SHIFTING MASCULINITIES: DYNAMICS OF GENDER AND POWER IN MODERNIST LITERATURE

by

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(Under the Direction of Jed Rasula)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores how changes occurring in the early twentieth century presented a variety of threats to the socio-cultural interpretation of maleness and masculinity, using the literary works of Thomas Mann, Christopher Isherwood, Djuna Barnes, and Virginia Woof. These threats caused a distinctive change in how masculinity could be regarded and portrayed, allowing for the consideration of a wider awareness of alternative masculinities, which had previously been disregarded. Hence, the general purpose of this work is to explore how literature written during this timeframe serves as an arena to express the tensions associated with the crises of hegemonic masculinity vis-à-vis these alternative forms.

This dissertation examines four literary works from this historical moment in which the threats to the seemingly fixed concepts of masculinity and maleness are exposed. This work seeks to contribute to the scholarly discussion of masculinity, gender studies, and modernist literature by examining the rise of literary characters exhibiting forms of non-normative masculinity, a trend that becomes apparent around the turn of the twentieth century, when the seemingly traditional, heteronormative concept of masculinity begins to rupture. This investigation does not attempt to establish a definitive explanation of masculinities, but instead,

uses the most commonly accepted characteristics of masculine behavior as its premise to examine those moments in early twentieth century literature where these notions of masculinity rupture and its characteristics dislodge from the traditionally masculine, male-sexed figure.

INDEX WORDS: Masculinities, Gender Studies, Modernism, Thomas Mann, Christopher Isherwood, Djuna Barnes, Virginia Woolf

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2010

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December 2010

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work, the hours and years that crafted it, to my mother, Teresa Bruce, and to my grandmother Louise Rowland. Thank you for always supporting my endeavors and encouraging me. I am always humbled by the sacrifices you've made for me and forever touched by your unconditional love and unending emotional support that sustains me.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my grandmother Margaret Bruce, who passed away unexpectedly shortly after I graduated from high school. Although she has been unable to share in the joys of my successes in college, graduate school, and my professional life, she is always missed and lives forever in my heart.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank my major professor, Jed Rasula, for his guidance, advice, and tireless readings of my drafts throughout this project. Thanks also to my committee members, Michael Moran and Aidan Wasley, who both provided me great insight into this project and my academic career at the University of Georgia.

My unending thanks and gratitude will never manage to convey appropriately the praise or appreciation I have for Karen Schiff, who not only directed my master's thesis at Clemson but also encouraged, prodded, and supported me throughout my experience at the University of Georgia as well as with the writing of this dissertation. Her brilliance and insight continue to inspire and motivate me.

Karen and Gina Humphreys, both of whom I regard as my greatest mentors, have shaped my interest in gender studies. While Karen provided the resources and interaction to cultivate my academic experiences within the field, Gina has exposed me to practical situations and "real world" environments heavily influenced by gender difference in which women and other minorities face discrimination and unfair practices on a daily basis. This exposure and Gina's deft handling of these situations are what first prompted my own investigations into aspects of gender and identity when I began graduate school at Clemson University, and my interest in the field continues now because of the experiences I have shared with her and the lessons I have learned from her. For these reasons and for her friendship and support throughout this and numerous other projects in my life, I give her my thanks, commendation, and my undying loyalty.

I am also thankful for several other friends, without whom I would have never completed this work. Marlene Hanks, Rosa Hampton, Jennifer Peters, and Keith Ridgeway have stood by me throughout my graduate school experiences, and their love, friendship, and words of encouragement have provided me tremendous support; Devin Prather has always provided a listening ear as well as the much-needed distractions that have kept me grounded throughout the writing and completion of this project. Finally, I must also thank Becky Childs, whose experience and advice assisted me greatly during the writing of this dissertation.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In a memorable scene from Virginia Woolf's 1928 novel *Orlando: A Biography*, Woolf's hero spends hours poring over paintings of ancestors and examining the crypts of long-departed loved ones (70); Orlando's desire is to identify with a member of the esteemed ancestry and emulate that person's historic life. In this way, Orlando might establish a direction in life that would be validated by the surrounding culture. Similarly, Gustav von Aschenbach from Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* models his own life after his noble male ancestors, constantly living in the shadow of these men, though Aschenbach always believes his efforts never measure up. In each instance, the characters strive to create for themselves a fixed identity that would be validated and revered within their social contexts. By seeking out their ancestors, they want to emulate models of decorum from the past that have already been positively defined within the culture and have proven successful in earning recognition and respect from others.

Several characters, however, struggle throughout their lives to maintain this identity to which they aspire: in Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*, for example, when Felix Volkbein deems his Jewish ancestry to be socially unsuitable, he fabricates a Christian aristocratic heritage, complete with paintings of fake ancestors and a falsified family crest, symbolic displays of his made-up lineage that would garner him respect amongst his peers. Even Aschenbach devotes himself to a life of discipline in order to disguise his own masculine shortcomings that might challenge how he is perceived socially, and Matthew O'Connor, the esteemed physician of *Nightwood*, hides

his transvestism and desire to be sexed female in order to present himself as a respected (male) member of society. These characters seek to obtain a level of manly respectability that would grant them social recognition and authority. As men, these individuals can function within the social structure in a manner that allows them more power to dictate how they might be perceived. This aspect of power becomes most apparent in Christopher Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin*, in which Isherwood constructs an alternate identity for himself that would be deemed acceptable by his contemporaries. The efforts to manipulate social perception is also apparent in the other texts, as Felix's sham noble heritage goes unquestioned by his acquaintances, and Matthew's personal proclivities are overlooked because publicly he is regarded a male medical authority.

The ease with which these discursive identities can be manipulated calls into question the (in)stability of the seemingly established masculine authority these characters strive to locate within their history and/or socio-cultural context and subsequently seek to mimic, for the masculine components of these sought-after identities would appear to be the central aspect by which these individuals believe they will achieve social validation. However, the fluidity with which these figures seem to adjust their presentations of masculinity challenge any essentialist idea of masculinity as a fixed concept. The notions of maleness and masculinity are themselves byproducts of the socio-cultural framework they exist within.[1] This framework upholds masculine power and male authority, thereby establishing what some theorists regard to be a phallocentric and phallocratic society. Thus, those individuals whose identities adhere more closely to maleness, masculinity, and phallic authority retain social empowerment and privilege and are even enabled by the social system to interpret meaning and impose a fixed embodiment

[1] In his work *Masculinities*, R. W. Connell states, "In speaking of masculinity at all, then, we are 'doing gender' in a *culturally specific way*" (68, emphasis added).

onto those not (as) privileged within the system, thereby becoming phallocentric interpreters of society itself.

However, concepts of maleness and masculinity are linguistically and culturally constructed, making them malleable and capable of shifting over time. Additionally, because culture and environment shape these concepts, multiple aspects of maleness and masculinity may exist simultaneously within any social construct, so if society favors a privileged version of masculinity, then this framework would suggest a hierarchy of masculinities in which one form would be idealized and hegemonic, receiving social privilege over all other forms. This hegemonic masculinity would "refer to a particular idealized image of masculinity in relation to which images of femininity and other masculinities are marginalized and subordinated" (Barrett 79). Therefore, the most socially accepted identities, like those to which the characters mentioned above aspire, would embody the more favorable hegemonic masculinity of the time period in which it existed while its characteristics would be constantly shaped and reshaped by an ever-changing culture still comprised of other variations of masculinity receiving less recognition than the idealized form. The negotiations and interrelationships occurring between these multiple forms of masculinity become worthy of exploration, especially with regard to the historico-cultural context in which the characters and novels being explored through this dissertation exist.

Studies of masculinity have been a popular scholarly focus since the second-wave feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s, with researchers from various academic fields attempting to define masculine behavior and explain its role and effects within society and culture. Many of these scholars acknowledge that masculinity exists in multiple, sometimes contradictory, forms and should therefore be regarded plurally, as masculinities. Nevertheless,

the predominating scholarship, particularly with regard to modernist literature, focuses on its own privileged version of masculinity: the young, adult, middle-class, heterosexual, white male. Such a narrow contemplation of masculinity in early twentieth century literature has limited the scope in which masculine behavior might be examined or even recognized, especially when considering the numerous historical events occurring around the turn of the century that made a significant impact on both the idealized perception of masculinity within society during the time period. This dissertation examines how this moment in history presented a variety of threats to the socio-cultural interpretation of maleness and masculinity. These threats caused a distinctive change in how masculinity could be regarded and portrayed, allowing for the consideration of a wider awareness of alternative masculinities, which had previously been disregarded. Hence, the general purpose of this work is to explore how literature written during this timeframe serves as an arena to express the tensions associated with the crises of hegemonic masculinity vis-à-vis these alternative forms.

Masculinities: A Brief Overview

Numerous interpretations of masculinity have emerged in the twentieth century, and while these investigations have offered a number of valuable insights, two details commonly appear in most research and should be highlighted: all express a difficulty in establishing an authoritative definition of masculinity, and most identify the time period surrounding the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century as a locus of change in the perceptions of masculinity. Both of these details merit further discussion here. An accepted fundamental criterion for masculinity in Western culture is the rejection and marginalization of all things feminine (Alsop 143; Connell 68; Kane 20; Knights 1), but determining what equates

with either femininity or masculinity rests upon how the culture interprets certain characteristics. In her study *Female Masculinities*, Judith Halberstam best sums these up when she writes:

> Masculinity in this society inevitably conjures up notions of power and legitimacy and privilege; it often symbolically refers to the power of the state and uneven distribution of wealth[, …b]ut, obviously, many other lines of identification traverse the terrain of masculinity, dividing its power into complicated differentials of class, race, sexuality, and gender. (2)

Exacting a definition of masculinity proves difficult for scholars because of these complicated variables that shape how individuals perceive masculinity and femininity within their culture. Halberstam lists these and recognizes them as specific loci for the accumulation of masculine power; the assertion of power within the social structure appears to be the most commonly acknowledged perception of masculinity in Western culture. Halberstam's research suggests that this perception results from the culture commonly perceiving masculinity in a limited way. R. W. Connell, author of several books on masculinities and other gender issues, also asserts that "[m]ass culture generally assumes there is a fixed, true masculinity" exhibiting signs of discipline and power (45). This assumed true, singular expression of masculinity within contemporary culture, as explained by Rachel Alsop, Annette Fitzsimmons, and Kathleen Lennon in their work *Theorizing Gender*, "[hinges] on heterosexuality, economic autonomy, being able to provide for one's family, being rational, being successful, keeping one's emotions in check, and above all not doing anything considered feminine" (141). This characterization of a specific, culturally upheld version of masculinity appears to coincide with the social expectations of Western culture, which privileges the male as the provider, lawmaker, and dominating authority over both women and other subordinate males. Thus, I regard the type of

masculinity considered most favorable within the culture at any given time to maintain the phallocentric authority to control and interpret the surrounding environment and the individuals within it who lack the same authoritative power. This ability becomes apparent in each of the four novels being examined in this dissertation: as writers, Aschenbach, Isherwood, and Orlando's biographer retain interpretive power which they convey to the masses through their written works. Similarly, *Nightwood*'s Matthew O'Connor imposes his authority upon his listeners by using the command of his voice to dictate how life should be. The words of each of these men are accepted without question because they (presumably) embody their culture's concept of hegemonic masculinity.

Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (77). Thus, males exhibiting hegemonic masculinity echo patriarchal ideologies by maintaining, promoting, and often embodying its cultural ideals while policing nonconformity within the social structure, an aspect most notable in Isherwood's practices in *Goodbye to Berlin*, which I will explore in a later chapter. Michael Kane also states that the cultural ideals which uphold hegemonic masculinity favor "the accumulation of wealth, power, and respectability" and deem those entities that challenge these efforts as "undesirable" and "inferior." Kane includes among those undesirables "women, […] the 'degenerate lower orders' [whose sexual practices challenged heterosexuality], criminals, foreigners and colonial people" (20), all of whom impede the maintenance of a respectable society and are considered inferior because they do not conform to accepted prescriptions of gender, sexuality, class, or ethnicity—the same variables Halberstam identifies as contributing to hegemonic masculinity's power. I would also include age as a

contributor to masculinity's power, for both Connell and scholar Stephen Whitehead make references to the impact of age and the importance of youth on the perception of masculinity and its authority (Connell 57; Whitehead 34).

Hence, the social construct privileges hegemonic masculinity not only for emulating the favorable traits within the culture but also for retaining patriarchal authority because of the cultural assumption that hegemonic masculinity exists as the only true masculinity that males should exhibit, and as a result, all subordinating characteristics that cannot conform are marginalized and/or feminized. This assumption, however, fails to acknowledge or accept that those subordinated might also exhibit masculine traits despite their lack of maleness and/or power within the culture, as made evident through Jenny Petherbridge's ability to function in her relationships with a masculine authority on par with her male contemporaries in *Nightwood*. Robin Vote, also from *Nightwood*, exhibits aspects of a subordinating masculinity, given that her body has a potential for independence and freedom that others acknowledge for having commanding power within the social milieu. Also, Orlando embodies a subordinating masculinity, given that society deems h/er[2] to be female, yet s/he remains independent and in control of h/er life and finances. Accordingly, the possibilities of subordinating masculinities, exhibited by homosexuals, females, non-whites, and so on, become ignored by the status quo; however, current scholarship has begun to recognize evidence of masculinity within these other groups. Halberstam even argues that hegemonic masculinity depends "absolutely on the subordination of alternative masculinities" (*Female* 1). Furthermore, Connell notes a "gender politics within masculinity" and believes our comprehension of masculinities is incomplete until we are able to "recognize the *relations* between the different kinds of masculinity: relations of

alliance, dominance, and subordination. These relationships are constructed through practices that exclude and include, that intimidate, exploit, and so on" (37).

Coupled with this recognized need for awareness between various types of masculinities is the gradual temporal shift in social and cultural ideals that shape and redefine hegemonic and subordinating masculinities. That is to say, even though culture has favored the male body and aspects of maleness in establishing a concept of masculinity, its criteria have changed and will continue to evolve over time. As Stephen Whitehead points out, the "Victorian and Edwardian views of 'the male' […] sit in marked contrast to dominant gender perspectives of even earlier times." Maleness in times past, as exemplified by monarchs and noblemen, involved the public expression of emotions and flamboyant dress, whereas during and after the eighteenth century, these characteristics became inappropriate for standard male behavior and more commonly associated with femininity. As the middle-class gained political and economic power, its attitudes and styles overtook those of the aristocracy (15). This shift becomes apparent in Woolf's *Orlando*, as the expectations of appropriate male social conduct and dress shift during Orlando's lifetime, which spans several hundred years. Just as these public expressions and expectations of behavior change, so did the perceptions of masculinity shift to emulate the ideals of the ruling class of the time. What proves significant, then, is that a society's historico-cultural context governs how the maleness of the body and its relationship to masculinity, hegemonic or otherwise, might be interpreted.

These influences also explain why the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries proved to affect cultural perceptions of masculinity so greatly because during this time, new questions emerged concerning the various functions, roles, and capabilities of the body; the

[2] Because of Orlando's multiple genders, the pronouns s/he and h/er are used to recognize the character's vacillation. These pronouns are modeled after the technique used by gender theorists, such as Butler and

search for answers led to the development of theories and social movements attempting to empower those whose bodies did not conform to socially acceptable expectations. Most scholars point to this period as having made a significant impact on how contemporary culture perceives masculinities today because of the challenges presented against the historico-cultural interpretations of nearly every mentioned variable that constructs masculinity and how it is upheld.

Masculinities and the Early Twentieth Century

Michael Kane recognizes a definite social change in perceptions of masculinity occuring in the late 1800s when issues of sex, sexuality, and gender became commonplace concerns for mainstream society (213). In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault points out that prior to this, the culture had imposed a silence and repression regarding these issues, the discussion of which was limited only to those men operating within the legal and medical fields (40-1); the actions these groups imposed upon those deemed inferior, however, led eventually to public dissent and calls for change. The women's suffrage movement, fueled in Great Britain by the 1832 Suffrage Reform Act, gained momentum at the turn of the twentieth century and altered women's social, economic, and political status throughout the Western world. Connell explains that the public awareness of the women's movement exposed the disparities of gender relations and threatened patriarchal control (82).

Additional complications to gender issues arose with increasing concerns about homosexuality. Both Foucault and Eve Sedgwick assert that the late nineteenth century was the moment in which homosexuality was defined and became recognized as an aspect of identity, and sexuality now contributed to the understanding of one's being (*History* 43; *Epistemology*

Jay Prosser, to designate gender discrepancies.

83). This occurred at least in part because of medical and legal characterizations: Foucault credits German psychiatrist Carl Westphal for having first defined homosexuality as inverted sexual behavior (*History* 43), while the subsequent passing into law of Germany's Paragraph 175 in 1871, followed by England's Labouchére Amendment in 1885, both prohibiting sexual "indecency" between men, signaled an awareness that biological sex did not necessarily denote one's sexuality. The efforts of science and the law to normalize male sexual behavior demonstrate the attempt within society both to equate homosexuality with femininity (regarded as an inversion of "true" maleness) and to dissociate homosexual behavior from hegemonic masculinity (Connell 78). However, the prohibitions and medical demonization of homosexuality ignited debates within scientific and medical circles; sexologists Havelock Ellis and Magnus Hirschfeld, for example, attempted to change the negative perceptions of homosexuality. Hirschfeld even used evidence from his research to seek the repeal of Paragraph 175 before his institute drew the ire of the Nazis. In England, the 1895 trial and conviction of Oscar Wilde reaffirmed the legal position against homosexuality and further increased its public awareness. These actions and reactions occurring within mainstream society, to paraphrase Halberstam, began untangling the knot that had previously bound together gender, sex, and sexuality (*Female* 48).

With this unraveling came changes in the perceptions of manhood and masculinity because their challenges no longer came only from women, which had previously been regarded as the only opposing binary to men and manliness; other men whose gendered behavior and sexuality varied from the cultural norm now posed a recognizable threat to the power of hegemonic masculinity as well. As a result, the social system, empowered by its own patriarchal ideology, began to associate homosexuality with femininity, a behavior already expelled from

the characteristics of the masculine ideal (Connell 196); thus, the laws and scientific research supporting homophobia reinforced efforts to expel such "impure elements" and purify society (Knights 5). These expulsive efforts also appeared within the social spheres of the general public. Suspicion and innuendo shrouded any form of male bonding or friendship, causing a paranoia amongst men who:

> would have constantly and actively—or even aggressively—[tried] to demonstrate to others and to themselves that they had nothing to do with 'homosexuality.' The demonstration of homophobia thus became in the twentieth century *the* condition of simple friendship between men and of all homosocial bonds. (Kane 115)

The necessity of men to assert heterosexuality through homophobia and the public's increased speculation of homosexuality within all forms of male bonding greatly challenged the heterosexual masculine ideal, which had previously been considered the social norm. Before this time period, male interaction became scrutinized for sexual impropriety more publicly and casually. However, the increased awareness and paranoia of homosexuality altered public perceptions of any male interaction, and as Kane's research proposes, heterosexuality was no longer automatically assumed; instead, it would have to be proven and defended through acts that repelled non-heterosexual behavior and activity. Hence, these efforts to expel homosexuality became identified with manliness itself (Connell 196), thereby making heterosexuality and homophobia compulsory for men who strived to achieve the masculine ideal. This becomes apparent in later chapters of this work, as Aschenbach, Isherwood, and O'Connor each attempt in their own way to reassert the socially acceptable form of masculinity, by either

(initially and superficially) repelling homosexual/homosocial desires or by keeping those desires private and out of the public domain.

While both the women's movement and the raised awareness of homosexuality signaled a crisis for the stability of socio-cultural perceptions of masculinity, other challenges emerged from outside the realms of gender and sexuality. As mentioned previously, the power shift within Western culture from upper-class rule to middle-class governance had already modified public perceptions of masculinity, but this dynamic became even more intensified by the theories of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, whose considerations of labor and the working-class drew added attention to the conditions of the body. Proletariat bodies, because of their laboring, often exhibited muscular physiques that differentiated them from the upper and middle-classes. The working-class's displays of strong, well-developed bodies made an impact on the upper-classes who viewed this physicality as a potential for power, which should remain unattainable to the proletariat if the class structure is to be maintained. The lower-class male body can be seen as a site of middle-class disturbance in *Goodbye to Berlin*, with the introduction of the youthful and physically admirable Otto Nowak, whose physique and strength compare more favorably among women (and other men) to the upper-class male bodies of Isherwood and Peter Wilkinson. Isherwood even admits later, in his memoir *Christopher and His Kind*, that he toned down the descriptions of Otto's body in an attempt to alleviate his readership's possible anxieties over both the lower-class boy's physical perfection and Isherwood's own personal, homosexual desire for it (42). Acknowledging the appeal of the lower-class male body with its strong physique, the middle-class co-opted this physically fit body type: Kane proclaims a "rediscovery of the [male] body" at the turn-of-the-century, thanks to "the cult of physical exercise, nude bathing, and sunbathing," all of which served "initially [as] a revolt on the part of young men against the

pruderie of bourgeois culture" (113). The emphasis on exercise and sunbathing become central to Mann's *Death in Venice*, as Aschenbach spends much of his leisure time observing the young upper-class boys, specifically Tadzio, clad in their bathing suits and playing in or near the sea. These bodily activities, coupled with a renewed international interest in sports (the revival of the Olympics occurred in 1896), altered social expectations of the bourgeois (male) body's appearance and, in doing so, linked certain aspects of physical fitness with masculine behavior.

These events also reaffirm the stratification of masculinities within the class structure despite the co-optation of strong body types as a condition of the masculine ideal. Maleness and manliness can vary among classes based upon the methods in which each class obtains status and/or power: members of the working-class may gain status through brute strength and evidence of hard labor while status among the middle and upper-classes may come from acquisition of personal assets and monetary gain. The ability to co-opt these criteria across classes, however, implies the fluidity of masculine ideals and the ability for multiple perceptions of masculine behavior to exist, even within a single class, yet each variation of masculinity would still defer to hegemonic masculinity by either allying itself with or subordinating to the prescription of socially acceptable manliness. Even still, the presence of these emerging masculinities further challenged traditional ideals of manhood and threatened culturally accepted male behavior simply by offering alternatives to the dominating structure, thereby adding to the growing crisis of hegemonic masculinity and the ideal of manliness.

Consequently, in addition to the co-optation of desirable qualities to express a masculine ideal, hegemonic masculinity also attempts to expel or discredit any idea, characteristic, or being that threatens its dominance. In this way, Ben Knights suggests the efforts of hegemonic masculinity compare closely with those of a nation:

> Both are based reassuringly upon a notion of shared identity rooted in biological affinity, both define themselves in relation to the hostile other, both lead in the direction of purification and the expulsion of impure elements. A proximate community is defined and bonded together against all the forces which need to be expelled. (5-6)

Kane also recognizes a link between masculinity and nationalism, noting that in the early 1900s the United States, among other countries, referred to itself as male while those nations threatening it were regarded as female (112). Prior to the Second World War, Germany would also be referenced as the *Vaterland*, or Fatherland. The feminization of foreign entities raises awareness of the surrounding, impenetrable barrier that embodies the nation, retaining its power and purity by repelling that which it deems undesirable. Note that for the nation to remain undefiled—to retain its maleness—it must avoid *penetration* from the feminized outsider. Kane acknowledges the significance of these events in a time of masculine crisis:

> [W]ith the decline of the patriarchy and the crisis of masculinity around the last turn of the century, many men looked to the nation as the saviour of their threatened masculinity and idealized the nation above all as a homosocial community of men whose fears and confusions about their own identity, and in particular about their own masculine identity, might be projected onto all territories outside the borders of that idealized masculine nation. (vi)

By transferring its fears of feminization to regions outside its own territory, the isolated, masculine nation may then pride itself on its own strength, authority, and dominance—qualities that are maintained by male-oriented groups established to celebrate and/or demonstrate both maleness and nationalism (e.g., the military, government and political parties, the education

system, sports, male-youth organizations, etc.). These celebrations of (male) nationalism exhibit a male narcissism that bonds the nation together and increases pride and patriotism. This male bonding supports the nation through a unification of sensibilities that emphasizes ideal masculine behavior while simultaneously minimizing notions of individualism and self-ownership that had brought about the challenges to gender, sexuality, class, and other characteristics that had threatened to destabilize any cultural notions of a masculine ideal.

This male-inspired nationalism intensifies during wartime, and as countries' common interests shift to national support and defense, they temporarily move away from domestic concerns and individual freedoms. Because of this, Kane points out that the First World War "held out the possibility of a return to a sense of community among men […] whose role as warriors was clearly distinct from the domestic duties of women—a return, in other words, to the security of unquestioned authority, blind belief and hierarchical structures of the patriarchy" (167). The War and its aftermath did succeed in reenergizing a sense of male dominance throughout the world but were ineffective in completely quashing individual efforts of seeking social freedom and equality. War had consolidated patriarchal ideology within the centralized nation-state (Connell 189); however, with the war's end came the revival of the women's movement and renewed efforts to decriminalize homosexuality.

As a result, male-oriented groups, organized to protect and celebrate national ideals, often turned to defending the nation from the internal threats to male authority, and numerous countries turned to extreme forms of governance, such as fascism, to reaffirm the ideals of a socially accepted concept of hegemonic masculinity. Connell mentions the rise of fascism to sustain the pre-war world order, and both he and Kane recognize the attempts of fascist states to obliterate any actions that challenged male supremacy (Connell 193; Kane viii). These

continued efforts reinforced the idealization of hegemonic masculinity by perpetuating male narcissism as a means to combat the feminized outsider. However, given the changing perceptions of gender and sexuality, the presence of male narcissism also further complicated the crisis of masculinity by encouraging the admiration of men and maleness as a means of securing the nation at the same moment that society discouraged such admiration between men for fear of being assumed homosexual or less manly. Evidence of this can be seen within the novels of this dissertation; the Nazi doctor of *Goodbye to Berlin* points out the corruptible power the young gay hustler Otto Nowak has, noting that boys like him have the potential to ruin others and, therefore, should be institutionalized. With *Death in Venice*, Aschenbach's initial admiration for young Tadzio gradually turns into a lascivious desire for the boy that Aschenbach himself characterizes as a secret illness. Because of the apparent dangers of male bonding leading to homosocial desire, Kane insists that male-dominated society is upheld by the same factors that threaten it: "the notion that men should primarily love not only themselves but masculinity itself—and other men." The difference between upholding and challenging the ideals of masculinity rests upon expressing these actions either symbolically or sexually (5).

Nonetheless, the multiple messages that male narcissism could send posed greater problems to the ongoing crises of masculinity and individual male identity, both of which become unstable with the conflicting interpretations of male bonding and male-admiration. How, then, can the male body correctly evoke the masculine ideal when the actions formulated to uphold the social order could be regarded as the same as those threatening its power? This confusion over appropriate expressions of masculinity occurs at a moment in history when sexual discourse began to intersect all other social discourses, demonstrating the newfound power of gender and sexuality to reform the culture as a whole. Sedgwick, in *Epistemology of*

the Closet, discusses the complications of the culture as it struggled to relegate all behavior into distinct categories of gender (male or female) as well as the newly defined binary of sexuality—heterosexual or homosexual (2). Still, the underlying, intrinsic contradictions within these categories of gender and sexuality held the potential to deconstruct any definitive characteristics attributed to a given, presumably fixed masculine identity, allowing for ruptures to occur within each division that then create new alternatives. Halberstam asserts that "the momentous negotiations about gender that took place at and around the turn of the century […] produced particular forms of femininity and masculinity and clearly showed that femininity was not wed to femaleness and masculinity was certainly not bound to maleness" (*Female* 48). The instability of clearly defined sex and gender roles becomes apparent at the turn of the century, when the culmination of war and various other social, economic, and psychological upheavals had damaged the social psyche, fracturing not only men and concepts of masculinity, but also the culture as a whole.

Masculinities and Modernism

Rather than provide an opportunity to address the disparities within masculine identity, the rise of this modernist culture consequently fostered an environment that encouraged disconnection, which in turn, sustained a cultural ideal of a seemingly fixed masculinity. Modernist culture's "insistent strangeness, its fragmentation, and alienation," according to Peter Middleton, elevated hegemonic masculinity because they emphasized isolation (44), which downplayed the male bonding and narcissism that had previously raised concerns. Depersonalization and the distancing from emotions, two significant characteristics of modernism, are shared aspects of hegemonic masculinity and therefore bolstered its strength

within the culture as well. These common qualities of modernism and hegemonic masculinity support claims by Middleton and Tamar Katz that modernism—particularly literary modernism—favors this particular incarnation of the masculine ideal (Middleton 10; Katz 2).

Although Middleton acknowledges modernism's fixation on masculinity and male subjectivity, he insists that "the literary modernist is much more self-conscious about the problems of gender awareness" (10). While both scholars recognize that despite its bias toward hegemonic masculinity of the time period, modernism also presented opportunities of exposure for variations to the cultural norm, and these variations are what this current project intends to explore. Adding to these concerns of gender is the sensitivity to sexuality, which gains more exposure during this time; Sedgwick confirms that contemporary perceptions of male homosexuality and homophobia began to take shape in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (*Between* 202). All of these factors affected modernist culture, and although modernism appeared to endorse hegemonic masculinity, it also presented the growing awareness of other genders and sexualities that contributed to the development of subordinating masculinities, although these manifestations of masculinity have only rarely been explored.

These subordinating masculinities occur when some of the characteristics attributed to idealized masculinity dislodge from the male body-type that society and culture privilege. Anyone who does not conform exactly to these prescriptions cannot attain hegemonic masculinity; instead, any exhibitions of masculine behavior from such individuals would be considered an alternative masculinity because its performance does not contribute to the preservation of the masculine ideal within society and culture. Consider also Connell's caveat that alternative masculinities do not always subordinate themselves completely to the masculine ideal, as some alternative versions may ally with hegemonic masculinity (37). Gay, female, and

working-class masculinities, for example, will tend to subordinate themselves to hegemonic masculinity; however, while adolescent, middle-class, white boys and elderly, middle-class, heterosexual white men may be out of the exact realm of hegemonic masculinity, any signs of masculinity within these two groups would ally them with it, as is demonstrated through Aschenbach and Tadzio in *Death in Venice*. In addition, Alsop, Fitzsimmons, and Lennon observe that each of these alternative masculinities hold within it a potential of a hierarchic masculinity structure in which the sub-group establishes its own norms of masculinity (141); therefore, each group may have different means of masculine expression.

Despite the prevalence of these alternative masculinities, research into modernism and its gender-related themes have focused almost entirely on aspects of hegemonic masculinity as the lone possibility for masculine expression. In 1992 when Peter Middleton wrote *The Inward Gaze*, he noted that "little has yet been written directly on masculinities and modern writing" (53). Eighteen years after his publication, more research into this area is available, but the majority limits its focus to hegemonic masculinity and/or the men attempting to achieve this masculine ideal. Middleton's own research restricts itself to investigations into these matters. Other scholarship extending beyond the domain of hegemonic masculinity tends to focus on a specific alternative gender and/or sexuality issue, with only one or two chapters including information concerning masculinity; though frequently, even these scholars only compare their area of focus to the masculine ideal upheld during the modernist era. Even Judith Halberstam, who makes a significant contribution to the field with *Female Masculinities* and her later work *In a Queer Time and Place*, confines her modernist masculinities research to women who displayed characteristics of same-sex desire; although this is not the sole reason Halberstam identifies them as masculine. Clothing and accessories also seem to be significant criteria of female masculinity

in Halberstam's research. While sexuality and apparel are often central to the performance of masculinity, be it hegemonic or alternative, other factors unrelated to the body, its uses, and presentation may also be considered. One's frame of mind and emotional state can also express masculinity or lack thereof, as can what is spoken or kept silent. Access to these non-visual indicators, however, often proves difficult to obtain without direct communication with the subject, but an examination of literature can provide entry to both visual and non-visual factors contributing to a greater understanding of various masculinities at work within a given social construct.

The purpose of this project, then, is to examine some of the literature written during this historical moment in which the threats to the seemingly fixed concepts of masculinity and maleness were exposed. This dissertation seeks to contribute to the scholarly discussion of masculinities, gender studies, and modernist literature by examining the rise of literary characters exhibiting forms of non-normative masculinity, a trend that becomes apparent around the turn of the twentieth century, when the seemingly traditional, heteronormative concept of masculinity begins to rupture. This work will not seek to establish a definitive explanation of masculinities, but instead, will use the most commonly accepted characteristics of masculine behavior for its premise to examine those moments in early twentieth century literature where these notions of masculinity rupture and its characteristics dislodge from the traditionally masculine, male-sexed figure.

