Queering Home:

Domestic Space and Sexuality in Postmodern American Literature

by

Jason Bryant

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved November 2013 by the
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Deborah Clarke, Chair
Robert Sturges
Lee Bebout

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

December 2013

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores narratives of homosexuals and trans men and women occupying domestic spaces, discerning the ways that "home" shapes understandings about sexuality and examining the ways that understandings of sexuality shape how domestic spaces are occupied. Queer artists and intellectuals have deconstructed the legacy of normativity that clings to the metaphor of the domestic realm. *Queering Home* argues that writers have used the discursive concept of home to cultivate sociopolitical communities (Audre Lorde, *Zami*) while also insisting upon material spaces of shelter and comfort for individuals queered by gender performance, sexual orientation, and resultant adverse economic conditions (Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues*). Two novels, Dorothy Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina* and Mike Albo's *Hornito*, challenge the coming-of-age tradition of narrating childhood/adolescence through the redeeming prism of the confident, queer adult; in particular, these novels trouble the problematic notion of domesticated maturation as a heteronormative condition that continues to cling to much contemporary American lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) politics. The third chapter examines Marilyn Hacker's sonnet collection, *Love, Death, and the Changing of the Seasons* in correspondence with Carl Phillips's collection, *Cortège*, as they queer the concept of domestic bliss, the goal toward which romantic partners are "supposed" to be committed. Hacker and Phillips revise the same-sex couple as a processing of gay ways of life, which resists positing normative, married futures for lesbians and homosexuals. Finally, the study investigates Terrence McNally's play, *Lips Together, Teeth Apart* and a series of still life paintings by Joey Terrill for their depiction

of narratives of domestic spaces (pools, open-concept design, medicine cabinets), which condition the subjectification and desubjectification of gay male sexuality and domesticity in the era of HIV/AIDS. Throughout, this dissertation draws energy by challenging the "given" and "inevitable" heteronorms that condition domesticity, sexuality, and space, demonstrating how late twentieth century writers and artists have queered the home.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Page

Chapter 1

Introduction

1. Introduction

Perhaps because the concept of home for most people evokes the fantasy of "traditional family," no in-depth academic inquiry has explored "the queer home" in American literature of the late twentieth century. At its foundation, my dissertation remedies this gap by examining the ways that domestic spaces shape sexuality in correspondence with the ways sexuality shapes how domestic spaces are conceived, built, and occupied. In so doing, my work bridges theories of space, domesticity, and sexuality, like those formulated by Michel de Certeau, Christopher Alexander, and Lee Edelman, with socio-cultural topics relevant to contemporary America, such as same-sex partnerships, HIV/AIDS, and identity politics.

"Queer home" may strike a discordant tone for some readers given that the two terms are often seen as charged and antithetical. For some, the domestication of the queer term might seem to minimize some of queer's radical political potential. Others might resist attaching the queer term to "home," a spatial concept that has, at least since the Victorian era in the West, signified safety, comfort, harmony – each adjective anathema to queer. Still others could find the phrase problematic for its capacity to invite such reductive, stereotypical associations about queers and homes in the first place. This last assessment suggests a meaningful critique since no paradigmatic queer attitude, practice, or person provides a model for queering homes; moreover, no home archetype

constructed in theory or built for human occupation stands as a stable model in which we can affirm a queered home.

Yet, the phrase stands in for my dissertation as an iteration that insists upon the right of queers of whatever stripe to feel at home in safe, comfortable, self-determined spaces, which include, but are not limited to single-family homes, apartments, and other domiciles. Queer home serves this dissertation fundamentally as a move to interrogate heteronorms – which I acknowledge are as fluid and local as they seem to be static and universal – as they are presented in literary representations of homemaking. The concept of queer home allows me to straddle theoretical inquiry with empirical scholarship, for "queer" connotes, in academic discourse, an abstract, deconstructive turn towards text and social construction, while "home," as sociological and anthropological research demonstrates, demands commitment to data that reflect real-world experiences.

Pitched between these two tensions of scholarship, art and literature provide an engaging ground for spatial, domestic, and queer inquiry. Especially since the 1970s, representations of homes contextualized by visible sexualized subjects have escalated in number across a range of American texts. Sexual/domestic work is apparent in texts produced by canonical authors and artists like John Updike, Don DeLillo, Toni Morrison, David Hockney, and Nan Goldin. Not all of the texts my dissertation examines can be understood as "queer" art or literature in opposition to "straight" or "American" canonical texts, though each of them communicates same-gender desire, sex, and/or subjectivity as it is enmeshed in domestic space. I investigate representations of some of the most candid and explicit intersections of domesticity and sexuality, and I specifically

choose expressions from a diverse range of interstitial categories of ethnicity, race, gender, and social class to demonstrate how those constructions of identity inflect the conditions in which American characters occupy domestic spaces.

The research questions that I have developed emerge from this queer approach to the art and literature, but they are also committed to interrogate domesticity and the ways that lived-in space creates everyday conditions for living, loving, and dying. These considerations include the following: To what degree do domestic spatial and temporal arrangements impart instruction about hierarchy, time-management, self-control, and order? In what ways do families allow, deny, and complicate individual claims to sexual expression? How do residents create private spaces and times for sexual gratification in order to escape the gazes of others – of children, parents, siblings, lovers? How do "life lessons" about maturity, dignity, and good health persist in relation to heterosexuality? Do these lessons help to perpetuate practices of reproduction, childrearing, and heterosex? How do everyday ways of living – watching television, eating, cleaning, taking medication, bathing – frame delimitations and allow for flexibility regarding the ways one interprets concepts of individual identity, property, community, region, and nation?

From these questions, my dissertation explores the material and discursive uses of home, including close investigations into experiences of childhood, coupling, and illness and death as represented in literature and art of the late twentieth-century. As this dissertation is the first of its kind to survey late-twentieth century literature and art for representations of queers in domestic settings, it benefits from an interdisciplinary

approach. In order to establish my project's validity, next, I turn to demonstrate how this dissertation fits into historical and contemporary scholarship in the three interrelated fields of space, domesticity, and queer theory grounding it.

Of those French theorists of the twentieth century whose work emphasizes the importance of space to organize living – among them, Gaston Bachelard and Henri Lefebvre – Michel de Certeau, in *The Practice of Everyday Life* provides the most uncomplicated theoretical foundation for *Queering Home*. In each chapter, I apply de Certeau's maxim – "*space is a practiced place*" – to representations of homes, demonstrating how homes as "proper" places for establishing shelter, comfort, and privacy are always and entirely charged through by the queer practices of their occupants. In particular, though, my dissertation investigates domestic space as "composed of intersections of mobile elements," which include "vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables" reflective of residents' sexual and social subjectivities (117).

For instance, in chapter two, I argue that the porch of Aunt Raylene's home in *Bastard Out of Carolina* represents the only stable, safe place for the novel's children, whose fathers often threaten them and their mothers with physical abuse. When mothers deposit children on Raylene's porch in the middle of the night, they affirm that Raylene's man-less lesbian place is the proper site for the safety of their children. Yet, the site also radiates with the lines of departure of Raylene's former lover, of whom Raylene had demanded the abandonment of her child in order to share her home. Crisscrossing that vector is the potential trajectory for Bone, the novel's adolescent narrator, whose sexual and social orientation is constructed around these negotiations of space. In *Bastard*,

multiple players participate in queering domestic space – mothers who rely on Raylene's and not their own heteronormative homes for shelter and safety; Raylene, whose offer to house children extends to her blood family but not to her lover; and Bone, who witnesses these adult practices as complicated ways she can expect to make house in the future.

As a cultural theorist, de Certeau's work centers on the everyday, a category fundamental to my analysis of domestic space. As opposed to de Certeau's emphasis on micro practices and sites (tactics of the street, the grocery, the dwelling), most American twentieth-century scholarship of space has tended toward macro-analysis representative of the "big names" of postmodern spatial discourse, including Frederic Jameson, David Harvey, and Edward Soja. While the contributions of these scholars have generated powerful critical concentration on the role of space as a significant conduit of contemporary living, their theoretical frameworks provide little room for inquiry into the subtle moves, sly negotiations, and daily nuances that also inform how and why we insist upon occupying intimate spaces in the ways we do. These big picture theorists consistently overlook the granular, the visceral, and the sexual in their abstract investigations into contemporary spatiotemporal conditions, a critical oversight typical of postmodern scholarship that Judith Halberstam's *In a Queer Time and Place* exposes. While my dissertation benefits from Halberstam's call for specializations in regard to the critical treatment of space, I situate "home" as *the* central site for such inquiry because the queer persons who occupy homes and the practices they perform highlight an under-questioned "uncertainty about the precise contours of everyday life" (Highmore 17). The ambiguous, fractured, and confusing experience of postmodern life made abstract by

market forces and sociopolitical controls, described by theory's heavy hitters, certainly is not diminished in the domestic sphere. On the contrary, my dissertation claims the queer home as a site that emphasizes the addition of sexuality as one of those forces that (dis)organizes everyday life, from a particular point of view implicit in all forms of American media.

Geographers have concentrated upon this kind of postmodern spatial work by interrogating the organization of various sites for spatial meaning. In order to establish a connection between the postmodern critical work on space in general to the particular inquiry into queer home work, I take from Doreen Massey the understanding that space is "constructed out of the multiplicity of social relations across all spatial scales, from the global reach of finance and telecommunications, through the geography of the tentacles of national political power, to the social relations within the town, the settlement, the household and the workplace" (4). Acknowledging this conception of a geographic space, that which is deeply inflected by "other spaces," my dissertation avoids treating representations of homes as insular, atomistic enclaves in which "the American dream" is fostered. Rather, Massey's conception of space allows me to make the claim throughout this dissertation that exposing the multiplicity of social *and sexual* relations – further explored by geographers David Bell, Gill Valentine, and Larry Knopp – resists an uncomplicated perception of homes and homemaking.

My work's emphasis on home as a destabilized space, then, turns from the recent critical work on contemporary notions of "privacy," which I must address before moving on to this dissertation's fit in domesticity scholarship. Deborah Nelson has mapped out

the expansion of the role "privacy" has taken as a rhetorical concept important to contemporary American lives, noting the uneven distribution of sociopolitical justice provided to American citizens. Queer scholar Krishan Kumar explains further that the home becomes conceived as a consecrated place because discourses about personal, gendered, ethnic, religious, and sexual identity are formulated there. Nelson and Kumar correctly acknowledge the waves of recrudescent discourse that attach the concept of privacy to an understanding of the sanctity of identity as under-fire by many sociopolitical institutions and forces.

Still, my dissertation resists this understanding – that we can defend personal and domestic privacy from "exterior" forces – arguing that those forces already everywhere inflect American life. As a departure from the perspective of privacy scholars, I work from a conceptual, queer approach that situates same-sex desire as illustrative of the multiplicity of practices of everyday living and dying that are resistant to being named, identified, and classified as "private practices." This means that my dissertation affords no privileging of identity, no *naiveté* about the nefarious invasions of privacy on behalf of advertisers, governments, or corporations, who lay claim to constructions of individual identity via statistics, polls, and market trends. Again, this dissertation takes the postmodern perspective of space as a social and sexual construction, which demands that I approach subjectivity via the queer approach that investigates how social and sexual relations work to construct each other.

To explain how I put this approach to practice, my final chapter analyzes the still life paintings of Joey Terrill, which feature tablescapes of household goods like 7-Up

bottles, peaches, candles, *galletas con chochitos*, Scrabble tiles, along with anti-retroviral HIV medications scattered among them. While suggesting the urge to classify identity by depicting the private space of his subject – What does the painting say about the American consumer? About contemporary Chicano life? About homosexual home life? – Terrill's paintings provide no mechanism for the viewer to privilege a specific identarian viewing. I argue, instead, that the still lifes invite the viewer to imagine the use and experience of the domestic objects displayed, each positioned to suggest associations between disease, disposability, death, and same-sex desire. The viewing makes apparent these correspondences about the particular deaths of gay men by encouraging viewers to imagine the regimes of health and self-control – which emerge from other spaces like hospitals, gyms, pharmacies – they themselves practice in order to forestall their own deaths.

With this description of Terrill's treatment of domestic space, I move to demonstrate this dissertation's bridging of spatial work in general to domestic scholarship. Much work has been written on the nostalgic trope of home that relies on ahistorical assumptions that, in the indefinable past, domestic life was much less complicated and much more fulfilling than contemporary home life. Stephanie Coontz has argued against this shallow sort of late twentieth-century conscription of home ideology in *The Way We Never Were*. I acknowledge that normative idealizations of domestic space persist in postmodern American art and literature, but, largely, they are

destabilized, treated ironically, or "recycled," to borrow Rosemary Marangoly George's term, in order to problematize their rhetorical power to organize everyday life.[1]

My dissertation highlights artistic representations that scramble domestic traditions in order to demonstrate a queer re-imagination of home that keeps intact certain idealizations while critiquing others. For instance, I argue that Marilyn Hacker's *Love, Death, and the Changing of the Seasons* relies upon the maintenance of romantic mythos affixed to the home as site of coupling. She emphasizes this tradition via her commitment to the love sonnet form and meter as well as her division of sharp subject positions between lover/beloved (or, husband/wife in the normative sense). Yet, her unreserved tone and vulgar language as well as her emphasis on the great attention to "work" that domestic lovemaking entails provides Hacker the means to queer traditional representations of the home as a site of romance. I begin my analysis in chapter three of Hacker's ability to do so upon a powerfully representative line: "I kiss you till my clit's about to burst, / and catch myself reorganizing shelves" (13). The line is wholly domestic – the home is the "proper" place for sex and chores – yet refreshing in meter and tone, which folds in the excited imagination of sex in the context of the speaker's turning back to ordinary housework.

As de Certeau has explained, the spaces in which everyday life occurs are those in which we can identify this kind of interchange between the strategies inherent to "place" and the tactics by which occupants negotiate their own sexualities and subjectivities. I acknowledge that common as well as critical attention to the zone of the home often

[1] Kristin Jacobson's *Neodomestic American Fiction* provides a recent application of Marangoly George's "recycling" approach to post-1980s fiction.

simplifies its everyday qualities as mundane and nugatory. On the surface, preparing meals, checking email, making appointments, and finding space for groceries can be dreary and monotonous activities. This observation cannot be complicated by simply spinning those tasks as celebratory practices vis-à-vis the logic of advertisers: that television provides some good tips for interior decoration or that cooking a pot roast well does not necessarily recommend the domestic as a meaningful site for inquiry. My dissertation slows down upon the processing of domestic space, revealing a range of work and joy that is often hidden in either the praise or denigration of home as a space for analysis. In so doing, this project bridges the tension that Michael Sheringham has identified recently: "To opt for positive or negative evaluations is to filter out the tensions that give the everyday its fruitful ambivalence, and above all its status as a sphere of human self-realization" (30). In order to emphasize the exchange between ordinary and extraordinary, work and play, and art and life, my work insists upon interval experiences, the processing of domestic space put into flux by queer subjects in representative American art and literature of the late twentieth century.

Because domestic space is peopled, I acknowledge that my dissertation fits into anthropological and sociological scholarship. Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* as well as Yi-Fu Tuan's *Space and Place* are path-breaking discussions of the importance of homes in organizing human lives. My dissertation takes the spirit of those works as energizing the inquiry into a concentration upon domestic space, but their scholarship relies too much upon an imagined idealized home occupant, a "we" who occupy domestic space – in quantifiable research, contemporary scholarship seeks to qualify or challenge the

characterizations that these scholars have asserted in opening up home's significance as a site for criticism.

More comfortable a fit for my dissertation are contributions by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, whose *Flow*, based upon quantified research qualified by his team's assessment of the "psychic" negotiations of spaces that humans tend toward in arranging domestic space, underscores my urge to follow the ways that narrative representations of home residents "find flow" as they negotiate with parents, children, lovers, siblings, and other loved ones. In theory, as I have explained above, this work fits into postmodern scholarship that has exploded the home, demonstrating its contingency to other spaces and social relations; yet it is the physical experience of domestic space in which those relations are discerned. Csikszentmihaly recently has written that, domestic spaces and objects cause one to imagine that "his or her desires are in harmony; his or her goals might be reached; the past and the future are related in a sensible way; that the people who are close to them are worthy of love and love them in return. Without such feelings, life is not worth living" (163). I acknowledge this as my dissertation's approach to domesticity. For instance, I discuss how house plants, the "green sunlight" they provide in the final pages of Audre Lorde's *Zami*, represent a way to signify calm, nurturance, and competence altogether. From this experience, Lorde is able to cultivate an imaginary "home" that discursively unites all women as sisters of one family. This approach to domesticity, which refuses to valorize specific qualities as reflective of universal domestic experience, allows for multiple and various representations of what

objects, practices, and experiences within homes resonate with particular meaning for some queer subjects.

My dissertation engages those objects that sociological research attests that Americans believe belong in homes – certain types of furniture, photographs, medicine – which necessitates my acknowledgement of the importance of material culture scholarship to my project. Daniel Miller writes that, "[t]o study stuff, we need ourselves to be where stuff is. Right there, in the living room, the bathroom, the bedroom and the kitchen" (109). Throughout each chapter, I pore over those sites and objects that resonate with meaning in the representations of queer homes. For instance, I note that, in the play, *Lips Together Teeth Apart*, Terrence McNally emphasizes the daily stuff of jewelry, vodka, magazines, charcoal, and bath towels that stand in to communicate what one character claims are "the little day-to-day details, the nuances – that give our lives some zip and some meaning" (48). Yet, those particular objects in that they are inherited, communicate that the ways of living are on the other side of the coin also the ways of dying. This lesson McNally exposes to his audience: that stuff is never dead, only re-consumed, reprocessed, or transformed. When Sally, confused as to why her dead brother has bequeathed to her his Fire Island beach house and its effects – which include the loud and brash gay neighbors, the community with its dearth of sidewalks, bowling alleys, and movie theaters – I argue that the audience members are invited to question to what degree and what meaning their stuff, property, and lifeways holds for them.

Finally, the theoretical understandings of domesticity and domestic spaces for my dissertation come from contributions of postmodern theorists. In this way, they depart

from the concept of "domestic tradition," rejecting the notion that a stable, identifiable approach to domesticity as a category for living is possible. Instead, postmodern theory stresses the processing of home, which is altogether messy, hazy, and scattered. Recently, Manuel DeLanda has argued that homes are "mixtures of self-organized and planned components: certain objects will occupy a space and fulfill a function which we deliberately assigned to them while others will be located where they meshed well with their surroundings. And in these terms, the feeling of home could be derived from how well we mesh with the objects and expressive affordances of this private environment." Again, this corresponds with postmodern work my dissertation recognizes from de Certeau's perspective as "space" as a practiced "place."

From Avtar Brah, this dissertation takes a fundamental postmodern approach that negates the ability to establish concrete, insular understanding of "home;" he wonders along with my dissertation, "When does a location *become* home? What is the difference between 'feeling at home' and staking claim to a place as one's own? It is quite possible to feel at home in a place and, yet, the experience of social exclusions may inhibit public proclamations of the place as home" (193). As countless queer testimonies indicate, it is also quite possible to feel not-at-home in the place in which one is told he should feel so. Finally, this queer understanding of home I move to now is tied to scholarship that my dissertation uses to apply to domestic representations of late twentieth century art and literature.

The queer home that my dissertation examines is not akin to "queer homes" featured on television, as in sitcoms like *Modern Family* or *The New Normal.* Nor does it

correspond to some form of Gay Inc.-approved model because the homes I examine do not follow a heterostatic stereotype. Instead, these representations of homes follow an abstract concept of queer space as counterarchitecture or third space, formulated by architect Aaron Betsky in the 1990s. Betsky insists upon queer space as being immaterial yet available to all people willing to oppose "heteronormative" ways of life, among which he cites personal investments in order, hierarchy, profit, and productivity. It is from the postmodern spirit of Betsky's call to critique norms affixed to the domestic tradition that my project finds its generative energy. Contemporary queer scholars have taken this approach, while encouraging work that stresses the grounded, local, real-world practices of queers who live in domestic spaces. For instance, Judith Halberstam defines queer space as "the place-making practices within postmodernism in which queer people engage," which are attached to "new understandings of space enabled by the production of queer counterpublics" (6). It is into this mode of inquiry that I situate my dissertation.

I find that British historian, Matt Cook, who analyzes queer historical subjects and domestic traditions of the past that permeate contemporary living, represents an approach to queer homes *in history* in a way that most resembles my approach to queer homes in artistic representation. In "Queer Domesticities," he writes that to study queer home is to bother the "tensions between ideological imperatives and sweeping queer theorizations, on the one hand, and on the other, the pragmatics, problems, and possibilities of being at home and making home for 'ordinary' queer men in a range of different and particular social, cultural, and economic circumstances" (174). My dissertation confirms Cook's survey of the complexity endeavored in any analysis of queer domestic space. I have

taken as an organizing principle for analysis the attempt to maintain a more-or-less shifting balance between the concerns Cook urges scholars to straddle as my project applies to representations of homosexual men, lesbians, trans people, and HIV-positive subjects in late twentieth-century American art and literature.

With this understanding in mind, let me map out how my dissertation fits queer domestic scholarship from contemporary theoretical as well as empirical approaches. I acknowledge Sarah Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* as the most fully-engaged inquiry into queer space in Anglophone scholarship, allowing for the critical use of spatial and directional terms that fund my orientation to analyze queer subjectivity in representations of homes: trajectories, proximity, occupation, intersections, arrangements, and other notions each fit into the negotiations that people wager and activate in daily living situations. Corresponding with the deconstructive approach that postmodern scholars have provided regarding space, *Phenomenology* affords me the way to demonstrate that, "[w]ithin homes, objects gather: such objects arrive and they have their own horizons, which 'point' toward different worlds – even if this 'point' does not make such worlds within reach" (176). This is as true to the case in Lorde's *Zami*, which details the author's process of formulating "home" as a political concept that appropriates all women as sisters of the same family, as it is of Terrence McNally's silent-yet-boisterous chorus of dancing gay men in *Lips Together*, who figure a *danse joyeuse* out of the tradition of the *danse macabre*: they are both domesticated and undomesticated, refusing to live and die by the terms of heterosexual propriety.

I find that this dissertation resists the urge to abstract "queer space" by engaging in contemporary scholarship regarding race, class, and gender – in fact, each of these I examine as necessary to the problem of the "home" in the flux surrounding diaspora specific to Lorde's mythobiography. By applying Nayan Shah's problematization of notions of "settlement" and "desire," all sorts of forms of classification – race, gender, sexual orientation, home, family, nationhood – require constant re-interrogation, which my chapters on Lorde and Joey Terrill, in particular, demonstrate.

Regarding the empirical approaches to queer space, my dissertation takes inspiration from recent family studies that have redefined "family" as a doing as opposed to an ontological category to which one belongs. Kath Weston's ground-breaking *Families We Choose*, in addition to Judith Butler's "Gender is Burning," have contributed to this adopted approach. Andrew Gorman-Murray points out that, on a practical, Saturday-night level, home is queered when queer people open up the intimate spaces they occupy, "inviting in external nonnormative counter-discourses, bodies and activities" (56). This corresponds to the theoretical invitation to see domestic space as indefinable by traditions that have nostalgically been affixed to what a home is and does. While Gorman-Murray's approach has a celebratory character, Sarah Elwood reminds us that those counter-discourses (and counter-eyes and -ears) that queers allow into their homes can also introduce surveillance. Queer spatial representation responds to heteronormative gazes, which is why, I argue, the audience interpellation that McNally builds into *Lips Together*, soliciting those in theater seats to consider themselves contaminated by "death" via AIDS or other terminal diseases, *makes apparent* the

controlling aspect of that heterosexual and normative gaze that often goes unquestioned in viewing what death is, what types of people are "marked" for/by death, and why.

Finally, my research applies to literary representation the findings of sociological data, two landmark studies that I wish to cite as inspirational and contributory. First, Blumstein and Schwartz's 1983 study of home life, *American Couples*, devotes quite a bit of copy to homosexual and lesbian partnerships, demonstrating their various states of attachment, cohabitation, and uncoupling. Their findings are important (in research that has been duplicated over and over again) that human relations no matter what distinction via sexual orientation – all types of social and sexual relations are made in some ways loose, unstable, contingent. Christopher Carrington, and other sociological and psychological research points out, too, data that demonstrate that homosexual, lesbian, and trans people *do* experience domestic spaces and practices in particular ways. The paradox of quantifiable data that these and other important researchers engage fuels my dissertation's emphasis on the negotiations between theory and empiricism, home-as-tradition and home-as-process, and the slippery conditions of queer domestic life, love, and death.

2. Chapter Overview

To close, in brief, I include the arc of this dissertation's following chapters and provide an overview of each chapter's analytical emphases. The first chapter deliberately positions together "home" as a conceptual discursive site of meaning with homes as material places queers require because they so often are denied shelter due to queerness in a variety of forms – by gender, sexual orientation, poverty, discriminatory employment

practices, and social control systems. For this reason, chapter one deals with what I consider to be two foundational queer texts – Audre Lorde's memoir, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (1982) and Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues* (1993). As is the case for every primary text examined throughout this dissertation, both Lorde and Feinberg deploy both discursive and empirical constructions of home to found meaning for their narrators' lives, yet I will concentrate more upon Lorde's use of the generative function of home to process ever-wider and more radical interpretations of the domestic as a concept for queer relationship building. By investigating *Stone Butch Blues*, then, I emphasize the grounds upon which its trans narrator is constantly denied access to domestic spaces and how this shapes her homemaking practices. Ultimately, I find that both the discursive and empirical approach to finding home queer the static traditional model of home as an untroubled space in which families are established, insular biological foundations for living are generated and fostered for propagating future homes, and heteronorms are developed in concert with consolidating notions of self and sexuality. These texts resist the conditions of the normative in trade for a postmodern, queer dynamism in structuring domestic concepts and the occupation of homes.

Chapter two begins the heteronorm-deconstructive work suggested by the first chapter, which carries through the rest of the dissertation, taking as topical inspiration narrative representations of domestic living common to "important" phases of life – childhood/adolescence (chapter two); adult-partnering (chapter three); and later or sudden experiences of morbidity, mortality, and terminal illness in preparing the home for death (chapter four). While these are broad categories for inquiry, the respective texts I

investigate allow for specialized inquiry into why these phases hold lasting value under the conditions of heteronormativity. Assailing those conditions is the queer work of the bulk of the dissertation. For instance, chapter two queers the concept of maturation/maturity by deconstructing the child/adult binary that heterosexual relations insist upon as necessary to children's and adolescents' development into a heteronormative adulthood all the while covering over the implication that, under such conditions, children and adolescents are sexualized as objects who are not-yet-straight. I argue that Dorothy Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina* (1992) and Mike Albo's *Hornito: My Lie Life* (2000) provide a counternarrative to childhood and adolescence that privileges subjectivity- and sexuality-in-flux, rendered outside the traditional narrative perspective of youth under the lens of hetero- or homonormative authority. The novels confidently devalue maturing its rhetorical power to shape lives which follow normative arcs, which I find provides significant queer social and political import as they refuse to pay homage to the unquestioned role of maturing as a codeword for emerging into adulthood as prepared to settle down, a staple to coming-of-age narrative. In so doing, they provide powerful critiques to the contemporary mania for normativity popular in LGBT politics, which demands access to institutions of marriage, reproduction, and child-rearing as untroublesome end-goals of gay domesticity.

Chapter three demonstrates how the sociopolitical concept of "domestic bliss," partnering in domestic space, has been deconstructed, in part, by queer homemaking practices. Following this, I employ Marilyn Hacker's poetry collection, *Love, Death, and the Changing of the Seasons* (1986) and Carl Phillips's 1993 collection, *Cortège*, to

deconstruct fantasies related to heteronormative narratives of romantic partnerships. I argue that both texts contribute to the postmodern, queer understanding of coupling as a doing – a work, a process – as opposed to the static, conventional approach to coupling as a static, ontological state of being. In this way, this chapter exposes as hollow the basis (romance) that underpins the categorical status of committed partnership like marriage in an era in which gays and lesbians increasingly seek access to the institution as a normative, stabilizing force. I argue that Hacker and Phillips describe moments of delight, pain, and, especially, of quotidian ordinariness in ways that question the fantasy of romance, the saccharine status of sentimentality as mechanisms that energize the drive for gays and lesbians to seek marriage. Instead, their poetry shows everyday partnered life as a scrambled, open, inconsistent performativity that resists categorization as a state of being for productive queer lives. Incorporating inspiration from late Foucauldian perspectives on gay ways of life, this chapter analyzes *Love, Death* and *Cortêge* for narratives of queer coupling that deny partnerships an end goal in domestic bliss.

The final chapter investigates two forms of HIV/AIDS narrative: Terrence McNally's 1991 play, *Lips Together, Teeth Apart*, and Joey Terrill's series of still lifes (1997-2003). Both the play and the paintings, I argue, demonstrate representations of HIV-positive gay males fulfilling the category of *homo sacer*, as formulated by political philosopher, Giorgio Agamben. In depicting subjects living with and dying of HIV/AIDS, the texts ponder the concept of particular death in the context of death-in-general. I point out the status of exception of People with AIDS to legal protections, social justice, or human empathy as evidence that the claim of modern politics to

represent all always implies the exception of a limited few. This paradox McNally and Terrill illustrate by stripping their texts of HIV-positive subjects whose domestic spaces are left behind – positioned in front of audiences – for heteronormative viewing. I argue that the texts structure an experience of sociopolitical inequality, demanding that audiences interpret particular and universal death through their watching practices which are more likely than not to imply a healthy, able-bodied, heterosexual, reproductive, disease-free subject.

This dissertation contributes to contemporary scholarship circulating around space, domesticity, and sexuality by applying a queer approach to "home." To close this introduction and to guide the reading of the following chapters, I point out a contradiction implicit to this, and any, analytic investigation using interdisciplinary approaches, which is that personal choice dictates the direction that analysis takes. For me, a queer, deconstructive approach that takes sex, space, and "the domestic" as constructions that interface with and inflect each other fits best into my scholarly desire to question norms that have calcified around those constructions. While this dissertation benefits from a wide range of creative scholarship in space, domesticity, and sexuality, it claims as primary the queer perspective of challenging heteronormative conditions that structure the sexual categories that inhere to narratives of space and the domestic. As its fundamental purpose, then, this dissertation assails some of the pretenses about living in domestic spaces that seem so important to heteronormative logic. Showing up the process of maturation and maturity as life lessons about settling down, challenging the persistent trope of romance and sentimentality to verify and validate long-term partnerships, and

productively claiming death and disease in the subjectivities and practices of gay men as sites of sociopolitical exception, these chapters value the queer radical potential in questioning the givens of heteronormativity, which everywhere seek to conserve, stultify, and stop critical inquiry. These givens include institutions closely related to home – the family, education, health, "society," the nation – which is why queer interventions are necessary not only to challenge heteronormative logic, but to create space and opportunities to oppose them. Discursively, my hope is that this dissertation provides something contributive to this open-ended and irresolvable goal.

Chapter 2

The Discursive and Material Implications for Queering Homes: Audre Lorde's *Zami* and Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues*

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I position two proto-queer texts together in order to demonstrate how the development of American "queer subjectivity" arose as a discernible discursive and embodied notion. Written before the arrival of the queer category, Audre Lorde's *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (1982) and Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues* (1993) concentrate upon the home as a site conditioned by twin concerns that would become central to queer politics: "the home" as narrative metaphor and homes as real-world shelters. The contrasts between the two perspectives of homes symbolize the creative tensions characteristic to contemporary queer scholarship and political discourse. On one hand, queering the home involves deconstructing home ideology as a set of particular, heteronormative social constructs that disallow wider conceptual possibilities for spaces and sexualities. On the other, queering the home means guaranteeing that queers have access to real-world spaces of shelter and comfort. Thus, queering the home stretches and scrambles the home category ("dyke bar as home," "Black lesbian sisterhood as home," "body as home") while insisting upon self-defined, empirical structures of protection and comfort for queers (like the one at 7331 E. Polk Street, Scottsdale, Arizona, for example).

While *Zami* and *Stone Butch Blues* both queer the metaphor of home as well as argue for the real-world need for queers to occupy secure housing, I recommend Lorde's

memoir as generative of the former approach and Feinberg's novel of the latter. How do Lorde and Feinberg perform this *ur*-interrogation of the queer home? *Zami* destabilizes the concept of home by demonstrating that the conditions of heteronormativity force queers to construct imaginary uses for space – in "private" and "public" spaces, in geographic and virtual places, and via embodied collectivization or fantasized connections. Through the negotiation of "queer diaspora," Lorde's narrative privileges the creative process of becoming, of her narrator working through domestic spaces in order to cultivate a particular sense of belonging. Lorde creates a metaphor of the diasporic construction of home: "*Wherever the bird with no feet flew she found trees with no limbs*" (34). The narrator's subjective/spatial symbol is meant to foreground the traumatic effects of diaspora, yet Lorde refuses to allow tragedy to determine her narrative, which leads her to imagine and seek to realize lesbian sisterhood as "home." While the normative model of home ideology insists that the conceptual association between self and space necessitates a heterosexual and cisgendered identity, *Zami*'s metaphor effectively shatters heteronormative conditions for imagining home while simultaneously repudiating the fantasy of home as an insular, private space. Both tactics demonstrate the memoir's queering of the home category.

Regarding the material relations between queer subjectivity and domestic space, *Stone Butch Blues* highlights objects, spaces, and practices in homes as constitutive of safety and protection queer people require. I perform a "reading through skin" of queer scholarship, of sociological data, and of the novel as a way to account for the necessity that queers – especially trans men and women – find consistent access to intimate space.

Feinberg's narrator, Jess Goldberg, searches for a home in her own skin in correspondence with her search for stable, affordable housing, a space she terms "The Land Where They Don't Mind." Through her occupation of a number of spaces – abandoned rooms in downtown New York City, couches in friends' homes, her own apartments – Goldberg locates herself by negotiating very painful constructions of class and gender, which complicate her access to safe spaces. Empirical data show that, especially for transgendered people, dedicated access to affordable, secure spaces is less assured than for normative or cisgendered queers. I claim that it is through the social reading of skin that these domestic disparities persist. Trans men and women are visible through the screens of gender, race, and class; reading skin through these screens allows social institutions to empirically regulate transgendered people's access to employment, healthcare, and reliable shelter.

In order to demonstrate this chapter's fit into scholarly inquiry on these topics, I provide summaries of the texts here to demonstrate their thematic connections. Lorde's "biomythography," *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*, explores the author's life narrative as a type of "bridge" connecting other "zamis," a Grenadine term for "*women who work together as friends and lovers*" (255).

