MALE HOMOSOCIAL LANDSCAPE:
FAULKNER, WRIGHT, HEMINGWAY, AND FITZGERALD

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by
Masaya Takeuchi
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Dissertation written by
Masaya Takeuchi
B.A., Rikkyo University, 2001
M.A., Rikkyo University, 2004
Ph.D., Kent State University, 2011

Approved by

Robert Trogdon, Chair, Doctoral Dissertation Committee
Mark Bracher, Member, Doctoral Dissertation Committee
Kevin Floyd, Member, Doctoral Dissertation Committee
Elizabeth M. Smith-Pryor, Member, Doctoral Dissertation Committee
Marilyn A. Norconk, Member, Doctoral Dissertation Committee

Accepted by

Donald M. Hassler, Interim Chair, English Department
Timothy Moerland, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
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Introduction

The national ideals of the United States, such as freedom and equality, have clashed with the harsh, severe realities of racism, classism, sexism, and imperialism. The clash has been one of the largest themes for American writers who keenly detect the country’s irrationality and injustices, and who seek to investigate the anguish and suffering of its people. As literary critic Richard Chase argued in *The American Novel and Its Tradition* (1957), the origins of the American novel lie in the “contradictions” rather than the “unities and harmonies” of American culture (1).

In revealing the gap between the ideal and reality, American authors often depict the repudiation and severance of human bonds due to social restraints or cultural codes. Their novels offer various illustrations of the union, conflict, and loss of human connections. In “Come Back to the Raft Ag’in, Huck Honey!” (1948), Leslie Fiedler provided an intriguing, controversial argument that American novels such as *Huckleberry Finn* and *Moby Dick* describe “the mutual love of a white man and a colored” (667) and represent the colored man as “homoerotic lover” (668). According to Fiedler, the white American feels a “compelling anxiety” of being “alone” and an inerasable sense of “guilt” for his historical oppression of
the colored population; the two novels allow the American public to “[dream] of his acceptance at the breast he has most utterly offended” (670-71). Fiedler’s analysis throws light on the white man’s conflict between his desire for uniting with African Americans and his (as well as his ancestors’) guilt at having persecuted them. This suggests that the conflict motivates white writers to create novels and also that their novels function as a space in which white readers can fantasize about having a rapport with the black men to appease their compunction about racial discrimination. However, no matter how sincerely white men desire to reconcile with black men, racism often prevents reconciliation. In general, not only racism but also sexism, classism, nationalism, and imperialism often lead to a human’s failure to compromise with other people. In The Art of Loving (1956), Erich Fromm defined love as “the overcoming of human separateness,” as “the fulfillment of the longing for union” (30), claiming that human desire for “interpersonal fusion” is “the force which keeps the human race together, the clan, the family, society” (17). Despite, or rather because of, this fundamental desire to establish groups in accordance with social conditions, the American people have experienced the union and rupture of men between different races, sexes, classes, and nationalities. How did novelists, then, give literary expression to the pleasure and pain of human relationships while they themselves struggled with cultural and historical forces that constructed and controlled their identity and ideology?
My subject is American modernists such as William Faulkner, Richard Wright, Ernest Hemingway, and F. Scott Fitzgerald. This dissertation analyzes male homosocial systems in order to reveal how male homosocial relationships are established and transformed in accordance with impersonal historical forces that lay behind racism, World War I, and capitalism. It shows how male fictional characters struggle to construct, transform, and assert masculinity in a homosocial system while anguish over its power structure or discovering the value of life amidst despairing conditions. The concept of homosociality that I employ is based on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s theory. This theory offers an effective methodology for analyzing homoerotic tendencies in male bonds and the power of these bonds to exclude socially disadvantaged persons, such as women and homosexuals, to create and maintain a patriarchal society. In *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985), Sedgwick develops Gayle Rubin’s concept of “male traffic in women”—“the use of women as exchangeable, perhaps symbolic, property for the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men with men” (Sedgwick 25-26). Sedgwick develops it into the concept of male “homosocial” relation, identified as male bonding, which is cemented through the exchange of women between men and characterized by misogyny and homophobia.¹ Rubin, a feminist, defines “a sex/gender system” as “a set of arrangements by which the biological raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human, social intervention and satisfied in a conventional manner” (32). She goes on to criticize Claude Lévi-Strauss’ anthropological
account of marriage—the “exchange of women”—as a vehicle for constructing and reinforcing a male coalition: “The total relationship of exchange which constitutes marriage is not established between a man and a woman, where each owes and receives something, but between two groups of men, and the woman figures only as one of the objects in the exchange, not as one of the partners between whom the exchange takes place” (Lévi-Strauss 115; Rubin quoted 37; Sedgwick *Between* quoted 26). Drawing upon Rubin’s criticism of Lévi-Strauss’s understanding of the “exchange of women,” Sedgwick offers analytical tools for examining male patriarchal groupings in light of men’s misogyny and homophobia.

To parse the constitution of male bonding, Sedgwick also refers to René Girard’s concept of “the triangle of desire” in *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure* (1961). By examining European classics, including Miguel de Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*, Gustave Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*, and Stendhal’s *The Red and the Black*, Girard argues that the subject desires the object through an imitation of a model that has already desired (or is presumed to desire) the same object. Girard calls this model “the mediator of desire” (2), claiming that one’s desire is not spontaneous but rather aroused by the presence of the mediator: “A vaniteux [vain person] will desire any object so long as he is convinced that it is already desired by another person whom he admires” (7). Girard distinguishes between two types of mediation: 1) “external mediation” when “the distance is sufficient to eliminate any contact between the two spheres of possibilities of which the
mediator and the subject occupy the respective centers” and 2) “internal mediation” when “this same distance is sufficiently reduced to allow these two spheres to penetrate each other more or less profoundly” (9). Reflecting upon the decline of human reverence for the absolute ideal or God in modern Western culture, Girard contends that the triangular desire often arises from “the passionate imitation of individuals who are fundamentally our equals and whom we endow with an arbitrary prestige” because “internal mediation triumphs in a universe where the differences between men are gradually erased” (14).

The gist of Girard’s argument is that the subject’s rivalry with the mediator intensifies and augments the subject’s desire for the object. In his reading of the triangular desire, Girard demonstrates how the subject envies and hates but at the same time secretly admires and emulates the mediator and how the two rivals produce and cement their male bond while competing for the object (a woman/property/social position). Sedgwick sums up Girard’s view: “in any erotic rivalry, the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved: that the bonds of ‘rivalry’ and ‘love,’ differently as they are experienced, are equally powerful and in many senses equivalent” (Between 21).

Building upon Girard’s framework of triangular desire, Sedgwick addresses “male homosocial desire within the structural context of triangular, heterosexual desire” (Between 16). She exposes male homoeroticism—male-male intimacy and sexually charged
relationships between men—hidden in the rivalry between the desiring subject and the mediator. In hypothesizing “male homosocial desire” as “the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual,” she stresses the hypothesis as “a strategy for making generalizations about, and marking historical differences in the structure of men’s relations with other men” (Between 2). She uses the word “desire” instead of “love” to “mark the erotic emphasis” because “‘love’ is more easily used to name a particular emotion, and ‘desire’ to name a structure” (Between 2). She prefers “desire” because the term is “in a way analogous to the psychoanalytic use of ‘libido’—not for a particular affective state or emotion, but for the affective or social force, the glue, even when its manifestation is hostility or hatred or something less emotively charged, that shapes an important relationship” (Between 2). In other words, she is concerned with the “structure” or “the affective or social force” of male homosocial relationship.

Her analysis clarifies two elementary “structures” of “male homosocial desire”: 1) “the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual” and 2) the radical disruption of the visible continuum caused by homophobia (“the schism in the male-homosocial spectrum created by homophobia” [Between 201]). It shows the mechanism of male (homosocial/homosexual) bonds and violence on the border between “homosocial spectrum” and “homophobic rift” (Between 201). Although classical Greece indicated the seamless continuum between “men loving men” and “men promoting the interests of men,”
male “homophobia” as rooted in modern West culture operates to create a rupture along the continuum between emotional ties and erotic love (*Between 3-4*). As Sedgwick writes, “there is an asymmetry in our present society between, on the one hand, the relatively continuous relation of female homosocial and homosexual bonds, and, on the other hand, the radically discontinuous relation of male homosocial and homosexual bonds” (*Between 4-5*). Men’s affiliation with a homosocial institution requires “certain intense male bonds” such as “male friendship, mentorship, admiring identification, bureaucratic subordination, and heterosexual rivalry”; however, because “intense male homosocial desire” is “at once the most compulsory and the most prohibited of social bonds,” their affiliation results in “the acute manipulability, through the fear of one’s own ‘homosexuality,’ of acculturated men” and “a reservoir of potential for violence caused by the self-ignorance that this regime constitutively enforces” (*Epistemology* 185-87).

The “exchange of women” between men functions to produce, maintain, and reinforce male homosocial communion. According to Sedgwick’s understanding, “male traffic in women” serves as a device for cementing male (homoerotic) bonding and for denying male homosexuality. The bond of rivalry over a woman between two men has an undercurrent of homoeroticism; nonetheless, through the “traffic in women,” men, proving themselves as heterosexual, establish homosociality, a strong social network between men. Her study reveals, in the “traffic in women” paradigm, “the distinctive relation of the male homosocial
spectrum to the transmission of unequally distributed power” (*Between* 18)—especially heterosexual-identified men’s discrimination against women and homosexual men. It shows “a continuum, a potential structural congruence, and a (shifting) relation of meaning between male homosexual relationships and the male patriarchal relations by which women are oppressed” (*Between* 20).

In short, Sedgwick’s homosociality has contradictory structures. It is, on the one hand, a homoerotic network in which male (non-genital) homoeroticism is intensively evoked in order to strengthen the male bonds, and, on the other hand, a homophobic network in which any concomitant homosexual nuance is thoroughly excluded in order to do so. In terms of men’s dominance over women, it is a heteronormative regime in which men must incorporate women as lovers into the patriarchy through the ritual exchange of them, especially, marriage, whereas it is a misogynistic regime in which men must socially marginalize women because the ascendency of women has the potential to endanger men’s interests and privilege. Sedgwick notes that “in any male-dominated society, there is a special relationship between male homosocial (including homosexual) desire and the structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power: a relationship founded on an inherent and potentially active structural congruence” (*Between* 25).

Sedgwick’s paradigm of the politics of male homosociality has provoked enduring debates about male homoeroticism, misogyny, and homophobia within a heteronormative
environment represented in various art forms, including literature, film, TV, and painting. In this dissertation, her theory is readily applied as a critical tool for examining how the homosocial culture defines male characters’ masculinities and how men struggle with the homosocial system through punishing themselves or others. It must be noted, however, that the homosocial system is not universal or changeless but it is conditioned by the times, regions, races, and classes and has undergone historical changes. In fact, Sedgwick’s analysis in Between Men is focused chiefly on mid-eighteenth- to mid-nineteenth century English novels, and she writes that “the focus of this study on specifically English social structures, combined with the hegemonic claim for ‘universality’ that has historically been implicit in the entire discourse of European social and psychological analysis, leave the relation of my discussion to non-European cultures and people entirely unspecified, and at present, perhaps, to some extent unspecifiable” (Between 19).

My research, therefore, historicizes a variety of homosocial structures in early-twentieth-century America and Europe by investigating thoroughly historical, cultural, or biographical materials. It examines the shifting, diverse homosocial regimes represented in literary texts in the historical and cultural contexts of America and Europe from the 1900s to the 1930s. Yet I do not limit my perspective to Sedgwick’s framework; rather, building upon Sedgwick’s theory, I aim to examine male homosocial relationships in broader contexts—not only male-male relations marked by misogyny and homophobia but also those associations
whose development interlocks with historical or social forces, such as racial discrimination, war experiences, and capitalist power. Faulkner’s texts—*Light in August* (1932) and *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936)—delineate white supremacist homosociality in opposition to blacks and women in 1900-30s American South (Mississippi); Richard Wright’s *Native Son* (1940) depicts the violence of white homosociality and the impossibility of black homosociality in 1930s American North (Chicago); Hemingway’s texts—*The Sun Also Rises* (1926) and *A Farewell to Arms* (1929)—describe the tension between heterosexuality and white homosociality (among soldiers or veterans) in 1920-30s Europe; and Fitzgerald’s texts—*The Great Gatsby* (1925) and *Tender Is the Night* (1934)—portray the exclusiveness of white homosociality (among middle-class men) in 1920s New York and Europe. The examination of these diverse patterns of homosociality elucidates the structure of patriarchal societies that evoke male homoeroticism and oppress women and racial/sexual minorities, clarifying the transformation of the structure in accordance with historical and cultural conditions. My aim is to build on the extant cultural studies about the patriarchal societies in America and Europe from the 1900s to the 1930s and gender studies about men in those times, showing how and to what extent the analysis of the representation of homosociality contributes toward understanding the culture and gender of the respective times, regions, and races.

Another focus of my study is on male masochistic and sadistic acts—the punishment of themselves or other people—in the homosocial system and the inconsistencies and
conflicts represented in these acts. Connecting Sigmund Freud’s theories of sado-masochism (as outlined in “Mourning and Melancholia” [1917], “A Child Is Being Beaten” [1919], “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” [1920], and “The Economic Problem in Masochism” [1924]) to historical, cultural, or biographical contexts, I attempt to demonstrate how and why heterosexual men or male dominators in the homosocial regime are impelled to punish themselves or others (i.e., different races, women, the lower classes, and homosexuals, etc.)³ and how and why, after their masochistic or sadistic acts, they try to isolate themselves from society in the form of self-confinement or to reconstruct their historical or social relationships with others.

In doing so, I pay close attention to physical expressions such as eating, vomiting, trembling, tears, and smiling in order to throw light on inner complex emotions of male characters that usually tend to be suppressed and non-verbalized. As Milette Shamir and Jennifer Travis point out in Boys Don’t Cry?: Rethinking Narratives of Masculinity and Emotion in the U.S. (2002), “masculine emotional expressivity in literary criticism and history” has been often neglected since history began to aim at objectivity and eliminate emotions as the irrational in the nineteenth century (14).⁴ By reconsidering the role of emotional restraint or emotional release in constituting masculinity through the examination of physical expressions as well as verbal ones, I testify to how the suppression of emotions is related to the construction of dominant masculinity (e.g. Jake Barnes in The Sun Also Rises)
and how the release of sentiments has the potential to transform the existing hegemonic masculinity for social change (e.g. Bigger Thomas in *Native Son*). The control of emotions is a performance of and a condition for adult manhood. The construction of manhood depends on whether men can keep their emotions under control. However, this (unsentimental) performance of masculinity often leads to men’s loss of compassion for women and social/racial minorities or even to their violence against them. It is, therefore, crucial to focus on the scenes in which seemingly unemotional men suddenly verbalize their (repressed) feelings or display them by smiling or shedding tears, because the examination of such verbal and non-verbal expressions shows how men’s emotional expressions are socially restricted, how the suppression of their emotions sometimes causes and justifies their unjust behaviors, and how the release of their emotions allows them to revive their humanity (compassion and sympathy) and prevents them from inflicting punishment on the self or the other. Although we must fully acknowledge that the explosive release of men’s feelings can provoke their ferocious violence against socially disadvantaged persons, this dissertation (especially the analysis of *Native Son*) suggests the potentiality of men’s integration of complex emotions for constructing a less violent masculinity.

*Male Homosocial Landscape* is organized into four parts and seven chapters. The theme of Part I and II is “Race and Homosociality” and that of Part III and IV is “War / Capitalism and Homosociality.” At the theoretical level, this dissertation contributes to
developing a method of applying Sedgwick’s theory of homosociality to the analysis of (non-) patriarchal group and society within the historical and cultural contexts such as race, war, class, and capitalism. At the interpretive level, it contributes to deepening our understanding of how the homosocial system dehumanizes individuals in many aspects and how individuals attempt to resist, reform, or escape from the system by punishing themselves or others.

Chapters 1 and 2 examine Faulkner’s novels, *Light in August* and *Absalom, Absalom!*, which have a long and wide-ranging history of criticism, from new criticism, through historical, psychological, feminist, gender, and ideological criticisms, and to postcolonial criticism and whiteness studies (*The Faulkner Journal* published a special issue “Faulkner and Whiteness” in 2007). Taking these criticisms into account, I underscore white male southerners’ sense of guilt, their impulse for self-punishment, and their desire for reparation to demonstrate their struggle between acknowledgement and repudiation of southern sin—the taboo against miscegenation—in southern white homosociality. To be sure, John Duvall interprets Percy Grimm’s castration of Joe Christmas as an instance of “the homophobia of homosexual panic” (*Faulkner and Gender: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1994* 63), and Betina Entzminger claims that Henry Sutpen’s shooting of Charles Bon can be read as “a symbolic consummation of Henry’s homosexual desire or, alternatively, as an enactment of his homosexual panic” (“Passing as Miscegenation: Whiteness and Homoeroticism in Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!*” 97). In terms of white homosociality, however, critics have
not fully underlined Hightower’s metaphorical vomiting after his witnessing of Christmas’s murder or Quentin Compson’s depression and self-hatred after his reconstruction of the Sutpen story in relation to *The Sound and the Fury.* Referring to psycho-historical studies about southern intellectuals’ sense of guilt for indicting their homeland in the 1920-30s (such as Fred Hobson’s *Tell about the South* and W. J. Cash’s *The Mind of the South*), I attempt to show Faulkner’s white male characters’ acceptance and rejection of southern historical sin and their transformative identity in accordance with their acknowledgement of southern history and culture.

My analysis thus demonstrates how deeply southern prohibition against miscegenation influences the gender and sexuality of southern men living in Faulkner’s racist environment. Faulkner’s texts, *Light in August* and *Absalom, Absalom!*, deal with southern white and black men’s impulse for self-punishment in the climate of white supremacy. According to Mason Stokes, white supremacy can be understood as “a homosocial network that commodifies and appropriates the bodies of white women and black men in order to consolidate both whiteness and heterosexuality as governing ideologies” (*The Color of Sex* 18). *Light in August* portrays a white supremacist Percy Grimm’s castration and murder of a putative black man Joe Christmas and a former minister Gail Hightower’s metaphorical vomiting when he recalls Christmas’s castration. If Faulkner, as I will show, aims to observe and understand southern society through his alter ego Hightower, the writing of Christmas’s death
(Faulkner’s acknowledgement of white homosocial violence) might have aroused in Faulkner’s mind a double sense of guilt—first for belonging to a white supremacist society and second for criticizing his own culture. I assert that Hightower’s metaphorical vomiting suggests Faulkner’s struggle between acceptance and rejection of southern white guilt: the taboos against black men’s sexual approach to white women and against homosocial bonding between white and black men in order to maintain and reinforce white homosociality.

In *Absalom, Absalom!*, Quentin–Shreve’s joint imagination depicts Thomas Sutpen’s refusal to recognize Charles Bon as his son and Henry Sutpen’s shooting of Bon because of Bon’s blackness. Given Bon’s pathetic craving for his father’s acknowledgement and Henry’s homoerotic admiration for Bon’s sophisticated elegance, I attest to the way in which miscegenation taboo ruthlessly severs interracial connections or bonds, thereby cementing the white male solidarity of the postwar South. Referring to historical materials regarding southern intellectuals’ guilt and melancholia, I explore Quentin’s depression after his reconstruction of the Sutpen story, clarifying why southern white intellectuals were impelled to punish or kill themselves in the cultural climate of the 1920s South. My ultimate goal is to demonstrate that Faulkner redefined Quentin’s determined suicide in *The Sound and the Fury* as his vicarious punishment to expiate his guilt for exposing southern vice in *Absalom, Absalom!*. 
Chapter 3 focuses on the divided self of Bigger Thomas in Wright’s *Native Son*. This novel has provoked vigorous critical debate about Bigger’s violence between “apologists”: “apologists” (Jerry H. Bryant; Valerie Smith) have read it as a creative action through which Bigger achieves self-recognition and affirms his human identity, while “critics” (Alan W. France; Maria K. Mootry) have sharply attacked it for reinforcing stereotypes of African American men and exaggerating their misogyny. However, the fact that Bigger’s self is a product of complex social forces—racial oppression and cultural discourse—makes problematical any simple apology for or criticism of his violence.

