasé attitude show us about the interrelation of gender, sexuality, and emotion?

From the perspective of affect studies, to say that *Friends and Relations* lacks "compelling feeling" means that the novel doesn't conform to the norms of feeling that define its represented identities. This is most apparent through Janet's characterization because there are numerous examples in which Janet performs emotion in such a way as to be out of line with social and narrative expectations. For instance, after Janet agrees to marry Rodney, she discusses him with Laurel. Laurel expects her sister to confide in her, to be overcome with joy at the prospect of marrying during "a summer when men were so few," but instead, Janet seems unfazed and merely directs her sister to look at Rodney and "see" for herself.[14] Laurel replies, "But oh, Janet, do try and be less extraordinary!"[15] In another notable instance later in the novel, Janet finds her daughter Hermione and Laurel's daughter Anna up past their bedtimes. She "[tells] herself" that "this was shocking" and performs as though she feels shocked, scolding the girls for being up so late.[16]

In both cases, Janet's performance of feeling is represented as eccentric to expected emotional performances. In the first instance, she is out of the

ordinary as a woman engaged to a handsome, eligible bachelor; in the second, she has to willfully display motherly concern. Her performed feeling is unintelligible according to the norms of feeling between sisters, of companionate marriage, of presumed heterosexual desire, and of motherhood. Through her emphasis on how Janet *should be* feeling or, at least, the contrast between how Janet should be displaying affect and her failure to do so, Bowen calls attention to Hochschild's feeling rules, or the disciplinary norms of feeling associated with particular situations, relationships, and identities. Typically, these feeling rules remain part of the "promptings of an unseen director," but Bowen brings these expectations for feeling to the surface of the text.[17] Particularly, her novel calls attention to the compulsory feelings associated with a convincing performance of motherhood and heterosexuality by emphasizing Janet's refusal of or belabored uptake of these norms. According to Hochschild, emotional labor is the work required "to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others."[18] In a case of refused affective labor, Janet's "inexpressive" affect disappoints her sister while her performance of shock for the children produces the desired effect on them: they go to sleep.[19]

While Hochschild's definition of emotional labor could easily be read as positing the ontological fact of an authentic emotional life that is being oppressed by power, it seems to me that it could also be read epistemologically. That is, Hochschild is not only interested in what emotional labor *is* but rather how we can *know* it: "We are most likely to sense a feeling rule as a feeling rule … when we are not strongly attached to a culture or role."[20] At a distance from any set of emotional norms, we notice that our feelings (or lack thereof) are incongruous with expectations. We then notice the labor that goes into sustaining the social itself. It isn't knowable as labor if it doesn't feel like labor. This is the same idea behind the truism that if you love what you do, you will never work a day in your life. Logically, this is patently false; however, phenomenologically, it makes a certain sense. It is only when we manage our feelings, exert our will so that our emotional displays align with expectations, that we notice the work that goes into sustaining identities, relationships, and social interactions.

Janet operates in the text as the reader's primary way of knowing emotional labor because it is through her character that Bowen denaturalizes not only the roles of fiancé and mother but also of the human itself. Faced with her sister's frustration, Janet confesses to Laurel, "I don't feel much, I suppose. I've always had to do something, or arrange for something, or answer a letter. I don't even know what people are like."[21] Janet's inability "to know what people are like" places her not exactly outside humanity but at least askance of it; she sounds like an automaton here, doing without feeling. She struggles to approximate the role of fiancé because she doesn't know what it is like; feeling, Bowen suggests, is imitative, a copy without an original.[22]

Whatever the origin of Janet's detachment, the effect of Janet's detachment is to call attention to the emotional labor that goes into the performance of femininity and heteronormativity—that which qualifies one as intelligibly human. In this way, the lack of "compelling feeling" in *Friends and Relations* shouldn't be seen as a failure of the text but rather part of the novel's openness to a deconstructionist account of feelings and to a politicized Bowen, one who brings our attention to the (re)productive labor that goes into sustaining the social.

Historically within Marxist and Marxist feminist thought, there has been a separation between reproductive and productive labor, a line drawn between the private work of, say, a housewife caring for a child and the public commodification of feeling within the service industry.[23] However, this separation has been questioned by theorists such as Michael Hardt, who see all emotional labor, public or private, as a tool of biopolitics; that is, Hardt theorizes affective labor as that which creates social life itself, which is then exploited by global capitalism. Hardt writes, "This [affective] labor is immaterial … in the sense that its products are intangible: a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, passion—even a sense of connectedness or community."[24] There is no outside of emotional labor, no completely asocial place we could occupy that would liberate us from the work of feeling. (For that matter, why would we want to do that?) Thus, Janet isn't positioned as outside the social, as completely refusing affective labor; she is rather a tool that calls attention to when feeling feels like work, pointing out that all feeling is work. Moreover, Bowen's insistence on the often invisible or unrecognized work that goes into managing and displaying our emotions and attempting to know and manage the emotions of others calls attention to the gendered nature of this labor in that it often falls to women or is, at least, feminized. Janet's blasé affect is what attracts Rodney to her because it distinguishes her from the rest of "The Sex" because she has a rather "masculine awareness of 'situation.'"[25] While other women "set stages out on to which one stepped unawares and where it was impossible to be behave without consciousness," Janet lacks aptitude at recognizing feeling rules and at emotional management, thus, calling attention to feminine gender norms through her eccentricity to them.[26]

Bowen's novel isn't just another iteration of the modernist rejection of sentimentality through recourse to the blasé. Janet's unconvincing affect draws attention to feeling work done in the name of heteronormative femininity, work that is often seen as private experience but which is the result of affective norms. Janet is not alone in this. Bowen writes blasé female characters: emotionally distant women, lacking in affective display and disconnected from social life. Identified by several scholars as traumatized or stunted, they might also be described as enacting a refusal to perform the emotional labor of femininity.