[1] As such, it follows the standard chronological model of memoir by beginning with her childhood in a Harlem tenement apartment, which is governed by her first-generation immigrant parents. The book concentrates upon Lorde's young adult life: her education,

[1] Wesley Crichlow explains that biomythography as the particular term for Lorde's naming of this genre "elucidates Lorde's interest in using her life story to create a larger framework for other zamis. For her, the individual becomes the collective, as she recognizes the women who helped give her life substance….In this sense Lorde enables the move from the singular (I) to the collective (we) in black autobiographical writing" (203).

travels, and relationships with family members, friends, and colleagues. Lorde records with frustration the identity intersections that bracket her participation in various communities: in African American civil rights meetings, her voice as a lesbian woman is discredited; in feminist circles, her contribution as an African American and lesbian contradict the "central message" geared towards white, middle-class "liberation"; and in cafés, bars, and bedrooms, her desires for African American female sex and relationship partners are often unrealized due to the stigma of lesbian affect as "unwomanly" and averse to the agenda of African American sisters supportive of Black racial politics. Lorde's memoir intervenes in the record of identity-political discourse, demonstrating the ways that constructions of gender, class, ethnicity, and sexual preference can become experienced as essentialized roadblocks, especially for those seeking social and political equity. Like the work of her contemporaries, Barbara Smith, Cheryl Clarke, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Cherríe Moraga, Lorde's writings narrate lived experiences that celebrate difference while acknowledging that some lives are always already positioned as someone else's "other."

Stone Butch Blues records a similar narrative trajectory for its female-to-male (FTM) trans narrator, Jess Goldberg, and is set in Buffalo and New York City in the 1960s and 1970s. The novel dramatizes the community-building practices of queers during an era in which rigid roles conditioned gender and sexual performances, positing butches, femmes, bulldaggers, dykes, and drag queens whose gender performances were associated rigidly to conventions of masculinity or femininity. Goldberg, a butch lesbian, falls in love with femmes early in the narrative, following the desiring script expected of

her, despite the attraction she feels for other butch lesbians, which she increasingly comes to embrace. By binding her breasts, employing masculine dressing practices, and eventually undergoing surgery and hormone therapy, Goldberg transitions into a trans man. Post-transition, Goldberg feels she does not fit as a male subject: she cannot develop a consolidated male gender identity nor can she generate normative sexual-object choice preferences for women who perform conventions of femininity. Recognizing that she has "no language" to describe her location within systems of gender or sexuality categorization, Goldberg concludes that she exists outside available explanations for gender (275). Feinberg's novel dramatizes the crisis of category, which situates *Stone Butch Blues* as an early inquiry of gender as a social construct that informs subjective constructions of sexual orientation.

Taken together, Lorde's and Feinberg's texts provide theorists groundbreaking inquiry regarding social constructions of race, class, gender, and sexuality and demand attention to the subjectivities who suffer most from the essentializing of such categories. Through their respective narratives of othering via identity, they prefigure the theoretical concentrations of queer scholarship. I argue that it is through the metaphoric and empirical emphases on home/homes that the novels are able to narrativize these proto-queer approaches. As I have described above, now I turn to demonstrate how this chapter fits into contemporary queer scholarship on diaspora as contributive to "discursive home." Then, I will demonstrate how Lorde's memoir describes the queering of the concept of home. Following that application, I will argue for a "reading through skin" approach to trans literature, incorporating evidence of transphobia as a condition for

which to argue for material homes for queers. Finally, I use *Stone Butch Blues* and its descriptions of Goldberg's homes as constitutive of six conditions necessitating the housing of queers.

2. Queer Diaspora as Conditional to Queering the Home Concept

Zami explores diaspora as a precedential experience useful as a mode to challenge the heterostatic convention of home. Both postmodern spatial theorists and queer theorists recently have considered the connections between people and places – including affect, emotional intensities, intentionalities, emergent-identities, "lines of flight," and inbetweeness – as opposed to essentializing identities and places. If the concept of home is deconstructed in this way, then theorists and artists consider the reconstruction of home spaces that emphasize connections and flux as a way to deal creatively with real-world homes that have been busted up by socioeconomic conditions, such as those that caused Lorde's family to move from Grenada to Harlem just before her birth. The experiences that relate Lorde to her family, her parents' homeland, and her own impulse to re-experience in their home the feeling of being both here and there reflect not just her awareness of an open home but provide her a way to reconsider how homes function performatively in general.

Lorde's relation to the concept of home suggests Avtar Brah's term, "homing desire," which throws the idea of home as an axiomatic, insular place into question. Brah explains that "[t]he *concept* of diaspora places the discourse of 'home' and 'dispersion' in creative tension, inscribing a homing desire while simultaneously critiquing discourses of fixed origins" (192-3). As the child of naturalized Grenadian immigrants living in New

York City, Lorde recognizes the concept of home as permeable due to her family's relocation. "Once *home* was a far way off, a place I had never been to but knew well out of my mother's mouth" she writes, experiencing their Harlem tenement as "a space, some temporary abode, never to be considered forever nor totally binding nor defining" (13). The experience of diaspora sets an early precedent for Lorde to interpret in-betwenness as a condition of home-making.

In describing diaspora in these ways, Lorde acknowledges the condition of Afro-Caribbean-American racial identities as formulated by movement. Her parents' migration from the Caribbean to Harlem characterizes a diaspora related to African diaspora, which brought Africans and Asians to the Western Hemisphere centuries earlier.[2] While Lorde does not pay much attention here to the global diaspora that positions her family in the West, in her last published article, she points toward the postcolonial crisis of Caribbean racial construction initiated by cultural scholars like Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall.[3] In "Of Generators and Survival: Hugo Letter," Lorde recounts the days immediately after Hurricane Hugo laid waste to the island of St. Croix, where Lorde lived: "I sense a deep well of fury in many people that underlies the courageous coping. It is an anger, largely unexpressed, stoked by the way St. Croix has been treated, by government agencies and in the U. S. media, as a naughty, irresponsible, and irritating stepchild deserving of correction" (78). Post-colonial rhetoric positions a bind around diasporic subjects,

[2] As I mention next, Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* develops the themes related to diasporic Blackness. David Eng's "Out Here and Over There" situates Asian American identity as queered by diaspora as well. With Alice Y. Hom, Eng also develops this scholarship in *Q & A: Queer in Asian America*.

[3] See Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* and Stuart Hall's "Cultural Identity and Diaspora."

acknowledged in Lorde's essay, which interprets them as victims to natural disasters, poverty, and lack of development while refusing to acknowledge that Western powers have structured and continue to structure the conditions that contribute to their victimization.

"Of Generators" recognizes this script that constructs racial, ethnic, and national assumptions about the diasporic subject, but it also describes the material rebuilding processes on the island that cultivate agency, community, and self-determination in a way that creatively unites the two uses of home/homes that my central argument asserts. Queer scholars who focus on Caribbean subjectivities also point to diaspora as critical node for inquiry. Echoing Brah, Thomas Glave writes that diaspora creates "[t]he desire for Home or 'home'" initiated by movement, place-memory, and displacement (5). As I will discuss below, Lorde invokes Caribbean imagery through cultural objects like food, spices, and cooking utensils in order to signal this diasporic subjectivity implicit to her family's domestic practices. In this way, Lorde's texts tread the distance between framing the diasporic subject as casualty or avenger of racism, demonstrating the creative use of diasporic "black queer territorial claims [that] rewrite blackness in ways that require us to examine blackness beyond the singularity of victim or resistor so that a more nuanced rendering is at least approached" (Walcott 29). Indeed, Lorde's cultivation of the home-concept as a productive "house of difference" embodied by sisters living and working together is a result of her Black proto-queer approach to diaspora.

A recent special issue of *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* highlights Black/Queer/Diaspora, although no discussion of Lorde's work is emphasized. Jafari S.

Allen's contribution there certainly applies to *Zami*, which corresponds to Lorde's othering as an effect of multiple diasporas:

> black queers always also often seem *a queer too far* for much of queer studies and gay and lesbian popular culture and politics. In addition, sexual minorities and gender-variant individuals from the global South who negotiate but do not wholly capitulate to what Cymene Howe has called the 'universal queer subject' discursively fall, in both time and space, outside narrowly Western and Northern middle-class gay constructions of 'family,' 'lesbian,' 'gay,' 'queer,' and 'Gay Rights.' Rather than pose this as a 'problem' for queer studies, it is more productive to see it as an enriching, challenging, and ultimately salutary proposition to refine queer theory. (221-22)

Allen's commentary enlivens the black queer use of diaspora, especially as diaspora is a concept that has been applied to a universal queer subject over the past decade. For instance, Anne-Marie Fortier and Alan Sinfield have creatively used diaspora as a fundamentally queer relation via this usage. Fortier writes that "the anti-nationalist proclivities of diaspora are amplified through the narrative of migration as homecoming rather than as homeleaving, where 'home' is not (re)produced in the heterosexual family" (188). And Sinfield identifies a queer "reverse diaspora" for children whose sexual desires exceed the heteronormative expectations of their parents: "If diasporic Africans are posed between alternative homelands…then lesbians and gay men are stuck at the moment of emergence. For coming out is not once-and-for-all; like the Africans, we never quite arrive" (103).

As Fortier and Sinfield demonstrate, the correspondence between queer and diaspora produces space for scholars and artists to reimagine alternative sites and conceptualizations of home. Yet, Allen's particularizing use of *black* queer diaspora suits Lorde's critique of homophobic Blacks and Afro-phobic feminists and lesbians who

claim affiliations to diasporic subjectivity by denying others' claims to the experiences of diaspora. If scholars invoke queer diaspora, as I do to show how the experience serves to destabilize the concept of home in *Zami*, they *must* resist the denial of the particularities of race and class implicit to claims of diasporic subjectivity. Simply because diaspora is a universalizing buzzword in much contemporary scholarship does not render it an effective tool of critique that can avoid conditions of race and class.

As I have discussed, Lorde's metaphor for diasporic subjectivity applies here: "*Wherever the bird with no feet flew she found trees with no limbs.*" As I examine below, *Zami* uses the precedential experience of diaspora as one of the fundamental ways that the domestic concept is open to scrambling. I move now to examine how *Zami* casts displacement, disorientation, movement, placelessness, and searching as positions of queer subjectivity, reflective of the experience of diaspora in contrast to the ways that race, gender, ethnicity and sexual desire are normalized by heterosexual and normative structuring of conventional domestic concepts.

3. The Footless Bird, the Limbless Tree: *Zami* and Queering the Home Metaphor

Particular to Lorde's productive use of queer diasporic subjectivity, Chandan Reddy writes, "Queers of color…can resignify those forms of housing and community not as static objects found throughout historical time, but as contemporary sites of change and transformation, interfacing with home and community at their points of historical movement and dynamic transformation" (364-5). Below, I identify the steps Lorde's memoir takes to illustrate the ultimate queering of the home concept as a "house of difference." First, Lorde uses genealogical/familial constructions of home as the ground

from which to develop a proto-queer family of sisters, noting the way that "reverse diaspora" forces lesbians out of the experience of family-belonging into the search for alternative kinships. *Zami* then concludes with accepting and fostering difference as a mechanism to imagining community-as-home, sisterhood-as-home: this notional reformulation of home preserves the memoir's significance for contemporary queer politics.

Central to Lorde's resignification of home is the primacy of familial kinship, which she describes in the memoir's prologue: "*I have felt the age-old triangle of mother father and child, with the 'I' at its eternal core, elongate and flatten out into the elegantly strong triad of grandmother mother daughter, with the 'I' moving back and forth flowing in either or both directions as needed*'" (7). Lorde takes the heterostatic family model and morphs it into one that acknowledges the (still-kinned) relation of women to each other. The emphasis on movement and fluidity describes the subject as capable of occupying multiple sites of relativity to other female subjects. In essence, this "flattening" that Lorde describes is equivalent to imagining the generational structure of grandmother/mother/daughter shifting into a sisterhood relation. As I will argue, this is exactly how Lorde takes the conventional model of home as a hierarchical framework and de/reconstructs it into the "house of difference" open to incorporate all women as sisters, as *zamis*.

This reconstruction of home emerges from her narrative of a childhood fantasy in which Lorde prepares her family's dinner, crushing garlic, black pepper, celery leaves, and salt in a mortar. She creates "a fantasy of my mother…looking down upon me lying

on the couch, and then slowly, thoroughly, our touching and caressing each other's most secret places" (78). At this moment in the narrative, as Lorde is unable to connect physically with other sympathetic Black lesbians, conjuring this image of her mother as a love object makes of her a sister, a contemporary whose investment in the care of Audre *as a sister* confers on her a relieving, remediating effect.

This fantasy conversion of mother-to-sister is indicative, too, of the awareness Lorde makes about the "reverse diaspora" caused by her mother's dismissive realization of her daughter's feminist politics and lesbian desires. In a brief fragment Lorde titles "The Last of My Childhood Nightmares," she describes her family apartment as containing a "*great and nameless evil…I realize that in this house of my childhood I am no longer welcome. Everything is hostile to me*" (199). Specific to all queers raised in heteronormative homes, this reverse diaspora inspires the reconstruction of the home concept, taking its singularly heterostatic familial meaning and reformulating it in ways that can admit difference. For Lorde, what is "hostile" to this familial model is the incorporation of sisters of all types of difference.

Lorde's lesbian relationships reflect a diverse range of experience, which leads to her reconstruction of the home concept. She writes of her first lesbian encounter, "Loving Ginger that night was like coming home to a joy I was meant for" (139). Then, with Bea: "I made love to a woman for the first time in my very own bed. This was home" (150). In her first long-term coupled relationship, Lorde attempts to create a domestic space into which she actively can incorporate sisters under one roof: "Muriel and I took Lynn into our home to live with us. For a while that summer, we had a vision and possibility of

women living together collectively and sharing each other's lives and work and love. It almost worked" (211). In practice, the performance of the sister home fails, but, Lorde writes, "dreams did not steer us wrong, but sometimes they were not enough" (211).

Contributive to the failure of realizing this dream home is the persistence of clearly demarcated gender and sexual roles. Approximating the queer term, Lorde describes her group as "exotic sister-outsiders….part of the 'freaky' bunch of lesbians who weren't into role-playing, and who the butches and femmes, Black and white, disparaged" (177-8). This queer experience resembles the indeterminate social and sexual relations that Leslie Feinberg describes of her trans narrator, too. Here and throughout *Zami*, Lorde's privileging of the queer position of difference, of the gathering-together of those "freaky" bodies and practices, constitutes the formation of the queer house of difference.

As with the Audre/Muriel/Lynn experiment, the memoir's closing episode that examines her brief live-in relationship with a Black lesbian, Afrekete, Lorde reads the concept of home as provisional, impermanent, and mobile. She characterizes the way that "queer home" works when her relationship with Afrekete ends: "We had come together like elements erupting into an electric storm, exchanging energy, sharing charge, brief and drenching. Then we parted, passed, reformed, reshaping ourselves the better for the exchange" (253). This is a positive characterization that is rendered, elsewhere in the memoir, much more painfully. For instance, she writes that for some of her lesbian cohort, "[i]n times of need and great instability, the place sometimes became more a definition than the substance," noting that, often, "there was no particular place, and we

grabbed whatever we could from wherever we found space, comfort, quiet, a smile, non-judgment" (225-6). Lorde comes to realize that the intervening condition – between the celebration of achieving temporary connections and the grief of literally and metaphorically being unable to find a place for oneself – characterizes the queer home: "our place was the very house of difference rather [than] the security of any one particular difference" (226).

Explained in this way, Lorde prefigures the ground of queer discursive home as a collectivity that incorporates the displaced and the different, those unhoused by the certainties about gender and sexual roles implicit to the heteronormative home model. The "very house of difference" also refuses to privilege any one particular pole of subjectivity, which attributes queer political power to difference rather than to identity. Lorde's description of herself as a footless bird in a forest of limbless trees aptly characterizes queer subjectivity in an era that predates the term, but it also has contemporary relevance. She explains eloquently in a documentary film, *Before Stonewall*, the ways that political marginalization can encourage individuals and groups to create power through the incorporation of difference:

> We need, as the movement encourages you or me,...to define ourselves. We deal with our similarities and then we must deal with our differences and the differences that are not being dealt with or provided for.…We can *use* these differences…we don't have to eradicate them. We don't have to wipe them out. We also don't have to remain with them. There is a total larger picture….I'm talking about the creative use of difference.

The creative use of difference keeps the queer home aloft, destabilized, searching for ways to challenge heteronorms that insist that constructions of gender, sexuality, identity, and politics must be rooted in order for them to be taken seriously. *Zami* prefigures this

"placeless" attribute of queer's discursive home, rendering the memoir as an enduring reminder that queering home means *ceaselessly* rejecting normalizing trends. This injunction preserves Lorde's memoir as satisfying an always-contemporary relevance to queer politics.

4. Reading Through the Skin: How Data Explain the Real Need for Real Queer Homes

The prizing of indeterminacy Lorde's memoir champions also informs Leslie Feinberg's construction of queer conceptual home. Many readers have found the indistinction of gender construction that Jess Goldberg recognizes as her "place" in the world the most rewarding takeaway from the novel. That recognition is the queer work of the novel, which describes Jess's search for a place that she calls "The Land Where They Don't Mind" (23). In order to find that space, Feinberg explores various strategies to provide Jess a sense of home: these come in various forms like the camaraderie she finds in gay and lesbian bars, in relationships with femme lesbians, in an attempt to father the child of one of her lovers, and via the tactic of binding her breasts and undergoing hormonal therapy to pass as a man. Ultimately, Goldberg abandons her search for an easily-defined gender identity, admitting, "'I want to understand about change – I don't just want to be at the mercy of it'" (299).

This leads Goldberg to an understanding about the placelessness of trans home, which unites it to the queer home concept: "I couldn't find myself in my own life….There was no place outside of me where I belonged. So every morning I willed myself back into existence" (209). This subjective willing associates Goldberg to Lorde, by stretching the concept of queer home to incorporate female masculinities (and, by

implication, male femininities). Skin is another correspondence between Lorde and Goldberg, as *Blues* describes Goldberg's attempts to feel at home in her own skin, which is marked/experienced as gender-queer. While Lorde's skin is marked as racially-queer to white feminists, among her lesbian friends, she is also read as gender-queer. As I mention above, regarding her "freaky" period, Lorde's Black lesbian interest in discarding roles that accommodate constructions of proper gender, race, and sexuality render her Goldberg's narrative sister. These are more than simple narrative associations, though. As I explain in this section, trans scholarship and statistical data describe the real-world effects of embodying queer skins.

For the remainder of this section, I follow what Sarah Ahmed and Judith Stacey recommend as "thinking through the skin," which they describe as a way "to interrogate how 'the skin' is attributed a meaning and logic of its own….how the skin is assumed to contain either the body, identity, well-being or value" (3). Regarding the subjective sense of feeling "at home" in one's skin, accounts of trans men and women often express, counter to queer theoretical aims to privilege the social constructionism of gender, claims to authenticity and wholeness in postoperative and/or post-hormonal-therapy statuses.[4] Rather than engaging the discourses of trans authenticity or using Jess Goldberg as a figure critical of clinical categorizations of gender, below, I emphasize that the subjective experience of feeling "at home" in one's skin is conditional upon access to secure,

[4] Trans scholars like Viviane Namaste point out the academic manipulation of the figure of the transgendered individual as a construction of medical and psychological discourses. She explains that "[w]hat is left out of these accounts is any real understanding of what everyday life is like for transsexuals. So while critics are churning out books, articles, and essays on transsexuals and the transgendered, they have nothing to say about the very real circumstances in which transsexuals live" (2).

comfortable intimate space. Feeling at home in one's skin is also conditional, it follows, upon acknowledgement that one's claims to subjective authenticity are not discredited by the social, political, and academic reading of skin as gendered, classed, raced.[5]

I will explore how the logic of skin imparts value and well-being to transgendered people, involving complex phenomenological assemblages of the subject with the social (including the subject's relations with and feedback from her or his encounters with systems of gender, race, class, sexuality, and identity). Thus, reading through the skin is to acknowledge that, "while the skin appears to be the matter which separates the body, it rather allows us to think of how the materialisation of bodies involves, not containment, but an affective opening out of bodies to other bodies, in the sense that the skin registers how bodies are touched by others" (Ahmed *Strange Encounters* 45). Jess Goldberg confirms that her experience as a stone butch lesbian constructs out of her body a "home alarm system that didn't seem to have an on-off switch. Once installed, the sirens went off and the gates shut, even if the intruder was loving" (94). Clearly, Jess wants that to be able affectively to open up her body to others she desires, but, as she and her lovers experience her skin as marked by a sharply masculine gender role, this is felt to be impossible.

She does not wish to be contained in the gender expression of either/or male/female. As she relates to a friend, "'I don't feel like a man trapped in a woman's body. I just feel trapped'" (158-9). I use this expression to discuss what seems so

[5] Sandy Stone writes in a famous manifesto, "Bodies are screens on which we see projected the momentary settlements that emerge from ongoing struggles over beliefs and practices within the academic and medical communities….As with 'genetic' women, transsexuals are infantilized, considered too illogical or irresponsible to achieve true subjectivity, or clinically erased by diagnostic criteria" (229-30).

disagreeable via normative perspectives on gender. For Goldberg to find in her body a home, she must reject the binary system of gender, but she also requires others to discard the division, as well. For Feinberg, as for contemporary trans men and women, this is an almost impossible condition to expect. I argue that, for cisgendered people (who comprise 99.7% of the American population), the construction of sexuality has become much more fluid, spilling out of the heterosexual/homosexual divide, over the course of the last thirty years.[6] Yet, the deconstruction of gender is, and will remain, like the category or race, hampered by the persistence of linking gender to biology.

Patricia Hill Collins reminds us that race, class, gender, and sexuality are each "systems of domination," not personal attributes, but she draws a distinction between homophobia and racism: "*Homophobia* flourishes in a context where the invisibility of the alleged deviancy is perceived to be the problem. Whereas the fears associated with racism lie in ideas projected upon highly visible, objectified Black bodies, the fears underlying homophobia emerge from the understanding that *anyone* could be gay or lesbian" (129). I incorporate Collins's distinction in order to demonstrate that sexuality and race are social constructions, systems of domination, that often are read unevenly, in regard to their respective ways of communicating something intrinsic about subjectivity. In the West, race is a condition read predominantly as a sociocultural immutability, even as postmodern theorists demonstrate race is a construction – a very powerful, complicated, and culturally-conditioned construction. Still, race (and skin, in particular, as *evidence* of race) is interpreted as biological in a way that sexuality is not. As Collins

[6] See the report from The Organization of American States, "IACHR Expresses Concern About Violence and Discrimination Against LGTBI Persons, Particularly Youth, in the Americas."

explains, under the "right" conditions, anyone might perform heterosex or homosex because sexuality is not related to biological "remainders" like skin pigment, eye shape, or nose length.

I argue that, because sex organs are biological material, gender is a social construction akin to race; bodies bear the socioculturally-inflected biological proof of male/female.[7] This normative and commonplace reading of gender as an embodied absolute, like race, seems intractable because of the deeply engrained lessons about the determinacy of biology to construct gender. If we replace "racism" in Collins's passage with "transphobia," we might agree that trans men and women are often "highly visible, objectified" gender-queer bodies, which does not relate them to their cisgendered homosexuals and lesbians. It is for this reason that I argue that scholars should not use the figure of the transgendered individual to offset claims that trans men and women make to find in the body a home, whether through or outside conventional gender roles.

Instead, queer scholars should read trans literature and art through the skin. Nael Bhanji writes that "the absolute metaphor of the body-as-house has always referred to…that marked epidermal periphery through which we literally feel our way through the world," but, importantly, this metaphor also means that, "to feel 'at home in one's skin' is to be taken *in the world* for who one feels oneself to be" (162, emphasis mine). This condition is denied to many if not most transgendered people, whose gender presentation is questioned, mocked, scrutinized, and deemed evidence for abuse and murder.

[7] That is, except in cases in which sex organs do not present biological consistency to either male or female body expectations – intersex individuals whose bodies on which surgery intervenes to assign gender at birth.

Reading through the skin means critics must take seriously the experiences of trans authors about their relations to gender, however queer or correspondent to normative constructions. *Stone Butch Blues* characterizes a trans subject searching for a body that will be a home for her. But, the novel is as much about a trans subject searching for a material home, a home that will satisfy "a need for intimacy, and the security necessary for intimacy, [which] is very much personalized" (King 28). I close this section by incorporating some empirical data about the contemporpary trans moment in the United States. These statistics reflect the roadblocks in place for trans men and women seeking to find homes in their bodies *through* reporting the restrictions that they must face in trying to establish and maintain material shelter. *Stone Butch Blues* was published in 1993, in an era during which the trans category had yet to be cultivated, and it depicts the brutal and overtly threatening conditions facing those who transgressed rigid gender identifications based upon inferred biological sex. For this reason, the novel's violence is shocking and gut-wrenching to contemporary readers. But, according to the data below, transphobia persists in visceral and structural ways.

The most recent and wide-reaching contemporary study, *The National Transgender Discrimination Survey*, reports responses related to domestic conditions from American transgendered individuals from 2011 surveys (see table 1).

Table 1 Domestic conditions reported by general transgender respondents, black trans respondents, and Latina/o trans respondents

Conditions reported:	All trans respondents	Black trans respondents	Latina/o trans respondents
Report owning home[8]	32%	14%	15%
Report having been homeless	19%	41%	27%
Report discrimination/denial of house/apartment	19%	38%	29%
Report salary below $10,000	15%	34%	28%
Report drug or sex work	16%	50%	34%

Source: Grant, Jaime M., Lisa A. Mottet, Justin Tanis, Jack Harrison, Jody L. Herman, and Mara Keisling. *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey.* Washington: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011. Web. 3 October 2013.

As the findings indicate, the most visibly objectified respondents via gender and race report higher levels of discrimination, homelessness, and straitened economic conditions. Trans subjects are read through the skin via heteronormative, racial, and class screens of discrimination in order to deny them safe, affordable housing via institutional officials like loan-lenders, employers, and landlords. In empirical ways, then, these data demonstrate painfully how home as a category is itself contingent upon "other spaces." Indeed, trans men and women, who require domestic shelter and comfort the most, endure some of the sharpest resistance to accessing those spaces.

The report also points to diversity in sexual orientation based on self-reportage of transgendered individuals. I incorporate this data in order to demonstrate, again, the slippery category of sexual orientation as a component of identity construction. Unlike

[8]Home ownership statistics compare to 67% of the general American population that reports home ownership.

gender and race, conceptions about sexual orientation travel in the transgender population just as they do among the cisgendered (see table 2).

Table 2 Sexual orientation reported by trans respondents

Sexual orientation	**Gay/lesbian**	**Bisexual**	**Queer**	**Heterosexual**	**Asexual**	**Other**
Respondents	21%	23%	20%	21%	4%	11%

Source: Grant, Jaime M., Lisa A. Mottet, Justin Tanis, Jack Harrison, Jody L. Herman, and Mara Keisling. *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey.* Washington: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011. Web. 3 October 2013.

Genny Beemyn and Susan Rankin's recent report, *The Lives of Transgender People*, identifies several sociological sub-categories of transgendered individuals: male-to-female (MTF), female-to-male (FTM), cross-dresser, and genderqueer, acknowledging that, although these classifications "do not capture the complexities of all of the ways that transgender people characterize and express their gender identities, these groups represent some of the main components of the transgender 'umbrella'" (156). While it is commonly the purview of sociologists and advocacy groups to dwell on these numbers, as the literature about trans experiences have only recently developed as a disciplinary category of inquiry, I pull these data in to show how the trans desire to experience the body-as-home is an imperiled concept physically, materially, and economically. Next, I move to demonstrate how Feinberg's novel narrativizes these data, explaining the very great need for trans men and women to be sheltered effectively.

5. *Stone Butch Blues* and the Conditions for Housing Queers Safely

Finally, to engage *Stone Butch Blues*, I take as inspiration Heather Love's recent appeal: "I want to recall a queer tradition that focuses on the lived experience of

structural inequality" (131). In order to explain how queers queer domestic spaces, they simply occupy them. But, as the above statistics demonstrate, predictable homes for trans men and women are hard to secure and maintain. So, in examining Feinberg's novel, I extend six reasons for which queers require and deserve access to consistent, safe housing. These six conditions include the basic need for shelter; the requirement of intimate space in which to develop personality in relation to gender, sexuality, and community; the need for privacy to satisfy claims to emotional and mental well-being; the need to acculturate into routines of daily living; the ability to invest space, objects, and practices with personal relevance, developing routines that reflect individuality; the need to develop homing as a way of life that acknowledges the advantages of occupying domestic space, which produces the urge to locate homing as a device to build community. These conditions are each in evidence in *Stone Butch Blues*, which I develop below as evidence that the novel claims the need of domestic space for queers and trans men and women.

The Organization of American States reports that, as late as August 2013, of the 0.3% of Americans who identify as transgender compared with the 3.5% of gay and lesbian Americans, the murder rate of transgendered people is 50% higher than the rate for gays and lesbians. A wide frame of humanitarianism suggests that the parsing of the inequity of homicide rates is on shaky ground, but the statistic supports the motivation of my argument to demonstrate how *Stone Butch Blues* illustrates the absolute and urgent need for transgendered people to affordable, protective, and comfortable shelters. As I've mentioned above, Feinberg writes of Goldberg, "There was no place outside of me where

I belonged. So every morning I willed myself back into existence" (209). This dislocation warrants Golberg's search for skin that fits her gender expression, but it also signifies a desperate need for a material place in which to feel at rest, peaceful, intimately satisfied.

Upon moving to New York City, Goldberg spends her days wandering, looking for work, and her nights trying to find sleep in kung fu and pornography movie theaters. She begins squatting in abandoned buildings. Finally, she rents a space that turns out to be "unlivable" by her own terms, yet she makes of the hovel a semi-private place:

> I bought two strong hasps and two locks at the hardware store and went back to the abandoned building on Mott Street. I installed them so I could lock the door from the inside or the outside. Then I bought a piece of plywood to cover a patch of floorboards and cheap air mattress for a bed….I thought I'd die if I didn't get a few nights of privacy. (232)

These rudimentary provisions secure Goldberg for a time from aimless nocturnal homeless men and policemen intent on rounding up vagrants. These basic conditions for housing satisfy the fundamental need for security and safety from weather, danger, and privacy.

The second condition for private space necessary for trans people is access to intimate zones in which they can develop a sense of personal gendered and sexual identity. Feinberg expresses this need by narrating Goldberg's sexual education in the bars and homes of her Buffalo lesbian butch fellows and their femme lovers: "They let me sleep over on the weekends on their soft old couch….Al and Jackie groomed me. Literally. Jacqueline gave me haircuts in their kitchen….One night at the kitchen table Al pulled out a cardboard box and handed it over to me to open. Inside was a rubber dildo" (30). In this private education, Jackie takes care of Goldberg, using the kitchen to help

construct her hair to conform to stone butch masculine presentation. Per her role as a femme, Jackie nurtures Jess in this way, just as, in her role as butch, Al demonstrates with the dildo the sexual device that Jess can expect to use as she develops sexual relationships with her own femme lovers. The private education Goldberg receives via these helpmates is only appropriate in the zone of their homes, and these instructional activities incorporate Jess into a queer family system.

Akin to the positioning of children in the homes of biological families, though, Jess notes that this kind of housing provides little in the way of satisfying her will for her own personal space: "I'd spent a lot of my life on other peoples' couches….I had no privacy here, no space anywhere in the world where it was safe to grieve" (157). As Goldberg is a stone butch, her masculine gender performance marks her, to outsiders, as criminal and subject to police abuse and imprisonment. But, to the insiders within the community of her lesbian friends and lovers, that performance is dictated by a requisite presentation of gender that projects an emotionless, tough exterior. On the couch, which is situated in the "public" space of friends' private homes, Goldberg cannot find space in which to emote freely, which is a third condition for which private space is necessary to those considered the most vulnerable sociopolitical minorities: securing places for mental and emotional well-being.

A fourth condition for which trans men and women need consistent access to private homes is that the security of self-determined, safe domestic space establishes a certain order, a pattern that organizes routines for daily living. In the home of her friend Angie, Jess remarks that she's unfamiliar with the curtain fabric. She asks,

> "'What do you call that?'
> "'Muslin,' she said."
> "'You know,' I told her, 'I don't even know how to pay bills, or how any of that works.'" (69)

Goldberg makes a mental association between her ignorance of the window muslin, which registers to her as an iconic domestic item, to the daily, utilitarian practices that inform domestic life. Here, Jess confirms the power of the practical to inflect domestic living: the personal construction of homes, which are marked by objects like curtains, furniture, and appliances communicate an ordering of practices that are undertaken in order to sustain that construction of home. When she acquires an apartment of her own, Jess acknowledges this condition for private living by learning "to reduce the anxieties of life by paying bills on time, keeping receipts and promises, doing laundry before I ran out of underwear, picking up after myself" (123). Occupying and maintaining a home requires the satisfaction of this maxim that home is sustained by quotidian processes and the processing of home inflects the will to maintain domestic space.

With that functional imperative satisfied comes another condition for securing private space: the acquisition of aesthetic materials to project messages of personal identity onto that space. This is the formal mode by which individuals shape domestic identity through the accumulation of material objects. For Jess in particular, meaning coheres to curtains, a kitchen table, cut-glass vases with flowers, dish towels, herbs, painted walls, sanded floors, bed headboards and footboards, a black Guatemalan rug. Jess realizes that homemaking has an ameliorating effect on her sense of identity, prompting an urge to feel herself situated squarely at home. Framing herself in domestic space, this positioning cultivates an unexpected desire to please herself: "As my house

came together, I suddenly wanted things that made my body feel good….I bought thick, soft towels and fragrances for my bath that pleased me. And then one day I looked around at my apartment and realized I'd made a home" (236-7).

The cultivation of the feeling that she is particular to her space identifies the final condition for which trans men and women require domestic spaces, which is the cultivation of a sense of homing. To experience private space as one's own is to foster the sensibility that, when that space is lost, the urge to return remains. Jess loses an apartment to a fire: "I pictured the water in the amber glass on the kitchen windowsill boiling furiously in the furnace of heat. I saw a flame licking the stem of each narcissus in the glass, until they curled in on themselves and exploded in brighter yellows and oranges than ever before" (244). When she finds another space in the city, Jess refers to the moment as her "own spring thaw," which she recognizes while shopping for used furniture, hanging a framed handkerchief, receiving a tie quilt from her friend, Ruth (255). That cultivation of personal homing Jess realizes is not only for herself, but to see her friends and lovers occupying spaces of their own, encouraging them to develop safe, comfortable domestic zones, too. Decorating Ruth's apartment, she remarks, "It was an absolute pleasure to see the joy on her face as I covered her walls with fresh colors. She excitedly cut shelf paper while the cupboards were still tacky with white enamel" (255).

This final condition demonstrates how the cultivation of community is propagated via domestic concepts, which I have argued in respect to Lorde's *Zami,* is essential to constructing and maintaining sociopolitical power. The dual expressions of home that this chapter has engaged on conceptual and material levels are critical to understanding how

queering home is a necessary and valuable practice for homosexuals, lesbians, and trans men and women. Not only are both senses of queering home important to emphasize, they operate, as I have demonstrated, as two sides of the same coin. For, queering home is to take a heterostatic convention and to disturb it, which is most effectively done by occupying spaces in which that convention inheres most powerfully. As I mention at the outset of the chapter, *Zami* and *Stone Butch Blues* represent two proto-queer texts that will remain in the queer canon as evidence of the power of conceptual/material queering. It is via the mechanism of home, I argue, that these texts can claim such abiding relevance.