Although *Native Son* tells a male-centric narrative that represses and silences the voice of a black woman Bessie Mears, we must recognize how Bigger’s identity splits into two conflicted selves, an assertive one among blacks and a submissive one in front of whites, in “a society dedicated to the doctrine of white supremacy and Negro inferiority” (Woodward *Jim Crow* 18).

My analysis of white-authored media discourses after Bigger’s arrest reveals the violent structure of white male homosociality in 1930s Chicago: fear of black male sexuality under the influence of American racist discourse and anxiety about black solidarity with the Communist Party. *Native Son* depicts white men’s power to punish a black man Bigger in order to maintain and reinforce their homosocial network. Moreover, by calling attention to Bigger’s physical expressions such as tears and faint smile (that critics have neglected), I
show that his masculinity is in the process of transformation through meditations of his feelings, and interpret his smile as an expression of his unsolved mixed feelings—anguish, guilt, isolation, and despair—and a shimmering light of hope—the reconstitution of humanity and some wish for racial equality—in the darkness of racism.

Chapters 4 and 5 are concerned to investigate the formation of homosocial groups in *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms*. The myth of Hemingway’s heterosexual masculinity has been radically modified since the publications of his novel *The Garden of Eden* (1986) and Kenneth Lynn’s and James R. Mellow’s biographies (1987). Hemingway scholarship has focused a great deal of attention on parsing and speculating about Hemingway’s attitudes to gender and sexuality, with Nancy R. Comley and Robert Scholes emphasizing Hemingway’s sympathy toward homosexuals (*Hemingway’s Genders: Reading the Hemingway Text*); Carl P. Eby examining Hemingway’s femininity and fetishism of hair (*Hemingway’s Fetishism: Psychoanalysis and the Mirror of Manhood*); Debra A. Moddelmog claiming evidence for Hemingway’s transgressive desires (*Reading Desire: In Pursuit of Ernest Hemingway*); and Richard Fantina arguing for Hemingway’s queerness in another vein, his masochist heterosexuality (*Ernest Hemingway: Machismo and Masochism*). However, such work on Hemingway’s sexuality wrestles with the basic fact that a highly macho man, married four times, with no known (genital) sexual relationships with men, is not an obvious candidate for being read as possessing a homosexual sensibility, however
defined. Even if a compelling case had been made for Hemingway’s sexuality being non-normative in some way, there would still be the major theoretical and practical difficulty of explaining why he would have used his fiction to express or describe these desires. It cannot be simply assumed that Hemingway’s novels—*The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms*—embody a straightforward transcription of the author’s psyche, sexual or otherwise. Yet there is no doubt that his texts themselves depict male anxieties and tensions around sexual and gender roles that were fairly prevalent during and after World War I. Therefore, bearing in mind Hemingway’s military experience and his streak of transgressive sexuality, I reconsider his thematization of sexuality and gender in the historical context of the First World War. His fictional characters reflect anxieties about the construction and performance of sexual and gender identities in the army, an extremely homosocial environment, and in the postwar civil society, a heterosexual landscape. My investigation emphasizes the sustained conflict between homosocial war and heterosexual desire, thereby adding to the extant scholarship the clear account of how the pressure of homosocial military experience evokes homoeroticism between soldiers and disturbs their heterosexual masculinity and how such experience continuously influences their postwar heterosexual relationship with women.

Chapters 4 and 5 thus deal with the themes of gender anxiety and tension between homosociality and heterosexuality in *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms*. *The Sun Also Rises* depicts three episodes of male bonding: Jake Barnes’ denial of his friendship with
Robert Cohn, Jake’s intimacy with Bill Gorton and Wilson Harris, and Jake’s homoerotic bond with Pedro Romero. Although the conditions for male bonding—war experience, capitalism, nationality, race, sexuality, sex—are complicatedly interrelated, the text thematizes war experience as the primary condition: the shared war experience of Jake, Bill, and Wilson enables them to intensify male bonding, and Jake’s admiration of his rival Romero’s bull fighting as a substitute for war experience encourages him to form a homosocial relationship with Romero through the exchange of Brett Ashley. In addition, the advent of commercialism after the war in Europe (especially in Paris) influences the male exchange of Brett in a way that men regard her as an exchangeable commodity through which they strengthen male bonding. Importantly, however, Brett herself makes use of male capitalist power so that she can obtain freedom from customary gender restrictions. By investigating historical studies of World War I veterans and the emerging capitalist society and biographical studies of Hemingway’s war experience and his postwar life, I provide an interpretation of *The Sun Also Rises* as a homosocial narrative that depicts the war veterans’ struggle to pursue a new hope of living through the formation of male bonding in the capitalist environment.

*A Farewell to Arms* portrays the sustained tension between homosocial war and heterosexual civil life that Frederic Henry encounters in Catherine Barkley. Surveying historical materials concerning the homosocial army in World War I, I emphasize the
undercurrent of homoeroticism in Frederic’s bonding with Rinaldi, considering why Hemingway would produce a sympathetic portrayal of Frederic, an unconsciously homoerotic man. Also, by reading Frederic’s love relationship with Catherine as a process of restoring human ties, I explore whether Frederic loves the essence of Catherine rather than her value as other men’s (Rinaldi’s) desiring object. If men love women only as the object of other men’s desire in a homosocial system, there is a possibility that Frederic, in a heterosexual landscape without men, might set his devoted affections on Catherine herself instead. Yet, the point is that their relationship even after fleeing to Switzerland is shadowed by the war (his postwar gender anxiety can be explained as a product of war-time trauma); therefore, Frederic has to experience the constant struggle between heterosexuality and homosociality even in the postwar heterosexual environment.

Chapters 6 and 7 discuss the analyses on the male characters’ attempt to constitute and restore homosocial bonding in pursuing their heterosexual love in Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender Is the Night*. The two novels have been variously interpreted by literary critics (from new criticism to postcolonial criticism). In *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide* (1999), Lois Tyson provides a queer reading of the homoerotic relationship between Jay Gatsby and Nick Carraway in *The Great Gatsby*. By viewing the narrator Nick as “the medium of a closeted gay sensibility” (346), Tyson argues that because of “Nick’s homoerotic attraction to Gatsby,” he makes an effort to “help Gatsby rekindle his affair with
the unsuspecting Daisy” so that he can be “involved in [Gatsby]’s personal life” (350).

However, Tyson does not examine the function of capitalism to incite and promote male homosocial desire: Nick’s homosocial desire for Gatsby as a reflection of his concealed yearning for the fabulous lifestyle of the upper class despite his contempt for it; Gatsby’s homosocial desire for belonging to the bourgeoisie hidden behind his heterosexual love for Daisy as an embodiment of the class’s beauty. Referring to Thorstein B. Veblen’s *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), I show how capitalism, which enables the mobility between the social classes, continuously reconstitutes the form of male heterosexual/homoerotic desires and produces new homosocial relationships while severing conventional ties between men. I explore these male homosocial desires in the development of New York in the 1920s to illustrate the transformative structure of homosociality in the expansion of capitalism.

In the same vein, from the perspective of the interrelation between capitalism and homosocial desire, I reconsider how Dick Diver’s friendship with Franz Gregory is supported and developed by Dick’s heterosexual relationship with Nicole Warren in *Tender Is the Night*. Dick’s initial interest in Nicole emanates from his scholarly inquiry into her insanity, and as a doctor (husband/father), he aims for a scholarly achievement through his treatment of her mental instability. However, his homosocial exploration of psychic disease is radically disturbed by not only her insanity that originates from the sexual abuse by her father but also
her beauty that her wealth increasingly enhances. Considering Dick’s gender anxiety in relation to Nicole’s economic masculinity (her wealth and beauty, which like capitalism manipulate male feelings), I interpret his heterosexual love as homosocial desire for a scholarly world. Yet, his ambition to become a leading psychiatrist in Europe is partially thwarted by Nicole’s attractiveness, which embodies the expanding momentum of capitalism that entices and controls male desire for wealth and social ascendancy. My reading offers a new interpretation of Dick’s self-reclusion from society in the novel’s last scene as the outcome of his determination to separate from Nicole rather than that of his decline and dissipation. By analyzing Dick’s intentional performance that arouses Nicole’s hatred for him, I interpret his self-reclusion as his submission to living in the countryside while withdrawing from the capitalist society. Building upon these interpretations, I shed light on the conflict between Dick’s scholarly life and his heterosexual love to reveal his gender anxiety in the ever-developing capitalist society.

My reconsideration of masculinity in a homosocial landscape offers an insight into the complexity of male (often-suppressed) minds—the sense of guilt and loss and the hope for solidarity—clarifying how complicatedly and inconsistently inner conflicts determine masculine behaviors. My study largely demonstrates the following four points: 1) the homosocial system encourages both men and women to internalize the dominant patriarchal ideology through which the system is maintained and reinforced; 2) men suffer an inner
conflict between the internalized ideology and their conscience even as they are forced to keep their emotions in check; 3) such conflict and restraint produce disruptive masculinities that exist between masochism and sadism; and 4) through punishing the self or the other, an individual asserts a masochistic/sadistic masculinity, and then, sometimes (like Bigger Thomas) undergoes a transformation of his masculinity from one that is apathetic and impulsive to one that is compassionate and tolerant in response to the shift in his worldview or in relation to history and culture. My analysis of literary texts from the perspective of sadomasochism in the homosocial system reveals how profoundly literature describes the agony and hope of male characters living in a specific ideological time and culture.

My study contributes, on one hand, to the sociological examination of homosocial systems in America from the 1900s to the 1930s, and on the other hand, to the literary analysis of the complex interiors inscribed in individual masculinities in these systems. This dissertation is a record of the compromise and friction between literary studies and sociology. Insofar as individuals live in a particular time and society and literary texts deeply and elegantly inscribe their lives as the background to an idiosyncratic cultural landscape, my research shows the rich possibility of an interdisciplinary approach to literary texts.

Notes


3. In Manhood in America, Michael S. Kimmel identifies “exclusion,” projecting negative feelings onto others, as a way for American men to secure manhood, “the Self-Made Man”: “a model of manhood that derives identity entirely from a man’s activities in the public sphere, measured by accumulated wealth and status, by geographic and social mobility” (13). Placing the construction of masculinity in the context of American history and popular culture, Kimmel shows how the cultural definition of manhood has changed over time and how cultural prescriptions about the meaning of manhood were bounded up with social and cultural forces.

4. In An Emotional History of the United States, however, Peter N. Stearns and Jan Lewis insist that although emotions used to be rarely examined as a significant theme in historical inquiry, many historians began to make analytical researches on emotions history in the early 1980s (3-4). In Worlds of Friendship, Robert R. Bell, a sociologist, points out the necessity of American men to do something and hide interior in public: “A major value in the American masculine world is to do—to be active and get things done. To do means to perform outward, to move into the world outside oneself. The measure of masculinity comes to be what can be shown and what others can see. The training of males to be doers is often at the cost of emotions and feelings. Males are taught that their feelings are to be controlled, channeled, or repressed. Even things that are discussed among men are often treated as if they are ‘out there.’ The few subjects that may be personal tend to be shaped as abstract
general questions” (79). For a comprehensive investigation of the diversity of friendship between men in America, see Geoffrey L. Greif’s *Buddy System*. Greif uses the four, overlapping categories—Buddy System—of must, trust, rust, and just friends in order to probe into the complexity of male friendships.

5. Although we cannot regard Quentin in *Absalom, Absalom!* and Quentin in *The Sound and the Fury* as an identical character in all aspects, I assume that Quentin’s experiences in the latter fiction to reinforce his commitment to the Sutpen story and that without them his depression and self-hatred after his retelling of the story would be lessened. For Faulkner’s affirmation of the connection between the two novels, see note 3 of chapter 2 in this dissertation.

6. For a brilliant elaboration of male intimacy in the First World War, see Paul Fussel, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (270-309). In Part III, I refer to Fussel’s analysis in detail to examine gender construction in Hemingway’s texts. On the effect of the war on male bonds in British culture, see Sarah Cole, *Modernism, Male Friendship, and the First World War*. Cole notes that “the war produced highly visible reconfigurations of male community and attacked the physical body in terrible new ways, and these powerful features made the war seem to many contemporaries—as to today’s critics—like a transformative event in the logic of masculine intimacy” (7).
Part I: Chapter 1

Creative Writing as Self-Punishment:

Christmas’ Suicide and Hightower’s Vomiting in *Light in August*

In the summer of 1933, William Faulkner wrote “An Introduction to *The Sound and the Fury*” for a new edition. The “Introduction” reveals not only how his mind was filled with “ecstasy” while writing the novel (414) but also what creative activity signifies in the South. Faulkner argued that art “has no place in southern life” in the land “killed by the Civil War,” but it is the product of “[the artist’s] breath, blood, flesh, all” (411), defining literature as the art into which the creator puts all his soul and heart.

Because it is *himself that the Southerner is writing about, not about his environment:* who has, figuratively speaking, taken the artist in him in one hand and his milieu in the other and thrust the one into the other like a clawing and spitting cat into a croker sack. . . . We seem to try in the simple furious breathing (or writing) span of the individual to draw a savage *indictment* of the contemporary scene or to *escape* from it into a makebelieve region of swords and magnolias and mockingbirds which perhaps never existed anywhere. . . . Anyway, each course is a matter of violent partisanship, in which *the writer unconsciously writes into every line and phrase his violent despairs and rages and frustrations* or his violent prophesies of still more violent hopes. (“Introduction” 412; emphasis mine)
The expression—thrusting the artist into his environment—suggests not just the incompatibility between the literature and the cultural barrenness of the South¹ but also Faulkner’s attitude toward writing in the first half of the 1930s. Faulkner remarked that “I seem to have tried both of the courses. I have tried to escape and I have tried to indict. After five years I look back at The Sound and the Fury and see that that was the turning point: in this book I did both at one time” (“Introduction” 412). Because the “Introduction” reflects upon Faulkner’s career as a novelist after he wrote The Sound and the Fury (1929), the southern artist refers to Faulkner himself who deepened concern about social issues and felt “despairs,” “rages,” and “frustrations” over the reality of the southern society. Indeed, Faulkner described Quentin Compson’s incestuous delusions and suicide in The Sound and the Fury, but during the 1930s he created not only a literature of “escape” but also a literature of “indictment,” focusing on social issues such as race, violence, and class. In the 1930s, Faulkner deepened concern about the southern social environment and exposed the vice of white southern culture in his works.² Light in August is representative of this literature of “indictment.”

Faulkner’s determination to indict the South must have been a struggle, even a desperate one for two reasons. First, the act of writing novels of indictment awoke his unconscious ambivalence toward his homeland. In The Mind of the South (1941), W. J. Cash claimed that the southern writers appearing after the 1920s felt an “inner uneasiness” from
the conflict between their “intense belief in and love for the Southern legend” and “their new habit of analysis and their new perceptions” (377). As we will see in the next chapter, Faulkner sublimated such complex emotions in Quentin Compson’s agonizing expressions in *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936): “I don’t. I don’t! I don’t hate it! I don’t hate it!” (303).

Second, southern writers, including Faulkner, have long been caught between literary creativity and social censorship. Bertram Wyatt-Brown’s analysis of southern “honor” as the ethic of the southern white male behavior which demands southern men to consider the disturbance of order an insult against the community shows that southern writers had to struggle with anti-intellectualism in the “honor-conscious” society. Wyatt-Brown writes: “with the exception of law and political theory, intellectuality was considered effete and pretentious, and this sentiment was to hobble Southern men of letters for most of Southern history. Writing and thinking were regarded as isolating endeavors, dangerously free of public security” (“Evolution” 993). As the southern literary researcher Fred Hobson argues, however, southern intellectuals who encountered “the accusations and misstatements of outsiders” and realized “the image of a benighted and savage South” nonetheless had a “radical need” to “explain and interpret the South” (3-4). Hobson points out that native critics, who were “preoccupied with Southern racial sin and guilt” (4), killed themselves at a high rate (e.g. W. J. Cash, Edmund Ruffin, Hinton Rowan Helper, and Clarence Cason killed themselves), suggesting that they punished themselves for criticizing the South (3-8).
Moreover, when the book’s theme is related to social criticism as in *Light in August* and *Absalom, Absalom!*, the writers were forced to confront Cash’s concept of the “savage ideal” (90): absolute loyalty to southern traditions and customs, a total repudiation of change, and the refusal of new ideas being invasions from outside. Cash contends that psychological defense mechanisms based on the southern “ideal” made the southerner who denounces the South an object of aggressive exclusion. In fact, after publishing *The Mind of the South*, Cash left the South and committed suicide in Mexico by hanging himself (Clayton 186). Critics of the South deepened their guilt with fears of opposition from their hometowns and feelings of emptiness after completing books; thus, they were often allured by a desire for self-punishment (Hobson 8).

However, we cannot directly apply such a tendency of self-destruction to Faulkner, because, as Hobson points out, great authors like Faulkner cannot be classified into one of the two main streams of the southern intellectuals: “apologists” and “critics.” It was Faulkner’s inner conflicts between the two that created his energy to write; therefore, we cannot immediately conclude that Faulkner had the same kind of desire for punishment as Cash. To put it another way, Faulkner engaged in writing novels while being torn between his homosocial bonding with the white supremacist culture and his violation of the cultural taboo through writing in the 1930s.
Yet Faulkner’s bouts of excessive drinking while writing and his hospitalization due to alcoholism after writing a novel such as *Absalom, Absalom!* seem to suggest that the act of writing aroused the urge to hurt or punish himself. Writing novels might have evoked a sense of guilt for exposing the darkness of southern history and only through an addiction to alcohol could he rid himself of his remorse. If alcoholism is a form of slow and piecemeal suicide, then Faulkner’s excessive drinking was acutely self-destructive, suggesting that the creation of novels strengthened his compulsion to punish himself for criticizing his homeland.

Takaki Hiraishi’s research corroborates Faulkner’s tendency toward self-punishment. Hiraishi argues that Faulkner could sever ties with neither his real mother nor his nursemaid Caroline Barr in his father’s cultural absence after the Civil War, but rather he prolonged these relationships and thus disliked both mothers, with the result that he had a craving for death and a tendency toward self-punishment (*Manner* 107-16). Hiraishi’s argument draws upon Lillian Smith’s description of the trauma of a southern white child from the dominant class. In *Killers of the Dream* (1949), Smith, a southern white author and a contemporary of Faulkner (both authors were born in 1897), writes that the white child loves his black wet nurse, finding pleasure in her breast milk and petting; however, as he gains self-awareness as a white southerner, he must suppress his affection for the black nurse. Nevertheless, the suppressed love he has for his nurse repeatedly returns and continuously influences his personality for a lifetime (127-34). Smith goes on to write:
Now he has achieved his stature as a white man; he has accepted the life that his whiteness conferred upon him. But he is never at ease. The powerful drives of childhood will not stay in the little stream beds his culture gullied out for them. Again and again they overflow, sweeping across him like a flood. Tenderness for his mother turns into sudden cruelty for his wife which he conceals even from himself sometimes, or betrays by lightening flashes of hatred. Sometimes he loses the shame he is trained to feel about women of other color or class and admits to himself and to others his pleasure in them. Sometimes a sweeping sadistic feeling for all women overpowers him. He feels betrayed, cheated; and he despises himself and them for a treacherous partnership in which he seems always to have been the loser since childhood.