"Association Between Females": Queer Affective Labor

In his "The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman," Sigmund Freud analyzes and dissects a young woman's desire for an older "cocotte."[27] Amongst other explanations, Freud argues his commonly alleged point that we search for our parents in our love objects, that every love object is a substitute for someone lost. At one point, he calls his patient's desire for this older woman "a yearning from the beginning for a kinder mother."[28] This logic has, of course, been used to be dismissive of queer sexuality; however, it also begs the question: what does it mean to look for a mother substitute? What is the affective nature of this desire?

We can read Freud's analysis of female homosexuality as one that emphasizes how what we look for in our sexual partners is someone who will do affective labor for us. A desire for a substitute mother is arguably a desire for the ultimate symbol of emotional work. Oddly, Freud is not far here from aligning with the controversial yet highly influential work of Adrienne Rich, which expands the definition of lesbian to include multiple forms of "woman-identification." She argues that compulsory heterosexuality assures the "male right of physical, economical, and *emotional access*" and that lesbian identification should be freed from its "limiting clinical associations" to include the affective bonds between mothers and children, friends, lovers, and feminists.[29] In short, Rich defines lesbianism as an affective position rather than or in addition to a libidinal one and, in a certain sense, urges women to abandon doing emotional labor for ungrateful, oppressive men to do it instead for other women.

Both Freud and Rich, while highlighting the affective dynamics of women's relationships, elide the work that is involved in these emotional attachments. Rich speaks of the work that must be done by heterosexual feminists when faced with their heteronormativity and the work that women do for men, but stresses lesbian relationships as defined by mutuality and the "sharing of work."[30] The tendency to see forms of queer life, intimacy, and reproduction as somehow outside the realm of the social and, thus, without the emotional labor involved in forming social networks is still present in queer studies. For instance, Lee Edelman's definition of homosexuality as fundamentally asocial and death-driven imagines queerness as the antithesis of reproductive futurity in the name of the social order. Even those interested in queer affect rarely conceptualize this in terms of work, emphasizing instead how affect undoes identity or exceeds discourse. How might we queer affective labor and see the affective labor of queerness?

Bowen's fiction, I argue, offers a point of departure for thinking about this question. While *Friends and Relations* calls attention to the affective labor of marriage and motherhood, it is also true that Bowen's queer female characters are portrayed as unidealized, specifically as affectively demanding. Bowen

tends to place her blasé female protagonists in situations that highlight not only the emotional demands of heteronormativity but also the work that goes into forming queer sociality and queer communities between women. For instance, in *To the North* (1933), Bowen creates another blasé character, Emmeline, who owns a travel agency. She has a secretary called Mrs. Tripp who, when Emmeline suggests that Tripp's shorthand isn't any good, directly confronts Emmeline about her emotional indifference. Tripp complains that Emmeline takes "no notice," that she could faint and Emmeline would go about her work, that working for her is like working "for a stone."[31] Tripp's demand is essentially a demand for Emmeline's affective labor—specifically interest, attention, and empathy to bring them together *as women*: Tripp thinks,

> But where was the confidence? Where were the smiles, the gleams of satirical understanding, the dear sense of impositions endured together, of jokes shared grimly enough, that should cement an *association between females*? Not by as much as a glance did Emmeline say: "We are here to suffer."[32]

The meager pay Tripp receives isn't what she is after by working at the travel agency. She desires "a sense of connectedness or community" between women that involves the exclusion of men, particularly Emmeline's business partner Peter.[33] Tripp's desire is more akin to the female complaint, as defined by Lauren Berlant, than to a feminist one: that is, Tripp looks to Emmeline for a community of two defined by women's suffering rather than their political goals. However, the scene still underlines that affective labor facilitates processes of woman identification, an identity constituted by emotional networks rather than by anything like a female essence.

Bowen is satirizing Tripp in this scene. Catching the detached Emmeline completely by surprise, Tripp is figured as melodramatic: "Emmeline felt for a moment they must be engaged in unholy theatricals: such things did not happen this side of the footlights. No one had struck this note in the office before."[34] We can see this as part of Bowen's modernist rejection of melodrama or sentimentality, but the metaphor of performance also serves to emphasize a desire for an audience, a community, and an exchange of emotional display. Tripp craves a community of two that reaches out to include all women who feel. However, Emmeline, like Janet, is figured as eccentric to the social, almost above humanity, and she exposes (and rejects) the emotional work that goes into such community creation. Tripp's desire for an emotional attachment to Emmeline blurs woman-identification into queer relationality when she admits that her interest in her employer isn't just as a member of a group but as a singular "you": she claims, "I shouldn't stay here a moment if it were not for you."[35] Here, Tripp moves from the affective

labor of group affiliation to that of a couple, though she never attains it. Tripp is but a minor character in the novel, and Emmeline gives all her love to the undeserving cad, Markie, dismissing Tripp and eventually dying.