In the remaining chapters, I deconstruct several themes associated with American domestic ideology. In so doing, I demonstrate how queer narrative has worked to use the home in complementary, critical, and challenging approaches. These following chapters investigate "life moments" that are attached to American occupations of domestic space. Next, I move to interrogate the process of children and adolescents maturing in family homes. I investigate the heteronormative domestic controls in place meant to orient children to the conditioning of maturation, a process aimed at generating productive, romance-seeking, heterosexual adults who will perpetuate the pattern in raising children of their own. As I will demonstrate, queer narrative challenges this system meant to inspire Americans to duplicate this domestic pattern unquestioningly.

Chapter 3

Playing Against House Rules:

Queer Youth and the Problem of Maturing

"*When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things*."

--1 Corinthians 13:11

1. Introduction

As I have acknowledged in the previous chapter, Lorde and Feinberg demonstrate the potential for breaking ground around the ideology and material practices related to the home. This chapter begins to investigate "life moments" that are attached to American occupations of domestic space, which I will carry through as an argumentative approach to the remainder of the dissertation. In this chapter, I will claim that two novels centered on "queer children" deconstruct the model of maturity that St. Paul posits in the epigraph above, so common to the heteronorm that insists upon a clear-cut divide between children and adults.[1] Dorothy Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina* (1992) and Mike Albo's *Hornito: My Lie Life* (2000) provide similar narrative approaches to representing the movement from childhood to adolescence and into adulthood that queer each of these life-categories. Throughout this chapter, I examine how the narratives' domestic situations devalue

[1] "Queer child" is an obviously loaded term that flattens both constructions of "queer" and "child" as if each term is facilely understood on its own, much less when placed together. In *The Queer Child*, Katherine Bond Stockton recognizes four types, of which the closest approximation to my definition is the "grown homosexual," an adult looking back at the child through memory or writing to reconfigure a child with clear-cut same-sex preferences who will advance to an age at which s/he affirms homosexual object choice. Allison and Albo write of the sexual and social development of characters who will advance ostensibly into homosexual adulthood. For more on constructions of queer children, see Katherine Bond Stockton, *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century*.

maturation, progress, and growing up into the designs established by familial heteronormativity.

It is important to recognize that the novels detail thematic differences regarding child and adolescent experience. Allison's novel depicts a girl growing up poor in the rural South whose extended family provides her comfort and relief from the physical and sexual abuse she suffers in her stepfather's home. Albo's narrative features a boy whose experiences in middle-class suburbia frame his growth into adolescence bemused by domestic sexual practices that are otherwise unthreatening. Any one and all of the profound departures in theme regarding region, gender, and social class mark these novels as contrary, oppositional texts. I draw them together deliberately *because* these departures act as thematic oppositions that position the narration of childhood and adolescence as always conditioned by the problematic "future" of adult subjectivity. In so doing, this chapter situates maturity as a totalizing category meant to contain all constructions of childhood and adolescence as tightly separated from "the adult." Drawing generative power from two texts that treat representations of radically different "types" of childhood enables me to make this broad critique of the construction of maturity.

I want to be careful here to emphasize that "queer childhood" is not a category I employ as a way to reduce all traces of difference, as though gender, class, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation matter little to constructions of subjectivity. It is because of these differences themselves that I find correspondence between *Bastard* and *Hornito*: both novels demonstrate that through experiences of difference, subjectivities and

sexualities are formed and abandoned, pondered and recapitulated, never stable. This chapter considers that it is through these differences that representations of queer childhood – subjectivity- and sexuality-in-flux –like Allison's and Albo's abandon the identity consolidation adulthood signifies, which is a common trope to much same-sex-oriented coming-of-age narrative.

The novels, then, correspond in that they narrativize childhood and adolescence queerly rather than through simple thematic correlation. Many well-crafted memoirs and novels have developed the homosexual coming-of-age theme in which, by maturation, odd children develop into adolescence and adulthood by becoming aware either suddenly or slowly that they intuit social and sexual attractions to same-sex gendered individuals.[2] Some of these narratives tend to exhibit what Angus Gordon calls an "uncritical embrace of queer adolescence as the abject site of an interpellation that queer adulthood subsequently cites and reverses…constituting adolescence…as the territory of an inevitable martyrdom, the reward for which is postponed until adulthood, when the possibility of queer identification offers its own kind of resurrection" (10). Allison's narrative, which depicts the traumatic suffering of a young girl, resists taking the subject position of adult survivor looking back into the past to recount the successful weathering of childhood pain. And, Albo's novel screens the depiction of sissy adolescence neither through the lens of adult shame nor pride, as both of those narrative arcs of

[2] Too many good examples abound, but noteworthy texts include Mark Doty, *Firebird*: *A Memoir*, Rakesh Satyal, *Blue Boy*, Rigoberto González, *Butterfly Boy: Memories of a Chicano Mariposa*, Tom Spanbauer, *The Man Who Fell in Love with the Moon*, and Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home* and *Are You My Mother? A Comic Drama*.

childhood/adolescence reflect the privileging of adulthood as a "revised" category of subjectivity.

Gordon points out the practice of privileging the irrevocable moment (and its forever after) when a subject becomes self-aware of individual difference. Introducing a broadcast of *This American Life* on the subject of sissies, Ira Glass frames this kind of experience: "What could be more horrible than the moment when you realize that everybody in the world can see some aspect of you, something about you that you never even knew you were revealing? That you never even wanted to reveal?" Many queer authors characterize childhood as an era of shame and guilt from which a person emerges into adulthood, in which s/he can take pride in personal difference. The transformative barrier between childhood and adulthood is understood as maturation.[3] This is the "totalizing tendency" of coming-out narratives that Michael Warner claims is at work when authors cast adulthood as the remedy to childhood (8).

In their own ways, Allison and Albo avoid the problematic practice of resurrecting the abject queer child as a confident gay adult. Through the representation of the "middle space" of childhood and adolescence, Allison and Albo chart the sexual "movement and trajectory" of the individual without pat conclusions or retrospective assessments that place in opposition the child and the adult (Quimby 4-5). These novels succeed at this by denying the concept of maturation its rhetorical power to shape queer subjectivity. In what follows, I analyze Allison's and Albo's novels for spatiotemporal

[3] In fact, the *It Gets Better* anti-bullying campaign relies on this rhetorical strategy, that maturing ameliorates the pain of being bullied. But, the campaign never addresses whether the "it" in the maxim references the institution of bullying or the experience of being bullied. Does bullying "get better" as it is recoded in adulthood in normative ways? Or does maturation resolve magically the pain of being bullied?

narratives of children and adolescents who negotiate sexuality within family homes. *Bastard Out of Carolina* cuts off the narrative just before the moment of its protagonist's progression into conventional adolescence, suggesting her movement into lesbian sexuality without structuring definitive confirmation. Instead, the novel privileges the moments from childhood that have constructed the character, refusing to defer sexuality its ultimate *meaning* until adulthood. *Hornito* does project its protagonist into adulthood, performing the motions of restorative reflection on queer childhood and adolescence. But, the novel corresponds with Allison's denial of adult sexuality its singular significance in comparison with child sexuality. Instead, Albo's novel discredits the concept of maturity, noting that it is typically invoked in order to mean, reductively, "settling down." Settling down, Albo discovers, is the heteronormative condition by which youths are converted into productive adults. Revealing the logic underpinning this often untroubled norm, *Hornito* privileges the notion that sexuality and subjectivity are fluid constructions of self too tidily settled by social controls of surveillance, classification, and identity consolidation.

This chapter claims *Bastard* and *Hornito* as key texts for advancing anti-heteronormative queer subjectivity in an era when more and more homosexual Americans seek identity consolidation via practices of marriage, child-rearing, home ownership, and other private gains. Thus, they resist the normalizing trend in much contemporary politics that insists upon a sanitized, HRC-approved subject position as a condition for entry into political discourse. Privileging subjectivity-in-flux, the novels demonstrate constructions of childhood and adolescence that do not determine normative

adult futures; their youth experiences are not pitched toward ripening their bodies and minds into "inevitable," productive objects for heteronormative social and political use. For this reason, the queer subjectivity of childhood and adolescence that Allison and Albo employ puts into practice Lee Edelman's call for queers to resist reproductive futurism, using the image of the Child as the fulcrum upon whose advance into maturity, into heterosexual adult modes of reproduction, the future hinges. This chapter examines the two representations of queer childhood and adolescence in domestic space which resists the progress narrative and self-consolidation implicit in the child/adult heteronorm of maturation. In so doing, I argue, the novels point toward queer political implications that subvert the limitations of contemporary identity politics by way of resisting the patterning of children as the yet-to-be redeemed constructions that puberty rescues.

Before I begin to interrogate the domestic spaces occupied by Allison's and Albo's queer youth, I must demonstrate how such work fits into recent scholarship. In the next section, I do so, demonstrating that the child has received much attention in late twentieth and early twenty-first century criticism. As a social construction, childhood has profound significance. In order to limit the explanations as to how my work fits into such an overwhelming body of scholarship, I emphasize below how recent theoretical work has negotiated the nexus of the constructions of the child, the queer, and the domestic.

2. Keep Out: Queer Kids and Restricted Territory

James Kincaid points out that a cultural line has been established over the past two hundred years in which it is understood that "the child is that species which is free of sexual feeling or response; the adult is that species which has crossed over into sexuality"

(6-7). Bracketing children as a category of human contrary to the category of adult by the mark of sexuality eroticizes children, as Kincaid's work shows. Moreover, it figures sexuality as the fundament of social norms affixed to the child/adult binary, which includes innocence/experience, chaos/order, ignorance/knowledge, and inappropriate/appropriate. This construction sets up a valorization of the category of adult, dictating the commonly held assumption that parents have ascertained the proper educational experience to raise children by their very maturation into adulthood.

Besides the obvious logical inaccuracy underpinning that assumption, the social divide between child/adult imagines adulthood as a kind of solution to childhood. One is an incomplete human being as a child, according to such logic. Central to this perspective, children have not integrated social and sexual norms that govern adult society. According to Katherine Bond Stockton, this construct keeps in place the idea that all children are always imagined as "not-yet-straight." Thus, compulsory heterosexuality is what is at stake in the relation of children to innocence, chaos, ignorance, and impropriety. Normative lessons on gender, class, ethnicity, nationality, and religion each attach to the concept of sexual maturation, which "theoretically keeps society running in a predictable, non-anarchistic manner" (Herzog 61). Regarding gender, for instance, sissy boys are what David McInnes and Cristyn Davies explain as "an expression of what should be inexpressible" (116). As preadolescent expressions of gender nonconformity, sissies resist falling in line with the masculine norm attached to boyhood and threaten to

carry over destabilized gendered messages into manhood.[4] Thus, "[t]he fragility and mobility of the ordering of gender is made visible in the declaration of 'sissy'" (117).

Bond Stockton demonstrates that "queer children" do not exist in the contemporary historical record, much less in psychological, sociological, or medical research simply because the queer child is nonexistent in the public imagination. Instead, Stockton writes, "[f]ictions literally offer the forms that certain broodings on children might take" (2). Because we conceive narratologically that childhood is an exposition that develops into heteronormative adulthood, we can intuit queerness in any construction of childhood as reflected in "a series of mistakes or misplaced desires" that signals a departure from the anticipated pattern of maturation; in children, often, "queerness inheres…in innocence run amok" (3).

Both Allison's and Albo's novels of queer children who progress into adolescence and adulthood celebrate this sense of innocence without coloring in the false border between child and adult who looks back at childhood through the lens of the "post-shame, post-guilt, post-recognition, disciplined adult" (Halberstam *Gaga* xxiv). *Bastard Out of Carolina* depicts the narrative of Ruth Anne ("Bone") Boatwright, whose rough and tumble childhood advances into bemused adolescence set in rural South Carolina. Born poor and illegitimate, Bone relies on the comfort of her poor and working class

[4] The ready conflation of gender and sexuality brands sissies (and post-adolescent tomboys) as incipient homosexuals despite the simultaneous cultural assumption that children do not exhibit sexuality until puberty. Recent scholarship at work to deconstruct this double bind for those children marked as "sissy" and "tomboy" includes *Over the Rainbow: Queer Children's and Young Adult Literature*, edited by Michelle Ann Abate and Kenneth Kidd; *Queer Youth Cultures*, edited by Susan Driver; *Sissies and Tomboys*: *Gender Nonconformity and Homosexual Childhood*, edited by Matthew Rottnek; and C.J. Pascoe, "'Dude, You're a Fag,': Adolescent Masculinity and the Fag Discourse."

maternal relatives to offset a miserable existence at home due to the ongoing physical and sexual abuse dealt by her stepfather, Daddy Glen. Because her young mother, Anney, repeatedly turns a blind eye to Bone's suffering for the sake of maintaining her romantic partnership with Glen, Bone spends most of her childhood in the company of her sister, Reese; her Granny; and her Aunts Alma, Ruth, and Raylene. At the close of the novel, Anney, Glen, and Reese leave Bone in the care of her lesbian aunt, Raylene, for the sake of everyone's comfort.

The lesson that Allison employs to close her novel involves an epiphany Bone makes. As she ponders the possibility of maturing to become an adult like her mother, Bone makes a discovery – "I was already who I was going to be" – as a way to deny the concept of origin its fundamental power to govern (and, thus, limit) growth and the possibilities of desire (309). *Bastard* stops short and *Hornito* deflates the common transformative representation of childhood in which the progression into adulthood guarantees children greater fulfillment. In *Bastard*, Bone's epiphany has a particularly spatiotemporal aspect in that it avoids a representation that traces a causal chain of being between the past and the present. Elspeth Probyn explains that in the flawed logic that remembering the past encourages,

> there is only one line of movement, one that goes from the present to the past in order to justify the present. To say the least, this is not a very productive line; it does not yield anything new in the present. It merely reproduces the present as an effect of the past, of past causes. While this line undoubtedly exists, it must be joined with another line of movement if it is to be productive. (117-18)

In Allison's novel, where Bone happens to be at this self-discovery contains the potential for where she can imagine herself being in the future. This has a metaphysical ring, but,

more importantly, at the close of the narrative, Bone is on the front porch of her lesbian Aunt Raylene's house, a safe haven – not her maternal home, but one that will frame her maturation into adolescence, ostensibly as a confident lesbian woman. It is important to note, however, that neither the process of maturation nor "the future" as the subject's deferred productive end zone, is a goal prized in Allison's novel. Instead, Bone's epiphany discredits both the concepts of origin and maturity.

Such a representation extends itself toward queer approaches to deprivileging heteronormative models of fixing, mastering, and consolidating self-control. Those models limit the possibilities of narrative and political appeal of the contemporary moment in which the future is unimaginable, thus, negligible in its power to construct queer subjectivities. Though Probyn's construction of another line of productive forward-movement implies a future, if we consider the line instead as a spinning verticality or a dotty vector implying indeterminate vicissitudes, this line is no more reduced in meaning by withholding its future trajectory any more than Bone's powerful insistence that "I already was who I was going to be" is reduced by its narrative gap to determine her as a fully-formed adult. Thus, in the way that it resists the depiction of the future as an angle toward which all subjective and political forces must bend, *Bastard* signals the productive potential – not only of constructions of the immature, the anarchic, and the inchoate – of concentrating on the contemporary, on the messiness of subjectivity in general.

A theoretical approach to narrative and memory is significant here, too, because, as Probyn explains, the line behind narration of a contemporary moment is littered by

dead events and effects that only appear to have caused the present to have come about. Regarding youth narratives, this means that any interpretation of childhood is always already inflected by adult constructions of subjectivity. For instance, *Hornito*'s format splices scenes from the narrator's contemporaneity, in which he is a grown man in his twenties living and working in Manhattan, with scenes from his childhood and adolescence. Such form corresponds to depictions of "out" adult gay voices that look back to remembered constructions of childhoods in order to represent the boy or girl who would be queer. The gay boyhood and adolescence of Mike Albo is only produced *as* gay boyhood and adolescence as an effect of narrative memory.

The impossibility of narrating childhood except through this prism of memory – which is the impossibility of narrating childhood *at all* – has been established in theory by Jacqueline Rose in *The Case for Peter Pan*. In Albo's, as in Allison's novel, this is the case, as narrative moments of childhood and adolescence are constructed from a retrospective perspective of queer adulthood. The ability to reconstruct childhood is impossible; consciousness doesn't work that way. However, the novels draw no normative conclusions on maturation and maturity as a causal link between children and adults, which is the "impossible relation between adult and child," which Rose argues "sets up a world in which the adult comes first (author, maker, giver) and the child comes after (reader, product, receiver), but where neither of them enter the space between" (1-2). Allison's and Albo's novels narrate this subject positioning as they must, in order to trouble the often unquestioned heteronormative claims on maturation as a life process significant to constructing subjectivity (*Bastard*) and on maturity as an imperative

condition to assert serious sociopolitical commentary about alternative forms of homemaking (*Hornito*).

Both Anne-Marie Fortier's "Making Home" and Sarah Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* have interrogated recently the importance of the home as a spatiotemporal construct that shapes subjective approaches to sexuality. Especially regarding childhood and adolescence, the home is the site in which heterosexual norms are constructed specifically to instruct children about how to be both normative objects as well as normative subjects. I argue that the spatial placement of Allison's and Albo's young characters in domestic settings reveals the desired functions of adults to be controllers of their children's maturation processes. But, adult parents also use heteronormative controls in order to shape their children into proper individual subjects that are *particular* and *representative* of a singular family identity. For this reason, in *Bastard*, Daddy Glen wants his stepdaughter to be a Waddell, not a Boatwright; similarly, in *Hornito*, the narrator resists choosing a domestic partner as a way to "distinguish himself" as an adult Albo – despite the very fact that partnering is so normative a process that little distinction can be gained by falling under its sway. The novels demonstrate that family home life constructs twin instructions for youth: to grow up is to grow into familial heterosexual assumptions and to grow up is to cultivate a confident and consolidated sense of individual identity. By denying the process of "growing up" its power to shape sexuality and subjectivity, then, *Bastard* and *Hornito* resist the lessons of normativity so common to coming-of-age narratives.

Hornito dramatizes the childhood and adolescence of its central character, Mike Albo, who lives with his parents and older brother in suburban enclaves in Virginia and Nevada. The narrative is framed from the perspective of Albo as a young adult who has moved to Manhattan to work and seek out potential romantic partners. Both Albo's coming of age story and his contemporary search for long-term relationships convey his personal confusion about how to live a satisfying life. Unable to come to terms with an identifiable conclusion as to whether or not Albo even wants to find a partner who might help to close off the "immature" phase of his life, he integrates diary entries recounting his first homosexual encounter with descriptions of his current flings. The novel ends abruptly, without resolution, insisting that the narrator resigns himself to an interstitial kind of romantic existence, forestalling the resolution of movement from immaturity to maturity.

Though he resists the norm-directive that he must replicate an adult home that reflects the consolidated domestic zone created by his parents and his friends' parents, Albo feels himself a failure. But, that recognition isn't limiting, via what Judith Halberstam has called the "grim scenarios of success" affixed to the conventional model of heteronormative maturation, which dictates a "goal of delivering us from unruly childhoods to orderly and predictable adulthoods" (*Queer Art* 2-3). Halberstam consistently has criticized conventional approaches to time that cultivate "cultural scripts that usher even the most queer among us through markers of individual development into normativity," generating a strong, queer resistance to the normative construction of life phases.("Queer Temporalities" 182). As I demonstrate, Albo's novel looks back at the

homes of his childhood as a way to relate to his contemporary domestic situation in creative tension. Concluding that the fluency between his childhood and adult homes represents what Halberstam calls a "refusal of mastery" that maturity calls for, Albo adopts a free-form type of adulthood, akin to the "innocence run amok" queerness of childhood that Bond Stockton has formulated. In so doing, the novel characterizes a queer resistance to "reproductive futurism," outlined by Lee Edelman's *No Future*, situating Albo as a queer, anti-normative representation of adulthood in an era whose LGBT politics increasingly privileges adult norms like marriage, child-rearing, and family-building.

Having appealed to the theoretical groundwork that frames this chapter, I move now to demonstrate how Allison's and Albo's fiction have illustrated that sexuality is of major importance in the lives of their child/adolescent characters. Bone and Albo demonstrate that domestic sexuality is never as simple as that which goes on between mom and dad. In ways both traumatic and celebratory, childhood domestic sexuality contributes significantly to the ways that adults develop sexual and social relations. Representations of Allison's Bone at home and Albo's Mike in domestic spaces trouble the child/adult heteronorm, devalue identity consolidation in trade for characterizations of sexuality- and subjectivity-in-flux, and point toward political implications suggested by the refusal to pin down mature identity constructions transformed by maturation into adulthood.

3. "I Already Was Who I Was Going to Be": Refusing Maturation in *Bastard Out of Carolina*

To examine Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina* for its potential to muddy the category of the sexual child and an attendant privileging of subjectivity and sexuality as always in flux, I consider in correspondence the child narrator's experiences in and out of her mother's home along with those depicted in her extended family's homes. Bone Boatwright, the novel's queer child, learns about the interstices of sexuality and domesticity as constructions that cross into and out of adult and child experiences alike. As I will argue below, Allison's resistance to draw definite conclusions about Bone's sexual orientation situates the character as a queer child whose affirmation, "I was already who I was going to be," deprivileges the concept of maturity, of identity consolidation so implicit to queer coming-of-age literature (309). In so doing, the novel acknowledges a queer disinclination to organize life around an individualist, heteronormative standard of growing up.

Bastard depicts a broad range of differences between its narrator's single-family home experiences and those experienced in the home of her aunts, especially in Aunt Raylene's home. As a consequence of low-paying labor, in order to establish a single-family household, "Daddy Glen" Waddell often moves his wife and her two daughters, Reese and Bone, in and out of a series of rental homes too expensive for long-term occupation. Another motivation prompts Glen's movement: just after he moves the family to a "new house in West Greenville…so far from any of the aunts' houses that there was rarely time to stop by and see them," he begins the systematic physical and

sexual abuse of Bone (105). Glen's decision to remove his family to faraway places affords him the ability to harm Bone, who he sees maniacally as a sort of ten-year-old rival for the love of his wife, Anney. It is understood that the West Greenville house is the space in which Glen first escalates his violence against Bone. When he is not nagging her, shouting at her, or chasing her into bathrooms and bedrooms to molest her, Glen is professing his great and providential love to his wife and daughters. Bone, of course, wants the abuse to stop and for Glen to love her, her sister, and her mother as a proper family, like the father she reads about in *Robinson Crusoe*.

In this terrible way Bone is introduced into the realm of sexuality, a child processed into adult sexual relations. Glen's infantile rage fuels a series of outbursts, beatings, and molestations after moments when he feels a loss of control over his employment, relationships with Anney or his parents. By his series of attacks, Glen disallows Bone a "natural" flow, predicated upon puberty, into the realm of adult sexuality, forcing her to consider herself a rival of familial love for Anney. For this reason, Glen commits both sexual abuse and incest against Bone with these acts in the very same zones – bedrooms – in which he provides Anney sexual satisfaction. This explosive situation, which Bone can only weather and internalize – forces Glen to hop from unloved house to unloved house throughout the narrative, dysfunctional family, which he helps to keep troubled, in tow.

While Glen forces Bone to cross into adult sexuality, Bone and other characters interpret his domestic movements as the acts of an overgrown child, an unloved boy. He chooses rentals that are "shabby imitations" of those of his financially better-off brothers,

"with a nice lawn and picture windows framed in lined curtains," rather than living more modestly in visibly poorer sections of town (81). Acknowledging that Glen is a "man-child," his wife, Anney, tells a sister of the moment she met him: "'You could see the kind of man he wanted to be so plain. It was like looking at a little boy….that's when I knew I loved him'" (133). When she thinks of how she feels living in Daddy Glen's abusive home, Bone wonders, "It must have been like what he felt when he stood around in his daddy's house, his head hanging down" (209).

The treatment of Glen as a child counterbalances the narrative abuse of Bone, who he has interpellated into adult sexual relations. The novel insists upon complicating sexual and social relations without, of course, valorizing predatory adult sex practices against children. This complication stands as one of the most charged conceptual aspects swirling around the child/adult binary as it is broken down in the novel. Allison deliberately does not condemn Glen in the novel; he is beaten up severely by the Boatwright men when they discover his abuse of Bone, but he keeps his wife, Anney, in the end. The novel's point in demonstrating this form of narrative irresolution is to force the point that the heteronorm that insists upon the right and force of heterosexual coupling also implies the incorporation of children always already into adult sexual relations. As children are imagined as "not yet straight" via heteronormative logic, they are sexual objects in-the-making. Glen makes use of this condition implicit to heteronormative modes of living by his sexual appropriation of Bone and by demonstrating his capacity to preserve his marriage.

While the novel demonstrates this blurring of the child/adult division, it also processes childhood as a construction that is intrinsically sexual. In one scene, Bone is displayed as a queer child, representative of a destabilized sexual subjectivity. Here, she is, all-at-the-same-time her mother's child, the sexual object of Glen's hatred, and the child discovering her sexual appetite. Bone recalls that in her stepfather's bedroom closet hang

> the same two or three belts he'd set aside for me. Oiled, smooth and supple as the gristle under chicken fat, those belts hung behind the door of his closet where I could see them and smell them when I helped Mama put away his clothes. I would reach up and touch the leather, feel it warm under my palms. There was no magic in it, no mystery. Sometimes I would make myself go in that closet and wrap my fingers around those belts as if they were something animal that could be tamed….[H]ow could I explain to anyone that I hated being beaten but still masturbated to the story I told myself about it? (112-13)

The passage incorporates the belts as the only physical suggestion of Daddy Glen in the presence of his bedroom, leaving him as a man out of the equation of Bone's developing sexual awakening. There is nothing implicitly masculine in the room described; instead, Bone is accompanied by her mother performing domestic duties. Bone denies any sexual "magic" or "mystery" to the belts. They are simply household objects translated into understandable domestic ordinariness – like "gristle under chicken fat," stripped of their power to hurt Bone, capable now of pleasing her senses of smell and touch.

Bone is around the age of ten at the time of this description, and, as Allison is careful never to ascribe to her a specific sexual orientation, she is the queer child. The kind of sexual interplay Bone intuits between Glen and Anney is nonsensical to her, so it doesn't enter description. But the pleasure she experiences alone with herself with common household items convince her that sexuality does contain the capacity for

pleasure and personal satisfaction. As a queer child, she is a subject unmoored from heterosexual relations despite claims made by her mother and stepfather that she is central to those relations. Bone describes her experience of her family's home as "ghostly, unreal, and unimportant" (65). In this way, Bone is cast as the unstuck signifier, the child who is meant to be central to heterosexual relations, yet is set adrift as a queer remnant of heterosex – the bastard of the title – who persists in Glen's and Anney's imaginations as a force interruptive of normative husband/wife relations. All at the same time, and constituted by the above confusions, Bone is a child negotiating her own ways to access sexual pleasure.

Allison insists upon the sexuality of childhood in this scene as well as others, depicting Bone's active sexual repertoire in the bedroom she and her sister, Reese, share. For example, in the afternoons, when Reese plays outside with friends and before Anney and Glen come home from work, Bone rocks on her hand, envisioning herself "being tied up and put in a haystack while someone sets the dry stale straw ablaze" (63). Later, Reese develops the practice, and each lets the other take turns respectfully late at night on the bed. And the pattern works again in the afternoons when they share the bedroom for masturbation sessions – "When she came out, I would go in" (175). They even protect one another from potential parental intruders. This partnership is never acknowledged among the sisters, even though each child breaks some (hetero)sexual taboos: Bone intrudes once into their room to find Reese's face covered by the thin veil of their mother's panties and Bone takes to listening in on Reese's sessions in order to masturbate to her grunting (174-76).

The blunt relations that Allison makes between children and sexuality refuses to acknowledge the heteronormative lie that children are not sexual. That is, the novel insists that children are not recognized as sexual unless they are used as objects for adults. Sexualized by adults who are meant to wait for children to mature, children figure as strange constructions in heteronormative logic. By showing that children are rendered queer when they are not supposed to possess sexual appetites, yet *do*, Allison puts the heteronormative category of the child into fluid form, blurring the sexual conditions on which the category rests.

It is external to the heterosexual family-building home created by her mother and stepfather that Bone finds a space into which she "fits" – her Aunt Raylene's home. The emplacement at Raylene's does not suggest itself as a site for Bone to develop or mature, as I have demonstrated are heteronormative conditions. Rather, Bone describes her situation at the novel's end as fluid-yet-grounded: "Who would I be when I was fifteen, twenty, thirty?...I wasn't old. I would be thirteen in a few weeks. I was already who I was going to be" (309). Her wonder about adulthood implies no distance, no separation between her experience of youth. This epiphany Bone makes on the porch of Raylene's house as she watches her mother abandon her to her aunt's care.

To close my discussion of *Bastard*, I focus on Raylene's home as an alternative site for the construction of childhood and adolescence that refuses to uphold well-worn heteronormative treatments that creep even into much homosexual coming-of-age narrative. In so doing, I explore how Raylene's home communicates a ground for productive queer politics regarding narratives of queer childhood. Resistant, oppositional,

yet intersectional with heterosexual relations, Raylene's home symbolizes an approach to queer political power of narrative to resist normative narrative arcs that privilege maturity, identity consolidation, and progress.

In contrast to the house-hopping practices of her siblings, Raylene has kept a home, which she "had rented…for most of her adult life," far out in the country alongside a river (79). The marginal situation of her domestic space corresponds with her outsider-status in gender-queer performance: Raylene keeps her hair short, wears overalls, smokes, spits, and is rumored to have joined the carnival under the name Ray in her youth. In this "adult tomboy" performance, Raylene replicates the rough and uncouth performance of her mother, Granny. In fact, Raylene is situated in a narrative position between Granny and Bone that suggests a generational lineage of, if not outright lesbian desire running throughout the Boatwright family, then a tomboy-kind of kinship. Anney tells Bone she fears she'll grow up as "wild and mean" as her uncles, Granny, "or even Raylene" (110). Bone is clearly fascinated with her aunt and receives respect in kind, especially when Raylene confides in her: "'I'm counting on you to get out there and do things, girl. Make people nervous and your old aunt glad'" (182). Here, Raylene suggests a relation between herself and Bone that surpasses the already-established genealogical bond. Judith Halberstam would explain that Raylene celebrates Bone's incipient ability to resist the lessons of female adolescence regarding "restraint, punishment, and repression," holding true that her "tomboy instincts" are not claimed by puberty's ability to make her compliant and easy (Halberstam "'Oh, Bondage'" 156). Central to Bone's

appreciation of Aunt Raylene is her independence and ability to perform gender-queerly while commanding respect from her family.

In the reterritorialized kinship system that Raylene develops in correspondence with Bone, personal difference is celebrated and the urge to change, to develop into maturity is devalued. Raylene's refusal to conform to female gender stereotypes, in contrast to her sisters' habits of chasing after men despite all reason to acknowledge that they will be hurt, serves to frame Bone's epiphany that she already was who she was going to be. As a model for living, Raylene's home provides Bone a safe space to be herself. This narrative presentation, as I have argued, challenges the coming-of-age tradition effectively, but it also complicates the cultural imperative that children become like (heteronormative) adults in order to establish authentic selves. Raylene's discursive home suggests an alternative to that normalizing tradition by privileging the anarchic, unsettled, "wild and mean" radical potential for queer politics.

Moreover, Raylene's home challenges directly the heteronormative logic that underpins the traditional nuclear families established by her siblings. While her home exists on the margins of society as a site for developing queer difference, it is also a space that her sisters use to protect their children from the violence of their fathers. As such, Raylene's home is a direct condemnation of heterosexual relations, acknowledged by the "dropping off" practices of her sisters. She reminds Bone's mother about the frequency of her family's late-night habits: "'An't nobody in this family ever been selfish with their children. Why, I've gotten up many a morning to find a porch full of young'uns somebody's dropped off in the night'" (189). The fact that Raylene has lived in her home

for many years implies its steadiness as a site for safely housing children on the fly. That she is single, yet can sustain her own home implies another reason why Raylene's porch is a reliable resource for the care of children. Her charge to Anney implies that drunkenness, shouting, violence, or a combination of all of these practices are inherent to her sisters' relations with men, necessitating that children be removed from their houses.

Ultimately, the reason that her siblings recognize Raylene's home as safe for children far away from the reach of men who are prone to harm them lies in the fact that Raylene is a lesbian. Implicit within the family's interpretation of Raylene is the recognition that she is not man-crazy like her sisters, which allows them to do horrible damage to their own children. At the novel's end, Anney ultimately surrenders Bone to Raylene's care. The novel closes with Bone looking "out into the dark night, past Raylene's hip and the porch railing" (309). Only from this vantage point has Bone been able to experience "a matrix of desire, admiration, adoration, specialness, pleasure, understanding, reflection, excitement, longing, and fantasy which form the foundation for all sexual desire and activity" (Lee 182). None of these emotions in the matrix is rendered conditional upon Bone growing up into heterosexual relations.

Raylene admits to Bone a secret about heteronormative relations that children, especially those neglected by their parents, do not and cannot understand: "'Bone, no woman can stand to choose between her baby and her lover, between her child and her husband. I made the woman I love choose. She stayed with her baby, and I came back here alone'" (300). Raylene's home serves as this interstitial space that accommodates those who have been left behind by women who cannot abandon their own sort of

heterosexual longing – whether that longing reflect an urge to attach to a man (like Anney's) or a need to raise a child (like Raylene's lover). Raylene teaches Bone that there are no consistent conditions of maturing, explaining that parenting is a process, too, inflected by heteronormative patterns of familial romance. This is a lesson Raylene has encountered by the rejection of her lover, passing it on to Bone as insight about origins, maturing, and parenting, which cultivates her epiphany about being-who-she-already-was.

The queer import of Raylene's lesson, as well as the power behind *Bastard*'s narrative, lies in a singular and consistent approach: the construction of maturation is organized by heteronormative demands, but it doesn't have to be. Allison's novel suggests itself as a celebration of anti-normative ways of living as children and adults, avoiding the worn trope of casting maturation as the answer to childhood, as the reward for incorporating heteronormative standards of living. As I have argued, coming-of-age novels much-loved by gay and lesbian readers especially since the 1990s that showcase the consolidated identity of the grown adult looking back at her or his childhood are problematic in that maturation is constructed as a heteronorm.