The Theorists Involved

To aid with my investigation, I will incorporate a number of theorists whose work proves significant in the fields of psychoanalysis, gender studies, and social constructivism. The work put forth here, as indicated above, supports the notion that concepts of gender and gendered identity are fabrications of the social construction of reality and favor those approaches above essentialist positions.[3] Also, as the changes to culture and social demands have evolved over time, so too have the perceptions of hegemonic masculinity. Therefore, the theorists involved in this work most often operate from constructivist perspectives. The work of these and other contemporary theorists often incorporate revisions or extensions of psychoanalytic theories, as most investigations of gender, sex, and identity revolve around psychological stages of development. Accordingly, the psychoanalytic work of Sigmund Freud proves valuable to the work of gender studies. Although many regard Freud's work as sexist, it proved influential during the early twentieth century (thanks in part to the English translation of Freud's research being made available) and effectively linked psychological development to sexual behavior, creating a new means of examining the individual and sexual identity. Jacques Lacan's work also proves insightful, extending from Freud's own research and incorporating into it theories of sociology and linguistics. Lacan's theory of the social system is predicated upon a symbolic order, structured by language and restriction of meaning. This work aids in subsequent theories of identity and social constructivism, though it is also highly criticized among many feminists and gender theorists for its apparent privileging of men, a flaw also identified in many of Lacan's source materials.

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[3] As Connell points out in his work *Masculinities*, "The weakness in the essentialist approach is obvious: the choice of the essence is quite arbitrary" (69).

Theorists from masculinist studies have already been incorporated into this work and have been useful in establishing a framework for how masculinities have been historically interpreted or neglected. R. W. Connell has already been mentioned as making significant contributions to this field of study, and Peter Middleton also provides informative research in *The Inward Gaze*, which investigates the early twentieth century's concept of hegemonic masculinity. Connell and Middleton extrapolate their ideas from the work of Michel Foucault, whose theories propose the social construction of bodies and become foundational to a number of later theorists working in the realm of gender studies and body theory, including Mark Seltzer, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Judith Butler, and Judith Halberstam, among others. Foucault's first volume of *The History of Sexuality* and *Discipline and Punish* also prove valuable to the work of this dissertation; the former is very useful for its commentary on how nineteenth and twentieth century conceptions of the body, sexuality, and gender were shaped by the legal and medical fields of the era, and the latter explains how various socially constructed institutions shape and order bodies and dictate how they are expected to function within society.

Seltzer builds upon Foucault's ideas in *Discipline and Punish* when examining the influences of machine culture on the social expectations of bodies in his work *Bodies and Machines*. Seltzer proposes that the class system creates empowered subjects within the ruling class that impose strictures upon the lower-classes in order to refine these individuals to meet social expectations of behavior and identity. The ruling class goes so far as to impose embodiment upon these individuals, casting them in preconceived roles that alleviate anxieties that would threaten the upper-class's rule. Seltzer's work factors prominently here as it suggests that those most empowered to rule are the males who convey the socially favorable behavior and appearance of hegemonic masculinity, idealized within the class structure as the most revered

and respected, while those in the lower-classes, subjected to an enforced embodiment, are most often placed in demeaning roles tied to how the ruling class perceives their sexual behavior.

Sedgwick and Butler also assume very prominent roles in contemporary discussions of gender studies and queer theory for their contributions to the fields. Sedgwick's *Between Men* and *Epistemology of the Closet* trace the history of homosocial desire and homosexual identity while Butler's work, including *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that Matter,* explore the performativity and materiality of the body as it attempts to present gender. Butler's suggestion that the body "does" gender as opposed to "being" a specific gender allows for new discussions of the possibilities of various modes of gender expression and alternative gendered identities to emerge that would challenge the traditional view of the binary structures of male/female and masculine/feminine. For Butler, all concepts of the body, gender difference, and materiality are culturally constructed and bound in history (*Bodies* 28). As constructions of culture and history, those concepts are formulated through a system of language and binary logic that privileges maleness and masculinity. By revealing points of rupture within the seemingly fixed sites of gender, sex, and sexuality, Butler locates a gap between the body and its discursive construction that allows for new concepts or methods of understanding about the body to be generated and explored.

Butler's work is significant within gender studies and feminist thought because it neither proposes a singular, fixed concept of the female body nor does it claim an end to gender bias through the advent of writing through or from a female body. Butler regards the concepts of a unitary female body, which is often sought after by feminist theorists, to be heavily marked by those same discursive and cultural constructions that privilege maleness and masculinity. Thus, the desire for this absolute, female-sexed body is a construct still embedded within a biased

system. Butler's theory diverges here from those of Hélène Cixous and Susan Bordo, two of the most well known proponents of feminism to oppose Butler's ideas, espousing essentialist views instead. While Cixous, like Butler, seeks to abolish this binary logic that maintains the social system, she believes this can only occur through women's reclaiming of their female bodies and writing through them. The success of Cixous's theory, then, rests upon the localization and legitimization of the female body, which as stated before, Butler regards as still being locked into a biased system constructed by language and binary logic.

Bordo, on the other hand, disagrees with Butler's theory of gender existing as strictly and reductively discursive. For Bordo, ascribing gender merely to a convention of language and linguistic play is a gross oversight that neglects the necessity to understand the feminine within the realistic social conventions in which women must continually operate.[4] While Bordo's reaction is valid, it does not refute Butler's claim that the dualities structuring our world are still grounded in systems whose presumed fixity can be deconstructed. Bordo's foundational theories even originate from those of Foucault, whose work implies the social construction of bodies. Foucault's work is equally instrumental in Butler's theories, though Bordo insists upon examining this construction within the parameters of the binary logic in which our society functions, while Butler deconstructs this logic in order to locate alternative methods of consideration.

Additionally, the theories of Bordo and Cixous situate a definable female body as the source of contemplation for the advancement of feminist ideals. While Butler may be classified as a feminist in her approach, her theory does not require the "sexed specificity of the female body" (Hekman 67), but instead explores the instability of *all* concepts of gender, sex, and

sexuality, regardless of their current discursive and/or cultural definitions. The openness of Butler's theory to examine all genders and sexes make the thrust of her argument more valuable to the efforts of this dissertation, as my aim is not to assert a definitive male or female form or assert the dominance of one aspect of the binary over the other, but instead to examine the instability of both halves of the binary while seeking different ways in which the body's expression of masculine (or feminine) identity might be conceptualized.

Butler also effectively contextualizes herself amongst other feminist theorists, explaining how her own theory incorporates those of Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and others, pointing out the similarities in which they regard the limitation of language and the social construct to represent concepts of gender and the body fully and completely. Despite Irigaray's frequent leanings toward a concept of essentialism and *l'écriture feminine* similar to those of Cixous, Butler most often tries to find a common ground between her ideas and Irigaray's, using Kristeva in *Bodies that Matter* to assist in closing the gap between all three women's theories. Butler's ultimate argument with these and most other feminists' theories remains the same as her critique of Bordo: the essentialist foundations of their systems of reform and/or revolt remain bound within the biased framework of binary logic from which they propose to escape. Still, Butler reconceptualizes these women's theories in ways that allow her to infuse the crux of their ideas into her own theoretical approach to understanding the body, sex, and gender.

Kristeva and Irigaray also prove important for the investigations of this dissertation as well, despite these women's essentialist leanings. In *Revolution in Poetic Language* and *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva exposes disruptions in the framework of male-dominated society and suggests points of rupture that challenge the conventional, accepted models of individuation and

[4] In "Material Bodies," Susan Heckman writes that according to Bordo, "by overemphasizing gender as a fantasy and a choice, the gender skeptics forget that our world is, in fact, structured by gender dualities

subjectivity. While Kristeva's work borrows from the psychoanalytic models of Lacan, they push beyond what many perceive to be Lacan's limiting focus on stages of development that tend to privilege male identity and authority. Irigaray also takes this notion of male privilege to task in *This Sex Which Is Not One* by identifying how women, their femininity, and sex have been systematically denied and negated in Western culture. This proves useful in examining how masculinity and maleness have been upheld socially and culturally, while also revealing how their presence and power are sustained through those female aspects of culture that would seem to have been negated.

Judith Halberstam borrows from this concept of female negation to examine how women and transgenders whose bodies might present aspects of maleness or masculinity have been culturally ignored or disregarded in most analyses of gender, identity and similar studies of sexuality. In *Female Masculinities*, Halberstam incorporates this concept, Butler's theory of the gender as a performative aspect of the body, and other interdisciplinary works to devise a methodology to examine the female body when it presents traits deemed to be masculine. In doing so, Halberstam manages to identify several aspects of female masculinity occurring around the turn of the twentieth century that had previously been overlooked or dismissed because prior investigative models had only considered masculinity to be a product of male-sexed bodies. By suggesting that masculinity is not an inherent trait of the male sex, Halberstam locates a disruption in male identity and masculinity that refutes essentialism.

The disruptions to socially accepted concepts of the body, gender, and sex proposed by Halberstam, Butler, Kristeva, and other aforementioned theorists can be linked to the socio-cultural reliance upon a binary system of logic that, through these theorists, reveals itself to be more penetrable and less fixed than culturally perceived. However, the work of Gilles Deleuze

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and if we want to change the politics of the world we must come to grips with those dualities" (64).

and Felix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* proposes the theory of the rhizome, an alternative to the binary system, that embraces multiplicity and discourages fixed specificity, preferring instead states of constant becoming (5). Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic system along with the work of the previously mentioned theorists allow for the alternative interpretations of gender, the body, and sex as they related to identity and prove useful here.

Chapter Descriptions

This dissertation incorporates these theories to examine the effects that the structure and limitations of contemporary culture place upon the body and its presentations of gender and sex in order to explore the ways in which alternative forms of masculinity and new perceptions of masculine behavior challenge conventional notions of a fixed and idealized masculinity. For this investigation, I examine four novels in which occur a slippage or rupture of socio-culturally established concepts of ideal masculine behavior. I stage each text within its own chapter, ordered to present the gradual progression of my argument. With my examination of Mann's *Death in Venice* in the second chapter, I explore Aschenbach's growing dissatisfaction with his own body. As an upper-class male, Aschenbach would appear to embody an idealized masculinity; however, his advancing age and unhappiness with the insufficiencies of his own "delicate" body lead him to abandon his known identity and reject his own body in exchange for his desire of young Tadzio, whose body and demeanor seem closer to an ideal masculinity than Aschenbach perceives himself to be. Aschenbach's established masculine, German identity destabilizes, as made evident through a careful examination of how this seemingly fixed and privileged identity is predicated on the weaker, feminine influences of Aschenbach's foreign mother. While most criticism of *Death in Venice* focuses on the pederasty implied between

Gustav von Aschenbach and young Tadzio, this approach limits the scope in which the (inter)actions of the central characters might be more fully examined. This chapter investigates how Aschenbach's body longs for a youthfulness and masculinity that causes Aschenbach to lose control of himself as well as his command of his surrounding space that ultimately leads him to regard his own body as abject. Rather than take control of his surroundings, Aschenbach's surroundings change him by making him feel inadequate and inferior, especially when in the presence of younger and seemingly more empowered men. Using Kristeva's theory of the abject alongside Freud's writings on narcissism, I explore how Aschenbach's growing dissatisfaction with his body becomes so dire that he negates himself in order to focus his desires upon the body of young Tadzio, who represents among other things, an ideal masculinity and youthful body to which Aschenbach aspires but cannot possess.

While this chapter demonstrates how the seemingly ideal male's masculinity destabilizes through both internal and external forces and reveals the possibility for the male body to become a site of rupture where a fixed presentation of masculinity cannot be sustained, the third chapter examines how the narrator of *Goodbye to Berlin* takes advantage of this possibility in order to manipulate how he and his seemingly idealized masculinity are publicly perceived and thereby socially accepted. The author, Christopher Isherwood, casts himself as narrator in the semi-autobiographical novel but changes key aspects of his identity, particularly his sexual orientation, that might be considered unfavorable to his middle-class readership. The middle-class, according to Foucault, dictates the law and regulates social order; therefore, the middle-class' ideals would influence how an approvable masculine, male identity would be constructed. The Isherwood narrator fabricates himself in a manner that would be accepted by this class and positions himself to enact surveillance upon his acquaintances, whose behavior and actions

would not meet the middle-class' social approval. By incorporating the social and body theories of Foucault alongside Mark Seltzer's findings from his work *Bodies and Machines*, I also propose that Isherwood's positioning and false identity situates him to become the phallocentric interpreter of his surroundings, empowered by bourgeois society to impose a fixed embodiment and identity upon those he encounters. As the phallocentric interpreter, Isherwood has the authority to describe to his middle-class contemporaries the condition of life for the working-class individuals with whom he interacts. Isherwood's surveillance also creates a fictive embodiment for himself in which he appears to his audience as a normalized, empowered male onlooker, when in fact, Isherwood is a homosexual with more in common with those he surveys than he chooses to reveal to his readership. While the dissonance between Isherwood's presented self and his private identity calls into question the authority he is bestowed within the text, his method of surveillance also imposes an embodiment on the other characters that turns them into commodities for consumption by his middle-class readership, presenting evidence of the social system's power, through its phallocentric interpreter, to foist identities upon individuals who may not conform adequately to established paradigms.

The fourth chapter examines characters that embrace these forced identities and imposed embodiments dictated to them by the social system. Just as Isherwood manipulates the way in which his body and identity are presented publicly, so too does Matthew O'Connor strive to hide what would be considered his personal shortcomings in order to present a coherent, masculine self that adheres to the social strictures established within Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*. Neither Matthew nor Robin Vote's bodies conform precisely to the defined roles they are assigned through the binaries of male/female or masculine/feminine. Robin's body manifests itself in a multiplicity that defies categorization within the binary structure, but she lacks the ability to

explode the system, opting instead to conform herself to it and abide by the laws imposed upon her by the social construct. Matthew, on the other hand, wishes for change but refuses to act in a manner that would jeopardize his professional male authority and challenge his own position as a socially empowered phallocentric interpreter. The characters are at constant odds with their bodies, which seek to disrupt a system they both struggle to remain locked within. I use Irigaray's theories of the subjugation of women within society and culture to examine how Robin conforms herself to these expectations. Deleuze and Guattari are also introduced here to aid in understanding the rhizomatic potential of both Robin's and Matthew's bodies; however, this potential goes largely unrealized as the characters opt to force themselves into fixed identities for social display and approval.

Chapter five introduces Virginia Woolf's *Orlando: A Biography*, and with it the character Orlando who succeeds in exploding the expectations of binary roles of gender and sex, whereas the characters of prior texts have failed. Orlando possesses a liminal body that deconstructs concepts of sex and gender, presenting itself as always already multiple. Orlando sees no need for the fixity that would bind the character to a finite aspect of masculinity or femininity; instead, Orlando enjoys multiplicity and avoids any specific or definitive placement within any binary role. Here again, the theories of Deleuze and Guattari are presented to demonstrate how Orlando evades fixity or specificity and still manages to exist within h/er socio-cultural context. Also, Orlando's multiplicity presents a challenge and disruption to Orlando's biographer, who serves as the phallocentric interpreter for the book's audience. Through Orlando's multiplicity, the biographer recognizes his limitation in expressing all aspects of his subject, effectively destabilizing the role of (and need for) singular interpretations that would otherwise sustain the binary system.

Each chapter builds upon the concepts revealed in the preceding chapters while allowing for an in-depth exploration into the nuances and subtleties put forth within the individual texts. Certain themes are present within each of the novels, such as the inconsistency or dissatisfaction of the body in relation to its presentation of socio-cultural expectations of masculinity, gendered identity and behavior, creating a notion of imposed embodiment upheld by the social structure and enforced by phallocentric interpretation. However, the chapters are organized to examine each text individually in order to convey a progression of thought leading to a culminating idea that proposes, through Orlando, an alternative manner in which the body and its relationship to gendered and sexed identity within the social structure may be conceptualized.

When considering *Orlando* in contrast to the previously discussed works, one can become more aware of the enormous complications surrounding the concepts of the body, gender, sexuality, and how these are constructed through the binary relationships at work in our social context. Within each chapter, different aspects of the breakdown of masculinity and its relationship to the body, gender, and sexuality are exposed, revealing a deficiency in being completely and adequately interpreted with contemporary socio-cultural constructions. This can be seen in the three works preceding *Orlando*, as characters within those texts either reject their bodies when they cannot conform to social expectation gendered identity (be it masculine or feminine) or attempt to disguise this nonconformity. Orlando transcends these limitations by accepting h/er body regardless of its ability to comply with prescribed social roles.

Also to be noted is the complexity of the chronology of this topic. While the historical situations of the early twentieth century allowed for the disruption to conceptualizations of masculinity, no point-to-point timeline can be established to show exactly how concepts of gender and sexuality have evolved. Even the structuring of the novels within this dissertation is

not chronological, but more thematic in tracing issues that become important to the investigation of shifting masculinities. This work seeks to enhance and further the discussion of masculinity, gender, and power by bringing these texts together as a commentary both on the events of the time period and the needs of these writers to express newly emerging perspectives of gendered identity.

CHAPTER 2

THE ABJECTIFIED BODY AND THE TRANSFERABLE PHALLUS: LOCATING YOUTHFUL MASCULINITY IN MANN'S *DEATH IN VENICE*

Death in Venice offers an immediate challenge to the socially accepted notion of an idealized masculine, male body and its commanding authority over the space it occupies. Thomas Mann's central character, Gustav von Aschenbach, is the esteemed, socially empowered male figure of the text, but he reveals the fragility of his power through his revelations about his age and the frailty of his own male body in its struggle to maintain the authority that has been socially bestowed upon it. Aschenbach's complications of age, masculinity, and their relationship to the male body are explored best with Aschenbach's exposure to other youthful, masculine figures. These encounters reveal a desire and lack of young adulthood within Aschenbach at the same time they expose a disruption between Aschenbach's own masculine and feminine boundaries. As a result, Aschenbach gradually turns against his own body, abjectifying it in order to redirect his desire onto the seemingly perfect male body of the youthful Tadzio, whom Aschenbach regards as an embodiment of his own ideal self. The effect of aging and its impact on the male body become immediately significant to the plot of *Death in Venice*, with the novella following Aschenbach as he plans his vacation to Venice and documenting the experiences leading to his death on the beach; a close reading of several passages demonstrates how Aschenbach's exposure to youthful and masculine bodies affects his decision-making and self-perception to reveal his faltering masculinity.

Both Aschenbach's aging and desire for masculinity and youth become apparent early in the narrative. The story begins with Aschenbach, a nationally celebrated writer, contemplating the effects his strenuous mental activities have had on his aging body:

> He had been overstrained by the difficult and dangerous morning's work, which just now required particular discretion, caution, penetration, and precision of will: even after his midday meal the writer had not been able to halt the running on of the productive machinery within him […] nor had he been able to obtain the relaxing slumber so necessary to him once a day to relieve the increasing demands on his resources. (3)

Although Aschenbach's labor is more intellectual than physical, he acknowledges a physical toll it has taken upon his aging body, noting that the intense activity of this particular day has overexcited him and prevented him from having the nap he normally requires after such exertion. His usual need to rest reveals a lack of stamina, possibly a result of his age, and suggests a weakness of body that would diminish his masculinity. However, the description of his work as being "difficult and dangerous"[5] implies a retention of masculine power. His efforts have also required what the narrator calls a "penetration,"[6] further implying domination and masculine authority.

The choice of words to describe Aschenbach's work seems to compensate for inferiorities the artist feels concerning his profession and physical presence. Despite having been nationally lauded for his writing, Aschenbach is still "not pleased with his mastery" (6), and although his writing is taxing on his body, his work is not labor intensive in the same manner most working- and middle-class professions would be. Thus, the use of the words danger, caution, penetration

[5] schwierigen und gefährlichen

and precision provides an empowered, masculine connotation for Aschenbach's profession that might not otherwise be associated with the art of writing. Such connotation would also belie the status of Aschenbach's body, which possesses "anything but a naturally robust constitution." The narrator also describes Aschenbach as having "slender shoulders" (8) and later notes that his body is "dainty" (12). Aschenbach's delicate features imply a feminine appearance, and his small frame and childhood medical ailments suggest frailty and poor physical health—all characteristics uncommon to the socially-conceived notion of the ideal masculine male form. Thus, the use of masculine words to describe Aschenbach's art offsets the artist's physical inadequacies.

Even though Aschenbach has relied upon and masculinized his intellect and writing to compensate for his infirmities, he links his physical deficiencies as well as his artistic abilities to his mother, to whom Aschenbach also attributes his "traits of a foreign race" (7).[7] Aschenbach credits her "impetuous and sensuous blood"[8] both with his physical features and his artistic impulses (7), further feminizing both traits. The maternal connection to these traits emphasizes their femininity, as does their foreign association. As Michael Kane points out in *Modern Men*, foreign entities are traditionally feminized when they pose threats to a nation's ideals (112). The manly aspects of Aschenbach's German ancestry, composed of "men who had led upright lives of austere decency devoted to the service of king and country" (9), lose their masculine qualities when challenged by the mother's foreign bloodline, which the narrator exoticizes by describing its "darker, more fiery impulses."[9] Although aware of the features that differentiate him from other Germans and diminish his masculinity, Aschenbach acknowledges those feminine

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[6] Eindringlichkeit
[7] Von ihr stammten die Merkmale fremder Rasse in seinem Äußern.
[8] rascheres, sinnlicheres Blut

attributes he possesses, crediting the characteristics of his mother's lineage for influencing the artistic endeavors that have made him famous in Germany.

In doing so, the writer elevates his admittedly feminine qualities; however, his art still expresses both a presence and desire for the socially accepted masculine qualities that his body cannot attain. As such, Aschenbach's artistic abilities, though credited to the foreign and feminine, are the traits that have given the writer fame, even honorary nobility, in his German homeland. The contrast between the sexed maleness of Aschenbach's body (and all its perceived empowerment as male) and its limited, seemingly emasculated capabilities reveal a slippage in masculine expectation quite early in the novella. Similarly, the maternal origin of his socially-admired artistic ability that has elevated his status and social standing further blur the lines of masculine dominance and feminine submission within the text. The feminine interior of both Aschenbach's body and his art belie the masculine qualifications they have been socially granted; thus, the gendering of the writer's traits deconstruct.

This foreign, maternal blood that Aschenbach notes within him as both separate from him and still a part of him creates a breakdown between the boundaries of what is masculine and feminine as well as what is internal and external; the blood flows within Aschenbach, but he identifies it as Other: both foreign (not of his kind) and maternal (not of his sex; not of himself). As such, it seems in opposition to him at the same time it is a part of him; the maternal, foreign blood becomes the abject, occupying the liminal space between subject and object while being neither of them. According to Julia Kristeva, the abject "disturbs identity, system, order" (*Powers* 4) because the abject is:

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[9] dunkleren, feurigeren Impulsen

> A massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness, which, familiar as it might have been […] now harries me as radically separate, loathsome. Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. A "something" that I do not recognize as a thing. […] On the edge of non-existence and hallucination, of a reality that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates me. (2)

The abject, while being neither subject nor object, acts as a site of both rejection and desire, those things that call into question the boundary between self and other. For Kristeva, the abject can be bodily emissions, such as excrement, tears, blood, milk, sweat, or semen, which break the boundaries of the bodies while still being a part of them yet not; however, the abject can also be located in practices (ceremonies or rituals), or any person or thing that creates a sense of uncertainty in a subject's own boundaries and borders. Aschenbach's blood, though still within him, is abject because it disturbs Aschenbach's identity by calling into question the boundaries between himself and his mother, the maternal element residing within him, and between masculinity and femininity. The blood is part of him yet not because it also belongs to the foreign mother whose presence within him challenges his masculinity at the same time it has provided him the means by which to obtain recognition and honor within German society. Thus, the blood, as abject, creates a type of ambiguity that Kristeva states "does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it—on the contrary, abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger" (9). Aschenbach appears aware of such ambiguity because even as he tries to accept this part of himself and acknowledges that his achievements and his talents have come from his maternal side, he feels impeded by these abilities in the face of his father's manlier ancestry. As late as the final chapter of the novella, Aschenbach still questions and defends the masculinity of his life and art:

> At times when his life brought him recognition and success he would think about his ancestors and try to *reassure* himself that they would approve, that they would be pleased, that they would have to admire him. […] He thought about their rigorous self-possession, their *manly respectability* […]. But then what would they have said about his whole life, a life that had so diverged, one might say *degenerated*, from theirs, a life under the spell of art that he himself had mocked in the precocity of his youth, this life that yet so fundamentally resembled theirs? He too had done his service, he too had practiced a strict discipline; he too had been a soldier and a man of war, like many of them. […] It was a life of self-control and a life lived in despite, a harsh, steadfast, abstemious existence that he had made the symbol of a tender and timely heroism. *He had every right to call it manly*, call it courageous […]. (47-8, emphases added)

He seeks to justify himself by finding the "manly respectability" of his (male) ancestry through his art and intellect, which all are credited as byproducts of his maternal and foreign blood.

Aschenbach's identification of the blood within him as maternal further emphasizes the indistinct subject/object boundary caused by the abject (the blood) because an individual achieves subjectivity by first differentiating itself from the mother, whom it must recognize then as an object. As Kristeva describes it, "Abjection preserves what existed in the archaism of pre-objectional relationship […] with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be" (10). For Kristeva, every instance of the abject recalls the mother-child relationship in which the child must sever itself from the mother in order to gain its own subjectivity. While the separation described is that of an infant separating and differentiating itself from its mother as the child moves into a narcissistic stage, the situation may be used as a metaphor of

Aschenbach's struggle to establish himself as a masculine, male subject in the presence of the maternal blood that contributes so much to his own existence, not only as a subject but as a *masculine*, *male* subject.

Additionally, the foreign, feminized blood that flows within Aschenbach serves as another aspect of himself that juxtaposes the masculine and feminine: his male body is always already penetrated by feminine, foreign blood. This notion of penetration carries through even into Aschenbach's art, for the tragic heroes of his own writing echo the archetype of Saint Sebastian, who despite his youth and masculinity, suffered the penetration of numerous spears and arrows. Aschenbach even agrees with his critics who recognize throughout much of his work that common archetypal hero that embodies "an intellectual and youthful manliness which grits its teeth in proud modesty and calmly endures the swords and spears as they pass through the body" (9). Despite this criticism and the complexities within Aschenbach concerning the juxtapositions of masculinity and femininity within him, he still possesses the authority within the nation as a phallocentric interpreter, for his writing "had earned the gratitude of an entire young generation by showing it the possibility for a moral resolution" (7). Therefore, despite his own inner struggles, Aschenbach still manages, through his intellect, to present himself as an authoritative, masculine force within his social environment. Although Aschenbach possesses this intellect that is also found in his protagonists, his body lacks the youthful manliness he admires in these heroes and reveals his own disparity for not having such a physical form.

The reference to Saint Sebastian, the penetrated youth, embodies an ideal of manly, disciplined respectability with which suffering should be endured.[10] Sebastian's efforts to smile through pain represent a disciplining of the body that Aschenbach himself has sought to emulate

[10] As Mann noted in his Nobel acceptance speech in 1929, Saint Sebastian "smiles amidst his agony" and exhibits "grace in suffering" (par. 5).

throughout his life's work. Having refused the slothful, carefree existence of youth, Aschenbach commits himself to a rigorous schedule in order to cope with the "tortures and vicissitudes of his real work" (*Death* 8). The choice of words imply a suffering that could be compared to the agony of Saint Sebastian, a suffering gladly endured by Aschenbach to obtain the recognition of his fellow country*men*. Aschenbach's emasculated body, rife with the fiery, impulsive maternal blood, finds control and mastery through self-discipline; the story's narrator supports this notion by writing that "for [Aschenbach] discipline was his heritage at birth from his *paternal* side" (9, emphasis added). Hence the discipline Aschenbach maintains over his mind and body, through his exercise, movement, and intellect, serves as the masculine force used to keep his more feminine aspects in check. His strict work ethic and desire to prove himself worthy of his paternal ancestry meant Aschenbach had "never known sloth, never known, the carefree, laissez-faire attitude of youth" (8). Instead, he has disciplined his body for the work he performed. Aschenbach believes he commands a masculine presence through his intellect, social status, and disciplined body, which allows him to master the space he occupies.

Aschenbach's personal feelings of inadequacy in relation to his body's masculinity (or lack thereof) parallel a concept Mann himself struggled with through a significant portion of his artistic career. Gerald Izenberg notes that the release of Mann's diaries to the public and the shift in cultural attitudes since Mann's death have allowed for a greater awareness of the homosexual subtexts that run through several of Mann's works, *Death in Venice* among them. Izenberg points out that studies of Mann have revealed his own conflict in reconciling his concept of masculinity with homosexuality, which was heavily stigmatized and feminized in German culture at the time (99-100). Mann's struggle, then, appears to relate to his own feelings relating to homosexuality and masculinity vis-à-vis their cultural perspectives, which altogether negated

masculinity as a possible characteristic of homosexuals. Mann appears to convey this conflict metaphorically through the challenges Aschenbach faces with his own body, which strives for masculine identification and acceptance.

Despite such efforts, the inability of Aschenbach's "dainty" body to conform to masculine expectations has created within Aschenbach a feeling of inferiority that he yearns to overcome. Just as he wrestles internally with his maternal blood for selfhood and manhood, he struggles externally with his emasculated body for an appearance of masculinity. Aschenbach's masculinity is not expressed externally on his physical body, but rather presents itself through the social standing he has achieved through his art and intellect. Because of this, Aschenbach has no actual physical, personal focal point that marks his masculinity, and this absence causes those feelings of inferiority within him. Adding to Aschenbach's distress is the age of his body, which in its early fifties, has progressed beyond the commonly accepted standard of age for ideal masculinity.[11] Aschenbach's exposure to other, younger men within the novella force him to contemplate his age and the power he has or lacks in their presence.

The factor of age also appears to have been important to Mann when he constructed the novella. T. J. Reed quotes a portion of Mann's notes, compiled during the author's research for *Death in Venice*, that indicate Mann's desire to create a situation where Aschenbach and Tadzio could have similar backgrounds with their most significant disparity being their age difference (150). This direction contrasts somewhat from Mann's own inspiration for the novella; as David Luke notes, the impetus for Aschenbach's fascination with young Tadzio came from Mann's personal experience in which he encountered, during a family vacation with his wife, a young Polish boy whose presence enamored Mann (198). At the time, Mann was in his mid-thirties

and, therefore, still aged within the appropriate parameters of the idealized masculinity empowered during this time period. However, Mann's contemplation of a male author advanced in age and struggling with his own masculinity while pondering the relationships between that masculinity, his age, and identity (as those factors dictate how and where he might fit within the social construct) appear relevant to the timeframe in which the novella was written. Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska notes the emphasis placed on the youthful, physically fit male body in Europe and much of the Western world that originated in the late nineteenth century and extends even into contemporary culture of the twenty-first century. This rediscovery emphasizes the active, youthful male body.[12] Michael Kane further states that the renewed attention given to the male body increased the popularity of (nude) beaches and swimming resorts, locations where the male body could both obtain exercise and present itself in various stages of undress, allowing for its public admiration. Hence, the swimming resort of Venice's Hotel des Bains provides a perfect setting in which the aged Aschenbach sees the visible differences between his own body and the swimsuit-clad youths playing along the beach.

Aschenbach's feelings of inferiority with regard to his body and presentation of masculinity do not originate on the beach of Venice, however. This inferiority manifests itself throughout the novella when Aschenbach encounters males possessing the youthful, masculine body he does not have. Each of these individuals reveal within Aschenbach both the lack of and desire for those youthful, masculine qualities he cannot fully possess, and at the same time, they represent an element of the foreign, maternal aspect that Aschenbach struggles to reconcile

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[11] Stephen Whitehead states, "For if masculinity is about occupation, vigour, activity, mastery, and overcoming space, then ageing is the inevitable process that puts under question such dominant representations of maleness" (200).