The queer aspects of emotional labor are better articulated in *Friends and Relations* through the relationship between Janet and Theodora Thirdman, the queerest character in the novel. Theodora first meets Janet at Laurel's wedding when she is only fifteen and on the outskirts of the social circle formed by the families Tilney and Studdart. Despite the fact that no one seems to like her, Theodora keeps in touch with Janet and winds up playing a role in Janet's failed love affair with Edward when she writes Edward a letter from Batts informing him that Elfrida and Considine are there. Theodora is coded as a lesbian or "female invert" in several ways, but it is ultimately her affective intensity that makes her eccentric to both the norms of sexual object choice and the novel's affective norms.[36] For instance, Lady Elfrida bemoans Theodora's "passions for women—awkward, such a tax on behavior, like nausea at meals."[37] The gender of Theodora's objects of "passion" may play a role in Elfrida's distaste, but, given Elfrida's own queer preference for Janet, it seems that it is the intensity of "passion" that troubles her most. Heteronormativity, of course, impacts the issue here; women's passions are normatively directed at men. But Theodora also violates the emotional norms of relationships between women in such a way that suggests that she has overstepped the rules of social etiquette. As Theodora herself says, "I love [Janet] beyond propriety."[38] It suggests that passion is more a violation of manners, that is, feeling rules, than something that is fundamentally asocial and deviant.[39] Thus, Theodora is affectively queer, not just libidinally queer—that is, her character's feelings are eccentric in the sense that they don't follow the "feeling rules" for the social class within which Theodora operates.

While Theodora does desire Janet, the dominating affect of their relationship is *interest*. For instance, as Janet performs her domestic duties, "the whole of Theodora's attention weighted her movements," an attention that she desires Janet to return.[40] As Janet feels this "oppressive" affective demand, Janet plans to "at twenty to one, … cross to the sofa, sit idle lest Theodora should be offended, give her entire attention, say: 'Well, Theodora …?'"[41] Janet sees her relationship with Theodora as requiring just as much emotional labor as her performance of the roles of fiancé and mother, perhaps even more so. Thus, Bowen implies that, in terms of the demands on women's capacity to manage the emotional lives of themselves and others, queer relationships are similar to the affective demands of normative femininity. The attempt at mutual interest, the mutuality implied by Rich's definition of woman identification, is undermined by the affective differences between Theodora and Janet. Unlike Theodora, Janet does not wish to "unbosom" herself, a feminized term for the exchange of interest, sympathy, and confidences.[42] Theodora's desire for Janet's attention is not only about the creation of a

queer couple—she wishes to "discount Rodney and all the others" so that they can be "tête-à-tête"—but also about Theodora's desire for a larger queer affiliation.[43] Interest, according to Silvan Tomkins, is the most fundamental affect in that it sustains "the necessary and the possible."[44] Interest enables the drives, but it also propels cognition, attachment, and the social itself. Returning to *Friends and Relations*, we see Theodora's demand for interest from Janet as a demand for the affective labor that would create queer community. You can't very well manage the emotions of others without the bare minimum of interest which acts as the "support of sensory input, of memory, of thought and of action."[45] Interest is thus the foundational affect of emotional labor.

Theodora is perhaps not alone in her attempt to create queer sociality. Janet herself confesses to Elfrida that she married Rodney not because she loved him but because she "wanted to be related"—a queer form of community with the (doubly) repressed objects of desire, Edward and Elfrida herself.[46] However, when Elfrida begins to narrate her experiences as a freshly divorced woman living in Paris, Janet stops her—thinking "I wish she wouldn't"—and changes the conversation with a comment on how late it is getting.[47] If Janet desires some form of queer sociality—with Elfrida, with Theodora whom she continues to invite places although she annoys everyone, even with Edward for whom her love is a shade incestuous—she cannot bring herself to do the feeling work that these "relations" require. We can see Janet as representative of the modernist blasé attempt to remain "aloof from public circulations of feeling."[48] While this might enable the modern subject in the city to create what Georg Simmel described as "a protective organ for itself," it also makes it difficult to form feminist or queer communities between Bowen's queer characters and her blasé protagonists.[49]

While Janet's inability to give Theodora the emotional labor she desires is based on heteronormative formulations of who is deserving of emotion, Bowen's examples of the affective demands of queer relationships bring attention to the often-unseen labor that goes into relationships between women, queer or not. Emotional labor, then, offers a way of thinking about intimacy that is eccentric to the hetero-homo binary. Edward and Theodora are both characterized by their emotional needs. By the conclusion, we are supposed to think that Janet's blasé affect has been inauthentic. She does, in fact, feel desire for Edward and her heterosexuality and motherhood only require affective labor because she married the wrong man; if she had married the right one, it wouldn't feel like work. Yet we can read Janet's return to Rodney as representative of Bowen's rejection of intense feeling and the affective labor that would be required for Janet to manage Edward's feelings. In fact, Edward and Theodora are emotionally aligned for Janet: "Something was always the matter with Theodora—something was generally the matter with Edward."[50] Both are affectively demanding. At the end of the day, whether gay or straight, love is just too much work.