By deprivileging maturation its rhetorical power to consolidate identity, novels that feature queer youth resistant to pinning into place a consolidated self scramble all kinds of heteronormative "urges": to grow up, to settle down, to fix roots, to multiply. Raylene's home, Bone's epiphany, and *Bastard*'s construction of childhood each suggest the queer power to deny these heteronorms subjective- and sexual-shaping potential. The novel frames "other ways" of conceiving subjectivity and sexuality available to Raylene

and Bone that also squarely condemn some of the dangers implicit in heterosexual relations. *Bastard* acknowledges the role of child-as-sexual-object implicit within the child/adult binary that casts all children as not-yet-straight objects created by and for heterosexual maturation. It also devalues the chrononormativity, to borrow Elizabeth Freeman's term, that structures constructions of childhood, adolescence, and the process of maturation into adulthood. These are queer realizations that the novel brings forward to allow for a reinterpretation of the political investment in marriage, child-rearing, and reproduction so popular in much LGBT politics. As I have argued, Allison's novel breaks ground for establishing this potential; next, I argue that Mike Albo's *Hornito* delivers direct assaults against the injunction that queer youth grow up via heteronormative lines of trajectory.

4. Hut for Life: Resisting Maturity in *Hornito*

As I mentioned at the outset, queer childhood is not a uniform category that I use to blanket over marks of difference constructed by gender, region, or social class. Both *Bastard* and *Hornito* trouble the ways that gender, geographic location, and class inflect youth narratives. Significant to this chapter is relation of maturation to maturity implicit in both novels: while Allison's novel demonstrates the dangers of progressing into heteronormative adulthood for its narrator, devaluing *maturation* as a process that fixes identity, Albo's novel questions the connection to *maturity* inherent to constructions of "normative" adulthood. Written in an era in which homonormative narratives encourage and privilege depictions of gay and lesbian adults marrying, settling down, and establishing multi-generational families, *Hornito* challenges the notion that, as an identity

group, gays and lesbians have "grown up," qualifying them for access to those adult institutions.[5] In order to trouble the child/adult heteronorm that situates maturity as a condition of post-puberty life, the novel uses the narrator's experiences in his own home as well as his friends' houses in order to provide a counternarrative to the contemporary normative urge to frame responsible, respectable, normatively-coherent lives.

In fact, the novel uses the domestic metaphor of the *hornito* as a description of how the narrator has been placed sexually and subjectively, by others. Having admitted that he is in love with a classmate after their first sexual encounter, Albo hears this in return: "'*You see….there are* los catedrales, *the cathedrals, your wife, your partner in life, and then there are the little huts surrounding the cathedral*, los hornitos, *and you may have many little huts, many* hornitos *of lovers*'" (229). Over the course of the novel, Mike has taken as a matter of fact the fit of this vernacular architecture personally: a hovel is nondescript and temporary in comparison with a staid, grand cathedral. His pursuits at love and sex and work and home life each have no centrally deep attachments. Yet, there is a "deeply contaminated part" of Albo that he'd like removed, which is the urge to settle, the insistent imperative that he find comfort and resolution in settling down with another man permanently (239). At times, he locates this part as a lump in his left breast as a way to imaginatively constrain its will to exist as a part of his subjectivity.

Relating his resistance to settling to the construction of the *hornito* of his life fuels the novel with its generation of childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood as connected. Significantly, as I have mentioned above, the novel does not look back to the

[5] On homonormativity, see Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality?: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy.*

past from a perspective of judging a childhood as constitutive of embarrassment or shame, which Angus Gordon explains is common to coming-of-age gay fiction. Instead, Albo adopts the *hornito*, pleased by its linguistic fit to help construct domestic situations, from childhood through adolescence and into young adulthood. As a metaphor for his life, he prizes the structure's mobility and impermanence in contrast to the way that Allison's narrator finds motion spatially disconcerting. Where Bone Boatwright finds the stability and steadiness of Aunt Raylene's space as contributive to personal satisfaction, Mike privileges fluidity and transience. The conditions of the narrators' respective childhoods frame these departing thematic conclusions by neither denying nor valorizing either approach as contributive of self-autonomy.

As I argue below, Albo's novel provides a queer challenge to the consolidated adult self as mature in two ways. The narrative exposes the heteronormative lie that adult autonomy is characterized by building up one's *catedral*, establishing a romantic partnership, reproducing, raising children, etc. There is no correlation between reaching adulthood and achieving maturity, the novel finds, outside of this self-generative system: to be mature is to commit to these practices. Below, I argue that Albo frames youth experiences in homes in order to question the conditions of normativity as a way to resist them. In so doing, as in Allison's *Bastard*, Albo's novel establishes a queer political alternative in resisting these conditions that also satisfies the queer call to resist uncritically narrativizing adulthood as the completion and perfection of youth.

Outside of heteronormative logic, maturity is a nonsensical concept. Rather, surveillance, and the learning of ways to surveil oneself and others, relates youth to

adults. Albo's novel corrects the heteronormative misunderstanding that growing up means that one internalizes surveillance as a central node of living and loving. *Hornito* reveals this error by describing how fervidly the narrator concentrates upon his behavior in the contexts of others. As I discuss at the end of the chapter, the recognition of this flow of control – explicit between adult relations with children, internalized among relations among adults – provides queer power to resist normative logics.

Hornito illustrates youths repeatedly encouraged by adults to mature by adopting specific, normative modes. Citing the bathroom as one of the spaces heightened by the sense of adult sexual control of children, Albo writes,

> For a time I think that my parents are impostors and that they are sent to study or kill me, I'm not sure, and I think the bathroom mirror could be two-way, and my impostor parents could be spying on me. They study me in the bathroom, my every gerbilly move. I enter and leave looking straight into the mirror with a scowl, knowing someone is behind the glass and, defiant, I say, 'Hi! I know you're there!' Then, when I am done humiliating myself in front of Them, I turn to leave and sharply bark, 'Bye!' to the mirror again, marching out, going down to dinner, where my family, the puppets of the Abductors, sits. (24-5)

Vis-à-vis the creation of the puppet parent motif, Albo describes that what is inconceivable for him to intuit, much less, to acknowledge: that his parents are concerned or interested in the very humiliating things he does with his body in the bathroom. Imagining these abductor parents behind the bathroom mirror to do the work of scanning Albo's bathroom – "the tiled terrorland with its pubic truths…where I jerk off in silent innumerousnesses" – establishes the construction of the sense of childhood surveillance that informs Albo's conclusions that adult sexuality is invested in control and watchfulness (23).

In narrating this childhood experience, the novel relates its child and adult character by blurring the line between them. It deconstructs the condition that puberty rectifies youth into adulthood by demonstrating that puberty only "works" if the adult emerges into a stable, parent-like status, the ostensible goal of maturing. This heteronormative lesson is reinforced in the context of other child/adult relations during a sleepover. In bed, late one night, his friend Wade Gregory encourages Mike to trade penis-touching and kissing with him. In the thick of the horseplay, Albo hears Wade's mother snap: "'Go to sleep, Mike!'….I look at her in the doorway and she is in a bra and panties" (69). Mrs. Gregory's signal is a brusque, powerful assertion that being a child does not allow for sexuality.

Moreover, the reprimand charges Mike specifically, rather than including her son explicitly in the warning. Mike recalls, "I am treated like a sex offender…marked for life, who might explode and dive onto someone's genitals" (69-70). Mrs. Gregory's reprimand faults him with attempting to despoil her son's (hetero)sexual trajectory, but it also reinforces the notion that the training of children for sexual practices is a an adult (heterosexual) responsibility not a jocular (homosexual) experiment between boys.

The novel's concluding conceit braids together strands from two narratives to deconstruct the category of maturity: entries from Albo's adolescent diary (from 1987) are intertwined with descriptions of a sex scene between Albo and a young adult crush (in 1997). The effect of combining those two moments in the novel is to frame twin conclusions Albo makes about sexuality and maturity. First, he discovers the truth behind an old lie affixed to heteronormative child-rearing: sex does not commit one person to

another. Next, he realizes that, although nearly everyone around him denies his claim, maturity is the condition upon which youth trades in some of its free-form curiosity and imagination for standard patterns of normative living and loving. I argue that one reason that heteronormative modes of living are perpetuated so consistently is due to the valorization and systematization of the condition of maturity to organize life narratives. Albo's novel frames this perspective, which I use to conclude by teasing out the argument's queer potential for alternative trajectories for queer politics.

Young Mike's first sexual encounter takes place in a classmate's bedroom. This boy, Jeff, schools Albo about the difference between *catedrales* and *hornitos*, after Mike claims to be in love with him. Jeff explains, "'*Look, Mike, we're not attached to one another*'" (215). In the ten-year narrative interim between this moment and Mike's adult narrative, he has slept with around one hundred lovers and has enjoyed them, each in their own way. Almost suddenly, in his mid-twenties, Albo realizes how touchy his familiars become around the topic of open sexuality – "And I said, *Oh, come on, Gina, it's not like you aren't a whore too*, but that really offended her….I have noticed recently gay guys doing this just as fervently" (100). He learns that a childhood boyfriend is in a long-term relationship with his bank teller partner and that twenty-something Jeff is constructing his own *catedral*, preparing a union ceremony with his domestic partner. The implications about maturing fall into place for Albo, whose guilt begins to rise with every casual sex encounter. In contrast to the commitments his boyhood friends are making in their twenties, Albo feels that falling in love would signal to him that his "life is closed now" (214). When his friends offer advice as to how to deal with the fact that he

cannot find the right man with whom to settle into domestic bliss, he discovers that they interpret him as an extended child:

> 'Don't worry, you'll find someone'…'It's weird, you know, you have to love yourself first'…'You need to love yourself before someone else can love you'…'You go for stupid guys, Mike'…'You're what? Twenty-seven? You're still young, Mike'…'It's a mysterious series of circumstances'…'You have just happened to have not been in the right place at the right time'…'It'll happen when you least expect it.' (236-7)

Their advice encourages Albo to abandon the *hornito* already and start building his *catedral*. All of this dating has been practice for Albo to discern the one person with whom he can build brick-by-brick that domesticated dream.

He hears the voice of maturity from Lynn, a former high school girlfriend who has "crossed over" into adulthood: "She sounds so calm, like all drama within her has been washed out to sea. I try to sound more mature…as if I wasn't still seventeen" (235). In this description, Albo subverts the construction of meaningfulness that surrounds adulthood, the phase in which adults condition fruitful and productive lives. Instead, Albo finds that maturity produces calm, drama-less adults like Lynn, who have followed the lessons affixed to the lie of heteronormative aging. He discovers that there must be a logic at work, secret to him, that convinces his contemporaries to settle down unquestioningly into placid adulthood. And, he discovers that, in so doing, they have fulfilled an important commitment they feel must be paid to maturing, one they mark as a serious division between themselves as they were – former youths – and themselves as they are now – serious, calm, adult constituents. In contrast, Mike is still seventeen, unmarked by progress, unclassifiable as mature, and fucking his brains out.

This last point is not to suggest that *Hornito* features its narrator celebrating his young adulthood as a confident, sexually liberated queer. Mike is guilty throughout, ashamed of the nagging sense that he doesn't belong in the theater of his "mature" contemporaries. I argue that the novel's subtitle, "My Lie Life," indicates an ironic characterization of adulthood: though the young adult Albo claims that he feels himself a liar by having to affect a committed investment to maturity, protesting that he really *does* want to find "the right one" with whom to settle down, he demonstrates that "adulthood" is itself a lie-life constituted by the adoption of the heteronormative commandment nearly-impossible to evade: put away childish things, arrive, commit, settle, produce.

In this way, *Hornito* confirms a maxim that emerges from a recent Canadian film, *1981: The Year I Became a Liar*: "the damn truth only works if everyone is telling it." While "truth" here is meant to be shown as a construction whose conditions for verifiability are always already impossible to define, *Hornito* uncovers the tacit acknowledgement of maturity as a heteronormative mechanism of control that frames childhood. Mike finds that, not only is heterosexuality a pre-established given regarding childhood sexuality and subjectivity, but, more and more nakedly, normativity structures all phases of life, from childhood to adolescence to adulthood.

Albo finally rejects all of this working-toward-becoming mature as a normative construction of identity, preferring an alternative view of subjectivity, one in which he conceives life as "[a] smooth, curvy meshwork," enfolding "all the polluted people, barely connecting, but never alone" (240). This vision is another articulation of the resistance to what Albo writes elsewhere as the systematization of sex: "sex is becoming

systematized. And in any system, things become more and more arcane and part of that system, until you forget you are even inside a system anymore." I argue that the system that Albo bemoans is a metaphor for the normative structuring of daily life around the processes of marriage, reproduction, child-rearing, and, ultimately *maturing* into an identity position conditioned to take on the replication of those processes. This meshwork of polluted people who touch on and off offers a productive counternarrative to the maturity-conditioned master narrative of heteronormativity.

Illustrating Lee Edelman's call for queers to challenge "reproductive futurism," Aldo's novel queers the idea that there is a "there" to get to. I argue that the novel demonstrates that the process of maturing from childhood through adolescence to adulthood has always already constructed one type of adult. As a life category, then, *Hornito* demonstrates that maturity is incompatible with queer politics. Like Edelman, Leo Bersani and Judith Halberstam are reinvigorating queer political discourse with an anarchic bent, which devalues the construction of the Child as a foothold on the future that everywhere avoids the incorporation of homosexuality as a contributive force except under normative conditions.

I claim *Hornito* as a narrative that posits the operation of maturity as fundamentally normative, confining, weak, and hollow. As I have demonstrated, maturity is a condition that is only sensible in heteronormative logics, which the novel draws out as a suspect category for queer politics. Instead, *Hornito*'s candid approach to surveillance as the correspondence between childhood and adulthood, its perspective of the fluid and fantastic relations that unite constructions of children to adulthood, and its

resistance to valorize normative representations of maturity each contribute to the denigration of normative constructions of sexuality and subjectivity. As the novel demonstrates, queer politics must privilege flow, instability, and immaturity as life conditions that refuse to follow structures of childhood, adolescence, and adulthood as identifiable, serious objects for political gain. The expansive point with which Albo concludes is to imagine queer sexuality and subjectivity as the critical position from which the "grounded" truths of heteronormativity are ceaselessly questioned, from which the truths about some constructions that seem so certain – yes, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, but also maturity, reproduction, "the future" – become figured as natural, undeniably significant constructions of human existence. The novel frames a valid question: What if all of the simple, important truths children learn are really only constructions that adults – whose lie lives have been inalterably conditioned by the heteronormative commandments of maturity – produce in order to make sense of the impossibly rigid, static, hog-tied conditions that maturity demands of them? *Hornito* wonders how it is that the category of maturity, which offers so little space for desiring after subjective, sexual, and political productivity, has such convincing power. As my analysis has demonstrated, because it is attached to the construction of the "normative life," maturity, then, provides queers no significant subjective, sexual, or political efficacy.

5. Conclusion

As a model for queer youth narrative, coming-of-age constructions are inconceivable when the goal of representation imagines the production of a coherent,

self-aware gay or lesbian identified subject who contextualizes his and her experiences into a saved-by-sexuality narrative. That approach tends toward the normative arc of consolidation, progress, and maturity. Because constructions of childhood are always already adult constructions, queer youth narratives must approach categories of "maturation" and "maturity" not as filter-conditions that mark the untroubled processing of children into adults but as heteronormative constructions of knowledge that act as ways to regulate and systematize human life. This is the politics of queer youth narrative: to question what is valued in representations of children, adolescents, and young adults; neither to cast youths as the inheritors for whom the future is created nor as the benefactors who prepare futures for all of humanity; to continue to ignore the characterization of childhood through the adult heteronormative gaze.

As I have recommended, Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina* provides critical approaches to childhood and adolescence that resist normative narration by refusing to attach value to moments of origin, maturation, and arrival. Bone's epiphany that "I already was who I was going to be" yanks loose the line imagined to stretch between the subject's past and her future. Albo's *Hornito: My Lie Life* continues the deconstruction of that line, which normative narrative seeks to hold into place, signifying the past and present as conditions that defer the meaning that is always over the horizon, at some time in the future, only if heteronorms are maintained for the efflorescence of that future. Both novels are tied together as texts critical of the concepts of maturation and maturity to create and define productive lives. Their political implications arise from narrative correspondences that insist upon queering sexuality and subjectivity as clear-cut

conditions that owe maturing into adulthood their heteronormative legibility. As the novels demonstrate, such legibility is tied to heteronormativity, rendering maturation and maturity as impossible categories for considering the possibilities of imagining queer subjectivity, sexuality, and politics.

In the next chapter, I will take the institution of the domesticated couple as it is represented in two poetry collections as a mode of processing adult gay subjectivity and sexuality. Marilyn Hacker and Carl Phillips demonstrate the sociocultural shift of coupling as a postmodern process, which their queer narratives criticize via assailing the script of romance as a requisite condition to organize loving and living in the American home. As Allison and Albo disregard the script of maturation as a way to redeem children as confident, consolidated adults, I find that Hacker and Phillips resist the heterostatic model of domestic romance as a condition for defining "functional" adulthood.

Chapter 4

Doing It Together, the Gay Way:

Queer Coupling in Marilyn Hacker's *Love, Death, and the Changing of the Seasons* and Carl Phillips's *Cortège*

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the poetry of Marilyn Hacker and Carl Phillips by drawing attention to the poems' representations of same-sex couples living in domestic space via two basic strategies. First, I examine the poetry's reflections on a socio-cultural shift in emphasis regarding coupled relations: from a definitional perspective ("What makes a couple?") to an operational approach ("What makes a couple *work*?"). This postmodern shift in the American imaginary has not advanced uniformly in a consolidated, singular movement from one to the other in social rhetoric about marriage, family values, or sexual morality. It is retrograde to suggest that past thinkers about American culture once regarded *only* the status of individuals regarding their sexual and affective lives as important. Today, we are just as curious about relationship status: "He is a bachelor," "I'm a married woman," "She is single and D-T-F" certainly are not antiquated expressions. Neither is social curiosity about the ways that coupling works only a contemporary matter. While we might scoff at tips that 1950s cookbooks provided their wives for pleasing their husbands, for example, Americans are still obsessed with

how to live functional domestically partnered lives – scan any *Cosmopolitan* or *Men's Health* cover at the grocery newsstand for proof that this practice persists.[1]

Clearly, the social stigma against the un*married* is reduced today, but the American fascination persists in regards to knowing how to maintain consistent, long-term, loving dyadic relationships under single roofs. As I have demonstrated in the previous chapter, Americans valorize the idea of settling down with another human being as a positive mark of maturity. The "work" of loving and living together draws much social attention; this corresponds to critical and popular emphases on the postmodern concept of performativity to explain reality.[2] So, the first approach that this chapter takes is to examine how Hacker's *Love, Death, and the Changing of the Seasons* (1986) dramatizes the performative work played out in coupled domestic spaces. Seen via this approach, the domestic work of lesbian coupling evinced in Hacker's poetry reflects an understanding of the domestic as performative and illustrates particular aspects of housework that are often overlooked by heteronormative texts.

The second approach this chapter takes is to examine the ways that the poetry recommends a certain domestic art of living, what has been called a "gay way of life." Political conservatives have cited loudly the public visibility of gay couples and families as destructive of the institutions of family and marriage, but scholars claim "queer families" as the "vanguard of the postmodern family condition, because they make the

---

[1] For an insightful overview of cookbooks as unique sites for domestic instruction, see Jessamyn Neuhaus, "The Way to A Man's Heart: Gender Roles, Domestic Ideology, and Cookbooks in the 1950s."

[2] Americans are *so* obsessed with what makes interpersonal relations work, for instance, that researchers are seeking genetic explanations to uncover the "secret" behind successful, long-term marriages. See University of California - Berkeley, "Wedded Bliss or Blues? Scientists Link DNA to Marital Satisfaction."

denaturalized and contingent character of family and kinship impossible to ignore," proving that there exists no longer a "consensus on the form a normal family should assume, every kind of family has become an alternative family" (Stacey and Davenport 356-7). Even so, neoliberal gay "rights" advocates clamor for same-sex marriage recognition, according to a friable political perspective that seeks the normativization of gay subjectivity. This is *not* what I mean when I claim that Hacker and Phillips recommend a domesticated gay way of life.

Instead, I argue that the poetry queers the weak ground upon which same-sex marriage "reform" bases its lite-politics: a singular, over-sentimentalized fascination with romance that privileges heterosexuality as an "originary" model for contemporary relationship-building. Hacker and Phillips cast their domestic coupled love narratives through the Foucauldian lens of *parrhesia*, an "activity where the speaker has a specific relation to truth through frankness," through which he establishes "a certain kind of relation to himself or other people through criticism (self-criticism or criticism of other people), and a specific relation to moral law through freedom and duty" (*Fearless Speech* 19). Thus, I argue throughout that Hacker's and Phillips's collections find strength by appealing to a mode of critical frankness that refuses to characterize gay domestic partnership as a heteronormative romance. Instead, the poetry privileges the realm of the common and ordinary, the vulgar and disgusting, the taboo and sacrosanct, *especially* as they concern domestic partnerships.

In fact, the final condition Foucault mentions *requires* that the *parrhesiastes* speak freely in order to recommend honest speaking practices to others as a kind of

ethical practice. This is what I mean by the "gay way of life" that the domestically-situated coupled speakers of Hacker's and Phillips's poetry espouse. I acknowledge that this approach reflects contemporary attitudes critical of the institution of marriage and the inclination to seek long-term coupled commitment, in general, which cannot be qualified strictly as "gay." The contemporary trend of Americans to recognize marriage as an institution that doesn't work, in the end, for most romantic couples, has been well-documented. But the ideality of domesticated romance as a life goal continues to underpin Americans' wholesale faith in marriage: according to a 2011 Pew Research Study, 61% of unmarried Americans hope to wed and 90% of Americans over forty-five years of age report having been married (Cohn). While I cannot claim the practices of *parrhesia* in Hacker and Phillips as exemplary of the only approach to deconstructing the appeal to romance as a way to organize American life via the institution of marriage, I do cite the poetry as reflective of gay subjectivity, which has been marginalized until recently as a condition warranting exemption from the social institution of coupling and the legal institution of marriage.

In particular, I argue that Phillip's *Cortège* (1995) casts gay partnered relations in the domestic realm as an ethical practice of communication in service to honesty as opposed to the secrecy that upholds common notions about "modern romance." Associations of artifice that cling to romance buzzwords, which include "mystique," "enchantment," even "hanky panky," demonstrate the contrivance of heteronormative modes of partnered lovemaking. As most of Phillips's texts demonstrate, *Cortège* resists trifling with these obfuscations, reflective of the silly emphases "Gay, Inc." politics

position as rights-worthy, by concentrating on how joy/pain/desire enlivens the gay subject committed to another *in light of* the fact that his joy/pain/desire cannot be contained by that union. In other words, Phillips reveals that, even and especially from the perspective of gay domesticated partnership, a gay way of life admits honestly that sexuality and subjectivity are impossibly slippery conditions upon which to claim knowledge to another person as a "husband" or "wife." Because there is no pattern of romance pre-established for gay lives that, as I have reported, condition 90% of Americans to desire marriage as a life goal, I argue that Phillips's poetry is able to communicate an objective, critical approach to gay partnered love. Modern romance continues to be constructed by the expectations, safety-checks, and goals attached to marital bliss, and I argue that *Cortège* employs a speaker's relation to his lover as evidence of a critical gay approach to the ideality of romance to condition his life and love with another.

Both Hacker's and Phillips's collections narrate domestic coupledom as an institution that unites ordinary people in ordinary spaces doing ordinary things: partners eat, sleep, shit, love, and fuck one another in the shared space of the home. These are processes ordinary to all kinds of Americans of whatever sexual orientation, but I argue that what is "gay" about the art of domestic relations that Hacker and Phillips illustrate is that it resists conforming to the heterostatic script of coupled intimacy that the rhetoric of romance situates as natural and necessary among healthy adult relations. In doing this kind of revision of coupling, I call attention to David Halperin's claim that queers "are forced to engage in at least a modicum of critical reflection on the world as it is given,"

which prompts the cultivation of a productive "second-order processing and reprocessing of immediate experience" (*How to Be Gay* 454). To value a gay art of domestic coupledom is to be frank about what it is that clings to the rhetoric of domestic romance, which I argue, Hacker and Phillips perform. They take the mundane little world of the home; charge it with all kinds of sexual, emotional, and philosophical intimacies; and refuse to hold up the space as evidence of success, achievement, or validity. They offer no swelling strings or strains of organ pipes as a conclusive result of their gay subjects living and loving together. In place of the phoniness that conditions heterosexual patterning, *Love, Death* and *Cortège* pivot an alternative, gay, critical approach to domestic coupling that draws no false conclusions.

Love, Death, and the Changing of the Seasons, frames domestic space as the site in which couples do the work of domestic life in a long sequence of sonnets (over one-hundred-fifty), interspersed with villanelles and sestinas. They catalogue a lover-speaker who woos, couples with, and then loses her beloved over the course of just-under one year. The collection invokes the tradition of formal poetry, by highlighting conventional forms as a way to interrogate modern and contemporary American love relations. Carl Phillips's *Cortège* differs radically in its approach to form, which employs free verse, experimenting with broken lines and playing with stanza breaks for effect. Thematically, his collection reflects Hacker's emphasis of the domestic space as central to organizing his speakers' contemplation of long-term coupling with a same-sex partner. Though there lacks the thread of a stylized narrative found in Hacker's collection, *Cortège* represents

domestic coupledom as an ongoing process in which lovers discern how their lives have impacted and are impacted by their partners.

In their respective poetics, Hacker and Phillips emphasize the ability of form, content, and language to communicate the concept that ordinary domestic space is a site of performative processing of a relationship that is always open to the vicissitudes of living and loving with a partner. In these ways, *Love, Death* and *Cortège* support my argument that lesbian and gay perspectives have contributed to the shift in imagining coupledom as a performance rather than as an ontological state. It is my hope that the secondary argument this chapter makes indicates that poetic expressions like Hacker's and Phillips's indicate a new shift away from Americans' fascination with the stale, derivative heteronorm of romance toward an invigorated and honest gay way of life at work in social and sexual relations. Before I investigate the collections, though, I situate my argument among contemporary scholarship, which I move to explore now.

2. Doing It Together, The Gay Way…

Anthony Giddens' *The Transformation of Intimacy* charts the historical changes which produced the domestic couple-form as a standard expression of "modern love." Accounting for its prominence, Giddens writes that "Romantic love introduced the idea of a narrative into an individual's life….inserting self and other into a personal narrative which had no particular reference to wider social processes" (39-40). On a basic level, the narrative of the experience of intimacy with another person in a shared space creates the productive ground for both Hacker's and Phillips' poetry. There are poignant accounts of "sexual ardour" in the poetry, as Giddens would characterize them, but experiences of

emotional intimacy take precedence in each poet's oeuvre. This emphasis on affect and intimacy reflects a turn in social and critical approaches to the domesticated couple as a form of insular social commitment.

But, rather than valorizing the insularity of these narrative love matches, the poetry concentrates on the postmodern interpretation of coupling as "a doing." Giddens cites the "appearance" of homosexual couples along with the greater social freedoms women gained during the twentieth century as correlative to transformations of twentieth-century patterns of intimacy. A landmark piece of sociological scholarship from 1983 that details these changes via case studies is *American Couples: Money, Work, Sex*, which cites the performative capacities of coupled relations from a range of self-identified statuses. For instance, note the performative reportage from a couple identified as Marion and Grace:

> women who had no previous lesbian experience but who felt that women might make up for the emotional deficits they experienced in marriage….They keep their money separate because both find it works best that way….They feel too many couples argue about money, so they help each other out….Sex is an expression of feeling for them….Marion would like a little more privacy – but she doesn't say that to Grace because she doesn't want to hurt her feelings….They had successful marriages by any external yardstick, marriages of long duration, homes, and families, but they felt emotionally barren and searched for another woman who could understand (448-54).

In case after case, the study emphasizes the activities that each partner performs in order to construct their relationship rather than foregrounding marital status as an ontological certainty for coupledom. As I will describe below, Hacker's speaker gushes about the delightful work she undertakes to receive her partner into her home, detailing the

practices of clearing out internal spaces to make room for her beloved, preparing meals, and scheduling day trips as evidence of her partnership.

That "work" now is central to even the most conventional of coupled relationships is demonstrated in the proliferation of marriage self-help books, which emphasize the "how to" as an approach to keeping marriages alive. Brenda Cossman de-emphasizes marriage as a frozen state, reconceptualizing it as "a commitment to the practice of self-governance, to making one's marriage a project that is to be worked on everyday….something that you do, over and over" (73). John D'Emilio paraphrases the social vicissitudes that have contributed to the revision of domesticated coupling in claiming that "[*s*]*ince the early 1960s, the lives of many, many heterosexuals have become much more like the imagined lives of homosexuals*," by which he means that, for most Americans, it is no longer considered strange that "[o]ver the course of a lifetime an individual might move in with a partner, break up with that partner and find another, get married, have a child, get divorced, cohabit with someone else who also had a child (or didn't), break up again, cohabit again, marry again, and become a stepparent" (39-40). All of this coupling, uncoupling, and family-making involves a tremendous range of work.

From D'Emilio's perspective, coupled life is a doing that can and often does involve a lot of this couple-work. My work in this chapter extends the scholarship that family theorists have been conducting as an effort to support the reframing of family (meant to include a pair of individuals living together) as a doing because "to see [family] as something we *have* is to beg the question of what family is in advance of knowing

what the family-making process has created" (Oswald et al 148-9). Work processes conducted by family members include partners' negotiations of food work, consumption work, kin work, and nurturing. Just as feminist and queer scholars recognize gender and sexuality as social constructions, family scholars work to demonstrate that family is itself constructed by the doing that its individual members perform.[3] Indeed, the logic behind the political call for conferral status of same-sex "marriage" in legal and social venues stems from advocates' reasoning that this "doing" between same-sex people cites their relationships as equivalent to "valid" heterosexual partnerships. "Doing" coupledom is today everywhere declared as the barometer of appropriate relations between two consensual adults.

Christopher Carrington's 2002 study of domestic daily life among gay and lesbian couples, *No Place Like Home*, makes an important distinction about the work couples do, which specifically relates to my investigation of Hacker's and Phillips's poetry. Carrington notes that the "labors of love" that often are associated with the domestic couple "produce a stronger and more pervasive sense of the relationship(s) as a family, both in the eyes of the participants and in the eyes of others," which partners can cite as evidence for their lovers' care and devotion to the family (6). Carrington points out that "lesbigay" couples and families often "do not possess vocabularies of typologies" about the domestic work of coupling (18). He notes that social stigmas persist for men who do

[3] For more from the perspective of family studies scholars, see Judith Stacey's *In the Name of the Family: Rethinking Family Values in the Postmodern Age* and *Unhitched: Love, Marriage, and Family Values from West Hollywood to Western China* as well as Barbara Risman's *Families as They Really Are*. Queer scholarship that has participated in consolidating this approach includes Kath Weston's *Families We Choose*, Valerie Lehr's *Queer Family Values*, and Heather Murray's *Not in This Family*.

housework and women who don't, but, further, he insists that most of the complications of housework are difficult even to communicate:

> There is no easy way to express the experience of simultaneously waiting at home for a refrigerator repair person, conceiving a dinner plan, answering a phone call from a telemarketer, envisioning a recreational activity for the weekend, noticing a spot on the carpet in the hallway, dreading a visit with someone at the hospital, worrying about the cost of the refrigerator repair and coming up with a plan to pay for it, all while sitting in one's home office working on a project that is due in a few days. Many of these discrete experiences and innumerable others constitute domesticity. All of them can occur simultaneously. Yet in official conceptions these experiences become 'housework.' Conventional measures of housework might capture the waiting at home for the repair person, or the time spent actually cleaning the carpet, but not for the mental process of monitoring the carpet, or the anxiety of figuring out how to pay, or the dread of visiting the hospital, or the mental effort of thinking about dinner options in light of schedules, expenses, supplies, and the desires of family members. A valid measurement of housework requires much more attention to detail, a more rigorous effort to make visible the often invisible dimensions of domesticity. (19)

Here is where Phillips and Hacker provide useful commentary on flushing out the various mental, emotional, and physical details that become lumped together under the term "housework." In describing the details of loving and living in the couple form, the poems examine domesticity's performative aspects by highlighting the detail-oriented aspects of coupledom.[4]

For all of their beauty, Phillips's poems are so impressionistic that they appear as contemplative exercises in which a speaker thinks through all of the mental, emotional, and physical processing involved in ordinary moments shared with partners. For instance,

[4] And uncoupling, which is an important component of the "breakdown of work" that is also part of coupledom. Hacker in particular evokes the home broken by a partner's abandoning of the work to keep the system functional, which I explore below. Though it should appear obvious, non-responsiveness and absence/emotional distance account for the two major reasons why couples report the failure of heterosexual and homosexual relationships alike. For more on the work of uncoupling, see Lawrence Kurdek's "The Dissolution of Gay and Lesbian Couples" and "Adjustment to Relationship Dissolution in Gay, Lesbian and Heterosexual Partners," whose statistical data relates to same-sex couples within the context of family studies research.

"Kit" hinges upon the speaker's expectations while preparing for sex for the first time with a lover. He has established the setting: "For mood: lamps, but / flickering, in need of a strong circuit" (7). He prepares his body on the bed, "facedown, spread-eagled, lie smooth as / blades." And, he wonders what he might feel once the intercourse begins: "You may find / that taking his unknown quantity upon you will / require imagination on your part: suggestions / include any man mouthing his hands clear of fried chicken."

These descriptions represent the physical, mental, and emotional work involved in the speaker's consciousness of sex preparation. Thematically, Phillips illustrates the anguish of lovemaking, especially when it is instantiated between strangers. Formally, he communicates a sense of trepidation and expectation by building line-tension, withholding the delivery of phrase completion ("but / flickering"), simile comparison ("smooth as / blades") and future-tense verbals ("you will / require"). Though fraught with anxiety, "Kit" does not simply describe the angst of the pre-sexual encounter, as the inclusion of the imagery of the man "mouthing his hands free of fried chicken" demonstrates, which I cite as illustrative of Carrington's charge that the sociological expression of domestic work is often incommunicable. Through poetry, as this image from "Kit" demonstrates, such articulation is approachable. For, the image of the fried chicken licker introduces into the description of all of the speaker's preoccupations, a relation to physical delight: a man's body, his hands; his mouthing, in particular; the lube-y viscera of chicken fat melting into his mouth. Critique of the lines itself doesn't do the stanza justice in its capacity to signal the forces at play in the speaker's presentation of this moment. In slowing down to meditate upon the multiplicity of emotional

vicissitudes of this narrative experience, Phillips evidences some of that sociological housework Carrington references.

