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Chipping at the bedrock: Reading and rescripting foundational narratives of gender, race and sexuality

Wuthnow, Julie, Ph.D.

University of Hawaii, 1994

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CHIPPING AT THE BEDROCK:
READING AND RESCRIPTING FOUNDATIONAL NARRATIVES
OF GENDER, RACE AND SEXUALITY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF
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By
Julie Wuthnow

Dissertation Committee:
Kathy E. Ferguson, Chairperson
Ruth Hsu
Neal Milner
Phyllis Turnbull
Valerie Wayne
For

Jeannie
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kept reminding me that doing creative work matters, that it's hard, and that not only was I doing it I was entitled to do it.

In my own home, our collective situation appeared to be a recipe for disaster. Two overworked, aging and poverty-stricken graduate students writing dissertations; one diligent but overextended fifteen-year-old working at least as hard at her own schoolwork, speech contests, cheerleading, etc. \textit{Mais voilà!} It didn't happen! We became a (mostly) cheerful little writing factory for what seemed like months on end. And it worked. Leah produced, among many other pieces, the famous "Jane Eyre Paper" for which she received truly rave reviews from her teacher. And Kathie and I not only "got done," but are as close as we've ever been. It just worked, like it always does.
ABSTRACT

According to the conventional wisdom, we of the modern west are in an era of "celebrating difference." We are willing to admit that in the past some white people were racist, some men were sexist, and almost everyone despised queers, but in this account the late twentieth century has ushered in a new era of equality and mutual respect.

More than a few questions attach themselves to this formulation, however. For instance, who is the "we" that is still able to place itself at the center and evaluate whether "we" are treating minorities, women and homosexuals appropriately or not? More specifically, what are the dominant cultural narratives that maintain whiteness, maleness, and heterosexuality as central, "normal" and dominant in spite of cosmetic changes to everyday political discourse? Considering the conceptual insights of poststructuralist, feminist, and anti-racist theory, what narratives make it possible for ostensibly feminist males to blithely harass their female employees and students, or for purportedly anti-racist whites to perpetually diminish, degrade and "disappear" people of color? Most importantly for my project, however, what are the narratives which produce and maintain homophobia as a thriving political and linguistic practice? I focus in particular on two types of narratives which retain extraordinary power in producing the homosexual subject and the meanings of that subjectivity. I first examine medical discourse and the production of the unhealthy and abnormal homosexual who "naturally" produces aversion in the heterosexual subject. I then consider how classic romance narratives, for instance William
Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, reproduce male dominance and white supremacy, and how they script homosexuality as the "outside" to true love.

Finally, I examine Jeanette Winterson's novel *Written on the Body* and the film *Philadelphia* in order to reflect on the success of these works in rescripting these powerful and oppressive narratives of domination. How might politically and linguistically self-conscious artistic strategies begin to disrupt the conventional categorizations of normal/abnormal, white/non-white, male/female, straight/gay and their concomitant production of superior and inferior identities?
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

A bright young man studies feminism (sporadically, but in earnest) for two years with teachers he likes and respects. He understands and is sympathetic to feminist arguments. He claims he will never argue with his future wife because he will simply wait for her to figure out he was right in the first place.

A Women's Studies department is overwhelmingly white. They know their anti-racist feminist literature and have every intention of pursuing hiring practices that will increase racial diversity. They spend a substantial part of a faculty luncheon discussing the health risks involved in eating local food.

Two non-traditional (AKA "mature") female undergraduate students take a lot of women's studies classes together. They hear a lot about lesbianism. The straight one asks the gay one why she dresses like a man.

A self-proclaimed (at least historically) radical Political Science Department. They are the renegades of the University. They are democratic and egalitarian. They have dedicated a lot of time to improving gender relations within the department. At a reception for two visiting female faculty members, the resident women (faculty and staff) provide the food. The men are the most assertive about eating it. The women clean up the mess.

A new, mainland haole teacher is midway through teaching her first class in Hawai'i. She is not blind. She notices that most of her students are dark-skinned. She formulates a paper assignment about race that presumes a uniformly white group of students.

These stories are true, in spirit if not in precise detail. I was party to three of them, and the other two can be considered reliable hearsay. I have recounted them here in order to display instances of the issue that will form the central thematic of my dissertation. Broadly speaking, this theme can be termed a particular expression of the "problem of difference." There are a
variety of possible theoretical approaches to this issue, two of which, poststructuralism and feminist theory, will form the backbone of my work. There is much complexity within these categories, and considerable overlap between them, yet my intention is to create a conversation of sorts between these two different "languages of politics." Both have been very influential in forming my thinking about the world, and a molding, splicing and juggling of these languages will hopefully bear fruit in trying to unravel the complex issue of "difference."

Post-structuralists, linguists and semioticians who are interested in language, text and representation refer to difference, or différence in the case of Derrida, as the basis of all systems of meaning, and much of my work will rely upon and make reference to theoretical insights derived from these schools of thought. The feminist conception of difference, however, connects more directly to the stories I have recounted above. Feminists such as Audre Lorde, Cherrie Moraga, Chrystos and Gloria Anzaldúa have elaborated ideas around the concept of difference that have been very influential in the feminist movement. On their interpretation, within Western society there are certain norms which privilege some people over others, and anyone who is "different," that is, who deviates from these norms will suffer the consequences. As a strategy to convert difference from a liability to an asset, the feminist movement as a whole (and society-at-large in recent years) has sought to both "name" difference, that is, to educate ourselves about our differences, and to celebrate diversity. Writers like Lorde are widely read, and feminists do know more about the implications of differences in race, class, culture and sexual orientation than they did ten years ago. In other words, the naming of difference proceeds with great
But where is the celebration of diversity? More to the point, how can celebration occur given the ubiquity of the kinds of stories which open this essay? There has been the presumption, at least among white feminists, that the celebration of difference would follow "naturally" on the heels of heightened awareness, since those who had participated in this process would become both empowered in those realms where we were oppressed, and less oppressive in our own practices.

To put it bluntly, this approach is not working, and it is the incredible stubbornness of patterns of ignorance (in spite of years of education), insult and oppression that forms the sand in my shell, and that keeps me working on ideas about how to "do difference differently."

*****

I have asserted the idea that the American feminist practice of naming and celebrating difference is "not working." This leaves much to be explained. What would it mean for any feminist practice to "work," and what specifically is the "problem of difference" upon which this practice should operate?

The incidents I have recounted are meant to show by example the persistence of both stereotypes and oppressive practices among educationally privileged people, but the "problem of difference" needs to be thematized much more broadly. Simply put, racism, sexism, classism and homophobia are well and thriving within American culture. Although blatant expressions of bigotry are no longer considered "politically correct," our lives continue to be deeply structured by hierarchy. Whiteness, maleness, middle class status, and heterosexuality carry material and social
privilege in our society. In one sense, then, the "problem of difference" can be thought of as the problem of inequality, oppression, or perhaps as an unequal distribution of power and privilege. Within the context of the feminist movement, this begins to explain the failure of a strategy that simply seeks to name and celebrate difference. If naming difference takes the form of highlighting oppression, what cause is there for celebration, and how does the naming process address the issue of ending that oppression?

As Frederick Douglass wrote in 1849:

The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims have been born of struggle. . . . If there is no struggle there is no progress. . . . The struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will . . .

(Douglass 1960)

This begins to explain why a political practice based on educational or "naming" strategies as the sole means to bring about social change is doomed to failure. Douglass's reference to struggle can be considered an insistence on recognizing the necessity for power in the pursuit of liberty by oppressed peoples. In his terms, the power can be either moral or physical, or a combination of the two, but some form of power is necessary in order to launch an effective political movement.

But what constitutes an effective political movement? When has a people achieved liberty? Liberty in Douglass's terms can be thought of as

*1 There are a multitude of sources available which explore this issue. Within recent feminist writings, some of the most powerful discussions can be found in Sister Outsider, by Audre Lorde, This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color, Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, editors, and Going Out of Our Minds: The Metaphysics of Liberation, by Sonia Johnson.
adequately high social standing, however adequacy might be defined, within hierarchical society. There is nothing here to indicate that Douglass is questioning the notion of hierarchy in and of itself. His focus is on strategizing within the context of the harsh political climate of slavery. His strength is in recognizing that disparities in privilege will not be eradicated simply by being named. That approach is politically naive and doomed to repeat historical patterns of oppression. Oppressed groups must organize politically and improve their power position relative to other groups.

This version of power politics, however, will not be the subject of my dissertation. Rather than focusing on the differential status of social groups within hierarchical society, I will be focusing on the issue of hierarchy itself. Political organizing by oppressed groups is essential, but unless the notion of hierarchy is challenged, its only possible outcome is a swapping of positions within hierarchical structures that continue to burden vast segments of the social order. One way to shift the focus towards the issue of hierarchy-in-itself is to revisit the notions of power and naming. Is power always so readily discerned? Is naming always as benign as I have claimed thus far? Tracy Strong, with some help from Friedrich Nietzsche, helps to crack open this conundrum:

Our language . . . repeats, in a sort of neurotic compulsion, our history and our selves to us. Language pulls together and is the world: this language, our world. The very ability to give names—to extend the control of language over the world—must then be a masterly trait, for it consists of saying what the world is. To name is to define and bring under control; the allocation of names creates the world in the image of he who names. (Strong 1984, 99)
Perhaps naming is more powerful than it first appeared, and of some use after all. If naming is what creates the world, it is far from innocuous. This realization still does not mean that naming hierarchy will make it go away, however. On the contrary, naming hierarchy may constitute a repetition or compulsion that even fortifies hierarchy as the truth about the world. I say this not to undermine the importance of political critiques of inequality, but rather to introduce a note of caution about possible unpleasant side effects of pursuing critique as an isolated strategy.

How then can the power of naming be used in a more productive fashion? Perhaps the un-naming of hierarchy and the naming of new worlds must be actively pursued. Sadly, taking the names by the horns will be no small task. Western culture is profoundly hierarchical, and "thinking difference" (between selves, within selves) in the context of an egalitarian framework, in other words, dismantling hierarchy, goes against the grain of deep-rooted patterns of conceptualization and practice. Support for this idea comes from Tzvetan Todorov in *The Conquest of America*. In his discussion of Christopher Columbus's encounters with Native Americans, Todorov describes the only conceptual tools Columbus had available in making sense of the Other:2

Either he conceives the Indians... as human beings altogether, having the same rights as

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2 In *Identity/Difference*, William Connolly proposes a useful way of thinking about the relationship between difference and otherness. "An identity is established in relation to a series of differences that have become socially recognized. These differences are essential to its being. If they did not coexist as differences, it would not exist in its distinctness and solidity. Entrained in this indispensable relation is a second set of tendencies, themselves in need of exploration, to congeal established identities into fixed forms, thought and lived as if their structure expressed the true order of things. When these pressures prevail, the maintenance of one identity (or field of identities) involves the conversion of some differences into otherness, into evil, or one of its numerous surrogates. Identity requires difference in order to be, and its converts difference into otherness in order to secure its own self-certain..." [emphasis mine]. (Connolly 1991, 64)
himself; but then he sees them not only as equals but also as identical, and this behavior leads to assimilationism, the projection of his own values on the others. Or else he starts from the difference, but the latter is immediately translated into terms of superiority and inferiority (in his case, obviously, it is the Indians who are inferior). What is denied is the existence of a human substance truly other, something capable of being not merely an imperfect state of oneself. (Todorov 1985, 42)

Todorov is arguing that assimilation and domination are the only two options available to Western subjects in response to the Other. It is important to consider the possibility that since Todorov's work refers to a historical period five centuries removed from contemporary Western culture it does not accurately represent contemporary political and social realities. An important consideration, to be sure, but Audre Lorde's work strongly suggests his formulation has lost none of its salience:

we have all been programmed to respond to the human differences between us with fear and loathing and to handle that difference in one of three ways: ignore it, and if that is not possible, copy it if we think it is dominant, or destroy it if we think it is subordinate. But we have no patterns for relating across our human differences as equals. (Lorde 1984, 115)

Indeed, she has shown not only that strategies of assimilation and domination persist, but has added a third term; the active ignoring of difference. Perhaps this is a reflection of late twentieth century political realities. If "we" are forced to acknowledge that sexism and racism are not socially acceptable behavior, but still don't know how to respond to the Other as equal and different, ignoring that the Other is different at all is an
obvious quick-fix to the problem. Ignoring difference surpasses assimilationist strategies in one important respect. Whereas assimilation recognizes difference and attempts to transform it into sameness, this deliberate erasure denies that difference exists in the first place. This willful denial is how women become "one of the boys," as long as they play by the boys' rules, and how racial difference becomes simply a matter of skin color. In lingua blanca,³ "they" are proclaimed to be just like "us" except for that "extra" pigment in their skins. So there's no problem! What a relief! Adrienne Rich refers to this phenomenon as white solipsism, and succinctly describes its political dangers:

I used to envy the "colorblindness" which some liberal, enlightened, white people were supposed to possess; raised as I was, where I was, I am and will to the end of my life be acutely, sometimes bitterly, aware of color. Every adult around me in my childhood, white or black, was aware of it; it was a sovereign consciousness, a hushed and compelling secret. But I no longer believe that "colorblindness"--if it even exists--is the opposite of racism; I think it is, in this world, a form of naïveté and moral stupidity. It implies that I would look at a black woman and see her as white, thus engaging in white solipsism to the utter erasure of her particular reality. (Rich 1979, 300)

White solipsism is a strategy that simultaneously asserts whiteness as the center, yet refuses to acknowledge the privilege attached to that whiteness, to that center.

Assimilation, domination, erasure. My work will focus on exploring ways to imagine possibilities beyond these well-worn practices which

³ Thanks go to Louise Kubo for coining this phrase.
characterize hierarchy. My stance is a precarious one, for, as Lorde points out: "Possibility is neither forever nor instant. It is not easy to sustain belief in its efficacy." (Lorde 1984, 38) Imagination is equally elusive; it isn't even real! Nonetheless, I will choose to dangle from these twin threads of imagination and possibility throughout the duration of this project. This does require a leap of faith, perhaps to a belief in something akin to Audre Lorde's notion of poetry:

it is our dreams that point the way to freedom.
Those dreams are made realizable through our poems that give us the strength and courage to see, to feel, to speak, and to dare. (Lorde 1984, 39)

Will the threads hold?

* * * * *

[heterosexual] orientation, when understood as a branded contingency . . . may now be open to new possibilities of reflection. You are now in a position, first, to question the tendency to ethicize this disposition as if it flowed from a universally proper identity for males ("heterosexuality") and, second, to resist the conviction that you cannot really accept "homosexuality" in others unless you purge the aversion to sex with men in yourself. [emphasis mine] (Connolly 1991, 177)

The figure of the homosexual appears quite frequently in William Connolly's Identity\Difference. Connolly is trying to do the right thing, to convert Otherness, whether homosexuality or any other form of marginalization, into difference and to "[fold] care for the protean diversity

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⁴See Spike Lee
of human life into the strife and interdependence of identity/difference."
(Connolly 1991, x)

My question to Connolly: Isn't aversion important? Can gays and lesbians benefit from a political strategy that condones (at the very least) mainstream revulsion toward their sexual practices? What does it mean to me if a woman (I presume a certain amount of titillation for many men at the thought of lesbianism) says to me: "I respect you as a lesbian," but is thinking to herself, "Please don't make me think about what you do in bed because I'd have to think about what it would mean for me to do that in bed Oh My God how disgusting . . . " I can state unequivocally that this attitude does not lift me, in terms of my subjective experience, from the category of the Other. My oldest friend embodies a particular version of this theme. She loves me, she is profoundly loyal to me, she has tremendous respect for me, but . . . she thinks she is better than me because she is straight. She does not waltz around proclaiming her superiority. As a loyal and sensitive friend, she works very hard to avoid hurting my feelings; her attitude is revealed in little slips of the tongue that reflect dominant stereotypes and ideologies around homosexuality. Connolly would no doubt contest these stereotypes and ideologies, but part of my friend's ease in assuming superiority derives from the availability of a discourse of aversion to homosexual practices. There is no readily available counter discourse of either aversion or indifference to heterosexual practice. Gays and lesbians can occasionally be seen recoiling from the perversity and incredibly bad taste of breeders, but this expression of resistance does not tap into a source of power. It is meager and incomprehensible in the context of dominant discourse.
Aversion matters. Connolly can be read generously in terms of pragmatism, however. Perhaps he is thinking that waiting for the public mind to purge its aversion to homosexuality could make the wait for fair treatment of gays and lesbians a very long one. And he is correct in his implicit assumption that being treated respectfully and left with a realm of sexual privacy is preferable to being thrown out of housing and jobs, beaten up, or killed because of one's sexual orientation. I do want a world peopled with the likes of my old friend rather than with gay-bashers. But knowing that fair-minded people are becoming more tolerant of something they still find distasteful leaves me dependent on the kindness of strangers. That can never be acceptable.

But how to eliminate or transform aversion? Connolly's evocation of the term purge is self-defeating and Puritanical at the outset. "I will not be revolted, I will not be revolted . . ." This chant is the flip side of the mantra of homosexuals in denial of their same sex longings: "I will not be attracted, I will not be attracted . . ." To argue that this strategy does not work is to make a gross understatement. Feelings are not easily molded by rational thinking or self-discipline. The failure of the "reasonable citizen" to eradicate aversion is what leads me to seek hope elsewhere--in the realm of imagination. As Trinh Minh-ha and bell hooks explain:

To disrupt the existing systems of dominant values and to challenge the very foundation of a social and cultural order is not merely to destroy a few prejudices or to reverse power relations within the terms of an economy of the same. Rather, it is to see through the revolving door of all

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5 Although he is not advocating purging as a strategy, since he is willing to leave aversion intact, his implicit assumption that purging would be the only possible strategy is what merits attention.
rationalizations and to meet head on the truth of that struggle between fictions. (Trinh 1991, 6)

I chose to be a writer in my girlhood because books rescued me. They were the places where I could bring the broken bits and pieces of myself and put them together again, the places where I could dream about alternative realities, possible futures. They let me know firsthand that if the mind was to be the site of resistance, only the imagination could make it so. To imagine, then, was a way to begin the process of transforming reality. All that we cannot imagine will never come into being. (hooks 1991, 54-5)

Can imagination provide openings for dominant discourse to speak/produce/envision homosexuality in terms other than aversion, perversion, inversion, disease, lifestyle choice, immaturity, or inferiority? More to the point, can imagination begin to loosen or disrupt the binary dualism heterosexual/homosexual? Meaning systems structured in terms of binary dualisms, for instance, male/female, white/non-white, active/passive, etc., presume the dualism Same/Other and its hierarchical foundation. Same sex sexuality will retain its marginal status as long as dualism determines what it means. If it is defined as homosexuality and as not-normal, not-natural, that is, not-(heterosexuality)(the Same), it is inherently Other and inferior.

In its most theoretical aspect, then, my project will seek to disrupt the heterosexual/homosexual split. I will investigate creative works which undermine the dualisms that make the anecdotes which open this introduction comprehensible. The subjects in these stories rely on dominant cultural narratives (founded on dualisms) which script men as right and
women as wrong, white people as advanced and people of color as backward, straight people as normal and queers as wannabees. As the dualisms which support these narratives are eroded, they will literally become unthinkable. I am looking for other kinds of stories, particularly those that interrogate Same/Other categorizations rather than proposing either reversals of existing hierarchies or assimilation.

Crippling the heterosexual/homosexual split will be my primary aim, perhaps only because it is the marginalization I feel most acutely. Of all the subjectivities which clothe and mold me, my lesbian identity is the least comfortable garment. It pinches because it's too tight; it is simultaneously gaudy and invisible; no matter how I rearrange it, brush it, fluff it up, accessorize it, sport it jauntily at just the right angle, it just looks . . . "mannish," at least to straight eyes. I want a new wardrobe . . . I want more than one thing to wear . . .

* * * * *

one important way social power is mediated in American society is through the contestation between the many narrative structures through which reality might be perceived and talked about. By this I mean to focus on the intense interpretive conflicts that ultimately bear on the particular ways that realities are socially constructed. (Crenshaw 1992, 403)

Oranges are not the only fruit. Nor are fruits the only narrative. Narratives dependent on the meaning attributed to (hetero)(homo)sexuality necessarily compete and intersect with other narrative structures, for

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6See Jeanette Winterson.
instance, ideologies which give meaning to race and gender. This insight will have at least two important consequences for this work. The first is that it will be very dangerous for me to attempt to examine the heterosexual/homosexual split in isolation from other important narrative structures. The isolation would be purely illusory, and my work would smuggle in relationships of domination solely through being inattentive. For instance, if I want to discuss the homosexual as a subject in American culture, who will I be discussing? The first likely candidate is probably myself, given my relationship of domination (as author) relative to this work. And if I manage to extricate myself from the center of the text, the character of a white, middle class, relatively young gay male is likely to appear. Unmarked identity categories take on dominant characteristics; I will need to be vigilant about what I am saying when saying nothing at all. Or more to the point, I will need to sustain the visible presence of other categorizations, for instance, race, class, and gender classifications, throughout my work. Sexuality will remain a point of confluence, but not an isolated stream of ideas.

Secondly, gender and sexuality categorizations are mutually dependent and complicated by each other. A man is a man is a man, unless he's a faggot, in which case it's really hard to tell what he is. A former

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7 In “One Is Not Born a Woman,” Monique Wittig provides one way of thinking about how gender and race categorizations are produced rather than discovered as pre-existent realities: “A materialist feminist approach shows that what we take for the cause or origin of oppression is in fact only the mark imposed by the oppressor: the ‘myth of woman,’ plus its material effects and manifestations in the appropriated consciousnesses and bodies of women. Thus, the mark does not preexist oppression. Colette Guillaumin, a French sociologist, has shown that before the socio-economical reality of black slavery, the concept of race did not exist (at least not in its modern meaning: it was applied to the lineage of families), . . . what we believe to be a physical and direct perception is only a sophisticated and mythic construction, an ‘imaginary formation’ which reinterprets physical features through the network of relationships in which they are perceived.” (Wittig 1984, 149)

8 This may or may not be desirable or possible. The notion of the objective bystander-as-author has been deconstructed both by post-structuralist and feminist analyses.

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landlady once asked me about a gay male couple we both knew: "Who's the woman and who's the man in that relationship?" She had a way to settle this gender thing once and for all, and it boiled down to penetration and violation. Unfortunately, this is not only an attitude of ignorant heterosexuals. I have known more than one gay man who has consoled himself with the idea that even though he is gay, he has never let anyone fuck him. Masculinity is revealed as both tenuous and arbitrary when it becomes a matter of protecting one's anus.

But what of lesbians, who have no penis/penetrator to monitor in order to indicate gender identification? Monique Wittig provides a way to address this issue in ideological rather than physiological terms:

women are a class, which is to say that the category "woman," as well as "man," is a political and economic category, not an eternal one. . . . "Woman" is not each one of us, but the political and ideological formation which negates "women" (the product of a relation of exploitation).

To destroy "woman" does not mean to destroy lesbianism, for a lesbian is not a woman and does not love a woman, given that we agree with Christine Delphy that what "makes It a woman is a personal dependency on a man. [emphasis mine] (Wittig 1984, 151)

By virtue of their independence, dykes don't fully achieve their gender role. This is only the beginning, however; ideas about penetration and dependency only scratch the surface in elaborating the complex intertwining of gender and sexual categories. There's a lot more work to be done here.

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men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men
and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object—and most particularly an object of vision: a sight. (Berger 1972, 47)

What is the sexual function of nakedness in reality? . . . nakedness has a positive visual value in its own right: we want to see the other naked. . . . Their nakedness acts as a confirmation and provokes a very strong sense of relief. She is a woman like any other: or he is a man like any other: we are overwhelmed by the marvellous /sic/ simplicity of the familiar sexual mechanism. . . . The focus of perception shifts from eyes, mouth, shoulder, hands—all of which are capable of such subtleties of expression that the personality expressed by them is manifold—it shifts from these to the sexual parts, whose formation suggests an utterly compelling but single process. The other is reduced or elevated—whichever you prefer—to their primary sexual category: male or female. Our relief is the relief of finding an unquestionable reality to whose direct demands our earlier highly complex awareness must now yield. (Berger 1972, 59)

Western sexuality is grounded in vision, especially in maleness as spectator and femaleness as object. It also depends upon the "unquestionable reality" of primary sexual categories, and the inevitability of a particular form of desire. Indeed, when nakedness surprises rather than confirms, shocks rather than relieves, the results can be fatal. In Jennie Livingston's film Paris is Burning, a cross-dressing male prostitute is dead by the end of the film, presumably because a john discovered a penis when expecting a vulva. There simply must be "an utterly compelling but single process," and any possible contaminants to that narrative must be eradicated.
If these simple truths about sexuality are written strongly, boldly, without regard for common decency, a narrative of perversion emerges. Spectatorship becomes voyeurism, desire becomes obsession. These perversions are normal sexuality—only more so. Hence they can be more revealing about normalcy than normalcy itself. The narrative of normal sexuality has become thin and cliché through infinite reiteration. As a narrative, it is powerful enough that it no longer has to explain itself. It doesn't mean anything in particular, it simply is, and its naturalized status makes it difficult to perceive. This naturalization is precisely what makes interrogations of perversions such as voyeurism and obsession valuable. Through exaggeration, they distort the normal, but also put it into relief, give it depth and weight and multiple dimensions. The distortions make the normal more visible, more tactile, more disturbing.