The southern white male thus tends to be stricken with a self-hated and sadistic feeling toward women. Pointing out the self-destructive tendency (the positive acceptance of death) common in three male characters—Byron Bunch, Gail Hightower, and Joe Christmas—Hiraishi interprets their (especially Hightower’s) life and recognition as evidence of “the hotbed of Thanatos and defeatism in the postwar South,” asserting that “Faulkner himself might be bound to the Thanatos instinct for a long time, perhaps all his time since childhood” (Manner 90; translation mine). Hiraishi explores “the psychology of Faulkner’s repetition which can coexist the self-punishment tendency” in his theme and style in Light in August (Manner 106; translation mine). Referring to Julia Kristeva’s understanding of creative activity as a melancholic expression of the object loss, Hiraishi notes that Faulkner bore the loss of his loving nursemaid as an “inerasable unconscious stress,” and that he had to repeatedly release the stress of this loss by depicting white–black relationships in his novels even if he felt tortured and agonized by the act of doing so (Manner 108-11).
It seems then reasonable to assume that this latent desire to destroy or annihilate himself motivated Faulkner to write *Light in August* and at the same time made him feel the desire to punish himself as a creator. In other words, we can speculate that when the novel’s theme is related to social criticism as in *Light in August*—and Faulkner wrote the novel in the climate of the “savage ideal”—the writer felt guilt as a white southerner and a southern critic, and as a result was compelled to punish himself. The denunciation of the South might arouse in Faulkner’s mind a double sense of guilt—as a white southerner in a white supremacist society and as a southern writer who indicted the cultural climate of the South. If we reinterpret *Light in August* as an act of self-punishment, we can infer that in the scene of Joe Christmas’s death, the author punishes his character as a surrogate, and we can trace Faulkner’s sense of guilt and self-punishment in that text.

Based upon Faulkner’s desire for self-punishment in the southern psychological climate, I will first show that Faulkner’s description of the supposedly interracial union between Christmas and Joanna Burden inscribes Faulkner’s subversion of his own identity as a white southerner and his challenge against the southern rule of prohibiting racial mixing. After that, I will demonstrate that Christmas’s death is at the same time a murder based on the white community’s fantasy and a masochistic “suicide” on the part of Christmas. Christmas’s castration and murder have been variously interpreted by literary scholars. For example, the new-historicist Eric J. Sundquist argues that Christmas is a surrogate victim in
the sense that he contains “the community’s own projected desires and fears,” and that Christmas’s murder depends on “its vitiating and overwhelming a system that cannot control it” (94). From the perspective of gender, Jay Watson interprets Grimm’s castration as an attempt to “[force] gender to confirm to an emasculated body in the hope of erasing the overdone, well-nigh unbounded masculinity that body has come to signify for Jefferson” (167). In terms of whiteness studies, Chuck Jackson, placing *Light in August* as the re-imagination of whiteness “as tied to the horror of state-based violence” in modern America (194), insists that Grimm’s castration signifies “the monstrosity of the state itself as an unstoppable agent of death” (206). Although some researchers discuss Christmas’s death in the context of not only the South but also America in general, many scholars believe that his murder is caused by the fantasy or obsession of southern white community.

However, the point that critics have paid little attention to is whether or not Gail Hightower, who is beaten down by Christmas, watches Christmas’s castration and murder. The text does not reveal clearly that he witnesses it, but, to begin from the conclusion, it can be assumed that he does so, and that he metaphorically vomits at recalling Christmas’s castration the next day. What impact, then, is given to Hightower as witnessing it? Why does Hightower metaphorically vomit at recalling it? What drama is concealed behind his vomiting?
By examining the process of writing and common biographical points between Hightower and Faulkner, I will claim that the figure of Hightower, who is beaten down by Christmas and watches his castration and death, reflects Faulkner’s self-punishment and acceptance of guilt: the author is punished by Christmas, and through it he attempts to take on the burden of the southern historical sin. However, as I argue later, the text does not show that Faulkner completes his task. My ultimate goal is not merely to show Faulkner’s gesture of self-punishment, but to reveal Faulkner’s anguish and ambivalence over his native land in the inconsistency of his self-punishment.

1. Christmas and Joanna: The Visualization of Miscegenation

Christmas’s adoptive father Simon McEachern (Doc Hines) implants his twisted Calvinistic doctrines in Christmas’s mind: his hatred for mixed blood (“A walking pollution in God’s own face” [128]), the condemnation of female sexuality (“womanfilth” [129, 132]), and the sin of “lechery” (160, 201). Christmas internalizes the southern white ideology which stigmatizes the black races as filthy, sinful, and inferior. This internalization disturbs his existence because of his possible taint of black blood; it causes the disruption of his identity through a conflict between the self as the incarnation of the black sin and the self as the punisher of the sin. After he beats McEachern with a chair, he asks his lover Bobbie Allen to
go with him, but she abandons him because of his black origin (“a nigger son of a bitch” [218]). He starts on a wandering journey and his anguish over the indeterminacy of his identity deepens because he “has been convinced by his culture that he needs to know [whether he is white or part-black] in order to know who he is” (Gray 198). Indeed, he has a slight chance to accept his ambiguous origin and live as a mulatto when a white prostitute responds to the confession of his blackness after sex in a brothel near the North: “You are [a negro]? . . . I thought maybe you were just another wop or something. . . . What about it? You look all right. You ought to seen the shine I turned out just before your turn came. . . . Say, what do you think this dump is, anyhow? The Ritz hotel?” (225). However, he feels only fury in response to her words, and his facial expression scares her to death; he becomes “sick” because he “did not know until then that there were white women who would take a man with a black skin” (225). This episode conveys how deeply his mind has absorbed the southern ideology of white supremacy, for without his internalization of that ideology he would neither feel rage at the prostitute nor feel agony over his possible taint of black blood.

After travelling for fifteen years, Christmas finally settles down in a house where Joanna Burden, a white woman, has been living alone. Joanna also bears the “burden” of sin and punishment developed in connection with the concept of the black race. The Burdens, who moved from the North to the South during Reconstruction, have professed Puritanism for generations. Joanna’s father, who inherited his father’s (her grandfather’s) extreme
religious piety, takes four-year-old Joanna to the graves of the grandfather and his half-brother, who were killed by ex-slaveholder Colonel Sartoris. At the gravesite, he admonishes her: “The curse of the black race is God’s curse. But the curse of the white race is the black man who will be forever God’s chosen own because He once cursed him” (253). This childhood admonishment determines Joanna’s future because it “assigns her a place in the chain of patrilineal succession as well as in the endless chain of the doomed and damned, and so fixes the rigid pattern of her life” (Blekasten “Fathers” 133). Under the influence of Puritanism, she believes in “all the children coming forever and ever into the world, white, with the black shadow already falling upon them before they drew breath,” even hallucinating “the black shadow in the shape of cross” (253). She lives in her house alone for twenty years, until the age of 41, repressing her sexuality as a virgin according to the doctrine of Puritanism.

Faulkner repeatedly describes the southern taboo of racial mixing in the merging of and conflict between the two characters burdened with racial problems since slavery. As Sundquist writes, “By embodying [the problem of the color-line] in a character whose very physical and emotional self embodies the sexual violence of racial conflict, Faulkner made the problem painfully visible and immediate” (90). In the late spring of 1929, when Christmas slips into the house, he makes a sexual assault on Joanna, saying “I’ll show you! I’ll show the bitch!” (236). “The shift from the second-person ‘you’ to the impersonal,
contemptuous ‘bitch’ suggests that Joe here is reacting not merely to one woman but to all women” (Ruppersburg 139). His words mirror his male-centric conviction of women as submissive to men. Yet they also manifest his gender anxiety in relation to Joanna. By assaulting her, he “must feminize her, subordinate her” in order to “solidify himself as ‘masculine,’” but “her masculinity forces Joe Christmas to acknowledge, to some extent, his ‘femininity’” (Roberts 176): “It was like I was the woman and she was the man” (235). His thinking—“Now she hates me. I have taught her that, at last” (236)—shows his inverted pleasure in provoking female animosity toward him. His attempt to use violent masculinity in opposition to women stems from his misogynistic views on female goodness or kindness, which were formed by a dietitian’s sexual act and Bobbie’s betrayal. For her part, after recognizing Christmas’s black origins, Joanna bolts the door of a back porch reserved for whites and leaves open the door of the kitchen for blacks; by doing so, she suggests that she will treat Christmas as a black man inferior to her. She compels him to enact the role of a black man so that she can atone for the curse of the black race through the treatment of Joe as a black male. Yet her attempt to control him provokes his rage, and he throws the meal Joanna prepares for him at the wall.

By neglecting Joanna for four or five months after this incident, Christmas forces her to recognize her own sexual desire for him. When he revisits her house in September 1929, she recounts to him stories of her ancestors and her own past. Afterwards, she continues to
crave his body as gratification of her carnal appetite for the next two years. She develops her sexual relationship with him as a black male, steeped in the fantasy of being attacked by a black man. Christmas, for his part, indulges in the illusion of raping Joanna as a black man, that is, reproducing the sin of his parents’ miscegenation. He sneaks into the residence “as though he entered by stealth to despoil her virginity each time anew” (234); he compulsively repeats the act of tarnishing the chastity of a white woman in his inverted fantasy. Even if it is a fantasy, he desperately challenges the southern code through the theft of white female virginity as a black male.\(^7\) In other words, their sexual intercourse is “the conjunction of two people with opposite but complementary racial and sexual fantasies” (Ruppersburg 137).

The explosive sexual passion of Christmas and Joanna derives from their transgression against the southern racial taboo of miscegenation. In *Eroticism* (1957), Georges Bataille examines the erotic impulse in relation to taboo and transgression, identifying “the essence of eroticism” in “the inextricable confusion of sexual pleasure and taboo”: “the taboo never makes an appearance without suggesting sexual pleasure, nor does the pleasure without evoking the taboo” (108). In the act of “violating” the taboo, Bataille argues, men “feel the anguish of mind without which the taboo could not exist: that is the experience of sin” (38). If “crime leads a man to the greatest sensual satisfactions, the fulfillment of the most powerful desires” (Bataille 169), Joanna and Christmas, by “violating” the miscegenation taboo, gain “the greatest sensual satisfactions” while sharing the “sin” of the transgression.
Joanna experiences the return of her repressed sexual desire, which reproduces and reinforces the inherited curse of the black race through “damning herself forever to the hell of her forefathers” and “living not alone in sin but in filth” (258). Her prayer to God—“Dear God, let me be damned a little longer, a little while” (264)—suggests her clear recognition of depravity and her concealed pleasure in committing the “sin” of rebellion against God.

For Faulkner, his depiction of the southern white taboo of racial mixing must have been fascinating because of its taboo violation, but it must have also been risky because of its subversion of his southern white ideology and its provocation of the white society in the climate of the “savage ideal.” Joanna later demands that Joe go to “a nigger college” and become “a nigger lawyer” (276); however, Joe, who internalizes the white supremacy ideology, repudiates her demands. Both of them harbor murderous intent, which leads to a blow-out in which Christmas kills Joanna. Faulkner portrays the state of racial discrimination after slavery through the two characters and indicts the historical forces of the taboo against miscegenation through the description of the development and collapse of their perverted love relationship.

2. Christmas’s “Suicide”: Self-Punishment and Masochism
In Chapter 19, Christmas escapes in the center of the square in Jefferson on the way to the courthouse to be sentenced to life in prison by a special grand jury. Percy Grimm, a patriot and a white supremacist, pursues him. His confident tracking and excessive violent response are based on what Bertram Wyatt-Brown calls “honor,” the code of the southern white male behavior, which demands southern men to consider the disturbance of order an insult against the community and to avenge such an insult immediately. His expression, “Has every preacher and old maid in Jefferson taken their pants down to the yellowbellied son of a bitch?” (464), just before his shooting of Christmas, is a response of “the homophobia of homosexual panic” (Duvall 63). It signifies the interaction of white male homophobia with racial division in Faulkner’s South. Grimm, projecting his anxiety about gender onto the unstable contour of Christmas’s gender, hates him. At the same time, because the suspected homosexual relationship between Christmas and a white minister Hightower may subvert the white-dominated society, he fears feeling the intimacy between the two. The homophobic elimination of Christmas leads to the restoration of the order and stability of the racist society. It strengthens the white homosocial bond relegating black males to a racially and socially inferior position.

Furthermore, Grimm’s remark, “Now you’ll let white women alone, even in hell” (464), just after his castration of Christmas is a representation of the “rape complex” (Cash 115): the southern white men’s fears of the rape of white women by black men after
Reconstruction. Grimm allays his fear of black men’s threat to white masculinity through castration, a rite to “[transfigure] Christmas’s hypermasculinity into the docile, emasculated, asexuality of the eunuch—or of the black male slave” (Abdur-Rahman 188-89). Faulkner places Grimm extremely devoting himself to the moral discipline of the community as an agent for the embodiment of the community’s obsession. Grimm, who “acts with community approval, or at least the force of the community behind him” (Davis 172), is an embodiment of the white southern male’s communal fantasy and its faithful executor.

The communal fantasy takes his life, to be sure; however, there is a possibility that his death is sort of “suicide.” It is difficult to understand why he escapes in the middle of the square and runs into Hightower’s house because the author does not describe his inner mind; but, as examined in detail later, we can presume that he chooses Hightower’s house as a place to put an end to his life.

Here we may recall Christmas’s tendency toward “self-punishment,” as Lee Jenkins and Noel Polk have pointed out. Jenkins argues that the obsessive-compulsive disorder of characters, especially Christmas, in Light in August derives from “a disturbance in the experience of mothering, or nurturing” (212). Polk claims that Christmas, who watches the act of sexual intercourse between the dietitian and young intern, namely the primary scene between his surrogate parents, “spends the rest of his life unconsciously looking for, trying to provoke” the punishment he cannot get from her (84). It must be noted that he is a masochist
who experiences the pleasure of self-preservation by punishment. We can see it in his ecstatic expression at the moment of his adoptive father Simon McEachern’s whipping or in the two men’s beatings at a restaurant-cum-brothel.

If so, there is room for considering the possibility that a life sentence is too slow a punishment for Christmas, who has an impulse toward “self-punishment” and masochism, and he seeks to end his life by killing himself or by being killed at Hightower’s house. Sigmund Freud writes: “In order to provoke punishment from this last representative of the parents [the great parental power of Destiny], the masochist must do what is inexpedient, must act against his own interests, must ruin the prospects which open out to him in the real world and must, perhaps, destroy his own real existence” (“Masochist” 169-70); therefore, Christmas’s reckless escape can be a subjective act to challenge the “Destiny” of his blood and to “provoke” a stricter punishment. He gets a gun, not to kill his pursuers or Hightower but himself; in the end, Grimm follows him to Hightower’s house, and he gives Grimm the opportunity to kill him. His behavior seems to give the town the impression that “It was as though he had set out and made his plans to passively commit suicide” (443).

3. Christmas’s Rebellion against the Author: Hightower’s House
Running into Hightower’s house, Christmas strikes Hightower down with his manacled hands. Faulkner compares the figure to “a vengeful and furious god pronouncing a doom” (463). This comparison implies Christmas’s hatred for Hightower because as he has “religious hatred” (184) and beats down a black minister at a black church, Hightower, a servant of God, can be easily an object of his animosity, and because his grandmother’s possible introduction of Hightower as his savior in a jail (448) can arouse his rebelliousness against Hightower and strengthen his enmity. We can therefore speculate that striking Hightower down is a rebellion against God = the Minister Hightower, and that his purpose in ending his life in Hightower’s house is to show his dead body to God as a curse. His death vividly throws light on his rebellion against authorities/religion, including McEachern’s and Joanna Burden’s. His “peaceful” (464) eyes just before his death shows the ecstasy of his desired death. In exchange for his life, he establishes his identity as “a rebel against God.”

Importantly, Christmas’s rebellion against God can be read as “a rebellion against the author” himself. According to Regina K. Fadiman’s study of a manuscript of *Light in August*, “Before [Christmas’s flashback] was written, *Light in August* began with the opening passages of the present chapter 3, concerning Ga’il Hightower in his study” (194). Referring to Fadiman’s research, Joseph Blotner summarizes an updated three-page manuscript entitled “*Light in August*”:

Hightower sits in his study, writing and awaiting a familiar vision which comes at twilight: it is, as Regina K. Fadiman describes it, a “recurrent vision of the shots, shouts, galloping horses and the rush of invisible horsemen. . . .” After
supplying information on Hightower’s grandfather, his parents, and his early life, the omniscient narrator goes on, on the second page, to describe Hightower and his wife travelling on the train to Jefferson to assume his duties there as pastor, drawn not by the nature of that particular church but rather by the fact that Jefferson was the site of a wartime raid on a henhouse in which his grandfather had participated. Hightower’s obsession and the unhappiness of the pair is apparent there and on the third page, where, after their arrival in Jefferson, the account breaks off. (Manuscripts vii)

Faulkner first set Hightower as the central figure of this novel, and then he described Hightower’s attending Lena Grove’s birth and the murder of Christmas in his own house (Fadiman 194-97). In other words, Faulkner first wrote the scenes in which Hightower witnesses both the birth of a child and the tragic death of a black man, and through these experiences Hightower ponders the fates of society and human beings.

To be sure, we should not overemphasize the similarities between Hightower and Faulkner, because there are some differences such as Hightower’s position as a minister and the unstableness of his gender (Parker 83-86). However, Hightower’s childhood largely corresponds with that of Faulkner such as the fact that their nurse maids are the objects of their love since they raised them and the fact that they see their ideal egos in a grandfather / a great-grandfather rather than in a father. We can therefore argue that Faulkner began to write this novel under the guise of Hightower, and through Hightower he attempted to understand and observe southern society.

Furthermore, given that the author drew inspiration from an actual incident in which Oxford residents lynched and emasculated the black man Nelse Patton who killed a white
woman in 1908 (Blotner *Biography* 704), what has to be noticed is that he added the story of
the fugitive breaking into a house, which did not occur in the real event. Why does he make
Christmas run into Hightower’s house? Can’t we explore in that fictional event the author’s
intention to watch Christmas’s death at close hand and to ponder his death?

If we reread Christmas’s murder/suicide, keeping the above in mind, the figure of the
author punishing himself emerges.

. . . when they saw what Grimm was doing *one of the men gave a choked cry
and stumbled back into the wall and began to vomit*. “Now you’ll let white
women alone, even in hell,” he said. But the man on the floor had not
moved. . . . For a long moment he looked up at them with *peaceful and
unfathomable and unbearable eyes*. Then his face, body, all, seemed to
collapse, to fall in upon itself, and from out the slashed garments about his hips
and loins *the pent black blood* seemed to *rush* like a released breath. It seemed
to rush out of his pale body like the rush of sparks from a rising rocket; upon
that black blast the man seemed to *rise* soaring into their memories forever and
ever. (464-65; emphasis mine)

Here the author does not reveal whether or not Hightower witnessed Grimm’s castration and
the “rush” of “the pent black blood,” but he seems to do so, because, in Chapter 20, just after
he recalls Grimm’s shooting, “The one who. . . . into the kitchen where. . . . killed, who
fired the—,” namely, just when his thinking turns to the scene of castration, “it seems to him
that some ultimate *dammed flood* within him breaks and rushes away” (492; emphasis mine).