In employing the term housework, here, I want to make a distinction that Carrington's description avoids but that Phillips's poem, does, which is that work can imply a negative connotation in some accounts. I want to avoid that connotation by drawing upon a distinction Hannah Arendt first made between "work" and "labor" in Marxist thought (although I do not conduct a Marxist analysis of coupledom here). As Matthew Tinkom explains in *Working Like a Homosexual*, Arendt defines labor as "the ongoing, repetitive, dull task of scratching out a life from the world," but work is "playfulness," in which "subjects may glimpse another kind of exertion of themselves toward the material world that labor does not and cannot encompass" (11-12). While there is plenty of labor involved within the domestic sphere, and it is often organized by gender disparities, this chapter does not investigate domestic labor, but emphasizes work as "the doing" of coupledom in domestic space.[5] As a domestically-related term, then, work will serve as a neutralized term, in that it does not imply drudgery, toil, or slavishness toward an enterprise in which a subject is not invested. The speakers who describe coupledom in Hacker and Phillips perform domestic work that is self-appealing and satisfying though it is comprised, obviously, of physical, mental, and emotional effort.

With that pleasant connotation of work in mind, I turn now to describe this chapter's fit into the second component of my thesis, which recognizes *Cortège* as

[5] Joan Larkin's 1975 collection, *Housework*, provides a good example of the details of domestic labor.

deconstructive of the heteronormative script of "romance." Just as Giddens has noted homosexual and lesbian relationships as contributive to the emphasis of the performative on structuring dyadic relations, I argue that queer partnerships can execute a productive response to the cloying notion that connubial sentimentality ("domestic bliss") is the imagined goal by which couples measure whether or not their coupledom "is working." Doing this kind of critical work requires me to visit Michel Foucault's claims to imagine a "gay way of life." I want to suggest that Phillips's collection cultivates a domesticated gay way of life that devalues a singular devotion to romance through *parrhesia* – truth-telling – by acknowledging the slippery ways of desire that normative narratives of romance tend to conceal.

The topic of a "gay" art of living recently has been enlivened by the publication of David Halperin's *How to Be Gay*. In order to explain that Phillips's poems demonstrate a gay mode of living constitutive of an "honest," detail-oriented, critical, socially-contextualized perspective, I refer to Halperin's commentary on gay men:

> gay men inevitably come to see what heterosexual culture considers to be a natural and authentic identity – a form of being, an essence, a *thing* – as a social form: a performance, an act, a *role*….In order to get to the bottom of the mystery of homosexual attraction, you have to focus your attention on the object of your desire in its most complete contextual realization, its full social concreteness, its specific social systematicity….The very blatancy, ubiquity, prevalence, obviousness, even vulgarity of the canonical definition of sexual attractiveness in heterosexual culture relieve straight people of the imperative to define the exact social forms that correspond to their desires. Which is why they tend not to even see those forms as *social* in the first place" (197-99).[6]

[6] *How to Be Gay* investigates the particularity of gay male subculture as ironic, aesthetically-oriented, and melodramatic, each an aspect easily found in Marilyn Hacker's voice in *Love, Death, and the Changing of the Seasons*. In contrast to *Cortège*, Hacker's style more readily fits Halperin's description of the particularity of gay male modes expressions, which likely explains why I personally am in love with it. I choose *Cortège*, instead, as a representation of a gay way of

I argue that "romance" or "passion" or "marital bliss" – conditions imagined to exist between two lovers as evidence of their functional partnering – is constructed as a natural and authentic *thing* meant to prove heterosexual (and, increasingly, homosexual) "success."[7] Following Halperin, I insist that it is because heterosexual culture has no expressions of desire through particular social and stylistic forms that the monolithic and bland construction of romance organizes heterosexual coupled daily life. The earnestness with which much heterosexual discourse relies on an idealized "love," frankly, appears ridiculous to many queers, who recognize romance as a banal, uncreative artifice. This explains why camp is so appealing to gay men, for instance: its melodramatic charm exaggerates the lie at the bottom of heterosexual claims to authenticity.[8]

In claiming that the heterosexual romance narrative is always predictable and stale, I do not suggest that room for particularities to inflect heteronormative narratives does not exist. But the common insistence that romance characterizes a time-honored, intrinsically valuable pattern for living invalidates the very concept of romance itself. For instance, look to the common childhood refrain that "explains" romance as a life pattern:

> John and Janie sitting in a tree
> K-I-S-S-I-N-G
> First comes love,
> Then comes marriage,
> Then comes baby in a baby carriage!

---

domestic life not because its author is a gay male, but because the collection is, tonally, a "serious" counterpoint to the truth-telling that *Love, Death* performs in ironic, playful ways.

[7] Halperin on LGBTs clamoring for inclusion within the heterosexual project of marital normativity is apt, here: "Sometimes I think homosexuality is wasted on gay people" (448).

[8] Lauren Berlant's "The Subject of True Feelings" examines how "romance" is not only a personal concern, but a shaky basis upon which to establish legal authority, too: "It would not be too strong to say that where regulating sexuality is concerned, the law has a special sentimental relation to banality" (36).

As the refrain demonstrates, there is nothing productive outside this pattern on which to create a life. There is, as Halperin discovers, no social form to heterosexual coupling outside of the simple patterning of love, marriage, and reproduction. It signals no *raison d'être* for perpetuating the pattern outside of the biological, and it makes no strong social relation to culture. It lacks any sense of style.

In contrast, the appeal to coupling in Hacker and Phillips is alive in its particularities to gay social and sexual relations. In Hacker, this emerges from a melodramatic reading of a tempestuous domestic love affair between two lesbians whose affair Hack, the speaker, describes in "Having Kittens About Having Babies III." She describes heterosexual domestic love as "Real Life" that appears in "last names, trust funds, architecture" (106). Hack makes a formal distinction between the domestic work that she and her beloved, Rachel ("Ray"), perform, in contrast to the state of heterosexual domesticated coupledom (which the processes of marriage, reproduction, and "Real Life" freeze into place).

To the straights, Hack and Ray are "erotic *frissons*, birds of passage, quaint / embellishments in margins" (106). The characterization of homosexual coupling here is energetic, exuberant, and motile, and it situates their relationship in the context of the heterosexual romance narrative as a serious, desire-crushing enterprise. In contrast, Hack effuses: "Look at what we're mak- / ing, besides love," explaining that "Its very openness keeps it from harm" (106). While the hyphenated enjambment of "mak- / ing" maintains the rhyme scheme within the sonnet, breaking the word up this way draws attention to the concept of "craft," of the doing of poetic writing. The enjambment also draws the eye to

the expression "making love," claiming that homosexual lovers, although not participating in "Real Life," can and do "make life" out of their lovemaking.

She responds to the tradition of viewing matrimonial romance as a singular state of being, a receptacle into which respectable individuals enter and ostensibly remain. If that is the way that coupled heterosexuality is represented, domesticated homosexual love- and life-making, then, can be seen as, conversely, an open social form whose very flexibility predicates its durability. "Openness" here also suggests non-monogamous domesticity, for Hack deliberately has broken up Ray's previous relationship with another woman. Moreover, Hack admits that her commitment to Ray as a kind of "wife" will not force her to cede the sexual affairs she maintains occasionally with French girlfriends, her "*copines*." This is Hacker's performative poetics, which uses the heterostatic romance model ironically in order to situate how performative lesbian homemaking is charged with possibility, openness, and freedom.

Laura Kipnis attests that the heterosexual model of romance, which Hack criticizes for its banality, is meant to incorporate into coupled social relations a form of control: "It's generally understood that falling in love means committing to *commitment*" (56). As I've demonstrated that romance narrative commands partners commit themselves to a sacrosanct system of cohabitation that has in contemporary America come to shape people "into particularly fretful psychological beings, perpetually in search of prescriptions, interventions, aids. Passion must *not* be allowed to die!" (66). Here, Kipnis playfully comments on the frenzied condition of romance as a barometer of normativity attached to the rhetoric of heterosexual relations. If the passion is missing

between heterosexual lovers, then the boring pattern of sameness underpinning heterosexual relations is revealed.

Reading *Cortège* through this type of heterostatic perspective is impossible, for its narrators imperil "romance" throughout the collection. In "In the Picture," the speaker, while viewing a photograph of his lover before having met him, imagines what he himself must have been doing at the moment his lover's picture was being taken. Had he been "two, maybe three years / into a marriage" or had he been cheating on his wife, "wondering who's in the shower" (64)? In bed with his lover at a contemporary poetic moment in "Freeze," the speaker – instead of imagining or performing the nighttime carnal exploits with his beloved that romance is supposed to condition between two lovers – thinks back to his freewheeling past sex life. And, in the love poem, "Domestic," the speaker even admits to himself that, should he die in the future far away from his current lover, it would not be so bad.

A straight reading of these poetic ruminations through the screen of romance would find them desire-killing, for the lover *must* be attached to and fully committed at all times to his beloved under the conditions of romance. Phillips, however, acknowledges desire here – pondering the bodies he's had access to in the past, thinking through the possibilities of partnering with other men in the future – as a social form that acknowledges that all men are potential lovers, thus all men are implied in the social and sexual relation between two male lovers. Through the homosocial form of desire, which imaginatively relates all gay men to each other as potential (if not practical) partners, Phillips's speaker admits a truth that the normative script of romance avoids. Through

these admissions, lovers conceptually surpass the imagined constraints that unite them to their beloveds. Phillips communicates what I will argue is the experience of *parrhesia*, on which a "gay way of life" is predicated. Alexander Nehamas describes *parrhesia* as "plain and direct truth-telling,…a way of finding out who one is" (167).[9] Tom Roach explains that "*parrhesia* offers an alternative model of subjectivity and relationality….[A] *parrhesiatic* friendship is an experiment in truth-telling that provokes a productive tension" (28). As gay men and lesbians communicate through same-sex identifications, they are able to acknowledge that straights' claims to authenticity, value, and meaning are based only on misreadings of social constructions. The shared awareness of this condition, which inflects queer social and sexual forms of desire, constitutes the "honest" ground upon which a "gay way of life" relates to *parrhesia*.

The gay way of life, then, is evinced in narratives about the domestic institution of the gay or lesbian couple when *parrhesia* enters into discourse. In other words, when love narratives renounce the bland trope of romance, so affixed to heterosexual relations, in trade for honest, critical elaborations of the experience of living and loving – anal warts and all – a gay way of life is communicated. The motivations, goals, and outcomes of gay ways of living are not constructed upon a pre-existing pattern, as with heterosexual relations, but deconstructed by a critical attitude to social and sexual relations that serves as a "way of being that we practice in order to redefine the meaning of who we are and

[9] For more on the role of *parrhêsia* in developing care for the self as it is developed in late Foucault, see Foucault, "An Ethics of Pleasure," "Friendship as a Way of Life," "The Ethic of the Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom," along with Milchman and Rosenberg's "The Aesthetic and Ascetic Dimensions of an Ethics of Self-Fashioning: Nietzsche and Foucault."

what we do, and in order to make ourselves and our world more gay" (Halperin, *Saint Foucault* 78).

Eric Parras writes of the practice of *parrhesia*: "crafting new cultural forms, beautifying life, and creating new kinds of relations: these were, in Foucault's mind, inseparable from the idea of elaborating a modern ethics" (132). That modern ethics, the gay ways of life, relates directly to my argument that Hacker and Phillips devalue romanticism as an old, outdated, and historically heterosexual approach to life. Finally, my argument that Hacker and Phillips construct same-sex domesticated coupledom as a way to resist the hackneyed trope of normative romance attaches to remarks recently made by J. Jack Halberstam in an online interview:

> We strenuously object to the models of success that exist all around us – wealth, conquest, normativity….What fuels homophobia is a sense that gays and lesbians and trans people actually want to change the way we live; that their queerness stands as a rebuke to the forms of life that heterosexuals have fashioned, consolidated and defended.

A gay way of life, as depicted in domestic couple form in *Love, Death*, and *Cortège*, risks the dangers of exposing what heteronormative constructions of romance muzzle – that the "very real" random urges of sexual desire you experience spill over the artificial lines you've drawn around yourself and your partner; that long-term commitment to another human being is valid only under an unimaginative system of romance that heterosexuals have constructed to provide life one type of meaning; that those precious values vaunted by social institutions construct your sense of identity, not the other way around.

Below, I consider Hacker's collection as evidentiary of a "first wave" of queer critique of the institution of domestic coupledom, which insists upon coupling as a

performative "doing." As I have described above, this interpretation has infiltrated contemporary Americans' senses of marriage as an ongoing project rather than as a definitional status. It is my hope that the second component of my thesis, which examines Phillips's depiction of the gay way of life through the domestic couple queering romance, bespeaks the crashing of another wave of queer critique that will infiltrate and defuse the concept of romance that adheres to contemporary imaginations of marriage. In this way, we might be able finally to disinherit marriage as the normative system that qualifies adult relations.

3. Working for Love & Loving It: Marilyn Hacker's *Love, Death, and the Changing of the Seasons*

In drumming up thematic connections related to domestic space in Hacker's fifth collection of poetry, I find a host of recurring motifs related to domestic doing – kitchens, cooking, tables, wine, windows, bathrooms, beds, closets, clothes, record players, music, intimate conversation, wiring, roots. I will pore over some of the domestic minutiae that Hacker emphasizes below, but first, I address the form in which Hacker performs her domestic poetics.

Most consistently, it is the poetic form of the Italian sonnet which Hacker employs to interrogate the social form of the lesbian domestic couple. As a form whose traditions demand a particular correspondence to an ideal, the sonnet works beautifully as a lyric metaphor for the conventional concept of home. First, like any traditional poetic form, it is "closed," in that in order to be accepted as a sonnet, it must correspond to

particular standards.[10] This is similar to the conventional definition of home, which, to many people, must reflect certain basic traits. For instance, questions about the basic determination of home status include: Does it have a door/way? Do the (relatively) same people spend a lot of time there frequently? Are work, eating, rest, sleep, and recreation performed with some consistency there?

As with any discussion of a constructed form, for all of its formulaic durability, both the sonnet and the home are malleable and diverse, too. Readers interested in exploring Hacker's collection for its recycling and reinvigoration of the sonnet's traditions can find *Love, Death* an enriching and fun reading experience.[11] Hacker has professed an appreciation of tradition only because it allows poets the joy of stretching conventions to apply to their own time. This is her approach to allusion: for Hacker, it isn't so much that "the sonnet as a form in itself is 'pertinent,' but that it lends itself to pertinent topics, to which, by the weight and richness of its history, it adds a counterpoint of what has gone before, setting the contemporary issue into stronger relief" ("Sonnet" 144).

One way that Hacker plays with heroic sonnet form in order to enliven the tradition of domestic coupling can be found in her inventive approach to meter. Hacker writes elsewhere that meter is especially important to her poetics: "metrics is the bone-

[10] An Italian sonnet must comprise fourteen lines containing an opening octave and a closing sestet, thematically connected by a *volta* after the eighth line. The octave provides the narrative premise "with the sestet contradicting it, modifying it, or giving a concrete proof" (Hacker "Sonnet" 130). Traditionally, the poetic narrative illustrates a lover courting a beloved. Rhyme scheme varies although the tradition demands patterns of consistent end-rhyme.

[11] Its tone is ironic throughout in recycling traditions like courtly love, troubadour songs, and the Elizabethan sonnet tradition, demonstrating how these conventions persist in representing "romance."

structure, the armature, of poetic form, of open forms as well. They, too, must have some kind of metrical coherence, make some kind of aural sense" (qtd. in Finch). Like many contemporary American poets, Hacker's verse is vernacular, which contributes to rhythms that mimic the ebb, flow, and stoppage of spoken English.

In a clever sonnet such as the unnamed one that begins "Didn't Sappho say her guts clutched up like this?" the speaker's engrossment with digestive cramps is caused by her nervousness from imagining coupledom with Ray, her lesbian beloved, who, over the course of the collection, becomes the speaker's house- and love-mate (before breaking off their relationship). The poem's final tercet:

> ◡ / ◡ / ◡ / / ◡ ◡ / |
> Although I'd cream my jeans touching your breast,
> ◡ ◡ | ◡ / ◡ / ‖ ◡ / ◡ /
> sweetheart, it isn't lust; it's all the rest
> ◡ \ ◡ \ ◡ ◡ ◡ \ ◡ / ◡ ‖
> of what I want with you that scares me shitless. (12)

As the sonnet's resolution, it incorporates a thematic concentration of Hacker's collection – the intimacy of domestic coupledom that boldly associates the sexually charged (the titillations of lust) with the dull quotidian (the day-to-day humdrum). Here, "lust" appears just before the only full caesura in the geographic center of the stanza, forcing the speaker to pause before moving forward. The greatest stress of that line is implied by "rest," which would likely be expressed in italicized form in conversational speech, as it is meant to clarify and emphasize the speaker's *true* concern over the supposed motivation for her anxiety (lust). After "rest," the final line employs a *sotto voce* pace meant to spool out as an aside, an under-spoken confession.

In this way, the meter carries forward the thematic release of the sonnet – clutched up guts are released with the final "shitless" in an ironic tweak of the love sonnet form, which might have been used normatively (and is so used by Hacker in subsequent sonnets) to celebrate the lover's lustful delight. This is a sonnet whose final line elides the domestic ("all the rest") while centering it as a form of commitment, work, and love that is deeply significant and powerful enough to cause fright (and other messes).

Throughout the collection, Hacker incorporates meter that juxtaposes the graphically sexual with the banal to produce a statement that relates the functional aspects of coupling with its orgasmic potential. In one of her many untitled poems, she uses relatively fluent pentameter to join two phrases:

> ◡ / ◡ ◡ ◡ / ◡ / ◡ / |
> I kiss you till my clit's about to burst,
> ◡ / ◡ / ◡ / ◡ / ◡ / ‖
> and catch myself reorganizing shelves. (13).

Both orgasm and de-cluttering space are given equal value here – both in terms of thematic and metric equivalence. The suggestion is that both the ecstasy produced by sexual intimacy and the mundane task of straightening up space are delightful. This is especially so because the lover is preparing room for the entrance of the beloved into the domestic space. In order to accept the beloved into her home, Hack must "make space." She suggests here that, as an orgasm that unites the lover to her beloved in a sexually intimate way (and powerfully felt body experience) makes room for her beloved to be integrated into Hack's "love life," it inspires her to make physical space in her home for the body of her lover to occupy it. Both of these activities are related. It's an obvious

point to make, and Hacker makes it here clearly, but it is a simple expression of the powerful relation between the sexual and the domestic. Both work to sustain the other: the coming creates the need for the occupying with the hope that the occupying will produce more opportunities for the coming.

A central aspect of the work of domestic coupling emerges in the form of choice: choosing to remain committed to the sexual and/or affective parameters of a dyadic relationship, choosing to perform tasks to satisfy a partner, and choosing to respect each other as cohabitants are all vital concerns for the maintenance of a coupled relationship. The role of choosing within the performative work of domesticated coupledom has dramatic importance throughout *Love, Death*. In a committed relationship, Hack points out again and again, each lover must choose either to maintain the relationship by working with the other or to abandon the work of the relationship and leave. Often, the latter option is emphasized as a risk that hangs over each lover, which she must safeguard against by pleasing her beloved with the domestic work that lovers perform to function as a couple. Early on in a relationship, at least, Hacker shows her lover-speaker emphasizing performative domestication in a celebratory light. In the crown of sonnets entitled "Eight Days in April," in which Hack and Ray first settle down together, the lover sighs near the end of the crown, "we are free / to choose each other perpetually" (71).[12]

If, as it appears, Hacker's Hack is meant to be taken as a poetic model for the author – who has experienced long- and short-term relationships with men and women

[12] Lewis Turco defines a crown as "a series of seven *Italian sonnets*. The last line of each of the first six sonnets becomes the first line in each of the ensuing sonnets; the last line of the seventh sonnet is the first line of the first sonnet. Since the seven sonnets are considered to be one poem, no rhyme word can be reused except in the formally repeated lines, and new rhymes when they appear cannot be those used elsewhere in the poem" (161).

and has identified as a "lesbian of choice" most recently – the idea of choosing takes on even more livelihood in the context of domestic love/work. In "On Marriage," which follows the "April" crown, Hack acknowledges that she is "likely to be called on" to explain her decision for coupling up with Ray – after only eight days of domestic life together (72). The depiction of the lover having to explain herself speaks to this charge that Hack doesn't know what she wants in a domestic partner, so she chooses only what she can have. This is also hard work. Characterizing the assessment that a friend might have looking upon at Hack's lusty pursuit of Ray as "Tack / -y," Hacker interrogates the ways that form, work, and choice collapse our assumptions about how best to live with another person (72). In both domestic relationships and in love poetry, it is *bad form* to enjamb too readily, but Hacker performs both ironically to comment on the ways that form and tradition persist in modeling ways that lovers seek to create functional domestic lives.[13] Her approach here is a camp aesthetic, which involves an ironic and playful poetics.

It is the work of choosing that keeps the domestic partnership functional, though Hack is aware that commitment is always provisional. She closes "On Marriage" with the sestet that focuses on choice and its relation to domestic orientation and the energy couple-work requires:

[13] The well-worn joke Hacker suggests here asks, "What does a lesbian bring to a second date?" and answers, "A U-Haul." Hacker's voice is ironic and playful throughout, reflective of a "gay aesthetics" that can involve an approach to all matters of life with an amalgam of irony, lightness, pleasure, self-deprecation, shamelessness, curiosity, histrionics, and other modes. An investigation into Hacker's use of camp, in this regard, would be a productive study.

/ / ᴗ ᴗ / ᴗ ᴗ / ᴗ ᴗ ‖
No law books frame terms of this covenant.
ᴗ / ᴗ \ ᴗ / ᴗ ᴗ ᴗ / |
It's choice that's asymptotic to a goal,
ᴗ / ᴗ / ᴗ / | ᴗ / | ᴗ /
which means that we must choose, and choose, and choose
/ ᴗ ᴗ | / ᴗ ‖ / / ᴗ ᴗ /
momently, daily. This moment my whole
ᴗ / ᴗ ᴗ ᴗ / / | ᴗ ᴗ / /
trajectory's toward you, and it's not los-
ᴗ ᴗ / ᴗ ‖
ing momentum. (72)

Again, Hacker characterizes heterosexual coupledom as a closed form, sealed into place and recognized by a number of private and public social customs ("law books," "covenants"). By contrast, homosexual domestic coupling is fuzzier because it is a social form that "does not compute," hence the asymptotic approach to understanding what it might look like.[14] On one hand, as lesbian domestic coupling *looks* like romance – it involves all of the basics: love, sex, housework – yet, on the other hand, the lovers' same-sex gender identifications do not correspond with the official markers that valorize romance as a heteronormative form of coupledom. The first line of the sestet declaims, and the following one explains, providing clarification that domestic lesbian couples must found their homemaking around the "choice" of working together without the conferral of matrimony reserved for heterosexual lovers.

To ground long-term domesticated commitment with another individual upon something as provisional as choice might strike many as foolish, but more and more people today do so. Notwithstanding statistics, Hacker situates the role of choice (however flimsy) as a central fundament of the work of doing coupledom. And, as the

[14] As the fact that Hacker is so devoted to metrics suggests, mathematics as metaphor runs throughout Hacker's oeuvre.

poem expresses in the exaggerative iambic phrase that celebrates the couples' freedom "to choose," there is satisfaction in this performative way of approaching coupledom. It serves as a type of refrain because of its repetition – "to choose and choose and choose" effuses grandly the delight that underpins the work of domestic coupling if one appraises choice as a positive ground to approach loving another person.

Love, Death points out one of the fundamental reasons why this concept of coupling-as-a-doing emerged as a way to reframe cohabitation, partnership, or marriage: choosing requires perpetual work on the part of *both partners*. Ever histrionic, Hack pleads with her beloved in one of the final poems, fearing Ray will soon reject their shared love project: "We worked for love, loved it. Don't sling / that out with Friday's beer cans" (210).[15] By imploring her lover this way, Hacker is raising the point that the very mundane activity of throwing out the trash is something that *must be done* in living together. The phrase suggests that, by equating the chore with the work of loving they developed, Ray trashed the extraordinary possibilities of domestic coupledom altogether.

The work of coupling also implies uncoupling, which the latter half of *Love, Death* explores. In the tenth poem from the collection's "Coda," Hack constructs an elegy to the doomed failure of her love affair with Ray that is yet very much committed to humor and lightness:

> Who would divorce her lover with a phone
> call? You did. Like that, it's finished, done –

[15] Most remarkable about Hacker's tone in *Love, Death* is her grasp of irony in playing with the standards related to relationship-building and the often too-personal response lovers have to their beloveds by concentrating upon Hack's self-aware but maudlin fixation on Ray. But, Hacker also creates moments of great beauty, loss, and sympathy, especially in the final poem that closes the collection, "Did you love well what very soon you left?" which mirrors the end line of Shakespeare's Sonnet 73, which reads, "To love that well which thou must ere leave long."

or is for you. I'm left with closets of
grief (you moved out your things next day). I love
you. I want to make the phone call this
time, say, pack your axe, cab uptown, kiss
me, lots. I'll run a bubble bath; we'll sing
in the tub. We worked for love, loved it. Don't sling
that out with Friday's beer cans, or file-card it
in a drawer of anecdotes: 'My Last
Six Girlfriends: How a Girl Acquires a Past.'
I've got 'What Becomes of the Broken-Hearted'
run on a loop, unwanted leitmotif.
Lust, light, love, life all tumbled into grief.
You closed us off like a parenthesis
and left me knowing just enough to miss. (210)

The objects that inform the poem's tone-shaded lightness are domestic stuff – a phone, closets, bubble bath, a tub, beer cans, a file cabinet. This "stuff" is meant to be occupied and shared by the beloved and, now that her love has been reproved, the jilted speaker feels spurned by the home accents.

Like the tone throughout the collection, Hack is melodramatic, but there is an undeniable nod to the experience of sadness that opens and closes the sonnet. That correction the lover gives to herself early on – "or is for you" – so shamefaced, suggests that the break-up has done little more than hurt her feelings. But through the course of the poem, that wounded pride is altogether transformed into a greater loss at its close, mourned with lyrical rhythm and couplet-rhyme (a rarity in Hacker's oeuvre):

˘ / ˘ / ˘ ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘
You closed us off like a parenthesis
˘ / ˘ / ˘ / ˘ / ˘ / ‖
and left me knowing just enough to miss.

For clarity, I argue that we must look to the parenthetical as a visual simile, as Hacker requests we do, though she does not include the literal visual:[16]

()

The image *requires* us to think of a couple. It is as if, in just suggesting the image, Hack wants to insist upon cementing into place some visual metaphor that seals lover together with beloved because the beloved will not allow the couple to be realized in a literal way.

The parenthetical would be the perfect expression of a complete dyad in visual form, but Hacker doesn't allow that, even. She invokes a single parenthesis here, emphasizing the singular symbol:

)

If we look at what she's done visually, we sense a single lover, looking back at what is final, completed, finished. There's something visually unfinished-looking about this closing parenthesis symbol. Somehow, it looks sad, alone, incomplete. The lover at home alone – which is referenced in the sonnet following this one as "Home alone is home, alone" – seems wrong in the same way. This is especially so because, throughout the collection, Hack has recounted enthusiastically the joys of the domestic that she and her lover have shared. Hacker has illustrated in words and suggestion how the domestic's poetics are affected by this abandonment with this lonely parenthesis with which Ray has answered Hack. Nonetheless, she emphasizes this discordance by sealing the ending of this sonnet in an exalted, rhythmic, rhyming couplet – in a flash of irony, Hacker making poetic the unwanted experience of being jilted.

[16] To defend myself from the charge that, because Hacker does not incorporate the parenthesis symbol into her poem, one cannot invoke it literally, I counter: think of the parenthesis and try *not* to invoke the symbol.

The poem's artful cues as to the lover's most profound sense of loss comes with its acknowledgement that, not only is this relationship ended, the lover laments that her whole career of love is over, too. Hacker represents this by titling Ray's collection of anecdotes: "My Last / Six Girlfriends: How a Girl Acquires a Past." Taken alone, without completing the enjambment, "My Last" communicates Hack's self-referential fear that this is her last attempt at domestic coupling. Due to her age (Hacker was in her mid-forties at the time of its writing), Hack feels too old to be able to pursue lovers with the goal of establishing a shared home. This was her last shot. In the same way, earlier in the poem, the complete expression "I love / you" is broken up if we stop at the end line: "I love" is Hack's sad admission that she sees that hers is an unrequited love now.

It is in this assessment that the sonnet finds its elegiac eloquence, as in a musical composition. It reaches its crescendo in the rhythm of the line just before that closing couplet:

/ | / | / | / ᴗ / ᴗ / ᴗ / ‖
Lust, light, love, life all tumbled into grief.

The series of those strongly accented (poetically and in real life) experiences – lust, light, love, life – which are the pillars of poetic expression itself just as they are the most meaningful experiences of living – all of them tumble down to this stopping point of grief. Hacker picks up on this tone and delivers the collection's final bell-toll with the last poem in the collection, which is one of Hacker's most studied poems.[17]

[17] See Marilyn Farwell's *Heterosexual Plots and Lesbian Narratives* and David Caplan's *Questions of Possibility* for a direct discussion of the relation between Shakespeare's Sonnet 73 and the final poem in *Love, Death, and the Changing of the Seasons*.

By including all of the messy details involved in the failure of a relationship, Hacker acknowledges that processes of coupling and uncoupling are complicated, performative experiences. As I have acknowledged above, there is *parrhesia* throughout the collection, which refuses to discountenance the unsightly and untoward effects of gay love relations in addition to accessing the social form of camp to tease traditional forms and poetics related to the Western romance narrative tradition. I move now to investigate Carl Phillips's modern verse as it communicates the gay way of life that resists being conditioned by the heteronormative model of romance.

4. "There *Is* No Way to Explain / What Happens": Carl Phillips's *Cortège*

Phillips's poem, "Domestic" provides a glimpse into his concentration on the ordinary domestic realm shared by two gay lovers in a mode of expression that eschews romance its power to control coupled relations. The speaker confers on the domestic realm a monumental significance, claiming that the home he shares with his partner is "the whole world, / all I want of the world" (55). In the hands of another poet, this generalized celebration of domestic space might reflect the urge to romanticize the home. But, per his approach to describing the gay way of life of coupledom, Phillips never does this. The entire poem is an attempt that, like much of the thematic emphases in Phillips's poetry, captures in place a microscopic concentration on the intellectual and affective intimacy of a person contemplating his relationship to his partner. This is his poetic approach to queering romance via *parrhesia*, the truth-telling capacity of the poet to express himself in the context of other relations. A point that Michel Foucault raises has particular application to Phillips's way of expressing a partnered gay way of life: "The

one who uses *parrhesia*…is someone who says everything he has in mind: he does not hide anything, but opens his heart and mind completely to other people through his discourse" (*Fearless Speech* 12). Via "Domestic," Phillips's complete truth about gay domestic coupling involves the imaginative claim to the home as "all I want of the world," but it also involves the lover's imaginative rejection of his beloved for another.

Though the domestic has the capacity to stretch as wide as to be a world for the speaker, he acknowledges that he experiences moments living with him when he fails to communicate his true feelings about their relationship. First, he admits that he is "always forgetting" to tell his lover about the small discoveries that pop into his mind throughout the day (54). There are other times, he suggests, that he forgets to confide these things or deliberately chooses to withhold them from his partner. He admits to a daily ritual he performs each morning from a room downstairs from his partner, who practices his morning bathroom routines upstairs:

> I
> keep myself from saying too loud I
> love you until the moment you flush
> the toilet, then I say it, when the
> rumble of water running down through
> the house could mean anything: flood,
>
> your feet descending the stairs any
> moment. (55)

The force of the speaker's perspective is located in the line and stanza breaks. There's a hinge, a stutter, after each of those two "Is" if the stops in each line are read: "I / keep myself from saying too loud / I." This read demonstrates the careful attention Phillips' pays to allowing the level of the language to express paradox in a poem, which pays

careful attention to the complications of living with and loving another person. The utterance bespeaks trepidation that an open profession of love or affection might elicit. Or the fear might also come from a place explained earlier in the poem: the expression of love for another person can belie so easily a feeling of mawkishness in the lover professing ("can I help it if / all I can think is things that are / stupid, like he loves me he loves me /not?"). Whether from fear of being found emotionally guarded or overtly sentimental, these are two feelings that prevent the speaker's full acknowledgement of love.

The stanza also counterweighs the expression of love with the most ordinary of all domestic activities – the flushing of the toilet. In the way it is presented, "I / love you" is the subject/action/object weighed against the subject/action/object with which "you flush / the toilet." There seems to be an intentional jocularity of representation here that doesn't so much suggest that the speaker's state of love for the other is met with the beloved's careless flushing as much as it plays with the idea that both the most significant felt-aspects of life (counting "loving" as one of those) and the most routine of matters ("a morning dump") occur in the same space. There's a naked honesty, a domestic truth, found in this mode of expression.

While, on the surface, equating a profession of love to the toilet flushing certainly isn't attached to any romantic tradition, these equivalences also do not explain how the poem speaks to a larger truth about the gay way of (domestic) life. I argue that the poem's central concern is with a strikingly unromantic perspective that Phillips buries in the poem's fifth stanza. Folded in together with those things the speaker forgets, or

chooses not to express, or utters when the beloved is not available to hear the expression, is his conclusion that to die alone, away from, and without his partner, well, that wouldn't be so bad:

> Yesterday, in the café I
> keep meaning to show you, I thought
> this is how I'll die maybe, alone,
>
> somewhere too far away from wherever
> you are then, my heart racing from
> espresso and too many cigarettes,
> my head down on the table's cool
> marble, and the ceiling fan turning
> slowly above me, like fortune, the
>
> part of fortune that's half-wished-
> for only – it did not seem the worst
> way. (54)

Here is Phillips's anti-romantic *parrhesia*, the truth-telling of domestic coupling seemingly at its most indecorous, appearing in poem as a tortured truth. How are readers meant to take this expression that completely discountenances the domestic relation that unites the two men? For, it is rude and potentially desire-killing that a lover would profess that the work of love that daily life with another person engenders can produce what could only be interpreted by his partner as a cold epiphany. The speaker organizes this discovery as another of those *frissons* akin to disclosing love too profusely or too bathetically. It appears among them because it is nonetheless true to the speaker's feeling, representative of his critical attention and care toward expressing a feeling about domestic life. While the speaker admits this is a truth that is "half-wished- / for only," he nonetheless wishes it.

To read this representation of domestic coupledom through the lens of romance is to find the speaker's partnership imperfect, broken, failed. But queer relationships – here, as in Hack's admission that the very openness of her relation to Ray keeps it durable – do not follow the romantic model of domestic bliss, which situates lovers in a frozen, static embrace that refuses to expose the truths of human desire. Phillips's insight about truth-telling of gay relations is in evidence in the epigraph that opens *Cortège*, a line Phillips incorporates from Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*: "*The unendurable is the beginning of the curve of joy*." Barnes's line literally characterizes "straightness" with "the unendurable," positing the expected conformity to linear representation as a heteronormative weight for individual expression. The curve leads toward a different trajectory that suggests the circle, but, because Barnes's line referenced in Phillips's epigraph does not complete itself into circularity – it is only a curving away – there is the acknowledgement of incompleteness, messiness, and wandering, which, in Phillips's use of it as a metaphor, reflects joy. In the epigraph, he acknowledges the ways that queer loving, which refuse to follow the construction of the domestic as a space in which to cultivate normative associations to the romantic pattern of partnering, are *wayward*, asymptotic, errant.