[12] Zweiniger-Bargielowska affirms that the culture's admiration of the youthful male physique did not originate in Germany with the rise of fascism in the 1920s, but instead, this ideal had circulated

within himself. Aschenbach's intellect, self-discipline, and social standing are incapable of retaining any mastery of Aschenbach's space in the presence of these imposing figures whose stature seems to overpower any efforts by Aschenbach to control himself or to take command over his surroundings. Those individuals possess a youthfulness and a masculine presence that Aschenbach lacks, causing him to find both his body and intellect under total submission to several male characters that he encounters, including the foreign traveler standing on the chapel steps, the gondolier in Venice, and even young Tadzio. The presence of these males' bodies manages to overtake any sense of power Aschenbach believes himself to have. Thus, in every sense, he realizes an insufficiency with his age, his body, and his own masculinity, though he tries to compensate for these shortcomings through his intellect and his movement (his mastery of his surrounding space). Aschenbach's actions reveal a limitation to his perceptions of his own masculinity and also expose the dynamics at work within the hierarchies of masculinity occurring within the culture. For the same characteristics that construct the idealized masculinity to which Aschenbach aspires also shape the hierarchy of subordinating and alternative masculinities that cannot achieve the social acceptance of the idealized form. Therefore, Aschenbach's own representation of masculinity attempts to ally with the idealized form; however, his age and timid body in the presence of stronger and younger men place Aschenbach and his version of masculinity in a subordinate position to those individuals. Thus, when Aschenbach exercises his intellect or his body, he is attempting to reassert his masculinity as well as overcome his lack of youth, but these attempts appear useless in the face of those individuals embodying youthfulness and physical masculinity.

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throughout Europe from as early as the 1890s, so it would have been a consideration during the time of the novel's composition and subsequent publication in 1912.

These insecurities in the face of others begin to surface when Aschenbach stops while walking along the Englischer Garten to notice the curious foreign gentleman standing on the steps of a mortuary chapel in Munich. This red-haired "man's not altogether ordinary appearance" takes Aschenbach's "thoughts in a completely different direction" (4), and ultimately inspires Aschenbach to travel abroad. This encounter with the stranger presents the first of several instances where males observed by Aschenbach assume control of his mental and physical actions. In each case, the appearance and performance of the men's bodies impact Aschenbach's self-perception and self-control, thereby destabilizing the masculinized discipline over his unwieldy body and intellect. Upon seeing the red-haired gentleman, Aschenbach immediately feels "a youthful thirst for faraway places" that grips him so forcefully that "he stood rooted to the spot" (*Death* 5). The gentleman awakens Aschenbach's desire for youth and also becomes a locus of masculine power to which Aschenbach feels drawn. However, the encounter causes Aschenbach to lose control of the two abilities that provide him with his own sense of youth and masculinity: seeing the gentleman both captivates Aschenbach's imagination and ceases his movement. Aschenbach notes the sense of authority the man exudes over him and the surroundings: "It may be that his elevated and elevating location had something to do with it, but his posture conveyed an impression of imperious surveillance, fortitude, even wildness." The domineering stance of the gentleman's body and his cold stare prove forceful enough for Aschenbach to feel "an awkward sense of embarrassment" and avert his eyes (4). By turning away, Aschenbach defers to the man's authority and dominance, but seeing the stranger piques the writer's curiosity and awakens his youthful desire to travel. Aschenbach becomes dissatisfied with his current access to youth and movement—his writing and mobility through his own city—when he sees the foreign gentleman. In the novella, Aschenbach neither contemplates

his age nor worries about his mortality until he first encounters the intimidating man. While their interaction is brief, it presents a contrast between Aschenbach's physical presence and authority with that of the foreign traveler.

Aschenbach's visual exchange with the foreigner also reveals a number of aspects that further expose and challenge the artist's seemingly masculine façade. For some critics, the encounter carries a homosexual undertone, which would disrupt the assumption of heterosexuality that has been historically bestowed upon the ideal masculine figure. Robert Tobin notes that Mann's reference to the particular Englischer Garten in Munich where Aschenbach sees the traveler "points to homosexuality, for the park has been a meeting place for homosexuals from shortly after its construction in the late eighteenth century to the present day" (220). Such parks and cemeteries, like the one in which the traveler seems to be standing, served often as cruising areas in Wilhelmine Germany according to Edward S. Brinkley, who also interprets Aschenbach's admitted feeling of embarrassment from exchanging glances with the traveler as a moment of sexual tension. While watching the traveler, Aschenbach feels embarrassed when he realizes that his lingering stare is being returned. According to Brinkley, "[T]he nonverbal pickup, the prolonged stare, appears then (as now) to have been a primary means of mutual recognition for men looking for sexual contact…[b]ut Aschenbach has no social structures at his disposal to respond to the young man" (9). Aschenbach's inability to respond externally to the young traveler, however, does not quell the emotional surge within him, for he feels "a sudden, strange expansion of his inner space, a rambling unrest, a youthful thirst for faraway places, a feeling so intense, so new—or, rather so long unused and forgotten—that he stood rooted at the spot…pondering the essence and direction of his emotion" (*Death* 5). The image of the traveler has incited internal desires within Aschenbach that he lacks the means

of expressing externally yet cannot fully process internally either. This conflict between internal and external creates a desire within Aschenbach that generates a vision of a wild, untamed jungle, replete with sexualized images.[13] The vision overwhelms Aschenbach, who feels "his heart pound with horror and mysterious desire" before the vision fades (*Death* 5). Aschenbach's conflicting emotions—the simultaneous feeling of horror and desire—culminate within this powerful, sexual image and provide another example of the juxtapositions at work within the character and his surroundings, all of which confront and threaten Aschenbach's concept of the idealized youthful masculinity he cannot portray.

Brinkley identifies a similar juxtaposition with the appearance of the foreign traveler. Described by the narrator as:

> tall, thin, clean-shaven, and strikingly snub-nosed, the man belonged to the red-haired type and […] was clearly not of Bavarian stock, and in any case the wide and straight-brimmed straw hat that covered his head lent him the appearance of a foreigner, of a traveler from afar. To be sure, he also wore the familiar native rucksack strapped to his shoulder and a yellowish Norfolk suit […]. He had a gray mackintosh over his left forearm. […] It may be that his elevated and elevating location had something to do with it, but his posture conveyed an impression of imperious surveillance, fortitude, even wildness. His lips seemed insufficient…maybe because he was afflicted with a facial deformity—in any case they were retracted to such an extent that his teeth, revealed as far as the gums, menacingly displayed their entire white length. (*Death* 4)

[13] Tobin goes to great lengths to show the sexual connotations and double entendres behind the German words Mann used in this and other passages within the text. Most notable, though, in Aschenbach's vision are the "hairy palm trunks [that] rise up near and far…out of thick, swollen, wildly blooming

In this passage, Brinkley notes a "thinly veiled" reference to Oscar Wilde[14] and his 1890 novella *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Not only does Brinkley note the play on Wilde's name, but also that the unusual, lipless sneer on the traveler's face echoes the "turning point of Wilde's novella, when Dorian has committed his first act of cruelty, and the upper lip of his closeted portrait curls upward in a disfiguring sneer." Additionally significant are the uses of the colors gray and yellow in the traveler's attire (8). For gray, the last name of Wilde's protagonist, is the color of the dreary Venetian sky as it appears throughout much of Aschenbach's vacation, and more importantly, it is also the color of Tadzio's eyes. The yellow suit, according to Brinkley, references Gray again whose "signal color was the yellow of *The Yellow Book*" (8). Brinkley misses the continued significance of yellow within *Death in Venice*, however, as it continues to appear in the suit color of the old fop and the sash of the snub-nosed gondolier, and yellow also characterizes the tone of Tadzio's skin and face, which appear to Aschenbach to be covered in a "yellowish glaze of Parian marble" (*Death* 25). The homage to Dorian Gray appears plausible and relevant here, as each of these yellowed figures, when encountered by Aschenbach, challenge his feelings of youthful masculinity, for which Gray sacrifices his own soul to retain eternally.

The image of the foreign traveler, however, does not exude the eternally youthful masculinity of Dorian Gray; instead, the image appears as an amalgamation of both Gray and his portrait, inspiring Aschenbach's awe and desire for youthful endeavors while simultaneously revealing the decaying, corpse-like features on his peculiar face. Again, the abject presents itself to Aschenbach through the traveler's "not altogether ordinary appearance;" his absent lip caused by his snarled expression and the snub, seemingly absent nose imply the image of an

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vegetation" (*Death* 5) and the exotic birds with weirdly shaped bills, which Tobin reads as phallic symbols (222).

expressionless skull or corpse, which according to Kristeva, is also abject, revealing what is permanently "thrust aside in order to live" (3). The vision and desire for youthful travel, though triggered by the encounter with the foreigner, appear to be a subconscious defense by Aschenbach to thwart the cadaverous face of the onlooker, an effort to repel the abject by establishing a narcissistic moment for the artist. Narcissism, in this context, can be explained in both Freudian and Kristevan terminology here; Freud suggests in his essay "On Narcissism: An Introduction" that narcissism "may claim a place in the regular course of human sexual development" as "the libidinal complement to the egoism of the instinct of self-preservation" (546). In other words, certain moments of narcissism may be useful in preserving the ego. The development and sustainability of the ego is also addressed by Kristeva through narcissism, which "appears as a regression to a position set back from the other, a return to a self-contemplative, conservative, self-sufficient haven" (14). Freud specifically defines the egoism of sleeping and dreaming as well as the focus on illness to be narcissistic activities (551). To reassert his selfhood, Aschenbach daydreams and plans to travel, which he notes is "a measure he had to take for his health" (*Death* 5); both activities, according to Freud, are "narcissistic withdrawal[s] of the positions of the libido on to the subject's own self" (551). The withdrawal into Aschenbach's self also reveals the artist's attempt to define the boundary of his own space, something his experience with the traveler had challenged. Viewing the traveler as abject also reinforces the notion of Aschenbach's narcissistic defense, as Kristeva claims that abjection "*is a precondition of narcissism*. *It* is coexistant with it and causes it to be permanently brittle" (13).

Once again, the presence of the abject creates a liminal space in which subject and object are blurred; here the traveler may also be seen as an amalgamation of Aschenbach and other characters forthcoming in the novella. Brinkley, for example, notes the combined qualities of

[14] etwas herrisch Überschauendes, Kühnes, oder selbst *Wildes* (emphasis added)

both Aschenbach and his beloved Tadzio in the appearance of the foreign traveler, writing of him:

> What has been an only partly legible figure is clearly a merger of Aschenbach (author)/narrator/ephebe—a young beardless man, wearing a straw hat (Aschenbach's own signature accessory) in a position of surveillance—and this condensation then prefigures the analogous merger of lover and beloved, of Aschenbach and Tadzio. (8)

While recognizing certain aspects of the traveler's description that blend Aschenbach (the straw hat, the power of surveillance) with Tadzio (youthful, beardless, with gray eyes and yellowish, marble skin that could parallel the gray and yellow clothing of the traveler), Brinkley is quick to cite this merger of Aschenbach and Tadzio as the only representation of the image presented. However, the traveler serves as one composite within a concatenation of similarly blended characters that appear throughout the novella to challenge both the masculinity and absent youth of Aschenbach. The straw hat, for example, worn by the foreign traveler does not only signify Aschenbach but also both the old fop whom Aschenbach encounters on the boat excursion to Venice and the gondolier who rows Aschenbach to the island, each of whom wears a similar straw hat. The fop also dons a yellow suit, similar to the foreign traveler, while the gondolier wears a sailor suit that foreshadows the attire worn by Tadzio when first seen by Aschenbach. The chain of interlinked characters upholds the notion suggested by Vernon Venable that Mann's novella creates "a new technique for the exploitation of poetic meaning…in which no symbol is allowed unequivocal connotation or independent status, but refers to all the others and is bound rigorously to them by means of a highly intricate system of subtly developed association" (qtd in Von Gronicka 124). Venable's depiction of the latent juxtapositions having multiple meanings

with no independently definitive symbolic status shows yet another disruption of the boundaries between subject and objects, the internal and external, and makes tenuous those borders of each character's independent identity.

This fluidity of boundaries resonates throughout the novella for Aschenbach, as he occasionally desires to lose himself within his own surroundings—particularly those near water—and blend feelings, individuals and sounds indistinguishably into each other. The indistinguishability of feelings, language, and experience without any acknowledgement of boundaries comprise the initial *chora* stage of psychosexual development, according to Kristeva, in which a child has no sense of subjectivity and has not distinguished itself from the mother. The *chora* precedes both language and the symbolic law, which defines the child as subject and distinguishes itself from the maternal as other (*Revolution* 26-7). Several instances occur for Aschenbach within in the novella in which he expresses these feelings of indistinguishability. While voyaging to Venice by boat, for example, the narrator comments on Aschenbach's tranquility while relaxing on deck: "in empty, undivided space our sense of time fails us, and we lose ourselves in the immeasureable" (15). Aschenbach's selfhood blurs into the vast ocean; even the reference is not made to Aschenbach individually but a collective and indivisible "we." No boundaries or identities, not even time exists within this *chora*-like space. Examining the story through Kristeva's theoretical framework reveals how Aschenbach's loss of self mirrors the *chora* and therefore can be linked to the artist's difficulty in separating himself from the maternal. In this particular instance, as with Aschenbach's experience with the foreign traveler, Aschenbach recomposes himself through his exposure to the abject, the unwelcome recollection of the repulsive old fop he'd seen earlier on the deck, and a retreat into the narcissistic practice of

sleep (*Death* 15). The abject marks a developmental separation from the *chora*, serving as an initial attempt to break subject from object. As Kristeva defines it:

> The abject confronts us, on the other hand, and this time within our personal archeology, with our earliest attempts to release the hold of the *maternal* entity even before ex-isting outside of her, thanks to the autonomy of language. It is a violent, clumsy breaking away with the constant risk of falling back under the sway of a power as securing as it is stifling. (*Powers* 13)

The abject provides a tenuous break from the maternal, a break that may not sustain itself but instead provide only a temporary distancing from the maternal body in the complex process of self discovery. Thus, the presence of the old fop as the site of abjection, which allows for Aschenbach's break from the *chora*, marks only a momentary and impermanent separation of the artist from the boundary-less realm of existence he attempts to recall.

Aschenbach regards the old fop as abject because his appearance disrupts (what Aschenbach considers to be) the boundaries of social normalcy, especially as these customs would apply to elderly males. He finds himself disgusted with the old fop who, unlike Aschenbach, attempts to hide his age and pretends to be youthful like his compatriots. The fop poorly performs youthfulness by masking his age with ornate clothing and makeup and repulses Aschenbach who notes that the interloper wears "overly fashionable" clothing, yet:

> scarcely had Aschenbach gotten a closer look at him when he realized with something like horror that this youth was not genuine. He was old, no doubt about it. There were wrinkles around his eyes and mouth. The faint carmine of his cheeks was rouge; the brown hair beneath the colorfully banded head was a wig; his neck was shrunken and sinewy; his clipped moustache and goatee were

> dyed; the full, yellowish set of teeth he exposed when he laughed was a cheap set of dentures; and his hands, bedecked with signet rings on both forefingers, were those of an old man. (14)

Scholar Kathleen Woodward refers to the old fop's feigned youthfulness as a masquerade, and considers Aschenbach's adverse reaction to be a result of the restrictive "social codes of dress and behavior in relation to old age" (123). Because the man does not *act* his age, Aschenbach considers him out of place, as for the artist, it would be inappropriate for a man of his age and stature to compete or perhaps even associate with younger, more powerful men. Aschenbach even acknowledges this sense of youth's entitlement when considering the old fop; after observing the garish attempt of the old man to perform youthfulness, Aschenbach believes that the man "had *no right* to wear [the] foppish and colorful clothes, [he] had *no right*" to appear young (14, emphases added). Aschenbach's disdain for the old man's appearance does not seem to relate initially to the man's apparent abandonment of masculinity. In his attempt to perform youthfulness, he modifies his body with makeup and hair dye and adorns himself with jewelry and vibrant colors, all of which are activities more commonly associated with women and femininity; however, Aschenbach's horror, his feelings of abjection for the fop, appear to stem from the man's false youth. The fop uses the makeup and jewelry to present an illusion of youthful masculinity, despite these items' feminine association, and as such he presents himself as the inversion of Aschenbach's dilemma of having his internal, feminized blood contributing to his own masculine façade. Looking upon the fop, Aschenbach experiences the "fear and fascination" associated with the abject (*Powers* 45); he feels repulsed by what he sees and yet he is somehow drawn to the image since he later adopts it as his own in an attempt to please his beloved Tadzio.

The disturbance the fop causes within Aschenbach prevents him from achieving the blissful moment of nonexistence, the return to the *chora* experience, but once parted from the boat and aboard the gondola to Venice, Aschenbach again loses himself in the serenity of the moment. As he relaxes in the gondola, Aschenbach hears sounds of an "incomprehensible language" being spoken around him and notes that "[t]he peculiar quiet of this city of water […] seemed to soften their voices, to disembody them, to disperse them over the sea" (18). The disembodied voices represent again Aschenbach's failure to acknowledge boundaries, though he is prevented from fully indulging in the experience because of the murmurs of his gondolier, another abject figure with corpse-like facial features similar to the foreign traveler on the mortuary steps in Munich. Like the traveler, the gondolier's commanding presence also threatens Aschenbach's masculinity. The gondolier asserts authority through his physical presence by looming eerily over Aschenbach during his boat-ride to the shore. Aschenbach feels threatened and trapped but remains seated while the gondolier, dressed in a sailor suit, "plied his oar with great energy, putting his whole body into every stroke" (18). The strength and elevated positioning of the gondolier's body and his commanding maneuverability of the phallic oar contrast with Aschenbach's powerlessness in the seat of the gondola below the young rower. Aschenbach is helpless and immobile, making him physically incapable of exerting any authority over the red-haired man whose laboring body and commanding presence contrast greatly with Aschenbach's frail form. Also, the actions of the gondolier have distracted Aschenbach, who cannot return himself to the *chora*-like experience in which he had found pleasure.

In contrast, after arriving in Venice and sitting on the shoreline, Aschenbach again looks out onto the ocean and tries to recapture the feeling of the indivisible:

> [H]e let his eyes roam the ocean's distances, let his gaze slip out of focus, grow hazy, blur in the uniform mistiness of empty space. He loved the sea from the depth of his being first of all because a hardworking artist needs his rest from the demanding variety of phenomena he works with and longs to take refuge in the bosom of simplicity and enormity; and, second, because he harbors an affinity for the undivided, the immeasurable, the eternal, the void. It was a forbidden affinity, directly contrary to his calling, and seductive precisely for that reason. (26)

Aschenbach recognizes the risks associated with enjoying the void of immeasurable space—the *chora*—where everything blends and no boundaries exist, yet he is drawn to and fascinated by it. Aschenbach also appears to acknowledge that his affinity with the void is "contrary to his calling" because as a writer, existing within a boundless void of indistinguishability disrupts both the apparent concreteness of the language he creates and the boundaries that objects must acquire if they are to be interpreted or explained. This moment in the novella marks the threshold of convergence between Kristeva's semiotic, in which the fluidity of space (the *chora*) allows for multiplicity of meaning and indefinable boundaries, and the symbolic, wherein fixed meanings and set boundaries are enforced. The free-form *chora* and the semiotic are interconnected through their relationship to the maternal and are precursory to the symbolic, which occurs when boundaries are defined to distinguish between subject and object, thereby ending the possibilities of multiplicity. Language supports the symbolic in that "language, in turn, structures the world by suppressing multiple meanings" (*Gender Trouble* 101), which reinforces the rejection of the maternal body and maintains its position as Other so that the individual may retain his own boundary, thereby maintaining his own subjectivity. Therefore, Aschenbach's use of language for his art (which is already complicated by its association with his mother and femininity)

would require the suppression of multiple meanings in order to be useful, yet Aschenbach's affinity for the realm of indistinguishable boundaries reveals his difficulty in establishing and maintaining such boundaries. As stated earlier, even the other characters he encounters on his journey do not always hold a fixed boundary of set traits or appearances unique to them. Even Aschenbach's own boundary is disrupted by the foreign, feminized blood within him and his desire to blend into the immeasurable *chora*.

Prior to Aschenbach's experience on the shore of Venice, his other moments attempting to recall the feeling of the void were interrupted by encounters with the abject. As stated before, the abject is simultaneously a "*precondition of narcissism*" and "coexistent with it" for Kristeva. Experiences with the abject create the tenuous breaking away between subject and maternal body/object; however, the narcissistic moment in which a subject sees its image and recognizes itself as separate from the other becomes a more distinguishing moment for the subject to establish its own boundary and repel itself from the indistinguishable *chora*/maternal body. The image the subject sees becomes an ego ideal to which the subject aspires. Aschenbach's experience on the Venetian shore looking into the immeasurable is neither interrupted by an abject nor by his own image, but instead by the idealized image of young Tadzio, whom Aschenbach desires (to be). The narrator states that:

> the horizontal line of the sea's edge was crossed by a human figure. When he had retrieved his gaze from the boundless realms and refocused his eyes, he saw it was the lovely boy who, coming from the left, was passing before him across the sand. (26)

Aschenbach's gaze focuses in on the image of the boy, whom he has already seen and come to idealize. Though the image is not Aschenbach himself, he has already come to view the boy's

body as an image of perfection at the same time he projects upon the boy certain physical qualities that Aschenbach had previously only recognized within himself. When first encountering Tadzio in the anteroom to the dining hall, Aschenbach acknowledges the boy's perfect form and beauty, but in the same instant, he also notes the boy's "delicate" features and slim, androgynous frame (22). The frailness of the body is reminiscent of Aschenbach's own "dainty" stature and delicate health as a child. Though Tadzio runs and plays and enjoys himself like any other adolescent, Aschenbach questions the health of Tadzio and later assumes the boy "is very sensitive, he is sickly[…]. He will probably not live long" (29).

More revealing is Aschenbach's effort to create for Tadzio a German heritage. Though Aschenbach already identifies Tadzio and his family as Polish, the artist considers that with the elegance of Tadzio's Polish mother, "she could have been the wife of a highly placed German official" (23). Aschenbach has imagined for Tadzio a masculine German ancestry that would aid in controlling those impulses of the foreign mother, an identical situation experienced by Aschenbach, who projects onto Tadzio's ideal form all those aspects of himself he has struggled to accept. Tadzio's perfection should be capable, like Saint Sebastian, of calmly enduring such suffering, as Aschenbach even notices in Tadzio the "sense of *discipline*, responsibility, and self-respect" that had shaped so much of Aschenbach's own development (23, emphasis added). Accordingly, the boy represents a site of ideal form for Aschenbach, who focuses on this perfect image and recognizes its distinction amidst the amalgamation of indistinguishable images and sounds on the beach. The difference here between Aschenbach and Tadzio is the external appearance of their bodies. Aschenbach's body is tired, aged, and lacks masculine robustness, whereas Tadzio's is young and though slight, is physically beautiful in form.

Not only does the image of the boy assume its own spatial boundary for Aschenbach, but the writer also locks the boy into language by trying to learn his name. While observing the boy on the beach:

> Aschenbach listened with a certain curiosity, unable to distinguish anything more that two melodious syllables—something like Adgio or more frequently Adgiu, with a drawn-out *u* at the end of the cry. The sound made him glad, it seemed to him that its harmony suited its object. (27)

Amidst the chaotic noise of what the narrator had previously described as the melding together of "all the great languages of Europe" (21), Aschenbach fixes Tadzio into language by learning his name. This act is significant within the text because Tadzio is the first name learned or established by Aschenbach among the individuals he encounters.[15] The only other character distinctly named in the text, aside from Aschenbach and Tadzio, is that of Tadzio's playmate/tormenter Yashu, who is the only character to challenge the physical boundary of Tadzio, first by hugging and kissing him during their play on the beach (27) and later during a wrestling match in which Yashu defeats his weaker opponent (62). Yashu's distinctive boundary is named to differentiate more clearly his own space from that of Tadzio's during their physical interaction, for Tadzio's boundary must remain intact and well-distinguished for Aschenbach, who regards this form as ideal. Even when Tadzio gathers with his family, Aschenbach distinguishes the boy's boundaries from all others. Tadzio's sisters are, by contrast, indistinguishable from one another, as they all appear "disfiguringly chaste" with their "nunnishly vacant and expressionless" faces, wearing their "habitlike," drab dresses (22). Asexual and formless, similar to the *chora*-like void into which Aschenbach gazes into on the

[15] Butler states in *Bodies That Matter*, "naming is […] the setting of a boundary" (8), and the narrator confirms as much by stating that Aschenbach felt the harmony of the boy's name "suited its *object*."

beach, the sisters seem to form a background upon which Tadzio's colorful image shines forth for Aschenbach.

Despite exhibiting an ideal form for Aschenbach, Tadzio's body still exhibits aspects of both masculine and feminine qualities, similar to those characters already witnessed within the novella. Looking at Tadzio, Aschenbach observes that:

> Softness and tenderness were the obvious conditions of the boy's existence. His English sailor suit had puffy sleeves that narrowed at the cuff to embrace snugly the delicate wrists of his still childlike yet delicate hands. The made his slim figure seem somehow opulent and pampered with all its decoration, its bow, braidwork, and embroidery. (22)

Though the boy's appearance attracts Aschenbach, it also bears similarities to that of the old fop who had previously repulsed the aging artist. Tadzio possesses youth, but like the old fop, he does not possess the requisite young adulthood that would grant him access to manhood and ideal masculinity. Though his clothing, a sailor suit, implies an adult (perhaps even manly) occupation and echoes the attire worn by Aschenbach's masculine gondolier, Tadzio's outfit is highlighted by its feminine qualities: the puffy sleeves, a bow, braidwork, and embroidery. The visible parts of the boy's body are also feminized; his hands and wrists are delicate, and his hair appears to have never been cut, its curls hanging down the back of his neck. Aschenbach also imagines Tadzio's upbringing as soft and tender, neither of which would fit a description of the ideal masculine male. Hence, Tadzio's efforts to appear manly fall short and reveal femininity as well, just as the attempts of the old fop to feign youthfulness expose feminine aspects that defeat both males' attempts to portray ideal masculinity. Still, Aschenbach is enthralled by Tadzio's appearance, whereas the old fop's attire had horrified him. Tadzio's exhibition of

feminized attire upon his male body differs from the fop in that the abject is not invoked here; the boy is youthful, full of life, and absent of death, whereas the fop's makeup and colorful suit attempted to hide the prospects of death that the old man's aged visage would show.[16] Aschenbach desires Tadzio, who represents ideal youth masquerading as a young adult while the fop disguises his age with a false youth he no longer has nor possesses the ability to reclaim.

Aschenbach's intense focus on Tadzio causes a shift in attention for the artist from his own image, body, and selfhood to that of Tadzio's. Aschenbach becomes dissatisfied with his appearance and his accomplishments as his devotion grows for Tadzio, who is the embodiment of perfection and true youthfulness. And though Aschenbach's body had never been capable of exhibiting superficial appearances of masculinity, he had previously managed to display masculine authority and achievement through his intellect and art. Aschenbach initially uses this nonphysical aspect of masculinity to combat both his feelings of old age and his insecurities in the presence of younger, more masculine men; however, after his affinity for Tadzio has grown, Aschenbach spends:

> a considerable length of time in front of the mirror looking at his gray hair and his severe, tired face. At the same time, he thought about his fame and about the fact that many people recognized him on the street and looked at him with respect, all on account of those graceful, unerringly accurate words of his. He called the roll of the long list of successes his talent had brought him, as many as he could think of, and even recalled his elevation to the nobility. (29)

Tadzio's youthful appearance prompts Aschenbach to regard his age negatively; however, the writer immediately considers his accomplishments and ties them to his appearance. The fame he

[16] Brinkley comments that Tadzio functions differently from the fop and the foreigners, whom he collectively refers to as the "denied Other" (10).

has acquired through his art depends upon his being recognized by the public, and this recognition comes only through his current, aged appearance. Thus, Aschenbach's appearance, through its relationship with his art, indirectly exemplifies his masculinity, and he relies on this initially to control his desire for Tadzio's youthfulness. Nevertheless, Tadzio influences Aschenbach's self-perception more heavily as the story progresses, and the narrator's references to Aschenbach's aged appearance increase.

Aschenbach's representation of masculinity also falters with the cessation of his movement. In order to admire Tadzio's active youthfulness, the writer spends his days resting on the beach and watching the boy play with his friends. Aschenbach thus exchanges his own mobility for Tadzio's activity. Tadzio's presence challenges Aschenbach's mastery of the space he occupies, both physically and within the text itself. Even from the moment he boards the gondola, Aschenbach begins to lose the control he has over his body; the gondolier, porters, and servants of the hotel either guide or lead Aschenbach to every location from this moment forward. Upon viewing Tadzio, the artist then becomes motionless to continue watching the boy. His only other movements are efforts to follow Tadzio and observe him. Aschenbach also becomes nominally absent from the text in the presence of Tadzio, referenced most often "by general pronouns ('onlooker' and 'observer,' for example)" (Johnson 87). Referring to Aschenbach with such generalizations may seem unusual for the central character of a work, but the narrator appears to do this to emphasize the presence of Tadzio and the effect the young boy has on the artist. For Aschenbach's intense focus on the youth reveals his transference of subjectivity onto Tadzio.

This transference becomes more evident during a moment soon after Aschenbach's first encounter with Tadzio on the beach. While seated and looking from the open window of his

room, Aschenbach spots Tadzio returning to the hotel. Seeing the young boy causes Aschenbach to feel "the excitement in his blood" which he no longer desires to control. This moment contrasts the earlier scene in which Aschenbach views himself in the mirror and feels aged and both physically and visually inadequate. Here, the open window replaces the mirror, and Tadzio becomes Aschenbach's substitute. As he views Tadzio:

> [Aschenbach] sat quite still, quite unseen in his elevated location and looked into himself. His features were active; his brows rose; an alert curious, witty smile crossed his lips. Then he raised his head and with both his arms, where were hanging limp over the arms of his chair, he made a slow circling and lifting movement that turned his palms forward, as if to signify an opening and extending of his embrace. It was a gesture of readiness, of welcome, and of relaxed acceptance. (*Death* 34)

The image Aschenbach beholds of himself differs greatly from the tired and weary traveler he'd viewed previously in his mirror because he looks "into himself" while viewing the young Tadzio, who has now become for Aschenbach a narcissistic focal point, an idealized self that he cannot truly attain, but one with which he struggles to identify.

Aschenbach's effort of identification with Tadzio slightly alters the manner in which the artist's relationship with the young boy has been previously interpreted. Because of Aschenbach's pursuit of Tadzio, many scholars like Jeffrey Meyers and Leslie Fiedler have examined the homoeroticism and pederasty suggested in the novella, but few have considered how Aschenbach's desire for Tadzio relates to the artist's narcissistic desire for youth and ideal beauty rather than for sexual pleasure. Given the events leading up to Tadzio's appearance, Aschenbach seems propelled by a quest for youth and the ability to reconcile the masculine and

feminine within him. Even Woodward describes Aschenbach's love of Tadzio as a "desire for a lost youth" (126), and Brinkley points out that many scholars have missed the "significant detail" that no physical interaction ever occurs between Aschenbach and Tadzio (3). What does occur are Aschenbach's surveillance and the occasional visual exchange between the two males, but these acts of looking reinforce a notion of narcissistic pleasure for Aschenbach. The empty embrace, for example, which Aschenbach extends towards Tadzio, Aschenbach's idealized self, from the open window of his hotel room is only returned metaphorically much later in the novella when Tadzio smiles at the artist. The narrator states, "It was the smile of Narcissus leaning over the mirroring water, that deep, beguiled, unresisting smile that comes as he extends his arm toward the reflection of his own beauty […]" (43). The description implies a *reflective* exchange, for Narcissus was cursed to fall in love with his own image, which he mistook for another. Therefore, what Aschenbach beholds is the (albeit distorted) mirror image of his idealized self, and that becomes one of the many ways in which he regards Tadzio. As with Venable's discussion of Mann's ability to exploit poetic meaning, allowing nothing to be completely fixed, so to is Aschenbach's connection and reactions to Tadzio. Realizing Tadzio is an idealized self and the focus of Aschenbach's narcissism serves as only one manner in which to interpret their interaction that may, in turn, illuminate or enhance other readings.

Accepting Tadzio as Aschenbach's locus of narcissistic pleasure also may seem impossible considering Freud's definition of narcissism as "the libidinal complement to the egoism of the instinct of self preservation" and "the libido that has been withdrawn from the external world [and] has been directed to the ego" (546). Narcissism would then appear to be a libidinal withdrawal into one's self, in which an individual "treats his own body in the same way in which the body of a sexual object is ordinarily treated" (545). Freud continues in his essay,

however, to state that libidinal focus associated with narcissism may concentrate on a specific body part or moments of self-investment such as sleeping, dreaming, experiencing illness or even hypochondria (551). The libidinal focus on the ego appears to be the primary characteristic of narcissism, and both the libidinal focal point of narcissism and the ego are assumed to be located on or within the subject's own body. However, Judith Butler points out the textual contradictions of Freud's findings that present opportunities for both the ego and the libidinal focal point of narcissism to occur externally and away from the original subject's body. Butler points out in Freud's *The Ego and the Id*:

> In a move that prefigures Lacan's argument in "The Mirror Stage," Freud connects the formation of one's ego with the externalized idea one forms of one's own body. Hence, Freud claims, "The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but *is itself a projection of a surface*." (*Bodies* 59, emphasis added)

The externalized formation of the ego described here shows that the ego is first discovered as a surface projection, a viewing of the self or a concept of one's own body to which the figure aspires.