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Do you know what is almost extinct in your sex? He looked sideways at me, so I shook my head. Innocence. The one time you see it is when a woman takes her clothes off and cannot look you in the eyes (as I couldn't then). Just that first Botticelli moment of the first time of her taking her clothes off. Soon shrivels. The old Eve takes over. The strumpet. Exit Anadyomene. (Fowles 1963, 186-7)

John Fowles's *The Collector* is a book about obsession and voyeurism. The main protagonist, Frederick Clegg, is a butterfly collector. He falls in love with Miranda from a distance, before he even knows her name. He watches her for weeks, or perhaps years, and plots a way to have her as a guest in his home. He is utterly possessed by his love for her. Nothing else matters in his life. He kidnaps her in his van, and deposits her in a dungeon.
he has built in the basement of his secluded country house. He watches her, he photographs her, he buys her anything she wants. By the end of the story, Miranda catches pneumonia. Rather than bring in a doctor, Clegg allows her to slowly die.

Clegg does not and can not make love to Miranda. He takes photographs instead. The singular and compelling process is transformed from sexual intercourse into looking. "The photographs . . . I used to look at them sometimes. I could take my time with them. They didn't talk back at me." (Fowles 1963, 109) He simply wants to look at her, and he doesn't want her looking back at him. "I wanted to look at her face, at her lovely hair, all of her all small and pretty, but I couldn't, she stared so at me." (Fowles 1963, 29) There is an inherent threat to Miranda in Clegg's stance, one which is not lost on her:

I am one in a row of specimens. It's when I try to flutter out of line that he hates me. I'm meant to be dead, pinned, always the same, always beautiful. He knows that part of my beauty is being alive, but it's the dead me he wants. He wants me living-but-dead. I felt it terribly strong today. That my being alive and changing and having a separate mind and having moods and all that was becoming a nuisance. (Fowles 1963, 218)

Clegg is insane. It's obvious. Beyond his unusual sexual proclivities, he's a kidnapper and murderer. How odd, then, that the Botticelli moment is a fantasy not of Clegg, but of G.P., the good guy in this story. Miranda is twenty years old and an aspiring artist. G.P. is much older, an accomplished painter, and Miranda's most important role model. Shortly before Miranda's capture, G.P. develops such a strong desire for her that he chooses to sever
their connection so that he can regain his inner peace. The relationship is not lost in her mind, however. During her confinement, G.P. is the object of her fantasies, the counterpoint to her captor, and the embodiment of life, art and love. Yet he too craves a truly innocent woman, a woman who cannot look him in the eyes. Is G.P. the spectator to Clegg's voyeur? Is G.P.'s desire a pale rendering of Clegg's obsession? Is Clegg G.P., only more so?

G.P. and Clegg provide one point of comparison in *The Collector*. John Fowles's use of equivocal juxtapositions does not end with Clegg and G.P., however. Frederick Clegg is not merely Frederick Clegg. In presenting himself to Miranda, he declares himself to be none other than Ferdinand, savior of Miranda the exiled princess. Never mind that Miranda Grey of *The Collector* is exiled by virtue of being kidnapped by this would-be Ferdinand; he proclaims himself Miranda's hero, her true love. He loves her and he knows that she can love him too and they can live happily ever after if only she will try.

Frederick Clegg's choice of the name Ferdinand is anything but random; he has a very specific purpose in presenting himself as Ferdinand rather than just plain old Fred. The reference he makes is to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, a play in which Ferdinand plays the role of Prince Charming opposite Miranda, the daughter of Prospero. Frederick Clegg, kidnapper and murderer, has a love story echoing through his consciousness! *The narrative which explains and justifies Clegg's profound and ultimately fatal violence toward Miranda is not one of war but of love.* Clegg's appropriation of Shakespeare's story does not go uncontested, however. Miranda Grey knows her Shakespeare as well, and refuses Clegg's usurpation of such a stellar role.
in his favored narrative. In Miranda's mind, her captor is no Ferdinand but rather Caliban, Shakespeare's dark and primitive Other to Ferdinand's virtuous and civilized Self.

What does it mean for Fowles to evoke this well-known Renaissance narrative? What does he refer to, reiterate, or subvert? Are archetypal romance narratives about love or about violence? What is the relationship of love to obsession? Both Shakespeare's play and romance narratives considered more broadly deserve more attention. In chapters three and four, they will get their due.

* * * * *

John Fowles's *The Collector* is about obsession. Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is a classic romance narrative. And Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body* ... seems to be both. Or is it? For the moment, consider it obsession.

The narrator, of unidentified gender, has been sexually entangled with a plethora of characters. S/he has had exciting but ultimately failed whirlwind romance with so many married women that his/her heart needs a break and s/he takes up with Jacqueline, a safe and comfortable mate who works at the zoo. Louise has been married to Elgin for ten years. She married him because she knew she could control the relationship. They have a comfortable life together. Louise sees the narrator in a park. She wants the narrator, desperately. She contrives a way for them to meet. They fall in love and are completely consumed by each other. The bulk of the story is devoted to incarnating the depth and power of their passion.

The story of the narrator and Louise is one of palpable and profound obsession. It is not, however, a book of voyeurism or primary sexual
categories. Berger's statement that "men act and women appear" is unintelligible within the context of this story. Winterson doesn't counter his assertion in any direct way; we don't see women acting and men appearing, or men and women both acting and appearing. That kind of counter-argument to Berger could not appear here. Winterson has rescripted obsession such that male/female and actor/appearer dichotomies have lost their primacy. They don't disappear entirely; there are men and women, actions and objects of vision in this story, but they don't control and direct the narrative by being implicated in "an utterly compelling but singular process." She describes a different kind of process, one in which these familiar categories just don't matter very much.

Articulacy of fingers, the language of the deaf and dumb, signing on the body body /sic/ longing. Who taught you to write in blood on my back? Who taught you to use your hands as branding irons? You have scored your name into my shoulders, referenced me with your mark. The pads of your fingers have become printing blocks, you tap a message on to my skin, tap meaning into my body. Your morse code interferes with my heart beat. I had a steady heart before I met you, I relied upon it, it had seen active service and grown strong. Now you alter its pace and rhythm, you play upon me, drumming me taut.

Written on the body is a secret code only visible in certain lights; the accumulations of a lifetime gather there. In places the palimpsest is so heavily worked that the letters feel like braille. I like to keep my body rolled up away from prying eyes. Never unfold too much, tell the whole story. I didn't know that Louise would have reading hands. She has translated me into her own book.

(Winterson 1993, 89)
Unlike *The Collector*, there is no obsessor and object of obsession; the obsession is scripted as mutually consuming and controlled by neither: "I still wanted her to be the leader of our expedition. Why did I find it hard to accept that we were equally sunk? Sunk in each other?" (Winterson 1993, 91) This mutuality is part of what confounds gender roles in this book. If men act and women appear, but you have two people conjointly engaged in something uncatégorizable in those terms, that familiar question of who is the man and who is the woman crops up yet again. And Winterson compels the reader's active questioning on this point by leaving the gender of the narrator formally unidentified. There are several clues that identify the narrator as a woman, but they are somewhat subtle and not critical to the story line as it is written. The narrator's sexuality is also left ambiguous; s/he has had multiple affairs with both men and women, and although the affairs with women get more serious attention, the relationships with men are not overtly trivialized. Many passages begin with the phrase, "I had a boyfriend once . . ." or "I had a girlfriend once . . ." Both gender and sexual orientation lose their salience when dominant narratives of sexuality are displaced.

Intertwined with Winterson's confounding of gender categories is her de-centering of vision. The sense of sight is not absent from this book: "I have mapped you with my naked eye and stored you out of sight." (Winterson 1993, 117). It is, however, made meager relative to other senses, as the narrator makes clear in her elucidation of the book's title, *Written on the Body*, and in the following quotation: "[Louise] would have us deprived of all senses bar the sense of touch and smell. In a blind, deaf and dumb world we could conclude our passion infinitely." (Winterson 1993, 162)
These comments only begin to explain how Winterson rescripts obsession. There is much more to say about her work, and I will be giving her more thorough attention, but for now I would like to talk about balloons. Imagine a balloon partly blown up, one of those long skinny types that balloon artists like to turn into wiener dogs. It's not floppy, it holds its shape and can stand up with the best of them, but it is partly empty, not fully realized, somewhat lacking in character. Now blow it up until it is on the brink. One more spurt of air and it will explode, but for now it is extravagantly itself; solid yet nearly lighter than air, conspicuous in its fullness and brilliance. It may be exaggerated beyond beauty, but it is completely captivating nonetheless.

But then the balloon goes through a change. It is not popped or made to disappear, but rather stretched, massaged and transformed. There seems to be something going on inside the balloon. It begins to look more round than cylindrical, but the stretching is done organically and whimsically rather than mechanically so the final product is left with odd shapes here and there rather than perfect roundness. Then the balloon shrinks to more normal proportions. It looks more attractive than when it was filled to bursting; the color is better, the size is right somehow, it just seems more comfortable. It doesn't have any particular shape beyond its general roundness, but it is pleasing nonetheless. It could be all sorts of things, even if you can't discern exactly what it finally and definitively is. And it moves from time to time. You just can't tell what it's going to look like next.

The metamorphosis of this balloon is my version of Berger and Shakespeare, Fowles, Winterson and (??), respectively. Berger's sexual normalcy or Shakespeare's archetypal romance can be stretched into
Fowles's obsession; which can be reshaped into Winterson's obsession; which, when the heat is turned down, perhaps can provide openings for new versions of normalcy. How or whether these new normalcies should be described or elaborated is an issue I will pursue further. For now, it is enough to know that Winterson unveils possibilities, at least in terms of sexuality. She does not and cannot do justice to the "problem of difference" in all its aspects, but she does provide openings in her chosen arena. I will be looking for more writers who can do likewise.

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Has it never happened, as you were reading a book, that you kept stopping as you read, not because you weren't interested, but because you were: because of a flow of ideas, stimuli, association? In a word, haven't you ever happened to read while looking up from your book? (Barthes 1986, 29)

Everything which follows this introduction is designed to incite the "looking up" referred to by Roland Barthes. Not a looking up in vexation or frustration, and most of all not a looking up deriving from boredom that this dissertation just keeps going on and on and on and you just have to look at something, anything other than this page after page after page. . . . Rather a looking up out of interest and out of a desire to reflect. In order to incite this reflection, I have produced a series of what Barthes refers to as propositions: "the word proposition must here be understood more grammatically than logically: these are speech-acts, not arguments, "hints," approaches which agree to remain metaphorical." (Barthes 1986, 57) But to what do these "hints" refer? What value or meaning is to be derived from such a text? What is the logic behind its formation? "[T]he logic governing the Text is
not comprehensive (trying to define what the work "means") but metonymic; the activity of associations, contiguities, cross-references coincides with a liberation of symbolic energy . . ." (Barthes 1986, 59) I have made multiple associations, cross-references, allusions to contiguity; all with the hope that the reader will find herself in the act of . . . looking up.

There are limits to this strategy, of course, some institutional, some of which are connected to problems of meaning. With respect to the former, in the context of the academy I am expected to make an argument, display a knowledge of the pertinent literature, etc. And if this work is to have any comprehensible content, that is, if it is to make any sense at all, it must maintain some level of coherence and clarity, and occasionally even explain itself. The work meets both of these requirements to a large extent. There are a series of arguments here that are authorized by the proper sources, and I do want them to be there. I have things I want to say! On the other hand, I also want to hold these arguments lightly, not take them too seriously, and to disrupt them at the very same moment that I make them. I do take seriously the insights of post-structuralism/genealogy/deconstruction, and therefore this project is an attempt to write in a manner consistent with these insights rather than simply about them.

In pursuing this aim, I have employed a variety of strategies. I have, in complete seriousness and with all due consideration, left loose ends, produced gaping holes, interrupted myself relentlessly, and written in a
manner as playful as I could muster. I have eschewed formal transitions in favor of

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in order to disrupt the flow of discussions which threatened to become seamless, monotone and "truthful" arguments. In addition, a series of different voices appear in different sections of this work, primarily in order to speak back to the texts I have engaged with in their own language. This was actually a surprising development not entirely intentional on my part, but rather it was something which took me over and impressed itself upon me as appropriate. William Shakespeare and John Fowles are the two writers who brought this to my attention most vividly. Although I do not write like either of these authors, their words are so powerful and so different from one another that they each seemed to demand a different response from me. Hence the different voices, and the lack of a single consistent, distant, observing and detached academic voice.

All in all, then, I haven't made much of an argument in the following hundred pages or so. Well, at least I hope I haven't.
CHAPTER 2
PRACTICING AVERSION

We experience pain only and entirely as we interpret it. It seizes us as if with an unseen hand, sometimes stopping us in mid-sentence or mid-motion, but we too capture and reshape it. Our individual and cultural struggles to refashion pain remove it from the realm of the unthinking distress we share with the rest of the animal kingdom. It is in struggling to understand our pain that we saturate it in human history. The pain we feel thus always belongs to a particular place and time and person. It may be trivial or negligible (if we choose to interpret it so) but it is never simply an impersonal code of neural impulses, like changeless, computer-generated messages sent over an internal telephone line. Human pain is never timeless, just as it is never merely an affair of bodies. (Morris 1991, 29)

In a postmodern age, not even something as apparently elemental, ubiquitous and jarringly real as pain is allowed to simply be. There may be neurological or biological facts at the base of pain, but according to David Morris we cannot know these facts outside the act of perception and, necessarily, interpretation. The human experience of pain, then, as with all other experiences of reality, is dependent on language as the producer of diverse and distinct realities. There is no simple fact of pain, but rather linguistically produced and infinitely various constructions of the human encounter with pain.

That is, until Morris ventures into the titillating terrain of the Marquis de Sade's sex. What is it about sex that prompts even the most orthodox post-structuralists to bring forth the true facts about human sexuality?
Morris's Achilles heel seems to be located at the point at which pain and sexual pleasure commingle:

What gives Sade both his power and his offensiveness is the obsessive exploration of a fact we prefer not to face. Sade forces us to acknowledge that the act of inflicting pain sometimes generates intense sexual excitement. [emphasis mine](Morris 1991, 238)

Suddenly, Morris has represented the pleasure of sadism as simply true, a regrettable part of human nature. How did this happen? How does a thinker as sophisticated as David Morris end up talking in such a backward way about sexuality? If asked, Morris is likely to assert that my reading of this passage is not what he meant, that the fact he refers to is of course contingent on the existence of particular cultural narratives about pain and sexuality which are not true in any absolute sense and that it is impossible for a writer to perpetually mark that contingency, etc., etc. . . .

On my interpretation, what David Morris (hypothetically) thinks he means is beside the point. No individual is able to control or completely define meaning. Meaning is social rather than personal, and not at the beck and call of the sovereign subject/speaker/author. As Trinh Minh-ha writes in *Woman Native Other*:

language is always older than me. Never original, "me" grows indefinitely on ready-mades, which are themselves explainable only through other ready-mades. Spontaneity-personality in such a context does not guarantee more authenticity than stereotypy. Writing as an inconsequential process of sameness/otherness is ceaselessly re-breaking and re-weaving patterns of ready-mades. The
written bears the written to infinity. (Trinh 1989, 36)

Morris, in spite of his rigorous post-structural theorizing, has blundered into an important cultural narrative or ready-made, which declares sexuality to be natural, true, and knowable. As if: "It's part of our frightening animal instincts; something to be repressed in order to preserve civilization as we know it!" Again, I'm sure Morris intends not to be connected with this particular narrative, but his invocation of the so-called regrettable fact of our libidinous attraction to pain ensnares him in a narrative that he may not be consciously invoking. When Morris begins to talk about a fact we'd rather not face, we know what he's talking about, whether he intends us to or not. He does not have to demonstrate the factuality of his claim, or explain to us why we'd rather not face it. It is an unquestioned and unexamined part of our Western cultural knowledge, perhaps especially because it has to do with sex.

As I discussed in Chapter 1, William Connolly falls into a similar trap in *Identity\Difference* when he links the concepts of aversion and sexual practices between men. To reiterate his comments on this subject:

> [heterosexual] orientation, when understood as a branded contingency . . . may now be open to new possibilities of reflection. You are now in a position . . . to resist the conviction that you cannot really accept "homosexuality" in others unless you *purge the aversion* to sex with men in yourself. [emphasis mine] (Connolly 1991, 177)

I have already argued why I consider the condoning of aversion toward homosexual practices to be unacceptable. What remains to be seen is whether Connolly and I can agree on the import of the term "aversion" and
whether it has any particular connection to cultural attitudes towards homosexuality. In correspondence with me, Connolly writes:

[Desire] focuses through its exclusions. . . . There is no contingent pattern of desire without some corollary pattern of aversions, but the possible variations in particular patterns are endless. To try to purge all disinclination in the name of ethical purity would be to foster a totalitarian morality. (Connolly 1993)

Is Connolly in a position to define what the term aversion means when used in conjunction with homosexuality? His answer presumes that this particular connection is unimportant, and that all desires have their correspondent aversions. This prompts several questions for me: Are all disinclinations created equal? Can a disinclination towards red hair or Marxists be credibly termed an aversion? Why does Connolly's example link aversion and homosexuality so easily? And why is the possibility of aversion towards heterosexuality so unlikely? Would that even be intelligible?

What Connolly denies is the existence of one of Trinh Minh-ha's ready-mades. There exists a very strong cultural narrative that depicts homosexual practices, perhaps particularly those between men, as nauseating and unspeakable. Whether intentionally or not, Connolly has evoked this set of meanings; as in the case of David Morris, he has used language in which there is no need to explain whether people feel this aversion, or why they might. We all "know," gay and straight alike, that "normal" people experience disgust at the thought of sexual contact with a member of the same sex. It's a given, it's natural! In Althusser's terms, this "natural" disgust could be considered part of ideology. "[Ideology] is
apparent in all that is 'obvious' to us, in obviousnesses which we cannot fail to recognise and before which we have the inevitable and natural reaction of crying out . . . :'That's obvious! That's right! That's true!'" (Althusser 1971, 161) Althusser is more interested in "modes of production" than in sexual politics, but perhaps his language can be considered useful in terms of theorizing sexual ideology which promotes existing modes of reproduction, or patriarchy more broadly conceived.

The ideological status of heterosexual aversion is made even more clear when one considers the inherent disharmony of the notion of homosexual aversion. In other words, how much explanation would it require to both explain and overcome disbelief about how a homosexual person might be repulsed by the idea of sex with a member of the opposite sex? Is that aversion intelligible, and, if not, does it actually exist? Are all aversions really created equal?

My contention is that they are not, and that Connolly's example is readily understandable because it rests snugly within a particular historical context and set of meanings that define heterosexuality as normal, natural, desirable and superior. By naming all desires as focused by their exclusions/aversions, Connolly has disappeared the politics of sexuality. Straight people are entitled to aversion towards homosexuals because within dominant cultural narratives they are superior to us. It is not a two-way street; aversion does not flow back to heterosexuals in the same way it is rained down upon us. There is not only political privilege attached to the aversion felt toward same-sex sexuality by heterosexuals, but also a very particular history and set of meanings that link homosexuality/repulsion, but do not link heterosexuality/repulsion.

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My purpose in this chapter will be to unhinge the apparently natural connection between homosexual practices and heterosexual aversion. I will argue that this link is discursive rather than natural, specific to particular historical period(s), and that it serves purposes that are political and normative rather than merely neutral or descriptive. In other words, I am proposing to draft a genealogy of aversion towards homosexuality which will situate it as a political and discursive practice rather than a biological or "natural" human sexual response. In pursuing this aim, my strategy will primarily be negative or disruptive rather than explanatory. More specifically, this chapter can be seen as taking apart, piece by piece, the following statement: Aversion to homosexuality is the natural,1 eternal and completely negative response of normal people to a sexual aberration. The historical sections dealing with classical Greece and Renaissance Venice are aimed at the word "eternal," the discussions of race and colonization at the term "natural," and the investigation of "freaks" at the notion of pure negativity. My interest is not in what Greeks and "freaks" do mean, but rather in what they do not mean. Hence the shortage of explanation. The point at which explanation becomes more necessary arrives after the deconstructive work is done. If aversion is not eternal, then why now? And if it is political rather than natural, what is the nature of the political regime which produces this aversion, and whom does it serve? My discussion of the origins of aversion in medical discourse begins to provide some explanation in response to these and other questions.

Severing the link connecting the couplet homosexuality/aversion serves a very specific purpose; if aversion has been produced through

1In a more "enlightened" age, or in a formulation closer to what I attribute to Bill Connolly, this could read something like, "the individual response of most people."
politicized discursive practices, the possibility of rescripting the meanings of both homosexuality and aversion becomes conceivable through the alteration of these practices. In other words, the disruption I seek to enact opens the door to political change.

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on the whole, as regards desires and pleasures, ethical conduct was conceived as a matter of domination. (Foucault 1985, 78)

In order to understand how the use of the *aphrodisia* was problematized in reflection on the love of boys, we have to recall a principle. . . . I am referring to the principle of isomorphism between sexual relations and social relations. What this means is that sexual relations—always conceived in terms of the model act of penetration, assuming a polarity that opposed activity and passivity—were seen as being of the same type as the relationship between a superior and a subordinate, an individual who dominates and one who is dominated, one who commands and one who complies, one who vanquishes and one who is vanquished. (Foucault 1985, 215)

The Classical Greeks are widely believed to have been surprisingly tolerant of homosexuality, and in fact, pederasty between men and young boys of the upper class was a widely practiced and highly valorized custom. In Plato's *Symposium*, love between men and boys is described as one step on the path towards an appreciation of essential Truth and Beauty. It is not the means or expression of the highest form of truth; nonetheless, man-boy
love occupied an extremely privileged position both for Plato and other classical Greek thinkers.²

Many of the males involved in this practice also engaged in sexual relationships or marriage with women. How can this high rate of either homosexuality or bisexuality be explained? If there is such a thing as a "gay" or "bisexual" gene that predisposes certain individuals to same sex attractions, how can the Greek gene pool have gotten so skewed? Or, if heterosexual aversion to homosexual practices is configured as natural, how were such a large number of the fine citizens of the polis hoodwinked into thinking this practice was somehow respectable and dignified? In *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault argues that these questions are wrongly posed:

> Were the Greeks bisexual, then? Yes, if we mean by this that a Greek could, simultaneously or in turn, be enamored of a boy or a girl. . . . But if we wish to turn our attention to the way in which they conceived of this dual practice, we need to take note of the fact that they did not recognize two kinds of "desire," two different or competing "drives," each claiming a share of men's hearts or appetites. . . . To their way of thinking, what made it possible to desire a man or a woman was simply the appetite that nature had implanted in man's heart for "beautiful" human beings, whatever their sex might be. (Foucault 1985, 188)

Gender in this cosmology of desire is not the cardinal element in differentiating between desirable or undesirable sexual object choices.

Indeed, even object choice itself was not the primary focus of attention in

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²As indeed it does for Foucault himself. His treatment of this subject matter reveals considerable nostalgia for the good old days when pederasty was *de rigueur* for upper class males. It is not a nostalgia I share. As the subsequent discussion will show, man-boy love in Classical Greece reinforced rather than subverted hierarchy, and is thus antithetical to the goals of my own work. My use of Foucault's elaboration of the "use of pleasure" is intended not to valorize the Greek model, but rather to present it as simply different than the sexual regimes of the modern West. Its "difference" is useful to me as one of several strategies I employ to disrupt a naturalized conception of aversion toward homosexual practices.
determining ethical sexual behavior. According to Foucault, the *how* of eros was more important in Greek male sexual ethics than the *who or what*, and he characterizes the Greek system of sexual morality as revolving around "practices of the self," and "aesthetics of existence," rather than in terms of the codification of appropriate or proscribed sexual objects or acts (Foucault 1985, 12-13). The consequences of these ideas are enormous: the virtuous man *used* pleasure in styling himself as a moral and powerful man, rather than seeking to extirpate forbidden desires in order to achieve purity.