Elsewhere, a blonde man invites the speaker of "Cotillion" to dance and tells him that something – the subject of which he is unsure is "joy" or "pain" or "desire" – is "like when a small bird / rises, sometimes, like the difficult thing is not to" (17). Phillips's description of joy, pain, and desire, here, rising out of an inevitable, invisible source conflates them, which speaks to his mode of expressing gay erotic life as though a term that combines joy, pain, and desire would approximate verbally the experience of gay

love. Add to that characterization of a gay way of life another that he makes in "Aubade for Eve Under the Arbor" by way of emphasizing sexual and social joy/pain/desire as an infinite uncertainty: "the questions I still can't understand: how / long, when is too much not enough – what price desire?" (61). As Phillips's questions demonstrate, queer subjects scrutinize the truth-telling of erotic life without installing affectations around their love relations. The trope of coupled romance denies that free-flowing sexual and subjective power of joy/pain/desire exists outside of the limits of partnership, which is the very power attendant upon marriage as an institution that governs human patterns of living. *Cortège* insists that, even and especially from the perspective of the successfully domesticated lover, traces of joy/pain/desire exist within and beyond the bounds of partnership. This is Phillips's leaving evidence of and recommending a gay way of living and loving.

As a myth that patterns social and sexual relations between people, romance constructs explanations for situating two (heteronormative) people together. Two poems, "Teaching Ovid to Sixth-Graders" and "What Myth Is," interrogate the appeal of myths to explain human behavior. In the first poem, Phillips explains,

> any myth
> is finally about the lengths the mind will
> carry a tale to, to explain what the body
>
> knows already, and so never answers:
> that there *is* no way to explain
> what can happen. (35)

"Teaching Ovid" positions mind as keening and body as intuitive, demonstrating how experiences of joy/pain/desire felt by the body emerge in myths as ways to rationalize

why the body has felt something so immediate and inevitable. Perhaps this is one explanation for the persistence and "naturalness" of the myth of romance to structure lives. For, the long-standing narrative tradition of uniting one lover to one beloved justifies heterosexuality, reproduction, and the development of norms as constitutive of the *meaning* of human sexuality. Hence, the singular pattern of the romance myth always determines normative subjects. But, per this poem's claim to *parrhesia*, "there *is* no way to explain" the possibilities of joy/pain/desire except through artifice. Explanations to claim systemic knowledge about living and loving fail always to capture those possibilities. This is because joy/pain/desire is itself a construction of the relations between social and sexual relations. Acknowledging this, queers figure as romantic remainders, affirming that the gay way of life means always to slip outside of explanation, justification, assimilation.

Another poem, "What Myth Is" expands this perspective by engaging directly the notion of romance. Phillips admits, somewhat grudgingly, that romance is only another approximation of social and sexual relations. The poem opens with the title, declaring, "What Myth Is":

> Not only what lasts, but what
> applies over time also. So
> maybe, for all my believing, not
>
> you, on either count. (50)

Timeless and universal are claims made for the most famous romance narratives – Tristan and Isolde, Romeo and Juliet, *The Notebook* – yet Phillips claims here that they cannot construct a relation between lovers. The speaker even admits a dejected feeling for this

truth. This open acknowledgement of imperfection implicit to social and sexual relations supports my claim that Phillips's poetry examines, through a relation to *parrhesiatic* truth, a gay way of life and love. I argue that his poetry constructs gay domestic love as a relation that is honest about the social construction of joy/pain/desire. That this clear-eyed approach to erotics connotes a gay *domestic* point of view is important for, despite the heteronormative myth of two smitten partners embraced in a life-long commitment, which appears as the "natural" condition for all couples in love, Phillips risks telling the truth about joy/pain/desire: it is a condition structured by narratives, and those narratives cannot claim to have captured joy/pain/desire in a singular, permanent, or fixed state. It is in this way that Phillips's erotic poetics acknowledge gay claims to ways of life and love as speaking truth to normative claims to romance.

In closing, I claim that the importance behind Hacker's and Phillips's constructions of gay ways of living lies in the risk inherent to *parrhesiatic* rhetoric. Hacker pitches a histrionic lover seeking to lay domestic claim on her beloved with an exaggerated and overblown style, attuned to gay aesthetics of overstatement. In *Love, Death*, Hack's overbearing "style" of lovemaking is performed at the risk of driving her beloved away, which she eventually accomplishes. Phillips, whose collection is less invested in gay style, uses thematic inquiry to plumb the vicissitudes of joy/pain/desire that construct gay subjectivity, avoiding neat conclusions about domestication upon which so many representative models of romantic coupledom insist. Internal to those love poems within *Cortège* permeate tiny, conventionally desire-killing truths about gay social and sexual relations among partners. Those admissions are risky, too, because they deny

the stereotypes that underpin the myth of romance their power to convince and control ways of living and loving.

Because it is the construction that energizes LGBT advocates' contemporary push to crowd the chapel with gays and lesbians, romance needs more critical and popular interrogation. As one construction among many with which people form social and sexual relations with others, romance provides one way to relate. In this chapter, I have identified that singular pattern seeks to condition heterosexual (or heterosexual-like) lives in the service of normativity. For this reason, romance is a misguided myth because it attempts to explain desire in one way, channeled toward one mode of expression. But, as Phillips and Hacker demonstrate, desire runs a thousand different directions and is not limited by the imagined constraints that professions of love suppose. *Love, Death* and *Cortège*, in their respective ways, then, recommend a gay way of life as an alternative to romance and marriage, as a critical approach to life and love that more honestly portrays the social and sexual relations of partners as free-flowing and indeterminable.

Without a socioculturally sanctioned pattern like heteronormative romance to condition their speaker's love lives, Hacker and Phillips use the domestic metaphor in complicated ways. In the next chapter, I call upon a pattern that heteronormative perspectives have developed specifically for gay males: the diseased and not-yet-dead. In representing the homes of HIV-positive and -perished gay males, Terrence McNally's play, *Lips Together, Teeth Apart* and Joey Terrill's still life paintings characterize the pathological approach to gay men and their "contaminated" spaces. In that chapter, I will move forward with the argument about a "gay way of life" that this chapter sets up by

emphasizing the category of death as central to the construction of gay subjectivity and sexuality. As is evidenced in the treatment of domestic spaces occupied by gay men, death and disease are categories that queer narrative employs as productive critical sites of inquiry into American habits of approaching health and sickness, life and death.

Chapter 5

The Not-Dead-Yet Domestics of Terrence McNally's *Lips Together, Teeth Apart* and Joey Terrill's Still Lifes

1. Introduction

This final chapter interrogates homes as sites that relate health to death in the social imaginary of gay male subjectivity. Terrence McNally's 1992 play, *Lips Together, Teeth Apart* and a series of still life paintings by Joey Terrill (1997-2003) communicate overt messages about the heteronormative association of death and disease upon gay male subjectivity, which the American AIDS crisis of the 1980s and 1990s made apparent. Both sets of texts feature the domestic in place of the subject as a way to think through gay male sexuality and subjectivity. This chapter cites the paintings' and the play's homes as vivid symbols that do not simply frame the correspondence between gay male sexuality and death; they also make plain that home is an evidentiary site in which Americans make meaning about life and death issues.

McNally's three-act play is set on the deck of a Fire Island beach house previously owned by a man named David, who has died due to complications caused by HIV. David's death has occurred in the play's antecedent action; he does not appear as a character other than in other character's mentioning. He has named his sister, Sally Truman, to inherit the house, and, for the purposes of considering keeping or selling the place, she has brought her husband, Sam, to inspect the property. Because this weekend happens to fall on the Independence Day holiday, accompanying them are Sam's sister, Chloe Haddock, and her husband, John, with whom Sally has had a romantic affair,

recently terminated. This last fact, as well as the admission that John has learned recently that he has terminal cancer, either is avoided as a subject of conversation or denied until the final act of the play, which keeps the dramatic tension in place. Sally witnesses a man swim out into the ocean on the morning in which the play opens and, by its end, she learns that he has drowned, likely deliberately. Little happens in the play except that, through the character's conversations and parenthetical soliloquies, the emphasis on death circulates throughout – on David's death, which has predicated the group's presence at the house; on John's terminal condition; and on the drowned man.

The action takes place entirely on the deck of the beach house, from which the group observes gay male neighbors, whose homes flank it. The house is an open space, organized around the deck; windows and screens allow the audience to see and hear both what occurs on the deck as well as within the house, which features two bedrooms and a kitchen upstage. The swimming pool, which surrounds the deck, occupies much of the space in between the stage and the audience; in the final scene, set at night, the pool is lit, bathing the action with a pastel blue light.

In contrast to McNally's play, Joey Terrill's paintings reflect a post-elegiac tone, fitting with their chronological appearance in the post-epidemic era of AIDS in America. I will reference five of Terrill's still lifes: *Still Life with Crixivan* (1997-98) (see fig. 1), *Still Life with Sustiva* (2000-01) (see fig. 2), *Still Life with Viracept* (2003) (see fig. 3), *Still Life with Zerit* (2000) (see fig. 4), and *Still Life with Videx* (1999-2000) (see fig. 5).[1] All have been produced with acrylic and mixed media applied to canvases of equal size –

[1] See inset of these figures on pages 149-51, at which point I begin my analysis of Terrill's still lifes. These images were taken from the website of One Archives Gallery, which featured an exhibition of Terrill's work over the summer of 2013.

36 inches by 48 inches. Thus, each is a horizontal rendering that invites viewers to scan representations of everyday domestic objects set on the flat plane of a table. Each painting includes at least one reference to the pharmaceutical product mentioned in the title of the work in some form; for instance, in some, images of capsules are scattered across a table or oversized tablets are "blown-up," while in others, actual labels removed from medication bottles have been affixed to the canvas and painted onto images of medication bottles.

Although a number of artistic influences can be discerned throughout the pieces, because Terrill employs allusion consistently, the paintings should be recognized as works in the Pop art tradition. These are still life forms, the long-used method (until recently, diminished in most critical discourse) of depicting common household objects grouped together by the artist. Thus, the irony of Pop influences – Roy Lichtenstein, Tom Wesselmann, and Richard Hamilton – is made to syncretize with disparate styles of Frida Kahlo, William Merritt Chase, Henri Matisse, and Rene Magritte. This is Terrill's "Pop."

Throughout this chapter, I argue that it is through the construction of disease and death, which heteronorms attach to gay male sexuality, that queer politics can be imagined as a way to subvert the lure of the normative to dictate conditions of political change. Two strategies about the spatial approach to housing presented in the play and the paintings provide me a way to make broader extrapolations related to queer politics. The first approach interrogates the texts' commentaries on how home spaces signify disease and death. For instance, the pool in McNally's play and the table in Terrill's still lifes serve to mix up associations between particular death (disease) and universal death

(the human condition). I elucidate the connections McNally draws between the swimming pool – a container of infection that signifies gay-particular death – and the ocean just off Fire Island, meant to symbolize mortality in general. Likewise, Terrill draws attention to the particularity of disease as the agent of gay death in the context of universal mortality by positioning brand-name anti-retroviral medications among the common effects of daily life and death on his tabletops. Terrill's tweaking of the *memento mori* tradition, incorporating particularities specific to HIV-positive subjectivity, serves to highlight the condition of death relative to heteronormative perspectives on gay male sexuality. I argue that these artistic endeavors raise the specific condition of gay/death in relief to the background of "human mortality," which is itself a construction of "good," "clean," normative, biopolitically-conditioned heterosexual claims to knowledge about life and death.

The second domestic strategy these texts employ to relate gay male sexuality to death productively involves an "approach to design" that challenges those heteronormative claims to health via biological regulation. This approach is made visible in McNally's play via the setting's "open concept" deck space, on which the heterosexual characters express irritation at their exposure to the assumed regulatory gazes of neighboring gay men. In their failure to recognize the open concept construction of the deck/stage as a liberatory practice of gay communal home-building, the straights confirm the attraction to surveillance, insularity, and privacy as heteronormative control practices of habitation. Regulatory practices that are tied to health and death in particular resonate powerfully around the topic of medicine. As referenced by the medicine cabinet in *Lips*

Together and as showcased throughout Terrill's still lifes more pointedly, the medical is a charged domestic category. I interrogate the domestic medical as a category in these texts as they implicate gay sexuality along the discursive seam of open/closed approaches to life and death. In other words, I find that who you fuck says a lot more than your sexual orientation.

It is in that spirit that I close the chapter, taking *Lips Together* and the still lifes as queer indicators of "how to be at home" with "no future." This draws obvious influence from Lee Edelman's political call for queers to do just that. Edelman answers detractors who characterize his approach as "anti-social":

> Why not endorse, to the contrary, 'epistemological self-destruction' for all? Why not accept that queerness, taken seriously, demands nothing less? The fantasy of a viable 'alternative' to normativity's domination – a fantasy defended as strategically necessary when not affirmed as unquestionably good – offers nothing more…than futurism's redemptive temporality gussied up with a rainbow flag. Maybe we need to consider that you *don't* get 'from here to somewhere else.' Maybe we need to imagine anew, 'We're here, we're queer, get used to it,' not as the positive assertion of a marginalized identity but as the universal condition of the subject caught up in structural repetition. That's what makes queerness intolerable, even to those who call themselves queer: a nonteleological negativity that refuses the leavening of piety and with it the dollop of sweetness afforded by messianic hope. ("Queer Temporalities" 195)

Both McNally's play and Terrill's paintings affirm the queerness itself of "the universal condition of the subject caught up in structural repetition," playfully and positively so, even as (and because) they appeal to death. I argue that they acknowledge the particularities of disease, dysfunction, and pollution attributed to gay male sexuality in an American culture terrorized by the general topic of regular-old death. In fact, the normative fear of death generates the construction of gay male sexuality as always already diseased, dysfunctional, and polluted. *Lips Together*'s chorus of offstage

potentially disease-carrying fags who blare music, dance, fuck, and carry on in the context of an epidemic (his play is set in 1992), but, McNally demonstrates that the epidemic is simply, after all, death, for one and all (his play is set "in the present"). Likewise, in *Still Life with Videx*, in particular, I argue that Joey Terrill associates many resonances among gay male culture and sexuality and disease, death, and dying in the setting of the common American household.

The political potential for all of this, I argue, is to deny the persnickety phoniness of straight, regulatory culture, which casts the future as an ever-delayed, sunny ideality where dreams will be realized and all will be well, as long as certain rational precepts are followed to a T. This chapter claims: That ain't gonna happen. The optimism of normative, neoliberal politics refuses to negotiate with the conditions of the present, which political fidelity to normativity develops and regulates in the rhetoric of the promise of the future to somehow make everything right. Instead, by using McNally's play and Terrill's still lifes as evidence, the concentration on the always-dirty, never clean-cut here-and-now, queer politics can make claims to challenge the stasis of neoliberal politics, whose emphasis situates "the middle" as the proper site for political and social change. *Lips Together* and Terrill's still lifes insist upon the ragged edges of contemporaneity not as sites that obfuscate sociopolitics from its important work, but as its home.

2. Death and the Gay Man: A Rhetorical Love Affair

In order to tie together these three strategies of inquiry, I pause here to demonstrate how my argument fits into contemporary scholarship. This chapter's

argumentative work acknowledges theoretical contributions of Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben on postmodern constructions of subjectivity. Agamben defines subjectivity as "a field through which run two opposite currents – one is subjectivation and the other is desubjectivation. This is the experience of modern man….Many forces act to build subjectivity but others act to desubjectivate, disrupt the subject" ("Desubjectivity"). This construction of the subject devalues identity, which is a central theoretical component underpinning my argument that gay male sexuality connotes a particularity to death as opposed to universal (heterosexual) death. Agamben's definition demonstrates that subjectivation/desubjectivation occurs simultaneously and for all subjects in operation with other subjects and objects, and I argue that when identities become particularized, they are marked with essential characteristics distinguishing them as different from a universal other.[2] When those particularities reference life, health, disease, and, especially death – the paralytic moment that extinguishes identity – rhetorics of control, regulation, and risk intensify sharply.

As Agamben has argued, in the early epidemic era of AIDS, HIV-positivity was a particularity ascribed to all gay males. This status revealed gay men as *homines sacri*, a term Agamben develops to explain those populations who are a society's disposable

[2] Agamben uses the example of technological apparatuses to demonstrate subjectivation/desubjectivation at work: with the use of a technological apparatus – birth control, a social networking site, a car – the "building up" of the subject, of his personality, occurs (subjectivation), while at the same time, an absence of the subject is being constructed (desubjectivation). The subject's use of the medication, website, and car also means he is reduced by market forces or social institutions of sovereign power to a consumer, a statistic used to predict buying and social-activity trends, a datum for risk analysis.

people, whose deaths occur at the level of social sacrifice, but whose sacrifice communicates no transformative meaning. The *homo sacer* is the not-dead-yet.[3]

As a sociopolitical category, HIV-positive subjectivity demonstrates the loss of biopolitical self-control – that is, as Foucault explains, the failure to internalize processes of instruction that inform one about the "proper" ways one ought to live. At least in the earliest years of the AIDS epidemic in America, many homosexual American men sought and fought desperately to be recognized as viable biopolitical subjects in need of medical attention, quality of life, and dignity in dying. Gay men defied the dictates of healthy biopolitical administration, though, from normative perspectives, rendering them susceptible to disease and death. Tom Roach explains how biopolitical administration works:

> Thou shalt live a good life as devised by state-informed expert knowledge; thou shalt do what is best for you, which conveniently coincides with what is best for biopolitical administration. The family, medicine, psychiatry, education, and employers cooperate with state apparatuses to ensure a uniform standard of living, to produce subjectivities and forms of life that benefit the authorizing officiates. (77-8)

In the maintenance of these pursuits, those individuals who conform to them are the ones who are supposed to live, to survive, to prosper. Thus, adherence to the biopolitical administration of human life makes natural and proper the categories of health, wealth, safety, heterosexuality, and, above all, individual identity. This view implies that those ill, poor, imperiled, queer masses deserve their conditions.

---

[3] Contemporary embodiments of the *homo sacer* category include Guantanamo Bay prisoners of war and HIV-positive Africans, populations who are so extremely desubjectified as to be argued in juridico-political terms as non-people or whose adverse lot in life is taken as a matter of course (i.e., Africans are *meant* to be impoverished, to be disease-prone, and to die early; in the West, these are unquestioningly thought to be conditions of life for Africans).

This is made visible, for instance, in *Lips Together* around the structure of the swimming pool, a place typically used for health, vigor, and fun, which Sally Truman claims is "infected. We all think it's polluted. We all think we'll get AIDS and die if we go in" (80). AIDS resurrected panic about "the germ" as a specific cause for avoidance of certain behaviors, suspicion for certain types of people, and obsession in methods of disease control and prevention. The notion that the protection of one's health is connected to the safety and health of others emerged as a central concern of biopolitics in the late twentieth century that intensifies every time a new wave of epidemics is rumored to have blossomed.

As Sally confirms in *Lips Together*, those infected with disease contaminate the spaces they've occupied, which threatens those who come into contact with such spaces. Contamination is viewed as illustrative of the subject infected by the conditions of his environment, but the individual often is considered responsible for creating and existing in the context of that contaminated environment. From a pristine medical perspective, resisting access to contaminated environments is prudent biological instruction. But the problem is that, inevitably, some imagine that "types of people get the diseases they deserve" (Patton 7). For this reason, biomedicine, the treatment of disease by assessing patient risk and adherence, can sometimes represent the diseased as deserving of their conditions and contaminating the spaces they visit and occupy. The AIDS epidemic exposed the internalized lessons about health and safety maintenance that enfold prejudices related to social identities through the social construction of gay male sexuality as contaminated, easily avoidable, and a punishment worthy of death.

In the American imaginary, good health is attributed largely to the work one conducts, via diet, exercise, and refraining from high-risk behavior. That AIDS had nothing to do with abnormal human behavior was, nonetheless, overlooked because its target population first appeared to be gay men, long pathologized as promiscuous sexual deviants who perform no biological service for the benefit of society, the nation, or the record of humanity by their non-reproductive and "abominable" anal sex practices. Below, I extend the sociological and anthropological suspicion of biomedical treatment of AIDS patients by noting the reactions of McNally's characters and Terrill's visual representation of disease and survival. In so doing, my work applies theories of the post-Foucauldian scholar, Paul Rabinow: in looking at Terrill's paintings of survival in the era of endemic AIDS, I recognize that the positive achievements of medicine have prevented many deaths, while, at the same time, they have served to "operationalize" nature by introducing new domains of biomedicine at the level of the gene. This chapter explores the crisis of representation implicit within Terrill's still lifes – without the intervention of modern genetic science, we would not have his paintings because the artist is HIV-positive, yet he uses the visual media to interrogate the introduction of anti-retroviral pharmaceuticals as a way that daily life is organized by persons with chronic HIV.[4]

Terrill and McNally also stress the importance of domestic space as it concerns living and dying with AIDS. Regarding matters of morbidity and mortality, Americans expend a concentrated attention on – and actual physical contraction to – domestic space. When an intimate dies, friends bring food to her family home; when ambulances carry

[4] The chapter also puts into consideration Terrill's representation of the molecularization of everyday life in the post-epidemic era as is described in Nikolas Rose's *The Politics of Life Itself.*

away neighbors to hospitals, neighbors visit to see what help they can offer; when a friend is sick, one asks what medicine and material can be brought from the world outside into his home. Over the course of the late twentieth century, the movement of death and illness out of the hospital back into the home has reversed earlier social constructions of disease and death as justification for public intervention, explaining the rise of the hospital in American culture. As McNally demonstrates, especially when people die, the "stuff" at home matters; his play seems to wrestle with this very notion. My chapter investigates why home and its objects are a central topic for inquiry, regarding them, along with domestic scholars Daniel Miller, Juliet Shor, and Judy Attfield, as fundamental places that shape subjectivity and sexuality.

Specifically, I perform new scholarly work in treating medicine as a domestic object, featuring Terrill's incorporation of anti-retroviral medications, which demonstrates that, increasingly, the home – not the public hospital – is the central site for negotiating health. This move recognizes Krishan Kumar's claim that "the 'medicalization of social problems' moves, to an extent, in the direction of the home-centered society" (217). Taking to heart the understanding laid out by Marc Augé that "[t]he layout of the house, the rules of residence…correspond every individual to a system of possibilities, prescriptions and interdicts whose content is both spatial and social," my chapter concentrates on the use of the medicine cabinet in *Lips Together*, as a micro-space freighted with sexual and social meaning (52). The medicine cabinet as a space for social inquiry has been given little scholarly attention; however, Akiko Busch's *The Uncommon Life of Common Objects* provides some interesting meditations on its

ubiquity in contemporary culture, which I use to explore the concepts of private spaces as hierarchically ordered regarding their exposure to the gazes of visitors. This meaning is given equal resonance by Terrill's still lifes, which spotlight medicine, commonly hidden behind bathroom mirrors. Placed on the kitchen table, his representation of medication comments upon the role medicine plays in organizing American lives and deaths.

In concert with the post-Foucauldian theories this chapter emphasizes, the scholarship that I engage most consistently throughout this chapter is with queer theorists who have worked in the contemporary historical era (1980s through 2000s) on HIV/AIDS. This chapter owes much of its conceptive energy to the work of Lee Edelman, who I mention at the outset. In 1989, during the height of the American AIDS epidemic, Edelman reminded scholars that "even before the historical accident of the outbreak of AIDS in the gay communities of the West, homosexuality was conceived as a contagion, and the homosexual as parasitic upon the heterosexual community" ("Politics" 297). In *No Future*, Edelman advances a theoretical approach to gay politics that productively generates the conflation of the homosexual with the figure of the *sinthomosexual*, the Lacanian subject who refuses to participate in the heteronormative promise of futurity (35). By encouraging homosexuals to own the fantasy placed on them as the futureless not-dead-yet, a creative political position is generated whereby queers may critique the values ascribed to heterosexuality as positive simply because they point to a future. This mode of "reproductive futurism" admits the positive-minded, future-oriented subject as the only acceptable version of queerness. Certainly, the chorus of gay men neighboring the Fire Island beach house of *Lips Together*, who are literally and

performatively *on the edges* of the play's action, dramatizes Edelman's political call. They baffle the heterosexual characters, who wonder at all of this merriment in the context of death all around them.

Likewise, Terrill's paintings, in particular, *Still Life with Videx*, emphasize the complicated expression of gay male sexuality and subjectivity through the narrative lens of HIV-positive status. For instance, though *Videx*'s playful tone is expressed through disease, it does not conform to the categorization of the Person with Aids (PWA) as a victim, survivor, or afflicted sufferer, common to traditional narratives of PWAs.[5] In this way, the still life is able to resist what Nayan Shah notes are "[c]onventional accounts of stable, insular, and self-sufficient households…unable to make sense of the social and intimate experiences of those who migrate and their continuing connection to those who remain behind" (8). Though Shah references migration in its postcolonial context, if we read his expression through death as a passing and disease as a remainder-state, as *Videx* allows, we approach the intent of the painting as a confident expression of gay male subjectivity and sexuality. HIV-positive status is presented front-and-center as the marker of gay male disease and death, yet so are the celebratory practices of freedom that gay male sexuality and subjectivity foreground.

Below, I analyze the ways that Terrill's paintings and McNally's play express these liberatory sociopolitical perspectives through disease and death. First, though, I

[5] Simon Watney's powerful "Photography and AIDS" demonstrates how HIV iconography desubjectifies PWAs: "the diseased body is transformed into a signifying husk which is only there before our eyes to evidence the 'knowledge' of AIDS commentary which both precedes and exceeds the life of the person in the photograph, whose living being is ruthlessly obliterated" (183). In fact, the first widely distributed Hollywood imagery of PWAs was Tom Hanks's portrayal of Andrew Beckett in *Philadelphia* (1993). Watney interrogates the depiction of Beckett's wan, sickly victim as *the* face of AIDS after 1993 in "Art from the Pit."

concentrate upon the two strategies of pitching AIDS as a particular form of death to gay men in the context of universal (heteronormative) mortality; then I interrogate the domestic medical category for its ability to communicate open and closed orientations toward the biologically-related topics of health and death.

3. The Pool and the Table: Relating Gay-Particular Death to Universal Death

McNally's play begins with Sam Truman remarking that the swimming pool is "clean. It looks immaculate" (1), which contrasts with Sally's description of its "polluted" state by play's end (80). This, of course, resonates with the stereotype related to the gay man as spotless in appearance while rotting from immorality, sexual depravity, and disease internally – symbolized by characters in the Anglophone canon from Dorian Gray to Tom Ripley. And, the play showcases the four characters hashing out this understanding throughout. In so doing, the play dramatizes the conditions for particularizing David's death, for writing over the absent dead man a script that rationalizes disease and death for gay male subjects.

First, as a property owner in Fire Island, whose beach house is worth "close to a million," David/pool collapses several details about the stereotypical American gay male into one figure (46). He was white, wealthy, handsome, cultured, stylish, and sexually adventuresome. While this is a deeply troubled (and troublesomely common) reading of male homosexuality, David's metonymic representation as the swimming pool, as a site for queer political impact, is well-conceived. This is not because of the several easy associations between the man and the space. Those include the fact that, as a gay male stereotype, David was a "power gay;" thus, the pool represents the wealth that afforded

him property and an exclusive pool on expensive Fire Island. He was physically attractive, and the pool facilitated the visual attention of neighboring onlookers; remarking upon the openness of the property to neighbors' surveillance, Chloe complains, "Who wants to feel everyone's staring at them?" (46).[6] The pool also reflects a gay male stereotypical attitude toward sexual licentiousness, iterated by Sally's admission of fear that the pool likely contains piss, ejaculate, and other excreta from David and his "black lover" (80). These "dirty" effects of gay lovemaking – which enfolds as deviant practices golden showers, interracial sexual relations, and orgasms experienced outside their "proper" places – mark the pool as undesirable and uninhabitable by the four heterosexual characters. As David is dead, his pool serves as the specific remainder of diseased gay male sex, which is rendered as singularly terrorizing way to die from the perspectives of the heteronormative characters who feel that his specific way of living and dying threatens their "public health."

David/pool is a well-conceived sociopolitical construction because it communicates that, especially in the era of terminal AIDS in America, homosexuals and pools were readily associated as containers of potential infection, a challenge to public safety.[7] The immediacy of death that the AIDS crisis introduced to Americans exposed the inherent assumptions that homosexuals were decadent, devious, and deadly. Public

[6] The implied answer: hot people

[7] Greg Louganis's diving board head injury in the 1988 Seoul Olympics illuminates this point. Having learned of his HIV-positive status six months prior to the games, Louganis chose not to disclose the information following the accident in which his head wound bled into the diving pool. Louganis was criticized by some for keeping the information private at the feared risk of contaminating other non-positive divers. Such claims were overblown but communicate terror as the engine of extracting private knowledge underpinning "claims to truth" on behalf of public health and safety advocates.

and private expressions of this admission came from every medium and from many kinds of speakers.[8] McNally's theatrical foregrounding of these assumptions in the form of David/pool effectively queers them by taking ownership of them. As I will explain further in discussing the play's use of music and the neighbors, the pool is one method by which McNally situates front-and-center the stereotypes affixed to gay males as containers of death and reflects them back to the audience.

David/pool also emphasizes a correspondence with another space – drowned man/ocean. This relation is the way that McNally deals with specific death and universal death, tying those who have died of AIDS to those whom death takes as a general law of nature. From the beginning of the play, Sally watches a young man disrobe on the beach and swim out into the ocean, further than is advisable for his survival. In Act 3, it is revealed that the man's body has washed ashore near David's beach house. Because AIDS failed to produce a panic in most Americans' estimation in the earliest years of the epidemic, ostensibly because the disease seemed only to impact sexually active gay men, the infected were interpreted as a pathological exception, which I have demonstrated, characterized gay men as *homines sacri*.

McNally's representational mode of rendering the injustice of this presumption is to associate David/pool with drowned man/ocean. By associating David's specific death with the inevitability of death in general, McNally again situates homosexuality as a

[8] One of the most cited works of queer scholarship, Leo Bersani's 1987, "Is the Rectum a Grave?" investigates the public discourse surrounding "filthy homosexuals." Andy Warhol's candid diary entry for Thursday, September 29, 1983, registers a private expression as to how the panic around AIDS caused people to see all gay men as potentially diseased: "Cabbed downtown…to the new chic supermarket at Park Avenue and 18th Street, the Food Emporium, but a gay guy there made my sandwiches and so I couldn't eat them" (533).

category connected to death. The pondering of homosexual subjectivity in association with the subject-nullifying event of death makes serious the claims of the importance of the moment, of taking joy in the details, of the delight in ephemeral beauty that many homosexuals have espoused as practices of life and death. Both the pool and the ocean are containers of infection, McNally suggests, and the infection is one that affects us all – death in whatever form. I explore this in more detail as to the political import of associating death with homosexuality in conclusion, but, in the relation between David/pool and drowned man/ocean, I want to emphasize the fact that *Lips Together* makes apparent this dichotomy implicit in heteronormative discourse about gay men.

In the first act of the play, Sam drops a ring he has pried out of a locked box and drops it into the pool by accident. The ring remains at the bottom of the pool throughout the duration of the play until John, before admitting to the others that cancer will soon cause him to die, submerges into the pool to retrieve it. This occurs during the climax of the third act, when Sally begins the "contamination" of the four characters: she scoops pool water up and drinks it – "let's all get AIDS and die!" – then kisses her husband, while John enters the pool and splashes Chloe (81). Before he emerges, he performs a dead-man's float in the water until "SAM *grabs* JOHN *by the shoulders and lifts his head out of the pool and lets his body roll heavily onto his back on the deck.* JOHN *looks like he's dead.* SAM *turns away from him.* CHLOE *bends over his body.*" (85).[9] Theatrically, this is a technically complex moment: How to best get the actor playing John wet without

[9] Theater critic Reid Gilbert notes that this moment can be staged to great dramatic effect, recalling a Vancouver Playhouse production in which the actor playing John "exploited the effect brilliantly by holding his breath just longer than the audience expected, raising noticeable jitters in the audience that the actor was actually at risk of drowning and intensifying the symbol of the pool as a place of death, and as an intersection of the theatrical and 'real'" (482).

breaking the believability of the forestage-as-pool; similarly, how to demonstrate John as a floating body just on the surface of a liquid medium, again, without breaking the forestage-as-pool illusion; and how to ensure that the actor playing Sam is capable of lifting the dead weight of the actor playing John. Each requires challenging staging.

Moreover, its staging has to be done carefully because this moment is a performative *pietà*, which is shattered as soon as John "awakens" by spurting water into Chloe's face. Having fully committed to death *by playing with it*, taking it on as a condition of his own subjectivity because his inoperable cancer has claimed him, John plunges towards his symbolic death by drowning in the contamination pool. The character emerges with Sam's help and Chloe's concern, changed. The dramatic moment softens the perspective of what most viewers might call the most unsympathetic character due to his open racism, misogyny, and homophobia. His curse of death is rendered equivalent to David's in this kind of presentation of the totalization of death McNally seeks. It also brings forward the covalence of homosexuality and death. To be like David, John must approach death wholeheartedly and unceremoniously. To be marked as dead-yet-alive, as John has mimicked, translates him to David, drowned man, and the neighboring gay men who all are potential terminal cases.

The comic treatment McNally gives to the swimming pool is played out by the characters' repeated praise of the pool's beauty immediately followed by rationalizations as to why they will not swim. Early in Act 1, Chloe expects everyone to get into the pool but is careful never to get to close to it (6). In the afternoon of the second act, Sam exclaims, "God, I'd like to jump in that pool!" but begs off because he has recently eaten

(57). Sam again refuses to wash off sticky iced tea with which Sally has doused him during a fight, preferring a shower (61). John expresses the "Maybe later" bit when invited by Sam to dive in (80). Sam invokes food again in Act 3, connecting the idea of health/nutrition as anathema to what's going on in the pool: "I still feel that steak and baked potato and corn on the cob and strawberry shortcake with real whipped cream right here. I'd sink like a rock" (80).

The three healthy heterosexuals never get into the pool, never take the plunge toward symbolic death as John has, so the pool – its light, at least – comes to them in Act 3. The third act is bathed in the blue pool light: "*The main source of light is the pool…It is warm and muggy, a perfect night for a midnight dip*" (71). This theatrical move incorporates further the audience into the final act as witnesses and correspondents to the action occurring just before them. There are no spotlights, theater lights, or backlights – only the pale blue gel that covers all, onstage and in the audience. This move places everyone, in a sense, in the pool – underwater, contaminated, already dead. Placing his audience thus, McNally expands the queer implication that positively joins sexuality and death, emphasizing that the light of death not only encompasses the absent David, John Haddock, or the characters onstage, but takes everyone. Using the pool to express this is important because it is a direct charge that the viewing audience consider themselves all in the suspension of a new atmosphere. By pulling his audience into the place of death, McNally encourages them to consider the discursive particularity with which death is placed upon gay men though it is a condition universal to all.