Butler goes on to examine Freud's choices of objects and situations that can receive libidinal focus in the act of self-investment, or narcissism. She focuses on Freud's declaration that hypochondria constitutes narcissism in order to reveal how the libidinal focus may be applied to the imaginary. By associating both genuine pain and hypochondria with narcissism, Butler claims that Freud:

> establishes the theoretical indissolubility of physical and imaginary injury. This position has consequences for determining what constitutes a body part at all, and

> […] what constitutes an erotogenic body part in particular. In the essay on narcissism, hypochondria lavishes libido on a body part, but in a significant sense, that body part does not exist for consciousness prior to that investiture. (*Bodies* 58)

Butler's reading of Freud allows the libidinal focal point of narcissism to be pushed into the imaginary. If the body part receiving libidinal focus can be imaginary, brought into consciousness merely by the act of focusing on it (in this case through hypochondria) then that part is ultimately transferable from the physical body and onto an imaginary location. Butler affirms this, through Freud, by examining his discussion of the body's erotogenic zones serving as substitutions for the (male) genitals and behaving analogously to them. Freud then claims "erotogenicity as a general characteristic of all organs and may then speak of an increase or decrease of it in a particular part of the body" (552). Butler responds, "To be a property of all organs is to be a property necessary to *no* organ, a property defined by its very *plasticity, transferability,* and *expropriability*" (61). Thus the site of libidinal excitation need not originate in the genitals or on the corporal body but may be transferred to an imaginary space or body part associated with the subject's self. Additionally, Butler examines the link between the phallus and the penis, which can no longer be privileged as a site of originating idealization. For Butler, the phallus "belongs to no body part, but is fundamentally transferable and is, at least within [Freud's] text, the very principle of erotogenic transferability" (62).

Aschenbach's focus on Tadzio presents the site of transference in which the boy can become the imaginary part of Aschenbach, capable of receiving libidinal focus. Thus, Aschenbach allows Tadzio to become the recipient of the artist's own narcissistic focus. This

imaginary transference becomes most apparent when Aschenbach admires Tadzio's body and compares it to the artist's own intellect. Aschenbach praises the boy's form:

> What discipline, what precision of thought was expressed in the stretch of this youthfully perfect body! But was not the rigorous and pure will that had been darkly active in bringing this divine form into the clear light of day entirely familiar to the artist in him? Was this same will not active in him, too, when he, full of sober passion, freed a slender form from the marble mass of language […]? (37)

Aschenbach's visual pleasure is derived from his own identification with Tadzio's body, and Aschenbach likens his own feelings of artistic success and accomplishment to the physical perfection of the boy's body, thereby transferring the feelings of his intellectual achievement onto Tadzio's body.

Butler's reinterpretation of Freud explains the transferability mentioned above as a narcissistic act, and it also allows for Tadzio to become the ultimate site of Aschenbach's own phallus. As the story progresses, Aschenbach demonstrates less and less concern for himself, his health, and his existence in order to nurture his obsession for Tadzio. Aschenbach fades into his surroundings, partially as a means to hide his gaze from Tadzio and his watchers, but also as a sign that the artist is regressing into self-abjection. Aschenbach's surroundings, after all, are now the diseased streets of Venice, rife with infectious Asiatic cholera. Previously, when overtaken by his desire for Tadzio, Aschenbach had equated his "innermost secret" with the "heinous secret belonging to the city" in its attempt to cover up the epidemic (45), thereby regarding the city as Aschenbach's accomplice. The illness of the city, cholera, is abject; it relates to "excrement and its equivalents (decay, infection, disease, corpse, etc.)" which for

Kristeva "stand for the danger to identity that comes from without" (*Powers* 71). The abjection of the city and its disease implies within it those risks Aschenbach takes of losing his own identity and selfhood through his uncontrollable obsession with Tadzio.

This obsession culminates in Aschenbach's fever dream in which Aschenbach:

> Did not see himself as physically and spatially present apart from its action. Instead, its setting was in his soul itself, and its events burst in upon him from outside, violently crushing his resistance, his deep, intellectual resistance, passing through easily and leaving his whole being, the culmination of a lifetime of effort ravaged and annihilated.
>
> It began with fear, fear and desire and a horrified curiosity about what was to come. […] for from afar there approached […] a mixture of noises: […] a certain howl with a drawn-out *uuu* sound at the end. […] But there was a phrase, darkly familiar, that named what was coming: "*The stranger god!*" […] And the ecstatic band howled up the cry with soft consonants in the middle and a drawn-out *uuu* sound on the end. […] Their obscene symbol, gigantic, wooden, was uncovered and raised on high, and they howled out their watchword all the more licentiously. […] Now among them, now a part of them, the dreamer belonged to the stranger god. Yes, they were he, and he was they. (56-7)

While the dream evokes images of a Dionysian cult, the continual chanting of the watchword bearing the drawn-out *uuu* sound mimic the shouts of the children on the beach calling for Tadzio, who has become the stranger god for Aschenbach, who lacks any physical or spatial existence within the dream. The phallic totem, the obscene symbol, raised to honor the god is Aschenbach's emblem of Tadzio—the phallic power unto which the artist has given himself. He

becomes one with the cult, and lacking his own spatiality, he is left with only the form of Tadzio to exist within. This becomes evident upon Aschenbach's waking from the dream, as the artist focuses solely upon modifying his appearance in order to please and to mimic that of the youth whom he idealizes. The narrator notes that Aschenbach's "aging body disgusted him" when he viewed Tadzio (56). As such, Aschenbach begins to feign youthfulness by wearing the jewelry and bright colors reminiscent of the old fop. Still, the narrator remarks that Aschenbach "confronted the tortured gaze of his image in the mirror" (58). Therefore, Aschenbach allows the barber to dye his hair and apply makeup to his face.[17] These actions present the moment when Aschenbach turns himself into the abject, taking on those characteristics of "death infecting life" (*Powers* 4) by mimicking the old fop in order to perform a youthfulness he no longer has. Nevertheless, the alteration of his appearance ends the performance of his socially acknowledged masculine identity by erasing his older, distinguished, publicly recognized façade. By projecting his ideal self onto Tadzio, Aschenbach's own body has now become undesirable refuse.

The novella ends with the made-up Aschenbach, near death from cholera, observing Tadzio on the beach. Aschenbach's body appears young and vibrant with colors, but his health has failed him and he dies in his chair while watching Tadzio walk along the shoreline of the immeasurable void from which he'd observed the boy earlier. Though the boy's boundary remains intact amidst the abyss, Aschenbach is no more; his old body cannot merge with Tadzio's nor can he effectively imitate the boy's youth or beauty; therefore, he must succumb to the cholera—the abject that has now internally consumed his body. In the face of the younger male, Aschenbach lacks the control of self and surrounding space and effectively destabilizes his own masculine identity which granted him social status and power. Aschenbach wears makeup,

[17] Fiedler refers to this act as the writer's (and Mann's) self-hatred (242).

jewelry, and loud colors but still cannot recapture true youth, nor can he successfully acquire it vicariously through young Tadzio. Instead, Aschenbach's attempts mark the fear and desire associated with maintaining and displaying youthful masculinity.

The novella's conclusion also raises more questions about the perception of idealized masculinity upon which Aschenbach has focused so intently; before dying, the artist witnesses his beloved Tadzio being overpowered and nearly smothered in the sand by his friend Yashu. The dominance asserted over Tadzio reveals his own weakness and inferiority to the more powerful male; thus, both Aschenbach's youthfully masked body and Tadzio's seemingly youthful masculine body betray the two in this last scene, suggesting that superficial portrayals of an ideal masculine form may lack sufficiency in mastering space, despite their age, again calling into question the notion of the idealized male, masculine body and its perceived authority.

CHAPTER 3

THE SEEING MACHINE AND THE BODY-COMMODITY: SURVEILLANCE AND EMBODIMENT IN ISHERWOOD'S *GOODBYE TO BERLIN*

> Now, once I feel myself observed by the lens, everything changes. I constitute myself in the process of 'posing.' I instantaneously make another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image. —Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*

Death in Venice reveals a number of elements related to (the break down of) masculine ideals and male social expectations of the early twentieth century that are more thoroughly explored in Christopher Isherwood's novel *Goodbye to Berlin*. During Aschenbach's pursuits and observations of young Tadzio, Aschenbach frequently hides himself and his glances from what he considers to be the watchful eyes of Tadzio's female caregivers. These women's perceived surveillance over Aschenbach's actions influences the artist to the point that he must "take care lest his behavior should become noticeable and he fall under suspicion" (*Death* 50). The observing eyes compel Aschenbach to conduct himself in accordance with the social norms and expectations of masculine, male behavior. As such, this method of surveillance—whether real or imagined—operates as a vehicle of creating, refining, and controlling individual behavior. Similarly, in *Goodbye to Berlin*, surveillance shapes the actions and motivations of characters, pushing them to perform appropriately, lest they "fall under suspicion" like Aschenbach and reinforcing the expectations of their actions within their socio-cultural contexts.

This notion of surveillance serving to refine or discipline the body implies a machine-like process in which bodies can be mechanically produced and reproduced in accordance with the accepted standards of the refining tool. In this instance, the refining tool becomes the power of surveillance itself and the acceptable standards are those expectations (or demands) of middle-class society. The refined bodies then become commodities for the consumerist middle-class who is empowered to observe them. In *Goodbye to Berlin*, Isherwood becomes such a refining tool, operating as a seeing machine to enact a narrative surveillance over both himself and those with whom he interacts in order to reinforce the social expectations of his middle-class readership and to alleviate their anxieties about the lower-classes. The scrutiny under which the characters of *Goodbye to Berlin* fall also calls attention to their performative behavior within the Nazi milieu of Berlin in the 1930s. Isherwood's unique position within the novel as both seeing machine and observable body, however, exposes a disparity in which his own performance throughout the novel often belies his expectations as the empowered, male overseer.

Understanding the multiple roles Isherwood plays within *Goodbye to Berlin* may, at first glance, appear challenging given the complex structure of the text, but a closer examination reveals how the novel's format contributes to Isherwood's intended status as an empowered observer and interpreter of events. Isherwood wrote *Goodbye to Berlin* in the 1930s when the documentary genre had become increasingly popular; although a work of fiction, the novel contains details characteristic of a documentary style while also serving as a semiautobiographical account of the author's experiences in Berlin during the years preceding Hitler's rise to power. While living in the bankrupt German capital, Isherwood interacts with members of the city's working-class and those who would be deemed deviants by the social standards of middle-class Britain. The novel proves to be more complicated than a simple

documentary, however; despite being only *semi*autobiographical, the narrator of the story is still named Christopher Isherwood, and while the sexuality of the narrator appears ambiguous and seemingly heterosexual, Isherwood the author was openly homosexual while living in Germany. Regarding the naming of Isherwood's narrator, David Bergman writes that "Isherwood speaks of himself as a different and separate person. Thus, although these books try, in Isherwood's words, to be as 'frank and factual' as he could make them, still they have the feel of novels." Bergman characterizes Isherwood's writing as "crossing and recrossing the boundaries of genre" (205), thereby recognizing the impossibility of assigning his work to a specific type.

Isherwood (both author and narrator) referred to *Goodbye to Berlin* as a diary, a tenuous claim given that he most often shifts the focus of the text from himself to the individuals he encounters, thereby making his writing appear more as a form of surveillance and reportage than a means of self-disclosure, which would be expected in a diary format. Even though the opening and closing chapters of the book are entitled "A Berlin Diary," neither these chapters nor the text as a whole should be considered diary writing or diary fiction; for as Lorna Martens states in her work *The Diary Novel*, the main characteristic of diary fiction is "a first-person narrative that the narrator writes […] essentially for himself." She goes on to explain that a diary novel "is a fictional prose narrative written […] by a single first-person narrator who does not address himself to a fictive addressee or recipient" (4). Isherwood's work fails to meet these essential criteria for diary fiction because even in the chapters labeled as diary, Isherwood directly addresses an external audience, referencing them as "you" in order to draw the reader into the scene of unfolding events. Additionally, at the conclusion of the "Sally Bowles" chapter of the text, Isherwood directly addresses Sally, telling her "When you read this, Sally […] please

accept it as a tribute" (76). Therefore, Isherwood is aware that his writing is intended for a broader audience and will have a readership other than himself.

In the second paragraph of the text, Isherwood even situates himself for this audience by identifying his role for his readers, claiming:

> I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking. Recording the man shaving at the window opposite and the woman in the kimono washing her hair. Some day all this will have to be developed, carefully printed, fixed. (1)

This declaration carries with it a number of assumptions and implications that must be examined. Isherwood's claim of being a passive camera, arbitrarily capturing the images that pass before him, has been widely accepted at face value by a number of his critics (Finney 145; Thomas 44). Richard Mayne goes so far as to call Isherwood "a self-effacing onlooker, making no judgments, forming no attachments withholding imaginative sympathy, ultimately not involved" (qtd in Thomas 44). However, to invoke the concept of seeing-eye as camera does not imply the passivity the narrator suggests; rather, a camera fixes on objects at the discretion of the person controlling the lens. Anthony Shuttleworth also refutes Isherwood's claims of passivity, calling his role as camera misleading:

> For in offering a seemingly "objective" presentation of a Berlin Street that turns out not to be objective, he actually mimics the cultural role that cameras can fulfill, though not the role they are commonly thought to fulfill. Cameras are used to provide images which are thought to be free of interpretation when they are not so, to provide what is thought to be a single truth but is not. The recognition of this false objectivity lends a considerable poignancy to the narrator's desire to rid

> himself of the dangerous activity of interpretation. His truth-telling status is compromised, and we begin the novel with the disconcerting idea that the "truth" that would undermine cultural appearances is, in its own particular way, a mythology that can offer its own deceptions. (157)

The assumption Isherwood makes of his passive, objective perspective coincides with what bell hooks refers to as the "conceit of the neutral gaze," which "will always be […] an unmarked white gaze, one which passes its own perspective off as the omniscient, one which presumes upon and enacts its own perspective as if it were no perspective at all" (*Bodies* 136). Isherwood may believe his viewpoint to be passive and objective, but the objects he places within his view must be evaluated and interpreted through the language in which they are delivered to his audience. Both this view and the language in which it is offered are generated and controlled by the narrator himself, giving him complete power over the selected scenes, each of which he alone chooses to convey to his audience. Note, for example, that *Goodbye to Berlin* is not delivered as a streaming, chronological narrative but rather as a series of separate vignettes offered in asynchronous order. The structure of the text, therefore, implies an organization manufactured by the author/narrator who has gone so far as to choose how the information will be delivered. Hence, the presentation provided to Isherwood's audience appears less of an arbitrary offering of scenes than it does a deliberate manufacturing of events carefully ordered and provided by an authoritative interpreter upon whom his audience must rely for truth and accuracy.

Isherwood's authority derives itself from his appearance as the most normalized of the individuals within the text. Being perceived by his audience as a heterosexual male member of the British middle-class empowers Isherwood to become the most acceptable interpreter of the events because he appears to embody an idealized normality as presented through his

presumably hegemonic masculinity. Appearing normalized is crucial to Isherwood's role as reporter of events observed; as Michel Foucault states in *Discipline and Punish*, the act of surveillance serves as a disciplinary tool to *normalize* its subjects (183). The role of the observer must then be assumed by an individual who himself is normalized and capable of imposing punishment or passing judgment upon those bodies that defy normalization until they too can be either normalized or exposed publicly as examples of the dangers that befall those who fail to conform.[18]

In order to portray the normalized individual, Isherwood frequently offers aside commentary or creates scenarios in which those deemed unfit for mainstream society are judged or punished; though accompanying his friends into the dive bars catering to what bourgeois standards would consider a sexually perverse clientele, Isherwood comments to his readers that he has decided "never to visit a place *of this sort* again" (26, emphasis added). Similarly, while living with the impoverished Nowak family in a rundown area of Berlin, Isherwood, who also struggles financially, is careful to hide his living arrangements from the esteemed families that hire him as their English tutor. However, he uses the Nowaks's hardships as points of amusement for his wealthier clientele, writing "I amused them by descriptions of the Nowak household. I was careful, however, not to say that I lived there: it would have been bad for my business to admit that I was really poor" (111). By Isherwood's own admission, he exploits the Nowak family in order to make himself seem more acceptable to his leisure class contemporaries. In both instances, Isherwood creates means of passing judgment on others without fully implicating himself, even if avoiding implication means lying about his own circumstances. He goes so far with Sally Bowles as to enact punishment on her for having

[18] Conformity, according to Foucault, is currently dictated by society—more specifically bourgeois society—which is empowered to mete out punishment for offenders (*Discipline* 90).

slighted him by directing to her flat a con artist who sleeps with her and swindles her out of several hundred marks. Sally reports the crime to the Berlin police, whom Isherwood describes as "two officials—both obviously fathers of families—[who] were at first inclined to be shocked" (72). As the police, the men are enforcers of the social law and Isherwood immediately assumes them to be normalized into the culture, performing their duties as family men and parents.[19] Operating within these roles, the police officers may assume an elevated position of judgment over Sally, just as Isherwood has done via his assumed status as normalized onlooker.

Isherwood not only embodies a normalized middle-class status but also portrays himself within the text to have what theorist Anne Cranny-Francis describes as a 'normal' body. Cranny-Francis points out that the findings of Foucault and other cultural theorists suggest a privileging of a 'normal' body within mainstream society and culture (8). This 'normal' body mirrors the aspects of the male exhibiting characteristics of hegemonic masculinity, as this body "tends to be not only male, but also middle-class, from an Anglo cultural background, heterosexual, and aged somewhere between twenty-five and forty."[20] Cranny-Francis states that the concept of the 'normal body' "is also a technology for maintaining the social dominance of a particular discursive positioning" (9). That positioning—a young, masculine, heterosexual, middle-class Anglo—comprises all the characteristics that can be assumed for *Goodbye to*

[19] As representatives of the law, the officers illustrate the normalization implied by Foucault and also demonstrate how their bodies conform to what Judith Halberstam refers to as a gendered and sexualized construction of time and space—functioning to wed and reproduce as a means of continuing the accepted social structure (*Queer* 8). Foucault also upholds this notion, citing capitalism's influence on Western culture to compartmentalize sexual activity and limit its practice in ways that do not conflict with expectations of work and the stability of the social structure (*History* 6).

[20] Other theorists, including Halberstam, Michael Kane, and R. W. Connell support this theory, offering similar criteria themselves for defining the ideal, 'normal' body within the social structure (*Female Masculinity* 2; Kane 20; Connell 57). Each theorist recognizes the disadvantages these social expectations place on those who fail to appear 'normal,' or do not exude hegemonic masculinity.

Berlin's narrator, and he is the only individual within the text who can embody these traits, for the only middle-class Anglos appearing in the novel other than Isherwood are Sally Bowles, a female, and Peter Wilkinson, an admitted homosexual. The primary difficulty with Isherwood the author complying with the prescriptive normal body comes with his homosexuality; however, the sexuality of the Isherwood narrator remains ambiguous throughout the text, though his fellow characters assume he is heterosexual; Fraulein Schroeder entertains Isherwood and Sally as though they are lovers, even regarding Sally as Isherwood's "property" (38). In another scene, while visiting Frau Nowak at the sanatorium, Isherwood engages in a kissing session with another female patient, and though his ambivalence can be noted through his description of the event, his sexuality is never questioned, and he is presumed to be the normal-bodied male and the novel's sole representation of an ideal masculinity.

As the presumably normalized male within the text, Isherwood is empowered by his audience to observe and report on those with whom he interacts in Berlin and its subculture. Isherwood's acquaintances within the text also recognize his authority, for they respect him and frequently turn to him as a confidant or analyst of their problems. Even when Isherwood openly admits of his financial struggles, Frau Nowak discourages Isherwood from living in her slum-like neighborhood: "a gentleman like you!" Frau Nowak exclaims, "I'm afraid it wouldn't suit you at all" (103). Despite Isherwood's financial distress, Frau Nowak and the other characters all make socio-cultural assumptions about Isherwood's status as being elevated from their own. Fraulein Schroeder goes so far as to confide her private medical concerns in Isherwood, asking his advice on whether a surgical reduction in her bosom would alleviate her heart palpitations (6). Similarly, Peter Wilkinson divulges to Isherwood the most intimate secrets of his life and his psychological history during their stay together on Reugen Island. Each character, in his or

her own way, acknowledges the elevated status that Isherwood seems to embody, and Isherwood, in turn, records their information for presentation to his audience. By providing a written document examining these individuals, Isherwood has turned each subject into Foucault's definition of a case study. Foucault discusses the privilege of writing and the act of written description about individuals as a "means of control and a method of domination. [Writing] is no longer a monument for future memory, but a document for possible use" (*Discipline* 191). Foucault goes on to state, "This turning of real lives into writing […] functions as a procedure of objectification and subjection" (192). In the case of *Goodbye to Berlin*, the observer and writer of these lives—Isherwood—assumes power over the text's subjects and becomes for his readership the phallocentric interpreter of what he encounters.

Isherwood's control of language extends beyond his power as interpreter of events for his readership by also presenting itself through his occupation of interpreter and translator within the text; he serves as a private English tutor to the wealthy (often Jewish) families living in Berlin. With this position, Isherwood becomes an accepted authority of the English language by those he encounters, further elevating his status as master of both English and German, empowered to interact within both realms of language. Isherwood's mastery of language implies the language inferiority of his Berlin acquaintances, which in turn accentuates their shortcomings for the reader. By insinuating such a language-based exclusion amongst those he encounters in Berlin, Isherwood asserts himself as the only figure empowered to know and interpret what happens, providing to these perceived unfortunates the male presence, which is assumed to have the authority to control and interpret their experiences.

Alan Wilde also notes that Isherwood's use of language "is both affected by and affects the nature of immediate perception and of conceptual choice" ("Language" 480), and this

observation becomes apparent when examining Isherwood's use of language as a tool of empowerment for himself. Throughout the text, Isherwood comments upon the inadequacy of his acquaintances' English as a means of establishing himself as the sole authority of the language. He describes his pupil, Hippi Bernstein, as speaking "schoolgirl English," not as advanced as it should be for a girl of her age (15). His landlady Fraulein Schroeder also speaks imperfect English with such a heavy German accent that she is unable to correctly pronounce the narrator's name, calling him "Herr Issyvoo," and according to Isherwood, Sally Bowles has "the vocabulary and mentality of a twelve-year-old schoolgirl" (65). Isherwood also notes the popularity of English within Berlin and the citizenry's desire to acquire the language, stating that he did not know the true name of his bartender-roommate Bobby "because English Christian names are fashionable just now in the Berlin demi-monde" (7). Isherwood's observations of these characters shape his audience's perception of them in the same moment they affirm his status and authority over them as the only person qualified to use the language correctly.

Isherwood's treatment of the Landauer family also indicates the linguistic measures the narrator takes to assert himself as the dominant, normalized representation of bourgeois society. As an extremely wealthy Jewish family, the Landauers's status presents a possible threat to Isherwood's elevated position within the text, but through his observations and exchanges with them, Isherwood systematically breaks down any authority they might share or take from him. When Isherwood discovers that the patriarch of the Landauer family had lived previously in London to research and report on the living conditions of the East End Jewish population—a case study that seems to parallel Isherwood's own observations of Berlin's slums and subculture—rather than engage in a discussion with Herr Landauer, Isherwood dodges any

exchanges and uses his tact with language to redirect the conversation, even bragging at his own "cunning" in "luring" Herr Landauer onto another subject.

Natalia, Herr Landauer's daughter who proves to be Isherwood's most vocal opponent, often argues with Isherwood, though he quickly dismisses her protests for the reader by claiming she cannot understand his English properly (142) and therefore is neither an adequate foe for him nor a formidable interpreter of the language. Natalia continues to assert some dominance over Isherwood, at one point charitably putting fresh fruit in his pocket, assuming that Isherwood is malnourished because of his poverty (143); however, Isherwood reasserts his authority over her by increasingly describing her to his audience using animalistic imagery that denigrates her humanity. He disregards what she has to say by comparing her words to farm animal noises and describes her movements as a type of pouncing akin to "an animal guarding its food" (146). The use of animal terms coupled with Isherwood's sole declaration within the text that he feels "masculine and protective" in the presence of Natalia (148) establish Isherwood's dominance over her and dismiss, through his power of language and choice of reported observations, any threats she could pose to his phallocentric interpretation of the events he surveys.

Isherwood's manipulation of language within the text also allows him to maintain his interpretive authority by controlling the written details about himself, in particular his homosexuality, which he does not want revealed to his audience. When speaking with Herr Landauer, the narrator avoids replying to questions posed about the "perverse" sexual behaviors of Lord Byron and Oscar Wilde. When directly asked if English Law would have been correct to punish Byron or Wilde for his sexual activity, the narrator circumvents both questions, remaining silent and thereby avoiding the need to answer and implicate himself or his own sexuality in any way (150). However, the nature of both questions—the government's right to prosecute

individuals for their sexual behavior—hints at the underlying problem Isherwood's narrator has with expressing his own sexuality in *Goodbye to Berlin*: as the normalized male body within the text, he cannot reveal his homosexuality and maintain his masculine authority as both empowered observer and representative of bourgeois society and its standards. Another similarity between Isherwood's dilemma and that of Wilde is the sexual involvement of the authors with lower-class men. As Connell points out, Wilde's legal troubles occurred when a fellow member of the upper-class challenged Wilde's sexuality. Prior to this circumstance, Wilde's exchanges with working-class men had not been legally or socially problematic because they involved working-class males who had limited social power (81). Isherwood the author identifies a similar dilemma with expressing his own sexuality amongst members of his class in *Christopher and His Kind*, a 1976 memoir that revises and enhances some of the details of Isherwood's life in Berlin in the 1930s. In this work, Isherwood acknowledges "suffering from an inhibition, then not unusual among upper-class homosexuals" in which Isherwood "couldn't relax sexually with a member of his own class or nation" (3). Rather than acknowledge this through his narrator in *Goodbye to Berlin*, the Isherwood of the novel instead remains silent, offering no explanation to his audience for his reticence or how it should be interpreted. Although the narrator's silence may provide a subtle indication of his homosexuality, it is by no means an outright admission. By saying nothing about his opinions of Byron and Wilde and their sexual preferences, the narrator has used language (or the lack thereof) to create a distance between his private feelings and his public presentation, maintaining for himself the illusion of a socially idealized masculinity with which his audience may identify. This silence also creates a distance between himself and the other characters that appears to elevate Isherwood from the masses and create the modernist distance and isolation reminiscent of the time period. This

imposed distance also makes the activities of Isherwood's contemporaries more observable and reportable than his own, so his caginess might initially be overlooked given his established role within the text as the surveyor and reporter of others' activities.

However, Isherwood's dual positions within the text create a disparity between his role as observer and his actions as participant in the events he reports, exposing the dissonance between Isherwood's expectations as the normal body within the text and his body's actual ability to fulfill this role. Alan Wilde, in his study of Isherwood's work also recognizes such a rift, stating that "between the attentive outward-directed gaze of Christopher's camera-eye and the essential privacy of his feelings there is […] a wide gap" (*Christopher Isherwood* 67). The gap, however, comes from Isherwood's control of what is said about him. As the interpreter of events, he has command over the details that will be revealed about himself and others, and by selecting what is presented to his audience, he can maintain his integrity with them.[21]

Isherwood's authoritative method calls into question those details that are missing, however, making his moments of silence more intriguing. For as Richard Bozorth states, "Silences under a regime of censorship are not simply hollow: they are silences about something and invite interpretation" (23). Accordingly, silence marks Isherwood's suppression of his sexuality in the same way as Foucault claims it identifies the repression of sexuality within bourgeois society. According to Foucault, this repression operates "as an injunction to silence, an affirmation of nonexistence, and, by implication, an admission that there was nothing to say

[21] The narrator's refusal to comment is perhaps best explained through his retort to Natalia Landauer when she accuses him of never giving his "real meaning;" Isherwood replies, "Of course I don't. Why should I? Arguments bore me. *I don't intend to say anything you're likely to disagree with*" (148, emphasis added). Isherwood acknowledges here an awareness that anything he presents must adhere to certain expectations; therefore, what he presents concerning himself must be regarded favorably lest it (and he) be rejected. As phallocentric interpreter of events, Isherwood has the control to present details in the way he desires, fabricating himself for his audience in a manner they deem appropriate.

about such things, nothing to see, nothing to know" (*History* 4). Isherwood's reticence appears similar to the coded silences and seemingly blank stares between Aschenbach and the foreign traveler he encounters in the Munich cemetery, which have been read as being marked with homosexual undertones. As Foucault explains, if expressions of sexuality are not discussed and not made visible, one should assume that sex, or this type of sex, does not exist. If Isherwood had not provided any representations of sex throughout the text, Isherwood's own sexual ambiguity might not stand out so prominently, but the narrator functions in a subculture he has characterized as overtly sexual. In every vignette, characters exhibit sexual activity and behavior, but any advances made directly to Isherwood are rebuffed. He frequently appears as a neutered character, a situation most obvious in his relationship with Sally and her rich lover Clive. Isherwood associates himself with Sally in their romance, writing in reference to all three of them, "What would become of us?". He continues, "Once started, we should never go back. We could never leave [Clive]. Sally, of course, he would marry. I should occupy an ill-defined position" (48). Isherwood cannot define his role in the couple's sexual and romantic relationship because he dare not convey his own sexuality to his readership. Consequently, Isherwood maintains his silence and also attempts to remain out of focus for his audience.[22] By using silence, as well as limiting what is shown of himself in front of his camera-view, Isherwood uses his control of the scene and of its description to hide himself within the text, making himself appear bland and uninteresting compared to the other characters whose lives are emphasized for the audience's review.

Further, Isherwood's manipulation of scenes portrayed through his camera-eye also reinforces his position as the phallogocentric interpreter of events. Because Isherwood controls

[22] As Wilde claims, "Isherwood typically substitutes for an exploration of that divided, haunted, and estranged self (the self, in this case, of his narrators) a ramble through the crowded and exotic country of

the gaze constructed by the camera, he has the power to manipulate what is (and is not) revealed. Hence, Isherwood controls the metaphorical camera, which records the subjects' actions, and the pen, which will document their activities, both of which he alone will authoritatively convey, interpret, and explain to his audience. Isherwood's position as surveillance camera implies machine-like processes used to refine and assemble individuals according to a normalized specification. Instances of people's everyday lives running with machine-like efficiency appear throughout Isherwood's text as well. According to the narrator, some of the richest families remaining in Berlin even live in homes made to resemble factories. The wealthy family of his pupil Hippi Bernstein lives in an affluent home built to resemble "a power-station," made "almost entirely of glass" with "metal-studded doors and a steamer clock fastened to the wall with bolt-heads. There are modernist lamps, designed to look like pressure-gauges, thermometers and switchboard dials" (14-5). His descriptions of the other homes, resembling a "flat-roofed steel-and-glass box," also imply the factory-like domains in which people live, blurring the boundaries between work and home, the natural and the machine. Direct human communication also becomes the responsibility of machines; the rooms of Hippi's factory-home are equipped with internal telephones that spare the inhabitants from leaving their current room and activity to communicate with the others within the house, thereby increasing the person's efficiency. Isherwood and his associates use the telephone for a similar purpose in one of the nightclubs they frequent. With each table provided its own phone, partygoers may call other tables to speed up their interaction with one another, again applying a means of machine-like efficiency to the production of bodies.