What, then, were the criteria used to determine what was fitting behavior for the morally proper Greek male? Foucault points to two concepts, moderation and activity, as the guiding principles of worthy sexual behavior. Moderation was important because it reflected a man's ability to master his baser, animal nature with his ability to reason, and was a measure of his ability to *control* rather than to *suppress* his desires. This in turn comprised evidence of a man's ability to control and rule others in the *polis*.

since one was expected to govern oneself in the same manner as one governed one's household and played one's role in the city, it followed that the development of personal virtues . . . was not essentially different from the development that enabled one to rise above other citizens to a position of leadership. (Foucault 1985, 75)

The imperative for males to be active and penetrating, rather than passive and receptive, in sexual encounters is similar to the directive to moderation in that it reinforces the notion that men must act in a way befitting their status as males, free citizens, and leaders. There was a danger here: men might abandon their "natural" role as actors and take on the subservient and feminized role of the sexual object.
in the practice of sexual pleasures two roles and
two poles can be clearly distinguished . . . that of
the subject and that of the object, that of the agent
and that of the "patient"--as Aristotle says, "The
female, as female, is passive, and the male, as
male, is active." (Foucault 1985, 46)

For the Greeks, then, it is passivity that threatened masculinity, rather than
the gender of sexual partners, and presumably one could be passive with
either males or females.

These two areas of problematization, moderation and activity, point to
a unifying principle which suggests what might constitute a pattern of
aversion for the dominant males of Classical Greek society. Both are
connected to notions of mastery, control, activity, and perhaps most
centrally, domination. Here, it is hierarchy rather than heterosexuality that is
naturalized, and it is the sexual relations that threaten to disrupt this "natural"
social order that prompt disdain. And perhaps aversion itself. Foucault
mentions a "definite aversion to anything that might denote a deliberate
renunciation of the signs and privileges of the masculine role." (Foucault
1985, 19) Can this be conceptualized more broadly to include the signs and
privileges of the leadership role of free, adult men? Can we consider the
idea that what was most repulsive in this context was the downward
transgression of social boundaries, or the voluntary renunciation of privilege,
rather than an inappropriate object choice?

There are of course some complicating factors to consider in
proposing this interpretative framework of aversion for the Greeks. For
instance, if male-male sexual relations are acceptable as long as one takes
the active role, what is to become of the social status of the receptive
partner? It is this delicate matter which prompted a prodigious amount of
theorizing by philosophers and moralists of the period, and they arrived at a number of ways of ameliorating the unfortunate objectification of future leaders. For instance, both Lover and Beloved were strongly encouraged to terminate sexual relationships when the boy achieved full maturity, and they were to transform an erotic relationship into philia, or adult brotherly love. What was morally precarious in relation to a boy or adolescent male became clearly unacceptable when dealing with a fully adult male who should be taking on all the rights and responsibilities of maturity, i.e., leadership and domination, rather than continuing to accept a position of subordination.

Further, it was variously proposed that boys either could not or should not experience pleasure in their sexual encounters with men. Neither should they submit to the Lover's overtures too readily or eagerly. They were to think of their participation as a sign of affection to the Lover, and as a reluctantly offered gift, rather than as a willing or pleasurable objectification of themselves. This dictum reinforces the notion that for the Greeks the problematic terrain lay not in the gender of one's partner but in the assertion or refusal of the role of activity and mastery over oneself and others.

Nevertheless, there are potential problems in proposing the Greek staging of sexuality as the antithesis to contemporary Western conceptions of sexuality. First, to do so would be to grant inordinate truth value to Foucault's work. In light of his lucid and meticulously detailed deconstruction of positivism, to read his notion of "the uses of pleasure" as "true" would be to temporarily and "erroneously" suspend the revolutionary impulse of his work in its entirety. As Hayden White explains, however, to make such a misreading is easy, or perhaps even likely. Foucault's work itself seems to invite this response in important respects.
If . . . Foucault's discourses begin in paradox and end in negative apocalypse, their middles are heavy with what Foucault calls "positivity," wide (if seemingly capricious) erudition, solemn disclosures of the "way things really were," aggressive redrawings of the map of cultural history, confident restructurings of the chronicle of "knowledge." (White 1987, 107)

Nonetheless, readers of his work can resist the invitation to accept the "way things really were," and retain a healthy degree of skepticism.

Secondly, it is important to keep in mind that the sexual practices of the Greeks and the modern West are not opposites. As a gay man of the contemporary West, it is better to be associated with masculinity rather than femininity, activity as opposed to passivity. And part of the threat of gay men is that they appear to willfully renounce some of the privilege and social status of the heterosexual male. Nonetheless, the emphases of the two sexual schemas are quite different. On the surface modern Western culture is democratic and egalitarian, and although hierarchy is *de facto* alive and well, it has entered the status of contested terrain. It can no longer so easily be assumed and naturalized in the way of the Greeks. On the other hand, the naturalized status of heterosexuality as a real and definable thing, not to mention as *normal*, has not faced serious challenge in the modern West. Voices of resistance in the form of gay liberation, lesbian feminism, and gay rights activism have been around for nearly twenty-five years, but any increased tolerance of homosexuals has not denaturalized the status of heterosexuality. We still think heterosexuality is "the real thing," and that homosexuality is yucky to everyone except for people who are *that way*. Tolerance within this context takes the position that "what they
[homosexuals] do is really their own business." For the contemporary West, aversion/homosexuality resonates deeply; for the Greeks, aversion/excess/passivity was a much more familiar tune.

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A paranoia that seems at times to have shared certain affinities with the witch scares that were to sweep Europe shortly appears to have gripped Venetian authorities in the mid decades of the fifteenth century. Outsiders sexually, from the perspective of the threatened dominant culture, both witches and homosexuals engendered a fear based, on the one hand, on man's powerlessness to stand up to their seemingly growing powers and, on the other hand, on God's threatened wrath against societies that tolerated such ungodly ways. (Ruggiero 1985, 140)

The fate of Sodom and Gomorrah loomed large in the collective imagination of Renaissance Venice. The recurrent catastrophe of bubonic plague gave ample evidence of God's ire; why tempt Him further with the very sins that brought on the blight of those famous cities? Rather than using the erotic pleasures as a means to form and mold themselves after philosophical models of virtue, the Venetians were fearful of specific expressions of carnal desire that might literally bring on punishment from the Almighty, and sodomy in particular elicited the most apprehension:

We need only turn briefly to the penalties imposed for the crime to see that the nobility was much more disturbed by sodomy than by any other act that crossed the boundaries of accepted sexuality. Death, usually by burning, was the normal penalty—a far cry from the two-year jail sentence plus fine required for fornication with nuns or the even milder penalties for other sex crimes. (Ruggiero 1985, 110)
The act of sodomy was not proscribed because it reflected a diminution of the virtuous self; it was forbidden for the sake of the city. And whereas the point of reference for the Greeks was the aesthetics of the self, and whereas modern consumer culture entreats us to indulge our desire, the Venetians focused on a code completely external to the self. Neither desire nor aversion were the object of scrutiny here, but rather sin as the literal transgression of God's will.

This focus on sin rather than self is also hinted at by the patterns of punishment engaged in by Venetian authorities. Homosexual acts between men in Venice during this period tended to follow the pattern of the Greeks, that is, the coupling of older men with young boys, with the older partner taking the active role. What is surprising in this case is that it was the active partner who was punished rather than the boy.

Contrary to the vision of most other Western cultures in which the passive partner in homosexual relations was considered more objectionable, in Venice the active partner was seen as more culpable. The traditional vision tended to reflect the sexual stereotypes of society: Passivity was the "normal" sexual role of the female; thus a male's taking the passive role made his sexuality "abnormal." Following the same logic, a man who expressed his sexuality actively, even though it was with another man, was acting essentially as the male partner. (Ruggiero 1985, 121)

The Venetians' indifference to this traditional model can be read to mean that they were not interested in the implications that certain sexual behaviors might have regarding an individual's normalcy or merit. They were interested in culpability and the active commission of God-provoking
crime, not in what acts of sodomy might tell them about the worth or peculiar sexual appetites of the people involved. They were not interested in getting "inside" the feelings and desires either of themselves or the Sodomites involved, but rather in literally burning the criminal element out of their community. The modern notion of aversion doesn't seem to fit here any better than it does in Classical Greece, unless fear and aversion are conflated in a simple way. There may be an element of fear in aversion, but a more complete rendering of this concept reveals a much more complicated picture.

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Renaissance Venetians feared the taint of sodomy within their own communities. As a trait or practice of an alien Other, however, sodomy presents a different set of possibilities; possibilities that are not so much frightening as exquisitely useful. The Spanish conquistadors who invaded the Americas in the 16th century found the sexual practices of Native Americans, and in particular the high visibility and wide acceptance of berdaches, an irresistible instrument of colonization. As did the Victorian Americans who followed them a few centuries later:

Under the Americans, the colonial discourse on native sexuality took a new form. . . . In this view, cultural differences were explained in terms of social evolution. Indians occupied a low position on the scale of development, while Anglo-Americans represented its pinnacle. Advancement meant that Indians had to abandon tribal customs and look and act like white Americans--and so the

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3 Male and female berdaches . . . have been documented in over 130 North American tribes, in every region of the continent, among every type of native culture, from the small bands of hunters in Alaska to the populous, hierarchical city-states of Florida. . . . In traditional native societies berdaches were not anomalous. They were integral, productive, and valued members of their communities." (Roscoe 1991, 5)
government implemented the policies of assimilation.  

...The Spaniards had used the allegation of immorality to justify what their morals otherwise prohibited—mercenary conquest. (Roscoe 1991, 176)

Brutal as it might be, colonization always requires justification. Even a genocidal policy of murder, land-grabbing and monumental destruction requires a moral basis, a set of reasoning which allows the conqueror to feel not only victorious but also superior. And for the colonial Spaniards, their condemnation of the practice of sodomy by native peoples played a crucial role in justifying imperial conquest. Arguing before judges of the King of Spain in 1550, the scholar Sepúlveda "argued that war against the American Indians was justified because of their patent irrationality, and as chief evidence he cited their practice of sodomy." (Roscoe 1991, 171)

For Victorian-era white Americans, land-grabbing took on a different character, one which merely sought to help those poor primitive natives come up to "our" level. Assimilation was the name of the game here, and one of the primary means used to achieve this goal was the Christianization of native sexual morality. This involved not only the suppression of sodomy, but also a restructuring of entire systems of kinship. The property-owning, industrious and patriarchal nuclear family was held up as the model for American Indians to follow, a model that severely weakened traditional community ties:

Most North American societies were organized around kinship (as opposed to economic) relations, which were structured by a set of rules regarding gender roles and sexual behavior. By interfering with native sexuality, the agents of assimilation
effectively undermined the social fabric of entire tribes. (Roscoe 1991, 177)

A weakened community is a malleable and vulnerable community. How convenient for those nice white folks who just want to make good use of the land!

Two related points can be drawn from this discussion. First, the visible and accepted presence of berdaches within many Native American societies indicates that modern Western conceptions of aversion toward homosexual practices are far from universal. In addition, contests over sexual morality can be seen to mask contests over something quite different than "sex-in-itself." For instance, the fate of entire continents. Aversion as a "natural" response to "unnatural" practices is not the primary issue here; at stake in the morally righteous colonial quest is vast territory and the domination and exploitation of the "inferior races."

* * * * *

Is aversion an unequivocal and resounding "NO!"? Is it the structurally necessary opposite of desire, as William Connolly suggests? Does it represent unambiguous flight from a perceived threat?

Consider the case of so-called "freaks," for instance Jo-Jo the Dog-faced Boy, Chang and Eng the Siamese twins, hermaphrodites, dwarfs and giants, the Elephant Man, or Sandow the Strong Man. Are "normals" simply repulsed by these anomalies of humanity, or do we/they have a more complicated relationship to the "unnatural"? A clue is provided in even the most rudimentary definition of the term freak: "An abnormally formed organism, especially a person or animal regarded as a curiosity or

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monstrosity." A suitable response to monstrosities is easy enough to imagine; they provoke horror and disgust. Yet the inclusion of the term "curiosity" in the definition of freak complicates the situation. A curiosity is an oddity, singularity, and a peculiarity, but it is also a rarity and marvel and implies nosiness and interest. In *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self*, Leslie Fiedler goes even further by describing the allure of the freak as erotic:

> All Freaks are perceived to one degree or another as erotic. Indeed, abnormality arouses in some "normal" beholders a temptation to go beyond looking to *knowing* in the full carnal sense the ultimate other. That desire is itself felt as freaky, however, since *it implies not only a longing for degradation but a dream of breeching the last taboo against miscegenation*. [emphasis mine]

(Fiedler 1978, 137)

Two important ideas can be culled from this passage. First, the reference to degradation makes explicit what the term "freak" implies: that freaks are not only different from "normals," but inferior. In addition, the term miscegenation conveys the sense of boundary-crossing which Fiedler refers to repeatedly and considers intimately linked to ordinary people's fascination with freaks:

> the true Freak challenges the conventional boundaries between male and female, sexed and sexless, animal and human, large and small, self and other, and consequently between reality and illusion, experience and fantasy, fact and myth.

(Fiedler 1978, 24)

He goes on to explain how our obsessive gaze upon Freaks is a response "to our basic insecurities, the sort of primordial fears . . . about scale, sexuality, our status as more than beasts, and our tenuous individuality." (Fiedler 1978, 44)
34) With these thoughts, Fiedler enters into psychological terrain I prefer to bypass and leans toward naturalizing categories I seek to disrupt. Nonetheless, he is useful in one very specific aspect: he shows that the aversion "normals" can be said to feel toward Freaks cannot be interpreted as a formal and absolute negative. As the existence and historical popularity of freak shows demonstrates, the relationship between Freaks and "normals" is much more complex and includes an elaborate interweaving of eroticism, fascination, attraction, disgust and repulsion.

But what of queers? Do we garner the same kind of prurient attention received by members of the traditional freak show? According to Fiedler, as of 1978 we still qualify through our association with hermaphrodites and their blurring of gender roles:

certainly no one in our time can ever disentangle his reaction to Hermaphroditus from his responses to homosexuals, transvestites, and especially transsexuals: humans of one sex driven, for reasons no one quite understands, to assume the roles attributed by their culture to the other... much of the horror felt in the presence of physiological intersexes has been transferred to them. (Fiedler 1978, 186)

Evidence of the persistence of this association of homosexuality with hermaphroditism and freakishness is as accessible as any grocery store newsstand. Tabloids of the 1990s still regularly feature "The Secret Homosexual Life of Famous Star X" right next to stories of sixty-year-old pregnant women and sightings of Elvis Presley. Homosexuality as spectacle persists with a vengeance. And a heterosexual world with aversion to homosexuality can never "just say no."
William Connolly is interested in denying a particular connection between homosexuality and aversion in favor of a model in which, "[t]here is no contingent pattern of desire without some corollary pattern of aversions, but the possible variations in particular patterns are endless." (Connolly 1993) As many patterns as there are people, perhaps? Something smacks of individualism here, and of the infinite variety of personal preferences. But are there so many possibilities? Homosexual practice is one particularly prominent site upon which aversion is endlessly scripted; are there other practices or identities which also draw inordinate negative attention and help to show the political rather than merely personal dimensions of aversion?

What happens to the notion of *endless* patterns of desire and their corollary patterns of aversion when it is held up to very specific yet *collective* histories of desire? For instance, to certain sexual beliefs of white Southerners during the lynching era? As Ida B. Wells explains, "The Southern white man says that it is impossible for a voluntary alliance to exist between a white woman and a colored man, and therefore, the fact of an alliance is a proof of force." (Wells 1892) This image not only ascribes aversion toward blacks to the white woman but attributes an inherent proclivity for rape to the black male. And in a different context, namely that of turn-of-the-century Europe, George Mosse identifies the attribution of sexual abnormality to the "inferior races" as part and parcel of European racism during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries:

the stereotyped depiction of sexual "degenerates" was transferred almost intact to the "inferior races." . . . These races . . . were said to display a
lack of morality and a general absence of self-discipline. Blacks, and then Jews, were endowed with excessive sexuality, with a so-called female sensuousness that transformed love into lust. They lacked all manliness. Jews as a group were said to exhibit female traits, just as homosexuals were generally considered effeminate. (Mosse 1985, 36)

Mosse is not the only writer to have found a connection between race, sexual normality and desirability. Indeed, in *The Jew's Body* Sander Gilman goes so far as to suggest that in nineteenth-century Europe, both Jews and blacks were simply considered to be part of "ugly" races. And not only were they ugly, the specific physical features which earned them this assignation were read as signs of sexual pathology: "the blackness of the African, like the blackness of the Jew, was believed to mark a pathological change in the skin, the result of congenital syphilis." (Gilman 1991, 173) Syphilis was also given responsibility for the Jewish nose, another sign of pathology, in this case not only of the circumcised Jewish penis, but also of the Jew's shrewdness in business matters, and his inability to speak properly. (Gilman 1991, 179-80) There is a certain circularity here of course. The notion that the syphilis causes the nose which represents the penis doesn't make much sense, but no matter! "They" are just diseased race and there's nothing for it.

Can aversion be considered an individual or discrete response to something one finds "distasteful" or "unappealing" when sexual abnormality and the concomitant repugnance it spawns are imputed to entire races? Is this a matter of personal feelings and taste, or power and politics? D'Emilio and Freedman, in their discussion of colonial American mores in *Intimate Matters*, lend support to the latter interpretation:

That white men of the planter class could have casual sexual relations with slave women, but
reserved the most brutal corporal punishment for black men who slept with white women, clearly illustrates the ways that sexual rules reinforced a system of racial dominance. That enormous scorn was heaped upon a white woman who had sex with a black man—even if they were married—while black women were expected to service the sexual needs of white men, reveals the combined forces of gender and racial hierarchy. (D'Emilio 1988, 37)

As with the classical Greeks, aversion is connected to the violation of an established hierarchy, in this case racial and gender caste systems that put white Americans in power over blacks, and European Aryans over Jews, and men over women. Any violation of those precepts is not an affront to personal sensibilities and tastes, but rather to established social orders.

My interest here is not in "purging disinclination," as Connolly seems to fear, but rather to attempt to discern the highly politicized nature of what appears to be our most personal feelings. Interrogations into the political nature of the meaning(s) of aversion do not constitute censorship; they are an investigation of politics, and in this case, an investigation of long-standing relationships of domination.

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A visceral recoil from homosexuality is the natural reaction of a healthy society wishing to preserve itself. (Pat Buchanan, New York Post, 27 March 1991)

The Greeks agonized over objectifying their boys, Renaissance Venetians trembled before a wrathful God, and we . . . , well we modern Westerners just want to be healthy and normal. "You are the proud parents of a normal, healthy baby." Healthy and normal; they just seem to go together like ham and eggs. As well they might. The conjunction between
health and normalcy is no coincidence, as a brief revisiting of Foucault makes apparent. Much attention has been paid to his claim that the homosexual predates the heterosexual, and is a creation of the late nineteenth century. What interests me more is his delineation of medicine and its kindred scientific disciplines as the fecund parents of these and numerous other sexual creatures.

As defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts; their perpetrator was nothing more than the juridical subject of them. The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. (Foucault 1980, 43)

The perpetrator of sexual misconduct was no longer an actor subject to legal or religious judgment, or even philosophical reflection, but rather s/he became an object of scientific scrutiny defined and thus created by doctors. The necessary link between health and normalcy arises out of the organization and history of the medical profession. As Foucault describes it, medicine, along with modern penal, educational, military and industrial organizations, is part and parcel of the creation of disciplinary society.

Prison continues, on those who are entrusted to it, a work begun elsewhere, which the whole of society pursues on each individual through innumerable mechanisms of discipline. By means of a carceral continuum, the authority that sentences infiltrates all those other authorities that supervise, transform, correct, improve. It might even be said that nothing really distinguishes them any more except the singularly 'dangerous' character of the delinquents, the gravity of their
departures from normal behaviour and the necessary solemnity of the ritual. But, in its function, the power to punish is not essentially different from that of curing or educating. [emphasis mine](Foucault 1977, 303)

The perpetual penality that traverses all points and supervises every instant in the disciplinary institutions compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it normalizes. (Foucault 1977, 183)

Given this profound connection between medicine, discipline, and normalcy, how could "healthy" mean anything other than normal? And since by definition homosexuality deviates from the norm, how can it be anything but unhealthy? There is a long and substantial history of this association: George Mosse makes reference to a German physician, Johann Valentin Mueller, who writes a characterization of homosexuals that in 1796 was to set the standard in medical texts.

External appearance, it was assumed, always betrayed the private practice of vice; telltale traits included reddened eyes, feebleness, fits of depression, and negligence about personal appearance—the subject's head tended to hang down listlessly." (Mosse 1985, 29)

Some fifty years later, Ambroise Tardieu "stressed a feminine appearance and diseased body as outward signs in a male homosexual . . ." (Mosse 1985, 29) And in Nazi Germany, homosexuality took on the status of an infectious disease which would imperil any person coming into contact with it in any way. (Mosse 1985, 166)

Times have changed somewhat. Homosexuality was removed from the official list of mental disorders by the American Psychological
Association in 1973 and is now theoretically viewed by "educated people" as simply one pattern or set of choices within a wide range of human sexual expression. And as Cindy Patton explains in *Inventing AIDS*:

That gay men were seen as "healthy" despite having a variety of treatable sexually transmitted diseases attested to the acceptance and positive valuation of gay men and their sexuality in the urban settings where these early [AIDS] cases were under study. Had these cases appeared fifty years ago, and had the homosexuality of the patients been recognized, doctors would probably have viewed homosexuals *per se* as constitutionally weaker and explained their immune system breakdown on this fact alone. (Patton 1990, 28)

Yet in spite of this apparent shift, there are ample grounds for considering Patton's formulation overly optimistic. The response to and interpretations of the AIDS epidemic in the United States suggest that the encroachment of disease into the gay male community does not represent a departure from a narrative of progressive liberation and improved quality of life, but rather the predestined conclusion to a narrative of doom. And this outcome is not only the result of blatant expressions of homophobia which proclaim glee at the prospect of the mass death of homosexuals. What is more telling are the interpretations issuing from apparently more sympathetic quarters. It has been easy to assimilate AIDS as "the gay disease," in spite of demographics which increasingly challenge this appellation, because "we" as a culture have never really gotten over the association of homosexuality with disease, in particular, *fatal* disease. As Jeff Nunokawa explains in "'All the Sad Young Men': AIDS and the Age of Mourning":

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AIDS is a gay disease, and it means death, because AIDS has been made the most recent chapter in our culture's history of the gay male, a history which, from its beginning, has read like a book of funerals. (Nunokawa 1991, 2)

Nunokawa goes on to explain how doom was written in as an integral aspect of homosexual identity from its inception in late nineteenth-century Europe. In Victorian England, for instance, Oscar Wilde's characterization of homosexual love in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was tinged not only with "metonymic markers of the love that dares not speak its name,"(Nunokawa 1991, 3) but also with abundant signs of lethal doom. And while Nunokawa is careful to note that Wilde did not bear sole responsibility for the creation of the literary image of the homosexual, nonetheless, the images he created were extremely influential and resonated well with other constructions of this newly-constructed identity. And the doom is simply there, right from the start.

As it is for Gaetan Dugas, the famous French Canadian Airline steward who is "Patient Zero" in Randy Shilts's rendering of the AIDS crisis in *And the Band Played On*. A scar from a kaposi's sarcoma lesion makes its appearance simultaneously with the figure of its bearer, Dugas, in Shilts's narrative. The narrative of the gay male continues to be synchronous with the narrative of impending and unavoidable death. Yet again, as in the case of Oscar Wilde, this is a characterization produced by a homosexual writer. It is not a representation of the most blatant homophobia, although Nunokawa does somewhat snidely remark: "[Randy Shilts's] book reminds us just how articulate, not to mention prolix, internalized homophobia can be." (Nunokawa 1991, 5) What is important, however, is that even people located on the continuum between "pro-gay" and "tolerant," *heterosexual*
and homosexual alike, are still captivated by a narrative in which homosexuality=disease=death. The medical narrative of homosexuality as illness is itself strong and healthy.

The conceptualization of lesbianism as disease is configured somewhat differently, in part because we have not garnered the high-profile either granted to or imposed upon gay men. We remain largely invisible in mainstream culture, with the exception of the recent appearance of and flurry of activity around the notion of "lesbian chic." But perhaps we remain invisible as "diseased" lesbians because we have already earned that label solely by virtue of being women. Jeff Nunokawa refers to gay men as "marked" men; perhaps lesbians have no need of further marking by virtue of our "already-marked" status as inherently unhealthy women.