Notes

1 Bowen, "On Not Rising to the Occasion," 107–108. Original emphasis.
2 Bowen, "On Not Rising to the Occasion," 108.
3 Bowen, "On Not Rising to the Occasion," 109.
4 "natural," *OED Online*.
5 Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 7. Hochschild first discussed emotional labor in *The Managed Heart*. Since then, it has been widely taken up within Marxist, feminist, and sociological studies. See, for instance, Hardt and Negri, *Empire*; and Weeks, *The Problem with Work*. For an excellent review essay and critique of Hardt, Negri, and Weeks, see Oksala, "Affective Labor and Feminist Politics."
6 Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 56.
7 Affect is a tricky word, as is evidenced by the many theorists who have attempted to dissect its meaning. The problem with affect often boils down to questions of where it comes from and its difference from emotion. Does it emanate from the subject? Is it imposed from without by culture? Is affect more bodily than emotion, which is cognitive? I will not attempt to answer these tricky questions in the space of this essay but will instead use the terms "affect," "emotion," and "feeling" interchangeably to discuss interactions between subjects and objects that involve both bodily and cognitive processes as I see distinctions between these terms often reify body/mind dualism. See Flatley's *Affective Mapping* for a glossary of affect terminologies.
8 For example, Love's *Feeling Backward* analyzes bad feelings including shame as they interrupt the consolidation of gay and lesbian identity. Likewise, Sedgwick's *Touching Feeling* focuses on the performative effects of shame and its impact on queer relationality.
9 Ellmann, *Elizabeth Bowen*, 89.
10 Ellmann, *Elizabeth Bowen*, 88.
11 Bowen, *Friends and Relations*, 13.
12 Ellmann, *Elizabeth Bowen*, 88.
13 Bowen, *Friends and Relations*, 15. For an account of the modernist blasé and its relationship to satire, see Greenberg, *Modernism, Satire and the Novel*, particularly his chapter on *Cold Comfort Farm* and women's use of the blasé to protest gendered norms of sympathy and sentiment.
14 Bowen, *Friends and Relations*, 18, 25.
15 Bowen, *Friends and Relations*, 25.
16 Bowen, *Friends and Relations*, 63.
17 Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 85.
18 Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 7.
19 Bowen, *Friends and Relations*, 24.
20 Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 75.
21 Bowen, *Friends and Relations*, 25.
22 I borrow my wording from the canonical *Gender Trouble*, in which Butler deploys a deconstructionist argument to expose gender as an imitative, rather than an essential, aspect of psychic life.
23 See Oksala for a review of this division between productive and reproductive labor.
24 Hardt, "Affective Labor," 96.
25 Bowen, *Friends and Relations*, 37.
26 Bowen, *Friends and Relations*, 37.
27 Freud, "Psychogenesis," 147.
28 Freud, "Psychogenesis," 157.
29 Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality," 647, emphasis added; 650.
30 Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality," 650.

31 Bowen, *To the North*, 149.
32 Bowen, *To the North*, 155, emphasis added.
33 Hardt, "Affective Labor," 96.
34 Bowen, *To the North*, 147.
35 Bowen, *To the North*, 151.
36 As several readers have noted, Theodora is openly designated as queer. Cullingford observes that she seems like a copy of Stephen Gordon from Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) and comments on the moments in the texts in which Theodora is queered through her lack of adherence to gender norms, specifically through how she takes up masculinity.
37 Bowen, *Friends and Relations*, 82.
38 Bowen, *Friends and Relations*, 146.
39 Like Tripp, Theodora is also aligned with performance and theatricality. Early in the novel, she discovers an aptitude for acting at school, one that enables her to become the center of interest and to kiss other girls in the play. Later, when she orchestrates the drama that brings Janet and Edward together, she is described as acting "like a stage villain" (146). Bowen seems to associate queerness with theatrical affect, perhaps unsurprising since Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* brought attention to lesbianism through its melodramatic plot in 1928, only a few years before Bowen published these two novels. Given this fact, we could see Bowen's novels as positioning the modernist blasé (Janet, Emmeline) against the melodramatic passion of queerness (Theodora, Tripp).
40 Bowen, *Friends and Relations*, 74.
41 Bowen, *Friends and Relations*, 75.
42 Bowen, *Friends and Relations*, 78.
43 Bowen, *Friends and Relations*, 74.
44 Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, 188.
45 Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, 188.
46 Bowen, *Friends and Relations*, 106.
47 Bowen, *Friends and Relations*, 108.
48 Greenberg, *Modernism, Satire and the Novel*, 25.
49 Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," 326.
50 Bowen, *Friends and Relations*, 75.