Isherwood suggests that his body operates in a machine-like fashion through his identification with the camera, imposing the surveillance machine designed to interpret and

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'The Lost'" ("Language" 487).

produce the bodies it captures in its gaze. These concepts of bodies-as-machines and the social construct serving as a machine-like force capable of making and/or refining bodies coincide with Foucault's insights about the effects of discipline upon the body: adequate discipline not only reforms bodies but makes them and their social environment operate with machine-like efficiency (*Discipline* 164). Mark Seltzer, in his book *Bodies and Machines*, supports Foucault's theory of regulated and producible bodies.[23] As part of his research, Seltzer investigates this "machine culture's" impact on realist works of the early twentieth century and finds that within these realist texts (of which *Goodbye to Berlin* would be categorized given its documentary style and examination of the everyday lives of Berlin's inhabitants) such a "body-machine complex cannot be considered apart from the 'realist' insistence on a compulsory and compulsive visibility" (95). That is to say, Seltzer has uncovered within these works a common desire to make all things visible; in order for bodies to be produced adequately, everything must be exposed. Seltzer states that this occurs with a simultaneous "fantasy of surveillance and a requirement of embodiment. That is, the realist desire to see is also necessarily a desire to make visible" (95). To explain this concept, Seltzer references Jacob Riis's exposé *How the Other Half Lives*, which documented, through images and stories, the lives of immigrants living in New York tenements at the end of the nineteenth century. Riis's interaction with the tenement dwellers created a dynamic of observation and reportage similar to that of Isherwood's in *Goodbye to Berlin* in that both writers attempt to document experiences with the lower-class in order for those in the upper-classes to examine and review. Both texts attempt to provide a

[23] Seltzer examines how late nineteenth and early twentieth century American texts negotiate the newly-found connections between bodies and machines and the impact these links have upon the cultural imagination, but much of his research may also be applied to non-American texts written during the same timeframe. Seltzer appears most interested in how the body-machine complex operates in the making of men and the production of bodies within the social constructs of the texts.

realist perspective of this "underworld" setting and its inhabitants. Seltzer finds that attempts of realist texts to observe the lower-classes create an empowered level of watching:

> Relations of power in the realist text are insistently articulated along lines of sight. More specifically, the realist vision of the urban underworld posits and fantasizes a disciplinary relation between seeing (seeing and being seen) and the exercising of power: the realist investment in seeing entails a policing of the real. It entails also the complex and tense interaction between vision and embodiment, between *the visual* and *the corporeal* [that] makes for the excitations generated by relations of vision and supervision. (96)

Not only must surveillance be enacted upon bodies but also through the power of looking, their bodies are fabricated into commodities that may then be consumed by the ruling social order, who have imposed what Seltzer calls "a requirement of embodiment." In other words, those empowered to observe require a corporeal (or embodied), *classifiable* representation of what they expect to see. This two-fold mechanism of surveillance and required embodiment operates at once within *Goodbye to Berlin*—as Isherwood's intent to become what Seltzer refers to as a "seeing machine," imposing surveillance upon the bodies being produced, and as the efforts of the producible bodies to lend themselves to total visible disclosure for subsequent commodification.

Evidence of Isherwood's surveillance presents itself immediately in the text. His declaration as camera is followed by a description of the first two individuals that his seeing machine grasps: "the man shaving at the window opposite and the woman in the kimono washing her hair" (1). Shuttleworth claims this choice of scene immediately after Isherwood's camera statement proves the narrator's intentions to reveal how "private people preparing public

faces are placed within a perspective that eschews such creations" (156). Isherwood's seeing machine operates continuously, even when his subjects are unaware of his observations and expose aspects of individuals that even they may not be aware they are revealing. Isherwood's positioning in other scenes empowers him to observe as well, even when his subjects are unaware they are being watched: while sitting in the dive bar being tended by his housemate Bobby, Isherwood opts to sit against the wall where he "could survey the whole room" (12). All of Isherwood's time in the text is spent watching and reporting what he sees, making him a seeing eye for the middle-class. Because the other characters in the text acknowledge Isherwood's socially elevated authority over them, a noticeable disparity exists between his status as onlooker and their role as observable bodies. Isherwood's presence among them creates what Seltzer describes as:

> an 'inevitable' difference between those who are socially included and those who are excluded […] and paradoxically promotes a desire to transcend this difference and, as we have seen, to imitate the privileged interior (that is, to reform along the lines of middle-class values). By this paradoxical logic, the representation itself effects at once a fantasy of reform and an 'inevitable' containment, effects a sort of cultural policing and self-policing of the underclasses. (94)

Isherwood's assumed normalization and middle-class presence creates a desire among his acquaintances to transcend their own class at the same moment that his presence affirms their current lower-class positioning.

Seltzer's theories appear to be an extrapolation of the ideas expressed in Marx's *The German Ideology* concerning individual expression and production. Seltzer posits that the bourgeois obtains pleasure and power through its ability to observe the lower-classes. The

lower-classes, in turn, acknowledge the power of the bourgeois and either adapt themselves voluntarily or are fabricated into what the middle-class expects of them. Marx writes:

> The way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of the actual means of subsistence they find in existence and have to reproduce. This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the reproduction of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather, it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite *mode of life* on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore coincides with their production, both with *what* they produce and with *how* they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production. (250)

Marx suggests that survival (producing a means of subsistence) comes through a form of mimicry, from an individual's ability to *reproduce* other means of survival already in existence. This reproduction consumes the individual, according to Marx, becoming his or her expression of life. A person is what he or she produces; hence, the working-class body becomes the object produced for middle-class consumption at the same time the working-class aspires to emulate the class to which it subjugates itself.[24]

Thus, in almost every vignette Isherwood shares, he encounters individuals who present themselves visibly, hoping to be validated and conformed or (as Seltzer refers to it) transcended into bourgeois society, but their efforts fall short and resituate them outside the realm of their middle-class observers. Isherwood's first landlady Fraulein Schroeder, for example, speaks of

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[24] Slavoj Žižek supports the effect of mimicry in his interpretation of Marx in *The Sublime Object of Ideology* by stating the body of the working-class becomes for the middle-class "the mirror of its value" (19). Žižek comments on the impact of this exchange, stating "only by being reflected in another man […] can the ego arrive at self-identity; identity and alienation are thus strictly correlative" (20).

her boarding house as it once was in the past rather than its present state, telling Isherwood of how she had never really needed the extra money from tenants and only boarded the "well connected and well educated" (3). Isherwood's present observations, however, reveal that Schroeder can no longer afford to maintain a private quarters of her own, sleeping on the living room sofa, and renting her bedrooms to street hustlers and prostitutes. Similarly, when Isherwood boards with the Nowaks, the family initially attempts to present themselves as being better off than they truly are; Frau Nowak describes her son Lothar as being selfless and working only to provide nice things for his mother, but her other son Otto interrupts her story to brag of the higher wages he earns from hustling on the streets. Later, during a vast family meal comprised heavily of vegetables and inexpensive cuts of meat, Herr Nowak declares to Isherwood, "we're all equal as God made us. You're as good as me; I'm as good as you" before stumbling around the room in a drunken stupor (110). The pressure for these individuals to perform for Isherwood, however, becomes most apparent through his description of the youngest of the Nowak family, the twelve year old Grete, who feels "very self-conscious" in Isherwood's presence (105). Grete's self consciousness echoes the pressure both Schroeder and the Nowaks feel in their attempts to mimic what their impressions are of middle-class life, revealing their desire to transcend the class barrier, or at least reproduce middle-class behavior.

The willingness of most of these individuals to make themselves visible also presents a desire by them to conform to the accepted socio-cultural ideals of the privileged interior—the ruling middle-class. As Seltzer states, "the desire to occupy the privileged interior appears also as the desire to *have* an interior: being inside and having an inside are the two sides of a single formation here" (94). To acquire selfhood and to be recognized by the social structure, a body must become socially constituted. That is to say, bodies must regulate their behavior and

conduct themselves in a manner acceptable to the social structure if they are to be validated within it; therefore, the subject "is formed from the outside in—filled as it were, with the social" (Seltzer 94), and the adaptability of the subjects in *Goodbye to Berlin* to their environment reinforces Seltzer's assumption that those falling outside the acceptable bounds of society may aspire to transcend themselves into a representation that would be approvable by the ruling class.

Sally Bowles, on the other hand, claims to have been born into the British middle-class but has produced for herself a working-class persona of a gold-digging entertainer struggling to become famous. Shuttleworth sees this impersonation as Sally's attempt to erase her past, believing "that a created self is a natural one" (158). Her persona is, in fact, not her own creation but the apparent reproduction of her friend and mentor, Diana, with whom she'd first arrived in Berlin. Sally describes Diana to Isherwood as "the most marvellous gold-digger you can imagine. She'd get hold of men anywhere—it didn't matter whether she could speak their language or not. […] I absolutely adored her" (28). The description of Diana could equally apply to Sally who has modeled herself after this caricature, and despite Sally's proclaimed middle-class origins, she still seeks the approval of Isherwood and a form of transcendence beyond her class position by aspiring to be recognized as a Hollywood-worthy performer and entertainer. Sally chooses to embody her concept of the lower-class fallen woman that can be consumed by middle-class men. Therefore, the voluntary exposure of Sally's body and the bodies of other working-class members assists Isherwood in his surveillance, offering themselves up for visible inspection and middle-class consumption, "making everything, including interior states, *visible, legible, and governable*" (Seltzer 95, emphasis added). Thus Sally's embodiment, like everything Isherwood observes and writes, reaffirms the empowered middle-class value system he appears to represent.

Sally has become a reproduction of a consumable body for the middle-class and assumes her role as commodity within her working-class setting, fulfilling Marx's idea of becoming solely what she can produce. Sally reiterates this idea of work and production as overtaking all aspects of everyday life when she tells Isherwood, "I'd never let love interfere with my work. Work comes before everything" (33). Isherwood echoes this sentiment, first stating of Bobby, his working-class roommate, "People like Bobby *are* their jobs—take the job away and they partially cease to exist" (188). Sally, Bobby and the rest of their working-class contemporaries exist only through what and how they can produce. Sally survives financially by selling her body both sexually and through her expressive stage performance, and even Bobby's name, as previously mentioned, is itself a fabrication, mimicking a more empowered group and created for the satisfaction of others. Thus, these working-class bodies produce not for themselves but for those enabled to consume. Isherwood confirms this, stating "Everybody sold what they had to sell—themselves included" (189). This notion reinforces Seltzer's idea of required embodiment in that individual bodies must fabricate themselves into usable commodities for middle-class consumption.

Seltzer connects the commodification of the working-class body with the eroticization associated with the leisure class's power to observe. Within realist texts, Seltzer finds "an eroticizing of power and of the power of making-visible. And this eroticizing of power is nowhere clearer than in the almost programmatic rewriting of the story of the (social) 'other half' in terms of the story of the (sexual) 'lower half'" (96). In other words, the required embodiment the middle-class expects to see of the lower-classes most often involves a sexualized embodiment of individuals. Seltzer offers a primary example of this in the story of the "fallen girl" that most frequently appears amidst the backdrop of the working-class slums. This

stereotype appears in *Goodbye to Berlin* primarily with Isherwood's experiences with Sally Bowles, who shamelessly flaunts her sexual promiscuity and openly admits to sleeping with men for money. Cranny-Francis, like Seltzer, acknowledges the fallen girl as a common embodiment of the working-class female, noting that middle-class observations often treat the female body reductively, seeing it as either "sexually provocative and dangerous, or maternal and nurturing" (70). Isherwood's reported observations of the three central female inhabitants of the Berlin slums, Sally Bowles, Fraulein Schroeder and Frau Nowak, fit these paradigms—Sally as the self-professed whore and Schroeder and Nowak as the maternal caregivers.

Cranny-Francis also discusses middle-class anxieties concerning the threat of the sexualized lower-class female bodies to disrupt the social order. Women like Sally Bowles and Isherwood's prostitute roommate Fraulein Kost present a danger to bourgeois stability because they "use their bodies (the promise of bodily pleasure) to entrap middle-class men into marriage, or at least financial support, […exploiting] their bodies in order to gain not just economic but also social advantage" (Cranny-Francis 71). Evidence of this occurs in Isherwood's depiction of Sally, who brags during conversation that a wealthy old man "wants me to be his mistress, but I've told him I'm damned if I will till he's paid all my debts" (24). Sally uses her body as a commodity, her sex as commerce for financial and social advancement. Isherwood even describes Sally in commercial terms, referring to her as an "acquisition" of her male companion Fritz (22) and as Isherwood's own "property" during an exchange with Fraulein Schroeder (38). Sally regards the world in terms of commerce and trade as well, telling Isherwood "when people have cash, you feel differently about them" (32). Sally's escapades demonstrate both the pleasures of the (male-dominated) middle-class as well as its fears, in that her body has been commodified for middle-class (sexual) consumption, but it also poses the threat of entrapment

into marriage and thus the destabilization of class position. To alleviate these anxieties, Sally's story concludes with her leisure class lover Clive abandoning her before they can be married, reassuring the audience of the punishment for attempting to transgress the class boundary.

Whereas Sally's presence as fallen girl poses a threat to the middle-class, her counterpart mother-figures do not. Cranny-Francis states that the nurturing, motherly working-class woman "constitutes no threat, for her (now) unfashionably maternal body signifies nurturing, caring and even servitude […]. The demands she meets are for hygiene, the preparation and serving of food, child-care and house cleaning" (73). This same description could be applied to Fraulein Schroeder whom Isherwood depicts almost identically. Described as "shapeless but alert, she waddles from room to room […] flicking her duster" (2), Schroeder acts more as the mother than as the landlady of her boarding home; Isherwood depicts her always as either tidying or preparing meals for her lodgers. Her large body implies a softness and nurturing comfort while its shapelessness is devoid of sexual enticement for the onlooker. Similarly, Frau Nowak embodies the mothering qualities of feeder and caregiver within her home. Both women, in this capacity, are capable of being regulated and consumed by the middle-class differently from the fallen girl, still in a manner of servitude, yet this body type does not jeopardize the stability of the middle-class and its barriers.

Frau Nowak does emphasize another maternal aspect that Seltzer describes in contrast to the fallen girl; Nowak appears as a variation of Seltzer's description of the prolific mother of the slums, who "appears as a deeply embodied reproduction of the social, as social 'forces' made visible and corporeal" (100). Seltzer depicts the mother of the slums as the maternal figure who produces large numbers of (usually) female children who mature to fulfill the roll of fallen girl. This slum mother is an embodiment of the slum itself who is brought to justice in order to

become legible, made into a case study. Although Frau Nowak has not been a prolific child bearer, mothering only three children (only one of whom has become a male hustler), Nowak does embody the working-class of Berlin through her perpetual illness. Isherwood first introduces her to the audience by questioning her about her health; she is chronically ill and her sickness mirrors the general malaise the middle-class observes in working-class society, which according to Cranny-Francis is often regarded as being rife with disease and the threat of contamination (71).

Rather than be brought to justice as a means of becoming a legible case study, Frau Nowak places her body in the care of physicians, who also hold the power to interpret her condition and correct her body for proper use.[25] By disclosing her illness and subsequently returning to the sanatorium, Frau Nowak allows herself to be inspected both internally and externally, a characteristic of the body-machine complex present within realist works, according to Seltzer, who documents the various instances of "dissection, vivisection, or surgical openings of the body" within these texts (95). For all things to be made governable, all things must be exposed.

In *Goodbye to Berlin*, Frau Nowak's is not the only body that seeks to be corrected through medical means. The entire city of Berlin appears to be a large sanatorium in which Isherwood witnesses numerous characters undergoing medical procedures or desiring to do so in attempts to reform their bodies to an acceptable social standard. Fraulein Schroeder, who longs to have her own bust reduced to correct her heart palpitations, reveres her prostitute-tenant Fraulein Kost with the "hall-mark of respectability" for having achieved "an operation in a

[25] Isherwood describes Frau Nowak's endless faith in her physicians, even when they differ in opinion, stating that she "listened to all three of them with the greatest respect and never failed to impress upon [Isherwood…] that each was the kindest and cleverest professor to be found in the whole of Europe" (124).

private nursing home" (188). Schroeder's reaction, as described by Isherwood, indicates both the respect and desire inherent in surgery and medical correction for these individuals. When Sally Bowles must seek a surgeon to give her an abortion after she becomes pregnant by one of her many lovers, Isherwood manages to find a doctor for her who, for the right price, removes any insinuation of illegality or impropriety for the procedure by authoritatively assuring Sally that her own poor health would make it impossible to give birth (52). Isherwood even manipulates his audience's own perceptions of the power of the medical system when he feels threatened by Bernhard Landauer's presence, suggesting that the young man's tired expressions meant Bernhard was "suffering from a fatal disease" (155).

Despite being middle-class himself, Peter Wilkinson's homosexuality and diminutive frame (a result of a heart condition) prevent him from achieving a normal-bodied status and because of this, he also discloses his medical and psychological history to Isherwood in hopes of understanding himself. Peter is aware of his apparent shortcomings and shares with Isherwood his numerous attempts to seek help from both physicians and psychiatrists. Peter opens himself for examination to both his doctors and now to Isherwood in hopes of being corrected. His efforts to expose himself with a desire of being reformed also mirror Foucault's findings concerning the medical influence present in the machine-like disciplining of bodies.[26] With Peter's case, the "proper" functioning of his sexuality would be governed by the medical system to ensure his behavior falls in line with accepted practices of reproduction and social regulation (*History* 41). With each of these incidents comes another opportunity for these bodies, their diseases, and symptoms to be medically evaluated and categorized in a format where the reader substitutes for the physician or reviews the subject alongside him, assuming a similar power by

[26] As with the military and education systems, the medical system works to correctly train bodies to properly function within society (*Discipline* 136).

overseeing the procedures performed and viewing the body, again, as a case study. As Seltzer claims, in the realist text, the individuals must be opened and dissected so that everything becomes visible to the all-powerful observer (96). The authoritative power assumed by the physician (and the reader by proxy) stems from this visual power of looking, seeing, and evaluating.

The power of the physician to dictate social order and determine the acceptability of practices appears most prominently in Isherwood's exchange with a Nazi doctor concerning Otto Nowak. Described initially by Isherwood as having a "superb" and youthful body (79), Isherwood casts Otto as another commodity type for middle-class consumption, the physically ideal male form, depicted numerous times by Isherwood's descriptions of Otto in various states of undress and always exercising and flexing his muscles.[27] Otto mars his own aesthetic beauty, however, by engaging in homosexual activity, regarded at the time as contradictory to any characterization of ideal maleness or masculinity. Otto, like Sally, prostitutes himself, though his clientele are both men and women, and his embodiment as a sexual deviant supports Cranny-Francis's assertions that working-class men "are commonly portrayed as sexually competent and promiscuous but also as exploitable and expendable" (76).

The Nazi doctor recognizes Otto's expendability within the social structure when he expresses to Isherwood his concern about Otto and what the doctor perceives to be Otto's pathology of unreformable homosexuality. The Nazi tells Isherwood:

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[27] Kane discusses the emphasis placed on exercise and the idealized physique for men in turn-of-the-century Germany. A physically fit male body, according to Kane, embodied the nation itself, demonstrating its power and discipline (113). Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska asserts that this attitude toward the physically fit male body remained in Germany through the late 1930s, but also influenced British culture as well (596), implying that Otto's physique would be an admirable trait within both societies.

> My work in the clinic has taught me that it is no use trying to help this type of boy. […] From a scientific point of view, I find him exceedingly interesting […]. He has a criminal head! […] Every week, one or two such boys come to my clinic, and I must operate on them for adenoids, or mastoid, or poisoned tonsils. So, you see, I know them through and through! […] I know this type of boy very well […]. It is a bad degenerate type. You cannot make anything out of these boys. (89-90)

By claiming to have examined boys like Otto internally, seeing their corrupted organs, the Nazi doctor believes to know these boys are corrupt mentally and externally as well and, therefore, are unfit for functioning in normal society. As a physician, the doctor holds the authority to determine appropriate sexual behavior, and as Foucault suggests in his first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, during this timeframe homosexuality was classified as a perversion that impeded the normal (hetero)sexual behavior that led to reproduction of the species (43). The efforts of the medical system to classify and correct such perverse behaviors created a surveillance conducted by physicians over their patients and a self-policing among individuals that not only reinforced the concept of the normalized family unit but also served to sustain the state as well (*History* 116). A perverse body that holds the potential to corrupt other normally functioning bodies while also failing to reproduce new, conformable bodies cannot adequately serve the social structure. Because of this the Nazi doctor proclaims Otto and his kind to be inefficient bodies within the machine-like social system, stating one "cannot *make* anything out of" them. Accordingly, the doctor states, "These boys ought to be put into labour-camps" (89), where presumably their bodies may still be used to serve the state in a nonreproductive, asexual,

and ostracized capacity that will threaten neither the stability of normal masculinity nor the sexual expectations of individuals functioning within normal society.

The link established here between visibly normal sexual practices and the continuity of the state with its efficient social structure correlates with Seltzer's theory of making all things visible in order to make them governable, but the introduction of Nazism and fascist ideals only further complicates the production of bodies for consumption. As time passes in Isherwood's stories, the influence of Nazism becomes more apparent, as does the characters' gradual shifting from functioning as a commodity for the middle-class into an acceptable representation of Nazi Germany. As Georges Bataille contends, with the influx of fascist ideology comes a breakdown of the class structure, as all classes supposedly merge to serve the state's unified goal, and new barriers are established or emphasized that replace the hierarchy of the class system (154). With Nazi Germany, race becomes the predominating criteria upon which the new hierarchy is established, and this is made evident in Isherwood's text as well, as he documents the increasing violence against Jews living in the capital city.

Nazism also alters the manner in which bodies are fabricated for consumption. Although a negotiation constantly occurs between the private body and the public social machine that comprises an individual within the social structure, the rise of fascism breaks down this system in a way that disregards the private individual altogether.[28] As fascism totally rejects private personae and the notion of individual selfhood, it leaves only a socially constructed surface that should consume the body entirely. As a distilled version of fascism, Nazism intensifies theatrics in its demand for bodies to perform in accordance with the nation's goals. As described by Modris Ecksteins, Nazism "was a grand spectacle" that encompassed all facets of life, both

public and personal.[29] A fascist regime manages to exploit individual performance because "it provides the participant with an experience of the self in communion with others, all of whom are potential subscribers to the present belief system" (Berghaus 5). Thus, through performance, the individual becomes a participant in and member of the fascist state.

Performativity is also implicit in Seltzer's theory of the body-machine conforming to the socio-cultural expectations to which an individual aspires, as bodies must reproduce themselves according to the bourgeois culture's expectation. However, given the eradication of a private selfhood in exchange for a totally external, superficial production of the body, the level of performativity demanded by the Nazis is heightened to a theatrical level. The expression of performance may then become spectacle and present itself entirely as a surface act. Isherwood witnesses this firsthand during his encounters with the young German communist Rudi and his compatriots who frequent the dive bars dressed in outrageous Russian attire, assuming this to be proper communist garb, and spouting communist ideology even they profess not to understand. At one point, one of the rabble rousers admits to "yelling out whatever came into my head—I don't know what I said. They liked it anyhow" (200). The behavior of these young communists appears to be a direct response to the equally performative demonstrations staged by the young Nazis who frequently raid the bars and spout empty Nazi rhetoric. As such, the communist boys merely act the part in order to rebel. Isherwood, however, recognizes the difference between Rudi and his associates and the "real" Nazis:

> I am thinking of poor Rudi, in his absurd Russian blouse. Rudi's make-believe, story-book game has become earnest: the Nazis will play it with him. The Nazis

[28] As Roger Griffin states, fascism "encourages the individual to subsume his or her personality unquestioningly *but willingly* within the greater whole of the national community caught in the throes of it transition to a new order, and so participate in the special historical destiny allotted to it" (15).

> won't laugh at him; they'll take him on trust for what he pretended to be. Perhaps at this very moment Rudi is being tortured to death. (207)

Isherwood's understanding of the game-play and performance of the communists is followed by his own brief moment of introspection when he closes his text by turning his camera-eye directly upon himself, catching his reflection in a mirror where he is "shocked to see that I am smiling" (207). Wilde reads Isherwood's smile as his subtle admission of complicity in the events he has presented, stating "Isherwood's sterner and guilt-ridden mirror signifies a refusal to see or to face necessarily unpleasant or unredeemable realities" ("Language" 485). Wilde's assumption seems valid, given that after such a shocking thought of Rudi, being punished merely for his performance, Isherwood catches himself smiling. Also significant, however, is the narrator's admitted shock at seeing his smile, insinuating Isherwood's own performance, masquerading as the idealized male of his class.

As the stand-in for middle-class empowerment, Isherwood's body's surface has produced what the social structure has expected of him, despite that public, socially constituted surface having disconnected from Isherwood's own interior, private self, which reads surprise when regarding the superficial reaction of his smiling face. The disparity between Isherwood the empowered male observer and Isherwood the person becomes more apparent in this moment of self-reflection imposed by the mirror, implying the fabricated embodiment of Isherwood himself and revealing a socially empowered embodiment of himself to his readers that is not an accurate representation of Isherwood the author. Instead, Isherwood has conformed to the same

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[29] Ecksteins notes that Nazism focuses more heavily on the theatrics of its actions rather than its content (312-3).

expectations and embodiment imposed upon his lower-class contemporaries in order to obtain the approval of his middle-class readership.

CHAPTER 4

RHIZOMATIC BODIES AND FEMALE MASCULINITY: THE LIMITATIONS OF BINARY SYSTEMS IN BARNES'S *NIGHTWOOD*

Whereas *Goodbye to Berlin* presents a schematic in which embodiment is imposed upon individuals by the Isherwood narrator who poses as the text's phallocentric interpreter, Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* presents alternative scenarios in which characters have the potential to transcend their socially imposed embodiment but fail to do so. Both Robin Vote and Matthew O'Connor struggle with their own embodiment, and their (in)actions impact the characters around them. Much like Isherwood in *Goodbye to Berlin*, Robin and Matthew experience difficulty allowing their bodies to express themselves completely and accurately, as both appear to conform to accepted conventions of masculinity and femininity in order to function within their social milieu. Matthew attempts to sustain a visibly masculine public identity that he has created for himself, yet he wrestles with his secret desire to be a woman and express a more feminine aspect of himself. However, just as Isherwood in *Goodbye to Berlin* used his control of language and scenes to construct a normative male identity emblematic of the culture's interpretation of idealized masculinity, Matthew has the same ability, presumably as a man of power and stature amongst his peers, to manipulate how others perceive him, using his phallocentric authority to dictate how the language and culture should interpret his masculinity and/or body. Like Matthew, Robin's body, which is interpreted as female and feminine within the socio-cultural construct of the text, has the potential to disrupt its social expectations; however, she fails to understand her body's capability to express multiplicity and strives instead

to conform to acceptable binary structures that uphold the social system and place her in a subjugated role within it. Robin's apparent fluidity does create a number of unstable relationships with other characters, however, who try in their own way to possess Robin. The attempts of these other characters, particularly the women, demonstrate aspects of female masculinity that have yet to be examined within the novel or addressed within any scholarship of the text. Although both Matthew's and Robin's bodies have the potential to defy certain fixity within the established binary systems that would impose upon them strictures of masculinity or femininity, male or female respectively, they are ultimately incapable of escaping the prescribed roles to which they have grown accustomed. However, their actions and the effects they have on others reveal alternative forms of gendered identity at work within the text.

Robin Vote presents a unique perspective from any previously discussed characters because her body defies specific categorization within a number of binary constructions. Whereas Matthew and the other dominant male force within the text, Felix Volkbein, rely on specificity and fixity within these constructions to maintain their public authority, Robin resists precise definability and thus, manages to elude exact linguistic categories that would fix her into exacting gender roles. Robin's body becomes the locus of this resistance; she is described as "a tall girl with the body of a boy" (46), and her gender is further confounded when her body adorns strange attire, such as a pair of boy's trousers (169) or clothes "of a period that [Felix, a lover of history] could not quite place" (42). Though sexed female, Robin has a boy's body, disrupting what Butler calls a "normative" category of sex (*Bodies* 1), and her interplay of gendered clothing further disrupts any consistent practice of gender performativity that would "materialize the body's sex, to materialize sexual difference in the service of the consolidation of the heterosexual imperative" (*Bodies* 2). According to Butler, the body must materialize or present

its sex and gender in accordance with the socio-cultural norm, and to achieve this materialization, the body must not only present a linguistically categorized sex (male or female) but reiterate that sex through a continuous performance of gender (e.g., through the wearing of gendered clothing) which also adheres to the regulatory ideal set forth by the social construct. Thus, the actions and descriptions of Robin's body defy normative expectation and therefore elude a fixed definability within the current system, creating a gap which Butler calls "disidentification" (4).

Though Robin's body freely defies categorization, Matthew struggles to prevent his own body from disidentifying in the same way. In public, Matthew exudes the expected persona of an empowered male with a commanding presence and garrulous attitude, and as such, his body reiterates the institutions of maleness and doctoral authority that empower him. Privately, however, his body escapes the regulatory ideal of masculinity by adorning itself with feminine attire, but Matthew indulges in these moments only when he believes himself to be unobserved so that his social persona will not be compromised. Believing that he is hidden from Felix's view while standing behind a screen, Matthew finds delight in applying Robin's lipstick and perfume to his body (36). Later, when Nora pays an unexpected visit to the doctor's apartment, she discovers him dressed in a gown and wearing a woman's wig, "heavily rouged and his lashes painted." However, no sooner than she sees Matthew this way than he "had snatched the wig from his head, and sinking down in the bed drew the sheets up over his breast" (79). Thus, Matthew puts forth substantial effort to hide this feminine aspect of himself which would contradict the masculine, socially acceptable persona he has created for public display. Matthew publicly distances himself so efficiently from female or feminine association that his only public exchanges with the feminine occur through his medical profession and the imparting of

authoritative advice, both of which would, in turn, validate him within his social setting and reaffirm his masculine authority.[30] His medical expertise, despite having been fabricated, grants him the authority over the female body, empowering him to recontextualize its experiences and feelings for both social understanding and the patient's comprehension. By doing so, Matthew's presumed authority over the female body and its functions allow him to keep his own body restrained (and constrained to acceptable masculine/male practices) so as to accommodate social regulation. Matthew's public presentation must meet the normative social expectations if he is to be accepted and revered as both a male and a physician, and as a result, he attempts to hide those non-masculine aspects of himself that might corrupt his public persona by which he is known. By acting this way, Matthew attempts to keep this socially acceptable presentation of masculinity localized on and within his body so that he can retain male authority.

Matthew's dilemma mirrors Felix Volkbein's in that both men appear to exhibit seemingly normalized, male bodies, yet both men struggle to maintain that legitimacy within their social frameworks. Felix is of Jewish-Italian descent, a common immigrant living in Vienna while Matthew is an impoverished, aging Irish-American living in a meager one room apartment and scrounging for food and handouts in the streets of Paris. Although the above describes the reality of both men's experience, they use their control of language, manipulation of their appearances, and revisions of their personal histories to construct false identities for themselves that express a more idealized masculinity that would grant them acceptance amidst their middle-class contemporaries. Carrie Rohman best articulates Felix and Matthew's aspirations in her essay on *Nightwood* when she discusses Felix's personal desire for identity: she writes that Felix has a "desperate desire for identity—an identity fixed by language and

[30] As Dianne Chisolm notes, Matthew "has been forced to choose gynecology as the only legitimate conduit to the pleasure he takes in playing the woman's part" (190-1).

culture, an identity whose meaning is guaranteed by the symbolic order" (59). Both men exhibit this desire for a fixed identity and take similar approaches in achieving it; each man fabricates a history that bestows upon himself power and reverence within his social circle. Felix creates a Christian heritage, devoid of the Jewish-half of his lineage, complete with an elaborate ancestry of Austrian nobility, claiming to be a Baron. Matthew, on the other hand, assumes the socially respected role of physician, though "he was not a licensed practitioner" (35).

Both men adapt their own histories to improve how others accept them and even how they come to accept themselves, and their choices hint at the overtones of vehement anti-Semitism and homophobia that can be found within Barnes's text. Along with charges of anti-Semitism, Merrill Cole calls *Nightwood*'s treatment of homosexuality to be "wretchedly homophobic" (391), though it is unclear if the expression of these sentiments within the text are a testament of Barnes's personal feelings or her assessment of the cultural atmosphere of the time period in which she wrote the novel. Cheryl J. Plumb, who has researched Barnes's work and, in 2005, edited a compilation of *Nightwood* along with its numerous related drafts, believes that the novel was written between 1927 and 1934 and revised numerous times between 1934 and 1936 (ix-x). During this time, anti-Semitic feelings and Jewish resentment had escalated significantly throughout the world. This heightened resentment would have been evident in Austria and other parts of Europe where Felix and his family reside in the novel, so the inflammatory comments made against Jews within the text could be attributed to the hostile social environment in which the story was set. This position can be supported when considering that many of the derogatory statements come from the novel's narrator whose descriptions of scenes and characters set the mood and tone of the novel's social milieu.

The source of the apparent homophobia within the text becomes more complicated to originate as the characters exhibiting homosexual tendencies, rather than the text's narrator, provide much of the negatively biased commentary. Again, Barnes's intentions are uncertain, as the author frequently depicted the novel as a representation of her relationship with her only female lover Thelma Wood, a relationship which has been documented as being very tempestuous and "destructive" (Plumb vii). Adding to the complexity and confusion of the situation is Barnes's own denial of being a lesbian and apparent dismissal of lesbianism later in her life (Martins 109). Barnes's true intentions or motivations for incorporating anti-Semitism and homophobia into her work are not as important here, though, as are their (re)presentations within the text as sites of examination for the alternative masculinities and challenges to the binary logic at work within the novel's social construct, which appears to mirror that of Barnes's own milieu.