Both the Victorian and the modern medical systems reclassify aspects of healthy femaleness into grotesque abnormality. Victorian medicine "treated pregnancy and menopause as diseases, menstruation as a chronic disorder, childbirth as a surgical event." A menstruating woman was treated with purgatives, forced medicines, hip baths, and leeches. The regulation of menstruation was pursued obsessively, just as the regulation of women's fat is today. (Wolf 1992, 222)

Naomi Wolf begins to explore the mark of womanhood; it doesn't take much thought to come up with more evidence of this association in the contemporary West. Women still get "the curse," all the while suffering from the newly "discovered" disease of PMS; are still treated as ill patients when pregnant; are still advised to purchase "feminine hygiene" products in order to avoid offending their men. The women's health movement of the 1970s sought to address these and other issues and did make some progress
toward de-pathologizing the female body, but it's fair to say it did not succeed in revolutionizing mainstream medical practice. Women as sexed beings are still by definition unhealthy; why bother to go into superfluous details about the unhealthiness of lesbians?

The conclusion I draw from this is that in order to interrupt the association between homosexuality and aversion, homosexuality, and indeed our conceptions of women's bodies, needs to be unlinked from medical discourse which has stigmatized gay men and all women. As long as homosexuals represent a pathological deviance from a cultural norm of health, we will prompt the disgust associated with disease. As I have discussed previously, part of this task involves disrupting the norm itself and the disciplinary grid that inscribes the binary dualism hetero/homo. But also important is rescripting same-sex affectional bonds and sexual practice in terms other than those of medicine and science.

But is medical discourse really the only problem? Rummaging through the debris of aversion is one way to reflect on that faintly odious smell which clings to queer bodies and pleasures. But do we only reek of unpleasantness? What other meanings are attached to us which reiterate our status as always Other, never Self? We may be approaching the status of Others who deserve equal rights under law or legal protection against discrimination; we may even receive genuine respect in certain rarefied environments. Still, something about us is a tad off, just too fuzzy to sense or be completely real.

There must be a story in this somewhere to explain . . . or is there?
JUNCTURE
(Ch. 2 1/2)

The political force of romance is to dislocate politics from the hegemony of the real, which is always the hegemony of the status quo, even when the utopian imagination of alternative reality functions negatively. If postmodernity is neither historical nor ahistorical, romance is neither realistic nor fantastic. Each evokes a practice of reading analogous to that of feminism at its strongest: a practice that refuses to be pinned down, that persistently opens up a space of transformation within the materiality of culture. (Elam 1992, 23-4)

In my discussion of aversion, I evoked narratives which appeared to be "real," most importantly the political theory of William Connolly, and scientific medical discourse. These two forms of discourse are not identical in their relationship to truth; medicine's alliance to natural science and the alleged facts of the empirical world seem to ground it more firmly in reality than the less tangible terrain of theoretical social science. And adjoining this common sense notion of the real and the esoteric, Connolly himself has the means to subvert the truth value of his work. As a theorist informed by poststructuralism, he knows that he does not speak or write the truth in any absolute sense, and his writing reflects this understanding in a myriad of ways. Nonetheless, it's fair to say that William Connolly considers himself a political theorist, or stated differently, a competent and reasonable practitioner of the discourse of political theory. In a passage which cites
Foucault's *L'Ordre du discours*, Hayden White begins to explain what the situation of Professor Connolly might mean:

discourse unfolds "in every society" within the context of "external restraints" that appear as "rules of exclusion," rules that determine what can be said and not said, who has the right to speak on a given subject, what will constitute reasonable and what "foolish" actions, what will count as "true" and what as "false." (White 1987, 112)

Connolly follows these rules in most respects, and for a reader that is very reassuring. He seems so reasonable, and it's clear he has thought long and hard about what he is writing. He is careful, he works assiduously at framing a strong and logically consistent argument, and one can tell that he has an abiding interest in getting it "right." Thus, if the title of Hayden White's book, *The Content of the Form*, means anything, then Connolly's form suggests "Truth!", even as his lips utter "Doubt! Uncertainty! Contingency!" My point here is not, as some have suggested relative to my previous work, to lob yet more rotten tomatoes at Connolly. As a theorist myself I am also, however reluctantly, implicated in the same mess. In the most general sense, avoiding the textual strategies Connolly employs within the context of academia is virtually impossible. What (and why) would academics be, after all, without some claim to knowledge or truth, and the standards by which to measure our adherence to these norms?

My point, however, is a different one. My intention is to form a link between what precedes and what will follow this juncture. It is not a link between truth and falsehood, the realistic and the fantastic, the theoretical and the fictional. It is a link between different sorts of narratives, all of which are based upon the "rules of exclusion" and "external restraints"
particular to their discipline. A theoretical discourse must expound theoretically, a scientific discourse scientifically, and the fictional forms which follow this juncture, i.e. novels and drama, must tell a plausible story.5

Thus far my work has focused on theoretical and medical discourses which produce "the homosexual" and other "different" and pathological creatures. In the following chapters, I will shift my gaze to fictional discourse, in particular William Shakespeare, John Fowles and Jeanette Winterson and consider what these narratives produce. In the interests of framing my own argument, I have treated theoretical and scientific discourse as less "true" than it pretends to be. Obversely, I will grant more importance to fictional narratives than is generally accorded to "stories." In so doing, I hope to dislocate my own text from the "hegemony of the real," in Elam's words, and relegate all the narratives I encounter to the status of "stories."

My shift to fictional discourse at this point can be explained in two ways. The first has to do with the ostensible content available in certain types of fictional narratives which can begin to answer the following question. Are the categorizations of healthy/unhealthy, normal/abnormal, heterosexual/homosexual the only way to construct meanings around libidinous and affectional bonds between people? More specifically, what about love? How do romance narratives produce subjects and objects either entitled to privileged roles or excluded from its scripts? To return to the

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5In the words of Catherine Belsey: "The novel, above all, is praised for its 'authenticity' in describing the world of social relationships or conveying the inner experience (often seen as 'universal') of the individual in quest of identity. Drama, too, is required to be realistic, and a common question provoked by Measure for Measure, All's Well that Ends Well or The Changeling is, 'Could the Elizabethans really not tell the difference between one woman and another in bed in the dark?' The tone of the question usually implies that either the Elizabethans must have been very odd or Shakespeare and Middleton ought not to require us to swallow anything so implausible." (Belsey 1980, 13)
anecdotes with which I open this dissertation: to what extent do romance narratives play a role as foundational narratives which script the meanings attached to hetero- and homosexuality? I have proposed medical discourse as such a set of narratives; I will now consider romance narratives as another and take a close look at William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as one important example of this genre.

I also shift to fictional discourse because of its inherent attention to form. Whereas non-fiction may attempt to simply convey information, fiction as a genre is explicitly concerned with the process of writing, that is, with the meaning conveyed by the form. I consider fiction to be more likely to approach what Hayden White refers to as the "classic text" by virtue of its attention to style, process, form:

> The classic text seems to command our attention because it not only contains ideas and insights about "the human condition" in general but provides an interpretative model by which to carry further our investigations in our own time or, indeed, any time. In reality, however, the classic text, the master text, intrigues us, not because (or not only because) its meaning-content is universally valid or authoritative . . . but because it gives us insight into a process that is universal and definitive of human species-being in general, the process of meaning production. . . . The difference in degree of complexity [between the "classic text" and "the most banal comic strip"] has to do with the extent to which the classic text reveals, indeed actively draws attention to, its own processes of meaning production and makes of these processes its own subject matter, its own "content." (White 1987, 211)

So it's on to *the* scribe of the classic text, William Shakespeare and at least two other attenders to form and to the production of meaning, John Fowles
and Jeanette Winterson. What will be revealed by not only what but how they write? In particular, how do their processes of writing either reinforce or subvert entrenched hierarchies of gender, race and sexuality? To what extent is their work constitutive of or resistant to the foundational narratives which form the focus of this project?

My decision to investigate The Tempest, The Collector and Written on the Body as my primary texts was originally founded not on careful analysis, but on serendipity. In chronological terms, I began with my stated goal of looking for texts which could begin to imagine possibilities other than hierarchy, and Written on the Body appeared very promising in moving toward that goal. However, Written on the Body does not deal solely with hierarchy. In its most obvious aspect it is a book about obsession. And as a powerful yet unconventional rendering of obsession, it prompted me to consider obsession in its more conventional mode. With only the slightest hesitation, up and out of the depths of my memory appeared The Collector with a stunning clarity and power. I first read this book in the mid-1970s and had then forgotten it, or so I thought. Apparently the strong impression of fear produced by this book left its imprint, however, and I wanted to further consider why. From there I was led to The Tempest through Fowles's extensive references to this text, and back again to Written on the Body through Jeanette Winterson's reference to Caliban. Seemingly by accident, the circle is complete.

But is it in fact The Accidental at work here? And is there a tidy circle that is complete in any final way? One of the most important discoveries of my work is the tremendous importance of the figure of Caliban, both as a character in a classic Shakespeare play, and as a hotly
contested political symbol. Within imperialist discourse, he represents the primitive Other, the dark savage, the being most in need of the civilizing influence of the master race. Conversely, within anti-colonialist discourse, Caliban is resurrected as a figure of strength and plays an extremely important role in subverting relationships of domination. Finally, as the dark and savage male, Caliban represents both the danger and allure of untamed sexuality. What then are we to make of him? Is he villain or hero? Savage or savior? These questions can never be answered in any final way; they can only represent unceasing contests over meaning. And given his significant role in narratives of imperialism and sexual politics, contests of meaning over Caliban represent contests of meaning over hierarchy. In an important way Caliban became the center of my work, and an exploration of a variety of representations of this important and enigmatic figure forms the connecting link between the texts which follow this juncture.
CHAPTER 3
PEOPLE WOULD NEVER FALL

"People would never fall in love, if they had not been told about it"
La Rochefoucauld

Back to the balloons of Chapter 1. If The Collector represents the exaggerated, the distorted, the abnormal, what does the more normal balloon look like? Fowles is overblown relative to what? John Berger gives us a peek of the normal, but where might we find a more fully developed narration of "the ordinary"? Fowles's text provides something akin to a billboard for a clue. Readers of Shakespeare's The Tempest will recognize that the names of Fowles's most important characters are drawn directly from Shakespeare's story, albeit altered in strategically important ways. Fowles uses the names Miranda, Ferdinand and Caliban, and these characters are, with the exception of Prospero, the most important characters in The Tempest.

Why does Fowles hearken back to Shakespeare? Casting aside the outdated and theoretically inappropriate question of an individual author's intentions, Stephen Greenblatt's Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare suggests why Renaissance texts might resonate with late-twentieth century concerns:

We continue to see in the Renaissance the shaping of crucial aspects of our sense of self and society and the natural world, but we have become uneasy about our whole way of constituting reality.... We sense too that we are situated at the close of the cultural movement initiated in the Renaissance and that the places in which our social and
psychological world seems to be cracking apart are those structural joints visible when it was first constructed. In the midst of the anxieties and contradictions attendant upon the threatened collapse of this phase of our civilization, we respond with passionate curiosity and poignancy to the anxieties and contradictions attendant upon its rise. To experience Renaissance culture is to feel what it was like to form our own identity, and we are at once more rooted and more estranged by the experience. (Greenblatt 1980, 174-5)

Greenblatt begins to give an idea of why the Renaissance remains important to the contemporary West. Steven Mullaney, in his essay "Brothers and Others, or the Art of Alienation," puts a finer point on the issue by reflecting on the importance of the Renaissance stage, and the role of Shakespeare as playwright in particular, in the formation of the modern self:

I would suggest that the Renaissance stage did not merely reflect the larger civilizing process of its times. The destabilizing dialectic between self and other, audience and play, social and psychological constitutions of the subject, which defined the complex theatrical transaction we know as Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, was in itself an influential forum and laboratory for the production of what would become the modern subject. If from our perspective and place in history we still feel a special kinship with Shakespearean modes of characterization, it is at least in part because Shakespeare's characters had a considerable role in producing us. (Mullaney 1987, 87)

This is not to imply that Fowles simply had to refer to Shakespeare because he is so important; it is merely to reflect on why it makes sense that he would. But to what does Fowles refer? What does it mean to evoke Shakespeare, and The Tempest in particular, in a twentieth century novel?
What sort of narrative does Fowles elicit, and how does he rescript that narrative?

***

Two women are standing knee-deep in crystal blue water, agitating a dirty throw rug with their feet and commiserating over their respective problems with men. One is mature, sensual, and openly lustful. Her man-trouble is a result of her mate's decision to practice celibacy. She hasn't had sex for six months; she is not happy. The other is on the cusp of womanhood, and is fed up with having to fend off the advances of the clownish man who works for her father. Suddenly, in perfect harmony, they burst into song:

Why do birds sing so sweet....

Why do they fall in love.....

The man in charge of the island, lover of one, father of the other, looks on admiringly from the house perched above the bank. The women, however, do not share his cheerful mood. Once they have completed the song, they scream up to him,

"We're tired of being prisoners!!!!"

The scene I have described is taken from Paul Mazursky's film Tempest, based on Shakespeare's work of the same name. It is not Shakespeare himself, but a conveniently located and, in terms of its major plot lines, remarkably faithful rendition of the original text. In the original, Shakespeare places Prospero, a duke deposed through treachery of his brother Antonio, on an island with his budding maiden daughter, Miranda.
They share the island with the dark and primitive Caliban, who becomes the resentful slave of the powerful Prospero. Caliban also represents an important threat; he has attempted to rape Miranda:

O ho, O ho! Would't had been done! 
Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else
This isle with Calibans. (I. ii. 349-51)

Miranda and the future of the island are spared, however, thanks to good fortune and a dose of Prospero's powerful art. A mighty tempest of his creation brings a fitting suitor to shore in the person of Ferdinand, son of the King of Naples and emblem of all that is good, true and manly. Ferdinand and Miranda fall in love at first sight, Ferdinand passes inspection by Prospero, and the couple receive his blessing and live happily ever after. In addition, Prospero is reconciled with Ferdinand's father, Alonso, who was party to the plot against Prospero and aboard the ship which grounded Ferdinand. Prospero then regains his throne. A truly happy ending, as spoken most eloquently by Gonzalo, the honest and trusted advisor to kings and dukes:

In one voyage
Did Claribel her husband find at Tunis,
And Ferdinand her brother found a wife
Where he himself was lost; Prospero his dukedom
In a poor isle; and all of us ourselves
When no man was his own. (V. i. 208-212)

*The Tempest* is referred to as a romance, which in Renaissance terminology meant that the play made use of and referred to miraculous or fantastical events. Yet *The Tempest* also qualifies as a romance according to the terms of more modern usage. It contains all the essential features of a truly romantic story: love, conflict, power, good and evil, and perhaps most
important, a tidy yet sparkling ending, with fathers once again politically united, and the young couple destined for conjugal bliss.

Shakespeare's story is much richer than what I have presented here, but for the moment these broad outlines will serve. And within these contours there are important, if hackneyed, features that are worthy of note. Miranda, as a girl entering womanhood, is passed from father to prospective husband in a transfer of ownership, and Caliban the dark and dangerous loses out to Ferdinand the fair and noble. The sexism and racism of Shakespeare's work is blatant and reflects the historical and political context in which it was written. Women were at least two centuries away from escaping their legal status as property, and Europe was still reeling from its first contacts with the natives of the New World. Shakespeare's story line has direct connections to these European encounters with and deliberations over the Indians. His story is believed to be based on an actual shipwreck off the Bermudas that took place in 1609, and at one point he paraphrases Michel de Montaigne's essay "Of the Cannibals" which deals with the cannibalistic practices of indigenous peoples of the Americas. Indeed, "Caliban's name may derive from 'cannibal'" (Shakespeare 1987, 126).

Confronting an admittedly ungenerous reading of Shakespeare with the political sensibilities of the 1990s is not my present task, however. What is more interesting to me is Mazursky's 1982 film, which presumably rewrites this story in a manner palatable to contemporary audiences. How are the relationships between Prospero (renamed Phillip in Mazursky's version), Miranda, Ferdinand (Freddie), Ariel (Aretha), Antonio (Antonia), and Caliban (the Greek Calibanos) configured in this modern version?
In Mazursky’s version of the Shakespeare story, Phillip is a man in mid-life crisis. He is fed up with the rat race of New York City, no longer willing to work for his gangster employer Alonso, and realizes he doesn’t love his wife Antonia just before she apparently seals the fate of their marriage by taking up with Alonso.

So, it’s off to Greece to get away from it all. His daughter Miranda decides to join him, being disgusted with her mother’s infidelity. They settle temporarily in Athens and there become hitched up to Aretha, a lost soul with a little dog who recites an impressive list of failed marriages and can sing Havah Nagilah in two languages. Phillip and Aretha start sleeping together and Antonia is hot on their trail in search of Miranda, so they head off to a remote island to start a new life together. Phillip’s little kingdom. He thinks he has found paradise: beautiful, pure and simple.

As with all compelling stories, however, there are problems aplenty to resolve, and most seem to be of a sexual nature. As the rug-stomping episode attests, Aretha and Miranda eventually become dissatisfied with their lives on the island. Aretha wants sex and something besides feta cheese to eat; Miranda wants malls, MTV and a break from hard labor and the clumsy sexual advances of Calibanos. Calibanos appears happy enough for the most part; he is simple and silly enough to entertain himself remarkably well, but he would do just about anything to satisfy the bouncing bonga-longa\(^1\) in his pants. The other important female character in the film, Antonia, is also unhappy. Her situation is quite different from that of the women on the island; at the same moment that Aretha and Miranda are singing their woes she is on an elegant yacht with Alonso. Nonetheless, she

\(^1\)This term is taken directly from the film.
is restless and uncertain in her relationship with Alonso, and most of all she wants her daughter back.

Shakespeare's story expressed power relationships in a number of ways: the politics of dukedom and kingdoms, the powerful magical arts of Prospero and Sycorax, the racial privilege engendered by colonialism, and the ownership and exchange of women. In many ways this would not be considered a "modern" story by contemporary audiences, and Mazursky has made the necessary shifts to make his version fit with the times. The most noticeable change he makes is in recasting Antonio and Ariel as females, wife Antonia and mistress Aretha. This shift accomplishes two things. Shakespeare chose to absent Prospero's wife from his narrative, and Mazursky's transformation of brother Antonio into wife Antonia reinserts a wife figure into the narrative. Secondly, the casting of both of these characters as females refigures their importance to Phillip in terms of sexual struggle. By means of this new configuration, Mazursky evokes a familiar narrative of the past three decades, that of the middle-aged man who dumps his long-time wife for a mistress or "trophy wife." Antonia hasn't stolen Phillip's money or endangered his job or status in any way, as did Prospero's brother in Shakespeare's version; she made the fatal mistake of staying with Phillip for too many years and sticking that boring old face of hers right up next to his. He grows to hate her for it, says so, and then she compounds her crime by sleeping with his boss, who is none other than Alonso. In Shakespeare's story Alonso was party to the betrayal of a monarch; for Mazursky political treachery is largely reconfigured as sexual treachery.

Susan Sarandon as Aretha plays the role of the young, attractive mistress who not only dotes on Phillip but also plays the role of ersatz
mother to Miranda in the absence of Antonia. This should be a happy ending: Phillip and Miranda abandon the treacherous wife and mother Antonia for the kind, giving and sexy Aretha who has no conspicuous flaws and is apparently in dire need of family connections. The story cannot end here, however, and Mazursky has provided enough distress on the island to make sure it doesn't.

Mazursky's happy, if counterintuitive, ending brings Phillip and Antonia back together. Phillip creates a tempest when Alonso and Antonia are offshore in their yacht, they are washed to shore, Aretha tells Phillip it's time to forgive Antonia, he does, and the erstwhile miserable family is reunited on a new footing, presumably to live happily ever after. Phillip and Antonia forgive each other, Antonia is forgiven by Miranda, they all still love each other, and the film is bathed in a profuse and profound sense of relief. At least for this happy trio. Aretha, on the other hand, voluntarily and graciously disappears to make this outcome possible. My contention is that this story line is neither credible or logical, but is entirely necessary nonetheless. Aretha must evaporate from this story in order to remove the disturbing presence of uncontrolled female desire.

But wait a minute. Why shouldn't Antonia get her family back? Can't Mazursky be read as acknowledging and rewarding the years of service and sacrifice that Antonia has made to her family? Perhaps, but Antonia is spared only by meeting certain very specific criteria. The most important of these is that Antonia be presented as a woman without desire. Whereas Aretha is consistently and urgently pressed upon viewers as a lustful woman, the only hint of Antonia's sexual nature reveals either lukewarm or repressed desire at best. In the one potential erotic encounter we see between Antonia
and Phillip, he begins to kiss and caress her, but she just really has to pee. End of story. The mundane conquers passion once again. Antonia does take up with Alonso after she discovers Phillip's hatred for her, but their relationship, which technically includes sex since they are having an "affair," is presented as less than passionate. Although Alonso is wealthy and powerful and thus not totally emasculated according to the terms of traditional masculinity, he is also strongly portrayed as an aging and temperamentally hypochondriac. Whatever virility he possesses resides in his pocketbook and social network, not in his body. And while the casting of Geena Rowlands, a strong and attractive woman, in the role of Antonia suggests the possibility of desire, hers is a desire hinted at periodically only to be ultimately suppressed. Antonia is with Alonso because she is lonely and angry, not because she is horny. Their affair more strongly represents a shifting of alliances than desire unleashed.

Of course sex is not the only form of desire, but for Antonia, only her longing for her daughter and her desire to reunite her family will be tolerated. Early in the film, she expresses an interest in returning to acting, presumably a vocation she has abandoned during her years of childrearing and homemaking. She even goes so far as to reacquaint herself with important people in the business in order to get a new start. But all for naught. Once her marriage breaks up and Miranda leaves with her father, we see no trace of her career ambitions. She drops everything to travel with Alonso in search of her daughter. Her desire to act simply disappears in the same way that the entire character of Aretha does at the end of the film. Female desire, with the notable exception of desire for child and family, must be effaced.
Aretha and Antonia are actually lucky only to suffer strategic disappearances from the plot at certain crucial points. As Dalma Heyn discusses in *The Erotic Silence of the American Wife*, the desiring women of both classic and modern literature, particularly those who commit adultery, have a remarkable or even inevitable propensity to be murdered, suffer a fatal accident, or commit suicide before the narratives they inhabit can be safely tucked away for the night:

Murder may be a dramatic breach of the marriage vows, but not so unthinkable that even the merest suspicion of extramarital sex can't instantaneously provoke and even justify it. Shakespeare becomes obsessed with adultery's monstrous hold on the imagination of even moments-ago trusting husbands, and the resulting devastation such husbands then bring upon even the purest of wives—all in the name of love.

The idea that the adulterous women are tainted—an aberration, unnatural, not even human... permeates our consciousness so completely that it is hard to find even an unmarried woman having an affair in literature who is not destroyed for her sexuality. Guinevere, Carmen, Mimi, Violetta, Mermione—each of these radiant heroines was killed, banished, or isolated—or she committed suicide. (Heyn 1992, 6-7)

This passage makes Antonia look quite lucky. She did commit adultery, and Mazursky is not only generous enough to let her live; she gets her man and daughter back and to all appearances her future looks rosy by the end of the film. However, all at the cost of that minuscule amount of desire she had in the first place. She lives and prospers as a malleable and forgiving wife and mother, not as a woman with her own desires and passions.
Aretha, as the desiring woman of the film, is not so lucky. As I have mentioned, she performs a remarkable and incredible disappearing act that severely strains my ability to suspend disbelief. She loves Phillip and Miranda and has no real prospects for either affluence or connectedness outside of her relationship with them. Yet in the last ten minutes of the film she kisses Phillip, tells him it's time to forgive his wife and sends him off to make up. She then simply disappears. We do not see her again, and other than the likelihood that she will continue in her quest to find Mr. Right, we are given no clue about what her future might hold. Nor do we see any sign that she struggles against this fate. She is portrayed as a character who knows she is doomed, and who knows that the figure of the mundane in the film, Antonia, must prevail in the end. Within this narrative, female desire is a flight of fancy that will eventually be brought back to earth and to "reality."

An interweaving of Heyn's ideas and Diane Elam's discussion of the distinction between "blond" and "dark" romance in *Romancing the Postmodern* helps to clarify this point. Antonia seems to conform, with an obvious interruption, to the well-worn conventional romantic plot:

> in the one story that has been written about women's lives, sometimes called the marriage plot, sometimes called the romance plot or the erotic plot, the star is Mr. Right. The woman, whether Sleeping Beauty or the Princess of Wales or Jane Doe, is chosen by Mr. Right and whisked off somewhere to live "happily ever after." . . . But examine the romance plot closely and you will see that after you cut to the chase--marriage--it is Mr.