In other words, the image of the “rush” of “dammed flood” implies that the sight of the
“rush” of “blood” that was witnessed and that Hightower is recalling it. Moreover, the author
does not describe clearly whether or not Hightower actually vomits, but the possibility exists
that “one of the men” who gives “a choked cry” and “vomit[s]” is Hightower. If we consider that vomiting signifies the person’s revulsion against the cultural ideology which urges castration, the likelihood that the man is Hightower is by no means low.

Here we need to analyze the formation of Hightower’s self in his childhood in order to analyze his vomiting in relation to his sense of guilt for Christmas’s castration. There is no doubt that Hightower experiences the Oedipus complex because he takes to his weak and dying mother and dislikes his father: “He and she both lived in them [her eyes] like two small, weak beasts in a den, a cavern, into which now and then the father entered—that man who was a stranger to them both, a foreigner, almost a threat” (475). In this typical Oedipus situation, Hightower’s father can neither sever his son’s attachment to his mother nor prohibit his son’s death instinct, Thanatos, because even if he intervenes between Hightower and his mother, he has no power to separate his son from his mother and rather promotes his son’s preparation for death. Because he is an “abolitionist” (472), he has no will to infuse in his son the southern traditional white culture, which persists in the glory and racism after the Civil War. As a result, Hightower identifies as his ego-ideal his grandfather rather than his father, as he thinks that “it’s no wonder . . . that I skipped a generation. It’s no wonder that I had no father and that I had already died one night twenty years before I saw light” (478).

In considering Hightower’s identification with his grandfather, we must examine a significant role of black Cinthy “who was his mother too and nurse” (470). Doreen Fowler,
who analyzes Hightower’s Oedipus situation using Jacque Lacan’s mirror stage theory, strangely neglects the role of Cinthy (64-74). It must be noted that her old tales about the war inscribe his grandfather’s heroic image in Hightower. Recalling an anecdote about his grandfather, who was shot to death while stealing chickens, Hightower reflects:

Now this is what Cinthy told me. And I believe. I know. It’s too fine to doubt. It’s too fine, too simple, ever to have been invented by white thinking. A negro might have invented it. And if Cinthy did, I still believe. Because even fact cannot stand with it. (484)

Citing the above passages, Hiraishi keenly argues the following: Hightower makes a stereotypical judgment that black thinking lacks rationality, but that, by following such black thinking, Hightower begins to view his grandfather’s absurd action as heroic. It is the black nursemaid identifying with her white master (Hightower’s grandfather) that inculcates the glory of the master into Hightower: “His racial attitude is thus destined to be confused, reflecting his mammy’s confused identity” (Hiraishi “Mammy” 81). In his later years, he can both enthuse over his grandfather’s battle and feel an affinity with blacks. This disruption of Hightower’s attitude toward racial issues is reflected in Faulkner’s writing about Hightower’s metaphorical vomiting.

Assuming that the person who watches the castration and vomits is Hightower, we can assert the following for the time being: The author attempts to comprehend Christmas’s life through Hightower, but when Christmas beats down Hightower and is then castrated, the author is overwhelmed by Christmas’s revenge for and fury at racial discrimination and is
shocked by the representation of the ideology of racial discrimination in a white supremacist society. However, we must notice that this is also the author’s enactment. In a sense, the author “invites” Christmas of his own will, and by doing so, he intends to face up to the reality of racial discrimination. Therefore, at this time, the author tries to confront the sin of white southern society and to experience a head-on encounter with the overwhelming historical forces of racial discrimination.

The castrated and dying Christmas gazes at “them” with “peaceful and unfathomable and unbearable eyes.” Although we can make several interpretations of his eyes according to how we identify the subject who feels his eyes as such (Schreiber 78-80), we interpret them here as including the gaze of the author and Hightower. The reason for the “peaceful” eyes is that, as we have examined, Christmas establishes his identity as “a rebel against God” by committing “suicide” and gains the “peace” he has desired (112). The reason for the “unfathomable” eyes is that at the moment of his release from his distress, they look down into the depth of his anguish in his eyes, but they cannot fathom it due to its bottomless depth. Evelyn Jaffe Schreiber argues that “For the community, Joe’s gaze here—his ‘unbearable eyes’—serves as an encounter with Lacan’s real, with what cannot be represented and what is repressed” (79). Rephrasing Schreiber’s argument in the context of the southern white male’s obsession, the reason for the “unbearable” eyes is that when the “black” penis, a symbol of the “rape complex” (Cash) is cut, the darkness of history colored by the nameless and
unidentified anxiety and sin of white men appears all at once, and so they, including Hightower, cannot bear watching such anxiety and sin.

When the “black blood” “rush[es],” however, such multi-layered eyes are no longer an object of comprehension, and the actuality of Christmas’s castration and death is conflated with the image of “soaring into their memories.” Moreover, the spectacle of the “rush” of “blood” becomes a still picture in “their memories” as we see in the following quotation, and their anxiety and their historical relationship with black men which appeared disruptively at the moment of castration are suppressed again.

_They are not to lose it, in whatever peaceful valleys, beside whatever placid and reassuring streams of old age, in the mirroring faces of whatever children they will contemplate old disasters and newer hopes. It will be there, musing, quiet, steadfast, not fading and not particularly threatful, but of itself alone serene, of itself alone triumphant._ (465; emphasis mine)

James A. Snead refers to Faulkner’s ambiguous style in this scene. For example, Snead argues that as a result of using the ambiguous pronoun “they,” the subject of the memorizing the Christmas’s death can be the blacks in Jefferson, the town people, and/or the readers; and he points out the ambiguity of the subject and concludes that the act of reading results in reenacting the murder (97-99). André Bleikasten writes that, in this scene, the blood which has been mostly “a metaphor of defilement and malediction” changes into “a radiant sign of glory” and that Christmas “is reborn in death” (328-29).

Perhaps Faulkner’s writing style, which includes the concealment of white male anxiety and historical actuality, the ambiguous description of Christmas death, and the image
of rebirth and apotheosis, suggests that Faulkner averts his eyes from the southern darkness. However, there is no doubt that Faulkner was conscious of his way of writing; therefore, do we need to interpret his struggle to choose such a manner of writing in the literary style?

At the moment of imagining Christmas’s end, the author has a clear vision of southern “vice”; and, to use his words, it is the moment when “he unconsciously writes into every line and phrase his violent despairs and rages and frustrations” (“Introduction” 412). Following the code of honor in the South, he puts Christmas to death; however, his empathy for Christmas enhances and, at the same time, his agony as a guilty southerner deepens. The ambiguous pronouns and adjectives indicate his empathy and anguish. The reason why he compares the “rush” of Christmas’s “blood” to “sparks from a rising rocket” is that he actually envisions and witnesses this vehement and shocking spectacle. The pronoun “they,” referring to those who never forget the scene, refers both to Hightower and the author himself; and the author who imagines and experiences it becomes a guilty person who is not allowed to forget it. No matter how peaceful a state he tries to attain, he will watch the scene “of itself alone serene, of itself alone triumphant”; and here he gazes at his fate to live with guilt.

4. Hightower/Faulkner’s Acceptance and Rejection of Southern Guilt
However, it must be emphasized that Faulkner does not succeed in accepting the southern guilt. In Chapter 20, Hightower admits his responsibility for his wife’s death, but he still considers that the root of the responsibility lies in his grandfather who died in the Civil War. The “wheel” of his “thinking” is surrounded with “a halo”; he sees in the halo “peaceful” faces, “as though they have escaped into an apotheosis” (491). His own face is among them, and they are “composite of all the faces which he has ever seen” (491). However, only Christmas’s face is “confused,” “as though in the now peaceful throes of a more recent, a more inextricable, compositeness” (491). Namely, Christmas is, for Hightower, an existence which has not been apotheosized or an existence which has not been absorbed in Hightower. To put it in another way, Hightower has not understood and absorbed Christmas’s castration and death, and he has not shouldered his responsibility. As I demonstrated above, it can be assumed that Hightower vomits at witnessing Christmas’s castration and then at recalling it the next day.

Further, we can analyze Hightower’s vomit using Julia Kristeva’s concept of “abjection.”¹⁴ Kristeva defines the “abject” as “what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect, borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite” (4). At the pre-objectal stage, the child, who is in an imaginary union with its mother, needs to renounce the maternal body as the abject in order to become a subject. Even after that stage, one faces the abject, such as sour milk, sewage, and a corpse, but disavows it to protect
oneself through vomiting. The abjection is “ambiguous” in the sense that, on the one hand, one draws jouissance from its union with the object as seductive, but, on the other hand, one abhors and rejects the object as repugnant to protect one’s own boundary (Kristeva 1-31).

If drawing upon Kristeva’s theory mentioned above, it is possible to state that Hightower finds Christmas’s murder both alluring and repellant. On the one hand, owing to his affection for his black nursemaid, Hightower secretly develops an intimacy with the blacks; consequently, when he desires to absorb and sublimate all the experiences in the “halo,” he, feeling empathy for “black” Christmas, attempts to introvert his death as seductive. This attempt is, in other words, to accept and internalize the southern historical sin that his death revealed. On the other hand, due to his identification with his grandfather who possessed slaves and fought the war, Hightower has formed his subject as a white southerner approving of segregation. Hence, if willingly accepting and internalizing the southern guilt, he could deny his ego-ideal grandfather and allow his subject to be threatened. As a result, he rejects Christmas’s death, the southern guilt, through vomiting in order to maintain the self as a white southerner. Here we may recall Christmas’s vomiting when he witnesses the dietitian and intern having sex; and if we can consider an act of vomiting in Light in August as “the symbol of desire and rejection” on a metaphoric level, Hightower’s reaction can be interpreted as both an acknowledgement and a repudiation of Christmas’s castration and
death. If the author is behind Hightower, we can see the struggle of the author who attempts to but cannot accept the southern guilt.

After the second time Hightower vomits, he “feel[s] himself losing contact with earth, lighter and lighter, emptying, floating,” and thinks, “I am dying” (492). The “contact with earth” means not only his attending Lena’s childbirth but also his rescue of Christmas (Ruppersburg 296); however, the loss of any relationship with the world signifies that in the end he cannot bear the racial guilt and assumes his responsibility for Christmas’s death. Moreover, the text refers to his frail physical condition twice, and we can speculate that his premonition of death will prove right; in fact, the author “revised Hightower’s statement in the manuscript from ‘Maybe I am dying’ to the published ‘I am dying’ to emphasize the minister’s conviction” (Ruppersburg 296-97). It is unclear whether Hightower meets death or survives, but at least the author intends to impress on us the likelihood of Hightower’s death. Why does he do so?

Writing about racial discrimination was an indictment of the vicious and shameful southern legacy that still existed more sixty years after the Emancipation Proclamation. It was a good and correct mission as a southern writer; however, it must have aroused a sense of guilt, because it was a betrayal of bonding with his native country that had bred into him a strong faith in and affection for the southern tradition. Furthermore, the cultural climate rooted in “the savage ideal” intensified his guilt for indicting the South and compelled him to
punish himself. Therefore, does not the author emphasize Hightower’s ending in the text for this reason? By punishing himself vicariously through his double Hightower does he not attempt to abate his sense of guilt? We leave here the matter of how consciously the author does so, but in terms of the southern historical and cultural context, the punishment of Hightower can be called the author’s self-salvation.

However, in an interview, Faulkner says that Hightower “had to endure, to live . . . with the memory of his grandfather” (University 75). Hightower’s living in Faulkner’s imagination shows that the author, who faced up to the racial guilt of the South in Christmas’s death, continued to bear the sin of racism as a white southerner. It must be noted that Hightower does not completely accept his guilt, but as Hightower lives in Faulkner’s mind, the writer, struggling between acceptance and rejection of southern guilt, kept reflecting on Christmas’s death.

When he re-experiences Christmas’s double death, a murder based upon the communal fantasy and the last decisive self-destruction, the author, deepening his empathy for Christmas, must have aroused at the same time his sense of guilt for the race problem as a white southerner and guilt for the indictment of his native country as a white southern writer. The description of Christmas’s death is an imprint of the moment when the author bears the double senses of guilt, and it is also an exploration of his fear and anxiety about racial discrimination and the darkness of southern history. Quentin Compson in Absalom, Absalom!
will succeed to the author’s anguish over acceptance and rejection of southern guilt. I will consider how Quentin succeed in the next chapter, but in this chapter I demonstrate that the creation of Christmas’s death, motivated by Faulkner’s impulse for self-punishment, is his strong attempt to face up to the darkness of the South, and that it inscribes the agony of the author who describes the South in the cultural climate. Light in August can be situated as a transitional phase of Faulkner’s more severe self-punishment, his in-depth examination of the self as a white southerner, in his later novel, Absalom, Absalom!

Notes

Large portion of this chapter was previously published as 「自己処罰としての創作行為—『八月の光』、クリスマスとハイタワー」[“Creative Writing as the Self-Punishment: Christmas and Hightower in Light in August”], in 『アメリカ文学研究』Studies in American Literature 44 (Osaka: The American Literature Society of Japan, 2008), 35-50.

1. In “The Sahara of the Bozart” (1920), literary critic H. L. Mencken criticized the “vacuity” of the southern art and literature after the Civil War, calling its climate as “the Sahara Desert” (136). Mencken wrote: “The south has simply been drained of all its best blood. The vast blood letting of the Civil War half exterminated and wholly paralyzed the old aristocracy, and so left the land to the harsh mercies of the poor white trash, now its masters. . . . [The war] brought bankruptcy, demoralization and despair in its train—and so the majority of the first-rate southerners that were left, broken in spirit and unable to live under the new dispensation, cleared out” (143-44).

2. Faulkner wrote his fifth novel As I Lay Dying (1930) in which Darl Bundren sets fire to a cabin where his mother’s coffin lies on its way to burial. My published essay, “Darl’s Arson in As I Lay Dying,” shows that Darl’s arson is both an expression of his incestuous desire for his mother and his indictment of the postwar southern culture: the absence of maternal love, the cultural climate rife with nihilism, and the fall of paternity amidst economic plight. The paper situates As I Lay Dying as a transitory phase in which Faulkner shifted his narrative focus from a literature of “escape” to a literature of “indictment.”
3. In an interview with the press in August 1955, Faulkner expressed his ambivalent feeling toward the South: “Well, I love it and hate it. Some of the things here I don’t like at all, but I was born there, and that’s my home, and I will still defend it even if I hate it” (Lion 101).

4. The original phrases in Japanese are as follows: 「南北戦争後の南部がタナトスと敗北主義の温床」「フォークナー自身、タナトス的な欲動を長らく、ひょっとすると幼時から終生もちつづけていたのかもしれない」. We can read a part of Hiraishi’s examination of the role of black nurses in his English essay, “‘Mammy’ as Faulkner’s Repressed Mother: Molly Beauchamp’s Genealogy.”

5. The original phrases in Japanese are as follows: 「自己処罰傾向と共存しうるような、フォークナーの反復の心理学」.

6. In “On the Melancholic Imaginary” Kristeva writes: “One can suppose that the verbalization of unconscious affects does not render these conscious (the subject knows no more than previously where his joy or sorrow comes from) but that it causes them to operate doubly: on one hand, the affects redistribute language’s order, giving rise thereby to a style; on the other, they display the unconscious in the characters and acts representing the most forbidden and transgressive motions of the drives. Literature, like hysteria—which for Freud is but a ‘deformed work of art’—is a staging of affects on the intersubjective, as on the intralinguistic, level” (116-17).

7. Interestingly, Christmas’s agony over his ambiguous identity expresses his unconscious wish for racial equality. When Joanna tells him about an episode in which Colonel Sartoris shot her grandfather and paternal brother down over “a question of negro voting” and her father “buried them and hid the graves” so that white native southerners would not dig them up, Christmas responds: “They might have done that? Dug them up after they were already killed, dead? Just when do men that have different blood in them stop hating one another?” (249). This response is contrary to his acts of augmenting Joanna’s animosity toward blacks through her rape. Is it suggesting that he wishes for the extinction of racial conflicts at the bottom of his mind? If so, does this wish spring from his unconscious grief over his limbo between white and black men? Faulkner does not describe Christmas’s exterior appearance in remarking the phrases above; he only lets Joanna say “Why do they” (249) and talk about her family anecdote; therefore, we are unable to gauge how much the phrases reflect Christmas’s true feelings. Yet when he unintentionally says “when do men that have different blood in them stop hating one another?,” is not his wish for racial equality deeper than we assume?

8. In The Crucible of Race, Joel Williamson argues that “black men were lynched for having achieved, seemingly, a sexual liberation that white men wanted but could not achieve without great feelings about guilt.” As the sons born to Victorian mothers the white men were projecting their own repressed, frustrated sexual desire onto black men. “If black men were, in essence, having sex with angels while white men abstained, then the punishment of black
men must be as awful as the white man’s guilt in contemplating himself in the same act, compounded by his frustration in abstaining” (Williamson 308). In this sense, Grimm’s castration of Christmas is the punishment of white male sin of lust.

9. Admittedly, we can build up other hypotheses. For instance, based on Gavin Stevens’s argument that Christmas’s grandmother promised him that “Hightower would save him” (448), and a sheriff’s explanation that they thought that “he would plead guilty and take a life sentence” (458), we can speculate that he cannot endure a life sentence, a despairing future, and runs into Hightower’s house because of his belief in his grandmother’s words. Or given that his grandmother told him that he might have Mexican blood rather than black blood, we can assume that he “had reliable knowledge not only of his origins but also of how he came into his predicament” (Singal 183), and runs toward Hightower’s house in order to survive. However, these ideas cannot answer a doubt that the grandmother’s words can so easily lead him, who has been deeply anguished by the thought of having black blood and loses his appetite as if abandoning his life, to hope; they cannot also shed light on the reason why he beats down Hightower who might save him with a gun or why “he neither surrendered nor resisted” (443) when Grimm corners him.

10. I will analyze later the role of Hightower’s mammy Cinthy and his grandfather in the formation Hightower’s identity in the main text, but I confirm here how Faulkner loved his nursemaid Caroline Barr and respected his grandfather and great-grandfather. According to Blotner, Caroline told many stories to the sons of the Falkner family: “she had a vast fund of stories about old times in the county before the War and about the lives of the county’s people, black and white. She would tell, too, about the days after the War, about frightening riders in the white of the Ku Klux Klan who claimed they were dead Confederates burning in hell but riding at night for brief periods” (Blotner Biography 76). She was “the kind of woman whose maternal feelings and needs never died out” and became “a second mother” to Faulkner and his brothers (Blotner Biography 76). In the contrast with Faulkner’s father Murry who ran a livery stable in Oxford for a time but fails the business with the advent of the automobile, his grandfather John Wesley Thompson Falkner was a successful lawyer, banker, and politician; for Faulkner “the firmament of adult authority” included his grandfather (Blotner Biography 78-79). Moreover, respecting his great grandfather Colonel William Clark Falkner who was a Confederate soldier, lawyer, railroad developer, and writer, Faulkner would say to his classmate—“I want to be a writer like my great-granddaddy”—and used the great grandfather as a model for his fictional character Colonel John Sartoris (Blotner Biography 105).