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23

FUNNY EMOTIONS

Queer Theory, Affect, and Poetry

Brian Glavey

Deep Gossip, Henry Abelove's 2003 collection of queer literary and cultural criticism, draws its title from "City Midnight Junk Strains," an elegy Allen Ginsberg wrote for fellow poet Frank O'Hara after he was struck down at the age of forty by a dune buggy on Fire Island. Offering a now famous description of his lost friend's brilliance, Ginsberg's poem highlights O'Hara's insistence on the "self-prophetic Personal," calling him a "Curator of funny emotions" and lauding his "common ear / for our deep gossip."[1] This epithet is itself perhaps a funny choice for Abelove's book, which takes neither gossip nor feeling as its explicit subject matter and only turns its attention to these poets in its final essay. But Abelove explains that he takes these terms as "an intimation of an intellectual vocation" that might prove important for queer studies.[2] Although the direction of this vocation would in fact be shaped much more definitively by another book published in 2003, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, Abelove's intimation has proven quite accurate. Following the so-called affective turn inaugurated by Sedgwick and others, queer theory has devoted considerable attention to the reconstruction of an "archive of feelings," to borrow Ann Cvetkovich's phrase, assembling what Sianne Ngai describes as a "bestiary of affects" or what the editors of the *Affect Theory Reader* call "an inventory of shimmers."[3] In roughly the same period, poets, too, have increasingly gravitated toward O'Hara's gossipy, curatorial aesthetic, assembling records of feelings and experiences that, because they exist outside the bounds of heteronormativity, might otherwise have been dismissed as trivial or silly. Poet and critic Chad Bennett, for instance, could be describing either his

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scholarship or his poetry when he insists that a poem might perform "the counterarchival work of recording the affective histories, or funny emotions, omitted from, obscured within, or effaced by official archives and archival practices."[4]

That Abelove should find a vocation for queer studies within the words of one midcentury poet mourning the loss of another suggests that the curation of funny emotions connects queer theory and poetry and offers important insights into both fields. In particular, attending to what Ginsberg describes as O'Hara's "Elegant insistency" on the personal might clarify debates about the relation between the personal and impersonal in the strain of queer theory that develops Sedgwick's commitment to positive affects like happiness, joy, and hope. Indeed, Abelove's nod to O'Hara suggests that the reparative strain of queer theory's affective turn also involves a movement away from the high modernist obscurity of novelists like Henry James and Marcel Proust toward the late modernist poetry of the moment immediately prior to Stonewall. One sees evidence of this shift in the prominence of O'Hara and other midcentury poets in much of the criticism influenced by Sedgwick's reparative criticism: in Michael D. Snediker's *Queer Optimism* and Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts*, for instance, as well as in José Esteban Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia*.[5] Despite their differences, these writers inherit from Sedgwick a sense that writing queer theory might not be that different from writing lyric poetry.

This renewed interest in the theoretical affordances of poetry is an interesting development in its own right. Although many of the critics associated with the establishment of queer theory as a discipline within literary studies in the early nineties had previously written about poetry, the early work in the field is almost exclusively organized around fiction. Indeed, although Sedgwick herself considered the writing of poetry central to her intellectual identity, her scholarship is mostly devoted to the novel. Even her famous essay introducing the concept of reparative reading began its life as the introduction to a project that initially appeared as a special issue of *Studies in the Novel* before being published under the title *Novel Gazing*. And yet, to a certain extent, the narratological origins of reparative reading might be said to conceal the closet lyricism of the concept, a fact hinted at by the ouroboric pun hidden in the collection's title. Queerness for Sedgwick had always been tied in a fundamental way to the first person—one of the animating hypotheses of *Tendencies* is that "there are important senses in which 'queer' can signify only *when attached to the first person*"—but her turn to affect theory makes this attachment to a kind of *lyric I* even more definitive.[6] Although reparative reading makes its original appearance in a book about the novel, its inchoate development is traced in an experimental book of poetry, *A Dialogue on Love*, which uses the poetic form of the *haibun* to move back and forth between Sedgwick's own autobiographical account of her

psychotherapy and the notes of her analyst. Sedgwick's conceptualization of reparative reading, in other words, is worked out specifically in relation to a poetics of oversharing.[7]

Sedgwick's interest in feeling is explicitly connected to an interest in her *own* feelings. This self-reflexive investment has much to do with why many readers have found her writing profoundly generative, but this dynamic also flags a theoretical problem. Lauren Berlant highlights this difficulty in a festschrift for Sedgwick that, after offering a loving account of her methodology, goes on to question its "overvaluation of a certain mode of virtuously intentional, self-reflective personhood."[8] Sedgwick's method, in other words, aligns with a kind of lyric subjectivity that gives Berlant pause: "There is an orientation toward interiority in much queer theory," Berlant asserts, "that brings me up short and makes me wonder: must the project of queerness start 'inside' of the subject and spread out from there?"[9] The centrifugal trajectory of Sedgwick's affect theory is potentially puzzling given that the conceptual value of affect for many thinkers hinges precisely on the way it disrupts the inside-out model of subjectivity. As Sara Ahmed explains, feelings "are not 'in' either the individual or the social, but produce the very surfaces and boundaries that allow the individual and the social to be delineated as if they are objects."[10] Because affects are generated at the interface of a subject and their environment, they are fundamentally relational and thoroughly social. Indeed, affect theory offers a powerful range of concepts for specifying the relationship between different scales, situating the intimacy of personal relationships within wider frames of sociality.