Felix's need to hide or abandon his Jewish heritage in order to be socially accepted reveals an awareness that identifying with a Semitic lineage would compromise how he would be socially and culturally perceived, as Jews during this time were treated frequently as lower-class citizens and oftentimes regarded as subhuman. Thus, despite evidence of dominance or certain socially acceptable characteristics of masculinity, Jews like Felix would have been considered culturally as subordinate to what was privileged, "true" masculinity within the culture: the young, heterosexual, middle-class male of Anglo descent. Judith Halberstam confirms in *Female Masculinities* that "femininity and masculinity signify as normative within and through white middle-class heterosexual bodies" (29); thus the non-white, or perhaps "off-white" Jewish body, be it masculine or feminine, would be socially excluded from privileged, normative categories. Therefore, Felix creates a non-Jewish identity for himself by revising his past to

create a new identity more in line with the socio-cultural expectation of maleness and masculinity. For Felix, history becomes a commodity that can be accumulated and used for adornment. With the fake portraits of his ancestors and their sham noble title, Felix "becomes the 'collector' of his own past" (10). His obsession with his history, no matter how false or fabricated, creates a barrier between the external world and his inferior interior comprised of the Jewish blood he denies.[31] To compensate for such racial and religious exclusion, Felix adopts the reconstructed Christian history that his Jewish father has passed down to him. In this manner, Felix seems most like Aschenbach from *Death in Venice*, who strives to overcome his foreign blood in order to create for himself an acceptable masculine identity that would bring him respect. Like Aschenbach, Felix aspires to nobility and social distinction as a means of escaping the feelings of inferiority and exclusion he has come to associate with his true heritage, and though his nobility lacks the authenticity of Aschenbach's status, both men revel in their titles, which bestow upon them distinction and honor as well as a socially acceptable masculine identity.

While Felix is a collector of the past, Matthew acts as its authoritative interpreter. Like Isherwood in *Goodbye to Berlin*, Matthew asserts himself as the phallocentric interpreter of events, qualified by his gender and profession (albeit fabricated) to translate every situation, even the nature of life and love, into language that is recognized with authority and validity by the other characters who defer to him. The commanding presence of Matthew becomes apparent immediately from the first moment he appears within the text, usurping the role of host at the party of the late-arriving Count. Felix hears the words of Matthew even before seeing him, further emphasizing the doctor's command of language to interpret experience. The narrator

[31] Susana S. Martins states, "The Jew is always already he who has been excluded and despised by Christians and defined as outsider so that others may feel themselves to be insiders" (112).

even describes Matthew's voice as being the "device" by which he could guarantee captivating an audience (15). The power of Matthew's words also becomes evident through the frequent and extensive monologues the doctor provides throughout the novel. Not only is his voice a powerful instrument for the characters within the novel, but his words become a centerpiece of the text itself for readers, as Matthew's statements assert themselves with an authority that rivals that of the disembodied, omniscient narrator.[32] Matthew's commentary presents itself in a manner, however, that appears to disembody the character from his own voice. During many of his monologues, his body is motionless, as when Nora finds him in his bed dressed in women's clothing. Matthew keeps his body and face partially covered and unseen, yet his voice takes on a presence in the room, and this voice echoes the institutions and impositions of society and culture, even though his body does not always manifest those sentiments.

In addition to Matthew's frequent conversations and anecdotes within the other chapters of the novel, two chapters in particular focus extensively on Matthew's exchanges with Nora Flood, who for the most part only agrees or asks simple questions in between Matthew's dense monologues. These two chapters comprise over one-third of the entire text, giving Matthew's words a significant platform. Located within Matthew's commentary are his own revelations of personal struggles to conform to a social expectation of masculinity that prevents his body from expressing itself in the more feminine manner that he would prefer. These monologues present in vivid contrast the disparity between Matthew's own body and the social expectations of manliness and masculinity that he vocally opines. As Martins points out in her study of *Nightwood*, Matthew's role in the novel is to point out that "all language, all discourse, whether religious, psychoanalytic, medical, or political, is ultimately reductive" (112). Matthew becomes

[32] Victoria L. Smith comments that Matthew serves as the novel's guide "and explains in his storytelling the intricate production of histories and of sexualities (among other things)" (197).

his own contradiction, however, as his secret desires for how he yearns to express his body prove the reductive qualities of language, which restrict and limit his body's ability to express itself in a manner that escapes the gender binary. However, Matthew upholds the strictures of language and its enforcement of binary logic despite the impositions they place upon him and others who do not conform.. He goes so far as to invoke references to homosexuals that are contemporary of his time, calling them "the third sex," and casting them in a derogatory, homophobic light. In speaking to Nora, he compares the homosexual to a lifeless and sexless doll:

> The last doll, given to age, is the girl who should have been a boy, and the boy who should have been a girl! […] The doll and the immature have something right about them, the doll because it resembles but does not contain life, and the third sex because it contains life but resembles the doll. (148)

Through this comparison, Matthew negates the life and sex(uality) of the homosexual. Cole claims that Matthew's comparison of the doll with the invert "emphasize[s] the third sex's sterility," and the inference that homosexuality is immature "is to rehearse a homophobic equation of emotional development with the achievement of heterosexual genitality" (394). Both of Matthew's references to the homosexual allude to two of the most common interpretations of homosexuality during the 1920s and 1930s when the novel was composed. The reference to homosexuality as a form of immaturity stems from Freud's theories in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, while Matthew's use of the term "the third sex" to mean homosexuals references the common views of sexologists of the period, particularly those of German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld, who attempted to prove scientifically the essential difference of homosexuals as a means of granting them social rights within Germany. Although his methodology did much to improve the treatment of homosexuals in Weimar Germany,

Hirschfeld's interpretations of homosexuality were often criticized by other professionals for ascribing femininity to the homosexual male (Izenberg 101). Suggesting all homosexual men were effeminate carried with it a social stigma and the inability of homosexual men to ever meet the social expectations of idealized male masculinity. Matthew's commentary seems to uphold these apparent scientific views of the time, and in doing so, they foist an emasculated identity upon the homosexual, portraying him as a feminized male. These characteristics could, in fact, be ascribed to Matthew himself; however, he creates a disconnection between his own body, which would fail to meet the social expectations if his private tendencies were revealed, and his male voice, which is empowered by his medical profession.

Much of Matthew's knowledge that he imparts throughout the novel involves concepts of the body and how it is socially and culturally interpreted, but his monologues also reveal that the doctor recognizes the limitations placed upon bodies *because* of their social interpretation and conformity to those expectations. Matthew reveals this awareness when he shares the story of the black circus entertainer Nikka, whose tattooed body is covered only by an ill-fitting, bulging loin-cloth (Barnes 16). Nikka's body "is literally inscribed by culture" (Martins 116); his black skin, his male endowment, and the inscription of words and images upon his body all mark Nikka and ascribe him a materiality.[33] Nikka, like Matthew, has a body that functions by materializing itself in a manner that upholds its socio-cultural expectations. Laura Winkiel identifies Nikka's markings as a literal way of identifying the stereotypical, racist categories of the black male as being "primitive and excessively sexual" (21). Even the inscription of "Desdemona" upon Nikka's penis carries with it the written threat of miscegenation upon the performer's body, which becomes literally encoded with the tattooed language that marks his

[33] Robin Blyn notes that language becomes like clothing, a "fetish-wear" that ascribes cultural meaning to the wearer's body (148).

social position and identifies his own masculinity as one subordinate to the dominant, white masculinity considered culturally to be more ideal.[34] Nikka's appearance serves as a (literally) marked contrast to hegemonic masculinity. His body appears overtly sexual through its exposure and differs greatly from the more composed, refined masculinity of the white heterosexual male. Matthew recognizes, however, that Nikka fails to meet these racist cultural expectations, explaining to his audience that sexually, Nikka "couldn't have done a thing (and I know what I am talking about in spite of all that has been said about the black boys) if you had stood him in a gig-mill for a week" (16). As Winkiel explains, Matthew possesses "inside knowledge that Nikka's sexual interest lies elsewhere, probably with men" (21). Hence, the manner in which Nikka uses (or fails to use) his body exposes a disparity between its actual use and its social expectation.

The body of Matthew's acquaintance, the trapeze artist Frau Mann, offers a similar commentary on the body and serves as the image that triggers Matthew's story of Nikka because Matthew considers them to be comparable entities. Mann's body is described as seeming:

> to have a skin that was the pattern of her costume: a bodice of lozenges […]—one somehow felt they ran through her as the design runs through hard holiday candies, and the bulge in the groin where she took the bar […] was as solid, specialized and as polished as oak. The stuff of the tights was no longer a covering, it was herself; the span of tightly stitched crotch was so much her own flesh that she was as unsexed as a doll. (13)

Just as language covered and materialized Nikka's body, so does the sexless costume materialize Frau Mann. Her bulging groin contrasts with that of Nikka's through its absence; whereas

[34] Alsop, Fitzsimons, and Lennon claim, "The construction of a dominant white masculinity is dependent upon constructions of the black masculine 'other'" (151).

Nikka's endowment presents a visual threat to the stability and propagation of the normalized (white, middle-class, heterosexual male) masculine body, Mann's bulge presents a material absence, or lack, emphasizing the power of the male body, upon whose groin resides the bulge of the penis. Mann's clothing *is* Mann's body according to the description and as such, she materializes as unsexed because she lacks a penis; her femininity is negated through this description.[35] Frau Mann, whose name might even be read as a contradiction of gender and its expectations, appears unsexed and reinforces Irigaray's notion that through unsexing the female body, the male-dominated culture reinforces its own sex as the *only* sex. By being negated sexually, the female body appears as a surface existing only to reinforce and sustain the male dominance by which it is suppressed, leaving the female body as an empty marker. The description of Frau Mann's body exemplifies the limitations of socially constructed femaleness foisted upon her.

The negation of Frau Mann's sex not only voids her as a female but also ignores how her body might be discussed in terms of female masculinity. Felix's perception of Mann appears bound to very limiting concepts of her body as it opposes Felix's own cultural perceptions of femininity and femaleness. When told by Mann that she had been previously "mixed up" with the Count (implying a relationship of some sort), Felix finds "the utmost difficulty that he could imagine her 'mixed up' with anyone, her coquetries were *muscular* and localized." Felix goes on to regard Mann's body as "much heavier than that of a woman who stayed upon the ground" (12-3, emphasis added). Felix finds himself unable to reconcile Mann's femininity with her muscular appearance—muscles and heft of body being qualities attributable to men and maleness. In this regard, Frau Mann's body appears as disarming as Nikka's in that it poses for

[35] Luce Irigaray writes in *This Sex Which Is Not One*, the female "sexual organ represents *the horror of nothing to see*" (26).

Felix (and mainstream culture) the threat of something improper being introduced into normative society: with Nikka it becomes the threat of miscegenation and the alternative masculinity of the black, male body, and with Mann it manifests as the masculine, heterosexual woman. Halberstam points out that earlier interpretations of female masculinity have often been misread (or even dismissed) as lesbianism or some form of same-sex desire (*Female* 50); this even resonates with the reference to Mann's body as that of the doll, which Matthew compares later in the novel with the body of the homosexual. However, Frau Mann exhibits no signs of lesbian desire within the text; she is presented instead as presumably heterosexual but with a muscular female body. Halberstam acknowledges her own omission of the heterosexual, masculine female within her investigations but recognizes that evidence of its existence has been difficult to trace given the historical inclination to assign any aspects of female masculinity to a lesbian identity (*Female* 57). Felix's reaction to Mann hints at this inclination, given that he cannot regard Mann on intimate terms with a man because of the shape of her body, which reads culturally as more manly than woman-like; therefore, from a socio-cultural perspective, Mann's body becomes negated through its coding of sex, gender, and presumed sexual orientation.

Robin's body, on the other hand, disidentifies with the expectation of female negation to which Frau Mann's body is subjected, extending beyond a simple disruption of gender roles and assuming aspects that would normally be considered abject. Her body is described as having "the quality of that earth-flesh, fungi which smelled of captured dampness yet is so dry," and her flesh consists of "the texture of plant life" (34). Both descriptors seem uncommon for a person and precede another description of Robin as a "beast turning human" (37). The culmination of images lead Rohman, in her critical analysis, to conclude that Robin is "figured as a prehuman organic body" who:

> is a supremely primordial and element-ary being whose subjectivity, rather than being impermeable and distinct, is characterized by seepage and overlapping. Among other binaries, she confounds the usual separation between human and animal. (66)

Rohman regards these characteristics to be Robin's "refusal of organic [and animal] repression as a necessary condition for the achievement of human subjectivity" (66). In other words, Robin expresses herself multiply, according to Rohman, and her animal and botanical aspects should not detract from her subjectivity.[36] These external elements, which should be used to differentiate Robin's body from the other, distinguishing her subject from the external object, are actually being associated with Robin's body here, creating a liminal space. Because Robin's body does not exclude the abject, it disavows the traditional modes of identification and separation of boundaries used within the social construct, thereby escaping the normative linguistic categories used within society and culture to establish such boundaries and borders for means of identification and understanding.[37] As both bestial and human qualities reside within Robin, she eludes fixity. The descriptions of Robin as a primordial figure, complicating contemporary norms of sex, gender, and even bodily composition and behavior, implies that Robin occupies a prelinguistic body, incapable of definition through contemporary terminology and thereby escaping the strictures of the social construct.

The disidentification of Robin's body with its social expectation reveals a rupture within the symbolic order, which maintains itself through sustainable linguistic categorization

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[36] The elements Rohman identifies can best be described as those categorized by Julia Kristeva as the abject. As mentioned in the second chapter concerning Aschenbach, the abject can be anything that "disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (*Powers* 4).

predicated upon a binary system of logic.[38] Because Robin is sexed female through the binary classification, many feminist theorists would claim that Robin is already devalued within a system that privileges and acknowledges only the male body and masculine form.[39] Deleuze and Guattari, however, propose an alternative system, the rhizome, that removes masculine privilege, destabilizes hierarchical frameworks, and allows for the consideration of the multiple within it. In *A Thousand Plateaus* they explain that:

> the rhizome is an acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system without a General and without an organizing memory or central automaton, defined solely by a circulation of states. What is at question in the rhizome is a relation to sexuality—but also to the animal, the vegetal, the world, politics, the book, things natural and artificial—that is totally different from the arborescent relation: all manner of "becomings." (21)

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[37] Martins supports this position, stating that Barnes's use of Robin and other characters "disarranges casual, ordinary notions of identity, exposing linguistic categories as insufficient, distorting, exclusionary, and misleading" (114).

[38] The power of language to construct our concepts of reality is best described by Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory of the symbolic order, which requires language to structure how we perceive our surroundings as well as how we understand each other and ourselves. Lacan theorizes the symbolic order as the means of constructing and interpreting everything an individual experiences, while also dictating how the individual will function within society. An individual enters into the symbolic when he or she learns language, which underpins the symbolic order by providing it with structure and boundaries that define our social framework and means of interaction. Lacan cites an individual's acknowledgement of the law and its relationship to the "name of the father" as first steps in entering into the rules of language and the symbolic order (*Écrits* 230). The *name of the father* marks individuals and imposes upon them the incest taboo, which establishes the social structure through awareness of the laws governing an individual's behavior and expectations within the social system. The symbolic, then, structures itself around fixed meanings and stable concepts, all ordered and constructed through language, and relies upon its empowered (male) representatives to interpret and enforce this fixed meaning.
The problem with the symbolic order, according to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*, is that "this system of thought has never reached an understanding of multiplicity" and instead operates in more rudimentary terms of binary logic (5). Within the current schema, Robin's body must conform to one side of the pre-established binary; when it does not, the current system devalues her at the same moment it attempts to foist an aspect of the binary system upon her.

[39] Irigaray proposes a plurality of the female body, whose pleasure "in its incompleteness of form […] is denied by a civilization that privileges phallomorphism" (26).

This rhizome functions as a liminal space, "always in the middle, between things, interbeing" (25), breaking down the concept of subject and object and melding them together; in this regard, the rhizome may be considered as a way of comprehending the composition of Robin's body, which comprises animal, human, and botanical qualities as well as a plurality of genders. Rohman agrees that Barnes's depiction of Robin complicates the norms of the current structure:

> Robin challenges the symbolic at its core, asserting that the outside of symbolization is not a radical absence but a kind of ontology, a plenitude experienced as anonymity, self-obliteration, movement and change—perhaps as communion with alterity, especially with the nonhuman. (81)

While recognizing the manner in which the symbolic becomes destabilized through the inability to fix Robin within the system of linguistic categories, Rohman incorrectly attributes the challenges Robin's *body* presents instead to Robin's entire being or person. Rohman's findings would imply that Robin's conscious awareness of her body's inconsistency with cultural norms lead her to take full advantage of those traits, using them to explode the current system and exploit its weaknesses. As Deleuze and Guattari point out, the presence of a rhizome will result in "an exploding of two heterogeneous series on the line of flight composed by a common rhizome that can no longer be attributed to or subjugated by anything signifying" (10). While Robin's body presents such a rhizomatic potential, Robin herself fails to utilize her body in this manner, limiting herself, instead, to the binary logic at work in the current social framework. Her relationships within the novel all exhibit qualities of the binary system to which she attempts to conform, despite her body's capability of exploding the contemporary structure.

Her first relationship with Felix reveals Robin's efforts to adapt to her socially expected role within their courtship and marriage. Robin allows herself to be confined to a passive role

within the relationship, assuming what would typically be perceived as the expectations of a female within a heteronormative relationship. Felix's treatment of Robin exemplifies the male dominance exerted in order to indoctrinate the female into male dominated society, refining her for male pleasure and male acceptance and repressing her own female sexuality. Irigaray discusses the uses of women within this system by stating, "Woman, in this sexual imaginary, is only a more or less obliging prop for the enactment of man's fantasies" (25). As a "prop," woman is a nonentity for the male user, similar to Irigaray's discussion of the female sex being negated (as with Frau Mann), and this appears evident in Felix's treatment of Robin. Felix's initial concepts of her are not what or who she is as an individual, but in what manner he might be able to use her. He first views her, comatose upon a bed, and notes of her:

> Such a woman is the infected carrier of the past: before her the structure of our head and jaws ache—we feel that we could eat her, she who is eaten death returning, for only then do we put our face close to the blood on the lips of our forefathers. (Barnes 37)

Felix's first impression of Robin is a complete disregard for her as a person, seeing her initially as an "infected carrier of the past"—which differs from Felix's own vested interests in history. History, after all, is a construction, a socially accepted interpretation of the past. Deleuze and Guattari define history as being "always written from the sedentary point of view and in the name of a unitary State apparatus" (23), thereby fixed in its relations and incapable of multiplicity or alternate interpretation. Robin's body, previously described in primitive, even pre-human terminology, lacks history and instead carries within it only the uninterpreted, unattainable past. Felix sees in Robin an opportunity to inscribe history upon her, exerting his own dominance over her in a fashion similar to those afore-referenced forefathers who processed

and fabricated the past into a legible history.[40] For Felix, who predicates his own identity upon his (creative) interpretation of history, Robin appears devalued and inhuman unless and until history can be inscribed upon her.

Felix's metaphor of consuming Robin in this passage also supports Irigaray's notion that women have traditionally served as consumable commodities within male society.[41] Hence, Felix regards Robin as a consumable commodity to which he, as a man, is entitled, and he considers her body only abstractly, not as an individual but as a (re)producer of his own desires. Felix's treatment of Robin and her subjection to him also reinforce Felix's social status as the masculine male. When, after Felix encounters Robin, Matthew asks of him if he "ever thought about women and marriage," Felix responds affirmatively by acknowledging that he "wished a son who would feel" as Felix does (38). Felix regards marriage and women as a means to procure male heirs, further negating the female, a concept confirmed by feminist theorist Hélène Cixous, who in her essay "Sorties," writes:

> Either woman is passive or she does not exist. What is left of her is unthinkable, unthought. Which certainly means that she is not thought, that she does not enter into oppositions, that she does not make a couple with the father (who makes a couple with the son). (579)

As Cixous suggests, Felix's desire for marriage does not involve a relationship with a wife except by means of obtaining from her a son; therefore, the union that Felix desires is a coupling

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[40] As Irigaray claims, "All the social regimes of 'History' are based upon the exploitation of one 'class' of producers, namely women" (173).

[41] Irigaray's theory is an extrapolation of the ideology put forth in Marx's *Capital* combined with the findings of anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss's *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* and posits that the current social order relies heavily on the treatment of women's bodies as objects of value and exchange among other men. According to Irigaray, women's bodies are treated as abstractions "whose reproductive use value (reproductive of children and of the labor force) and whose constitution as exchange value

with a son, whereas Robin as mother only serves as the empty, passive vessel that is to be filled with Felix so that Robin can reproduce for him a copy of himself.

During this process, Robin submits herself to Felix's desires, never questioning him or revolting against his will. In Felix's presence, the omniscient narrator states that "Robin's life held no volition for refusal" (43). Robin has accepted a life of passivity in binary contrast to Felix's active role as Robin's protector, teacher, and keeper. In her role, Robin meets the expectation within the relationship of a traditional female counterpart; Irigaray explains:

> Not knowing what she wants, ready for anything, even asking for more, so long as he will "take" her as his object when he seeks his own pleasure. Thus she will not say what she herself wants; moreover, she does not know, or no longer knows what she wants. (25)

The passage accurately describes Robin's passivity, existing at the desire of her husband Felix and never speaking. In fact, throughout the novel, Robin rarely speaks directly; instead, the narrator summarizes her words to the reader. When she is quoted within the text, her statements most often come to the reader indirectly, through conversational exchanges between other characters talking about her. Even when Felix learns of Robin's dissatisfaction with their relationship, he discovers it through the passage she's marked in a book: "*Et lui rendit pendant sa captivité les milles services qu'un amour dévoué est seul capable de rendre*" (45).[42] The reference to captivity implies Robin's unhappiness as well as an animalistic metaphor reminiscent of her rhizomatic body; however, by never expressing her own desires, Robin acquiesces into the binary systems of male/female and activity/passivity that her body has the

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underwrite the symbolic order as such, without any compensation in kind going to them for that "work" (173).

[42] The statement translates as "During his captivity she did for him a thousand things that only a devoted love can do."

ability to defy even though she chooses not to do so. Instead, she adapts herself to the situation, conforming to the prescribed binary logic.

Though her dissatisfaction with her situation becomes apparent, her only escapes become other forms of regulated social systems that require her to function within similar modes of binary opposition. She first turns to religion, which upholds the same laws of ordering and binary logic as the social order, heteronormative family, and language ("Sorties" 579), and later Robin turns to homosexual relationships with Nora Flood and Jenny Petherbridge, which on the surface, may seem to defy the expectation of the social construct, but as Butler declares, "Lesbian sexuality is *as* constructed as any other form of sexuality within contemporary sexual regimes" (*Bodies* 85).

While Robin and Nora's interactions place them in fluctuating roles of masculinity and femininity, their lesbian relationship with Nora more closely resembles that of a mother/child dynamic in which Nora assumes the role of nurturer and caregiver. Nora's maternal selflessness becomes evident in her description as someone who "robbed herself for everyone […], continually turning about to find herself diminished" (51). She becomes Robin's protector and possessor while also providing a home to which Robin may return after her nightly meanderings. Nora is a giver by nature and is drawn to Robin's aimlessness. They first become affiliated by Robin "repeating in one way or another her wish for a home, as if she were afraid she would be lost again, as if she were aware, without conscious knowledge, that she *belonged to Nora*" (55, emphasis added). In their relationship, an exchange of roles occurs in which Nora exhibits some masculine qualities of protection and stability while providing the feminine aspect of maintaining the home and passively waiting for her partner's return.[43] Robin, on the other hand, portrays the

[43] Carolyn Allen also recognizes the mother/child dynamic at work in Nora and Robin's relationship, noting, however, that the "relations of power in these seemingly conventional binaries is unstable rather

masculine role of the active, mobile half yet still exhibits those traditionally feminine qualities of desiring protection and guidance. This need for Nora's protection situates Nora as the maternal figure.

Nora and Robin's mother/child dynamic becomes more emphasized through the seemingly chaste nature of their relationship; their sexuality never achieves a "narrative realism" within the text (Chisolm 175), leaving the innocence of the relationship somewhat intact for the audience. Both Matthew and Nora recognize her maternal aspects within the relationship and its seemingly virtuous nature as well; Matthew tells Nora that she "almost caught hold of [Robin], but she put you cleverly away by making you the Madonna" (146). Later, Nora recounts a meeting with Robin that confirms Matthew's statement: "Looking from her to the Madonna behind the candles, I knew that the image, to her, was what I had been to Robin, not a saint at all, but a fixed dismay, the space between the human and the holy head" (157). Robin regards Nora as one of the most iconic (and virginal) mothers within Western culture, and the connection also implies the authority Robin concedes to Nora in this role. Having first sought out the Catholic Church as a means of escape from her relationship with Felix, Robin is aware of the reverence and power the Madonna holds; her veneration, however, comes to her through the actual authority of her child in a continuous exchange, or circulation, of power. A similar exchange occurs in all mother/child relationships according to Lacan, who sees the binary operating through the circulation of the imaginary phallus between mother and child.[44] Nora embodies

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than fixed." Allen remarks that "Nora has maternal control but she defers to Robin's masculine freedom" (178).

[44] In his extrapolation of Freud's theories on the Oedipus complex, Lacan writes:

> We're told that a mother's requirement is to equip herself with an imaginary phallus, and it's very clearly explained to us how she uses her child as a quite adequate real support for this imaginary prolongation. As to the child, there's not a shadow of doubt—whether male or female, it locates the phallus very early on and, we're told, generously grants it to the mother. (*Psychoses* 319).

Lacan's concept of the phallic mother, whom the child (regardless of sex) believes to have a phallus (*Écrits* 576), though the child is the embodiment of that phallus for the mother, the signifier of her desire, empowered, according to Irigaray, to have a free reign of contact that the mother herself is culturally denied. Her only legitimatized right to touch comes by interacting with that detached part of her body, "the baby-penis-clitoris" (Irigaray 27). Similarly, Nora remains separate from others and confines herself to her home, focusing solely upon Robin who is empowered to operate within the outside world. Further evidence of Nora's position as the phallic-mother in relation to Robin as the phallic-child appear, as do the complexity of the couple's dual roles of mother/child and masculine/feminine, when considering Nora's feelings of loss in the absence of Robin. For Nora, "Robin's absence, as the night drew on, became a *physical removal*, insupportable and irreparable. […] Robin was *an amputation* that Nora could not renounce" (Barnes 59, emphases added). Nora's lack of Robin is expressed through a metaphor of amputation comparable to a loss of the phallus in the Oedipal stage of the mother/child relationship. Hence, the amputation Nora experiences is the castration of her phallus—Robin—who ventures out into the night, separating herself from the love and protection of the mother figure.

Following the theory of the Oedipus complex within a heterosexual relationship, Nora's sense of loss would be lessened after the separation from the child in that her desire would redirect from her child to her male partner, the "true" holder of the phallus as the husband/father; however, Robin holds the place of both the phallic child and Nora's partner, leaving her with a sense of loss and lack that cannot be replaced. To make sense of her grief, Nora turns to the

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Lacan differs somewhat from Freud in his concept of the Oedipal phase, broadening the concept to include both male and female children, writing that "a relation between the subject and the phallus […] forms without regard to the anatomical distinction between the sexes" (*Écrits* 576). Lacan also uses

novel's phallocentric interpreter, Matthew, to help understand her loss. Matthew functions for Nora not only as the empowered male but also as the medical authority and her paternal figure, having helped "bring her into the world" (Barnes 18).[45] As such, Nora's exchanges with Matthew serve to educate Nora and answer her questions about Robin and her behavior. Nora's turning to Matthew for help in understanding her own relationship with Robin further implies the Oedipal overtones of their union.[46] Nora seeks out Matthew, the (male) character bent on bringing every experience and detail into language, in hopes of helping her sever herself from Robin. Still experiencing the lack of Robin, Nora tells Matthew, "She is myself. What am I to do?" (127), indicating that Nora has not fully achieved the differentiation between self and other in her relationship with Robin.

Jenny becomes the catalyst for Nora's loss of Robin and the lack she feels as a result of the separation because Jenny destroys Nora's fantasy construction of Robin and their relationship. As Slavoj Žižek states in *Enjoy Your Symptom*:

> In the network of intersubjective relations, every one of us is identified with, pinned down to, a certain fantasy place in the other's symbolic structure. […] We can relate to these "people of flesh and blood" only insofar as we are able to identify them with a certain place in our symbolic fantasy space. (5)

Nora has fantasized Robin as a significant part of herself, her imaginary phallus. Jenny destroys Nora's concept of Robin when Nora witnesses Jenny and Robin embracing in the courtyard. The

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phallus in place of penis in his terminology, as the phallus represents a symbolic concept for the power the penis maintains, though not localized to the genital itself.

[45] Martins supports Matthew as Nora's representative of the phallogocentric system stating, "he clings to oedipal structures that allow him to be, if only by proxy, heterosexual" (118).

[46] Dino Felluga discusses the importance of the Oedipus complex in Lacan's theory of psychosexual development, stating that it is "our way of recognizing the need to obey social strictures and to follow a closed differential system of language in which we understand 'self' in relation to 'others'" ("Lacan" par. 6).

image is so traumatic for Nora that she suffers a physical reaction from it: "Nora fell to her knees, so that her eyes were not withdrawn by her volition, but dropped from their orbit by the falling of her body" (64). Nora's vision of Robin and Jenny's bodies intertwined ruptures the symbolic fantasy space in which she'd compartmentalized Robin—as part of her own being. For Nora, Robin can no longer occupy this space if she is conjoined with another being; after seeing Robin and Jenny, Nora even says to herself, "'Now they will not hold together,' feeling that if she turned away from what Robin was doing, the design would break and melt back into Robin alone" (64). Nora hopes to be mistaken by what she has seen and wishes to see Robin singularly so that she might retain the fantasy of Robin as part of herself, rather than a part of someone else.

As a result, Nora finds solace in wishing for death because for her, death becomes the only available option for the type of reunion she seeks with Robin. Aware of Robin's body's disconnection with the symbolic, "Nora was informed that Robin had come from a world to which she would return. To keep her […] Nora knew now that there was no way but death. In death Robin would belong to her" (Barnes 58). Death, according to Lacan, provides a return to the real, a phase that is "primordial to language" and breaks down individual boundaries. Lacan scholar Charles Stephenson describes death as involving "a peculiar link between the symbolic and the real, presenting us with a sort of hole or void in the structure of meaning—a void that is not a deficiency, but virtually the opposite, an absolute condition of meaning" (3). The absolute condition of meaning, an abundance or plenitude, represents the concept of the Lacanian real in which there are no individual identities and everything exists with a sense of completeness. Such a sensation would be Nora's desire; through death, she finds a means to reunite with Robin to feel complete again, even more complete than by regarding Robin merely as the phallus. The term phallus and its concept are articulated through language and are components of the

symbolic, and language does not exist within the realm of the real, but operates instead as the catalyst that severs the individual from the real and pushes him or her into the imaginary and symbolic order. Until death, however, Nora's sense of loss and lack of Robin can be expressed only through language and the concepts of the phallus and their binary relationship.

To return to the earlier analogy of Nora and Robin's relationship as having a mother/child dynamic, Nora's reaction to seeing Jenny with Robin could be regarded as an example of the unstable power structure within Nora and Robin's binary relationship as well as the complications associated with reductively mapping a heteronormative structure onto a homosexual relationship. For in a traditional mother/child dynamic, the relationship becomes disrupted with the presence of the father, when the child realizes s/he is not the sole object of the mother's affection. If the inclusion of Jenny can be read as the introduction of the masculine/father figure (a point that will be addressed later), it would appear that Robin receives the attention rather than Nora, the mother figure of the relationship. However, Jenny's desire is not explicitly for Robin; as the narrator states, through claiming Robin as a conquest, Jenny "had appropriated the most passionate love that she knew, *Nora's love for Robin*" (68, emphasis added). Therefore, Jenny's actual desire is her (phallus-)envy of Nora and Nora's feelings for Robin, which link Jenny's affection more closely to Nora than to Robin. As Matthew says of Jenny, she "stands between two tortures—the past that she can't share and the present that she can't copy" (124). Jenny steals Robin, the phallus, to identify more closely with Nora, whose relationship with Robin Jenny hopes to recreate.