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2Why Elam fails to comment on the obvious racial connotations of this terminology is a mystery to me. I will employ her language for the time being, however, and consider its implications in my discussion of Caliban(os).
Right's story that continues, not our heroine's. After her implicit goal of becoming a wife is reached, her story is over. (Heyn 1992, 10-11)

Whew! It was a close call for Antonia. She stumbled and almost lost Mr. Right, then figured out life was miserable without him so was willing to give up her story to be joined once again to his.

Perhaps Aretha, as a woman unwilling to give up her own desires, shares an awareness similar to that of Maggie Tulliver, the "dark" woman of George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*. In Diane Elam's words:

> Romance itself, with its alternative visions for women, creates desires that Maggie feels are excessive. A full life is not only unobtainable, it is literally unthinkable for Maggie. The full life that might become desirable for the dark woman would itself be full of too many desires, desires which must remain unspoken. Romance, therefore, carries the prospect of dissatisfaction for women as a structured principle implicit in its opening. (Elam 1992, 132)

Aretha is different from Maggie in that her desires are thinkable and repeatedly spoken. Nonetheless, she never gives the impression of a woman who expects them to be fulfilled, and her gracious abdication of any claim to Phillip at the end of the film rings of destiny rather than disappointment. In keeping with Heyn's ideas, desiring women must be murdered, if not literally then through their disappearance in narrative.

I have argued that Mazursky changes the gender of Ariel and Antonio to reflect what might be to him more up-to-date concerns for his audience, dukedoms and witches perhaps being considered out of style. It may not be merely a matter of taste or a director's artistic discretion, however. A more definitive statement of the *necessity* of these changes, particularly in the
case of Ariel, can be made. What is most apparent is that the part of Ariel must be played by a woman in order to allay fears of incest. By 1982, fathers and daughters simply do not go off to live together on isolated islands; Phillip must have an adult female who is sexually available to him, even if he chooses to practice celibacy.

Also important, however, is the awkward fact that in Shakespeare's *Tempest* both Ariel and Caliban are slaves. The crucial question for Mazursky can be posed as follows: how can he cast the modern equivalent of a light, airy and white slave? As it turns out, the closest he can come is by transforming him into a white female. My intention is not to make a facile equation of the condition of slavery and the condition of femaleness, although there are certainly some points of comparison. Rather, what I have in mind is hinted at in an essay written by Bernard Knox in 1954. In discussing Shakespeare's indebtedness to classical comedy he remarks:

> Below the strange and brilliant surface composed of medieval magic and Renaissance travel tales, the initial situation, the nature and relationships of most of the characters, the development of the action and its final solution are all conjugations of the basic paradigms of classical comedy.

> One of the most influential of these paradigms relates to the existence in ancient society of a dividing line stricter and more difficult to cross than any social barrier has been since: the distinction between slave and free. The free man could not imagine a misfortune worse than slavery, nor the slave a greater blessing than freedom. Slave and free were not so much separate classes as separate worlds: Aristotle could go so far as to claim that they were separate natures. *This division was the most important sociological datum of ancient society, affecting men's attitude toward each other with a power almost as great as*
Almost as great? Ariel was other-worldly by virtue of being a slave; Aretha reproduces that status, although even more strongly, as a representative of femaleness. Mazursky needs a radical other in a subservient position, and Aretha fits the bill perfectly. There is an important difference worthy of note, however. What makes Mazursky's story the more damning for the Ariel/Aretha character is that as a result of his good and faithful service to Prospero, Ariel achieves his greatest desire: freedom. Aretha, who is likewise loyal and supportive, through her magical disappearance attains exactly the same thing. Unfortunately, it is the antithesis of what she actually wants. Too bad for her.

*****

This loss of the mother tongue seems not to disturb Friday, even though he never completely learns the master's. He negotiates a space somewhere in between. He develops a serviceable grammar that will never be eloquent; he learns to shout warnings of advancing, also black, enemies, but he can never dare speak to these enemies as his master does. Without a mother tongue, without the language of his original culture, all he can do is recognize his old enemies, and, when ordered, kill them. Finally, Friday no longer negotiates space between his own language and Crusoe's. Finally, the uses of Crusoe's language, if not its grammar, become his own. The internalization is complete.

(Morrison 1992a, xxvi-xxvii)

Toni Morrison's portrayal of Friday is one of resounding and total defeat. He has lost ownership of his body, by virtue of being Crusoe's slave, and perhaps more importantly his consciousness becomes completely colonized by the master's language. Friday is left with neither physical
autonomy nor the capability for resistance, since he has no language with which to imagine that resistance.

Caliban's situation is somewhat different from Friday's, and at first glance one would expect to find a situation even more hopeless. Caliban is not stolen from a culture, having only known the company of his mother prior to her death, and he is entirely without language until taught to speak by Miranda. His fate appears to be worse than Friday's in that he has never had the mother tongue or culture which, comparatively speaking, Friday has the privilege to lose. But somehow, even though he does not conquer Miranda or succeed in his plot against Prospero, he is never entirely beaten into the submission evidenced by Friday. Whereas Friday is colonized and erased by the master's language, Caliban steadfastly uses that same language to hurl insults and attacks back upon Prospero. He talks back, schemes, and always maintains a stance of defiance toward his ruler. In so doing, he remains an active threat throughout the play. This is not to say that he is portrayed as Prospero's equal and thus the kind of threat that the audience needs to be overly concerned about. Shakespeare's text, in keeping with dominant Western narratives, must represent whiteness as a symbol of goodness, and more importantly, superiority. Nonetheless, Caliban is neither portrayed as completely evil nor as completely defeated. Indeed, according to Stephen Orgel, although Caliban is perceived by Prospero as nothing but a savage and brute, the audience of the play has the opportunity to perceive a much richer character:

Caliban constitutes the most important instance in the play where what Prospero says and what we perceive fail to coincide. "You taught me language and my profit on't/Is I know how to curse" (I. ii.)
that famous riposte summarizes and justifies Prospero's view of Caliban. But we hear much more than curses in Caliban's language; he is the other great poet of the play. (Orgel 1987, 57)

A great poet can never simply be a brute; moreover, a great poet has the potential to escape total colonization. Caliban is alive, and, although in bondage to Prospero, the colonizer's language provides a source of power for him. Even if his appeals for justice fall on the deaf ears of Prospero, they have the capacity to spark a different kind of response for readers of the play.

But to what end? Can the colonizer's language really make Caliban a powerful figure? There is voluminous debate on this subject, more broadly configured, and it goes beyond my purposes to sort through these arguments and arrive at a definitive position either pro or con. What I can do is point to the broad outlines of at least two possible outcomes of Caliban's potent ability to speak and consider where they might lead us. Toni Morrison's evocation of Friday, while not a perfect fit for Caliban, remains haunting. What hope does Friday have of reclaiming his culture and self while being so thoroughly imbued with the language of Crusoe? Indeed, that saturation, to whatever extent it is complete, makes him a more likely candidate for successful assimilation into Western culture. In Caliban's case, this has been one use to which his ability to speak has been put by apparently sympathetic critics:

Frank Kermode . . . [relates Caliban] to the European wodewose, the wild or savage man, bred in the woods but, despite his uncivilized manners, human and educable. . . . the view of Caliban as a familiar European figure is symptomatic of a widespread critical attempt, which is prompted by
the play itself, to humanize and domesticate
Caliban, to rescue him from Prospero’s view of
him—to succeed with him where Prospero has
failed. (Orgel 1987, 56)

"Caliban the uncivilized" is perceived as a character akin to an errant child in
need of the fatherly guidance of either Prospero or literary critics. But not to
worry: given the proper training he can become the kind of son any father
would be proud of.

Paternalism toward the little brown brother is not the only possible
outcome of Caliban's grasp of Prospero's language, however. His power to
speak can also have revolutionary potential, as evidenced by the adoption of
Caliban as an important symbol of Latin American radicalism in the
twentieth century. In 1971, the Cuban revolutionary Roberto Fernández
Retamar's well-known essay, "Caliban," elaborated the importance of
Caliban as symbol:

Our symbol . . . is . . . Caliban. This is something
that we, the mestizo inhabitants of these same isles
where Caliban lived, see with particular clarity:
Prospero invaded the islands, killed our ancestors,
enslaved Caliban, and taught him his language to
make himself understood. What else can Caliban
do but use that same language—today he has no
other—to curse him, to wish that the "red plague"
would fall on him? I know no other metaphor
more expressive of our cultural situation, of our
reality. (Retamar 1989, 14)

This paints a grim picture of the situation for present-day Calibans, but
Retamar goes further to turn the tables on conventional readings of this
character. In an interpretation of Shakespeare's text which relocates the
power of naming, Retamar explains how an active embracing of the
maligned name Caliban can transform a badge of dishonor into a source of pride and power. In reference to the Cuban revolution of 1959, he writes:

The independentistas, white and black, adopted with honor something that colonialism meant as an insult. This is the dialectic of Caliban. To offend us they call us mambi, they call us black; but we reclaim as a mark of glory the honor of considering ourselves descendants of the mambi, descendants of the rebel, runaway, independentista black—never descendants of the slave holder. (Retamar 1989, 16)

This does not settle the matter for Retamar, however. He recognizes the name Caliban as an "alien elaboration" and goes on to ask if it is his true name, since it was given to him by Prospero. Nonetheless, Retamar does present some openings, some possibilities for liberation from oppression and stigmatization within the colonizer's language and using the colonizer's names.

* * * * *

European vocabularies do not have a silence rich enough to describe the force within Indian contemplation. Only Shakespeare understood that Indians have eyes. Shakespeare saw Caliban eyeing his master's books—well, why not his master as well? The same dumb lust... .

Shakespeare's comedy, of course, resolves itself to the European's applause. The play that Shakespeare did not write is Mexico City. (Rodriguez 1992, 23)

Richard Rodriguez, writing in Days of Obligation: An Argument with My Mexican Father, isn't particularly interested in purity, whether it be ideological, cultural, or ethnic. And unlike Roberto Retamar, he is not concerned with the distinction between alien and authentic elaborations.
Moreover, his notion of temporality seems almost bizarre in a culture addicted to twenty-four hour news services and docu-dramas produced before the event they purport to document has reached its conclusion. In a talk delivered at the University of Hawai‘i in March of 1994, he cited with obvious admiration an anecdote about Ho Chi Minh in which Ho was asked what he thought about the American Revolution. Ho’s response: "It's too soon to tell." For Rodriguez, it's too soon to tell the fate of Caliban and Prospero in any definitive way, but he's putting his money on Caliban.

I take it as an Indian achievement that I am alive, that I am Catholic, that I speak English, that I am an American. My life began, it did not end, in the sixteenth century.

The idea occurs to me on a weekday morning, at a crowded intersection in Mexico City: Europe’s lie. Here I am in the capital of death. Life surges about me; wells up from subways, wave upon wave; descends from stairwells. Everywhere I look. Babies. Traffic. Food. Beggars. Life. Life coming upon me like sunstroke.

Each face looks like mine. No one looks at me. Where, then, is the famous conquistador? We have eaten him, the crowd tells me, we have eaten him with our eyes.

I run to the mirror to see if this is true. It is true. (Rodriguez 1992, 23-4)

Mexico City does not represent a clean victory in any sense. Its existence is based on a history of consorting with the enemy, of sacrificing purity to survival. "The Indian stands in the same relationship to modernity as she did to Spain--willing to marry, to breed, to disappear in order to ensure her inclusion in time . . ." (Rodriguez 1992, 24). And from the

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3The most striking example of this phenomenon involves events surrounding the siege of the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas. TV producers got the cameras rolling on this one long before the compound actually went up in flames.
perspective of the comfortable classes in the United States, Mexico City hardly seems like a prize. Its problems with overpopulation, poverty and pollution are highly renowned and habitually lamented. Nonetheless, the Indian, Caliban, is alive and is swallowing the West.

Richard Rodriguez is a controversial writer. He scoffs at multiculturalism as a useful concept and exercise only for Canadians who can keep their borders neat and tidy, and he vociferously opposes both affirmative action and bilingual education programs. He is called a sell-out to white America and was proffered an invitation, which he declined, to be a guest on an Oprah Winfrey show which featured "self-hating blacks and Hispanics." All because he doesn't believe in authentic cultures, indigenous, homosexual, or otherwise, and is glad he speaks English and knows the Great Western Thinkers. His political perspective in the broad sense is not what interests me, however. What makes him important for my argument is the use to which he puts Caliban. Rodriguez doesn't care that the name was conjured up by a white Englishman of the Renaissance and is thus an "alien elaboration." For Rodriguez, what is important is that Caliban wins. Rodriguez lies with Shakespeare, and is pleased with what he sees in the mirror the next morning. "We have eaten him, the crowd tells me, we have eaten him with our eyes." I run to the mirror to see if this is true. It is true." Rodriguez has eaten Shakespeare, and it has made him strong. Although impure, Shakespeare's Caliban is sustenance for Rodriguez. Caliban is powerful.

\[4\text{From talk at University of Hawai'i, March 1994.}\]
So sings Calibanos to Phillip, Aretha and Miranda. Then he starts in on his clarinet, and the whole troupe engages in some good healthy singing and dancing. Such a charming fellow.

And just so silly. Not only does he provide music and good cheer for the other human beings on the island, he even entertains his flock of goats with a lively rendition of "New York, New York."

_Mazursky's Calibanos is a clown. Shakespeare's Caliban is not._

Caliban is no match for Prospero, and is subject to derision for his inability or unwillingness, depending on one's perspective, to remake himself in the image of Prospero. Yet he retains his dignity, his voice, and his status as a threat, not only to Prospero and Miranda, but also to white hegemony. Retamar and Rodriguez choose him as a symbol with good reason; a buffoon simply won't do.

What does it mean then to transform Caliban into Calibanos the clown? In particular, what are the implications for Mazursky's narrative that Calibanos is represented as a comic figure rather than a threat? Mazursky is not the first director to have done so. As Stephen Orgel points out in "Shakespeare and the Cannibals," the stage tradition has a history of presenting Caliban as clownish rather than frightening dating at least from the late eighteenth century. (Orgel 1987, 57) But why?

It is helpful to examine the meanings attached to archetypal images of the clown in order to unravel what Calibanos in particular might mean.
What are the different archetypes, and to what extent does Calibanos fit any of them? The first distinction to be made is between two very different types of clowns, sometimes distinguished by opposition between the terms clown, and fool or jester. They are both comic figures, designed to evoke laughter and playfulness, but their respective roles carry very different meanings, and represent distinctly different degrees of status and privilege within the social order. In *The Clown in Modern Anglo-Irish Drama*, Elizabeth Hale Winkler discusses the jester or court fool as a dramatic figure which reached the height of its importance during the Renaissance, particularly in the writings of Shakespeare. After this time it failed to retain its significance as a comic archetype, but an elaboration of its meanings is worth examining nonetheless.

[Shakespeare's] most famous fools... are professional entertainers; they are members of an aristocratic or royal household and wear the traditional court fool's motley. They are rarely vulgar, do not engage in knockabout humor, and invoke a more thoughtful or ironic laughter than the clowns. They are not generally portrayed as insane... but rather are formed by the creative imagination of the dramatist into wise critics of society, satirists, commentators; or they are transformed into the embodiment of a genial, refined and witty comic spirit. (Winkler 1977, 48)

Anne Cameron also discusses clowns as wise critics in *Daughters of Copper Woman*, her collection of stories from the Nootka Nation of Vancouver Island. Although Cameron refers to these figures as clowns, the role they perform in their communities was much closer to what is referred to as fools or jesters above. Their characteristic behavior was to mimic and

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5I do not consider Caliban to be one of these fools.
caricature behavior they found inappropriate, such as gaudy or pretentious clothing, or pompous and arrogant speech. Through this means, the clowns were a mirror and conscience for the community who forced people to look honestly at their behavior and consider the value of that behavior to the community. As Granny in one of the stories explains:

> our clowns were with us all the time, as important to the village as the chief, or the shaman, or the dancers, or the poets.

> A clown was like a newspaper, or a magazine, or one of those people who write an article to tell you if a book or a movie is worth botherin' with . . . (Cameron 1988, 109-110)

In this case, the clown or fool was influential, prestigious, and was one of the most valued members of the community for his/her ability to help maintain the cohesion of the collective. This type of clown was an important leader in a very particular sense, although not decked out in the more usual robes of authority.

In the case of the Nootka Nation, the traditional clowns died with the onslaught of imperialism. In the West, it's not clear why the fool died, but some time after Shakespeare, the image of the clown as the low-down, bumbling, slapstick blockhead took precedence over the court jester. The newer character is no wise conduit of social commentary, or a voice of subtle irony or critique. This guy is someone to laugh at and to look down upon, not someone that forces you to examine that splattering of egg on your own face. In the words of Winkler: "The rude rustic, seen in the perspective of his social betters, becomes an archetypal comic figure, he who makes himself ridiculous by offending against social convention." (Winkler 1977, 14) Winkler goes on to give a detailed description of the archetypal qualities
of the clown, but for my purposes in analyzing Calibanos, who by now should be recognizable as a clown rather than a jester, a few highlights which describe him particularly well will serve.

Ironically, the foremost "mental" trait of the clown is the realization or the unconscious presentation of the fact that man is above all a physical being. The clown's own creature comforts weigh heavier by far than any ideas or ideals, his primary impulses are to provide for his own needs in food, drink, shelter and sex, and his first reaction at the sign of danger is to run. (Winkler 1977, 20-21)

This characterization fits Calibanos perfectly. Although we don't see him as a particularly big eater or drinker, he is driven in everything he does by his desire for Miranda. He doesn't have the eerie and dangerous obsession of The Collector, he simply wants to satisfy his basic drives, and he keeps trying, against all odds, to do so. Early in the film, we see an apparently mobile sagebrush working its way down a bank in fits and starts toward the bathing Miranda just to get a little peep. Unfortunately for Calibanos, Phillip's yippy little dog is not fooled by his disguise, and the dog reveals Calibanos' transgression to both Phillip and Miranda. Phillip is not happy and threatens to kill Calibanos if he ever touches Miranda or peeps on her again, but Calibanos just keeps on trying. For him, there's just no denying those natural urges.

His next attempt involves luring Miranda into his cave with the attraction of his newly purchased television. Miranda is so starved for entertainment that she goes to the cave without hesitation and doesn't seem to notice that while she is engrossed in an episode of "Gunsmoke," Calibanos is making preparations for his grand overture to her. He washes his armpits, sprays on a little cologne, combs his hair and puts on a shiny
silver jacket, all while she sits a few feet away from him. He then approaches her, begins to kiss her hand, professes his love for her, and slowly works his way up her arm. She doesn't seem to notice until he has reached her elbow, and then she swats him away like an insect and tells him: "Knock it off, you pervert." She then storms out of the cave, apparently more upset by the loss of the television than by any trauma suffered at the hands of Calibanos. What is worthy of attention here is that Calibanos is not dangerous. He is above all a somewhat amusing, but mostly annoying pest. Calibanos' sexuality is an earthy, unrestrained, childlike force that violates social norms of appropriate behavior, but it is not threatening. Even the young and naive Miranda can merely brush him off. She is probably supported by her knowledge that Phillip has threatened to kill Calibanos if he touches her, but she doesn't seem to need that reassurance. He's just a "pervert" that needs to go away. After all, he doesn't even have a penis; in the language of the film he has a bouncing bonga-longa. And when he discovers that Phillip knows about his advances toward Miranda, he does what any good clown would do; he runs. By being turned into a clown, even the horny Calibanos has been castrated. He is not represented as possessing either normal adult male sexuality or the courage to stand and face Phillip like a man. He's just a silly little boy.

This formulation does seem to put me in the awkward position of preferring Caliban the potential rapist to Calibanos the clown. Two important revelations emerge from this apparent choice, however. The first is that men of color located in the inferior position in white-dominated discourse are represented in one of two ways; either as dangerous savages and rapists of white women who must be destroyed or controlled, or as
sensual yet impotent fools who need to be reminded to stay in their place but don't represent any real threat.

The second insight revealed by the Caliban/Calibanos duality has to do with the relationship between male power and violent male sexuality. Any powerful male, whether light or dark, is a potential rapist. Racist discourse holds that the white male, being restrained and civilized, responds differently to this natural urge to rape than the savage and uncontrolled dark male, but within the context of Western culture any man incapable of rape is not a real man. Stephen Orgel acknowledges this connection between the civilized male and savage male in his discussion of the surprising similarities between Caliban and Ferdinand. He explains that Caliban has two rightful claims to the island, by virtue of being Sycorax's son and through prior possession. Thus, Shakespeare has left openings in his text for Caliban to have some claim to legitimacy and authority on the island, and these openings have some surprising consequences:

Miranda has two royal suitors, and Caliban is one of them. If Prospero is unable explicitly to acknowledge the legitimacy of the suit, he implicitly does so by equating Ferdinand with Caliban, making him perform his servant's tasks, accusing him of usurpation and treason, and especially, inveighing against Ferdinand's lust for

6John Stoltenberg, writing in Refusing to Be a Man: Essays on Sex and Justice, discusses how rape is not simply a discrete act practiced by some men at some times, but rather a fundamental component of masculinity itself: "The series of actions that are appropriate to the character of 'a man, not a woman' is profoundly influenced by the presence of rape among them. This series of acts is not like a dissonance composed of random, unharmonious notes. It is, rather, a chord in which the root or fundament colors every pitch above it, its overtones enhancing every note that is struck. Rape is like the fundamental tone; played sometimes fortissimo, sometimes pianissimo, sometimes a mere echo, it determines the harmonics of the whole chord. 'Sometimes,' 'just a little,' 'now and then,' 'only rarely'—however much one may wish to qualify the salient feature of the series, the act of prevailing upon another to admit of penetration without full and knowledgeable assent so sets the standard in the repertoire of male-defining behaviors that it is not at all inaccurate to suggest that the ethics of male sexual identity are essentially rapist." (Stoltenberg 1989, 18-19)
Miranda, which has not been at all apparent in the play. Any suitor—that is, even the suitor of Prospero's choice—is Caliban. (Orgel 1987, 55)

Ideally, male sexuality would be rescripted by Mazursky and all other artists according to feminist principles which would not equate manliness with the potential to do violence to women. Yet given that Mazursky has no intention of disrupting this connection between violence and masculinity, his strategy of emasculating only Calibanos must be read as a means of disempowering Calibanos relative to white males. Given the choices presented by Shakespeare and Mazursky between Caliban as a powerful and dangerous figure and Calibanos as a powerless buffoon, the choice seems clear.

Calibanos' status as a non-threatening clown is further reinforced by his relationship to language. He is portrayed as either immature or stupid by his inability to speak proper English. It seems logical that he wouldn't speak flowing English without accent, given his situation as a Greek goatherd, but conveniently enough, this apparent ineptitude reinforces his status as a clown. "When Standard English is accepted as the norm by audiences, dialect automatically becomes considered vulgar and 'low' and therefore comic because it deviates from this norm." (Winkler 1977, 27) The comic value of poor English is further reinforced by Miranda. When Freddie and Miranda first meet while swimming just offshore the island, Freddie assumes Miranda is Greek and can't speak English. She decides to play on this by mimicking the speech of Calibanos. When she finally does reveal to Freddie that she is American and a native English speaker, they both get a
good laugh out of the whole thing. It's too bad for Calibanos that he can't switch out of the dialect; he's stuck with low and vulgar speech for life.

So far I have shown the ways in which the character of Calibanos fits the archetype of the clown, and I have stated repeatedly that his status as clown diminishes his power relative to Shakespeare's Caliban. This diminution need not come from a comparison between Shakespeare and Mazursky, however. The politics attached to the clown figure are inherently reactionary, as Winkler explains with respect to medieval clowns:

> the clowns in medieval religious drama by no means implicate criticism of the medieval world view, and the clowns in Shakespeare's drama ultimately serve to illustrate the superiority of the ruling social class. In this sense the clown may function consciously or unconsciously as an instrument in the preservation of the established system. (Winkler 1977, 49)

The reference to Shakespeare's clowns here does not refer to Caliban, of course. For Shakespeare, Caliban is dangerous. And although Caliban does end up being an illustration of the superiority of the ruling class in his own way, Shakespeare's portrayal equivocates enough to allow later readers to find revolutionary potential in his character. Mazursky appears to dash that possibility. Mazursky has pacified a dangerous character and transformed him into an unequivocal signifier of the superiority of whiteness. Along the way he also manages to justify a neocolonialism which turns places like Greece and Hawai'i into the exotic playgrounds of (mostly white) North American and Northern European tourists. The natives are no longer threatening in their difference or "strangeness"; they are exotic and entertaining additions to the scenery of paradise. Mazursky's text and
images not only justify the existing order of things; they make it incredibly seductive.

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"So isn't this dissertation supposed to be about queers? Where are they?"