Despite its centrality in the adoption and elaboration of the conceptual vocabulary of affect, Segwickian queer theory thus seems at times at odds with one of the important conceptual foundations of affect theory in general: the distinction between the impersonality of affect and the personalness of emotion. Within psychoanalysis, the use of the term *affect* originates precisely as a means to differentiate between first-person accounts of feeling (*emotion*) and the third-person observations of the analyst (*affect*). Developing this distinction, critics such as Brian Massumi insist that, not only is affect not subjective, it doesn't even require a subject in the first place.[11] Unlike emotions, affects are held to be pre-linguistic, pre-cognitive, and even pre-personal: embodied experiences of sensuous intensities that have not yet been channeled into the normative categories of emotion and signification. To a certain extent, Sedgwick's adoption of the vocabulary of affect is a good example of what Maggie Nelson calls her "want[ing] it both ways," both investing in the specific lexicon of *affect* employed by theorists such as Silvan Tomkins while also relying on the strategic imprecision of colloquial terms like *feeling* as well.[12]

For critics of this strain of theory, the apparent locus of queerness within the deep heart's core of first-person subjectivity threatens to turn attention

away from the realm of collective political action and toward the private domain of subjective experience, an inward turn that mirrors the neoliberal appropriation of queerness as a matter of private preference rather than an urgent demand for radical structural transformation. David Kurnick, for instance, has argued that Sedgwick's reparative reading essay has bequeathed a tradition that replaces debates about interpretive method with debates about personal character, a question less of how literary critics read than of how they feel about themselves when they do so. In this account, certain versions of queer affect studies flying under the flag of Sedgwick's reparativity might be seen as committed to transforming literary criticism into a ritual of self-care, generating not new insights about interpretation but only a "misguided, pop-psychologized way to talk about our discipline."[13] Such a development, from Kurnick's perspective, has lost sight of queer theory's commitment to telling hard truths, its professional alignment with the project of "*calling bullshit*."[14]

There is to be sure a certain truth to such accounts. But recent postcritical celebrations of Sedgwick's work don't necessarily do justice to the fact that reparative criticism—despite Sedgwick's own self-contextualization—has not abandoned truth telling. To return to Abelove's gloss of Ginsberg and O'Hara, such work might be seen as driven by the conviction that "*funny emotions* lead the way to *deep gossip*, and that *deep gossip* fosters *funny emotions*." This conduit for the transformation back and forth between certain kinds of feelings and certain kinds of speech acts suggests a model of affect theory that remains emphatically theoretical, which is to say that it produces knowledge. Listening to deep gossip is not surface reading.[15] Never simply a celebration of marginalized feelings and experiences, it is also an epistemological project that takes up the task of assigning contexts and meanings, to recognition and discovery as well as preservation of knowledge that might otherwise be forgotten.

In this chapter, I would like to suggest that the poetic tradition from which Abelove draws offers useful clarification of these debates about the personalness of affect and of criticism's relation to it. After all, arguments about the admissibility of the personal were central to the contested legacy of modernism in the middle of the twentieth century. It is worth noting, in this regard, how much Berlant's reservations about interiority come to rhyme in potentially surprising ways with T. S. Eliot's doctrine of modernist impersonality. Suggesting as a counter to Sedgwick's reparativity an attention to "the impersonality of the structures and practices that conventionalize desire, intimacy, and even one's own personhood," Berlant highlights "how uninevitable the experience of being personal, of having personality, is."[16] Compare such an observation with Eliot's famous assertion that poetry "is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality," complete with the crucial caveat that "only those who have personality and emotions know what it

means to want to escape from these things."[17] When Ginsberg suggests that O'Hara's gossipy poems represent a kind of emotional curation, he is underscoring the fact that his friend's most important contribution to the poetry of his moment might be his insistence on the queerness of a certain kind of attention to feelings that O'Hara half-jokingly refers to as *personism*, a movement "so totally opposed to this kind of abstract removal [of the personal] that it is verging on a true abstraction for the first time, really, in the history of poetry."[18] Key to O'Hara's poetics, in other words, is the paradoxical way in which a certain use of the lyric first person might make the personal impersonal and vice versa.[19]

The same tension between abstraction and personality is evident throughout Sedgwick's career. Indeed, the break that is often said to separate the explicitly epistemological ambitions of her earlier work from the touchy-feely attachments of her later work might better be seen as a career-defining version of this tension evident even in her earliest work. Within *Epistemology of the Closet*, for instance, this tension is manifest in the friction between the book's comprehensive theory of modernity on the one hand and the diversifying and particularizing impulse embodied in her famous first axiom on the other. "People are different from one another," Sedgwick famously insists, a simple and obvious principle that nonetheless threatens to unravel her book's monological thesis. In other words, the first principle of Sedgwick's paradigmatic version of paranoid reading is already an endorsement of something much closer to a reparative lesson. Tellingly, Sedgwick elaborates on this axiom in terms that closely mirror her later account of the use value of affect theory, underscoring the limitations of poststructuralist accounts of sexuality which cannot help but miss the granular specificity of individual lives and, as such, fail to live up to the "descriptive requirements" of doing justice "to the piercing bouquet of a given friend's particularity."[20] It is precisely such a failure that later motivates Sedgwick's adoption of Tomkins's affect theory, which is positioned as being better equipped to live up to the bouquet of personal specificity, hewing more closely than poststructuralist accounts to something the language individuals themselves might invoke to think about sex and sexuality: what feels good, what feels bad, what is exciting, what is boring. Affective explanations can be rich and varied—indeed, they can be so varied that they seem to suggest that each individual's sexuality is sui generis.