In this regard, the function of the phallus gains additional meaning within the structure of this relationship; to confine the phallus' function to its dictated role within normative

heterosexual strictures limits the way it may be perceived in non-normative constructions.[47] Both women simultaneously experience a sense of having and being the phallus, and though Nora's experience with Robin can be more closely tied to the mother/child dynamic, Jenny's relationship with Robin cannot be as easily compartmentalized. Their dynamic is much different and does not carry with it the undertones of a filial relationship or the same circulation of power but does represent characteristics of a masculine/feminine couple, with Jenny assuming the masculine role.

Jenny's procurement of Robin as a symbol of Nora's love for her implies that Robin becomes Jenny's fetish. Jenny, whom the novel describes as a perennial "squatter" and collector of other people's emotions, has also collected Robin as another trophy or possession. Thus, Jenny's appropriation of Robin parallels Irigaray's theory of men's exchange of women as commodities. Irigaray states that for such a commodification to occur, women's bodies must become fetishized and turned into an abstraction, "reduced to some common feature—their current price in gold, or *phalluses*" (175, emphasis added). From Nora, Jenny has effectively acquired Robin, who is the phallus and synechdochally represents Nora and Robin's relationship as a whole.

As Robin's procurer, Jenny also embodies aspects of female masculinity that extend beyond the exchange of the metaphorical phallus between the three women. Her wealth has

[47] Butler warns that the inclusion of the phallus in discussions of lesbian relationships may be perceived as imposing a heterosexist identification onto lesbian desire, suggesting lesbian relationships achieve their validity only through mimicking "real" heterosexual relationship (*Bodies* 86). However, through careful analysis and deconstruction of Freud and Lacan (much of which is articulated in the second chapter of this work), Butler postulates the displacement of the phallus onto other sites and, in doing so, proposes the existence of the *lesbian* phallus, which "crosses the orders of *having* and *being*; it both wields the threat of castration (which is in that sense a mode of 'being' the phallus, as women 'are') and suffers from castration anxiety (and so it is said 'to have' the phallus, and to fear its loss)" (*Bodies* 84). Butler's theory applies a clearer understanding of the power dynamics working between Nora and Jenny in their relationships with Robin and with their own connection to each other.

endowed her, thanks to her prior relationships with men, with a power status even among the male characters of the text, and her influence and stability allow her to operate on a somewhat equal footing with her male counterparts in order to exchange commodities and gain esteem. Jenny's financial standing provides her more maneuverability within society than might normally be allowed to either a lesbian or a woman, especially one exuding physical masculinity.[48] Considering Jenny's social standing in comparison to that of Frau Mann, Jenny's female masculinity becomes expressed more through her social interactions than it does through her body, which is never described to be uncharacteristic of the traditional female form. Frau Mann, however, has a physically masculine body and, as a circus performer, would lack the substantial financial resources to be as mobile within her social and cultural framework as Jenny. Thus, Jenny's own version of female masculinity allows her more opportunity to function within society and amongst male contemporaries. Matthew defers to her based on her financial position, telling Felix that "she is very generous with her money" (116). With Felix, Jenny even attempts to use her money to gain leverage when she attempts to purchase the painting of his grandmother, a symbol of Felix's manufactured history. Jenny's efforts represent her desire to collect the lives of others in a way of possessing the person on some level, just as with her appropriation of Robin.

Jenny also uses language to establish an authority over Felix and Matthew, attempting to weaken some of Matthew's perceived esteem by exposing his poverty to Felix. Her actions position her as one attempting to assume the role of phallocentric interpreter, and her authority challenges that of Matthew, whom her remarks attempt to reinterpret and discredit. Her efforts have some success, as when Felix relays Jenny's comments to Matthew, his appearance suddenly

[48] Halberstam agrees that "social status obviously confers mobility and a moderate freedom from the disgrace of female masculinity" (*Female* 69).

reveals that he has "deteriorated" (114), proving the impact of Jenny's power and her assumption of some masculine authority over him. During her visit with Felix, Jenny also discusses Robin and their relationship, further asserting herself as an equal with the male by demonstrating that she has now collected Robin, who was a former possession of Felix and, by way of Robin, Jenny has also collected a portion of Felix's history, proving that she has the clout and maneuverability to function alongside men.

Jenny, like Felix and Nora before her, each desire Robin for different reasons, acknowledging a uniqueness in Robin that she fails to recognize or control within herself. As a result, they each try to possess her in order to claim her unique qualities for themselves. Victoria L. Smith sees Robin as "a microcosm of what is lost to the novel's marginalized figures; Robin represents a history and memory that are not knowable because they are lost (or, more properly, have been destroyed)" (202). If Robin's qualities are aspects that place her outside of linguistic categorization, then language itself and the entrance into the symbolic order have destroyed the memory or aspects of the real that she represents, which the others try to reterritorialize onto themselves. Deleuze and Guattari discuss the process of reterritorialization, in conjunction with a simultaneous deterritorialization, which occurs within the structure of the rhizome. As entities become part of the rhizome, they experience "a veritable becoming," a mutual exchange in which "each of these becomings brings about the deterritorialization of one term and the reterritorialization of the other; the two becomings interlink and form relays in a circulation of intensities pushing the deterritorialization ever further" (10). Within Robin's relationships, the exchange taking place appears to be a deterritorialization of Robin's qualities of multiplicity that then reterritorialize onto her partners, each of whom deterritorialize some of his or her own qualities, which in turn, reterritorialize onto Robin. Deleuze and Guattari would define this as

her partners' experiencing a becoming-Robin while Robin would experience a becoming of the partner with whom she interacts.

This method of exchange, or becoming, can be seen in each relationship; with Felix, it occurs through the birth of their son Guido, who is the amalgamation of his parents. Despite Felix's attempts to produce an exact copy of himself through his union with Robin, the son exhibits traits from both parents. Guido physically embodies his father's warped history, "born to holy decay" (107), though his "strange" precocity and peculiarity are reminiscent of his mother. Felix even comments that Robin "is with me in Guido; they are inseparable" (117). Nora's reterritorialization of Robin appears through the disruptions and exchanges of power in their relationship that challenge the traditional models in which such relationships might be interpreted. Nora's connection to and association with Robin as part of her own being also disrupts the normative boundaries of bodies and hints at the prelinguistic concept of the real in which no separation exists between self and other. Nora seems to have mapped so much of Robin onto herself that Nora regards herself and Robin as an inseparable entity. Conversely, Jenny's dynamic with Robin creates a rupture within the paradigmatic roles of men and women that allows Jenny's entry into more male-associated transactions and behavior where Robin serves as Jenny's objectified commodity. As in her relationship with Jenny, Robin finds herself functioning in a role within each of her relationships that places her firmly within the binary system that the others manage to disrupt. The ruptures they cause seem only possible, though, through Robin's reterritorialization because their roles in the binary system, which they manage to deterritorialize from themselves, are reterritorializing onto Robin. Deleuze and Guattari point out that within this process of de/reterritorialization "there is still a danger that you will reencounter organizations that restratify everything, formations that restore power to a signifier,

attributions that reconstitute a subject—anything you like, from Oedipal resurgences to fascist concretions" (9). For Robin, this danger becomes realized within each of her relationships because she complies with the binary system rather than attempt to transcend it.

Evidence of Robin's surrendering to binary logic appears as well through her separation from Nora. As the phallic-child within their dynamic, Robin's role in the Oedipal phase would conclude with the separation from the mother, leaving the child to understand its own lack of a phallus and creating new desires for having and/or being the phallus in its adult relationships. Robin follows a variation of this pattern when examining what the text presents as her reason for leaving Nora: although Nora's discovery of Robin's ongoing affair with Jenny appears to be the incident over which Nora breaks from the relationship, Robin does not appear to abandon Nora until soon after a violent exchange between herself, Jenny, and a young female child named Sylvia, of whom Robin becomes enamored. The argument reveals simultaneously Robin's desire to create her own mother/child relationship, here with Sylvia as Robin's child, as well as Robin's acknowledgement of Jenny as being the dominant, masculine figure within their relationship. The quarrel occurs because of Jenny's jealousy of the attention Robin gives young Sylvia, who (according to Felix) has fallen in love with Robin (115). Robin's infatuation with children and infants also becomes evident through Nora's discovery that Robin has given both Jenny and Nora a doll during the course of their relationships. Nora interprets this by explaining to Matthew that "when a woman gives [a doll] to a woman, it is the life they cannot have, it is their child" (142). Robin's behavior towards her and Nora's doll confirms this speculation; Nora observes Robin "holding the doll she had given us—'our child'—high above her head, as if she would cast it down" (147), an act that precisely replicates her treatment of her infant son Guido at the conclusion of her relationship with Felix. With Sylvia, Robin directs her attention to a

living child, though their bond draws the ire of Jenny, whose jealousy erupts in an attack on Robin during a carriage ride with Sylvia and Matthew.

The positioning of the women and child during the attack, however, evokes birth imagery that may offer clues as to how this moment becomes the impetus for Robin's break from Nora. Before Jenny strikes Robin, young Sylvia is described as being speechless and cradling herself in a fetal position, "trying to hold her slight legs, that did not reach the floor, from shaking with the shaking of the carriage" (76). Jenny then pounces on Robin and:

> as Jenny struck repeatedly Robin began to go forward as if brought to the movement by the very blows themselves, as if she had no will, sinking down in the small carriage, her knees to the floor, her head forward as her arm moved upward in a gesture of defence: and as she sank, Jenny also, as if compelled to conclude the movement of the first blow, almost as something seen in retarded action, leaned forward and over, so that when the whole of the gesture was completed, Robin's hands were covered by Jenny's slight and bending breast, caught in between the bosom and the knees. And suddenly, the child flung herself down on the seat, face outward, and said in a voice not suitable for a child because it was controlled with terror: "Let me go! Let me go! Let me go!" (76)

Sylvia appears to be born through Jenny's violence against Robin and Robin's defense of herself and the child. Therefore, Robin becomes the mother and protector of a child of her own. Robin's squatting body even mimics a birthing position and calls into question the possible double meaning of the chapter title "The Squatter" in which this event occurs, as the fight/pseudo-birth becomes the event that leads Robin to abandon Nora and leave with Jenny. The symbolic birth of a living child, born of Robin and Jenny, may be regarded by Robin as

having a greater validity than the lifeless doll-child Robin had with Nora, and Robin's discovery of a living entity (Sylvia) with whom to establish her own mother/child bond could be the reason for Robin's abandonment of Nora soon after. The act suggests Robin's attempt to find something more closely relatable to a traditional, acceptable, heteronormative relationship. If Jenny may be perceived as the dominating, masculine presence within their relationship and Sylvia their child, then Robin has essentially repeated a relationship that would parallel the one she had previously abandoned with Felix.

Thus, the dynamic between Robin, Jenny, and Sylvia becomes more complicated in that Robin had both a real child in Guido and a socially validated husband in Felix but abandoned them. Robin's act of repetition with Jenny and Sylvia carries with it her choice to go with Jenny and leave Nora, but the ability to choose was never an option for Robin in her relationship with Felix. Regarding Guido, Robin tells Felix, "I didn't want him!" (49), and when Felix refuses to keep Guido's existence a secret, Robin makes the only choice she was allowed in her relationship with Felix by choosing to leave. With Jenny, however, Robin appears to make a choice in which she voluntarily decides to go with Jenny and break from Nora in an imitation of the breaking of the Oedipal phase of her existence. Žižek discusses the power of such a choice, referring to it as sacrificial situation in which the subject chooses to enter into the symbolic order as a means of becoming a socialized constitutive being. As Žižek claims, "This constitutive character means that the 'social contract,' the inclusion of the subject in the symbolic community, has the structure of a *forced choice*" (*Enjoy* 74). That is to say, the socialized being must sacrifice "the incestuous Object that embodies impossible enjoyment" (*Enjoy* 75), in order to become constituted and a part of the symbolic. In Robin's case, she must sacrifice Nora in order to ground herself within the strictures of the social construct and the symbolic order.

Robin traps herself within this binary system because of her apparent lack of self-awareness; Robin has no sense of self to latch onto and as such she is unable to understand her own body and its multiplicity, leaving her to fall back into the normative roles expected of her within her relationships. Cole states that Robin's behavior and actions indicate that Robin "never coalesced into a person" (395), suggesting that she lacks any notion of identity. Throughout the novel, Robin is described as sleepwalking through her life, "La Somnambule;" she drifts in and out of relationships and experiences without any will or apparent desire for much of anything. Matthew associates Robin's somnambulist attitude with a lack of memory, saying she appears "as if the hide of time had been stripped from her, and with it, all transactions with knowledge" (134). The connections between memory and subjectivity are also discussed in a similar way by Lacan, who notes that memory "allows us to arrive at a formulation of the subject's history" (*Freud's* 42). Because Robin has no memory, she lacks the capability to sustain any sense of self and cannot formulate or sustain her own history. Therefore, Robin's lack of history and memory place her further outside of the symbolic order, despite her own efforts to position herself within it. As a sleepwalker, Robin removes herself from memory and perceptions of her surroundings, making her a non-entity. Matthew even confirms this in the text by acknowledging Robin's animal-like qualities, saying "ah […] to be an animal, born at the opening of the eye, going only forward, and, at the end of the day, shutting out memory with the dropping of a lid" (135). Rohman sees this trait, Robin's lack of selfhood, as Robin embodying "a privileged form of being" (71), stating further that "Robin challenges the symbolic at its core, asserting that the outside of symbolization is not a radical absence but a kind of ontology, a plenitude experienced as anonymity, self-obliteration, movement, and change—perhaps as communion with alterity, especially with the nonhuman" (81). Given that Robin lapses into

behavior that *reinforces* the symbolic order replete with its binary logic that privileges maleness and subjugates her, she should be considered neither directly challenging the symbolic nor having achieved some privileged existence superior to any other being locked within the social structure and linguistic categorization. For Robin's lack of self and memory contributes to her inability to use her body's difference to control, manipulate, or explode the binary system to which she conforms.

Matthew's statement does attribute some sense of privilege to Robin's animal-like behavior, noting her ability to cast off memory as nonhumans appear to do; however, his statement should be read as Matthew's commentary regarding his own body, which lacks the ability to express itself more fully and in relation to how Matthew feels internally. Matthew desires to abandon memory because it ties him to his male past and the social order that assigns him and his body the role of male authoritative figure. As Matthew tells Nora, his true longing is to be a woman: "in my heart is the wish for children and knitting. God, I never asked better than to boil some good man's potatoes and toss up a child for him every nine months by the calendar" (91). His male-sexed body makes his desire impossible, as does his effort to hide any aspect of his transvestism, which would damage is public persona. However, his statements again reveal his awareness of the strictures placed upon the body due to the binary system. No clearer does this inner conflict of Matthew's manifest itself than in the church where he confronts the limitations ascribed to his own body when he exposes his penis at the prie-dieu. After asking God "What is this thing?", Matthew continues by telling Nora:

> I was crying and striking my left hand against the *prie-dieu*, and all the while Tiny O'Toole was lying in a swoon. I said, "I have tried to seek, and I only find." I

> said, "It is I, my Lord, who know there's beauty in any permanent mistake like me." (132)

Matthew regards himself, his sexuality, and his body as mistakes and turns to the church and to God, pillars of structure and order, for relief. As Monika Faltejskova writes of Matthew, "He is asking why he was made to suffer the gender confusion of having a female psychology and a male body for which the society makes him feel illegitimate and outcast" (97). Matthew finds no relief or resolution in his efforts, however, because he cannot remove himself from the strictly bound order of the social structure in which he has indoctrinated himself. As he leaves the church, he even questions, "Have I been simple *like an animal*, God, or have I been thinking?" (133, emphasis added). The question reemphasizes the contrast Matthew sees between an animal life lacking memory and thought and the life he leads, comprised of binary logic and language which cannot allow his body to function in the manner he desires. In this way, Matthew sees Robin and her body as sites of privilege in that they do have the capacity to achieve what his mind and body cannot, given that he works so tirelessly to define and legitimize himself within his social milieu.

Robin's animalism, however, credited for endowing her with some of the abilities her body has to rupture the social framework, proves to be just as linked into the binary system as her other socially conformed roles. Her animal nature reaches its height at the novel's conclusion when Robin returns to Nora's property and beneath a statue of Madonna (Nora's symbolic reference) attempts to copulate with Nora's dog. Her beastly nature seems to consume her, as she is described on all fours, barking and "crawling after [the dog]" (170). Rohman again credits this to Robin's privilege as a nonidentity in her "becoming-animal," stating that "Robin's mode of being is rhizomatic, schizophrenic, and amorphous; it is the practice of

'deterritorializ[ing] oneself,' of refusing an individuated identity" (74). Rohman misses key points within both Deleuze and Guattari's and Barnes's texts, however, in her assertion. First, Rohman references the rhizome's efforts to deterritorialize a space, which is made evident through Robin's abandonment of human attributes in her animalized behavior with the dog, but Rohman overlooks the aspect of reterritorialization that must occur alongside the deterritorializing. In this instance, no reterritorializing takes place, as the dog becomes visibly distressed by Robin's behavior, "rear[ing] as if to avoid *something that troubled him* to such agony that he seemed to be rising from the floor" (170, emphasis added). Therefore, no rhizomatic exchange occurs; although Robin may be becoming-animal, the dog is not becoming-Robin. Additionally, Rohman seems to neglect the fact that the dog Robin seeks union with is *Nora's* dog, her possession. As a family pet, Nora's dog cannot be considered rhizomatic because, according to Deleuze and Guattari, these animals are Oedipal animals, individuated with their own histories (240). By attempting to join with Nora's dog, Robin once again attempts to place herself within the binary system in which she plays the non-privileged entity, desiring to be likened to Nora's property and committing the act within Nora's space and before an idolized image Robin had previously likened to Nora.

Robin's act in Nora's chapel parallels Matthew's moment in the church in that both come to an awareness that their bodies are incapable of finding a complete escape from the binary constructs they exist within. Even if Robin's "return" to Nora through her animalistic behavior can be seen as an abandonment of her relationship with Jenny and its binary roles, Robin still finds herself identifying with Nora's other possessions (the dog, the chapel, the Madonna), likening her to Nora's property, an aspect of the same binary relationships she has had before. Similarly, Matthew cannot escape his own limitations foisted upon his body through the socially

upheld construct. As a result, both characters find themselves locked within the same system governed by masculine, normative expectations, despite their bodies' desire and/or potential to disrupt them.

CHAPTER 5

INCANDESCENCE AND THE LIMINAL BODY: EXPLORING THE MULTIPLICITIES IN WOOLF'S *ORLANDO*

Nightwood's Robin Vote and Matthew O'Connor lock themselves into binary systems of masculinity and femininity and, as a result, are powerless to express their bodies satisfactorily. Robin lacks memory and selfhood that would allow her to utilize the multiplicity of her body more effectively, while Matthew's desire to fix everything in a definable way restricts his body from presenting itself in the manner he desires. Where these characters appear to fail to present an acceptable body and integrated identity capable of allowing them to function within society and express themselves adequately, Virginia Woolf's character Orlando seems to excel. Although Orlando never experiences a precise moment where s/he fully realizes a definitive identity, s/he sees no need for a static self that must express a definitive aspect of the binary system. Orlando's lack of a fixed identity does not disrupt h/er overall person. The dynamics of h/er identity are multi-faceted and complex: s/he is not pressed to fix h/er identity into one defined gender or sex role, nor does s/he see a need to progress to a singular, idealized self. Rather, s/he explores h/er multiplicity—the many aspects of h/er identity—and finds no conflict with h/er ever-changing person because, as Orlando realizes, despite h/er numerous external changes, "she had remained […] fundamentally the same" (*Orlando* 237). H/er sameness suggests that h/er shifts in appearance do not alter, but enhance, h/er ever-developing self, and though h/er external appearances may vary from time to time in order to express various parts of h/erself, Orlando can maintain a unity of self that comprises and integrates all aspects of h/er identity at once, never requiring fixity. Woolf ascribes these characteristics of Orlando as being

incandescent, radiating with the heightened power individuals obtains through their ability to achieve a mingling of the sexes (and genders) within them. For Orlando, h/er actions and expressions present h/er incandescence through h/er androgynous mind and liminal body, always already in-between and multiple, and disruptive to the seemingly fixed, socially constructed concepts of sex and gender. Therefore, Orlando is incapable of being fully expressed or interpreted in any singular way.

Orlando expresses multiplicities in a manner that h/er counterparts Matthew and Robin cannot. All three characters have bodies capable of exploding the traditional binary system and altering the way in which they might be socially perceived. Robin, much like Orlando, has a body that expresses multiplicity of genders, among other bodily multiplicities, but she never finds a way to escape the binary system, so she continuously attempts to reposition herself within the expected submissive social roles of women. Matthew, on the other hand, has difficulty accepting himself as one gender; though sexed male, he wishes to be female, but he struggles with the concept by assuming he must be one gender or another. Because Matthew's sex is male, he presents himself publicly as such and spends much of his private life in a state of self-loathing because he cannot free his body from the strictures of social conventions that he publicly endorses. Orlando transcends the actions of both Robin and Matthew through the use of h/er body and its multiplicities.

Like Robin, Orlando's body possesses a multiplicity of form that cannot be conveniently expressed, even by Orlando's biographer, the phallocentric interpreter of the text. After Orlando's genital transition, the biographer notes of Orlando:

> His form combined in one the strength of a man and a woman's grace.
>
> […]Orlando looked *him*self up and down in the long looking-glass, without

> showing any signs of discomposure […]. Orlando had become a woman—there is no denying it. But in every other respect, Orlando remained precisely as *he* had been. The change of sex, though it altered *their* future, did nothing whatever to alter *their* identity. […] *Her* memory, then, went back through all the events of *her* past life without encountering any obstacle. […]Orlando *her*self showed no surprise at it. (138-9, emphases added)

Even though Orlando beholds h/er sex in the mirror to be female, the biographer does not refer to Orlando as such. Instead, he refers to Orlando both multiply and plurally—using the masculine and feminine pronouns as well as *their*, suggesting that despite a genital change made evident through observation in a mirror, the biographer (and Orlando) recognizes the multiplicities of h/er gender. The genital transition does not alter Orlando's identity because s/he has always maintained this multiplicity of gender, and s/he shows no surprise because s/he *is* still fundamentally the same being; even before this external transformation, s/he had been aware of these multiple aspects of h/erself.

Also noteworthy is the biographer's statement that Orlando's memory had remained intact and unchanged during the transformation. Orlando's presence of memory contrasts with Robin's notable lack thereof; Robin's inability to remember proves to be a significant handicap in her ability to control herself or maintain any sense of selfhood throughout the novel. Orlando's memory, according to the biographer, appears to provide some stability to Orlando's identity, which the biographer assures has not been altered. The concept of memory and identity, however, are those ascribed by the phallocentric biographer, who seeks to order the entirety of Orlando's life into a linear narrative suitable for comprehension within the social framework, which as Deleuze and Guattari have pointed out, "has never reached an understanding of

multiplicity" (5). If Orlando has always been multiple, then s/he cannot be fully expressed through the biographer's limited terms, as is made evident through his jumbling of pronouns when describing h/er. Having the qualities of multiplicity, Orlando embodies Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome and therefore, like Robin Vote, cannot be linguistically categorized in any adequate way. According to Deleuze and Guattari:

> not every trait in a rhizome is necessarily linked to a linguistic feature. […] Even when linguistic claims to confine itself to what is explicit and to make no presuppositions about language, it is still in the sphere of a discourse implying particular modes of assemblage and types of social power. […] Our criticism of these linguistic models is not that they are too abstract but, on the contrary, that they are not abstract enough. (7)

Because the biographer is ingrained into the binary system and requires linguistic categorization for all things, he is unable to find terms abstract enough to express Orlando; therefore, he must describe h/er in more rigid terminology, whether or not s/he actually adheres to it. Similarly, the biographer's limited perspective only allows him to see a genital change upon the surface of Orlando's body, an event that becomes the biographer's only indication of Orlando's multiplicity. Thus, Orlando's first challenge with how h/er body will be socially interpreted comes from h/er own biographer, who upholds the restrictive authority of the phallocentric interpreter. He cannot consider Orlando as having always been multiple because he is locked into the binary logic of the social framework and must interpret what he experiences through that logic and the language that structures it. Much like Isherwood's authoritative position in *Goodbye to Berlin*, the biographer has the power to foist an embodiment on his subject with which s/he may not adequately identify, but the embodiment meets the social expectations to

which the phallocentric interpreter must adhere.[49] Orlando even appears initially to accept h/er own status as male when the novel begins, but over time comes to be more aware of h/er body and identity and understands h/er ability to move more fluidly between the binaries. Being multiple, Orlando is always already both genders and more, and the biographer's failure to express this multiplicity adequately also calls into question the biographer's own understanding of Orlando's identity, which he claims to be just as static as he considers Orlando's body to be. Assuming that Orlando was once absolutely male before becoming absolutely female at the moment of the genital transition, the biographer places Orlando into fixed categories to which s/he cannot adhere. Similarly, the biographer's assumption that Orlando's identity is fixed and unaltered presents another flaw in his sense of logic, which is incapable of expressing the multiple. If the biographer must fix Orlando's body into set gender roles, he is just as likely to fix (mistakenly) Orlando's identity. Thus, when he states Orlando's identity is unaltered, he is correct in that the identity has not changed just as Orlando's gender has never changed because both have been multiple all along, only the biographer lacks the ability to interpret this adequately into language.

The power of the phallocentric interpreter to conform and linguistically interpret experience in a culturally constructed manner also becomes disrupted through the life of Orlando because of the expanse of time in which the novel is set. Orlando's life begins in the 1500s and extends through and beyond the novel's conclusion in 1928. During this time period, the social and cultural atmosphere shifts regularly, meaning that the expectations and duties of the phallocentric interpreter would shift as well in accordance with the social demands of the period.

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[49] Lisa Haines-Wright and Traci Lynne Kyle confirm this limitation of both the biographer and his readership who may read *Orlando* while locked within the same social framework: "Readers confuse biological sex with gender identity, and thus see Orlando as first man and then woman, rather than always both and more" (179).

These vacillations would reveal, then, that the impositions of the social construct are temporal and malleable, just as the roles of gender and sex themselves. The novel begins with Orlando dressed as a male, though the biographer acknowledges that "the fashion of the time did something to disguise it" (13). Orlando's lace collar and taffeta waistcoast would imply a feminine appearance in terms of the dress code for men in the 1920s; however, h/er attire is appropriate for sixteenth century English aristocracy and would go unquestioned as appropriate masculine, male attire during the time period. As time passes, Orlando continues to note the various ways in which society changes, giving particular emphasis to the transition into the nineteenth century, in which "the sexes drew further and further apart. No open conversation was tolerated. Evasions and concealments were sedulously practised on both sides" (*Orlando* 229). While the changes of social expectations occuring throughout the passage of time indicate the impossibility of establishing any fixed notion of social standards as well as the impositions that society foists upon individuals, the nineteenth century presents for Orlando a time in which society began to impose harsher restrictions, especially with regard to the interaction between the sexes and the apparent gender roles related to them. All of these changes inhibit Orlando and h/er incandescence, as they push the sexes apart rather than unite them. Orlando's biographer even describes these events through a metaphor of dampness, which attempts to drown the sources of light within the country (232).

Orlando struggles to exist within this new time period, finding the nineteenth century's attitude towards sex, expressions of sexuality, and gender freedom to be more oppressive than any other time, especially with its apparent enforcement of the institution of marriage, a social regulation which has lasted within the socio-cultural construct ever since. Orlando's feelings of oppression could mirror those Woolf herself was feeling during the composition of Orlando, for

the apparent inspiration of *Orlando* was Woolf's female lover, Vita Sackville-West, to whom the novel is dedicated and who posed for three of the portraits of Orlando that are used in the novel (Dick 63). Karyn Z. Sproles writes that *Orlando* is Woolf's written expression of desire for Sackville-West, creatively alluding "to homoerotic desire and [disentangling] gender, sex, and sexuality" (73). Woolf's relationship with Sackville-West challenged contemporary standards not only because of its homosexual nature but because Woolf was still married to her husband Leonard at the time and remained married throughout her affair with Sackville-West, who also was married. Orlando's feelings of uncertainty with regard to marriage and its constraints could mirror the feelings Woolf experienced during the writing of the novel, as Sproles notes that *Orlando* was composed as Woolf's affair with Sackville-West was ending (74). The various expressions that Orlando and h/er body appear to comprise could be considered as Woolf's own commentary on the intermingling of dynamics at work in her own relationships with her husband and her lover; Orlando becomes a representation of the multiplicities that are constantly being negotiated but never fully acknowledged or adequately expressed within Woolf's (or Orlando's) contemporary cultural milieu. These multiplicities become difficult, if not impossible to interpret in a socially acceptable way during the early twentieth century in which the novel was written and reveal the inadequacies of social strictures in acknowledging alternative expressions of gender, sex, sexuality, and relationships between men and women.

Despite these cultural limitations of the time, Woolf's depiction of Orlando strives to express h/er multiplicity, which extends beyond the surface of the body and its commentary on gender, sex, and identity and into Orlando's form of memory, which can only be understood through the concept of the rhizome. Memory itself, according to Deleuze and Guattari, adheres to a binary format governed by a "majoritarian agency" that structures and orders all memories

into precise points (293). This majoritarian agency is an aspect of what Deleuze and Guattari define as the "arborescent system"—arborescent because the structure of binary thought maps itself in a treelike manner and appears in contrast to the less ordered system of the rhizome. Deleuze and Guattari state, "Binary logic is the spiritual reality of the root-tree. Even a discipline as 'advanced' as linguistics retains the root-tree as its fundamental image" (5). Because our social structure has ordered disciplines and thought into such a limited, treelike manner, so too is its approach to the ordering of the mind, applying this same structural format to memory, subjecting it and the unconscious "to arborescent structures, hierarchical graphs, recapitulatory memories, central organs, the phallus, the phallus-tree—not only in its theory but also in its practice of calculation and treatment" (17).

Memory, then, is understood as arborescent when considered as a collection of finite points upon which each individual memory may be localized. Therefore, an individual generates memory by thinking from point to point, every point fixed and distinguished, like each memory should be according to the arborescent system, following a linear "flow of time" (294). Deleuze and Guattari propose a rhizomatic structure of thought and memory through the submission of the points of memory to the line that may connect them: "A line of becoming is not defined by points that it connects, or by points that compose it; on the contrary, it passes *between* points, it comes up through the middle" (293). Hence, the rhizomatic memory structure, called the block-system, thrives on the liminal space between the points, which is referred to as the "line of becoming" because it exists in a constant flux of in-between-ness and relies neither upon a linear time structure nor a definitive locus; the line of becoming constantly reterritorializes and deterritorializes the points it functions between. According to Deleuze and Guattari:

> If becoming is a block (a line-block), it is because it constitutes a zone of proximity and indiscernability, a no-man's land, a nonlocalizable relation sweeping up the two distant or contiguous points, carrying one into the proximity of the other. […] The line-system (or block-system) of becoming is opposed to the point-system of memory. Becoming is the movement by which the line frees itself from the point, and renders points indiscernible: the rhizome, the opposite of arborescence. (293)

Orlando's form of memory most closely parallels this concept of the block-system. When considering the vast assortment of images and events swirling about h/er head, Orlando memory is described as having a similar line-imagery. The biographer writes:

> Nature […] has further complicated her task and added to our confusion by providing not only a perfect rag-bag of odds and ends within us—a piece of policeman's trousers lying cheek by jowl with Queen Alexandra's wedding veil—but has contrived that the whole assortment shall be lightly stitched together by a single thread. Memory is the seamstress, and a capricious one at that. Memory runs her needle in and out, up and down, hither and thither. (78)

Orlando's "rag-bag" memory connects via a single thread, a line of becoming, with an indiscernible pattern woven all about the various points, running in all directions—"hither and thither," forming an assortment of interconnections and becomings. Deleuze and Guattari support this concept of Orlando, stating themselves that "*Orlando* already does not operate by memories, but by blocks, blocks of ages, block of epochs, blocks of the kingdoms of nature, blocks of sexes, forming so many becomings between things, or so many lines of deterritorialization" (294).