If McNally's play suggests a gay male stereotype(s) as subject set in a well-known gay male community in order to locate disease and death specific to gay male subjectivity and sexuality, Joey Terrill's images assert a subject underrepresented by LGBTQ identity politics – a gay Mexican American at home, living with HIV. As in *Lips Together*, no rendering of the subject's physical being is present, but the domestic objects arranged on the tables in each still life are meant to relate the homosexual male subject to categories of specific disease and death.[10] Terrill does this by making connections between domestic space and representations of anti-retroviral medications that insist upon the gay particularity of death via HIV/AIDS yet the ordinariness of death, rendering his subject universal. Especially with the end of the epidemic AIDS era – the era of chronic maintenance of HIV on the part of patients who survived to receive anti-retroviral therapy after 1996 – the use of pharmaceutical products has sustained many lives.[11] As agents of biomedicine, HIV drugs penetrate the homes of the infected, desubjectifying them as terminally ill persons. Yet, they are subjectified by the life-providing chemistry that the medicine delivers.

---

[10] In an earlier still life, *What Is It About Today's Homos That Makes Them So Different, So Appealing?*, representations of physical bodies do appear in the margins. There, two men perform analingus on one another in a bed near the table of domestic goods. The title of the piece directly references Richard Hamilton's 1956 *Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing?*, considered by most critics to be one of the earliest representations of Pop Art.

[11] In 2010, 1 million PWAs were reported living in the United States (Vermund, Hodder, et al 149). In Africa, as of 2008, 33.4 million PWAs were reported (Sahn 1), and 20 million Africans have died of HIV/AIDS (Poku and Whiteside xvii). Infected Africans are not guaranteed survival by any means due to the fact that access to life-giving anti-retroviral therapy is not widely available, due, in part, to politically and economically motivated restrictions emplaced by institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The AIDS crisis in Africa exposes again the mechanisms of the state of exception of modern politics, which Giorgio Agamben has laid out in *Homo Sacer*. For more, in particular, about HIV-positive Africans as disposable bodies, see Didier Fassin, *When Bodies Remember*; David E. Sahn (ed.) *The Socioeconomic Dimensions of HIV/AIDS in Africa*; Melinda Cooper, *Life as Surplus*; and Ezekiel Kalipeni, Susan Craddock, et al (eds.) *HIV and AIDS in Africa: Beyond Epidemiology.*

Representing HIV medication among the daily domestic goods of contemporary American life makes commentary upon the increasingly medicalized nature of daily life and the personal desire to subject oneself to medicalization for health, especially in case of survival, despite horrifying and long-term adverse physical and psychiatric side effects. I argue below that Terrill's paintings expose several perceived inconsistencies or ambiguities that demonstrate this process of daily-life-on-the-threshold. But, here, I explain that Terrill's emphasis on the exclusivity of anti-retrovirals in the still life tradition makes plain that the particularity of a "gay male disease" via AIDS is all the same a universal condition, a way to live and die like any.

The art form "still life" linguistically and formalistically fits this notion of capturing life in the context of death, which is an artistically complex endeavor. The analysis of still lifes is challenging primarily because, as Norman Bryson has noted, they provide no narrative. The narrative line discernible in portraiture and landscape is traded for grouping, allusion, and the material resonances recognizable in the representation of domestic objects. Figuring out why the artist has chosen particular arrangements, references, and objects marks the way that still lifes incorporate the viewer as subject of those paintings. Viewers stand-in to ponder the meaning of the organization of home goods in the context of the historical tradition of still lifes' concentration on the ephemerality of life, the inevitability of death, and, above all, the ordinariness of death.[12]

The still life tradition has developed over centuries, but several common

[12] Important critical commentaries on the still life tradition and its pervasive resurgence in modernist and postmodernist art include Leo Steinberg, "Other Criteria;" Meyer Schapiro, "Cezanne's Apples;" Charles Sterling, *Still Life Painting*; Margit Rowell, *Objects of Desire*; and Bonnie Costello, *Planets on Tables*.

Fig. 1. *Still Life with Crixivan* from Joey Terrill; ONE Archive Gallery and Museum; 2012; Web; 5 Aug. 2013.

Fig. 2. *Still Life with Sustiva* from Joey Terrill; ONE Archive Gallery and Museum; 2012; Web; 5 Aug. 2013.

Fig. 3. *Still Life with Viracept* from Joey Terrill; ONE Archive Gallery and Museum; 2012; Web; 5 Aug. 2013.

Fig. 4. *Still Life with Zerit* from Joey Terrill; ONE Archive Gallery and Museum; 2012; Web; 5 Aug. 2013.

Fig. 5. *Still Life with Videx* from Joey Terrill; ONE Archive Gallery and Museum; 2012; Web; 5 Aug. 2013.

categories of objects are associated with it, which include flowers, food, time-related objects, and death-related objects. Several types of items appear consistently in each of Terrill's paintings, each corresponding to the tradition. First, all of the arranged objects rest upon a *serape* tablecloth, which is not realistically rendered, but its rounded or squared shape resembles a table. Each image incorporates flowers – either roses or tulips. Fruits and vegetables are always represented; some are crudely painted, while others are realistic, and some appear as allusions to previous Pop work (Warhol's banana in *Viracept* and Wesselmann's corn cob in *Zerit*, for instance).

Typical to Pop art is the inclusion of brand name foods whose packaging reflects what Sara Doris calls a "preoccupation with obsolescence" (9). Terrill continues this trend, featuring glass Coca-Cola bottles, a bag of Merita sliced bread with a retro diamond-patterned design, and a can of Del Monte Tropical Fruit Salad in outdated packaging, among other references. Allusions to Mexican or Chicano foods are also consistent, in the forms of a partially concealed box of Ibarra *chocolate para mesa* tablets to the corner of a de la Rosa box of *mazapans*, to sets of *pans dulces* included in two of the paintings. Finally, in each, capsules or bottles of anti-retroviral medication appear, providing the still life its title.

I argue that the open presentation of the medications on the tables provide each painting a way to communicate the particularity of disease and death that popular representations attribute to gay male sexuality, while Terrill's inclination to insert the medications into the context of the still life tradition makes the point that HIV-positive status and gay male sexuality are also simply general conditions of life and death. The paintings emphasize the particular experience of HIV-positive subjectivity for those living after what Kane Race calls the "Protease Moment," which marked a transition between sure death for all infected persons and management of disease for some of the infected. Kane explains that, in the early years of AIDS activism, the common bond of death inspired AIDS victims and their advocates to form powerful political action communities. With the incorporation of anti-retroviral therapy, personal management eclipsed political intervention – the shift in subjectifying HIV-positive people moved from collective action in the political arena to isolated survival in the home. Terrill's art

makes use of this shift, highlighting the fact that for those PWAs who have survived the past nearly-twenty years of medical sustenance, middle-age domesticated life has been particularly difficult, having been

> put in the morbid position of romanticizing mass gay death as some sort of precondition to genuine sociality and political transformation. This is precisely the bind in which many people whose lives had been affected by the epidemic now found themselves – their aspirations lurching unsatisfactorily between a frustrating politics of identity, a nostalgic politics of community, or else bland acquiescence to an overtly commercialized normality. (Kane 116)

By situating medications as powerful symbols of subjectivity in the central zone of the personal home, Terrill's art seeks to resubjectify PWAs who maintain this awareness on a daily basis in ironic and serious ways.

Terrill attests that the still lifes emerge from his "ambivalent feelings regarding living in this era of the HIV cocktail and the industry that has flourished around the disease" ("About"). I take this comment as the reason why Terrill intermixes representations of contemporary pharmaceuticals with outdated supermarket products like Merita bread, glass 7-Up bottles, and Dole Pineapple Chunks. Earlier Pop artists incorporated found imagery from popular culture in order to represent the ways that marketers create the obsolete when they create "the new." Terrill continues this tradition by positing that the manufacture and advertising of HIV medication operates in related ways. Research and development practices fuel the processing of ever-more-effective medical commodities, advertisers solicit consumers to demand them, and they are incorporated into homes as intimate personal goods that reflect life and death choices.

That is, until the next generation of pharmaceuticals is generated and the cycle commences again.[13]

Taken together as a series, Terrill's still lifes render a visual experience of ingesting the medication as combination regimen at home. This experience for the HIV-knowledgeable viewer emphasizes the fact that, for survival, some of the drugs represented must be taken in concert with others while severe or fatal contraindications exist between others.[14] Toxicity levels for each of the represented medications include elevated risks for liver damage, pancreatitis, psychological trauma, and fatality. While taken singly or in combination, none of the medications cures takers of HIV, yet they do reduce the patient's viral load, allowing her or him to survive if a number of factors are in place including dosage amount, proper adherence to drug-taking regimens, and abstinence from risk behaviors. Drug schedules are difficult to coordinate and instructions for ingestion of one drug can contradict altogether regulations for other medications in the cocktail.[15] Included in all of the vigor expected from adherents to anti-retroviral therapy, PWAs must understand that, even if they take all precautions and follow therapy strenuously, the threat of serious organ damage, neurological and psychiatric adverse events, and death is never obviated.

---

[13] Tablets of Videx, for instance, as one is depicted in Terrill's 1999 painting, are no longer prescribed due to adverse gastrointestinal effects; an enteric-coated capsule is now prescribed. In addition, Crixivan, depicted in Terrill's 1997 still life, is no longer in wide use due to its complicated dosage demands.

[14] For example, for maximum efficacy, Zerit must be taken in combination with other anti-retroviral drugs, but if it is used in combination with Videx, fatal side effects can develop ("Zerit® (stavudine)").

[15] For instance, Crixivan must be taken three times a day without food (which is usually eaten three times a day). Videx must not be taken with food, while Viracept must be taken with food.

These are specific conditions for PWAs that Terrill's still lifes posit as a nod toward the particularity of death ascribed to homosexual men. By incorporating the medications into still life tradition, he uses them rhetorically in place of conventional *memento mori* of hourglass, skull, snuffed candle, or overturned cup. This relates his Chicano gay male HIV-positive subject as a universal subject. With that insistence, the still lifes productively associate homosexuality to death, universalizing the particular. I move now to demonstrate how the play's and paintings' concentration upon the domestic medical works to convey open queer relations to health and death in the context of the buttoned-up, regulatory heteronormative approach to the same topics. In displaying these relations, I move further to make the argument as to how McNally and Terrill use the queer domestic category as a politically productive way to relate homosexuality to death.

4: Vanity of Vanities, All is Vanity: Approaching the Medical Domestic

The domestic medical category I explore in this section centers upon a medicine cabinet in *Lips Together* and the anti-retrovirals scattered on Terrill's tables. Through these spaces and items, the texts circulate a larger, conceptual discourse that situates gay male sexuality as an open category as opposed to heterosexuality as a closed approach to living and dying. The setting of McNally's play illustrates this dichotomous conceptual approach. Setting descriptions indicate the deliberate "openness" of David's house. The deck fills the entire stage, open to the sky and neighbors' glares:

> sliding glass-screen doors in the center of the house open onto the cooking/dining area. People inside the house can be seen as they prepare a meal, eat, make a phone call, etc., even though the parts of the play we can actually hear and

> participate in all take place on the wooden deck outside the house itself.[16] The same goes for the bedrooms…they can be reached either from inside the house or through sliding glass-screen doors that open onto the deck. As with the cooking/dining area, people may also be seen, if not heard, when they are in their bedrooms, unless their blinds are specifically drawn.

While this description demonstrates stage-as-house, it also implies David's place as house-as-stage. The neighbors' "presence" in the house is evoked through the music played throughout the course of the play, but also is made apparent with characters' commentary about the house's close proximity to the neighbors. The house itself is shown to be available to the "public," featuring transparent doors that allow sight and sound to pierce the most functional interior space – the kitchen – as well as the bedrooms, the most intimate spaces. As a matter of relevance to the point that David's life involved the joys of the scopophilic, Sam discovers a pair of binoculars, the familiar mode of neighborhood voyeurism, early in the play (15). Indeed, when Sam rinses off nude in the half-door deckside shower, the architecture reflects a voyeuristic client base for the construction of such a facility (61-66). Because the half-door occludes only the bottom half of a human body, it suggests a male user, and one who is unashamed of exposing himself.

Overall, the heterosexual characters bemoan the proximity to their neighbors. Sam complains, "Why do these houses have to be so close together?" and when John tells him that real estate on Fire Island is pricey, Sam responds, "The first thing we're going to do if we keep this place is build a deck higher than theirs. I don't want people looking down on me" (13). Geographically, then, the beach house figures a "homosexual" domain,

[16] To substantiate my earlier claim that McNally actively incorporates a sense of audience participation related to the events depicted by his postmodern theatre, I point attention to the particular phrasing of setting description here.

queering the conception of home as an atomistic, private enclave. Since the homes of the neighbors also mimic ostensibly this open design, McNally is making a deliberate claim to the queering of domestic space as regards its accessibility to others' eyes, ears, and other body parts. This is certainly a "way of living and dying" that reformulates the traditional biopolitical construction of housing, which most normative homeowners occupy as a means to organize living in manageable, privatized units. The form*less*ness, from the characters' heteronormative perspectives, of the departure from traditional structures, marks the beach house as open for multiple uses and invites multiple interpretations for lifestyle.[17]

The home's location on Fire Island also communicates its departure from traditional structures of living and dying. Sam notes the dearth of cars and sidewalks (3) and the island's absence of movie theaters and bowling alleys (59).[18] Not only do these comments signal the population's lack of interest in civic development, but, underneath, they suggest a *privileging* of home space counter to heteronormative demand for leisure located *outside* the home. The space leaves them to wonder: When the pleasures of divertissement don't exceed the communal-domestic zones of life, why bother to leave? Chloe verbalizes what living is meant to be like here: "Swim, take a walk, read, volleyball, paint, barbecue, nap, doze, eat, drink, laze, nothing" (4). Later, she adds to the catalogue by addressing her husband: "Get out the whips and chains – handcuff me to the

[17] But it also hides unquestionably the wealth necessary to accumulate access to such a lavish and open space.

[18] Chloe also bemoans the lack of a microwave oven, suggesting the culinary aversion to convenience foods reflective of the home's previous occupants (12). Later, in what seems to be another social class marker, she notices that they don't have any Smirnoff: all she can find are "Stoly and Absolut," which are more expensive brands (24).

bed – let me take a dildo to you and you see what it feels like….Honey, this is Fire Island, not Palm Beach" (32-33).

But the quality of the sexual activities taking place at the beach house this summer remains prudent. Instead, the domestic zone has paralyzed most of the characters by its deliberate avoidance of providing private structures safe and comfortable for heterosexuals. As one example, Sam reveals a panic organized around the bathroom medicine cabinet. In his Act 1 soliloquy, he muses, "Three days ago I was standing in front of our bathroom mirror in terror because I couldn't knot my tie" (30). He wanted to call Sally for help, but realized he couldn't because he fears that communicating any vulnerability to his wife will make her cease to love him: "How can I tell you these things and there be love?" In Act 2, when John is sent to Sam's medicine cabinet for a set of tweezers, Sam balks, "I have put some extremely personal things in there. I don't want some stranger knowing certain things about me" (67). And, in the final act, he is shocked when he witnesses John's substantial pharmaceutical intake: "I've never seen so many pills as he's got in there….From the look on his face, you'd think I caught him shooting up" (91).

Sam feels that this fear of exposure has dire consequences – his wife might leave him, his brother-in-law might find him "funny," and his perspective on John's "aggressive therapy" causes him to shudder. That McNally highlights this bathroom trope emphasizes a common social phenomenon about the bathroom medicine cabinet. It's a running joke that visitors to one's home are likely to snoop behind the mirror, inspecting medications, personal products, and brands of allegiance. These are meant to

communicate both individual difference and commonality between the home owner and the visitor. The contents tell what the man won't. That Sam has a pathological relation to medicine cabinets may seem to viewers as funny, but it's also fundamental to the heterosexual characters' relation to gay male subjectivity. As places that "nurture our phobias," Akiko Busch writes that medicine cabinets signal the biopolitical demand that we practice health to stay alive: "Today, AIDS, SARS, cruise ship viruses, and other contagious diseases seem more threatening, and there is a preoccupation with things unseen, a cultural mania for obsessive cleanliness" (138). The impact that the sight of medicine causes Americans is altogether tied up to discerning "what is wrong" with another human being.

As I have described above, Terrill's foregrounding of the anti-retroviral medications in his images provides them their meaning in the still life tradition. The most striking aspect of the paintings is that they capture domestic HIV-positive subjectivity by insisting that medication is a common daily object. It is *odd* to present medication in the way Terrill has done, out in the open, on the table, out of its packaging, but including the bottles there, too, on the kitchen table. But, *why* is it so striking? That is one aim of Terrill's still lifes: situating front-and-center the "evidence" of the domestic subject's terminal illness exposes into full view what is supposed to be kept private via heteronormative perspectives of health and safety as forms of control and regulation. Medication is intended for bathroom storage, not simply because it is from there where it is consumed typically, but because the admission of a body's ill health is considered too intimate a detail for public display in private space. Situating medication in a public

private space registers that its taker has lost some degree of control over the regulation of his or her health.[19]

The bathroom is understood as the most intimate place for a variety of reasons. The body is naked there more likely than in other rooms for the purposes of washing and preparing for day and night rituals. Waste is eliminated from the body in the bathroom. Self-estimations about the body are determined there through technological objects like scales, mirrors, and tweezers. The bathroom communicates information about the body's state of health in a way that is akin to the way that the kitchen communicates information about the body's state of nutrition. But there is fundamental distinction to be made in stating this spatial correspondence: kitchens demonstrate the degree of control that a subject chooses to express in determining what alimentation he ingests, while bathrooms express the *lack of control* that a subject has over his body.

This last point acknowledges that common bathroom objects – deodorant, soap, shampoo, Q-tips, razors, fingernail clippers, lotions, cosmetics, toilet paper, *and* medicine – are intended for the use on the body to ameliorate it. They demonstrate that something is wrong with the subject; his disgust, disapproval, or disease prompts him to improve himself. In the case of life-sustaining medication, the lack of control over one's bodily health is symbolized by the capsules he ingests. For Terrill to introduce into the kitchen the anti-retroviral pharmaceuticals, he brings an open admission that the lives of PWAs

[19] Public private display of medication is typical practice for some, though. The elderly, for instance, might place medication in public private spaces due to memory complications or the byzantine routinization that pharmaceutical regimes require. Mothers with children whose schedules also must be regulated might keep meds out for their availability. Often, as is probably a wider practice I note from personal experience, medications *do belong* out in the open to remind takers of their schedules. But, when company arrives, they are shuttled back to more private areas.

are desubjectified by the medication they must consume. In producing the still lifes that feature this admission, Terrill is able to resubjectify PWAs as those subjects who can resist the condition that compels the desire to deny illness. With irony and humor, Terrill's work provides a full admission of illness, allowing him to take the taboo of shame out of the experience of medical reliance. They instantiate the heteronormative assumption of gay male sexuality with disease confidently, acknowledging the symbolic and empirical diseased status of the gay male PWA.

In the details of the imagery, Terill conveys an open admission about gay male sexuality that produces a "queer home" because it is not supposed to acknowledge the dirty little secrets about the subject that medication communicates. Several common aspects of drug packaging are used to suggest this affirmation. He displays the most immediate (therefore important) data about the drugs prominently, which include manufacturer and storage instructions in some of the images. In *Still Life with Crixivan*, for instance, the actual drug label is painted onto an image of a white bottle. Crixivan is produced by Merck, and Terrill's wholesale inclusion of its label demonstrates what he describes as the confirmation that "the marketing and billions of dollars in profit made by the drugs' manufacturers puts these 'life-saving' medications in the same category as any consumer product in American culture" ("About"). Thus, Terrill demonstrates that Merck stands (*wants* to stand) in a superstar consumer product category equivalent to Cheerios, Dole, and Coca-Cola. This critique, especially in regards to the commodification of life-giving drugs, is how Terrill makes a statement about how PWAs are incorporated into an economy of desubjectification. Individual lives are drawn into a system that recognizes

they require medico-products to survive, which advertises and sells to them as if they are meant to use the products as they do soap, candy, fast food, and carbonated beverages.

Terrill's still lifes emphasize the ways that pharmaceuticals' manufacturer information communicates to which corporations PWAs owe their lives. And, as public commodities, Merck; Bristol Myers-Squibb; and Pfizer are, in one point of view, competitors with non-pharmaceutical goods produced by Arm & Hammer, Lipton, and Del-Monte. Their name-brands – Zerit, Videx, Crixivan, and Sustiva – represent the most expensive items in Terrill's imagery. But, they relate to other name brands as commodities. This makes the drug-taker both subject and object of medication, which is the case for anyone who ingests modern medicine to live. But, specific to PWAs is the understanding that, without the medication, they would surely die. Sustiva's online advertising slogan spells this out clearly: "Sustiva and me…we're in this together."

The general "look" of the medication bottle, as *Crixivan* and *Sustiva* demonstrate, is as familiar to most adults as are the labels of favorite food brands. They communicate an importance that contrasts with other commodities in that fine print is (as required by law) prominent. This contributes an "official" appearance to medication containers: there are only certain ways to dispense, store, and destroy such products. As opposed to the ostentation of pop culture food packaging, such injunctions signal the sense of a higher degree of regulation on the part of serious professionals who back up the consumer's use of the product. They do not radiate with bursts of colors but provide sober, white labels full of textual information. This means that they are to be taken seriously and, as seriously powerful life-saving consumables for PWAs.

Terrill plays with the concept that medical labels provide a clear-cut mode of ingestion that is rigorously followed. In *Sustiva*, he does this by incorporating a tin of amyl nitrites. Popular among gay male users in the 1970s and 1980s as "poppers," the tin warns that the Burroughs Wellcome & Co. "vaporole" should be carefully inhaled when being administered to a person experiencing angina pectoris. Despite the serious business prescribed on its packaging, poppers are/were used to intensify sexual arousal, an indication that, for as long as medicines have been prescribed for human use, they have been exploited by humans for non-prescribed purposes. Terrill's choice to scatter the Sustiva capsules, strewing them across the upper field of the image, is a suggestion of the awareness of the "popping" of popular drugs. Since the beginning of combination therapy, AIDS physicians and clinical scientists have bemoaned users' noncompliance and misuse of medications. In fact, smoking the powder from the Sustiva capsules creates an incredibly addicting high, a practice that ABC News reports has become a common trend in among young South Africans (Sciutto).[20]

Providing his viewers access to all of this medical information openly invites viewers to appreciate the HIV-subjective experience. In this way, Terrill's still lifes correspond with the spirit of *Lips Together*, to share confidently the information that relates homosexuality to disease and death. Next, I characterize the ways that these narratives about gay/death are infused with political potential signaled by this aesthetic

[20] It would be interesting to investigate the messages implicit in this type of reportage: While South African youths use the drug to subjectify themselves as pleasure-seeking drug users, media representations desubjectify them as criminals because they do not use the medication per prescription.

openness. In their approach to style, the paintings and play invigorate the queer home as a space that, because it accepts the diseased and not-yet-dead category, invites joy.

5. At Home with No Future

Both *Lips Together* and Terrill's still lifes could be characterized as stylized representations of gay male sexuality in that they insist upon domestic subjects whose approach to the serious and unsexy topic of death involves levity. McNally categorizes his play as a "tragic comedy" and, as I have explained, Terrill uses medications in ironic ways to represent gay, HIV-positive subjectivity. While neither participate in the camp politics of earlier expressions of gay male sexuality and subjectivity, they share a common style that I will explore below specific to homosexual aesthetics.[21] With McNally's use of the chorus of offstage gay male neighbors and Terrill's thematic sex-and-disease/death interplay in *Still Life with Videx*, I argue that they claim gay subjectivity as an aesthetical-ethical practice that lends itself to contemporary queer political efficacy.

This involves the texts' ability to suggest that gays take on the diseased/not-yet-dead category productively, to be, as I argue, "at home with no future." As I mentioned at the outset, this takes the charge from Lee Edelman that queers instantiate the here-and-now, the what-we've-got as the political conditions with which to do political work: "we do not intend a new politics, a better society, a brighter tomorrow, since all of these fantasies reproduce the past, through displacement, in the form of the future" (*No Future* 31). I claim now that *Lips Together* and *Videx* perform these home truths by taking on the

[21] As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, this culture of gay male style is mapped thoroughly in David Halperin's *How to Be Gay*.

diseased, disposable, not-dead-yet normative perspective as empowering, gay-positive attributes. This gay aesthetics-ethics attuned to celebrating the here-and-now conditions challenges the trussed-up qualities that normative subjects prize so highly – the varnished, preening, calculated "professionalism" most visible in life's moments that "demand" rectitude. Those offstage Fire Islanders whom the characters of *Lips Together* would characterize performing a *danse macabre* instead celebrate a *danse joyeuse* – not me! not now! – that is life-affirmative even while it is in poor taste. And, Terrill's death- and sex-soaked *Videx* effuses joy in citing the conditions that make homosexuality a celebratory condition through which to approach death, even and especially through the subjectivity of an HIV-positivity – yes, me! yes, now!

McNally employs music, which runs throughout his play, as a means to suggest the domestic omnipresence of the gay male contingency on Fire Island. They play songs from their home stereos either from left or right stages or both at the same time.[22] Each of the musical pieces played throughout – even those sung by Chloe, who appreciates musical theater as a result of her community theater hobby – has some associations for a stereotypical gay male listener of the early 1990s. Torch songs by Billie Holiday (28) and Ella Fitzgerald (71) are played as are musical theater numbers like the overture to *Gypsy* (33) along with classical compositions like Schubert's *Moments Musicales*, No. 3 (20) and operatic arias like Glück's "*Que puro ciel*" and Mozart's trio, "*Soave sia il vento*" from *Cosí fan tutte* (36).

[22] Act 3 opens as "*The Beach Boys are heard coming from one party...Ella Fitzgerald from the other*" (71).

The sounds of Joan Sutherland and Billie Holiday in the first act prompt John to call off to the neighbors, asking them to turn their stereos down. Shortly thereafter, Chloe admires the physique of one of the neighbors wearing only a bathing suit just offstage and wonders conspiratorially with Sally, "You compare that or your brother or your neighbors next door with the hi-fi to our two and you have to ask yourself something: don't straight men think we have eyes?" (32). The music is the mechanism by which the "way of life" that the Fire Island locals live is revealed. John storms off into his bedroom in this scene, and, to uphold his interests that the music be turned down, Chloe turns to ask them to turn it down, but "*the music from the house on the left is lowered before she can call over*" (34). Looking and being watched is solicited even with the use of music, a way to invite stares. For, having the music switched off before they can be asked to indicates that the four heterosexuals are being watched by the neighbors. Proximity, communal closeness, thus, is presented as part of the domestic lifestyle the neighbors prefer. The music from the hi-fi is not only meant for a singular private household but to spill over for everyone in the neighborhood, inviting the assumption that body and home, according to this lifestyle, are meant to be shared.

None of the play's characters attain anything of a transformation in regards to their estimation of the Fire Island neighbors. Chloe is sympathetic, but she is dull and only considers them the *crème-de-la-crème* because they are moneyed and physically attractive. Sally, whose relation to them should reflect some sympathy because she helped her brother, one of them, to die, never admits a positive opinion about her new neighbors. Near the end, after the 4th of July fireworks have exploded in the sky, she

admits, “I wish I had a better opinion about all this” while she watches both neighboring rooftops swarming with dancing men (90). She continues, “I was glad I never saw my brother dancing with another man, and now I never will,” which rhetorically unites the image of domestic homosexual lifestyles with death. She is glad David is dead, here, if it means that she never has to witness a family member dancing with a homosexual. She expresses the understanding common to all four characters: They, the boys next door, are the homosexuals, and only when they die can their lives be made meaningful.

Central to this perspective is the characters’ bafflement of the neighbors’ partying despite the fact that one of them drowned earlier in the afternoon and that David has recently been buried. John wonders, “I don’t know how those guys can act like nothing happened” (80). His incredulity iterates a larger question about the subject of a queer political perspective in the era of AIDS. McNally’s theatrical exploration attests, with the noisy insistence of the gay male neighbors: the concept of death is intrinsic to the category of homosexuality in the modern West. The heteronormative perspective of homosexuals is that, because they are not biologically reproductive, their deaths are final. Via this perspective, individually nullified in death, they leave only stuff. McNally adds: And noise, and music, and culture, and style.

This is illustrated in *Lips Together* in the several moments this chapter points out. But the boys with their loud music symbolize an entry point into this queer political potential of the here-and-now for which Edelman has called. Instead of only symbolizing personal death by focusing on David or Aaron, as McNally could have done and other playwrights have done successfully, he uses the neighbors as a *danse joyeuse* (or, to the

straights, a *danse macabre*) representative of the positive potential for homosexuals to signify a common fate and value in the acknowledgment of the trajectory that all living beings share.[23] As a basis for a queer political perspective, this approach gives meaning to the men who dance on the ceiling far beyond John's perspective that "those guys…act like nothing happened." They suggest the opening for a candid reframing of life and value under-explored by heteronormative perspectives. As Chloe puts it, "Thank God they still can" (98).

That joy of stylishness that the gay neighbors suggest with their "gay" music, sex in the bushes, and personal interactions with the straight characters is visibly illustrated in kind in Terrill's *Still Life with Videx*. By cutting death with sexuality, *Videx* queers the HIV-positive home, incorporating multiple categories of identity – homosexuality, *chicanidad*, HIV-positive status – and collapsing them into a sex- and death-affirmative representation of gay life. In so doing, he demonstrates that the productive use of disease and death is a way to imagine queer political potential. As a queer representation of gay male sexuality and subjectivity, Terrill's images open themselves to all peoples whose lives have been associated with the category of death – the meant-to-die or the meant-to-go-away – who yet live.[24]

---

[23] This approach is nothing new. Commenting on a faction of Florentines who faced the Black Plague with abandon in *The Decameron*, Boccaccio writes, "they believed that drinking excessively, enjoying life, going about singing and celebrating, satisfying in every way the appetites as best one could, laughing and making light of everything that happened was the best medicine for such a disease….[T]hey would often make merry in private homes, doing everything that pleased or amused them the most. This they were able to do easily, for everyone felt he was doomed to die and, as a result, abandoned his property" (8).

[24] Writing on Terrill's "political" art, Richard Rodríguez claims that Terrill's work "exemplifies the need to put the breaks on recent queer theoretical calls for 'antirelational' and 'antisocial' politics," all but citing Edelman as representative of this turn (486). As I am arguing, the

Implied by the representation of the medications involved in aggressive anti-retroviral therapy are byzantine regulations that affect all aspects of daily life as I have described above. Terrill is able to use a mode of painting by which to represent the experience of *taking* the medication. The change in proportion of the representation of the Videx tablet in this still life transmogrifies it, demonstrating its height and width as comparable in size to half of the width and height of the peanut butter jar to its right. A large chewable tablet in its earliest form, Videx 100mg was buffered with orange-flavored antacids to facilitate consumption. Still, many patients complained of its large size, reporting "undesirable gastrointestinal (GI) side effects and palatability problems" (NIH Clinical Trials). In Terrill's painting, the tablet is enormous, even casting its own shadow onto the tablecloth. This representation communicates the disagreeable size, taste, and visceral effects of chewing and processing the tablet. In so doing, it productively represents a subject who refuses to die, by taking the medication, but contributes positively to the experience of the necessity of going through the medical motions to ensure survival. This is a reclamation of subjectivity, a refusal to represent the queer as a "docile body" who simply relents to the dictates of medical science without personal commentary. It is a productive queer statement that acknowledges the

---

theoretical and critical negotiations between death and homosexuality made by Edelman subvert the too-easily applied charge that an association with death turns away from social/relational politics. In his commentary, Rodríguez raises critique leveled at Edelman, particularly by José Esteban Muñoz in *Cruising Utopia*, who argues that the proper direction for queer politics inheres to its capacity to imagine utopic futures, which is a never-realized, but precious resource for queer politics. In contrast, I argue with Edelman that queer political candor implicit to the texts I've scrutinized seeks to foment collectivity around the positive claim to death that actively resists heteronormative politics (the static modern political state in general) as a social practice opened up to anyone willing to operate within the queer category.

negotiations of health maintenance that the most vulnerable to death populations must access to survive.

The subject's daily home life is emphasized, too, through other suggestions in the painting. An association is drawn between ethnicity and religion – rendered in this image as a pair of *galletas con chochitos*, a dead mackerel, and a rosary situated in close proximity in the center of the still life. As a form of culturally recognized food, the cookies with sprinkles signify the subject's affiliation with Chicano food by ethnicity.[25] As the religious affiliation traditionally associated with Mexicans and Chicanos, the fish and rosary communicate another resonance. The rosary is more obviously a representation of Roman Catholicism, but "mackerel" has long been a stand-in for "Mary" in the phrase, "Holy mackerel!" and might also signify a sexual pun.[26] The *galletas con chochitos* have sexual iterative potential, as "chochitos," a diminutive of the Spanish-language slang word "chocha," meaning "pussy," indicates under-aged female vaginas. Such a relation communicates the operation of a before/after in terms of living with HIV/AIDS: virgins to the disease before they required Videx, they now require the medication as a necessary consumable.

Terrill's still lifes make these comical associations consistently, which is indicative of a subject-meant-to-die making some claim for the processing of his own

[25] I do not make the claim here that food always signifies an ethnic identity, especially because I've had my fair share of Mexican pastries. But, as Terrill uses much of his art to make political statements that connect his homosexuality, HIV-positive status, and ethnic affiliation, he uses stereotypically cultural foods and symbols to reflect each of these interstitial categories.
[26] See Mark Morton's *Cupboard Love: A Dictionary of Culinary Curiosities*: "Old French as *maquerel*…used to mean *pimp*, a person who peddles flesh," which developed into English with the association of pimp placed onto the fish-classification "because of the unfounded belief that every spring mackerels guide female herrings through the ocean to their mates" (186).

subjectivity. Here, it is worth noting that ethnicity and, to a lesser degree, religious affiliation, are considered by the biopolitical administration of HIV/AIDS medicine as high-risk factors. The Centers for Disease Control regularly report statistics about the "potential" for disease among ethnic populations. American Latinos and particularly African Americans are much more at risk to contract HIV than their Caucasian countrymen and -women, all the while socioeconomic factors and structural racism, which underpin such reporting, is overshadowed ("Populations"). Here, as in *Viracept* (with *pans dulces*) and *Sustiva* (with *Rompope*), Terrill makes positive use of culturally recognizable foods, which allow for a way to "see through" the statistical data that reporting institutions like the CDC overlook. Terrill's subject is an HIV-positive American, as his foodstuffs demonstrate, but he is also Chicano; these are not oppositions from his subject's perspective, they are correspondences.[27]

The same may or may not be the case in Terrill's use of Catholic iconography. In *Videx*, the rosary and mackerel allow for commentary on the fact that the Roman Catholic Church periodically issues edicts denouncing condom use despite the fact that condom use is a prevention mechanism necessary to resist HIV contraction. Only in 2010 did the Vatican suggest that the use of condoms is a "lesser evil where there was risk of HIV

[27] In *Zerit*, rather than the use of food to communicate ethnic affiliation positively, Terrill uses his own previous work as an allusion in the form of a *calendario* he produced for VIVA, an AIDS-education organization geared toward the Los Angeleno Chicano community. His bold and unique design borrowed from Jesús Huelgera's *El indo amor*, a *calendario* image familiar to many Chicanos featuring the myth of the Aztec warrior Popocatepetl holding his dying princess lover, Ixtacihuatl. In Terrill's *La historia del amor*, two male figures occupy the iconic positions above the bilingual copy, which reads, "Support your brothers with HIV." For more on Terrill's *calendario* imagery, see Tomas Ybarra-Fausto's "Grafica/Urban Iconography" and Catrióna Rueda Esquibel's "Black Velvet Fantasies: 'The' Aztec Princess in the Chicana/o Sexual Imagination" in *With Her Machete in Her Hand*.

contagion" (Hooper). Terrill incorporates this imagery to make plain the ways that public and social institutions have bearing on the lives of PWAs. Those meanings are deeply valuable, silly, ridiculous, or all at once because they reflect the personal subjectivation practices that a person living with AIDS negotiates at home, resisting the attempts to be captured as a datum of a specific, clinical population without the invitation to speak back.