11. Surely there is a possibility that the person who vomits is someone other than Hightower. However, the possibility is so low, because when entering Hightower’s house, the others bring “something of the savage summer sunlight” (463), and it is the evidence of their savageness which affirms Grimm’s belief and deed (Davis 173).
12. Grace Elizabeth Hale makes an investigation on southern culture during Reconstruction, and examines the various roles of black mammies in white families, such as a narrator of southern history to white children. Hale writes: “Mammies even became important sources of white family history, remembering both the genealogies and events that proved postwar whites’ antebellum greatness” (102). Joel Williamson addresses the internal influence of black mammies on white southern children in the slave period. Reflecting that the white children of the planter class “learned its famous manners from its close association with blacks and especially, perhaps, with black mammies,” Williamson argues that blacks “developed a super-sensitivity to the thoughts and moods of others, an interest and a capacity that they conveyed to the white children in their charge” (39).

13. In Literature and Evil, Georges Bataille argues that Emily Brontë, “who died for having experienced the states of mind which she described, identified herself with Catherine Earnshaw,” and goes on to write: “Wuthering Heights has a certain affinity with Greek tragedy. The subject of the novel is the tragic violation of the law. The tragic author agreed with the law, the transgression of which he described, but he based all emotional impact on communicating the sympathy which he felt for the transgressor” (21). The description of Christmas’s death is tinged with Faulkner’s “communicating the sympathy” he felt for the “transgressor” of the southern law.

14. In “Freud, Faulkner, Caruth: Trauma and the Politics of Literary Form,” Greg Forter analyzes Christmas’s vomiting of toothpaste at a dietician’s bedroom as his rejection of “a substance that identifies him with blackness and femininity” in order to illustrate “how identity is formed through a primitive dialectic of assimilation and expulsion” (271). Yet Forter does not examine Hightower’s vomiting.
Chapter 2

**Faulkner’s Redefinition of Quentin’s Suicide:**

*Southern Guilt and Self-Punishment in* Absalom, Absalom! *

In William Faulkner’s ninth novel *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), Quentin Compson retells the tragedy of “one drop rule,” the southern code of prohibiting miscegenation, in collaboration with his Harvard roommate Shreve McCannon. Quentin reconstructs the story about Thomas Sutpen’s family, which has been handed down from his grandfather through his father to him and shared among people in the community of Jefferson, Mississippi, and which Rosa Coldfield recounted to him in person. When he uncovers the most puzzling enigma of the story, which is the reason for Henry Sutpen’s fratricidal murder of Charles Bon, he speculates that Henry killed Bon because of southern white society’s interdiction against interracial mixing. Henry tried to allow Bon’s marriage with their sister Judith Sutpen despite the sins of bigamy and incest, but after he knew of Bon’s black blood from his father Thomas, he could not tolerate the sin of mixed marriage, eventually shooting Bon down.
This chapter will reinterpret *Absalom, Absalom!* as the drama of the formation and collapse of male bonding in the context of southern cultural climate: the conventional prohibition of miscegenation and the elimination of denouncers in the dynamics of the “savage ideal” (which I introduced in the previous chapter). The novel describes the constitution of and the longing for male homosocial solidarity such as the collaboration of narrators Quentin and Shreve; their imaginary identification with the past figures Henry and Bon; the homoerotic alliance between Henry and Bon through Judith; and Bon’s longing for recognition from his father Thomas, whereas it depicts the ruthless rejection and painful severance of the tie. Researchers have offered multilateral and profound arguments concerning the male relationships in the novel. For example, John Duvall’s *Faulkner’s Marginal* (110-15), Doreen Fowler’s *Faulkner* (120-21), and Betina Entzminger’s “Passing as Miscegenation” (94-95) examine the homoerotic tension between Henry and Bon; John T. Irwin’s *Repetition and Revenge* and Dirk Jr. Kuyk’s *Sutpen’s Design* analyze Bon’s demand for Sutpen’s recognition and Sutpen’s neglect of his existence; and Donald M. Kartiganer’s *Fragile Thread* (93-97), Robert Dale Parker’s *Absalom, Absalom!* and Norman W. Jones’s “Coming Out” (348) probe into the cohesion of Quentin and Shreve. Referring to and organizing the achievement of these studies, this chapter will provide comprehensive investigation of male relationships in terms of miscegenation and “the savage ideal,” throwing light on the dilemma and self-destructive behaviors of male characters who anguish
between human love and cultural pressures. The investigation will raise the following questions: why Quentin imagines that Bon self-destructively forces himself to get married to his sister; why Quentin experiences intense conflict in revealing the darkness of his homeland; and why Faulkner revived the dead Quentin who committed suicide in *The Sound and the Fury* and designated him as a narrator in *Absalom, Absalom!*! Faulkner must have created *Absalom, Absalom!* amid the dilemma between his personal compulsion to write about the South and southern cultural prohibition against criticizing it. With the relation between creative writing and the cultural climate surrounding southern writers in mind, this chapter aims to explore why Faulkner decided to reemploy Quentin in *Absalom, Absalom!*!, identifying one of the main reasons in that dilemma which Faulkner had to face in his own life. Based upon Faulkner’s desire for self-punishment in the southern psychological climate, it will show that Bon is a screen onto which Quentin projects his melancholic anguish over his father and sister and that Bon’s death is at the same time a murder based on white society’s code and a masochistic suicide on the part of Bon. By doing so, it will clarify Faulkner’s attempt to expose the guilt of the South and punish himself through Quentin’s vicarious re-experiencing of the story. Drawing upon the extant manuscripts of the novel, it will situate Quentin’s retelling of the story as the author’s denunciation of the South, reinterpreting his suicide as a product of the southern psycho-historical environment—the author’s self-punishment for betraying his native region.
1. The Joint Imagination of Quentin and Shreve: Words and Flesh

Quentin and Shreve’s “re-experiencing” of the Sutpen story comes from their eagerness to identify with the past male characters.\(^1\) As Kartiganer points out, Quentin and Shreve imagine the story according to their “private needs” (92) and their imagination reflect their thoughts on love and honor.\(^2\) Their “private needs” continuously provide the energy to re-experience so that they can deeply sympathize with the feelings of Henry and Bon while superimposing their own life upon the past narrative. Also, by elucidating the whole story which Mr. Compson could not complete, as Irwin asserts, Quentin attempts to become a better narrator than his father (113-14). In fact, he considers that Shreve “*sounds just like Father*” (147), seeing Shreve as “a father substitute,” an interlocutor to “vie for the dominant role as persuader” (Ross 228). Listening to Quentin’s retelling about Sutpen’s design which he heard from Mr. Compson, Shreve also says, “Don’t say it’s just me that sounds like your old man” (210), displaying rivalry against Quentin and his attempt to become a better narrator. The two young narrators thus strive to be superior to an opponent (a father) and struggle for the leadership of narration, consequently developing their impassioned telling.

As Minrose C. Gwin asserts, however, their passionate narrative reaches the climax of “a community of male telling” (175). By renouncing Rosa’s vision of Sutpen as devil, the
male speakers create “white patriarchy’s narrative of mastery”: “These men’s shared narratives of mastery, handed down by men to men, sometimes all the way from Sutpen himself to grandfather to father to Quentin and Shreve, the latter four saying and resaying the story back and forth to one another” (Gwin 175). Quentin and Shreve not only join the three generational “community” but also constitute the intimate relation of the same generation between themselves, so that they gradually collaborate to reach and share the truth of the past. Their narration evokes the past figures into the present time. In Chapter 8, when Shreve voices the male connection between generations—“all boy flesh that walked and breathed stemming from that one ambiguous eluded dark fatherhead and so brothered perennial and ubiquitous everywhere under the sun—,” Quentin and Shreve “star[e] at one another” (240). The crossing of the gaze enables their creation of “the common present” in which they achieve their imaginary coalescence and cooperate in imagining the behaviors and emotions of the past figures (Washida 63; translation mine).³

When Shreve imagines the growth of Bon around his mother, Eulalia Bon, who is planning revenge on Thomas, and a lawyer who is scheming to wheedle money from the Bons, the third-person narrator reports the fusing thoughts and voices of Quentin and Shreve: “both thinking as one, the voice which happened to be speaking the thought only the thinking become audible, vocal” (243).⁴ Moreover, when they imagine Henry’s homoerotic yearning for Bon and the amorous triangle between the two brothers and Judith, the narrator observes
their narration as follows: “it did not matter to either of them which one did the talking, since it was not the talking alone which did it, performed and accomplished the overpassing, but some happy marriage of speaking and hearing” (253). The “marriage” in their narration not only symbolizes the homoerotic relationship between Quentin and Shreve but also suggests that their narration is an activity of their simultaneously imagining the same contents with the obliteration of the difference between a speaker and a listener. Quentin’s apparently passive act of listening is equivalent to his active imaginative speaking, and their narration reflects Quentin’s individuality. It does not matter who is speaking; rather, it is important that they continue to tenaciously envision the same scenes without abandoning the interaction of intertwining and influencing each other. They create the site of a collaborative imagination that enables their mutual permeation: they conjecture identical scenes while reflecting the other’s personality.

In this peculiar imagination site, they re-experience the anguish and torment of the past figures. As Henry pants in the hope for his own death to free from agonizing over the sin of Bon’s bigamy and incest, Shreve starts to pant; he and Quentin empathize with Henry and Bon’s sufferings as if experiencing “the spirits’ travail of the two young men” (275). In the last part of Chapter 8, the two narrators begin to visualize the core of the tragic Sutpen story—the meeting between Henry and Thomas over Bon’s blood origin and the exchange of words between Henry and Bon over it—in a more idiosyncratic narrative technique:
He [Shreve] ceased again. It was just as well, since he had no listener. Perhaps he was aware of it. Then suddenly he had no talker either, though possibly he was not aware of this. Because now neither of them was there. They were both in Carolina and the time was forty-six years ago, and it was not even four now but compounded still further, since now both of them were Henry Sutpen and both of them were Bon, compounded each of both yet either neither, smelling the very smoke which had blown and faded away forty-six years ago from the bivouac fires burning in a pine grove, the gaunt and ragged men sitting or lying about them. . . . (280)

This scene emphasizes that the use of words in the joint imagination produces physical experiences. The two narrators interact with each other and the past characters, and their unified body synchronizes with the past figures’ bodies in a way that dissolves the boundary of a person and the gap of time. Their deep commitment to the story triggers the working of their physical function of olfactories: smell allows them to absorb into the past and to memorize a particular scene which they are experiencing. If Quentin in Absalom, Absalom! is identical to Quentin in The Sound and the Fury, the creation of this particular narrative technique is related to his failure to understand Caddy’s sexual experiences and her inner thoughts with words in The Sound and the Fury.

she took my hand and held it flat against her throat
now say his name
Dalton Ames
I felt the first surge of blood there it surged in strong accelerating beats
say it again
her face looked off into the trees where the sun slanted and where the bird
say it again
Dalton Ames
her blood surged steadily beating and beating against my hand
(SF 163-64)
Caddy’s body conveys to Quentin her love for Ames and sexual excitement over him. It renounces Quentin’s verbal attempt to understand her experiences and interior. For Quentin language is a tool to transform painful realities and create alternative ones. As Bleikasten contends, “When faced with unpleasant facts, Quentin refuses to acknowledge them or tries at least to twist the evidence so as to minimize their significance” (Splendid 107). When he faces Caddy’s loss of virginity, he nurses a delusion that he committed incest with her and confesses it to his father. By doing so, he tries to obliterate her premarital sex with a villain Ames, escaping into his imaginary world of incest with her. However, his father repudiates his confession and her body expression abandons his imagination. If following the author’s comment that Quentin “loved not his sister’s body but some concept of Compson honor precariously and (he knew well) only temporarily supported by the minute fragile membrane of her maidenhead” (“Appendix” 411), Quentin’s verbal defeat forces him to acknowledge his family’s decline. It also inscribes the fall of his masculinity as the eldest son who could not protect his sister’s honor. As long as she continues to have sexual relationships with men, including a northerner Herbert, her sexual experiences disturbs Quentin’s masculinity as a southerner who could not prevent the North’s invasion into the South. He remembers his verbal defeat in front of his sister’s flesh expressions and continuously recalls the memory as “sad” (SF 95).
In *Absalom, Absalom!*, however, he trusts the power of words again and attempts to get physical experience and comprehend the past figures by imagining with words. While imagining the past scenes with words, he lets his body respond to them; or while letting his body responsive to the past scenes, he strenuously imagines them with words. To put it another way, he envisions the past landscape with words, penetrates deep into the landscape, and merge with the feelings of the past characters, so that he can produce his flesh’s thoroughgoing response to each shade of their emotions.

Indeed, Quentin has motivations for responding to the Sutpen story: he “had grown up” as he repeatedly listened to the story that was developed over the Civil War; as a result, his body was “an empty hall echoing with sonorous defeated names; he was not a being, an entity, he was a commonwealth” (7). Once he starts to reflect upon the southern history, the voices of the Sutpen story begin to echo in his body. His identity originates in the story, the “heritage” of the community (7). In addition, the tale includes incidents common to his experiences in *The Sound and the Fury*, as the love triangle between Bon, Judith, and Henry corresponds with that between Ames, Caddy, and him. Therefore, his superimposition of his experiences upon the story intensifies his body’s attachment to it and his body’s synchronization with the past figures’ suffering. Thus, if regarding Quentins in *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!* as an identical character, we can situate his imagination activity in the latter work as an attempt to overcome the verbal defeat in the former novel and
conflate words and flesh to gain physical experiences with words. His personal desire to re-experience and understand the past through the verbal imagination bolsters and reinforces his imaginary identification with Henry and Bon.

2. Southern Guilt: The Prohibition of Interracial Intimacy

Quentin and Shreve offer an interpretation of Bon’s relationships with Judith and Henry in terms of his demand for his father’s recognition. Bon develops his romance with Judith in order to force recognition from his father, and once he gains it, he intends to end the romance: “He [Thomas] will not even have to ask me; I will just touch flesh with him and I will say it myself: You will not need to worry; she shall never see me again” (278). His homosocial bonding with Henry through Judith signifies his desperate attempt to access to his father: “there—there—at any moment, second, I shall penetrate by something of will and intensity and dreadful need, and strip that alien leavening from it and look not on my brother’s face whom I did not know I possessed and hence never missed, but my father’s, out of the shadow of whose absence my spirit’s posthumity has never escaped” (254). The two young narrators adapt Mr. Compson’s theory of Bon’s love for Henry—“Perhaps in his fatalism he loved Henry the better of the two, seeing perhaps in the sister merely the shadow, the woman vessel with which to consummate the love whose actual object was the youth”
(86)—into a narrative of Bon’s pathetic exploration of his father through his intimacy with Henry and Judith.

Elisabeth Muhlenfeld, however, opposes to Quentin and Shreve’s interpretation, arguing that there is the mutual love between Bon and Judith: “Bon was merely using Judith to force recognition from his father,” showing the possibility that Bon and Judith “do truly love one another” (‘We’ 72). She reads Bon’s letter to Judith as evidence of his “deep love” (73), insisting that Judith accepts the picture of Bon’s octroon mistress as “a message, a commission to care for Bon’s quasi wife and son” (‘We’ 73, 79). Although her reading sheds light on the probable love hidden in history, we need to recognize how and why Quentin creates Bon as a son who craves his father’s recognition. Quentin’s failure to imagine the reciprocal affection between Bon and Judith derives not just from his unwillingness to acknowledge the Ames–Caddy love affair but also from his contemplation of his own father—the sense of his father’s absence—in The Sound and the Fury.

Quentin’s confession of his imaginary incest with Caddy to his father originates in his double wish. First, Quentin, who grieves over Caddy’s lost virginity and promiscuity, cherishes a perverted illusion that the authoritative father’s punishment of their guilt for incest would erase the facts of her sexual conduct. Yet Mr. Compson has no apparent intention to cope with his daughter’s licentiousness and denies the incest as imaginary. He only admonishes Quentin that any emotions and memories will fade away as time goes by,
renouncing the privilege of his son’s sadness: “[people] cannot even remember tomorrow what seemed dreadful today” (SF 80). Mr. Compson, who is agonized over the discrepancy between his family’s antebellum prosperity and its postbellum decline, falls into cynicism and alcoholism, withdrawing into his inner world.

Second, Quentin, who identifies the weakening of fatherhood as the downfall of his family, confesses his incest in the hope of restoring patrimony. André Bleikasten attributes Quentin’s confession to his unconscious desire “to provoke paternal retaliation, i.e., to force Mr. Compson to play at last the part of avenging father and so to acknowledge the son’s manhood in the very act of threatening it” (127). Yet Mr. Compson insists that “Women are never virgins. Purity is a negative state and therefore contrary to nature. It’s nature is hurting you not Caddy” (SF 116); by doing so, he tries to persuade his son to accept Caddy’s loss of virginity as “nature,” an unchangeable fact, as he does the decline of his family. As Kazuhiko Goto asserts, this persuasion is “the father’s candid instruction on how to conduct life, which he has managed to reach with the benefit of alcohol in order to live in the postwar reality” (282; translation mine) because it is probably his daughter’s conduct that has worsened his alcoholism, as Caddy says that “Father will be dead in a year they say if he doesn’t stop drinking and he wont stop he cant stop since I since last summer” (SF 124). Given Mr. Compson’s recognition of his son’s sadness, the persuasion is also “his lie rooted in fatherly affection to soothe his son’s anguish over his sister’s loss of virginity” (Goto 282; translation
The gap between ideal and real fathers enhances Quentin’s longing for the revival of fatherly affection and an honorable family.

This longing affects Quentin’s creative imagining of Bon in *Absalom, Absalom!*: Bon suffers from the absence of his father and desires affection and recognition from him. While Bon grows up in the West Indies, his mother teaches him without words that his life’s ultimate purpose is to accomplish the vengeance she seeks, though he does not know what it is. When he is twenty-eight years old, the Bons’ lawyer arranges for him to enter the University of Mississippi, an unlikely college for a cosmopolitan, sophisticated man to attend; he thinks over the unclear reason for his entrance on a ship to America:

> Why? Why? Why this college, this particular one above all other?—maybe leaning there in that solitude between panting smoke and engines and almost touching the answer, aware of the jigsaw puzzle picture integers of it waiting, almost lurking, just beyond his reach, inextricable, jumbled, and unrecognizable yet on the point of falling into pattern which would reveal to him at once, like a flash of light, the meaning of his whole life, past—the Haiti, the childhood, the lawyer, the woman who was his mother. (250)

Although he has no clues to the substance of the future and his fate, he has to move on a linear gloomy road to the unchangeable, determined future, the irretrievable fate beyond his will. Although his expectation of meeting with his father in Mississippi arouses his yearning for “recognition” from him and “physical touch” with him, Bon gains “nothing” in the actual meeting during Christmas break: “no shock, no hot communicated flesh” (255-56).

Nevertheless, he continues to develop an earnest if unrequited love for the father to fill the void of his father’s absence that he has known since childhood. He keeps “waiting” for
Sutpen’s acknowledgement, torn between his irrepresible “puzzlement” over his father’s
effect and his inerasable trust in the father’s “love” (265-66). However, Sutpen ruthlessly
gives him no sign of recognition, eventually rejecting his pathetic seeking of his father’s
warmth because of the “one drop rule.” Sutpen tells Henry that Bon’s mother is “part negro”
(283), which leads Henry to forbid Bon’s marriage to Judith:

—So it’s the miscegenation, not the incest, which you can’t bear.  
Henry doesn’t answer.
—And he sent me no word? He did not ask you to send me to him? No  
word to me, no word at all? That was all he had to do, now, today; four years  
ago or at any time during the four years. That was all . . . He didn’t need to tell  
you I am a nigger to stop me. He could have stopped me without that, Henry.  
(285)

Sutpen not only repudiates Bon’s wish to gain his recognition, but also thrusts at him the
paramount cause of his abandoning his wife and child in Haiti: her concealed taint of black
blood. This merciless treatment causes Bon’s melancholic incorporation—rather than his
abjection—of his father into his ego. Because Bon has desperately attempted to trust and
identify with his father, his father’s rejection makes him lose hope and the will to live.