"I don't know, I haven't seen them. Have you seen them?"

"Nope. I haven't seen them. Where the hell are they?"

Such is the fate of the gay man or lesbian in romance narratives. Poof, disappeared, nada. We just don't figure into this story. This one is for "true love," not an alternative lifestyle or "different" sexual preference. But wait a minute, maybe we are in here somehow, even if only in a tiny, little unimportant way. We're important too... aren't we? The big question is: do we really want our assigned role in this story? In the next section, we'll find out.

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According to Alan Bray, author of "Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England," the nobleman Edward de Vere conspired against his queen, Elizabeth I. This is what was said about him:

The picture they draw is of a man who was not only a sodomite but also an enemy of society: a traitor and a man given to lawless violence against his enemies. He was also, they tell us, a habitual liar, an atheist, and a blasphemer. The charge of sodomy was not merely added to the list. It symbolized it... Sodomy, the jurist Edward Coke wrote, was "crimen laesae majestatis, a sin horrible committed against the king; and this is either against the king celestial or terrestrial." (Bray 1994, 41)

For the Elizabethans, sodomy was not solely a sexual crime; it was a political crime as well. In particular, it was treason against the monarch.
Prospero had his troubles with treason, of course. And he is the closest approximation to a monarch in *The Tempest*, being the powerful and autocratic ruler of the island on which the play is set. How convenient then, that the conspirators against him, Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban are tainted with the stain of sodomy. They are not portrayed in any blatant way as homosexuals, in part because, as Foucault has taught us, the homosexual had not yet been invented. They are not even portrayed as active and blatant perpetrators of the crime of sodomy. But perhaps they don't need to actually commit the crime; perhaps they just need to be marked by it. And indeed they are. In John Edward Friend's 1988 television adaptation of *The Tempest*, Stephano and Trinculo are played very campy, and according to a reliable source who has seen the play performed on stage several times, this is the norm rather than an anomaly. In addition, although Caliban is not played campy, his first encounter with Trinculo in Friend's version of the play is "bum-to-bum" under a blanket. This is not a sexual position I am familiar with, but the image is very suggestive nonetheless. These men are marked by sodomy, and even if they are not "actual" sodomites, their contamination with the badge of sodomy serves an important purpose for Shakespeare. If sodomy is an important signifier of treason in the Renaissance, then marking the conspirators against Prospero as sodomites reinforces and solidifies their role in the play as liars, atheists and blasphemers as heinous as Edward de Vere. Sodomy is treason is sodomy.

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7 In the introduction to *Queering the Renaissance*, Jonathan Goldberg writes: "to follow Foucault à la lettre, the Renaissance comes before the regimes of sexuality, and to speak of sexuality in the period is a misnomer. This is indeed the case if sexuality is taken as a marker of identity, definitional of a core of the person . . ." (Goldberg 1994, 5).

8 Thanks to Nahua Patinios for this information.
Bray presents the connection between sodomy and treason as specific to a particular historical period, in this case Renaissance England, but the connection may not be as much of an anachronism as his argument suggests. During the McCarthy era and beyond, a purported link between communist and homosexual tendencies has been reiterated with numbing regularity, as evidenced by the persistent popularity of the term "commie pinko fag." And the more current debates over gays in the military again raise the question of whether gay men, and lesbians to a much lesser degree, can be trusted to be loyal to their nation. In terms of artistic representations, a contemporary link between sodomy and treason is rendered particularly clearly in the film "The Day of the Jackal." The story the film tells is a fairly typical one. We have a bad guy (the Jackal) who's out to kill Charles de Gaulle, and the good guy (the police officer assigned to the case) who manages to find and kill the Jackal just seconds before he takes aim at de Gaulle. The story is typical, but its rendition is not. Frederick Forsyth tells a grand tale, and the effect of suspense which he achieves in weaving his narrative is in part due to his masterful characterization of the Jackal. As the story proceeds, the audience becomes mired in an complex mixture of admiration for the Jackal's exceptional intelligence and skill, and horror at his complete lack of humanity. He is not only hired and willing to kill de Gaulle, he kills cleanly, efficiently and without compunction any person unlucky enough to cross his path as he proceeds toward that goal. The character of the Jackal is the incarnation of cold and calculated treason itself.

Forsyth provides a very strong characterization, but apparently he doesn't feel it is quite strong enough. In what at first glance appears to be a

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9It is perhaps a mistake to mention lesbians in this context at all, given the overwhelming attention paid to the concerns of straight enlisted men worried about military showers and bunking arrangements.
gratuitous gesture, he just has to throw in the random act of sodomy. As the
film approaches its climax, the attempt on de Gaulle's life, the Jackal reaches
a different kind of climax—with a man. The clever police officer is hot on
the Jackal's trail, and in an effort to elude him the Jackal dons a disguise and
picks up a man in a bath house who is willing to take him home for the
night. The Jackal does end up killing the man, but only after they have done
the deed. This in spite of the fact that the audience is never led to think he is
a homosexual. He beds down women for similar tactical reasons earlier in
the film, and there are none of the telltale signs of effeminacy which usually
signify the gay male in mainstream cinema. He is simply willing to perform
any unnatural act, whether it be killing the head of state or fucking a man.
Sodomy is treason is sodomy. This handy conjunction puts the final touches
on Forsyth's portrait of a monster.

Mazursky is not compelled by this connection, however, since a more
traditional notion of political treason, as I mentioned earlier, has given way
to sexual treachery. The modern day version of Stephano and Trinculo are
still campy, but no longer involved in anything resembling political
overthrow. The drunken butler and jester of Shakespeare's text have been
replaced by a comedian and personal doctor who travel with Alonso, but
they are not interested in becoming king of the mountain themselves. They
lost their ambition a long time ago and are resigned to staying in service to
their gangster boss for the duration. They are not included in this narrative
for any reason as important as treason; they just provide a little comic relief
from time to time. This happens not only by virtue of one of them being a
comedian; their campiness is in itself a source of humor. One of their most
noteworthy appearances is when Calibanos sells them a statue which gets
them drooling. It's a little man, but no ordinary man. This one has an erect phallus as large as his entire torso. They're just tickled to have found it!

The politics of the clown has reared its ugly head again. If Calibanos's status as a dark clown reinforces the superiority of whiteness, it follows that campy clowns reiterate the superiority of either straightness or traditional masculinity, depending on how close to homosexual identity the campiness is played. For Shakespeare, campiness implied the possibility of sodomy; in Mazursky's case these are gay boys all the way. In both cases, they make Prospero/Phillip and Alonso look properly masculine. Unlike Caliban/os, who was not a clown in Shakespeare's text, Stephano and Trinculo were clownish from the start. In both texts, they are not present because they are important or interesting on their own account. They are there for a few laughs, and, more importantly, to demonstrate the unassailable superiority of the Prospero/Phillip character. It's fair to say that being the butt of the joke is not the most desirable situation in which to find oneself in a romance narrative. Romance is not for queers; it is most decidedly for "not-queers." The queers are only there to remind the audience of which is which.

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Well, actually the queers aren't there to perform this function. It is more accurate to say the sodomites, and in Renaissance England that term refers specifically to men.10 And while the sodomite appears to occupy only a small role intended solely for the purpose of bolstering the cause of

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10In her discussion of John Disney's 1729 treatise A View of Ancient Laws against Immorality and Profaneness, Valerie Traub notes: "Defining sodomy as 'the unnatural Conjunction of Men with Men or Boys' (180-81), Disney thwarts our modern expectation that all those engaged in same-gender erotic acts belong together. Used as we are to linking the identities and political fates of gay men and lesbians under the medico-scientific label of 'homosexuality' or the political banner of 'gay rights,' Disney's silence about sexual 'conjunction' among women seems odd..." (Traub 1994, 63)
manliness, just rule and reason, female homoeroticism is entirely absent from *The Tempest*, both in Shakespeare's and Mazursky's versions. An absence can be a difficult thing with which to frame a discussion; after all, what if the possibility of erotic attractions or behavior between women is simply absent from this particular story?

In her essay "The (In)Significance of 'Lesbian' Desire in Early Modern England," Valerie Traub demonstrates that an absence of lesbian practices or characterizations from a piece of English Renaissance literature is by no means peculiar. On the contrary, as her title suggests, this absence is the norm. "The 'lesbian desire' of my title is a deliberate come-on. If this is the last you hear of it, it is because, enticing as it may sound, it doesn't exist. Not, at least, as such." (Traub 1994, 62) The term "as such" leaves some questions unanswered, however. What might this phrase refer to, and how is it related to my discussion of *The Tempest*? If the complete absence of any sort of female/female desire in *The Tempest* is not representative of Renaissance English norms, how can those norms be described?

In order to begin to answer this question, Traub considers three types of texts, legal, gynecological, and theatrical, and makes a brief foray across the English Channel into France. What is important for her discussion is that France did prosecute female sodomites, but only under very specific conditions, namely, only when penetration with an "artificial" device (i.e., a dildo, that famous "artificial penis") occurred.

French sodomy, by definition, entails penetration. . . . Neither a Frenchwoman's desire for another woman, nor any nonpenetrative acts she might commit were crimes, but the prosthetic supplementation of her body was grounds for execution. (Traub 1994, 66)
Traub mentions the prosecution of female sodomites in France not merely to catalog interesting differences between French and English law of the period; what is more important for her argument is the connection between French statutes and English gynecological discourse. The French were worried about dildoes; what got the English hot under the collar was the dangerous potential of the fabled enlarged clitoris of the tribade, an organ which could presumably "enable a woman to take the part of a man."

(Greenblatt 1988, 67) In both cases, it is the supplement which signifies maleness that presents the threat. In Traub's words:

Primarily at issue, it seems to me, is not sexuality but gender. In England and in France, in gynecology and the law, it is not woman's desire for other women, but her usurpation of male prerogatives that incites writers to record and thus reveal the anxieties of their (and our) culture.

(Traub 1994, 69)

Thus it is not female sexual and affectional desire for other women that pose the threat here, but rather females unjustly seizing the privileges of manhood. In this formulation, women's desire for one another is subordinated to the envy and appropriation of maleness; indeed, that desire for another woman can be said to virtually disappear. The tribade does not desire women, rather she wants to become man. This formulation, of course, is far from dead, and appears ready to thrive into the twenty-first century. Manhood in all its glory is back at the center again.
But what of texts that do allow for the possibility of desire between women, without the trappings of dildoes, enlarged clitorises,\(^{11}\) the implicit desire to be a man? Do such texts exist, and, if the discourse of supplementarity and female usurpation can be said to reiterate and enforce male privilege, what purpose might an ostensibly female-centered text serve?

According to Traub, "non-supplemented" female homoerotic desire does appear in the context of theatrical texts.

whereas such practices are not recorded by gynecology and the law, they are the subject of many early modern stage plays. From Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1594-95) to his collaboration with Fletcher on *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1613), from Heywood's *The Golden Age* (1611) to Shirley's *The Bird in a Cage* (1632-33), what we might call, not a little anachronistically, "femme-femme" love is registered as a viable if ultimately untenable state. (Traub 1994, 69)

Here's the rub: women get to be together as women on the stage, but only as representations of the "ultimately untenable." This effect is achieved differently in each of the plays mentioned, but the final outcome is always the same: "the dramatic process . . . is . . . to pose eroticism between women as an option, only to displace it through the force of a seemingly 'natural,' ultimately more powerful heterosexual impulse." (Traub 1994, 77) This scenario begins to make clear the striking differences between what male sodomy and female homoeroticism represented in Renaissance England.

Whereas the male sodomite was a threat evocative of treason, love between

\(^{11}\)I am unable to verify if this is the correct spelling for the plural of clitoris. No dictionary at my disposal lists such a plural form, although each dictionary notes the plural for penis as either penises or penes. Is the possibility of a plurality of clitoris(es)(i) unthinkable? Well, it's just an oversight I'm sure.
women, as long as both parties involved avoided the dreaded usurpation of maleness, was an entertaining and titillating little lark that would always be displaced in the end. Heterosexuality in the context of patriarchal control was simply much too powerful for mere women to represent a genuine threat. As long as women are represented as safely married and bearing children by the end of the story, all is right with the world.

Given these general trends, the absence of female homoeroticism in both versions of *The Tempest* cannot be viewed as an aberration. If these representations are somewhat entertaining, but not particularly important or threatening, who really cares if they are present in any given play or not? In Traub's words:

> Existing independently of the representational nexus of sodomy and tribadism, bodily supplementation and gender appropriation, these theatrical representations suggest that "feminine" homoerotic desires were dramatized precisely because they did not signify. (Traub 1994, 80)

If these desires do not signify, it does not matter if they are present or not. They are simply not important.

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Miranda, Aretha, Caliban/os, Stephano and Trinculo, the (probably, but not always) non-existent woman-desiring women. They are the losers in the traditional romance narrative. In a story typical in its politics, if not the power of its rendering, Shakespeare commodifies Miranda, and Prospero secures victory and superiority over the dark and savage Caliban, and the sodomitical/treasonous Stephano and Trinculo. Prospero, emblem of whiteness and manliness, comes out the clear winner in this story, even if his
future prospects are not joyous. "[R]etire me to my Milan, where/ Every third thought shall be my grave." (V. i. 311-12) His personal happiness is not the main issue here, however. This story has a happy ending because the world is back in order, and he is on top.

1982. Women's lib. Black power. The American Indian Movement. Gay Liberation. Things are better now, right? Mazursky's modern rendition of Shakespeare's text vehemently suggests otherwise. He is not a blatant racist or sexist in the mold of the Moral Majority or Ku Klux Klan, yet his rendering of *The Tempest* does more to support and reiterate the centrality and superiority of the white male than Shakespeare's seventeenth century text. For Mazursky, in keeping with Shakespeare's original, some women are objects attached to men who have no story of their own. By the end of the film, Antonia goes back to Phillip to again takes up the role of the compliant "little woman" who gratefully upholds the patriarchal prerogative. Miranda is poised to do the same with Freddie. But this is not enough for Mazursky. He goes beyond Shakespeare in portraying a woman with at least partial subjectivity; Aretha is a woman with desire. Mazursky portrays this desire, but apparently only to dash it through the ultimate and inevitable disappearance of Aretha and her desire. White women get a glimpse of what "progress" might mean, but only to hear, "NO! NO! NO!" And the theatrical device of the clown accomplishes a similar effect with both Calibanos and the gay boys of the film. They have become merely amusing and entertaining; they do not represent any sort of real threat to Phillip. Mazursky has not updated his film for a more egalitarian age; he reiterates white male heterosexual dominance, *only more so.*
Thus far I have considered *The Tempest* from within the confines of
the text. I have examined the details of the narrative itself and made an
argument that emphasizes the importance of the role played by each
particular character. In my reading, each character stands in for a particular
 politicized identity, for example, Prospero for white manhood and Caliban
for dark manhood.1 I have treated each character not as an individual with a
deep, complex and changing character, but rather as something closer to an
archetype, and considered the political significance of the relationships
between these characters and their respective fates in an archetypal romance.
The suitability of this strategy is alluded to in a passage by Northrop Frye:

> The essential difference between novel and
romance lies in the conception of characterization.
The romancer does not attempt to create "real
people" so much as stylized figures which expand

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1 It could be argued that this strategy involves imposing twentieth-century categorizations upon a
Renaissance drama. My response to that objection can only be a simple and straightforward, "I confess."
How can a twentieth-century reader do otherwise? I take as my model the notion that literary criticism, or
indeed reading in more general sense, involves a production of meaning rather than the discovery of a fixed
meaning inhering in the text as dictated by the author. Roland Barthes and others have proclaimed the
defat of the author as the source of and controller of meaning, and the incorporation of this insight is
reflected in Barthes' own critical practice. In her discussion of Barthes' critical reading of Balzac's
*Sarrasine*, Catherine Belsey explains: "when Barthes reads *Sarrasine* he transforms it by the application of
existing forms of knowledge, employing post-Saussurean linguistics, Lacanian psychoanalysis and Marxist
economic theory to produce a meaning which was literally not available to Balzac and his contemporary
readers.‖ (Belsey 1980, 139) She goes on to explain that this decentering of the author does not merely
involve a shift from author to critic as privileged site of meaning production or 'genius.' Rather, our
attention should be focused on discursive practices rather than 'brilliant individuals,' be they author or critic.
"Possibilities of meaning are not discovered by transcendent geniuses who cleverly (and perversely) refuse
the obvious reading: on the contrary, they circulate between text, ideology and readers whose subjectivity is
discursively constructed and so displaced across a range of discourses. Thus author and reader . . . no
longer present the symmetrical poles of an intersubjective process understood as communication. Instead
critical practice is seen as a process of releasing the positions from which the text is intelligible. Liberated
from the fixity of the communication model, the text is available for production in the process of reading.‖
(Belsey 1980, 140). In terms of my own critical practice, a reading which focuses on racial and sexual
politics can be viewed as a privileged perspective from which to "[release] the positions from which the
text is intelligible" in the context of the American political landscape of the 1990s.
into psychological archetypes. It is in the romance that we find Jung's libido, anima, and shadow reflected in the hero, heroine, and villain respectively. That is why the romance so often radiates a glow of subjective intensity that the novel lacks, and why a suggestion of allegory is constantly creeping in around its fringes. (Frye 1957, 304)

I do not want to take Frye's formulation at face value, but rather use it as a starting point for considering romance as a form of allegory. Where I differ with Frye is in his assertion of romance as a psychological allegory. If we remove psychology from the realm of objective and scientific discourse, as poststructuralism enables us to do, psychology and all other social sciences are revealed as highly politicized discourses. The values inherent in making a simple correspondence between hero and libido, heroine and anima, and villain and shadow can no longer be viewed as neutral scientific or psychological observations. These correspondences arise out of a political context and have political effects; thus romance can be considered primarily a political rather than psychological allegory. Romance is a story which has a moral. The moral, however, does not reveal the truth about "human nature," but rather about "right and wrong" vis-à-vis dominant political orders and/or discourses.

By now, however, it is time to get off that train. More specifically, it is time to move outside of both Shakespeare's and Mazursky's narratives and consider both how they are structured, and how their respective structures affect their productions of meaning. I am brought to this point by my residual puzzlement over the conclusions I arrived at in my previous chapter regarding these two authors. More specifically, how is that those situated as Other vis-à-vis the white heterosexual male are dealt a worse blow by
Mazursky than by Shakespeare? Part of this result can be explained through the elements of the story I have already discussed: Mazursky performed certain alterations on the characters of Shakespeare's play and changed the narrative in ways that strongly affect the political import of his work. Nonetheless, these changes don't fully explain why Mazursky's text is so suffocating relative to Shakespeare's, and it is this lingering uncertainty which has prompted me to consider the importance of structure to the meaning of these two texts. Shakespeare's text is bad enough for the Other; why is Mazursky's so much worse?

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Mazursky's *Tempest* represents Everyman's fantasy. "Fed up with the city life, the rat race? How about an adventure to a (practically) deserted Greek island with a beautiful young woman? YES YOU TOO can escape, can take that trip you always wanted, can finally find that beauty and tranquillity that you've earned after all your years of hard work and sacrifice." The film works in a manner similar to an advertisement and takes the spectator along for the ride. We get to dream for two short hours that it is we who are on the island experiencing the peace and beauty of mythical Greece. And apparently all that separates us from realizing this dream is money. If only we had the money, we *could* experience what the characters in the film do. Their lives are not extraordinary in any way that makes them unreachable to the average person, outside of their relative wealth. Phillip, Miranda and Aretha have gone off to their exotic island, yet everyday annoyances and contingencies have followed them. They get hot and cranky at each other, the help (Calibanos) is recalcitrant and annoying, and the food just isn't that great.
What is important about this is that the fantasy offered to the spectator in this film is realist fantasy. What separates us from them is the practical concern of wealth, not the cosmological gulf between the "natural" and the "supernatural." The fantasy offered up in this film takes the form of a commodity which can be purchased for the right price, and this sort of fantasy does not remove the film from the genre of realism. In other words, the film appears to be a representation of "the real world," a world that we can identify with and imagine ourselves to be a part of. There is one important exception to this characterization, yet it is not sufficient to alter the overwhelmingly realist perspective of the film as a whole. Phillip as the Prospero character retains the latter's power to create tempests out of thin air, yet this gesture stands out as a definite anomaly relative to the rest of the film. It only makes sense as a specific reference to Prospero and the central event of the original play, and without the credibility it gains from that specific citation of Shakespeare, it would have no place in this film. Phillip's storm-conjuring power must be there in order for the film to reiterate Shakespeare's plot, yet in terms of the narrative strategy it does not fit.

A realist fantasy need not be an uninteresting one, however, as Mazursky's film amply demonstrates. It sweeps us up, carries us across the

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2 A more technical discussion and definition than the one which follows is provided by Catherine Belsey in Critical Practice. "Classic realism is characterized by illusionism, narrative which leads to closure, and a hierarchy of discourses which establishes the 'truth' of the story.... Classic realist narrative...turns on the creation of enigma through the precipitation of disorder which throws into disarray the conventional cultural and signifying systems. Among the commonest sources of disorder at the level of plot in classic realism are murder, war, a journey or love. But the story moves inevitably towards closure which is also disclosure, the dissolution of enigma through the re-establishment of order, recognizable as a reinstatement or a development of the order which is understood to have preceded the events of the story itself." (Belsey 1980, 70) In the case of Mazursky's Tempest, the connections with this formula are clear. The film participates in the illusion that it represents reality. The early scenes of the film precipitate disorder through the apparent breakup of Antonia and Phillip's marriage, as well as through his abandonment of his long-standing and successful career working with Alonso. As the main character, Phillip is engaged with issues of journey and love in a variety of ways. And finally, of course, there is definite closure and reinstatement of order as the finale of the film reunites Phillip with his wife Antonia, and they return home to New York to take up their old life.
threshold, and captures us in its embrace. It does not let go, or allow us to step back across the threshold and look upon it from the outside. It seduces and holds us tight. It feels good. Being held in just one embrace does have its drawbacks, though. It's hard to stop and think, for instance, when caught up in the heat of passion. Or to imagine the embrace of another when this lover pleases so well. This film does not incite reflection or critical thinking; it seeks to elide itself as film and draw us up in the sensations it produces.

For instance, it requires a very deliberate distancing which goes distinctly against the grain of the film for a viewer to notice that Calibanos has been made impotent, Aretha disappears, and Antonia loses her career ambitions. The film draws us into the characterizations and the plot and produces a dramatic pleasure which strongly favors feeling over this type of reflection. The film attempts to be seamless entertainment, while at the same time it reiterates relationships of domination. There is nothing in the narrative structure to counteract this process of mystification.

Shakespeare's narrative, however, invites active questioning by the viewer in a number of ways. Indeed, his texts have been referred to as "interrogative texts" for this very reason. The interrogative text is not unlike what Bertolt Brecht referred to as "epic theater," and indeed Brecht had a very strong interest in Renaissance drama. For this reason, it is worth considering some of the particulars of Brecht's ideas, as articulated by Walter Benjamin, and consider their pertinence to Shakespeare's work. In the most general sense, epic theater strives to avoid the seductions of works like Mazursky's and their attendant numbing of critical faculties:

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Brecht differentiates his epic theater from the dramatic theater in the narrower sense, whose theory was formulated by Aristotle. . . . Brecht's drama eliminated the Aristotelian catharsis, the purging of the emotions through empathy with the stirring fate of the hero. . . . instead of identifying with the characters, the audience should be educated to be astonished at the circumstances under which they function. (Benjamin 1968, 150)

The attention paid to education, astonishment and circumstances by Brecht reveals that his motives in structuring his theater went far beyond the ideas of either entertainment or realism. Indeed, his theater was blatantly political and theatrical in design and sought to draw attention to the very mystifications reproduced and reinstated by dramatic theater. Brecht's theater attempts to incite reflection and participation by an audience which he seeks to mobilize rather than charm.

There are several strategies cited by Benjamin which Brecht applied to further his aims. For instance, the interruption: "epic theater moves in spurts. . . . This brings about intervals which . . . impair the illusion of the audience and paralyze its readiness for empathy. These intervals are reserved for the spectators' critical reaction . . ." (Benjamin 1968, 153) In attempting to make the link between Shakespeare and Brecht, this one is easy. *The Tempest* is jam-packed with interruptions. For instance at I. ii. 317-20, Ariel breaks in on a conversation between Prospero and Caliban in order to allow Prospero to tell him . . . who knows what. We know that Prospero has given him another task, but we don't know what it is, since it is only whispered into Ariel's ear and we as spectators are not privy to the
information. There is no substance here to move the plot along—this is solely a gesture of interruption.