In the earlier work, however, it is not affect theory that offers this vocabulary but "the precious, devalued arts of gossip."[21] Deep gossip for Sedgwick becomes an alternative epistemology, a kind of curation linked to what she calls "*nonce* taxonomy," the "making and unmaking and *re*making and redissolution of hundreds of old and new categorial imaginings concerning all the kinds it may take to make up a world."[22] But although this project itself comes to be redefined in terms of affect and weak theory in her later writing, the taxonomical poetics of Marcel Proust connect both accounts.

Writing with her student Adam Frank, Sedgwick presents the attractiveness of Tomkins's thought precisely in terms of its resemblance to Proustian gossip. Tomkins, Sedgwick and Frank insist, is "the psychologist one would most like to read face-à-face with Proust."[23] This attraction to styles of thought that seem to multiply descriptive terms without giving up on the project of attempting to establish a kind of epistemological mastery in turn explains the centrality of affect theory to the distinction between reparative and paranoid modes of reading. Tomkins "more than countenances," they argue, "both the Proustian fascination with taxonomies of persons and the Proustian certainty that the highest interest of such taxonomies is ever in making grounds for disconfirmation and surprise."[24] Negotiating between a potentially paranoid drive to explain the world and an insistence on the reparative possibilities of surprise remains for Sedgwick an epistemological operation, constantly engaged in the testing of evidence and open to the possibility of being proven wrong.

The fact that a Proustian poetic taxonomy serves as the connection between Sedgwick's epistemological and her affective work underscores that the oscillation between something like paranoid and reparative modes of thought is a central feature of aesthetic experience, which is powerful in part because it allows one to treat the personal impersonally and vice versa. As Sianne Ngai has demonstrated, the central problem of aesthetic philosophy might very well be the intractable question of whether aesthetic experience is subjective or objective, a problematic that she traces back to a similar quandary within our understanding of emotion as well.[25] This shared paradox underscores how useful affect becomes as a way of comprehending the connection between sexual and aesthetics. In the introduction to their forum on "queer form," Kadji Amin, Amber Jamilla Musser, and Roy Pérez explain that the sensual and embodied—which is to say affective—encounter with the materiality of art is key to its potential to speak critically to structures of oppression.[26] To think of art in this way is to resist the Kantian tradition of divorcing sexual from aesthetic feeling. Sam See suggests that such a division never made much sense, and that paying attention to queer modernism affords "an opportunity to historicize and theorize sexual feeling, which is, like aesthetic feeling, rooted in questions of sensational taste and pleasure: what does and does not turn one on."[27] Affect theory offers an especially powerful set of tools for doing descriptive justice not only to the piercing bouquet of a work of art but to our experience of being pierced by it.

For Sedgwick, thinking about affect is never very far removed from a kind of deep gossip, a fact which suggests that perhaps O'Hara was already something of an affect theorist himself. If so, his most explicit theorization is likely "In Memory of My Feelings," a poem he began writing on what he believed to be his thirtieth birthday in 1956. A long autobiographical poem that served as a kind of breakthrough for O'Hara, connecting his earlier surrealist

experimentation to the later personism for which he is most often remembered, "In Memory of My Feelings" is a profound mediation on personality. "My quietness has a man inside it" the poem begins, highlighting a lyric inwardness seemingly at some remove from O'Hara's typical garrulous demeanor.[28] Indeed, in its meditation on quietness, the poem elaborates a theme expounded a few years earlier in "Mayakovsky," in which O'Hara famous muses: "Now I am quietly waiting for / the catastrophe of my personality / to seem beautiful again, / and interesting, and modern."[29] This belief in the aesthetic value and even modernness of personality clearly puts O'Hara at odds with the modernist doctrine of impersonality. More importantly, though, O'Hara skirts both of the options laid out by Eliot in "Tradition and the Individual Talent": a personality for O'Hara is not something to be either expressed or escaped from. Instead, it is something to be studied.

On one level, such study can't help but be subjective: "You do not always know what I am feeling," O'Hara insists in "For Grace after a Party," and in "My Heart" he relishes the thought that an "aficionado of [his] mess" might be shocked to discover that he is capable of all sorts of contradictory feelings.[30] But, even if O'Hara's poetry testifies to the fact that he is the truest aficionado of his own mess, it is nonetheless true that poems like "Mayakovsky" remain interested in the relationship between the poet's personality and other catastrophes unfolding on different scales. As such, "In Memory of My Feelings" travels outward from its initial quiet interiority in order to conclude with a meditation on the relationship between feelings and what O'Hara calls "the scene of my selves."[31] Lytle Shaw thus describes the poem as "metacommunal," exploring "the extent to which the self of an experience is also the self of one or several collectivities that frame that experience."[32] What makes such a poem most personal—its nuanced attention to fine gradations of emotion—makes it impersonal as well: it is after all an elegy memorializing not the self but the self's *feelings*, feelings which the poet might be said to possess—they are *my* feelings—but that nonetheless might be lost.