Importantly, this rejection signifies his painful loss of the loved object, which leads him to
incorporate the object to restore the ego. The incorporated object starts to function as the
super-ego, an absolute interdiction of miscegenation. In melancholia, “the excessively strong
super-ego which has obtained a hold upon consciousness rages against the ego with merciless
violence”; the super-ego is “a pure culture of the death instinct” and “often enough succeeds
in driving the ego into death” (Freud 53). Bon’s super-ego, evoking the sense of guilt for his
racial identity in the southern region, drives him to punish and kill himself as a sinful black male. His suicidal death—“Do it now, Henry” (286)—is the last, desperate expression of his love for his father, a love based on which he resigns himself to the father’s law.

Meanwhile, Henry’s murder results from his ambivalence toward himself/Bon. He kills Bon despite his admiration and love for him. His admiration of Bon’s urban sophistication leads to his unconscious imitation of his “clothing and speech and mannerisms” (254); his homosocial love for Bon manifests itself through the medium of Judith: “Hers and my lives are to exist within and upon yours” (260). His concession of Judith to Bon would have been a sublimation of his homoerotic love for Bon. In Eroticism (1957), Georges Bataille examines the function of a woman as an erotic “gift” in marriage, arguing that this gift is for the male giver “a renunciation,” which “enhances the value of the thing renounced” and “complements eroticism which heightens the value of the object of desire” (218). The gift is “a substitute for the sexual act; for the exuberance of giving has a significance akin to that of the act itself: it is also a spending of resources” (Bataille 218). Henry tries to show his affection and respect for Bon through the presentation of Judith as the enhanced erotic value.

However, the southern code in the 1860s provokes Henry’s fratricide, thoroughly severing the interracial communion. After handing his gun to Henry, Bon denies Henry’s idea, “You are my brother,” emphasizing, “I’m the nigger that’s going to sleep with your
sister. Unless you stop me, Henry” (286). Bon emerges as an abhorrent black male planning to “sleep with” a white woman, that is, to enact miscegenation. As Steve Price writes, “Charles Bon’s final act of self-determination, the act in which he finally decides his own identity, is the one that forces Henry, too, to decide his own identity” (332). Henry becomes a white protector of a white female from a black rapist. Henry’s murder “doubly denies brotherhood, by killing a brother and by subordinating the brotherly relation to his fear of cross-racial intimacy” (Parker Questioning 154). Yet it is also an expression of homosexual love; Henry’s physical response—“Henry grasps the pistol, jerks it free of Bon’s hand and stands so, the pistol in his hand, panting and panting” (286)—suggests “a covert allusion to a penile erection” (Fowler 121); his actual shooting is “the logical outcome of [his] ‘erect’ admiration for his brother” (Duvall 115).

Henry’s ruined figure in the Sutpen house in 1909 embodies his pangs of conscience and distress over forfeiting human love as the result of his submission to the southern ideological custom. Yet it also stems from his profound depression after murdering his double. Wyatt-Brown illustrates that “the duelist who killed his opponent sometimes fell . . . into a deep depression” in the antebellum South, analyzing the reaction as an “emotional effect of the conventions that the ethic of honor demanded” (Hearts xiii). He goes on to argue that the duelist’s distress is due to the mechanism of “honor” which allows him “temporarily to suppress despair at his own unworthiness and to project those feelings upon an
unsuspecting and justifiably outraged rival or enemy” (Hearts xiii). It must be noted, however, that by killing the rival or enemy, the duelist in effect murders himself, especially if the opponent is in part an object of his affection or respect. Henry must kill the loving, black man according to the ethic of “honor.” After “suppressing” despair at his affection for Bon and his fate to kill him, he “projects” those unsolved emotions onto the brother, then, kills the loved/hateful opponent—a part of himself. In this sense, Henry’s murder is a destructive expression of his ambivalence for Bon/himself.

Henry’s shooting “consummates homoerotic desire” at the level of the Quentin–Shreve narrative. It provokes “Quentin’s orgasmic reaction to the completion of the narration of the story of Henry and Bon” (Duvall 115), as Quentin begins to “jerk all over, violently and uncontrollably” on his bed after the narration (288). Concerning the Quentin–Shreve narration of Henry’s shooting, Betina Entzneger provides an argument that Quentin and Shreve shift their narrative focus to miscegenation so as to deny brotherly homosexual love (95-97, 102-03). As Noel Polk contends, based on “the homoerotic tension between Quentin and Shreve” in The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom!, the shift of their narrative may be related to their reluctance to deal with male femininity and homosexuality (“Cuckold” 137-144). Polk’s examination of “cuckolds” such as weak husbands or lovers and impotents in Faulkner’s novels clarifies that race is “a mask” for gender and sexuality
throughout Faulkner (“Cuckold” 144). We must therefore recognize Quentin and Shreve’s homophobic fear of elaborating homosexual intimacy of the Henry–Bon relationship.

At the same time, however, we must also take southern historical pressure fully into account. As the two narrators delve into the depth of the southern history, they collide head-on with the “one drop rule,” thereby creating the tale of the severance of male companionship due to the rule. Storytelling about the South compels them to expose the threat of the southern code to eradicate human solidarity and affection. In other words, the shift of their narrative implies that the race issue is still so menacing and overwhelming in the 1920s that Quentin has to foreground miscegenation taboo instead of developing the story about the repudiation of interracial queer love. Quentin reveals his own fear and anxiety about interracial marriage through the retelling of the Henry–Bon relationship, as Faulkner remarked: “every time any character gets into a book, no matter how minor, he’s actually telling his biography—that’s all anyone ever does, he tells his own biography, talking about himself in a thousand different terms, but himself” (University 275). In Quentin and Shreve’s conclusion, as Erskine E. Peters puts it, “Miscegenation is not seen at all as the mixing of the races, which the Southern fathers have carried out as a prerogative of their power over blacks, but becomes the abominable notion of introducing black blood into the white race” (120).

Quentin, through the re-experiencing of the tragedy, comprehends two painful self-figures. One is a ruined southerner who could neither protect an innocent sister like Henry
nor prevent the fall of his family’s honor. He projects his experiences with Caddy and Mr. Compson onto the Sutpen story; as a result, he has to acknowledge the loss of his sister’s virginity and the decline of his family’s patriarchy. The other self-figure is a sinful southerner bound up with the native land’s custom of banning miscegenation. He recognizes how irresistibly the irrational law constitutes and controls his identity, feeling ambivalence toward his hometown. When Shreve questions, “Why do you hate the South?” in the last scene, his ambivalence reaches its culmination: “I dont. I dont! I dont hate it! I dont hate it!” (303). Although he repeatedly tries to deny his hatred and discern his love for the South, Quentin’s mind paradoxically augments hostility toward the negative southern legacy, which persecuted African Americans in a race-based slave labor system and stirred up the inveterate racism during Reconstruction. According to Judith L. Herman, some trauma-suffering patients can distance themselves from painful memories through verbalizing them (175-213). However, Quentin’s retelling of the Sutpen story compulsively drags him into and binds him up with the southern history, far from separating himself from it. The retelling brings him to the distressful recognition that the past colors and controls the present rather than “the painful knowledge that the real truth can never be uncovered” (Ruppersburg 91). After the narration Quentin falls into a deep despair while reflecting upon his unsolved life and ambivalence toward his home. About five months later, he commits suicide under the burden of the sad present and the sinful past of the South.
As we have seen so far, Quentin has motivations for committing himself to the Sutpen story: his inherited knowledge about the tale, his superposition of his feelings about his sister and his father upon those of Henry and Bon. Quentin is certainly an ideal narrator who provides an exhaustive exploration of the southern racial issue, revealing the miscegenation taboo, which overwhelmingly breaks the bounds of human common practice. Yet our question remains: why Faulkner decided to revive Quentin who had committed suicide in *The Sound and the Fury* and employ him as a narrator in *Absalom, Absalom!*.

As Estella Shoenberg shows in the epigraph of her book, Faulkner began a manuscript of Chapter 2 with the words: “*That was the summer before Quentin died: that summer with wisteria everywhere from the spring held on reoccurred, bloomed again.*”¹² Quentin’s determined self-annihilation was in the forefront of Faulkner’s mind while he was working on *Absalom, Absalom!* In a February 1934 letter to Harrison Smith, his editor, Faulkner wrote:

Roughly, the theme [of *Absalom, Absalom!*] is a man who outraged the land, and the land then turned and destroyed the man’s family. Quentin Compson, of the Sound & Fury, tells it, or ties it together; he is the protagonist so that it is not complete apocrypha. I use him because it is just before he is to commit suicide because of his sister, and I use his bitterness which he has projected on the South
in the form of hatred of it and its people to get more out of the story itself than a historical novel would be. (Letters 79)

This comment not only reinforces the argument that Quentin is recalling his failure to protect Caddy—in contrast to Henry’s success as a protector—but also is reminiscent of the author’s conviction that the projection of individual experiences onto the past creates the profound personal significance of history. More important is that Faulkner used Quentin as a character who is determined to kill himself and who harbors a profound hatred of his native land and its inhabitants. In other words, Quentin’s fated self-destruction is related to Faulkner’s reemployment of him as a narrator, and Quentin’s animosity for the South is a chief motive for his examination of his native land.

Gerald Langford’s study of one of the manuscripts of *Absalom, Absalom!* shows that Faulkner rewrote it in a way that highlighted Quentin’s connection with the Sutpen story and assigned him the task of unearthing the truth about Bon’s murder. At the early stage of writing the novel, Faulkner considered that “the truth about Bon should be known from the beginning” (9). Faulkner at first assumed that Mr. Compson knows the father-son relationship between Sutpen and Bon and Sutpen conveyed Bon’s black blood to General Compson; however, in the process of its revision he added changes: Quentin informs Mr. Compson about that father-son relationship, and Quentin and Shreve conclude that Bon had black blood (10-11). Moreover, in the manuscript version of Chapter 6, Shreve continues his narration unbroken after Quentin has briefly recalled his trip to Sutpen’s Hundred with Rosa;
however, in revision Faulkner “eliminated most of Shreve’s recital, substituting a presentation of the events through several shifts to Quentin’s reverie” (11). As a consequence, these alterations dramatized Quentin’s involvement in the story because they “relegate Shreve to the background and move Quentin forward to create the effect of a multidimensional stage: Quentin now stands front center, resisting vainly as the reality of the present is usurped repeatedly by the obsessive ghosts of the past” (11). These changes led Quentin to become “the one who unlocks the old mystery and who is still obsessively involved in the story of a guilt which he, as a Southerner, must share” (41).13

Langford’s research on the manuscript shows “the meticulousness of [Faulkner’s] reworking,” which clarifies the intensity of the writer’s recollection in the process of revision: how “Faulkner actually relived the story, feeling out again the nuances of each scene, each character, each sensory impression” (42). For the author, the writing of Absalom, Absalom! was a re-experiencing of the southern historical sin, that is, his attempt to confront and accept his own responsibility and guilt for southern culture. As if to reinforce his re-experiencing, Faulkner cast Shreve as an interlocutor who leads Quentin/Faulkner to acknowledge the darkness of southern history. In an interview, Faulkner remarked: “Well, the story was told by Quentin to Shreve. Shreve was the commentator that held the thing to something of reality. If Quentin had been let alone to tell it, it would have become completely unreal. It had to have a solvent to keep it real, keep it believable, creditable, otherwise it would have vanished
into smoke and fury” (University 75). Shreve’s asking Quentin to “Tell about the South” (142) is the starting point for examining the southern history, and in their joint imagination Shreve continuously binds Quentin down to the story. He insists that “Quentin feels responsible, feels guilty” and southerners “feel weighted down self-consciously with the burdens of the past and a sense of difference” (Parker Questioning 119). As François Pitavy argues, “the novel ends in the recognition and acceptance of the love-hate bond which ties [Quentin] to his land—to himself. But such an increasing awareness has been made possible only through the agency of Shreve, whose institutions Quentin accepts only with reluctance” (197). In other words, Faulkner yokes his alter ego Quentin to the South through the intervention of Shreve; by doing so, Faulkner attempts to confront and accept his own responsibility and guilt for southern culture. If Bon’s death is at the same time Henry’s enforcement of the southern code and Bon’s premeditated suicide to avenge his mother, Quentin/Faulkner tries to experience a head-on encounter with the historical forces that repudiate and sever human bonds.

Significantly, in writing the novel, Faulkner must have drawn inspiration from his ancestors’ probable involvement in miscegenation. First, it is possible that Faulkner’s paternal great-grandfather, William C. Falkner, had two mulatto daughters, Fannie Forrest Falkner (born between mid-1864 and April, 1866) and Lena Faulkner (born about 1867). Both were with his slave Emiline Falkner (Williamson 64-67). He did not publicly recognize
his kinship with them, but biographical records indicate this possibility. Although southern culture prohibited sexual relations between black men and white women, the patriarchal power structure during Reconstruction virtually allowed for white men’s sexual access to black women. Williamson argues that “Through Emeline and her children, Faulkner was personally intimate with a real story, a historical happening, fully as powerful as any that he ever conceived in his imagination” (64). Second, during the Christmas season of 1887, Faulkner’s maternal grandfather, Charles Butler, deserted his wife and children and ran away with money he had collected from the town’s taxes. He did this not so much because he was bankrupt as because he wanted to flee with the beautiful octoroon companion of the Thompson family (Williamson 119-132). Williamson suggests that the couple’s children “would have been only one-sixteenth black—like Charles Bon in the novel Absalom, Absalom!—and probably their blackness would have been all but indistinguishable to the eye” (132). Yet the couple could not live in Mississippi, not only because of their adultery but also because of their violation of the late nineteenth-century miscegenation taboo.

Referring to the Williamson’s biographical research, Arthur F. Kinney writes, “The demon of miscegenation which Quentin is unwilling to raise for so long may have been the very demon Faulkner, through the story of Sutpen, not Butler, was trying to exorcise with equally compelling urgency” (26). Faulkner’s writing of the novel might have been an attempt to “exorcise” the “demon” of miscegenation and an outlet for his chaotic emotions
about the southern code, but it was not necessarily therapeutic for the author. The act of writing was to dredge up guilt-ridden memories of his family history, making him question the power of the white supremacist society as well as his identity as a white male southerner. The act of writing or telling can be “an act of confession, even catharsis—of purging oneself of haunting memories and fears in the hope that they will haunt no more;” but “always with the dangerous possibility that to explore and reveal is to dredge up painful memories which without confession would not be brought to the surface” (Hobson 7-8). Quentin’s narrative—“Nevermore of peace. Nevermore of peace. Nevermore. Nevermore. Nevermore” (298-99)—represents Faulkner’s anxiety and guilt that are paradoxically evoked through “cathartic” writing intended to obliterate “haunting memories.” In fact, as we have seen, Faulkner relapsed into alcoholism while revising the manuscript of *Absalom, Absalom!*: Joseph Blotner suggests that Faulkner “was suffering not only from nervous exhaustion but also from the unassuaged anguish over [his brother] Dean’s death” due to the crash of Faulkner’s plane (928). However, insofar as the act of writing *Absalom, Absalom!* was an exposure of the evil of his hometown despite his affection for the land—and he had put his entire heart and soul into the work—his drinking seemed to manifest his mental disturbance: the author’s anxiety and guilt caused by the creation of the novel.

In terms of the southern climate of the “savage ideal,” Faulkner’s publication of *Absalom, Absalom!* signaled a betrayal of his bond with his hometown that had bred into him
a strong faith in and affection for the southern tradition. If the “savage ideal” served as a
reinforcement of the author’s fear of readers’ response, we must call attention to the novel’s
function to urge white southern readers to arouse and encounter their guilt. Carolyn Porter
insists that Absalom, Absalom! “is itself one voice in a dialogue with the reader, who, like
Quentin Compson, struggles in vain to secure a detached position from which to assemble
and confront a chaotic and inexplicable set of events” (260). Referring to the last scene of the
novel, Porter concludes that even if readers resist becoming “trapped” within the novel, he
“remains contaminated by his knowledge that, in thus resisting the novel’s threat, he is
imitating its demonic hero” (276). Also, Robert Dale Parker argues that the novel is
“preeminently a participatory novel, a novel about its author’s imagination, its characters’
imaginations, and also a novel directly about our own imaginations” (Novelistic 130). Given
that the book encourages readers to relive the South’s sinful past, we can speculate that
Faulkner was more or less conscious of their repulsion toward the novel. Still, Faulkner was
impelled to write about the South, torn between love and hatred for it; his literary value stems
from his passion and dynamism to create works in the peril of mentality amidst the culture of
the “savage ideal.”

Writing Absalom, Absalom!, motivated by Faulkner’s impulse for self-punishment,
was his attempt to face up to the darkness of the South and explore his fear and anxiety about
the sin of racism. The act created in Faulkner a profound dilemma, because his representation
of southern vice was painful and challenged the very roots of his existence. Faulkner must have felt an even greater sense of guilt for being a white male southerner during the Jim Crow era and a southern author who criticized his native region. In this sense, Faulkner rewrote Quentin’s private suicidal anguish about his sister’s conduct as the tragic result of an agonizing burden: Quentin’s southern heritage. Quentin’s suicide reflects Quentin/Faulkner’s struggle between acceptance and rejection of southern guilt. Yet his death indicates another important issue. If Faulkner recognized that the creation of the novel would provoke backlash from readers, then he had to find a means to alleviate their rage, a vindication for indicting the South. But, if one is allowed to argue in this way, Faulkner must have found his salvation before he began to write the novel because Quentin was determined to end his life about five months after his narration of the Sutpen story. In a sense, the author could test out his own death through the death of his fictional character. In the contemporary psycho-historical climate, Quentin’s self-destruction functioned as a punishment for his own denunciation of the South and as the abatement of the author’s guilt for exposure. This enabled Faulkner to assign the threatening experience to Quentin, making his employment of the character a way to extend rather than close his career as a southern novelist. Absalom, Absalom! reconfigures Quentin’s suicide as Faulkner’s redemption, inscribing the author’s ambivalence toward his homeland and his struggle over authorship in the South. Quentin’s narration embodies Faulkner’s determination to descend into and measure the abyss of southern history even if
the task brings him suffering and torment—the fear of exile from his homeland and guilt for his betrayal of his cultural legacy.

Notes

A portion of this chapter is based upon my previously published essays: 「追体験と身体—『アブサロム、アブサロム！』の共同想像」 ["Re-experiencing and Body: The Joint-Imagination in Absalom, Absalom!"] in 『立教レヴュー』 [St. Paul’s English Review] 35 (Tokyo: Rikkyo University, 2006) and 「Again. Sadder than was.”—『響きと怒り』におけるクエンティンの死」 ["Again. Sadder than was.”: Quentin’s Suicide in The Sound and the Fury] in 『立教レヴュー』 [St. Paul’s English Review] 33 (Tokyo: Rikkyo University, 2004). I made an oral presentation on the first section of this chapter at William Faulkner Association of Japan Conference at Kanseigakuin University, Hyogo, Japan, on 15 October 2004, and the third section of this chapter at NASSS (Nagoya American Studies Summer Seminar) International Graduate Seminar at Nanzan University, Nagoya, Japan, on 26 July 2011.