These becomings constitute the plurality of identities that Orlando houses within h/erself. Because s/he is entirely multiple, s/he understands the numerous shifting parts of h/erself that exist within h/er, and s/he achieves the ability to move fluidly between them; for every movement of Orlando is liminal. The biographer notes that s/he was "changing selves as quickly as she drove" (310); however, the biographer's only way of assuming these changes are through his interpretations of Orlando's language that he documents within his text, to which he attempts to assign structure despite it being "rambling talk, disconnected, trivial, dull, and sometimes unintelligible" (310). H/er language appears scattered and disordered, much like the rhizome. The biographer admits to copying Orlando's disconnected words, "adding in brackets which self in *our opinion* is speaking, but in this we may well be wrong" (310, emphasis added). The biographer notes the possibility of error (calling into question the power of phallocentric authority) in attempting to assign the exact points at which Orlando changes selves; however, he fails to realize the needlessness of Orlando's multiplicities ever to be fixed or distinguished in one space. Orlando's commentary presents a constant in-between-ness of selves as s/he shifts back and forth between them all. S/he has no need to reside in one identity or construction of self when s/he can constantly exist *between* them.[50] In this regard, Orlando surpasses the

[50] Orlando resists conforming to one side of the binary system even with h/er name. As Pamela Caughie points out, in *Orlando*, "[l]anguage and identity are closely related" (77), and that idea is especially true when examining the name Orlando. Elizabeth Meese describes the name as "the passage from one sex to the other" (477), relying on the suggestion of Francoise Defromont that Orlando's name can be divided into Or/l/and/o (209). "Or" and "and" within the name imply a duality that "both joins and divides; it joins and divides identity with/from difference" (Meese 477). The unity and division suggested in "or" and "and" relate well with Orlando's personal concept of identity as being multifaceted yet bound together. While Meese points out and explains the "Or/and" of Orlando's name, she fails to define the two remaining letters "l" and "o" in the signature. Thus, the name itself seems to imply not only unity and division of identity, but also the unity of gender within one being; the phallic "l" coupled with the yonic "o." Thus, the name Orlando itself could be interpreted as an alternative to distinctly male and female gender: either man, woman, *Or man (l) and woman (o)*.

capabilities of Robin who lacks both arborescent memory and a rhizomatic block-system of thought, evidenced by Robin's continuous efforts to force-fit herself into a fixed binary role.

Similar to Robin's inability to act upon her multiplicity, Matthew fails to transcend the limitations of his memory and body in the manner Orlando manages because Orlando feels the freedom to express h/er multiplicity. Matthew, however, feels conflicted in publicly presenting his body in any way that would discredit his male authority. As the presumably normalized male, the representation of hegemonic masculinity within *Nightwood*, Matthew links himself to the rigid strictures of the social order that make it difficult for him to destabilize his own position of power. Deleuze and Guattari recognize this unwillingness as a characteristic of those in the majority of the power structure because as a man, Matthew comprises the majority and holds all rights, power, and privileges afforded to men (291). As a result, the theorists say that those (men) in the majority are unable to experience "becoming" in which the exchange of reterritorialization and deterritorialization occurs; "only a minority is capable of serving as the active medium of becoming, but under such conditions that it ceases to be a definable aggregate in relation to the majority" (291). Therefore, because Matthew cannot release himself from the role of the empowered male, he cannot allow himself to experience any becoming-female on his body or within him in the manner he desires. By contrast, Orlando revels in h/er multiplicity and allows the constant exchange of becoming-female and becoming-male on h/er body's surface. Just as s/he moves freely between states of identity, or selves, s/he uses h/er body as a site of play in which s/he can also move between performances of gender, never arriving definitively at any one gender but comprising all at once. Considering the manner in which Orlando cross-dresses, h/er behavior indicates that s/he never privileges one gender over another.

Clothing illuminates Orlando's gender multiplicity by revealing the constant liminality of h/er body's surface. H/er biographer rightly notes that it is "often only the clothes that keep the male or female likeness" (189); therefore, clothing becomes an external performance for Orlando in which s/he cannot express h/er multiplicity. Through clothing, s/he performs different aspects of h/er gender(s) at various times. Orlando wears h/er clothing in layers, and this layering is indicative of Orlando's gender multiplicity and the inability of the clothing itself to represent Orlando's gender adequately. After h/er genital transformation, Orlando beholds h/er image once again while dressed in women's clothing:

> [S]o dark, so bright, so hard, so soft, was she, so astonishingly seductive that it was a thousand pities there was no one there to put it in plain English, and say outright "Damn it Madam, you are loveliness incarnate," which was the truth. Even Orlando (who had no conceit of her person) knew it, for she smiled the involuntary smile which women smile when their own beauty, which seems not their own, forms like drop falling or a fountain rising and confronts them all of a sudden in the glass. (186)

Though at surface level, Orlando would appear to have embodied completely the gender of a woman in this moment, s/he immediately "turned on her heel with extraordinary rapidity; whipped her pearls from her neck, stripped the satins from her back, [and] stood erect in her neat black silk knickerbockers of an ordinary nobleman" (186), thus removing the female layer to expose the male one. And while in this scene, s/he admires h/erself before the mirror as a female, in a later episode, s/he admires h/erself in men's attire that "fitted her to perfection and dressed in it she *looked* the very figure of a noble Lord" (215, emphasis added). For Orlando,

gender is never fixed; like h/er body's sex, h/er gender, too, is multiple, and the surface of h/er body acts as a space upon which the meaning is constantly deferred, layered like her clothing.

Changing clothes may seem an insignificant activity, but for Orlando apparel holds a great importance. As the biographer states, clothes "change our view of the world and the world's view of us" (187). Therefore, Orlando's clothing changes would alter how others perceive h/er, especially for those like the biographer, who limit themselves to the binary logic of the social system and have need to categorize everything. Because of this manner of thinking, the viewer would behold Orlando's body in clothing and assume h/er gender (and possibly even h/er sex) based upon what is viewed upon Orlando's surface. Orlando, however, is always already multiple, so h/er body only expresses momentary vacillations between genders. For example, immediately after Orlando experiences the genital transformation, s/he admires h/er image and imagines how "the world" might behold h/er beauty as a woman dressed in women's clothing. But when s/he immediately undresses to reveal that s/he wears the knickerbockers of a man, perception of h/er beauty would change because h/er clothing performance has shifted from female to male.

This layering of gendered clothing upon the surface of Orlando's body calls into question clothing's role in performing gender adequately. As the biographer states:

> Clothes are but a symbol of something hid deep beneath.…In every human being a vacillation from one sex to the other takes place, and often it is only the clothes that keep the male or female likeness, while underneath that sex is the very opposite of what it is above. (188-9)

Still, for Orlando, the sex (or genitals) that marks h/er body is not the only sex existing within h/er. S/he is multiple despite one sex being viewable while the other(s) remains unseen. The

layers of clothing over h/er body mimic the layering of h/er sex by presenting only one gendered performance at a time to the viewer, when in truth, each layer signifies the multiplicity and constant in-between-ness of Orlando's gender.

These concepts of layering, of presence and absence, can be more fully explored when considered in relation to Jacques Derrida's theories of deconstruction, particularly Derrida's explanation of what he calls the hymen. In his 1972 publication *Dissemination*, Derrida discusses Steven Mallarmé's text *Mimique*, a description of a mimodrama in which a single performer mimes both the role of a wife who is tickled to death and her husband who tickles her. Playing murderer and victim, the mime must tickle himself to enact the death of the wife, only to have the tickling consume both characters, killing the husband as well. Hence, Derrida credits the mime's ability to perform both roles simultaneously on the white surface of his body, noting that the "Mime ought only to write himself on the white page he is; he must *himself* inscribe *himself* through gestures and plays of facial expressions" (198). Similarly, Orlando's body serves as a white space upon which s/he inscribes h/erself through the clothing s/he wears upon h/er surface. Just as Mallarmé's mime serves as the liminal space where the husband and wife may be performed, so does Orlando's body's surface become the liminal space for multiple genders to appear.

Derrida refers to these in-between spaces as hymens. The hymen, much like Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming (described as "the in-between"), is an indefinable space because of its in-between-ness; appearing as a fold, a layer, a crease, the hymen serves as both a barrier between two entities and, conversely, as the consummation of the two. Derrida reads hymen "both as 'membrane' and as 'marriage'"(182). He continues to describe the hymen as:

> the confusion between the present and the nonpresent, along with all the indifferences it entails within the whole series of opposites…[. It] produces the effect of a medium (a medium as element enveloping both terms at once; a medium located between the two terms). It is an operation that *both* sows confusion *between* opposites *and* stands *between* the opposites "at once." What counts here is the *between*, the in-between-ness of the hymen. The hymen "takes place" in the "inter-," in the spacing between desire and fulfillment, between perpetration and its recollection. (212)

While the hymen both defers and differs meaning, the play generated upon the in-between space dislocates itself from that which it attempts to refer, becoming "a reference without a referent" (Derrida 206). In other words, the hymen can be neither one nor the other because it is both and neither at the same time, just as Orlando is neither male nor female because s/he is both and neither and more simultaneously. Hence, the hymen, any in-between space, deconstructs whatever concept, idea, or thing it attempts to portray.

Derrida's description of the hymen, then, lends itself to Orlando and the deconstruction of both h/er sex and gender within the novel. The surface of Orlando's body acts as the hymen that deconstructs sex while h/er use of layered clothing becomes another hymen that deconstructs h/er gender. Although specifying gender appears irrelevant to Orlando, h/er apparel translates to society as h/er being one gender or the other when s/he wears clothing. As scholar Christy L. Burns states, Orlando's "gender cannot be effected until clothing—that external social trapping—pressures her to conform with social expectations of gendered behavior" (351). Burns reads Orlando's clothing choices as social pressure to conform to a set standard of gender; however, Burns fails to acknowledge the discrepancy between Orlando's actions and how

society chooses to "read" h/er by incorrectly assuming that Orlando's clothing is h/er exact expression of gender and that gender is h/er being. This difference occurs, according to Butler, because gender is assumed to be a person's "being," when instead, "gender is always a doing" because it is a performative act (*Bodies* 33). The clothed image of Orlando does not represent the entirety of h/er being, or identity; the image simply captures an aspect of the gender s/he is *doing*, or performing. While this performance represents an aspect of h/er identity, it does not offer an all-encompassing view of Orlando and h/er multi-faceted self. However, just as the sex of Orlando's body visually appears as female when s/he is, in fact, multiple, h/er gender performance presents itself, on the surface, as being one gender or the other when s/he actually comprises a multiplicity of layers and interconnections that never arrive at a fixed point but instead vacillate in a constant flux of between-ness. Again, these qualities connect with Derrida's concept of the hymen because:

> it outwits…and—as a cloth, a tissue, a medium again—it envelops them, turns them over, and inscribes them. This nonpenetration, this non perpetration (which is not simply negative but stands between the two)…is…perpetual. (215)

Here, Derrida compares the hymen to a cloth that temporarily inscribes without ever fully penetrating. When considering this description in relation to Orlando's body and h/er clothing, they appear just as the hymen Derrida describes—layer upon layer, female-associated clothing on top of male-associated clothing, covering female genitalia that was previously male genitalia. Neither layer ever manages to refer completely back to the internal core that is Orlando, however, and express the totality or multiplicity of h/er being.

The mirror through which Orlando views h/erself also proves incapable of reflecting h/er multiplicity, thereby complicating Orlando's identification with h/er self-image. Orlando's

mirror image cannot encompass all aspects of h/er identity because the mirror reflects h/er *doing* gender in various types of attire, and given that clothing can either correspond to or contradict the psychological status of an individual (as stated previously by Orlando's biographer), how can a temporary image reflected back to Orlando in the mirror serve as a frame of reference for ego and totality of identity? This disconnection between external *doing* and internal *being* challenges Lacan's theory of the mirror stage, in which Lacan proposes that an infant begins to acquire subjectivity and transitions into the symbolic order by first seeing his own body in a mirror and conceptualizing that body as its own ideal image. Lacan writes:

> The transformation […] takes place in the subject when he assumes an image. […] But the important point is that this form situates the agency known as the ego, prior to its social determination, in a fictional direction that will forever remain irreducible for any single individual or, rather, that will only asymptomatically approach the subject's becoming. (*Écrits* 76)

Therefore, the individual initially directs its ego in the imaginary space of the reflective image, which is presumed to be the totality of the infant's being. Lacan suggests the development of identity first occurs externally when the subject sees its image in the mirror. As the subject identifies first with its likeness, its identity establishment and self-development gradually move inward when the subject begins to accept its reflected image as a representation of the self; for the individual at first objectifies his or her self image and regards it as an other (*Écrits* 76). As Jenijoy La Belle describes it, the mirror stage occurs when the individual initially beholds his or her image and regards it as object, or other, and gradually moves "toward an internalization of the reflected image and an identification of ego with what had begun as an otherness" (43). Gradually, the subject sees and understands that this other is actually the subject's self-reflection.

Once the subject identifies itself with the externally reflected image, it begins to establish subjectivity. However, *Orlando* suggests that the image reflected may neither have association with the internal self nor the totality of a body's multiplicity; even when the subject sees its image reflected, the reflection may or may not completely and accurately represent the subject. While the mirror can illuminate an aspect of the self, it cannot render a total and wholly accurate view of the subject's entire being. These multiple aspects of identity manifest themselves only individually each time Orlando gazes into a mirror because the mirror can only reflect one aspect of identity at a time, giving h/er the semblance of expressing one gender at a time on h/er body's surface. H/er masculine exterior, though, proves just as temporary as the feminine exterior preceding it, and so forth and so on. However, the image that the infant relates to is static and seemingly fixed in the mirror stage. If the mirror stage is, as Lacan theorizes, the point of indoctrination of the infant into subjectivity and the symbolic order, then this event presents itself as a locus of limitation upon the developing subject, forcing him or her to conform to a fixed identity that may be inadequate.

Coupled with the mirror's failure to capture multiplicities adequately at one time is its persistency in reflecting back a gender assumed primarily by external appearance, but external gender, according to Woolf, holds lesser significance when compared to the internal feelings of the individual, which may not be properly expressed in a visual frame. In her essay *A Room of One's Own*, written around the same time as *Orlando*, Woolf writes, "Perhaps to think […] of one sex as distinct from the other is an effort. It interferes with the unity of the mind" (97). Orlando makes no distinction between sexes; s/he shifts fluidly between genders, and the mirrors s/he looks into serve only to mark h/er current gender performance. But the mirror reflects a false and temporary exterior that bears little relation to Orlando's multiplicity, which Woolf

considers to be a unity within itself. This unity Woolf describes as an androgynous (or incandescent) mind, which "is resonant and porous; […] it transmits emotion without impediment; […] it is naturally creative, incandescent, and undivided" (*Room* 98).

Woolf reveals the incandescence of Orlando's mind in a literal way by describing Orlando's image in the mirror:

> Then she […] drew and emerald ring upon her finger. "Now," she said when all was ready and lit the silver sconces on either side of the mirror. What woman would not have kindled to see what Orlando saw then burning in the snow—for all about the looking glass were snowy lawns, and she was like a fire, a burning bush, and the candle flames about her head were silver leaves; or again, the glass was green water, and she a mermaid; slung with pearls, a siren in a cave, singing so that oarsmen leant from their boats and fell down, down to embrace her […]. (185)

The burning imagery Woolf uses to describe Orlando's reflection suggests the incandescence of h/er mind and being, for as Orlando beholds h/erself, h/er emotions and senses appear heightened and the figurative incandescence Woolf suggests in *A Room of One's Own* takes on a literal appearance for Orlando as s/he sees h/er mirror image ablaze.

Woolf's coupling of fire and mirrors occurs frequently in her writing and is the focus of Hermione Lee's essay "A Burning Glass." While this particular passage from *Orlando* is not discussed, Lee alludes to a similar passage from *A Room of One's Own* that describes a burning bush being reflected in a river as a young oarsman passes by:

> To the right and left bushes of some sort, golden and crimson, glowed with the colour, even it seemed burnt with the heat, of fire. On the further bank the

> willows wept in perpetual lamentation, their hair about their shoulders. The river reflected whatever it chose of sky and bridge and burning tree, and when the undergraduate had oared his boat through the reflections they closed again, completely, as if he had never been. (5)

The key difference in the passages lies in the power of the oarsman and the frailty of the burning image; in *A Room of One's Own*, the "phallic oarsman" controls the situation; he is powerful enough to interrupt the mirror reflection of the burning bush, which exists alongside "feminine, lamenting willows" ("Burning" 17). The scene described in *A Room of One's Own* highlights the power of the masculine force to interrupt the weaker, feminine surroundings.

In *Orlando*, however, the scene shifts; the oarsman has lost his ability to control the setting; instead, he falls prey to the powerful mermaid/siren image that beckons him to come to her embrace. The embrace suggests a unity of the male oarsman and the female siren, thus reemphasizing the multi-gendered, "incandescence" of Orlando's mind. Whereas in *A Room of One's Own*, the actions of the oarsman and burning bush only briefly connect and separate, the two discrete objects merge and intertwine in an embrace in *Orlando*, thereby solidifying the notion "that only in being released from sexual bias can the mind become incandescent and creative" ("Burning" 17). The notion of establishing incandescence by eliminating sexual bias had only been hinted at in the passage of *A Room of One's Own* because the scene does not hold together; the union of the oarsmen and the mermaid is temporary. In *Orlando*, however, Woolf establishes a unity between the male and female images that connects the two genders. The reflection in Orlando ends with the embrace of the genders intact, suggesting a lasting interconnection of sexes that yields Orlando's incandescence.

The blending of the genders also reiterates Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming and the reterroritorialization and deterritorialization involved in the process. The becoming, or in-between-ness:

> brings about the deterritorialization of one term and the reterritorialization of the other; the two becomings interlink and form relays in a circulation of intensities pushing the deterritorialization ever further. There is neither imitation nor resemblance, only an exploding of two heterogeneous series on the line of flight composed by a common rhizome that can no longer be attributed to or subjugated by anything signifying. (10)

The merger of the two heterogeneous genders creates a constant becoming that moves between them in which the actions of deterritorialization and reterritorialization occur. The notion of the male gender entering into a becoming phase may seem contradictory to Deleuze and Guattari's claim that men compose the dominating majority within society and the majority cannot experience becoming, as it is only a possibility of the minority. However, man *may* experience becoming "only when he enters a becoming-minoritarian that rends him from his major identity" (Deleuze 291). By willingly removing himself from the majority position, man may then experience the becoming stage as well as the block system.

Orlando experiences this removal from the majority h/erself in order to arrive at a becoming, as s/he initially regards h/erself as male only. Orlando arrives at h/er own incandescence gradually within the novel because at first, s/he does not completely recognize or understand h/er own multiplicity. Perhaps because h/er initial genitalia sexed her body as male, s/he accepted the binary framework of the social structure and did not question the role in which s/he was (genitally) assigned. To reiterate the complication of the mirror stage, by seeing the

static mirror image of h/er male appearance, s/he would have initially identified with this image as an ideal, imaginary subject to which s/he would aspire to be, removing h/er from the multiplicity s/he actually has the capability to express. Orlando's biographer also confers and confirms maleness upon Orlando's body from the first line of the text by referring to Orlando as "He—for their could be no doubt of his sex" (13). However, Orlando's discovery of h/er multiplicity and arrival at incandescence occur with h/er introduction to Princess Sasha, with whom s/he experiences phases of reterritorialization and deterritorialization. Orlando finds h/erself drawn to Sasha's own incandescence and its connection to Sasha's inability to be fully expressed or to understand completely the entirety of her. The biographer describes Orlando's fascination with Sasha:

> For in all [Sasha] said, however open she seemed and voluptuous, there was something hidden; in all she did, however, daring, there was something concealed. So the green flame seems hidden in the emerald, or the sun prisoned in a hill. The clearness was outward; within was a wandering flame. (47)

Orlando even experiences a limitation of language to express Sasha. After spending considerable time determining whether or not she was male or female, "fox, or an olive tree," s/he realizes that "ransack the language as [Orlando] might, words failed [h/er]. [Orlando] wanted another landscape, another tongue" (47). Orlando vows to obtain this same incandescence, and through his exchanges with Sasha, s/he does arrive at it. The more exposure s/he has with the Princess, the more s/he deterritorializes and reterritorializes in order to experience becoming-Sasha. Prior to interacting with Sasha, Orlando lacked the incandescence of which Woolf wrote, for the only light associated with Orlando came externally: "Orlando's

face […] was lit *solely* by the sun itself" (14, emphasis added). However, before Sasha's departure, she tells Orlando:

> that he was like a million-candled Christmas tree […] hung with yellow globes; *incandescent*; enough to light a whole street by; (so one might translate it) for what with his glowing cheeks, his dark curls, his black and crimson cloak, he looked as if he were burning with his own radiance, from a lamp lit within. (54)

This turning point in the novel marks Orlando's awareness of h/er multiplicity and incandescence.

The incandescence of which Woolf writes in *Orlando* has been compared to the incandescence referenced by Hélène Cixous in her essay "The Laugh of the Medusa," in which Cixous claims the experience as a moment which women will be "borne up to" at the end of the "Phallic period" (1097). Accordingly, scholars like Katerina Kitsi-Mitakou compare the multiplicities in *Orlando* to Cixous's description of *l'écriture feminine*. Cixous equates feminine writing with using multiple perspectives to write from and about the female body, an entity which, for Cixous and other feminist writers (e.g., Irigaray), cannot be expressed singly or simply. Cixous also appears to eschew the notion of arriving at a becoming or in-between-ness that merges male and female, declaring instead that "women must write through their bodies" and reclaim their bodies from the phallogocentric order which denies them both a voice and an acceptable body (1097). Therefore, Kitsi-Mitakou believes that *Orlando* effectively "inscribes feminity" by presenting itself as a "female text [that] is engendered by and engenders a female body" (117). Accepting this view, though, reduces Orlando's actions to events that promote only Orlando's feminine qualities, and in turn, disregard any aspects of masculinity or other genders within h/er. Such a reading restricts the interpretations of Orlando's gender multiplicity,

confining it entirely to an elevation of the feminine and negation of the masculine. While this concept might appear to fit with Cixous's theory, it conflicts with Orlando's own actions within the novel; considering the manner in which Orlando transitions between gender expressions and performance of attire, s/he appears neither to abandon her masculine aspects nor does h/er behavior indicate that s/he privileges one gender over another. Deleuze and Guattari also point out Woolf's own professed aversion to "the idea of writing 'as a woman'" (276), stating that "the only way to get outside the dualisms is to be-between, to pass between, the intermezzo—that is what Virginia Woolf lived with all her energies, in all of her work, never ceasing to become" (277). Woolf's apparent preference, then, was to express the becoming, or in-between-ness and explore the liminal spaces which disrupt the current framework.

In this regard, however, Woolf's ideals, like the ideals of Deleuze and Guattari, seem comparable to Cixous's theory. Cixous states that the goal for *l'écriture feminine* is to "invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes, and rhetorics, regulations and codes" (1097). The wrecking of partitions and breaking down of barriers occur through Woolf's theory of incandescence as well as Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the rhizome and stages of becoming. All three theories seem to destabilize the authority of the phallus and the male/masculine majority, though while Woolf, Deleuze and Guattari identify the destabilization occurring through a form of blending and merging, Cixous insists that the distinction and borders of the female body remain intact, decrying any efforts of bisexuality that might neutralize femininity (1096). Cixous's proposal seems contradictory, however, in that she calls for a system that would break down all partitions, yet she wants to maintain the partition between sex and/or gender with regards to the preservation of the female body. Despite Cixous's professed

aversion to anything that would disrupt the female body, she does advocate a type of bisexuality that she defines as:

> Each one's location in self (*répérage en soi*) of the presence—variously manifest and insistent according to each person, male or female—of both sexes, nonexclusion either of the difference or of one sex, and, from this "self-permission," multiplication of the effects of the inscription of desire, over all parts of my body and the other body. (1096)

This description of bisexuality as a location of both sexes within one self seems comparable with Woolf's theory of incandescence, though Cixous again limits her definition by stating that only women are capable of this bisexuality because men remain occupied by their own "phallic monosexuality" (1096). Cixous seems unable to locate a method in which men can also achieve incandescence, but in doing so, she reinforces the partitions she hopes to destroy. Woolf, like Deleuze and Guattari, conceptualizes an ability for men to remove themselves from their majoritarian position in order to experience becoming and incandescence, and by doing so, destabilizes the traditional, phallocentric meaning of gender. *Orlando* "[unfixes] these conventional meanings" (Caramagno 183) of gender through multiplicity but does not destroy its meaning altogether. Instead, as Pamela Caughie points out, "it [calls] attention to and [calls] into question one way of making meaning" (79) for gender. In making an alternate meaning for gender, Woolf arrives at her concept for the androgynous, or incandescent mind:

> two sexes in the mind corresponding to the two sexes in the body [….I]n each of us two powers preside, one male, one female; and in the man's brain, the man predominates over the woman, and in the woman's brain, the woman predominates over the man. (*Room* 98)

With regard to Orlando, achieving mental incandescence through gender liberation serves as only one facet of h/er ever-changing self, however. The entire biography can be considered Orlando's quest for identity and self-understanding, with the gender issue comprising only a fragment of h/er overall process of identity development. When the novel begins, Orlando is a sixteen year-old living in 16th century England and has "the need of something which he could attach his floating heart to" (19). From the initial pages of the text, s/he challenges h/erself to find something with which s/he might identify that might give h/er purpose or distinction. H/er subsequent actions parallel those of Gustav von Aschenbach of *Death in Venice* in that both turn to their ancestors as a means of reaffirming their identities and giving themselves an ideal to which they might aspire. Orlando wanders the halls of h/er ancestral home "looking at picture after picture as if he sought the likeness of somebody whom he could not find" (70). Orlando's search for a recognizable face amongst h/er family paintings suggests that by identifying h/erself with someone in h/er family and finding a similarity between h/erself and familial other, s/he could gain a direction for h/er own identity.

What Orlando searches for, then, in the paintings of h/er ancestors, bears similarity to that which the infant of the Lacanian mirror stage strives to attain through viewing its reflection. Just as the infant sees an image of an ideal self to which it may aspire to become, Orlando, in locating a portrait with which s/he might identify h/erself, is actually seeking to connect h/erself to an image from which s/he might then begin to establish and differentiate h/erself. However, because s/he cannot find an identifiable image amongst h/er family paintings, Orlando must seek out other objects with which s/he might identify.

Orlando's quest of self-discovery proves unsuccessful initially because mirrors and static family portraits are incapable of reflecting the multiplicity of Orlando's being. Family portraits

and actual mirrors fail to capture more than one representation of a subject, so Orlando must seek out some object that can reflect multiplicity and change as rapidly as s/he does. This disconnection between Orlando, mirrors, and h/er ancestry distinguishes h/er from Aschenbach who feels the burden of his own ancestry, which pressures him to conform to the rigid social structures and class system he desires to master. Also, when Aschenbach views himself in the mirror and feels dissatisfied with his image, he becomes forlorn and dissatisfied with himself, turning next to Tadzio as a stand-in for his own mirror image. Orlando, on the other hand, recognizes the incompatibility of h/erself with h/er reflection and h/er ancestry and regards those objects as flawed rather than seeing a problem within h/erself. And whereas Aschenbach writes as a means of achieving the similar respect and honor that his male ancestors had with their abilities, Orlando disregards those past deeds of h/er ancestors and instead uses h/er art of writing as a self-creation that can most adequately express h/er multiplicity. H/er biographer writes that Orlando:

> vowed that he would be the first poet of his race and bring immortal lustre upon his name […] and Orlando [compared] that achievement with those of his ancestors, cried out that they and their deeds were dust and ashes, but this man and his words were immortal. (81)

Orlando recognizes the differences between h/er ancestors and h/erself by defining h/erself as a poet. H/er act of proclamation allows h/er to establish h/erself as a part of h/er family and heritage while simultaneously separating h/er from h/er ancestors and their earlier professions. Thus, when s/he can find no adequate object or reflective image that would fully express h/er, s/he creates from h/erself something that will.

Orlando's writing has the pliancy to conform itself, at any moment, to the multiple aspects of h/er being. Serving as h/er makeshift mirror, Orlando's writing possesses the ability to reflect multiple genders at once—a feat the true mirror cannot achieve. During a key moment in the novel, Orlando reviews h/er poem, "The Oak Tree," and attempts to write:

> Thus it was that Orlando, dipping his pen in the ink, saw the mocking face of the lost Princess and asked himself a million questions instantly which were as arrows dipped in gall […] at once substituted for the face of the Princess a face of a very different sort. But whose was it, he asked himself? And he had to wait, perhaps half a minute, looking at the new picture which lay on top of the old, as one lantern slide is half seen through the next, before he could say to himself, "This is the face of that rather fat, shabby man who sat in Twitchett's room ever so many years ago[…]." (79)

As though rising up between the lines, Orlando sees the faces of a woman (the Princess Sasha) and, almost instantly after, a man. Thus, h/er writing enables h/er to behold both genders simultaneously in one frame. And while the images s/he sees are not the actual reflections of h/er own self-image, the two images are characters that are closely tied to Orlando's personal development and serve to mirror the aspirations of Orlando's identity to achieve incandescence and establish subjectivity through the art of writing.

The image reflected in the poem comprises two sexes not only to represent the multiplicity of Orlando's gender but also to reveal the other aspects of identity that Orlando pursues. The Russian Princess offered Orlando a glimpse of the incandescent mind, and the male image that evolves from the reflection of the Princess bears the likeness of Nick Greene, a poet whom Orlando had previously sought for instruction on writing. Greene's presence is

equally important to Orlando, as s/he holds Greene (and all poets) in highest regard. And this image of Greene that appears in Orlando's writing inspires h/er to pursue h/er desire of becoming a poet.

When Orlando beholds the image of multiple genders in h/er text, s/he sees no divisions in the images of the Princess and the poet. When s/he regards the faces in the text, Orlando does not see them individually but multiply, noting that the images blend together rather than shifting definitively from one to the other: the image of the poet "lay[s] on top of the old, as one lantern slide is half seen through the next" (79). There is no partition between the two images; one blends seamlessly into the next, establishing the becoming that Deleuze and Guattari describe, with the ease implied by Woolf's explanation of incandescence. No distinct division exists between the gendered images, suggesting the incandescence, or androgyny, defined by Woolf, which has broken down the traditional concept of the gender binary.

Orlando not only disrupts these traditional concepts of gender and the binary structures that dictate contemporary concepts of sex, masculinity, and femininity within the social framework, but it also destabilizes the concept of the phallocentric interpreter, empowered by the social structure to dictate, explain, and define how information should be understood. Orlando's biographer acts as the phallocentric interpreter of the text, but he finds his authority constantly challenged as he is frequently torn between reporting what actually happens and interpreting it in a manner acceptable to social expectations. The biographer states that his first duty, like that of any interpreter, "is to plod, without looking to right or left, in the indelible footprint of truth;" however, Orlando's multiplicity creates an obstacle for the biographer which he refers to as "dark, mysterious, and undocumented" (65). The biographer's quest for truth is inhibited by his inability to express those concepts that have never before been documented or spoken. The

difficulties in telling Orlando's story leave the biographer completely aware that he is incapable of fully expressing Orlando's totality. He tells the reader that a biography "is considered complete if it merely accounts for six or seven selves, whereas a person may well have as many thousand" (309). The text encompasses several aspects of Orlando's identity but does not capture all of them. Still, the idea of multiple expressions of self can be witnessed through the written body of both Orlando the person and *Orlando* the text. Orlando's written body becomes further diversified because the biographer's representation(s) of Orlando are coupled with h/er ever-changing autobiographical poem "The Oak Tree." While the reader only sees a fragment of the actual poem, Orlando notes its many shifts and changes throughout h/er life, but by itself, neither the poem nor the biography completely expresses Orlando. Just as she uses multiple genders to express her body, she also requires multiple texts to express her life, rendering any singular version or representation incomplete.

The ever-present multiplicity and lack of distinctions make "the text of *Orlando* as unstable as the sex of Orlando" (Caughie 78). This destabilization allows both the text and body to de-center from the traditional, distinguishable forms, providing an in-between space for various modes of expression and performance to occur. By acknowledging the need for multiple texts, multiple stories, and multiple perspectives to express a being, *Orlando* effectively disrupts the authority given to the phallocentric interpreter, making his role one of many that must operate within the same block-system of constant exchange and becoming that Deleuze and Guattari identify. The text, then, proves to be as multiple as Orlando's body and mind. While this de-centering of both text and body facilitates the ability to shift forms and genders, it does not suggest a lack of wholeness for the entity. Orlando proves complete in her multiplicity, never requiring fixity or destination, instead being "always and already in the middle" (Deleuze

296), and impossible to reduce to limited forms or binary logic that would compel one to conform to rigid strictures of gender, sex, or a wholly masculine or feminine identity. The implication of Orlando's life, then, is that perhaps some possibility exists for the socio-cultural construct to evolve to a state that accepts the concept of the liminal body as a utopian space everyone might occupy, where the strictures of masculine and feminine behavior are neither enforced nor expected to present themselves in a fixed manner ruled by binary logic, but instead regarded as an amalgamation of any and all characteristics that may be expressed by everyone, regardless of gender, sex, or sexual orientation.

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