Whether lost feelings can or cannot be memorialized is a central question for modernism, as Jonathan Flatley makes clear. Many of the losses generated in the wake of modernity are difficult in part because they have to be recognized before they can be effectively mourned.[33] "In Memory of My Feeling" acknowledges as much when it suggests that the "scene" of selfhood can be hard to grasp precisely because it is "what is always and everywhere / present." "I could not change it into history / and so remember it" the poet confesses, and so these feelings, at once collective and personal, "become art."[34] Benjamin Lee reads this moment as representative of the way O'Hara's poems generate "circuits of affect" that are designed both for himself and his readers. These circuits, Lee argues, "connect internally but leap as well from subject to object of from person to person, in a constant interaction among

internal and external environments and stimuli."[35] Art and affect serve as tools for drawing connections between different contexts, different scenes of selfhood. Whether or not the constellations that are stitched into being by his poems begin on the inside and spread out, as Berlant suggests of Sedgwick's queerness, merely depends on where one begins tracing their patterns.

Fostering these connections of affect and aesthetics is the central ambition of O'Hara's criticism as well as his poetry, a shared project that I have elsewhere described as his relatable aesthetics.[36] O'Hara's attitude toward criticism is evident in "To Edwin Denby," a poem he wrote for his friend around 1957. Denby, a dance critic for the *New York Daily Herald* and elsewhere, was O'Hara's constant companion at the Ballet. Energized by their mutual appreciation of dancers and the dance, their friendship appears in O'Hara's poem as an occasion for a meditation on their shared work as critics and curators of a sort. "I'm so much more me / that you are perfectly you," O'Hara insists, continuing: "What you have clearly said / is yet in me unmade."[37] These lines emphasize both the distinctness of the friends' individual identities and their interdependence, a mutual interpellation that poem links to Denby's "deep and lightning feelings," the flashes of which reveal "what you have clearly said, / that feelings are our facts. / As yet in me unmade."[38] Feelings, here as throughout O'Hara's poems, are deeply personal and yet strangely impersonal as well: they take on a kind of solidness that can be shared precisely through being translated into word. O'Hara suggests that the incandescence of his friend's emotional life might be transmitted through the clarity of his language in order to become a part of his own interiority. If you were to look inside O'Hara's quietness you might find Denby the man inside. Criticism, for both figures, is a matter of testifying to the truth value of feelings, a project which is important because those feelings—to the extent that they do not map onto cultural validated norms of heterosexual masculinity—have been denied the ontological status that facticity conveys. There is a reparative element to this project, devoted as it is to the care of stigmatized or marginalized experiences, but in its lightning flashes it hardly gives up on calling bullshit.

Notes

1 Ginsberg, *Collected Poems*, 465.
2 Abelove, *Deep Gossip*, xii.
3 Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*; Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 7; Gregg and Seigworth, "An Inventory of Shimmers."
4 Bennett, "Poetry Today #10: Stamina and Endurance." See also Bennett, *Your New Feeling Is an Artifact of a Bygone Era*. See also his *Word of Mouth: Gossip and American Poetry* for a detailed account of O'Hara's gossipy poetics.
5 Even Lauren Berlant's *Cruel Optimism*, which is skeptical of an over-investment in reparativity, turns to a John Ashbery poem as its initial example of its titular concept.

6 Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, 8.
7 See Bradway, *Queer Experimental Literature* for a powerful account of the poetics of Sedgwick's writing.
8 Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 124.
9 Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 125.
10 Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 10.
11 Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 23–45.
12 Nelson, *The Argonauts*, 29.
13 Kurnick, "A Few Lies," 351.
14 Kurnick, "A Few Lies," 350.
15 For an account of description that is pitched specifically in terms of its epistemological capacity, see Love, "Close but Not Deep."
16 Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 125.
17 Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 43.
18 O'Hara, *Collected Poems*, 498.
19 See Perlow, *The Poem Electric*, for an important account of this dynamic.
20 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 23.
21 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 23.
22 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, x.
23 Sedgwick and Frank, "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold," 96, 98.
24 Sedgwick and Frank, "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold," 98.
25 Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 24.
26 Amin, Musser, and Pérez, "Queer Form."
27 See, *Queer Natures*, 18–9.
28 O'Hara, *Collected Poems*, 252.
29 O'Hara, *Collected Poems*, 202.
30 O'Hara, *Collected Poems*, 214, 231.
31 O'Hara, *Collected Poems*, 257.
32 Shaw, *Frank O'Hara*, 89.
33 Flatley, *Affective Mapping*.
34 O'Hara, *Collected Poems*, 257.
35 Lee, *Poetics of Emergence*, 5.
36 Glavey, "Having a Coke with You."
37 O'Hara, *Collected Poems*, 286.
38 O'Hara, *Collected Poems*, 286–7.

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