There is also another type of interruption which occurs with considerable frequency in the play. Prospero seems to be taken with making asides, ostensibly to himself, although of course the audience gains insight into his thoughts through this device. For instance, when he is busy manipulating the budding relationship between Ferdinand and Miranda in I.ii., he sees fit to comment first on how enchanted they are by each other in one aside, and just a few lines later on how the courtship should be prevented from progressing too easily, "lest too light winning MAKE the prize light." (I. ii. 452-3) In this case, the interruption carries important meaning in promoting an understanding of the plot, at least from Prospero's perspective, but it also constitutes an interruption in the flow of the narrative. It is a commentary in the middle of "the action" which draws attention to the "constructedness" of the plot.

In addition, there are numerous incidents of interruptions through the interjection of magic, in the person of Ariel, into the center of dramatic scenes. The most notable of these is the interruption of Antonio and Sebastian in their nearly successful attempt to murder Alonso. At II. i. 300, as they raise their swords to strike Alonso down, Ariel enters with a song to awaken Gonzalo and succeeds in preventing the assassination. This interruption does not represent the "natural" unfolding of a dramatic scene with which an audience could identify; the interruption seems artificial, contrived, and external to the logic of the central characters of the scene. It is a blatant manipulation of the action which again makes a gap or interval available to the audience within which they can formulate a critical response.
A related strategy employed by Brecht to alienate the audience from drama and preclude empathy was to blatantly and deliberately put on a show. Rather than attempting a representational style which aims to "convince the audience that the action on stage is occurring in a recognizably real world," (Sokolova 1992, 25) Brecht's work was deliberately theatrical and called attention to its status as theater rather than "real life." One approach to this is described by Benjamin: "an actor should reserve for himself the possibility of stepping out of character artistically. At the proper moment he should insist on portraying a man who reflects about his part." (Benjamin 1968, 153)

Prospero is probably the best example of a character who moves in and out of his role at various points in the play. The most entertaining example of this is at I. ii., when he is first describing to Miranda who they "really" are and how they came to be on the island. At line 66 he begins to expound on the tragic story of how he lost his dukedom to the perfidy of his brother Antonio, when suddenly, at line 77, he stops to ask "Dost thou attend me?" Miranda replies, "Sir, most heedfully," and he continues. Yet only a few lines later, he stops again; "Thou attend'st not?", to which she replies, "O, good sir, I do." Finally, at line 106 he asks one last time, "Dost thou hear?" Well, she's still listening, but that is not what is at issue here. It's as if Prospero stops in the middle of his recitation to draw attention to the superb quality of his performance. "I'm putting on my best show here, are you paying attention?" He steps out of character for a moment, not to reflect on his part, as Brecht/Benjamin would have it, but rather to draw attention to and gather praise for his acting. It's a virtuoso performance, and he wants to make sure that both Miranda and the audience appreciate it as such.
The notion of Prospero as actor can also be investigated in ways that are not directly addressed in Benjamin's discussion of epic theater. He can be located in at least three different levels of performance in *The Tempest*. The first is akin to the level I have just described, but it can be seen operating in a much more blatant manner. At I. ii. 476-82, Prospero is in the midst of conjuring up the trials for Ferdinand that will prove his worth as Miranda's suitor when Prospero stops to reprimand Miranda:

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! Silence! One word more
    Shall make me chide thee, if not hate thee. What,
    An advocate for an impostor? Hush!
    Thou Think'st there is no more such shapes as he,
    Having seen but him and Caliban. Foolish wench!
    To th' most of men this is a Caliban,
    And they to him are angels.
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Does Prospero really mean all that he says? He is at times an angry and temperamental character, and perhaps he has a father's reservations about giving up his maiden daughter to another man, but is he actually on the verge of hating Miranda? Genuine hatred for Miranda is unlikely here, nor is it plausible that he considers Ferdinand a Caliban among men. What is more likely is that much of the emotion he expresses is play-acting designed to further his plans for Miranda and Ferdinand. He is an actor in the play he is directing.

Which indeed leads directly to Prospero's second level of performance. With the invaluable assistance of Ariel, he is the director of much of the action in the play in a completely literal sense. The power of his art is so great that he actually has more control over the action than any "real" director could ever have. It is not only that he is able to conjure up storms; his role often seems like that of a puppet master. He is constantly
putting people to sleep, as if he has decided to take off that puppet for a moment because he has found another one he needs or wants to play with for a little while. His omniscience, again with Ariel's help, about what is happening all over the island with different groups of people also gives him the power to cast his view on any of a number of stages he has designed and put into play. He is the director of this play in many important ways.

Yet not entirely. On the third level of his performance, Prospero, like the other characters, is also subjected to the vicissitudes of fate, or perhaps the Big Director in the Sky. After all, he did lose his dukedom to Antonio and was put into exile against his wishes. He becomes part of the action, or caught up in the drama while in this stance, unlike the other two positions he occupies.

Nothing is ever settled, though. There is no single Prospero that dominates over the rest. And if there is no single Prospero, there is no single Caliban either. Prospero has more mobility than any of the other characters, but Shakespeare's strategy of producing fluid characterizations and unstable subject positions allows for Caliban to be both a potential rapist and conspirator, as well as symbol of strength and pride for twentieth-century activists and writers in the struggle against colonization.

In light of all these strategies, readers of *The Tempest* can never fix a single meaning for the text as a whole, or the truth about human beings or Life. The meanings perpetually shift, turn, refuse to settle. And with these shiftings, the audience is left space to think, interpret, and wrangle with contradictions. Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is not a closed text. It provides openings and prompts questions not only through the content of the actual
lines of the play, but through the multiple way in which it constructs and disrupts meaning. It is indeed an interrogative text.

Not so Mazursky's *Tempest*. In Mazursky's film, there are no interruptions, nor do the actors ever step out of their parts. On the contrary, they attempt to develop them with depth and insight, and in so doing keep them safely enclosed within the confines of a unified narrative structure. The characters do not act on multiple levels; they are simply in and of the narrative. For Mazursky, success involves telling a coherent story that "makes sense" and is credible and compelling. He tells a story that seems real, that an audience can identify with and become immersed in. He does not provoke us to distance ourselves from the feelings of the drama; that would involve a failure in the film's ability to provoke the "suspension of disbelief." For Mazursky, filmmaking does not involve presenting a story with blatant manipulations or contradictions that leave the audience wondering what to think, or indeed, thinking at all.

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It's time to take that balloon and blow it up again until it is nice and big and firm and ready to . . .

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If romance narratives reproduce hierarchy, what would constitute resistance to those narratives, that violence? Can one simply name the problem in big, bold letters and assume that justice will be done?

I am reminded of Mieke Bal's discussion of the work of Malek Alloula during the "Thirteenth International Summer Institute for Semiotic and Structural Studies" at the University of Hawai'i. In her course entitled "The Politics of Looking: Semiotics at the Intersection of Narratology,
Rhetoric, Feminist Theory and Visual Analysis," Bal developed an idea which she termed the "politics of citation." The work of Alloula's which most interested her was one which purported to critique the racism and exploitation of Orientalism, *The Colonial Harem.*

Ah, but the photographs! Alloula's critique involved selecting beautiful and typically "oriental" photographs of Middle Eastern women, and then lovingly and artfully arranging them in a book which took on the qualities of a rather expensive coffee table book. In other words, his "critique" became an object of enjoyment, yet another site of the exploitation of the "oriental" woman by the white male. One gets a palpable sense of Alloula lurking and drooling in the shadows at the marvels of his collection. His text is much more successful at reproducing Orientalism than at subverting it.

I wish the same were not true of John Fowles and his novel *The Collector.* As I began this project, this book appeared to represent a critique of romance narratives, as an anti-romance perhaps or as a way of bringing the inequities of *The Tempest* into relief. And there are those who argue that his works represent a critique of masculinity, albeit a seriously flawed critique. I was able to persist in that belief until the moment I picked up the book once again and began to reread it. That is, until the moment that it once again captured me in its horror. A woman reading this book cannot help but feel like yet another one of Frederick Clegg's specimens, whether it be a butterfly pinned to a board, or Miranda Grey trapped in a dungeon. I could not escape the force of the narrative, even as a diligent scholar simply

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out seeking little clues to support an academic argument. Whereas Mazursky's narrative seduces and rather gently draws the audience into its dangerous pleasures, Fowles's narrative takes the reader by force on the very first page --"before she came to be my guest here . . ."--and compels her to witness what is far too easy to imagine as her own fate.

* * * * *

In the sophisticated forms of fiction, as in the sophisticated practice of sex, much of the art consists of delaying climax within the framework of desire in order to prolong the pleasurable act itself. (Scholes 1969, 1-2)

People today always want to get things, they no sooner think of it they want to get it in their hands, but I am different, old-fashioned, I enjoy thinking about the future and letting things develop all in good time. Easy does it, as Uncle Dick used to say when he was into a big one. (Fowles 1963, 101)

Uncle Dick? Into a big one? Uncle Dick is Frederick Clegg's uncle, and ostensibly a fisherman, but the suggestiveness of this language could not be more blatant. Someone is having sex here, but it is not women. My exclusive use of the female pronoun in connection with the horrors of this novel was no accident. The male reader of The Collector, to the extent that he conforms to ideal masculinity, has a treat in store with this book. When

5This refers back to a point that I made in Chapter I, namely, that Clegg does not represent an abnormal deviation from masculinity, but rather the normal only more so. Bruce Woodcock states it nicely as follows: "all men are in one sense or another complicit in a system of power relations rooted in forms of appropriation and violence as means of dominance and control. The pervasive male ways of seeing women are an appropriation, as are the patriarchal forms of the social structure which limit and confine women to certain roles, economic expectations and restricted opportunities. Their raison d'être is the perpetuation of male privilege in different manifestations. In sexual terms, Clegg exemplifies the forms masculinity takes in the contemporary world. All men may not act out the fantasies Clegg has in the manner which he does, just as all men may not be actual rapists; but potentially they can and are because of the relation of social power and dominance they maintain over women. The violent forms into which sexual relations have been shaped, whether it be rape, pornography, prostitution, marital coercion, actual physical violence,
Robert Scholes refers to the pleasurable act of fiction above, he is referring specifically to the works of John Fowles, to writing he has characterized as "orgastic." But again, for whom? How does this novel simultaneously enact male sexuality and terrorize women? How does the novel represent and become the perfect embodiment of masculine sexuality?

* * * *

There are two portraits one can draw of Frederick Clegg. By the end of the novel, we know certain facts about him, both via his own and Miranda's narrative. Through this information, he emerges as a pathetic, if extremely dangerous, little worm. His language is trite, his intelligence narrow and limited, and his appearance is ordinary to the point of banality. All he really has going in his favor is the physical strength which allows him to literally overpower Miranda and the meticulous attention to detail which allows him to carry out his plan without a hitch. What makes this novel frightening, however, is the Clegg that is obliquely created through the narrative structure. This Frederick Clegg is omnipotent. He occupies all time, all space.

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"Nothing nasty, that was never until what I'll explain later." (Fowles 1963, 4) Very early on, we know that this story is over. In other words, it is a dead story, an object that Clegg controls. He is recounting it retrospectively, not in the midst of the action. The reader gets no opportunity to believe that there might be surprises in store, that the story might move in unanticipated or unpredictable directions. And if we cannot guess from the beginning about precisely what is going to happen, we are psychological pressure, or whatever, are all constructed to embody and enforce dominantly male prerogatives." (Woodcock 1984, 33-34)
given very specific clues. Blatant foreshadowing, one might say. For instance, on page thirty-nine: "I didn't want to kill her, that was the last thing I wanted." What does "last thing" actually refer to? And on page ninety-four: "It was like we had reached a dead end." The outcome of this story is predestined and the sense of impending and inevitable doom is overwhelming. All that is left for the reader is to witness the details of how the narrative unfolds.

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Suddenly I said, I love you. It's driven me mad. She said, "I see," in a queer grave voice. She didn't look at me any more then. (Fowles 1963, 34)

Miranda's voice is contained in and by quotation marks. She occupies a discreet place in Clegg's narrative, one determined by him. He is not contained in this way. His verbal utterances blend and flow with his writing; we can never be sure where one begins and the other ends. Perhaps because it does not matter. His voice is everywhere; it permeates and stains the space of reading in its entirety. It is inescapable.

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Yet a reader might protest that Miranda has written the entire second section of The Collector, that she does have a voice, and an eloquent one at that. The book is divided into four sections, with a diary written by Miranda constituting the second chapter. It is perhaps not a perfect or empowering representation of her voice, since the diary comes to us through Clegg's hands after her death. It is also diminished by being contained and
surrounded by Clegg's narrative by virtue of its placement in the novel. Nonetheless, her voice is there, and that counts for something, doesn't it?

It does not matter.

Or, it does not matter for Miranda's sake. Like everything else, it matters for Clegg and for the reader as voyeur. What Clegg and the reader are able to observe through the inclusion of Miranda's diary in The Collector is a trapped and pathetic animal frantically scrambling to find some way, any way to survive. She tries everything she can think of, from the pose of helpful friend, to angry woman, to violence against Clegg, to seduction. Nothing works. But of course we already know that. We know, before we even begin her diary, that she is going to die. Her voice does not matter; it is pathetic and futile. But it is fun to watch her try to escape, isn't it? Now that she's safely dead?

What is important here is that if you enjoyed the first chapter—surprise!—you get to do it all over again! The pleasure of foreplay, that is, watching her squirm, fight, weaken, and almost die, can be repeated before the climax. Remember those rules about good fiction, fishing and sex! Hold off as long as you can! The inclusion of Miranda's diary means we have to/get to (depending on whether we are female or male readers) witness the horror of what is happening all over again. And if we are women, we now have to witness and identify with how she felt as she was slowly losing her

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6 "by enclosing Miranda's narrative within Clegg's, in a certain sense the book contains her within his ongoing power, mounted like a specimen for our appraisal and gaze." (Woodcock 1984, 41)

7 Pamela Cooper writes: "Miranda's narrative, while its embedding in Clegg's memoir suggests stylistically the triumph of the author-as-pornographer, does repudiate the voicelessness which pornography attempts to impose on women. It also dominates the novel in terms of length, and symbolically opens Clegg's closed, solitary world by functioning as the vehicle for some of Fowles's own philosophical beliefs." (Cooper 1991, 36) As I go on to explain, I find this argument completely unconvincing. What does it mean to present the female voice, only to quash it and render it utterly insignificant?
life. The book keeps pounding, deeper and more painfully by the minute. There is no relief.

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Then the climax.

And what a climax it is. Clegg doesn't simply wander down to the basement and find Miranda dead one morning. The reader is given the blow-by-blow on every minute detail of her death. Not the tiniest pebble can be left unturned when so much pleasure is at stake. Every blemish on her face, every utterance from her mouth; every thrashing, crying out and drop of perspiration is described and fawned over with loving attention. *It takes Miranda ten pages to die.* It is the ultimate pleasure.

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Someone had sex. It was not me. As I reread this novel, I continually felt the urge to stand up and walk outside for some air. I finally did. It did not help. Reading this material was a suffocating and depressive experience. This book produced me as a passive and frightened observer, not as an engaged, interested and thoughtful reader. It is not an open text; it envelopes the reader in a narrative which is as closed and tight as Miranda's cell.

In political terms, then, it can not be considered a text which will bring about social change. By reproducing and eroticizing male dominance and violence in its most horrific form, the book is not a call for women to "take back the night!" On the contrary, it is much more likely to frighten us and keep us off the streets in an effort to avoid Miranda's fate. The message of this book, both structurally and in terms of the narrative itself, is that there is no way out. All women can do is hunker down and not get caught in the

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8Feminist have drawn much attention to the term "at stake," and with good reason. My use of sexist language in this context is completely deliberate.
first place. Stay off the streets, don't talk to strange men, and perhaps above all, feel lucky if you've got a man that's only got the "little" problems of someone like G.P.

G.P. He is an unrepentant womanizer, a self-absorbed egotist, and a man twenty years older than Miranda whom she does not find at all physically attractive. And as I hinted at in my first chapter, Fowles has given us the means to see in G.P. a man who is not radically different from Clegg, but rather Clegg in a different and somewhat more attractive form. Pamela Cooper explains:

> it is through Paston that the book sets up its most striking irony: in committing herself to the artist-mentor, Miranda is effectively choosing one collector over another, for both Clegg and G.P. exploit and try to control women—one through an icy celibacy and the other through an indifferent promiscuity. (Cooper 1991, 40)

Yet despite the connection between these two men, by the end of her captivity, Miranda is willing to wholeheartedly embrace G.P. She still knows that he is cruel, but it no longer matters. "G.P./ I shall be hurt, lost, battered and buffeted. But it will be like being in a gale of light, after this black hole." (Fowles 1963, 266) What the book succeeds in doing is naturalizing collecting and narrowing the realm of choice to that between "good" and "bad" collectors. Given the consequences of being trapped with a "bad" collector, women must feel grateful if they are lucky enough to find a man who does not perform the most brutal forms of violence upon them.

And then there is the question of women's desire. As always, women must denounce their desire in order to survive. It is significant in this story that Miranda is not attracted to G.P., but by the end she will gladly take him
anyway. As always, female desire is too costly, and this narrative reiterates that it must be sacrificed. "My body doesn't count any more. If he just wants that he can have it." (Fowles 1963, 266) It is also significant that her other important form of desire, art, is also at risk with G.P. In his words: "The art of love's your line: not the love of art." (Fowles 1963, 169) Miranda is by now ready to give up everything, but, too bad for her. She got stuck with the wrong kind of collector.

Fowles, Mazursky and Shakespeare. Shakespeare opens some space for disruption, but all in all these three do a fine job of reproducing hierarchy and domination. Can Jeanette Winterson help us out of this mess?
CHAPTER 5
LE GRAND FINALE

It is now time to end the critique and to gesture toward the more positive possibilities which constitute the wish list of my first chapter. I have shown Shakespeare, Mazursky and Fowles to be, albeit to varying degrees, the agents of the perpetuation of hierarchy so they're no help. Is there hope for something different, something more egalitarian and fluid? What follows represents some tiny little glimmers . . .

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Well, I was walking along one day, no, reading along many days, with all my favorite pals. Well, I didn't actually know all of them yet, but I thought I would like to know them. Or at least I thought I should want to know them. Queer theorists, I mean. I had heard a lot about them, I knew a few of them well enough to say "hey" to, and I thought once I got to know them better I would fit in just fine. I knew that they were practically the coolest thing going, and it seemed like for once I was going to be the right person in the right place at the right time.

And I knew what to do. I had Jeanette tagging along with me, and I knew that if I could get Jeanette and these theorist folks talking with each other, her being so famous and all, I would be home free. I would fit right in. Well, they did and I did, right from the first second we all met. Only problem is, I fell asleep. It turns out they didn't need me to translate, iron out their differences, make sure that they acted with decorum and respect for one another. Fact is, they acted like they had known each other all along. They were interested in all the same things and even sounded alike. Well, Jeanette does have a way with words, and a better sense of humor than most
of those jokers, but after a while I began to lose track of who was talking. They all blended so well that I couldn't tell them apart anymore. And it kind of like hypnotized me. My head was going back and forth, back and forth, like following some kind of pendulum. Jeanette, theorists, Jeanette, theorists, Jeanette, theorists. A, A, B, B, C, C. And there just didn't seem to be much for me to do. Except notice, I guess. Not my idea of a thrill. So I dozed. I just kept thinking, do these guys already know each other?

Well, just so you know that I was noticing, that I wasn't completely wasting my time on this little venture, here's the A, B, and C of it.

"A"

"Elgin is a great man."
"Since when? You always said he was a little rat."
"I did not say he was a little rat. I said he was rather small and that unfortunately he had the look of a, well, I said a . . ."
"Rat!" screamed the Pea banging her stick on the door just by my head. She should have been a knife thrower in the circus. (Winterson 1993, 166)

In Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body*, Elgin is the cuckold, the third wheel, the odd man out. He begins the novel as Louise's successful doctor husband, only to end up divorced and physically shamed by the Louise's lover. You see, s/he pops him good. S/he takes it in the stomach him/herself, tosses his/her cookies all over "the white diamond tiles of [Elgin's] marble floor," (170) but at the end of the day it is Elgin lying
bleeding on the floor with the random tooth falling out of his mouth. You see, Elgin is not a Real Man.

There are lots of clues. A short time after meeting Louise, he decides to attend Cambridge, "a college outstanding for its sporting prowess,"

(34) in spite of the fact that he is "small, narrow-chested, short-sighted." (33) He is not only a ninety-pound weakling. No, Elgin's fate is even worse. His lot is to be plagued with "navy blue corduroys (size M) and . . . off-duty Viyella shirt (size S)." (35) Elgin is a pear.

Not only that, he is descended from Orthodox Jews, an outsider in the bosom of WASP culture. He is no longer interested in practicing Judaism; indeed, "[w]hen Louise encouraged him to get in touch with his parents he sent them a Christmas card." (35) Elgin has become "comfortable and cultivated and liberal." (35) Nonetheless, he remains marked as Outsider. His mother is dead, he is estranged from his father, and "[he] doesn't care about people. He never sees any people." (67)

Elgin is both an isolated man and the only significant male character in this novel, and the potential success of Winterson's work as a subversion of the sexist and heterosexist English literary canon is utterly dependent upon this characterization. At least if one considers the insights of the queen of queer literary theory, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick.¹ In her groundbreaking study, Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire, Sedgwick elaborates the notion of male homosociality and its role as a crucial underpinning of hierarchical society. Writing in "Sylvia Townsend Warner and the counterplot of lesbian fiction," Terry Castle explains the significance of Sedgwick's formulation:

¹Who is, oddly enough, a straight woman. I bring this up not to slur the "authenticity" of her work; I simply find her role a curiosity, to say the least.
Sedgwick argues that just as patriarchal culture has traditionally been organized around a ritualized "traffic" in women—the legal, economic, religious, and sexual exchange of women between men (as in the cherished institutions of heterosexual love and marriage)—so the fictions produced within patriarchal culture have tended to mimic, or represent, the same triangular structure. English literature is "homosocial"... to the extent that its hidden subject has always been male bonding—the bonding "between" two men through, around, or over, the body and soul of a woman. (Castle 1992, 129)

The homosocial bond, while ubiquitous, is not a simple or safe bond, however. While male homosociality enables patriarchy in a fundamental way, it also carries within itself a potent threat to that same structure. In particular, there is always a danger that these charged bonds between men will violate that tenuous yet indispensable boundary between homo-sociality and homo-sexuality. The consequences of such a transgression are enormous. To quote Castle once again:

If a man can become "like" a woman in the act of homosexual intercourse, what is to distinguish such a man from any woman? By doing away with the "female middle term" and blurring the putative difference between "male" and "female," the overt eroticization of male bonds undermines the very conceptual distinction on which modern patriarchy is founded. (Castle 1992, 130)

This male-female-male triangle is thus revealed to be a very tenuous thing. Not only is it confounded by eroticized bonds between men; it also loses its form and function if occupied by only one man. Namely, Elgin. In Written on the Body the triangle collapses entirely because male homosociality
depends upon the traffic in women between men, and poor Elgin doesn't even \textit{know} any men. And even if he did he could neither compete nor bond properly, since his manliness is constantly under question. Winterson's depiction of Elgin's isolation represents a literary subversion of patriarchy because it fails to represent any important connections between men.

What does it represent, then? Some other kind of triangle? A female-male-female triangle perhaps? According to Terry Castle's formulation, if Winterson were to meet that criteria, she would have produced a work of "lesbian fiction."\footnote{This conception follows upon Castle's idea that "lesbian fiction" has been undertheorized and cannot be simply considered either works depicting sexual relations between women, or works written by lesbian women. In her words: "Is a 'lesbian novel' simply any narrative depicting sexual relations between women? If this were the case, then any number of works by male writers, including Diderot's \textit{La Religieuse}, for example, or some of the other pornographic or semi-pornographic texts of male voyeurism, would fall under the rubric of lesbian fiction. Yet this does not feel exactly right. Would a lesbian novel be a novel, then, written by a lesbian? This can't be the case, or certain of Willa Cather's novels, say, or Marguerite Yourcenar's, would have to be classed as lesbian novels, when it is not clear that they really are. 'A novel written by a lesbian depicting sexual relations between women' might come closer, but relies too heavily on the opacities of biography and eros, and lacks a certain psychic and political specificity." (Castle 1992, 128)} It is not clear Winterson has done so, however, due to the ambiguity of the narrator's gender. As I mentioned in my introduction, there are clues to identify the narrator as female, and therefore there is a strong suggestion that the relationship between Louise and the narrator is a lesbian relationship. Yet these allusions are never represented as more than that and do not resolve the undecidability of the narrator's gender in any final or complete way. This residual ambiguity means that \textit{Written on the Body} does not unequivocally qualify as "lesbian fiction" in Castle's terms. Yet perhaps it does not need to.