Nothing is emphasized more in *Videx*'s imagery than sexuality. That sexual practices constitute the situation of living with AIDS is foregrounded in each of the still lifes by a range of resonances. The mouth is suggested by the oral medication, but in *Videx*, it takes hold more than in any of the still lifes by the duplication of concentric round shapes that frame the central vantage point of the painting. Following the path that begins with the round tablet on a left-to-right diagonal scan, appears the opened red lid of the Peter Pan Peanut Butter jar, the face of a chocolate Hostess cupcake, and a red apple at the back of the table. Down-table facing the apple above and the Videx tablet to its left rests the white golf ball. This circuit imparts a central frame, which in its larger context is itself round. The viewer's eye must focus in on this intensified ring in the same way that it would do so in watching a person ingest an oral medication, but also, in the same way that, looking at a lover's face, intending a kiss, eyes will zero in on the mouth.

Those colors that Terrill emphasizes in the image also connote sexual meaning. Red and white have long been associated with "love," its carnal and pure forms. But, they also happen to be attributes to the "humors" that are associated with modes of transmission of HIV: blood and semen (and breastmilk). The red tulips, apple, and cherry

pie filling contrast with the white vase, golf ball, and Videx tablet. The packaging of the Peter Pan Peanut Butter and Bon Ami Powder intertwine red and white lettering.

Those two consumer products and the other products that appear in the upper left field of the image collapse a range of sexual and HIV-specific messages that signify both sexual delight and disease at the same time. The "peter" of the peanut butter suggests the instrument of sexual pleasure and disease transmission. "Bon Ami" suggests that a "good friend" would be one who provides every possible service to the subject, including sexual pleasure. Bon Ami is a cleansing powder, signaling the injunction that the refusal of clean living, of protected sex, has led the subject to the disease. A dish of cherry pie corresponds with the under-aged sexuality suggested by the *galletas con chochitos*. Cherry has its signification as "the virginal hymen," which the painting suggests has been taken from the subject. His purity as a sexual subject has been compromised, by the contraction of HIV. Pie has particular reference to the body as, in slang, it is often used as any place on/in the body which another can provide oral pleasure. The naked torso of David, whose pubis is covered by the pie, signals the sexual subject's object choice.

The still life tradition allows Terrill to invite viewers to stand-in with an HIV-positive perspective in order to consider what queer aesthetics contributes to an approach to ethics. Terrill demands viewers look at domestic space as a politically charged zone for PWAs, whose daily lives are shot through with the political ambiguities that LGBT politics has abandoned. As to the development of a queer politics of the not-dead-yet subjectivity owned by Terrill's homosexual subject, Terrill's art provides the interval between where queer politics left off, back in the 1990s, and the advent of normativity as

the bland direction that neoliberal identity politics has led the LGBT community. But the still lifes also motion to where it can be recaptured. Those who figure most underrepresented categories for normative political efficacy – the dying, the non-productive, the isolated, the domestic – are seen through a narrow frame that finds them not-dead-yet. It is in the potential for reframing these subjects as queer, of owning their homosexual and future-deadness – that Terrill's art signals the potential for an alternative queer biopolitical perspective.

As I have argued, the productive relation of homosexuality to death implicit in *Lips Together* and Terrill's paintings posits an honest assessment of the queer condition that is both particular to homosexuals and universal. Relative to death, queers are non-functional biological contributors to life. Queers have bodies but bodies that contribute nothing further than themselves, rendering them negligible, or, to kinder neoliberal perspectives, ornamental – *unless* they adopt the "proper" homonormative home life so brightly projected in contemporary media representations. McNally and Terrill demonstrate that the only way for queers to be at home is to acknowledge these truths. Out on the edges of normative society because their sexual practices and artistic endeavors correspond sexual subjectivity to disease and death, queers communicate openly the common lot of humanity. While heterosexual culture (with its devotion to "life" via ceremonies that celebrate birth, reproduction, and afterlife) advises norm-maintenance as a way to simulate optimism and the deferral of a completer joy in the future, queers takes their charge from the contemporary moment with an awareness that, by doing so, the category of disease and death hanging over them damns them from

admittance to the fantastical future. Those fags in McNally's bushes and in Terrill's dining rooms share a queer secret: if the Rapture ever does come for those serious, norm-abiding, future oriented faithful, the joys of a million different moments at the price of death outrun the cost of deferring them.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This dissertation has interrogated the scripts of normativity that attach to domestic ideology, mapping the ways that queer possibilities for sociopolitical import reside in narratives that depict American homes and homemaking. In their own ways, reflective of a series of important life-moments that organize American approaches to the domestic, each chapter has conducted a project of truth-telling. This endeavor is not attuned to "getting at" a universal or grounded Truth about sexuality and subjectivity, but it does expose the artifice that many Americans espouse as ways to live, love, and die as those practices are communicated through the spatial metaphor of the home.

Narrative provides an important conduit for revealing these domestic truths. As de Certeau instructs, "everyday stories tell us what one can do," and in this context, narrative always implies the limitations and the possibilities for what can be done (122). I want to emphasize that, for this reason, all art and literature is political. This is what motivates my critical concern with the zone of the home, which has become naturalized as a heterosexual, middle-class, white, Western private space in art and literature for centuries. The trend in twenty-first century media and political discourse has tended toward the narrow frame of the normative, which highlights the stale features of the American home in myopic terms. If everyday stories have the capacity to tell us what we can do, my dissertation claims, then the rhetorical awareness to what we can do has been diminished by heteronormative attitudes and practices.

Instead, as I have described, the multiple possibilities that queer home imagines can generate alternative approaches to living, loving, and dying. These ways run counter to some of the most exalted modes of value that condition heteronormativity. Queer home denies the ready-made value attached to claims to maturity – that identity consolidation, manliness/womanliness, success, acquisition, and dominance connote the good life that adulthood confers upon its most victorious personalities. Queer home ridicules the appeal to the sappy emptiness of romance as evidence that accounts for the ways those adult lives are said to operate effectively. And, queer home resists the aversion of death as the only way to find meaning in life.

In conclusion, I note that there are a multitude of other alternatives to life, love, sex, and death that queer home imagines, which provides this dissertation the potential for further development. For instance, narratives of queer aging and group LGBT senior homes are particularly timely now that the post-Stonewall generation has advanced into elder age status. Queer neighborhoods and communities provide spatial representations of homing that expand the concept of home toward communal practices of living. Recent work by Karen Tongson and Scott Herring provide opportunities to visit narratives of regions for their particularities and similarities in sexual and social practices, relating suburban homes to rural homes, for instance. Sustainability narratives often demonstrate how patterns of waste are established and can be discarded, suggesting that modes of living can emphasize connections between queers and nature. The contemporary economic era of the bubble and bust cycle as it corresponds to queer narratives that cast negotiations of debt, foreclosure, and capital loss and gain would contribute to the larger

narrative of American late capitalism and debt as it is invested in narratives that depict queers gaining, maintaining, and losing property. Finally, the central political-domestic icon of the American twenty-first century – Occupy – provides me a larger narrative with which to interrogate how concepts of queer sexuality and subjectivity have impacted new sociopolitical movements, constructing alternative narratives of nation, citizenship, and democracy abandoned by the politics of Gay, Inc. This approach, in particular, could interrogate the most powerful political approach to occupying "home" in contemporary America.

These vectors of critical attention are possible by imagining home as a flexible category, which my dissertation has emphasized throughout. The queer homing strategies that I examine in American literature have implications for structuring subjective approaches to sexuality, domestic zones and practices, and space. It is in this direction that my hopes are fixed to the promise of queer politics to provide counter-narratives, counter-architectures, and counter-discourses as ways to respond to the ever-expanding appeals to norms in twenty-first century rhetoric as natural and inevitable modes for organizing American life.

Works Cited

1981: The Year I Became a Liar. Dir. Ricardo Trogi. Quebec: Go Films, 2009. DVD.

Abate, Michelle Ann and Kenneth Kidd, ed. *Over the Rainbow: Queer Children's and Young Adult Literature*. Ann Arbor: U Michigan P, 2011. Print.

Agamben, Giorgio. "Desubjectivity and the Effect." European Graduate School. 2009. Web. 30 July 2013. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7dGglrjNzoc>.

---. Homo Sacer: *Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1998. Print.

Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology*. Durham, NC: Duke U P, 2006. Print.

---. *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*. New York: Routledge, 2000. Print.

Ahmed, Sara and Jackie Stacey. "Introduction: Dermographies." *Thinking Through the Skin*. Ed. Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey. New York: Routledge, 2001. Print.

Albo, Mike. *Hornito: My Lie Life*. New York: Harper Collins, 2000. Print.

---. "Lost in Space." *Narratively*, 8 October 2012. Web. 22 October 2013. <http://narrative.ly/taking-it-all-off/lost-in-space/>.

Alexander, Christopher. *The Timeless Way of Building*. New York: Oxford UP, 1979. Print.

Alexander, Christopher, Sara Ishikawa, Murray Silverstein, et al. *A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction*. New York: Oxford UP, 1977. Print.

Allen, Jafari S. "Black/Queer/Diaspora at the Current Conjuncture." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*. 18.2-3 (2012): 211-48. Web. 19 September 2013.

Allison, Dorothy. *Bastard Out of Carolina*. New York: Plume, 1993. Print.

Attfield, Judy. *Wild Things: The Material Culture of Everyday Life*. New York: Oxford UP, 2000. Print.

Augé, Marc. *Non-Places: Introduction of Anthropology of Supermodernity*. Trans. John Howe. New York: Verso, 1995. Print.

Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Trans. Maria Jolas. Boston: Becon P, 1994. Print.

Bechdel, Alison. *Are You My Mother? A Comic Drama*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012. Print.

---. *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006. Print.

Beemyn, Genny and Susan Rankin. *The Lives of Transgender People.* New York: Columbia UP, 2011. Print.

Before Stonewall. Dir. Gretta Schiller. 1985. Web. 4 October 2013.

Bell , David. "All Hyped Up and No Place to Go." *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*. 1.1 (1994): 31-47. Web. 21 October 2013.

---. "Fucking Geography, Again." *Geographies of Sexualities.* Eds. Kath Browne, Jason Lim, and Gavin Brown. New York: Ashgate, 2009. Print. 81-8.

---. "Geographies of Sexual Citizenship." *Political Geography*. 8.25 (2006): 869-73. Web. 21 October 2013.

Berlant, Lauren. "The Subject of True Feelings: Pain, Privacy, and Politics." *Transformations: Thinking Through Feminism*. Ed. Sara Ahmed, Jane Kilby, Celia Lury, et al. New York: Routledge, 2000. Print.

Bersani, Leo. "Is the Rectum a Grave?" *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism.* 43 (1987): 197-222. Web. 8 July 2013.

Betsky, Aaron. *Queer Space: Architecture and Same-Sex Desire.* New York: William Morrow & Co., 1997. Print.

Bhanji, Nael. "Trans/Scriptions: Homing Desires, (Trans)sexual Citizenship and Racialized Bodies." *Transgender Migrations: The Bodies, Borders, and Politics of Transition.* Ed. Trystan T. Cotton. New York: Routledge, 2012. 157- 175. Print.

Bible: King James Version. Digital Library Production Service. Digital Collections, University of Michigan. Web. 14 February 2013.

Blumstein, Philip and Pepper Schwartz. *American Couples: Money, Work, Sex*. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1983. Print.

Boccaccio, Giovanni. *The Decameron*. New York: Vintage, 2003. Print.

Bond Stockton, Katherine. *The Queer Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century.* Durham: Duke UP, 2009. Print.

Bryson, Norman. *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1990. Print.

Busch, Akiko. *The Uncommon Life of Common Objects: Essays on Design and the Everyday*. New York: Metropolis, 2004. Print.

Butler, Judith. "Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion." *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives.* Ed. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat. Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 1997. Print. 381-95.

Caplan, David. *Questions of Possibility: Contemporary Poetry and Poetic Form*. New York: Oxford UP, 2005. Print.

Carrington, Christopher. *No Place Like Home: Relationships and Family Life Among Lesbians and Gay Men.* Chicago: U Chicago P, 2002. Web. 26 February 2013.

Cohn, D'Vera. "Love and Marriage." *Pew Research Social & Demographic Trends*. Pew Research Center. 13 February 2013. Web. 28 October 2013.

Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment.* 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2000. Web. 24 September 2013.

Cook, Matt. "Queer Domesticities." *The Domestic Space Reader.* Ed. Chiara Briganti and Kathy Mezei. Buffalo: U Toronto P, 2012. 173-79.

Coontz, Stephanie. *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap.* New York: BasicBooks, 1992. Print.

Cooper, Melinda. *Life as Surplus: Biotechnology and Capitalism in the Neoliberal Era*. Seattle: U Washington P, 2008. Print.

Cossman, Brenda. *Sexual Citizens*: *The Legal and Cultural Regulation of Sex and Belonging*. Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 2007. Print.

Costello, Bonnie. *Planets on Tables: Poetry, Still Life, and the Turning World*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2008. Print.

Crichlow, Wesley E. A. "History, (Re)Memory, Testimony, and Biomythography: Charting a Buller Man's Trinidadian Past." *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from the Antilles.* Ed. Thomas Glave. Durham: Duke UP, 2008. Print. 101-131.

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihalyi. *Finding Flow: The Psychology of Engagement with Everyday Life.* New York: BasicBooks, 1997. Print.

D'Emilio, John. "The Marriage Fight is Setting Us Back." *Against Equality: Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage.* Ed. Ryan Conrad. Lewiston, ME: Against Equality Publishing Collective. 2010. Print. 37-42.

de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life.* Trans. Timothy Tomasik. Minneaspolis: U Minnesota P, 1998. Print.

DeLanda, Manuel. "Homes: Meshwork or Hierarchy?" *Mediamatic Magazine.* 8.2-3 (1995). Web. 8 July 2013.

Doris, Sara. *Pop Art and the Contest Over American Culture.* New York: Cambridge UP, 2007. Print.

Doty, Mark. *Firebird: A Memoir.* New York: Harper Collins, 1999. Print.

Driver, Susan, ed. *Queer Youth Cultures*. New York: SUNY Press, 2008. Print.

Duggan, Lisa. *The Twilight of Equality?: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2003. Print.

Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive.* Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2004. Print.

---. "Politics, Literary Theory, and AIDS." *Displacing Homophobia: Gay Male Perspectives in Literature and Culture.* Ed. Ronald R. Butters, John M. Clum, and Michael Moon. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1989. Print. 289-305.

Elwood, Sarah. "Lesbian Living Spaces: Multiple Meanings of Home." *Journal of Lesbian Studies*. 4.1 (2000): 11-27. Web. 21 October 2013.

Eng, David L. "Out Here and Over There: Queerness and Diaspora in Asian American Studies." *Social Text*. 52-53 (1997): 31-52. Web. 24 September 2013.

Eng, David L. and Alice Y. Hom. *Q & A: Queer in Asian America*. Eds. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1998. Print.

Esquibel, Catrióna Rueda. *With Her Machete in Her Hand: Reading Chicana Lesbians.* Austin: U Texas P, 2006. Print.

Farwell, Marilyn R. *Heterosexual Plots and Lesbian Narratives*. New York: New York UP, 1996. Print.

Fassin, Didier. *When Bodies Remember: Experiences and Politics of AIDS in South Africa.* Berkeley: U California P, 2007. Print.

Feinberg, Leslie. *Stone Butch Blues*. Los Angeles: Alyson Press, 2003. Print.

Finch, Annie. "Marilyn Hacker: An Interview on Form." *American Poetry Review*. 25.3 (1996). Web. 14 March 2013.

Foucault, Michel. "An Ethics of Pleasure." *Foucault Live (Interviews, 1961-1984).* Ed. Sylvère Lotringer. Trans. Lysa Hochroth and John Johnston. New York: Semiotext(e), 1996. Print. 317-81.

---. "Friendship as a Way of Life." *Foucault Live (Interviews, 1961-1984).* Ed. Sylvère Lotringer. Trans. Lysa Hochroth and John Johnston. New York: Semiotext(e), 1996. Print. 204-5.

---. "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress." *The Foucault Reader.* Ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon, 1984. 340-72. Print.

---. "The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom: An Interview with Michel Foucault." *Philosophy and Social Criticism*. 12.2-3 (1987): 112-131. Web. 4 April 2013.

---. *The History of Sexuality, Volume 2: The Use of Pleasure*. New York: Vintage, 1990. Print.

---. *The History of Sexuality, Volume 3: The Care of the Self*. New York: Vintage, 1988. Print.

Fortier, Anne-Marie. "Making Home: Queer Migrations and Motions of Attachment." *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration.* Ed. Sarah Ahmed. New York: Berg Publishers, 2003. Print.

---. "Queer Diaspora." *The Handbook of Lesbian and Gay Studies.* Ed. Diane Richardson and Steven Seidman. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002. Print. 183-97.

Gardner, Amanda. "More U.S. Couples Living Together instead of Marrying, CDC Finds." *U.S. News and World Report*. 4 April 1013. Web. 30 April 2013.

George, Rosemary Marangoly. "Introduction." *Burning Down the House: Recycling Domesticity*. Ed. Rosemary Marangoly George. Boulder, CO: Westview P, 1998. Print.

Giddens, Anthony. *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism.* Cambridge: Polity P, 1992. Print.

Gilbert, Reid. "'That's Why I Go to the Gym': Sexual Identity and the Body of the Male Performer. *Theatre Journal*. 46.4 (1994): 477-88. Web. 19 June 2013.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness.* Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993. Print.

Glass, Ira. "46: Sissies." *This American Life*. WBEZ: Chicago Public Media. 13 December 1996. Web. 14 February 2013.

González, Rigoberto. *Butterfly Boy: Memories of a Chicano Mariposa*. Madison: U Wisconsin P, 2006. Print.

Gordon, Angus. "Turning Back: Adolescence, Narrative, and Queer Theory." *GLQ* 5.1 (1999): 1-24. Web 6 October 2012.Glave, Thomas. "Introduction: Desire Through the Archipelago." *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from the Antilles.* Ed. Thomas Glave. Durham: Duke UP, 2008. Print. 1-11.

Grant, Jaime M., Lisa A. Mottet, Justin Tanis, Jack Harrison, Jody L. Herman, and Mara Keisling. *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey.* Washington: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011. Web. 3 October 2013.

Hacker, Marilyn. *Love, Death, and the Changing of the Seasons*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1996. Print.

---. "The Sonnet." *Unauthorized Voices: Essays on Poets and Poetry, 1987-2009.* Ann Arbor: U Michigan P, 2010. Print. 128-44.

Halberstam, J. Jack. *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the End of Normal*. Boston: Beacon, 2012. Print.

---. *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgendered Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York: New York U P, 2005. Print.

Halberstam, J. Jack. "Q & A with *Gaga Feminism* Author J. Jack Halberstam and Book Giveaway." *The Queer Fat Femme Guide to Life by Bevin Branlandingham.*

Queer Fat Femme. 18 September 2012. Web. 10 October 2013. <http://queerfatfemme.com/2012/09/18/q-a-with-gaga-feminism-author-j-jack-halberstam-and-book-giveaway/>.

---, Carolyn Dinshaw, Lee Edelman, Roderick Ferguson, et al. "Queer Temporalities." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*. 13.2-3 (2007): 182.

---. *The Queer Art of Failure.* Durham: Duke UP, 2011. Print.

---. "Oh Bondage Up Yours! Female Masculinity and the Tomboy." *Sissies and Tomboys: Gender Nonconformity and Homosexual Childhood*. Ed. Matthew Rottnek. New York: New York UP, 1999. Print.

Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. 2 (1990): 222-37. Web. 24 September 2013.Gorman-Murray, "Homeboys: Uses of Home by Gay Australian Men." *Social & Cultural Geography*. 7.1 (2006): 53-69. Web. 21 October 2013.

Halperin, David. *How to Be Gay*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap P of Harvard UP, 2012. Print.

---. *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography.* New York: Oxford UP, 1995. Print.

Harvey, David. *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference.* Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996. Print.

---. *Spaces of Hope*. Berkeley: U California P, 2000. Print.

Herring, Scott. *Another Country: Queer Anti-Urbanism.* New York: New York UP, 2010. Print.

Herzog, Ricky. "Sissies, Dolls, and Dancing: Children's Literature and Gender Deviance in the Seventies." *The Lion and the Unicorn*. 33.1 (2009): 60-76. Web. 12 January 2013.

Highmore, Ben. *Ordinary Lives: Studies in the Everyday*. New York: Routledge, 2011. Print.

HIV and AIDS in Africa: Beyond Epidemiology. Ed. Ezekiel Kalipeni, Susan Craddock, Joseph R. Oppong, and Jayati Ghosh. New York: Blackwell, 2004. Print. 1-10.

Hooper, John. "Catholic Church Tries to Clear Confusion Over Condom Use." *The Guardian*. 23 November 2010. Web. 2 August 2013. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/nov/23/catholic-church-condom-use>.

Jacobson, Kristin J. *Neodomestic American Fiction*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2010. Print.

Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1991. Print.

Kincaid, James R. *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1992. Print.

King, Peter. *Private Dwelling: Contemplating the Use of Housing.* New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.

Knopp, "On the Relationship Between Queer and Feminist Geographies." *The Professional Geographer*. 59.1 (2007): 47-55.

Kumar, Krishan. "Home: The Promise and Predicament of Private Life at the End of the Twentieth Century." *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy.* Ed. Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar. Chicago: U Chicago P, 1997. Print. 204-36.

Kurdek, Lawrence A. "Adjustment to Relationships Dissolution in Gay, Lesbian, and Heterosexual Partners." *Personal Relationships*. 4 (1997): 145-61. Web. 21 February 2013.

---. "The Dissolution of Gay and Lesbian Couples." *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*. 8 (1991): 265-278. Web. 21 February 2013.

Larkin, Joan. *Housework*. New York: Out & Out Books, 1976. Print.

Lee, Zevy. "Sexing the Tomboy." *Sissies and Tomboys: Gender Nonconformity and Homosexual Childhood*. Ed. Matthew Rottnek. New York: New York UP, 1999. Print.

Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991. Print.

Lehr, Valerie. *Queer Family Values: Debunking the Myth of the Nuclear Family*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1999. Print.

Lorde, Audre. "Of Generators and Survival: Hugo Letter." *Callaloo*. 14.1 (1991): 72-82. Web. 5 October 2013.

---. *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*. Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1982. Print.

Love, Heather, Christina Crosby, Lisa Duggan, Roderick Ferguson, et al. "Queer Studies, Materialism, and Crisis: A Roundtable Discussion." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*. 18.1 (2012): 127-47. Web. 4 October 2013.

Massey, Doreen. *Space, Place, and Gender*. Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 2001. Print.

McInnes, David and Cristyn Davies. "Articulating Sissy Boy Queerness within and against Discourses of Tolerance and Pride." *Queer Youth Cultures*. Ed. Susan Driver. New York: SUNY Press, 2008. Print. 105-121.

McNally, Terrence. *Lips Together Teeth Apart*. New York: Plume, 1992. Print.

Milchman, Alan and Alan Rosenberg. "The Aesthetic and Ascetic Dimensions of an Ethics of Self-Fashioning: Nietzsche and Foucault." *Parrhesia*. 2 (2007): 44-65. Web. 16 April 2013.

Miller, Daniel. *Stuff*. Malden, MA: Polity, 2010. Print.

Morton, Mark. *Cupboard Love: A Dictionary of Culinary Curiosities.* 2nd ed. Winnipeg: Blizzard, 1996. Print.

Murray, Heather. *Not in This Family: Gays and the Meaning of Kinship in Postwar North America*. Philadelphia: U Pennsylvania P, 2010. Print.

Namaste, Viviane. "Making the Lives of Transsexual People Visible: Addressing the Politics of Social Erasure." *Sex Change, Social Change: Reflections on Identity, Institutions, and Imperialism.* Toronto: Women's P, 2005. Print.

Nehamas, Alexander. *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault*. Los Angeles: U California P, 1998. Print.

Nelson, Deborah. *Pursuing Privacy in Cold War America*. New York: Columbia UP, 2002. Print.

Neuhaus, Jessamyn. "The Way to A Man's Heart: Gender Roles, Domestic Ideology, and Cookbooks in the 1950s." *Journal of Social History*. 32.3 (1999): 529-555. Web. 13 May 2013.

NIH AIDS Clinical Trials Information Service. "Comparing Side Effects of Two Forms of Videx in HIV-Infected Adults." U.S. National Institutes of Health. January 2002. Web. 1 August 2013. <http://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/record/NCT00008489>.

Organization of American States. "IACHR Expresses Concern About Violence and Discrimination Against LGTBI Persons, Particularly Youth, in the Americas." 15 August 2013. Web. 4 October 2013. <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2013/060.asp>.

Oswald, Ramona Faith, Libby Balter Blume, and Stephen R. Marks. "Decentering Heteronormativity: A Model for Family Studies." *Sourcebook of Family Theory and Research.* Ed. Vern L. Bengtson, Alan C. Acock, Katherine R. Allen, et al. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2005. 143-54. Print.

Paras, Eric. *Foucault 2.0: Beyond Power and Knowledge.* New York: Other Press, 2006. Print.

Patton, Cindy. *Sex and Germs: The Politics of AIDS*. Boston: South End P, 1985. Print.

Phillips, Carl. *Cortège*. St. Paul: Graywolf P, 1995. Print.

Poku, Nana K. and Alan Whiteside. "Introduction: Africa's HIV/AIDS Crisis." *The Political Economy of AIDS in Africa*. Ed. Nana K. Poku and Alan Whiteside. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004. Print. xvii-xxii.

"Populations at Higher Risk for HIV: Racial and Ethnic Health Inequities." Centers for Disease Control. 25 June 2013. Web. 2 August 2013. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/newsroom/HIVFactSheets/Epidemic/Inequities.htm>.

Probyn, Elspeth. *Outside Belongings*. New York: Routledge, 1996. Print.

Quimby, Karin. "The Story of Jo: Literary Tomboys, Little Jo, and the Sexual-Textual Politics of Narrative Desire." *GLQ.* 10.1 (2003). 1-22. Web. 14 February 2013.

Rabinow, Paul. "Artificiality and Enlightenment: From Sociobiology to Biosociality." *Anthropologies of Modernity: Focuault, Governmentality, and Life Politics.* Ed. Jonathan Xavier Inda. New York: Blackwell, 2005. Print. 181-93.

Race, Kane. *Pleasure Consuming Medicine: The Queer Politics of Drugs*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2009. Print.

Reddy, Chandan C. "Home, Houses, Nonidentity: *Paris is Burning*." *Burning Down the House: Recycling Domesticity*. Ed. Rosemary Marangoly George. Boulder, CO: Westview P, 1998. Print. 355-79.

Risman, Barbara. *Families as They Really Are.* New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010. Print.Pascoe, C.J. "'Dude, You're a Fag': Adolescent Masculinity and the Fag Discourse." *Sexualities*. 8.3 (2005): 329-46. Web. 24 January 2013.

Roach, Tom. *Friendship as a Way of Life: Foucault, AIDS, and the Politics of Shared Estrangement.* Albany, NY: SUNY P, 2012. Print.

Rodríguez, Richard T. "Being and Belonging: Joey Terrill's Performance of Politics." *Biography*. 34.3 (2011): 467-91. Web. 8 July 2013.

Rose, Jacqueline. *The Case of Peter Pan, or, The Impossibility of Children's Fiction.* London: Macmillan, 1984. Print.

Rose, Nikolas. *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2007. Print.

Rottnek, Matthew, ed. *Sissies and Tomboys: Gender Nonconformity and Homosexual Childhood*. New York: New York UP, 1999. Print.

Rowell, Margit. *Objects of Desire: The Modern Still Life*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1997. Print.

Sahn, David E. "Introduction." *The Socioeconomic Dimensions of HIV/AIDS in Africa: Challenges, Opportunities, and Misconceptions.* Ed. David E. Sahn. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2010. Print. 1-11.

Satyal, Rakesh. *Blue Boy.* New York: Kensington, 2009. Print.

Schapiro, Meyer. "The Apples of Cézanne: An Essay on the Meaning of Still-life." *Modern Art: 19th & 20th Centuries, Selected Papers*. New York: George Braziller, 1978. Print.

Schor, Juliet B. *The Overspent American: Upscaling, Downshifting, and the New Consumer*. New York: Basic Books, 1998. Print.

Sciutto, Jim. "'No Turning Back': Teens Abuse HIV Drugs. *Nightline.* ABC News. 6 April 2009. Web. 2 August 2013. <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/MindMoodNews/story?id=7227982&page=1>.

Sheringham, Michael. *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present.* New York: Oxford UP, 2006. Print.

Sinfield, Alan. "Diaspora and Hybridity: Queer Identities and the Ethnicity Model." *Diaspora and Visual Culture: Representing Africans and Jews*. Ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Soja, Edward W. *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. New York: Verso, 1989. Print.

Spanbauer, Tom. *The Man Who Fell in Love with the Moon*. New York: Grove, 1991. Print.

Stacey, Judith. *In the Name of the Family: Rethinking Family Values in the Postmodern Age*. Boston: Beacon, 1996. Print.

---. *Unhitched: Love, Marriage, and Family Values from West Hollywood to Western China.* New York: New York UP, 2011. Print.

Stacey, Judith and Elizabeth Davenport. "Queer Families Quack Back." *Handbook of Lesbian and Gay Studies*. Ed. Diane Richardson and Steven Seidman. New York: Sage, 2002. 355-374. Print.

Steinberg, Leo. "Other Criteria." *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art.* New York: Oxford UP, 1972. Print. 55-91.

Sterling, Charles. *Still Life Painting: From Antiquity to the Twentieth Century*. 2nd edition. New York: Harper & Row, 1981. Print.

Stone, Sandy. "The *Empire* Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto." *The Transgender Studies Reader*. Ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle. New York: Routledge, 2006. Print. 221-35.Shah, Nayan. *Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality, and Law in the North American West.* Berkely: U California P, 2011. Print.

"Sustiva ® (efavirenz) 600 mg tablets." Bristol Myers-Squibb. 2012. Web. 5 August 2013. <http://www.sustiva.com>.Shakespeare, William. "Sonnet 73." *The Sonnets and* A Lover's Complaint. New York: Penguin, 2010. Print. 75.

Terrill, Joey. "About the Still-Life Series." *Joey Terrill, Artist*. Web 24 October 2013.

---. *Still Life with Crixivan*. 1997-98. ONE Archive Gallery and Museum. 2012. Web. 5 August 2013.

---. *Still Life with Sustiva*. 2000-01. ONE Archive Gallery and Museum. 2012. Web. 5 August 2013.

---. *Still Life with Videx*. 1999-2000. ONE Archive Gallery and Museum. 2012. Web. 5 August 2013.

---. *Still Life with Viracept*. 2003. ONE Archive Gallery and Museum. 2012. Web. 5 August 2013.

---. *Still Life with Zerit*. 2000. ONE Archive Gallery and Museum. 2012. Web. 5 August 2013.

Tinkom, Matthew. *Working Like a Homosexual: Camp, Capital, Cinema*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke UP, 2002. Print.

Tongson, Karen. *Relocations: Queer Suburban Imaginaries.* New York: New York UP, 2011. Print.

Tuan, Yi-fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience.* Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 1977. Print.

Turco, Lewis. *The Book of Forms: A Handbook of Poetics.* 3rd ed. Hanover, New Hampshire: U P New England, 2000. Print.

University of California - Berkeley. "Wedded Bliss or Blues? Scientists Link DNA to Marital Satisfaction." *ScienceDaily*. 7 October 2013. Web. 8 October 2013.

Valentine, Gill. "(Hetero)Sexing Space: Lesbian Perceptions and Experiences of Everyday Spaces." Excerpts from: *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. 11 (395-413): 1993. Published in *Space, Gender, Knowledge: Feminist Readings*. Ed Linda McDowell and Joanne P. Sharp. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997.

Vermund, Sten H., Sally L. Hodder, Jessica E. Justman, Beryl A. Koblin, Timothy D. Mastro, Kenneth H. Mayer, Darrell P. Wheeler, and Wafaa M. El-Sadr. "Addressing Research Priorities for Prevention of HIV Infection in the United States." *Clinical Infectious Diseases.* 50.3 (2010): 149-155. Web. 19 June 2013. doi: 10.1086/651485.

Walcott, Rinaldo. "Outside in Black Studies: Reading from a Queer Place in the Diaspora." *Queerly Canadian: An Introductory Reader in Sexuality Studies.* Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2012. Print. 23-34.

Warhol, Andy. "September 29, 1983." *The Andy Warhol Diaries*. Ed. Pat Hackett. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 1991. Print. 533.

Warner, Michael. “Introduction.” *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*. Ed. Michael Warner. Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 1993. Print.

Watney, Simon. “Art from the Pit: Some Reflections on Monuments, Memory and AIDS.” *Imagine Hope: AIDS and Gay Identity.* New York: Routledge, 2000. Print. 148-53.

---. “Photography and AIDS.” *The Critical Image: Essays on Contemporary Photography.* Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1990. Print. 173-92.

Weston, Kath. *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship*. New York: Columbia UP, 1991. Print.

Ybarra-Fausto, Tomas. “Grafica/Urban Iconography.” *Chicano Expressions: A New View in American Art*. Dir. Inverna Lockpez. New York: INTAR Latin American gallery. Print. 21-27.

“Zerit® (stavudine).” Bristol-Myers Squibb. December 2012. Web. 1 August 2013. <http://packageinserts.bms.com/pi/pi_zerit.pdf>.