1. According to German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey, the subject needs to experience the inner connections between the past events and his own life in order to understand history. Dilthey writes: “On the basis of experience and self-understanding and the constant interaction between them, understanding of other people and their expressions of life is developed” (116). By repeatedly conflating other people’s experiences with his own ones in reflection, he can reconfirm his existence and understand history. In that process, he “re-experiences” the past incidents through the sedulous reproduction of them in order. However, “re-experiencing” is the creation in the line of occurrences. As Dilthey scholar Rudolf A. Makkreel writes, it “does not reproduce the actual process of creation” and it is a “creative understanding which may go beyond the original” (328-29). The subject to “re-experience” reconstructs the past events in his own way on the basis of his individuality. In a different vein, Takaki Hiraishi uses Dilthey’s hermeneutic concept of “understanding” to analyze how Faulkner leads the reader to believe that the Quentin–Shreve’s visualization of Thomas’s interview with Henry and the meeting between Henry and Bon in italics in Chapter 8 is the absolute truth shared by the two narrators—even if it is not necessarily the historically objective truth (Manner 151-71).

2. In an interview Faulkner remarked: “every time any character gets into a book, no matter how minor, he’s actually telling his biography—that’s all anyone ever does, he tells
his own biography, talking about himself in a thousand different terms, but himself” (University 275).

3. In The Power of ‘‘Listening,’’ Japanese philosopher Kiyokazu Washida writes: “When the other person [an interlocutor] and I gaze at one another, I am forbidden to enter my inner time that flows from the present to the past; my existence is dragged out to ‘the common present’ without seeing the future and is thus compelled to live the present time” (63; translation mine). However, Quentin does not always stare at Shreve during the joint imagination. When Shreve stops his narration after suggesting “the possibility of incest,” Quentin remains silent and “his shoulders hugged inward and hunched, his face lowered” (259). One reason for Quentin’s looking down is that he is recalling his incestuous affection for Caddy.

Although some researchers, including Kartiganer and Kuyk, regard Quentin in The Sound and the Fury and Quentin in Absalom, Absalom! as a different character, Faulkner takes a stance to affirm the connection between The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom! in an interview:

Q. Sir, speaking of those two books, as you read Absalom, Absalom!, how much can a reader feel that this is the Quentin, the same Quentin, who appeared in The Sound and the Fury—that is, a man thinking about his own Compson family, his own sister?

A. To me he’s consistent. That he approached the Sutpen family with the same ophthalmia that he approached his own troubles, that he probably never saw anything very clearly, that his was just one of the thirteen ways to look at Sutpen, and his may have been the—one of the most erroneous. (University 274)

4. For the function of the third narrator, see Kuyk’s Sutpen’s Design (35-36, 90-91) and Hugh M. Ruppersburg’s Voice and Eye (96).

5. See Jones’s examination of the homoerotic elements in the Quentin–Shreve coalescence. Jones argues that “The way the novel embraces the pleasures of its own narrative, primarily by eroticizing the back-and-forth rhythmic union Quentin and Shreve achieve through their history telling, seems to recommend a kind of coming-out historiography—one that valorizes the disruptive potential of illicit pleasures that have been denied by the official histories—in order to transform the haunted-house legacy of the past” (361).

6. In this note, I analyze Quentin’s masculinity in terms of his relationship with Caddy. Quentin’s conviction of the southern chivalrous notions of womanhood makes him obsessed with protecting Caddy’s virginity and honor. In Southern Honor, Bertram Wyatt-Brown defines honor as “the cluster of ethical rules, most readily found in societies of small communities, by which judgments of behavior are ratified by community consensus” (xv). Also, in Hearts of Darkness, Wyatt-Brown writes: “As a code primarily privileging male
behavior, honor required a behavioral approximation of ideal manhood” (xiii). His examination of southern honor clarifies that the antebellum society underscored how dependent male identity was upon the esteem of one’s fellows and upon the behavior of one’s white women and black servants. The patriarchal regime in the Old South designated the female body as a male property to be protected. The violation of their property signified not only a sexual affront against women but also the most unbearable insult against white male southerners. Quentin’s obsession with his sister’s virginity evidences his anachronistic adherence to the southern traditional concept of “honor” despite the advent of modernization into the South. Quentin’s masculinity is contingent upon his sister, especially her virginity.

However, Caddy behaves as a new woman. According to Anne Firor Scott’s *The Southern Lady*, women of the upper class in the antebellum South were described as “a submissive wife whose reason for being was to love, honor, obey, and occasionally amuse her husband, to bring up his children and manage his household” (4). The southern slavery system reinforced the southern lady’s image as submissiveness and perfection, and “rigid enforcement of the most conservative definitions of sex roles ensured that women would not extend their moral duties beyond the home” (Evans 93). Even though some women experienced personal romance and noticed the confining space of the patriarchal family structure, most of them followed prevailing customs, marrying into a family. During Reconstruction, however, a new woman, like Caddy, emerged. Although most churches in the South emphasized the conservative view of women as ladies, the southern suffrage movement began in the early 1890s and was accomplished in the 1920s; as a consequence, southern women gradually extracted themselves from the patriarchal system. In this context, Caddy’s deviation from the code of the southern lady—her sexual acts out of wedlock—can be situated as female independence and challenge against patriarchy. Her slander on her father and mother—“I’d break that place open and drag them [my father and mother] out and I’d whip them good” (173)—in her childhood foreshadows her discontent with southern patriarchy. Her sexual relationship with Ames is a dramatic flight from the stereotyped image of the southern lady. As long as her virginity is a symbol of the honor of the Compsons, Caddy as a new woman continues to subvert Quentin’s masculinity as the oldest son who must traditionally protect his family’s women from the outsider.

The text repeatedly stresses Quentin’s failure to display manhood. Holding the point of the knife at her throat, Quentin says: “it wont take but a second just a second then I can do mine I can do mine then” (152). Yet he cannot stab the knife in her throat; on the contrary, Caddy behaves manly, asking “youll have to push it harder” (152). Quentin only shed tears, dropping the knife, which suggests “Quentin’s sexual and emotional impotence” (Ross *Reading Faulkner* 131). Moreover, when Quentin tries to take her to a ditch in order to prevent her reunion with Ames, he insists, “Im stronger than you” (154). Yet this expression ironically represents Quentin’s anxiety for his own weakness, and he eventually sees manly Ames holding Caddy in one arm “like she [is] no bigger than a child” (155).
The Sound and the Fury describes the clash in Quentin’s thinking and experience between his yearning for pre-modern value regarding women and blacks and his denial of modern value. Quentin’s suicide represents, on one hand, his endorsement of pre-Civil War values, and, on the other hand, his understanding of the invalidation of those values by the modernization and growing democratization of culture.

7. In this note, I examine the reason for Quentin’s suicide in relation to his father’s thoughts on time to clarify why Quentin recalls his memories over his sister as “sad.” At the beginning of Quentin’s section of The Sound and the Fury, Quentin recalls that when his father presented him with a watch inherited from his grandfather, his father called it “the mausoleum of all hope and desire” and explained the reason for giving it to him: “I give it to you not that you may remember time, but that you might forget it now and for a moment and not spend all your breath trying to conquer it “(76). His father warns him of the vacuity of life: even if a man wants to live with hope and desire, he is fated to die, and even if he resists time, he will be defeated by it, learning only his own folly and desire. Moreover, when his father adds “no battle is ever won” and “victory is an illusion of philosophers and fools” (76), he probably imagines not only the battle between time and men but also the Civil War from a standpoint of the South, regarding the War as a part of the battles between time and men. By twisting off the hands of the watch, Quentin fights against time and tries to “conquer” it. This action signifies his determination not to fall into nihilism like his father but to fight through the war with time even if he has no chance to win. On a metaphorical level, he tries to fight against time that accelerates the fall of his family.

On reconsidering Quentin’s suicide in relation to time, one of the most important conversations between Quentin and his father would be the following one:

If we could have just done something so dreadful and Father said That’s sad too people cannot do anything that dreadful they cannot even remember tomorrow what seemed dreadful today and I said, You can shirk all things and he said, Ah can you. . . . It’s not when you realize that nothing can help you—religion, pride, anything—it’s when you realize that you dont need any aid.

(80)

His father’s phrase—no matter how dreadful the things people do, they will forget its memory as time goes by—forces Quentin to acknowledge the power of time: time, which has brought about the decisive transformation of Caddy—her sexual maturation and promiscuity—, will abate his “sadness” over it someday. Quentin asserts, “You can shirk all things” (commit suicide), because he has to end his life in order to extricate himself from the cycle of human life controlled by time. In a response to his son’s assertion, Mr. Compson admonishes him to assuage his anguish by accepting time’s “sad” victory over men. The father repeatedly emphasizes the power of time to relieve grief:

. . . he and now this other [suicide] you are not lying now either but you are still blind to what is in yourself to that part of general truth the sequence of
natural events and their causes which shadows every man's brow even benjys you are not thinking of finitude you are contemplating an apotheosis in which a temporary state of mind will become symmetrical above the flesh and aware both of itself and of the flesh it will not quite discard you will not even be dead and i temporary and he you cannot bear to think that someday it [a temporary state of mind] will no longer hurt you like this now were getting at it. . . . (177)

Mr. Compson regards Quentin's distress over Caddy's sexuality as "general truth." He contends that the distress will disappear with the lapse of time and Quentin cannot endure that disappearance. Although he contends this with the hope that his son will overcome the absurdity of time as "general," it is the temporality of emotions that is the most unbearable to his son. Before committing suicide, Quentin is obsessed with his father's view of his feelings as "temporary." In a sense, his father's admonishment drives his son to kill himself.

Reflecting upon his father's thoughts on the "sad" effect of time, Quentin thinks over the world after his death:

Hats not unbleached and not hats. In three years I can not wear a hat. I could not. Was. Will there be hats then since I was not and not Harvard then. Where the best of thought Father said clings like dead ivy vines upon old dead brick. Not Harvard then. Not to me, anyway. Again. Sadder than was. Again. Saddest of all. Again. (95)

Since it is difficult to understand the quotation above, I first need to provide my interpretation of the passages, adding words: "Bleached hats which have not yet faded and unbleached hats. In three years I can be, not wearing a hat. From a point of three years later, I could be, not wearing a hat, because I will die today. I will be the man who once was. Will there be hats then? Since I will no longer exist then and Harvard, either. Father said that Harvard is the place where the best of thought clings like dead ivy vines upon old dead brick. Harvard will not be then. No. At least to me, Harvard will not be. Again. Sadder than was. Again. Saddest of all. Again."

In an answer to his father's claim that "was the saddest word of all there is nothing else in the world its not despair until time its not even time until it was" (178), he argues that "Again. Sadder than was. Again. Saddest of all. Again." It must be noted that "Again" follows the consciousness, "Harvard will not be then. No. At least to me, Harvard will not be." Reading Faulkner suggests that "For Quentin, the thought that he might have to repeat his suffering is more painful than the thought of oblivion" (71), but "Again" does not signify the repetition of Quentin's anguish. Although Quentin considers in an instant that Harvard will not exist, he reconsiders that it will do in the world, but for him at least it will not. Namely, he considers that the world will last forever even if he dies today. In the world where "Again" continues to exist, his grief will certainly go away. Therefore, for Quentin, "Again," the most fearful situation that all his grief will go away, is sadder than "was," the
state in which he preserves the fragments of his grief, and “Again” is the saddest word of all. It is now when he can suffer his sorrow that he has to kill himself.

8. The original phrases in Japanese are as follows: 「敗戦後の現実を生きてゆくために酒の力を借りてたどり着いた処世の率直な伝授」, 「妹の処女喪失に苦悩する息子に手向けた、父親としての愛情に根差した精一杯の嘘」 (後藤 282). In *Defeat and Literature*, Goto demonstrates that literary works in the Southern Renaissance are “the postwar literature” that flowered sixty years after the Civil War and that they can be characterized as “the third generation’s literature” by grandchildren whose grandfathers fought and lost in the war and whose fathers closed their eyes from the encroaching modernization. The book has not been translated into English, but we can read several Goto’s articles on southern literature in English such as “William Faulkner and Southern Literature in the Postmodern Era” in *The William Faulkner Journal of Japan on Internet* 1 and “Cultures of Defeat, from Twain and Henry Grady to Faulkner and Mishima” in *Mark Twain Studies* 3. For the examination of the Southern Renaissance as “the third generation’s literature,” see also Richard H. King’s *A Southern Renaissance* (34-35) and André Bleikasten’s “Fathers” (122).

9. It is one of the mysteries in the novel how and when Quentin recognized Bon’s black blood before the narration, but it is reasonable, as Cleanth Brooks insists, that Quentin heard it from Henry when he invaded the Sutpen’s house with Rosa (Toward 320-22). Parker, who agrees with Brooks’s insistence, argues that the Quentin–Shreve imagination is a historical correct even though it is partly conjured by them (*Novelistic* 139-40, *Questioning* 151). In the same vein, Porter contends: “while investing Quentin with the knowledge of Bon’s past, Faulkner withholds from us its source, the conversation between Henry and Quentin on that night in September at Sutpen’s Hundred” (274). For another excellent reading of *Absalom, Absalom!* in relation to *The Sound and the Fury*, see David Paul Ragan, especially 344-50.

10. Ambivalence designates “conflicts in which the positive and negative components of the emotional attitude are simultaneously in evidence and inseparable, and where they constitute a non-dialectical opposition which the subject, saying ‘yes’ and ‘no’ at the same time, is incapable of transcending” (Laplanche and Pontalis 28).

11. In “How Shreve Gets in to Quentin’s Pants,” Polk analyzes Quentin’s homoerotic elements, showing the attachment of “the homoerotic urge” and “the fear of homosexuality” to “his sensibilities and sensitivities” (29). Polk goes on to suggest that “the possibility that he is homosexual, his fear that he is, works toward his decision to commit suicide” (29).

12. Shoenberg notes the words from the Jill Faulkner Summers Archive, University of Virginia. John Matthew cites the same phrases, stating that “as if *Absalom* will deepen our understanding of Quentin’s suicide” (117).

13. The “Introduction” to *The Sound and the Fury*, as David Minter argues, both “focused on Faulkner’s attention on the problematic relations between a novelist and his novels” and “provided the occasion for his discovery of Quentin Compson as a narrator of
Thomas Sutpen’s story” (157). In “That Evening Sun,” a short story written around 1930, Faulkner described Quentin’s initiation into racial hierarchy. Nancy, a black servant of the Compsons, quits working because of her fear about her husband’s revenge on her illicit pregnancy. After seeing her nervous timidity, Quentin innocently asks “Who will do our washing now, Father?” (309). Nancy’s prostitution for money suggests the poverty of black people in the Jim Crow society. Quentin’s inquiry can be read as his embryonic self-awareness as a white southerner on the side of the discriminator. In Faulkner’s fictions, Quentin is the author’s double through whom he can observe and ponder the white–black relation in the South. For Quentin’s role as “auditor” and “recorder” in Faulkner’s stories, see Michael Millgate (28-35).

14. Shreve is a Canadian in the published version of the novel, but, according to Elisabeth Muhlenfeld’s investigation, his original character, Burke, is “northern born” in the early draft of the work (xxi). Shreve represents the northerner’s perspective because students at Harvard University often ask Quentin the same questions as Shreve’s: “Tell about the South. What’s it like there. What do they do there. Why do they live there. Why do they live at all” (142). In this sense Quentin’s telling is his response to the northerners’ inquiries about the South in the 1920s. Faulkner’s shift from northerner Shreve to Canadian Shreve resulted in the expansion of the narrative transmission into the whole world beyond the framework of the United States. Quentin’s thinking expresses that expansion with beautiful image: “Maybe nothing ever happens once and is finished. Maybe happen is never once but like ripples maybe on water after the pebble sinks, the ripples moving on, spreading, the pool attached by a narrow umbilical water-cord to the next pool which the first pool feeds, has fed, did feed, let this second pool contain a different temperature of water, a different molecularity of having seen, felt, remembered, reflect in a different tone the infinite unchanging sky. . .” (210).

15. For the comparison of the refrain “Nevermore” in the novel with Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher,” see Parker Imagination (135-36).
Bigger’s Divided Self:
Violence and Homosociality in *Native Son*

Bigger Thomas’s violence in Richard Wright’s *Native Son* (1940) has provoked a vigorous critical debate between those who read it as a creative action through which Bigger achieves self-recognition and affirms his human identity and those who attack it for reinforcing stereotypes of African-American men and exaggerating their misogyny. There is merit in both views. Bigger’s murder of Mary Dalton can be interpreted as a necessary means for creating a new self, yet his rape and murder of Bessie Mears suggests a male-centric narrative which represses and silences the black female voice. However, the fact that Bigger is subjected to complex social forces—racial oppression and cultural discourses—that divide his sense of selfhood makes problematical any simple apology for or criticism of his violence. His melancholic identification with his father, who was killed by whites, releases his self-destructive impulses and leads to the formation of a tough persona in order to avoid
feeling guilty for his family’s suffering. As a result, Bigger’s identity splits into two conflicted selves: an assertive one among blacks and a submissive one in front of whites. His struggle to balance the two selves not only produces his gender-divided views of two women—Mary as passive and subversive, and Bessie as obedient and strong-willed—but also provokes his violence against them. By the novel’s end, he is in the process of becoming unified, as his tears indicate, but this unification is brought to nothing by the white male power structure in the Chicago of the 1930s, a homosociality characterized by fear of black male sexuality under the influence of national racist discourse and anxiety about black solidarity with the Communist Party. To some extent, then, James Baldwin’s argument is correct: “The failure of [Native Son] lies in its rejection of life, the human being, the denial of his beauty, dread, power, in its insistence that it is his categorization alone which is real and which cannot be transcended” (23). Paradoxically, however, springing out of the depths of his despair is Bigger’s sincere hope for achieving human solidarity and transcending racial categorization. His “faint, wry, bitter smile” (430) in the novel’s last scene expresses both his unresolved mixed feelings—pain, isolation, and despair—and the recovery of his humanity in the darkness of racism.

1. The Social Construction of Bigger’s Assertive Self
Native Son recounts how the assertive, masculine side of Bigger is constructed in opposition to his family’s plight and to the white racism that oppresses them all. In the opening scene, in which Bigger dangles a killed rat in his sister Vera’s face until she faints, his mother tells him she sometimes wonders why she gave birth to him and blames him for the family’s poverty: “We wouldn’t have to live in this garbage dump if you had any manhood in you” (8). She defines “manhood” as the ability to earn money and support the family; however, because of racial oppression, Bigger can get only menial jobs that do not pay enough to let him occupy the traditional male role of breadwinner. Mrs. Thomas’s failure to understand his difficulty ends in “creating a sense of guilt in Bigger—guilt about his inability to function as a man, guilt about his inability to support his family, guilt about what he does with the other boys when she is not physically watching over him” (Harris 65).

Important to Bigger’s struggle towards manhood is the killing of his father in a riot in Mississippi when Bigger was a child (74). At the end of the nineteenth century the South entered the “phase of heightened violence, a phase that reached its tragic climax in Atlanta in September 1906,” and “the whites seemed to have the capacity to punish the blacks almost at will, in any area, and as severely as they wanted—indeed, until they exhausted themselves in the effort if they so chose” (Williamson 189-90). Keeping in these historical facts, Bigger’s father was probably murdered by whites, and Bigger must realize that his father’s death led to the family’s predicament. Much as Wright felt responsible for supporting his impoverished
family after his father’s desertion (Fabre 14), Bigger, the eldest son, must have felt obligated to replace his dead father. In addition, as the sudden death of Wright’s uncle in Wright’s childhood “crystallized once and for all his vague dread of the white world into hatred” (Fabre 22), so the death of Bigger’s father probably implanted in Bigger his fear and hatred of white people. Importantly, Bigger is unwilling to reveal his feelings about his father’s death to Jan Erlone:

“And what was done about it?” Jan asked.
“Nothing, far as I know.”
“How do you feel about it?”
“I don’t know.” (74-75)

This unwillingness is no doubt due in part to the fact that Jan is a white man who Bigger associates with his father’s murderers. But if Bigger truly does not know what his feelings are concerning his father’s murder and the failure of the justice system to punish his killers, some form of repression is at work.