Indeed, perhaps it is advantageous, from a postmodern perspective which advocates the free play of multiple subject positions and the circulation of mutable and multiple pleasures, that Winterson has not filled in the blanks. She has cleared a space, through the voiding of male
homosociality, and then left the space open. *Written on the Body* does not have to be read as a novel about a passionate love affair between two women. It is love between a woman and we-don't-know-who. And to carry this idea further, since Real Women are in large part defined by their relationships to Real Men, we can't really be sure if Louise is a real woman after all. She might be a bulldagger in drag. We just can't be sure.

Let the play begin.

* * * * *

"B"

How embarrassing. I am one of the theorists implicated in this unceasing swing between Winterson and theory. She almost seems to echo my concerns, albeit in different language and within a different context. A, A, B, B, blah, blah, blah, blah.

I have proposed in an earlier chapter that an important source of the social and political liabilities attached to homosexuality are related to the phenomenon of heterosexual aversion toward homosexual practices. I argued further that the intelligibility of this aversion is dependent upon the deployment of medical discourses which associate homosexuality with disease. Finally, in order to interrupt the linkage of homosexuality and aversion, I proposed that Western cultural understandings of same-sex sexuality must be unhinged from medical models which constitute meaning through such binary dualisms as health/illness or normalcy/deviance.

But how to enact such an unhinging? A glimpse at the notion of dualisms more broadly considered, i.e. the good and the evil, the high and the low, and their respective perversions is of use here:
the concept of perversion always embodied what has now become a fundamental and crucial proposition. . . . It is the proposition that what a culture designates as alien, utterly other and different, is never so. Culture exists in a relationship of difference with the alien, which is also a relationship of fundamental, antagonistic interdependence. What is constructed as absolutely other is, in fact, inextricably related—most obviously in terms of the binary opposition (Dollimore 1992, 22)

Thus there can never be a distinct inside and outside, a self-evident Same and totally alien Other. And in Winterson's work, there can never be a simple differentiation between health and sickness, or even life and death. In her hands, the distinctions are blurred and begin to lose their meaning.

The difference between Winterson's rendering of illness and a more traditional medical model becomes clear when one considers how Western culture conceives of illness. Is it the result of an invasion from the Outside perhaps? By alien and hostile forces? The germ theory of disease would seem to support this notion. The germ is initially outside the body, yet somehow violates its borders and wreaks havoc on the integrity of the internal systems. Inside, outside; it's easy. Sometimes we and/or our bodies let our guard down, but in spite of these occasional lapses, essentially speaking the borders are easily defined and clearly distinguishable. The body has its own integrity; an integrity under siege to be sure, but a distinct and pure being. It is the Same, the germ is the Other.

That is, until Winterson gets hold of this subject. In the novel, Louise is ill with chronic lymphocytic leukaemia /sic/. Already the distinctions blur, because it is not clear what causes cancer. But the blurriness gets even worse.
In the secret places of her thymus gland Louise is making too much of herself. Her faithful biology depends on regulation but the white T-cells have turned bandit. . . . It used to be their job to keep her body safe from enemies on the outside. . . . Now they are the enemies on the inside. The security forces have rebelled . . .

Here they come, hurtling through the bloodstream trying to pick a fight. There's no-one to fight but you Louise. You're the foreign body now. (Winterson 1993, 115-16)

Notions of inside/outside, Same and Other are no longer intelligible within this schema which transforms the immune system into disease, and the Self into a foreign body.

Winterson not only begins to rescript the meanings of disease and health, friend and foe, inside and outside, she also wreaks havoc with the notion of medicine as an objective science which produces the unassailable truth of the human body. Medicine takes center stage at the point in the book when the narrator discovers, through Elgin, that Louise has leukaemia [sic]. By this point in the narrative, Louise has left Elgin and Louise and the narrator have been living together in great happiness for several months. Then Elgin sneaks in (little rat that he is) and, unbeknownst to Louise, tells the narrator of the disease and beseeches him/her to leave Louise so that she will come back to him and get the medical treatment she needs. Elgin is undoubtedly a little rat; he is also, however, a doctor, and this is his only source of power in the novel. And it is enough for him to cause the narrator to heed his advice and to leave Louise for an indefinite period of time.

The narrator leaves Louise in a heroic effort to save her life. Not surprisingly, given the intensity of their relationship, s/he is thrown into
despair by this action and seeks some solace in medical texts. Huh?

Medical texts? For solace?

I went to the medical books. I became obsessed with anatomy. If I could not put Louise out of my mind I would drown myself in her. Within the clinical language, through the dispassionate view of the sucking, sweating, greedy, defecating self, I found a love-poem to Louise. (Winterson 1993, 111)

This passage demonstrates how the narrator interprets medical discourse against the grain as a love poem, yet in other sections of the book that same discourse forms a protective shield for him/her from the pain of losing Louise. "Your face gores me. I am run through. . . . Frontal bone, palatine bones, nasal bones, lacrimal bones, cheek bones, maxilla, vomer, inferior conchae, mandible. ¶Those are my shields, those are my blankets, those words don't remind me of your face." (Winterson 1993, 132) For the narrator, and henceforth for the reader, medical discourse wears more than one face; it can no longer be a simple, transparent or objective description of the material body.

If the boundaries between health and sickness, science and poetry begin to lose their distinctness, so too goes any simple distinction between the healthy heterosexual and the diseased homosexual. To what could those appellations refer? Not only do notions of health and sickness become vastly more complicated; the status of the homosexual as a medical object becomes tenuous. If anatomy as a scientific discourse is capable of being metamorphosed into a love poem, as this narrative demonstrates, then what prevents the discipline of sexology, that inventor of the homosexual as object of scrutiny, from undergoing a similar transformation? What would it
mean to think of sexology as a love-poem to its multitudinous inventions, we, the sexual deviants of the world? High and low, good and evil do get a bit difficult to distinguish, don't they?

* * * * *

"C"

Winterson and I also share a concern with the dangers of romance, although her framing of the issue is somewhat different from mine. I have proposed that romance narratives reproduce a hierarchical structure which places the white heterosexual male at the center and on top, with all Others arrayed in a variety of subordinate positions surrounding that center. I have also considered how the structure of particular romance narratives makes them more or less confining to the characters which inhabit them. Winterson work displays an interest in the latter concern, while the notion of romance as inhabiting social and political realms disappears almost entirely. With the exception of the marginalized and emasculated Elgin lurking on the sidelines, the narrator and Louise are presented as the only two people in the world. We hear stories from the past lives of all three characters, and there is the occasional intrusion by people like Louise's mother and grandmother. Or sometimes an appearance by Gail Right, who is the narrator's boss during his/her exile from Louise. For the most part, however, the story is presented as one of obsession from the inside. There is a fixation between Louise and the narrator, one upon the other, that largely blocks out external relationships, histories, material contingencies.

What does intrude, however, are romance narratives. At numerous points throughout the book, either Louise or the narrator is prompted to say
"It's the clichés that cause the trouble." And the clichés have to do with the prescribed behaviors and predetermined expectations of romance. For instance, early in the book when Louise and the narrator have their first sexual encounter, the narrator initiates the following exchange:

"Louise, I love you."

... "Don't say that now. Don't say it yet. You might not mean it."

Then, a moment later, the narrator tries again:

"I love you."
"You've loved other people but you still left them."
"It's not that simple."
"I don't want to be another scalp on your pole."

There is some silence between them, then Louise speaks again:

"So you admit that I am just a scalp?"

... "Louise, I don't know what you are... You affect me in ways I can't quantify or contain. All I can measure is the effect, and the effect is that I am out of control."

"So you try and regain control by telling me you love me. That's a territory you know, isn't it? That's romance and courtship and whirlwind."
"I don't want control."
"I don't believe you."

No and you're right not to believe me.
(Winterson 1993, 52-3)

A romance narrative can be thought of as a script, a handy device to have around when you are out of control, don't know what to say, what to expect or how to act. It is also a script which promises everything. True love brings happiness, happily ever after, the end. Sometimes romance ends tragically, as with Romeo and Juliet, those lovers for the ages, but even that tragic end is the ultimate fulfillment.
It is the latter variation of the romantic script into which the narrator leaps at a crucial point in the narrative. Indeed, it is a moment we have already visited, that poignant moment when Elgin informs the narrator of Louise's illness and precipitates the central crisis of this story. This is the point at which the narrator decides to abandon Louise in order to ensure she is left in Elgin's care. This moment could be thought of as a medical moment, a time when emotions must succumb to reason, to the practicalities of dealing with a chronic illness. Yet another reading reveals a different possibility. We enter the text some months after the narrator has left Louise, at a moment when Gail Right is handing out some unsolicited advice to the lovelorn and lonely, namely, the narrator.

"You shouldn't have run out on her."
Run out on her? That doesn't sound like the heroics I'd had in mind. Hadn't I sacrificed myself for her? Offered my life for her life? . . .
Who do I think I am? Sir Launcelot? Louise is a pre-Raphaelite beauty but that doesn't make me a medieval knight. (Winterson 1993, 159)

And unfortunately for the narrator, Gail Right isn't done with her yet. She goes on to exclaim, "you want to live in a novel," and asks rhetorically, "Old slag Gail. What right has she to poke her nose into your shining armour?" (Winterson 1993, 160) It is at this point that the narrator realizes her mistake and decides to try to find Louise once again. She comes to realize that she stepped into a romance narrative at the worst possible moment and made the biggest mistake of her life.

The obvious temptation here for a reader is to beseech the narrator to abandon that silly romance stuff and deal with "real life" instead. I would certainly never suggest such a thing, however, and I doubt very much that
Winterson would either. There is no outside, after all. The choice isn't to move outside of narrative, but rather to inhabit different narratives, narratives less deeply etched and confining than those of traditional romance. The choice here is between relatively seamless or relatively porous narratives, rather than between narrative and not-narrative. And Winterson, through the repeated practice of disrupting the certainties of her own narrative, implicitly urges the adoption of more porous narrative strategies.

* * * * *

The back and forth of monotonous and seemingly endless agreement does finally halt, however. Precisely upon the consideration of race. Or more accurately, upon Winterson's lack of consideration. Earlier in this work, I discussed the importance of William Connolly's and David Morris's trafficking of "cultural ready-mades," to invoke again the language of Trinh Minh-ha. Connolly reflexively links homosexual practices and aversion. In a like fashion, Morris links sexual pleasure and pain. Neither conjunction requires explanation or justification; their meanings are intelligible purely through the act of referral.

*Written on the Body* also makes use of "cultural ready-mades." Not regarding sexuality of course; in that respect Winterson has given her work the most scrupulous attention, and the results of that effort are impressive. Gender and sexual stereotypes are like putty in her hands, and hardly recognizable by the close of the novel.

Not so racial stereotypes. *Written on the Body* uses racial stereotypes to do its work at crucial points in its narrative. On the very first page, for instance:
"I love you" is always a quotation. You did not say it first and neither did I, yet when you say it and when I say it we speak like savages who have found three words and worship them. [emphasis mine] (Winterson 1993, 9)

And just to make sure we know exactly to which savages she is referring, enter Caliban only a few lines later. What is Caliban doing here?

One needn't look far to find an answer. Toni Morrison's definition of Africanism, while referring specifically to the American context, is nonetheless very telling: "the fetishizing of color, the transference to blackness of the power of illicit sexuality, chaos, madness, impropriety, anarchy, strangeness, and helpless, hapless desire . . ." (Morrison 1992b, 80-1) The respective contexts of Caliban and Africanism are different, but the links between the uses to which Caliban has been put and Morrison's rendering of Africanism are highly suggestive. And, as Morrison herself says: "There also exists, of course, a European Africanism with a counterpart in colonial literature." (Morrison 1992b, 38) What more powerful and well-known representation could there be of the dark and savage colonial Other than Caliban? The use to which Winterson puts the image of the dark Other is different than its traditional role in colonial literature; within that context, the Self is defined precisely by its status as not-Other. In a twist on that strategy, Winterson's narrator identifies with the Other rather than using him oppositionally. Nonetheless the stereotype is being exploited by Winterson for her own purposes and its status as stereotype is never questioned.

When Winterson mentions Caliban and savages, she invites in a vast set of meanings already known by her readers without having to go to any of the trouble of actually describing what she means. Morrison's notion of "economy of stereotype" is useful in elaborating what this means:

131
"[Economy of stereotype] allows the writer a quick and easy image without the responsibility of specificity, accuracy, or even narratively useful description." (Morrison 1992b, 67) The "quick and easy image" evoked by the reference to the savage sets the stage for the most important subject matter of her book, namely, "illicit sexuality, chaos, madness . . . ." Winterson's use of this image is a cheap trick to get the reader "in the mood" for a wild, terrifying, yet sensual adventure.

And her first page is not the last time she will pull out this particular trick. Anti-semitism also comes to her aid in the characterization of Elgin as a wimpy, manipulative Outsider. She does describe Elgin in some detail, but since the stereotype of the Jew so closely matches her characterization of him, it can only bolster that representation. This move is reminiscent of Frederick Forsyth's inclusion of the random act of sodomy in his characterization of the Jackal in "The Day of the Jackal." The character is already there but why not just lay it on a little thicker, right? Perhaps because it can only mean that another stereotype is exploited and left undisturbed. Again.

*****

I guess it was a set-up from the start. I write a long treatise on the oppressiveness of medical discourse and romance narratives to same-sexers and set up Winterson to save the universe from that horrible fate. Of course her text could not bear the weight of that expectation. It was far too much to expect of any one writer or any one work. My own narrative structure, despite my efforts at self-subversion, placed her as the bullseye at the end of my own teleological path. Shakespeare; bad! Mazursky; worse! Fowles;

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3 A term coined by Gore Vidal.
horrifying! Winterson; YES! What text could possibly bear up under the weight of that yes?

It seems I got caught up in my own romantic quest and desperately needed and wanted a truly heroic figure or work to assist me in scripting a suitably grandiose and satisfying conclusion to this work. Bad idea, and unfair. Unfair to the genuine accomplishments of Written on the Body, and unfaithful to the spirit with which I began this work. All I sought as I began was a small space, a tiny glimmer, just a trace... of possibility. More specifically, I wanted to explore texts which could begin to imagine possibilities beyond those practices which I identified as the hallmarks of hierarchy: assimilation, domination and erasure.

Written on the Body does open the door to these possibilities, even if only slightly, and even if in a manner not entirely convincing or compelling. Nonetheless, that tiny opening does matter. Her work in disrupting the dualisms which support hierarchical structures and practices represents the accomplishment of a very difficult task. And although her work resonates too closely with theoretical concerns for my taste, it is far from a complete failure as art. Jeanette Winterson is a powerful and beautiful writer, and while Written on the Body may not qualify as Great Art, neither is it simply a pedantic and contrived mouthpiece for the voice of theory.

Yet I still have to wonder, is it enough? Does this diminutive "chipping at the bedrock" make any difference at all?

* * * * *

One way to consider this question is to return to the mainstream and to consider what is "making a difference" in the world of John and Jane Doe. What John and Jane are presented with in 1990s America is not Written on
the Body, but Philadelphia. It qualifies as a good film within the context of Hollywood high-gloss, and has received wide acclaim for being sensitive to the concerns of the homosexual minority of the United States. It has admittedly received considerable critique from gay and lesbian activists, and indeed I will be writing from the perspective of a white lesbian viewer; nonetheless this film stands as the most positive and influential representation of gays to be embraced by a large and predominantly heterosexual audience. Its popularity demands attention and makes a consideration of the political implications of the film imperative.

Philadelphia made me cry. The character played by Tom Hanks, Andrew Becker, dies and he is a really nice guy. I knew he was going to die from the start, but a good tearjerker always works. Good Hollywood drama. No questions here. The film led us like a big bunch of sheep and we all followed. So we all cried.

There is a point, however, where the "we" of the audience breaks down. I did not cry only because Becker died. I cried because I saw a part of myself on screen that I never see. There were queers up there and everyone got to see us and we looked like practically regular people! We had feelings and families and jobs and lives! The relief and joy I felt at "seeing myself" on the big screen was overwhelming. The fit wasn't a perfect one; I am neither a man nor a person with AIDS, but it was as close as I ever get, and it was impossible to resist the feeling that maybe "we" are making progress after all. Maybe things will be okay. Maybe eventually I won't have to think twice about my sexual identity, consider whether to tell

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4This discussion was inspired by a panel at the University of Hawai'i on 27 April 1994 entitled "Wayne Wang: From Chan is Missing to The Joy Luck Club," and a subsequent discussion with Louise Kubo regarding mainstream and alternative depictions of "minorities" in the media.
people or not, or agonize over whether my stance should be defensive, low-key, or proud. In other words, I was swept up by the sentimentalized possibilities of the film. Everything is going to be all right!

Several questions remain, however, and several more reasons for my tears. One of the most agonizing aspects of my experience of the film was having to sit and watch it with a predominantly straight audience. They snickered. Not at the sad parts, but at the gay parts. The film was mostly shot in mainstream and implicitly straight settings such as law offices, a courtroom, a public library, a hospital. There were, however, a few scenes in the film where just a tiny glimpse of gay culture was made visible, most notably a series of scenes at a gay party, and "they" snickered. There were a few drag queens, a few campy gay boys, men slow-dancing together, and the audience had to snicker. This imperative to snicker was in part due to the unspoken obligation to declare one's heterosexuality in the context of watching a "gay film," and snickering and derision are the method of choice for many, many straight people. In an important way, however, the film's structure actually invites this response. Philadelphia is extremely careful to avoid offense, most notably by refraining from showing any overt sexuality between men, and it adopts a position that seems to say, "We'll just show you a little bit of this until you get more used to it, and it will be okay . . . won't it? Please?" In a film billed "pro-gay," the tentative and pathetic plea for acceptance that constitutes the primary stance of the text enacts a very strong anti-gay political project. To use a concept elaborated by Hayden White, to ignore the production of meaning accomplished by framing the film as a gay/weak address to the straight/powerful audience is to assent to ideological mystification:
our assent to the form of the text as something
given, in the interest of entertaining, assessing, and
otherwise responding to the thematic content,
representations, judgments, and so forth, contained
in the narrative levels of the text, is the sign of the
power of this text considered as an exercise in
ideological mystification. (White 1987, 204)

Following White's ideas, the point I am raising is not a critique of the
narrative per se, but rather a commentary on the ideological import of the
structure of the film. How can a film be "pro-gay" that leaves judgment in
the hands of a mainstream (read straight) audience? Far from subverting the
binary dualism straight/gay, in its main address Philadelphia does not even
assert homosexuality as something good in its own right and address a gay
audience with that message. It asks for acceptance, understanding, tolerance
from straight people, and thereby reinserts the superior position of
heterosexuality with its attendant power to judge. Its structure represents a
plea for mercy from the superior/straight class. Nor is Philadelphia an open
text which solicits multiple interpretations from a variety of audience
positions; it aims relentlessly straight ahead without a quiver of hesitation.
Given the implicit subtext of straight superiority produced by this strategy, it
makes sense that those in the audience not inclined to liberal compassion for
"those poor people" will go along for the ride and feel even better than
before about being born straight. The fawning of sycophants can do
wonders to boost the ego, so why not laugh? IT'S GREAT TO BE
STRAIGHT!

There are other problems as well which I would like to mention
briefly. For instance, the fact that the first important gay male character to
appear on the silver screen is dying of AIDS reiterates yet again the narrative
of inevitable gay male doom identified by Jeff Nunokawa. In addition, the male homosocial bond as theorized by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick is reproduced and valorized yet again by the portrayal of the primary relationship in the film as that between Andrew and his lawyer rather than Andrew and his lover. It's just another buddy film! Not only is there a notable lack of physical affection between male lovers in this film, Andrew's lover is for the most part entirely absent. He does make small appearances to nurture his dying partner, but we don't really know much of anything about his life. We don't even see evidence of his presence in Andrew's house, although we are led to believe that they live together. The important relationship in this film is between men, yet decidedly not between men as lovers. Male homosociality is reproduced yet again, even while overcoming apparently insurmountable obstacles.

Yet in spite of this strong critique, my ambivalence remains. Try as I might for the sake of theoretical purity, I cannot avoid the fact that it really did matter to me to see this most marginalized aspect of my identity portrayed in a major film. In writing about another mainstream film, *Personal Best*, Elizabeth Ellsworth recognizes the social pleasures of identification, recognition and validation elicited by the lesbian subtext of an otherwise heterosexist film. A film need not be made by or for gays and lesbians in order for us to derive some benefit and pleasure from simply being able to see ourselves represented in at least a partially positive manner. Our mere presence may not be a major victory in political terms, but it does count for something when there is such a dearth of these images.

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5See Chapter 2, "Practicing Aversion" for an elaboration of this theme.
As with Jeanette Winterson's work, however, I again arrive at the point of asking, "Is it enough?" One way to approach this conundrum is to consider the politics of Hollywood more broadly. At a recent panel on the films of Wayne Wang, one audience member asserted that *The Joy Luck Club* was like all Hollywood films; it makes the audience feel good but doesn't actually do anything. Is it possible for a film to be so benign? Isn't "doing nothing" actually doing something extremely important, namely, reinforcing and reproducing the status quo? In the case of *The Joy Luck Club*, part of that task involved both exoticizing China and representing it as a backward and feudal society characterized by economic hardship and violence towards women. By way of comparison, the United States ends up looking terrific. It retains its status as the promised land, where individual effort can bring success and happiness to persons of any race, color or creed from anywhere in the world. America may not be perfect, but it is so much better here than "over there." In effect, this serves to represent America as free, equal, and the land of opportunity, thereby conveniently absolving white America from any responsibility for racism in the United States. White people, especially women and girls who identify with the mother/daughter travails depicted throughout the film, are flocking to this movie and loving it. Given the context of violent and pervasive white racism which exists in this country and which the film might have addressed, one must ask why this film feels so comfortable to that particular audience.

The wonders of America also pop up in a strange way relative to *Philadelphia*. In what seemed to be a merely a bizarre tangent in his Oscar acceptance speech, Tom Hanks closed his remarks with the phrase, "God Bless America!" Huh?? What does America have to do with it? Well, as it
turns out, quite a lot. Before his stunning dénouement, Hanks managed to mention the wisdom of those founding fathers from Philadelphia who had the foresight and courage to make equal rights and justice the pillars of American society. He also affirmed just how wonderful the woman in his life is, and that he grew up with some real live gay people which helped him to realize just how wonderful gay people really are. In other words, "I'm not gay, but I'm a true-blue believer in the America of freedom and justice for all so I recognize they are such nice individuals!" Everything is in place: America, Tom Hanks and heterosexuality all end up smelling like a rose. And that is precisely why this film is a success and why Tom Hanks was an acceptable choice for an Oscar. His speech was not the film itself, but it reflected the values of the film quite nicely. The film "did nothing" and left the status quo and those whom it serves in their comfortable position of superiority and power.

The reactionary nature of mainstream Hollywood films comes as no particular surprise. I have focused on sexual and racial politics here; Noam Chomsky and others would be quick to add an analysis of the pro-capitalist bias propagated by studios owned and controlled by transnational corporations. This is not to say that Hollywood producers can completely control the narratives or images they produce, or the interpretations these representations will incite in their audiences. Slippages and leakages in meanings can and do occur, and at the same time that Hollywood perpetuates a conservative ideology, it simultaneously provides some openings for the subversion of that ideology. Indeed my own process of

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7To the extent that Hollywood serves as a source of the production of language and social meanings, "at any given moment the categories and laws of the symbolic order are full of contradictions, ambiguities and inconsistencies which function as a source of possible change. The role of ideology is to suppress these contradictions in the interests of the preservation of the existing social formation, but their presence ensures
identifying with the gay characters of *Philadelphia* qualifies as just such a
leakage and subversion of ideology.

Nonetheless, there is a strong conservative bias, in the most formal
sense of the word, in the decision-making processes by which some films are
produced, promoted and well-received, while others are never considered for
production, or once they are produced, are left to languish by critics and
audiences alike. Films like *Philadelphia* succeed, given a certain level of
competence in terms of "entertainment value," precisely because they "do
nothing."

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*Written on the Body*, an obscure text with a small audience, does
something small. *Philadelphia*, a big movie with a big audience, also does
something small. It does nothing to subvert hierarchy, except for that trace
of revolutionary potential represented by the possibility for a gay audience to
identify with and receive validation from the creation and representation of
gay characters who begin to resemble "regular" human beings. I won't
choose between the two.

A lot of small things need to happen. It takes a lot of chipping to
make a dent in the bedrock.
These cartoons represent a joint effort by the author and Louise Kubo. Roughly speaking, the author is responsible for the concept, and Louise Kubo for computer graphics. Considerable overlap occurred, however, in the actual execution of the project.
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