As Claudia Tate indicates, “Wright read widely in psychoanalysis, and he used his understanding of its tenets in his writing” (94). In “Mourning and Melancholy,” included in the Collected Papers of Sigmund Freud that were among the numerous psychoanalytical works in Wright’s library (Tate 206 n7), Freud describes the melancholic person as one who has incorporated a lost love object into the ego through an unconscious identification with it. This identification, Freud argues, enables the ego to take on attributes of that object and preserve the object within the very structure of the self. Wright may have had the
psychoanalytic concept of identification in mind when, late in the novel, he describes
Bigger’s response to his family’s seeing him in jail: “He identified himself with his family
and felt their naked shame under the eyes of white folks” (296). It is likely that Bigger’s
anger at white racism owes something to a similar identification with his lost father. As Freud
emphasizes, however, in melancholia anger seems directed primarily at the ego rather than at
external objects, and the melancholic suffers “an extraordinary diminution in his self-regard,
an impoverishment of his ego on a grand scale” that leads to intense self-castigation: “he
reproaches himself, vilifies himself and expects to be cast out and punished” (24). In reality,
Freud contends, “the shadow of the object” (27) has fallen on the ego, meaning that what
seems to be self-vilification is actually repressed anger directed at the lost loved object
incorporated into the ego by means of identification. The anger may come from the
ambivalence characteristic of all love relationships or from “all those situations of being
slighted, neglected or disappointed, which can import opposed feelings of love and hate into
the relationship” (29). Bigger’s love for his father, we might suspect, is mixed with
unconscious resentment for abandoning Bigger to the mercy of an oppressive white society
and to the emasculating criticism of his mother, especially when we consider an “outstanding
feature” of melancholia that puzzles Freud: “his fears and asseverations of becoming poor”
(26).
Focusing on the “fury of repressed hostility toward black maternal characters” in *Native Son* and Wright’s other works, Tate describes Wright’s “urtext” as having “a primary plot of female or maternal betrayal and resulting male ambivalence” that anticipates the more overt “racial plot” (112). That fury is certainly evident in Bigger’s attitude towards his mother, as well as toward the rest of the Thomases: “He hated his family because he knew that they were suffering and that he was powerless to help them. He knew that the moment he allowed himself to feel to its fullness how they lived, the shame and misery of their lives, he would be swept out of himself with fear and despair. So he held toward them an attitude of iron reserve; he lived with them, but behind a wall, a curtain.” This hatred of others does not seem to involve the self-destructive aggression of the melancholic, but Wright does not stop there: “And toward himself he was even more exacting. He knew that the moment he allowed what his life meant to enter fully into his consciousness, he would either kill himself or someone else. So he denied himself and acted tough” (10). With this turn towards the thought of suicide, Bigger entertains the strategy of the melancholic who takes revenge on the internalized lost loved object “by the circuitous path of self-punishment” (Freud 30). Bigger, however, does not go down that path. Certainly his melancholic identification with his lost father produces his self-destructive impulse, but the surrounding racial oppression constantly poses a menace to his ego and provokes his father’s resentment against whites, so that his aggression tends to be directed at the external world, at white society rather than the
ego. Because the direct release of aggression against whites is socially prohibited, his sadistic impulse smolders and is partially turned against his own ego. He must therefore strengthen the defense mechanism of “toughness” in order to protect himself against shame and guilt for his family’s suffering and to prevent suicide or murder.

This toughness, this assertive masculinity, prevents Bigger’s bonding with other black males. Aime J. Ellis examines how Bigger, Gus, G. H., and Jack connect with one another by means of role playing. First “playing white” on a street corner, then “playing tough” in a poolroom, and finally “playing around” in a movie theater, the young men “foster the development of black male identities against (though largely informed by) an environment of racist repression and negation” (185). As Ellis points out, however, “playing tough” is “destructive because it violently works to threaten communal harmony as well as to disrupt the black male community it purports to nurture” (190). Bigger brings up the plan to rob a delicatessen owned by a white man, Mr. Blum, as “a symbolic challenge of the white world’s rule over” blacks (14), but he himself ruins the plan when his fear is exposed by Gus in front of the other fellows. At that point Bigger defends against emasculation by projecting this fear onto Gus and feminizing him, forcing him to lick the phallic knife to signify Bigger’s restored tough masculinity, but at great cost to their friendship.

In scenes like this, Wright shows how Sedgwick’s concept of “homosociality” does not apply to the black male community in Native Son. According to Sedgwick, men in
patriarchal societies establish homosociality, a strong social network between men, by exchanging women and proving themselves heterosexual. However, Bigger and his friends do not constitute a black patriarchy but are themselves oppressed by the white patriarchy. In “How ‘Bigger’ Was Born,” Wright makes his intention explicit: “I had also to show what oppression had done to Bigger’s relationships with his own people, how it had split him off from them, how it had baffled him; how oppression seems to hinder and stifle in the victim those very qualities of character which are so essential for an effective struggle against the oppressor” (452-53).

2. Bigger’s Submissive Self: His Hatred of Mary and Jan

In *Black Boy* (1945), Wright explains how his own assertive, aggressive self was constituted in relation to white people. When he was in elementary school, the white and black boys

began to play our traditional racial roles as though we had been born to them. . . . All the frightful descriptions we had heard about each other, all the violent expressions of hate and hostility that had seeped into us from our surroundings, came now to the surface to guide our actions. . . . Whenever we caught a white boy on our side [of the neighborhood] we stoned him; if we strayed to their side, they stoned us. (83)

In *The Outsider* (1953), Wright demonstrates how a black man’s submissive self also emerges in relation to white expectations when Cross Damon tries to disguise himself as
Lionel by assuming “the role of a subservient Negro” who is “so scared and ignorant that any white American acting out the normal content of his racial consciousness would never dream that he was up to anything deceptive” (214). Because he is intelligent and conscious of his performance, Cross always feels alienated from an ideal, assertive masculinity and develops a strong hatred toward himself and others.

In *Black Boy* and *The Outsider*, Wright shows how a white-supremacist society compels black males like Bigger to have double selves, a version of W. E. B. Du Bois’s “double-consciousness” (45). Bigger, on the one hand, displays his “tough” masculine self among his own people; on the other hand, he performs his subservient feminized self in front of white people. Both selves are always conditioned by whites: “[Bigger] felt that [white people] ruled him, even when they were far away and not thinking of him, ruled him by conditioning him in his relations to his own people” (115). In order to survive in a racist environment, he has to balance these two selves, but since the aggressive component of his assertive self cannot be unleashed consciously and directly against his white oppressors, when he finds himself isolated among whites it can only turn inward.

In contrast to his violent behavior among his own people, when Bigger visits the rich white Daltons he can enact only his submissive self. Although he feels “fear” and “hate” (44), he responds to the white servant Peggy and Mr. Dalton with a submissive “Yessum” and “Yessuh” and does not meet his future employer’s gaze: “He had not raised his eyes to the
level of Mr. Dalton’s face once since he had been in the house” (47-48). When worrying about picking up the letter he has dropped in the Dalton house, he wonders, “Why was he acting and feeling this way? He wanted to wave his hand and blot out the white man who was making him feel this. If not that, he wanted to blot himself out” (47). He hates both the compulsory performance and Mr. Dalton, whose presence forces him to play the stereotypical Jim Crow. In a society in which a black man’s violence against a white man is strictly taboo, Bigger’s aggression again turns inward: “Every time I get to thinking about me being black and they being white, me being here and they being there, I feel like something awful’s going to happen to me” (20). As we see here, when the balance of his assertive and submissive selves is threatened, he falls into a passive state in which violence is what happens to him rather being a means of asserting his manhood.

Bigger’s double masculinity produces his double view of Mary as both passive sexual attraction and active transgressor of racial boundaries. As if illustrating Laura Mulvey’s argument that in cinema the female body is “passive,” an “erotic object” for “active” male spectators to project their fantasies onto (Mulvey 27), Mary becomes the object of Bigger’s erotic gaze when he and Jack see her in a newsreel depicting rich debutantes disporting on a Florida beach. Before the projector rolls, Bigger and Jack compete in a masturbation contest, and just before Mary appears on screen they become aroused again by images of “smiling, dark-haired white girls lolling on the gleaming sands of a beach” (31). After taking vicarious
pleasure in watching Mary being kissed, handled, and chased by a white man, Bigger asserts, “She was a hot-looking number, all right” (33); he is further aroused when Jack teases him about the sexual gratification he can expect when he starts driving for the Daltons: “Ah, them rich white women’ll go to bed with anybody, from a poodle on up. They even have their chauffeurs” (33). Still, Bigger’s fantasy about intimacy with Mary once he becomes her chauffeur stops short of sexual intercourse. “[M]aybe,” he thinks, “she had a secret sweetheart” she would tell only him about, and “maybe she would give him money not to tell” (34). Consciously, at least, he cannot imagine asserting his manhood enough to replace a white lover, even with such a passive object of desire as Jack portrays her to be.

In the Dalton’s house, however, Mary is not the girl he saw in the newsreel, a girl who “his mind could do with . . . as it liked”; in her home, she is a “crazy girl” who “walked over everything, put herself in the way” (55), who “waded right in and hit him between the eyes with her words and ways” (59). While Bigger’s misogyny enables him to feel superior to his mother and Bessie, Mary does not fit the binary oppositions in his mind between a controlling man and a controlled woman and between blacks and whites.

As his excursion as Mary’s driver shows, Bigger can respond only with fear and rage to any effort to reconcile the divisions within himself and his society. While he is driving Mary around, she puzzles him by declaring, “I’m on your side” and “I’m going to meet a
friend of mine who’s also a friend of yours” (64). The “hot-looking number” of the newsreel is now hard to categorize:

She was an odd girl, all right. He felt something in her over and above the fear she inspired in him. She responded to him as if he were human, as if he lived in the same world as she. And he had never felt that before in a white person. . . . The guarded feeling of freedom he had while listening to her was tangled with the hard fact that she was white and rich, a part of the world of people who told him what he could and could not do. (65)

When they pick up Jan for a surreptitious rendezvous, Jan’s insistence that Bigger shake his hand and that they call one another by their first names also disturbs Bigger’s equilibrium. Ironically, the white liberal’s studied efforts to ignore his skin force him out of his all-but-unconscious submissive role and make him so intensely “conscious of that black skin” as to cause momentary self-annihilation: “He felt that he had no physical existence at all right then; he was something he hated, the badge of shame which he knew was attached to a black skin” (67). As Freud observes, “the ego can kill itself only if . . . it can treat itself as an object” (30).

At the moment that he sees himself reduced to a “badge of shame” and an object for Jan “to look at . . . and be amused,” Bigger imagines the death of his body, if not his ego, and had he not also at that moment “felt toward Mary and Jan a dumb, cold, and inarticulate hate” (67) he might well have acted on the self-destructive impulse. Unable to express either his assertive or passive self in the “No Man’s Land” (67) he now occupies, he is left “hovering unwanted between two worlds—between powerful America and his own stunted place in life” (Wright, “How ‘Bigger’” 451).
Yet when Mary and Jan begin to sing the black spiritual “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot,” Bigger can briefly affirm his identity as a black male in opposition to whites ignorant of his culture. For Du Bois, “Swing Low” was one of the ten “master songs” that were “peculiarly characteristic of the slave” (268) and that, like all “Sorrow Songs,” breathed “a faith in the ultimate justice of things” (274). By the time Wright composed Native Son, a theory had emerged that slave spirituals contained double meanings—one for the white masters and one for the slaves themselves—and constituted “a graphic and revealing record of slave resistance and earthly aspirations” (White 256). As Charsee Charlotte Lawrence-McIntyre observes, “every reference to Elijah’s chariot or the gospel train alludes to the Underground Railroad” (398). It is probable, then, that in the twentieth century “Swing Low” began to represent for blacks the disjunction between southern slaves’ expectations of freedom in the North and the exploitation they actually experienced there under Jim Crow. Whether Bigger reads a double meaning in the chariot is unclear, but it might well recall his own family’s migration—their hope to escape the southern racism that led to his father’s death and their bitter disappointment at the oppression they found in Chicago. In any event, when he smiles “derisively” at Mary and Jan and thinks, “Hell, that ain’t the tune” (77), he for once at least finds a source of pride in his blackness and despises their frivolous singing. And Mary certainly is ignorant of the meaning hidden in “Coming fer to carry me home” as the family car carries her home where the charioteer will not prove to be a savior.
3. Failure of the Assertive Self: The Murders of Mary and Bessie

Beginning with the opening scene in which he terrifies his sister with the dead rat, Bigger attempts to balance his submissive self, which is thoroughly conditioned by whites, by asserting control over others. For example, he hopes to “rule others” in order to escape from his “tight morass of fear and shame” (115), and he enjoys Bessie’s “agony” over his plan to exact a ransom for Mary because he feels “the worth of himself in her bewildered desperation” (148). These sadistic behaviors are the product of a frustrated manhood that ultimately seeks expression in a violent sexual assault.

As discussed above, Bigger’s sexual desire for the Mary projected on the movie screen is sublimated into a desire to be paid by her for keeping silent about her “secret lover,” an obvious substitute for himself. But when forced into intimacy with Mary and Jan, her actual secret lover, Bigger finds it increasingly difficult to restrain his libido. As Sondra Guttman argues, Mary’s interest in labor unions metaphorically indicates that “her politically transgressive desires are expressed as sexually transgressive desires” (173). When Bigger, looking in the rearview mirror, watches Jan in sexual intercourse with Mary, the sexual/racial boundary becomes fluid in his mind, the “stiffening feeling in his loins” followed by his body’s becoming “slouched again” (78) reenacting Jan’s tumescence and detumescence.
Moreover, the taboo of black males’ sexual desire for white women paradoxically enhances his desire for Mary, who, in her drunken state, makes herself as available as Jack has predicted she would. Filled with “a mingled feeling of helplessness, admiration, and hate” (82) for Mary and fearful of detection by her father, he yet becomes “enveloped in a sense of physical elation” (83), and by the time he helps her to her bed the racial barriers are virtually down as he momentarily assumes Jan’s place as a sexual subject desiring a white woman: “He tightened his fingers on her breasts, kissing her again, feeling her move toward him” (85).

When Mrs. Dalton enters the room, as Maurice O. Wallace points out, her racial gaze indicts black men as “consummate sexual outlaws” despite her blindness (37). Frozen in the “hysterical terror” of a nightmare at the sight of the “white blur . . . standing by the door, silent, ghostlike” (85), Bigger experiences Mrs. Dalton as the return of the repressed taboo against miscegenation that he is about to transgress. Perhaps fearing that if she should discover him he would be lynched, he first wants “to knock her out of his way and bolt from the room” but then, in his desperation, displaces onto Mary his hatred of “the white blur moving toward him in the shadows,” smothering her with a pillow as she struggles in a macabre parody of sexual excitement (85). His semi-accidental murder of Mary dramatizes the conflict between a black male’s enactment of subjectivity and the social prohibition against this enactment. He wants to assert his masculinity in sexual intercourse with a hated,
feared, yet desired white woman, but the entrance of Mrs. Dalton forbids his assertion. At the moment of Mary’s death, Bigger is not filled with orgasmic pleasure; rather, he is “intimidated to the core by the awesome white blur floating toward him” (86).

Like his murder of Mary, Bigger’s burning of her corpse in the basement furnace to destroy the evidence can be interpreted as a symbolic sexual act motivated by hatred and fear. As such, it calls to mind by contrast Gaston Bachelard’s discussion in *The Psychoanalysis of Fire* of prescientific conceptions of fire, especially its “sexualization” by alchemists who associated the concentrated flame in the alchemical furnace with the “masculine principle . . . a principle of power, active and sudden as the spark and the power of will.” In the “meditation of the lonely” alchemist, Bachelard writes, the “inner, masculine fire” can “open bodies” in an act of “total possession” that “is sometimes an obvious sexual act . . . performed with . . . the Rod of Fire” (53). While the alchemist’s “bodies” are only figurative female bodies, the corpse Bigger opens with knife and hatchet is no metaphor. And while the alchemist’s fire expresses the masculine will and achieves its highest value in its association with sexual reproduction, the fire in the Daltons’ furnace expresses only deathly rage: “A huge red bed of coals blazed and quivered with molten fury. . . . The fire seethed. . . . The heat blasted his hands” (91). No new life will emerge from the opening of Mary’s body on this bed, and the act itself is hardly an expression of masculine will: “He paused, hysterical.
He wanted to run. . . . But he could not. He must not. He had to burn this girl” (92). Hysteria, that quintessential female malady, does not signify masculinity achieved.

Only in retrospect the next day is Bigger able to construct a version of the murder as a willed expression of male potency. Assuring himself that he had acted with “daring,” he feels he has “created a new life for himself . . . that was all his own.” While knowing “he had killed by accident,” he persuades himself that “in a certain sense” the deed was not accidental but the “natural” climax of his previous life: “The hidden meaning of his life—a meaning which others did not see and which he had always tried to hide—had spilled out.” But a meaning that has “spilled out” despite efforts to hide it seems no more to warrant his “terrified pride” than did his earlier ejaculating in the movie theater (105-06). Mary’s murder certainly “results from a kind of outrage with the white world” (Harris 83), and as he looks back on it the act seems to be the first time in his life he was “equal” (164) to white men. But his “[e]lation” is based on the delusion that “he, a black timid Negro” has carried out a violent act that his “blind” family and “blind” whites like Jan and the Daltons would never suspect him capable of. He may believe that his assertive self has balanced his passive self, but his confidence in being able to “control himself” from now on is another delusion (106-07).

Bigger does, however, seem to act with more autonomy in his rape and murder of Bessie. Like Mary, Bessie appears to Bigger as a mirror image of his own divided self.
Walking beside her after a period of tender lovemaking, he feels “that there were two
Bessies: one a body that he had just had and wanted badly again; the other was in Bessie’s
face; it asked questions; it bargained and sold the other Bessie to advantage. He wished he
could . . . blot out, kill, sweep away the Bessie on Bessie’s face and leave the other helpless
and yielding before him” (140). The Bessie that buys and sells the other Bessie by
exchanging sex for liquor functions like the dominant white society and perhaps conjures up
in Bigger’s mind the current economic system that oppresses him. At any rate, his violence
towards her is a much more conscious political statement than the symbolic rape of Mary had
been. Before raping Bessie, he considers rape a gesture of resistance of the cornered against
the oppressor: “rape was not what one did to women. Rape was what one felt when one’s
back was against a wall and one had to strike out, whether one wanted to or not, to keep the
pack from killing one” (227-28). Rather than simply offering a facile justification of sexual
violence against women, Bigger in his desperation seeks to find in the sexual control and
possession of women a means of violent resistance to oppression.

What Bigger does not realize, however, is that in raping Bessie he is once again, as he
had in replacing Jan in relation to Mary, unconsciously assuming the place of a white man
rather than asserting his own black masculinity. Early in the novel, Bigger’s desire to be
white is shown when he and Gus, “playing white,” imitate “the ways and manners of white
folks” (17). The episode in the movie theater later that day emphasizes this desire. As Ross
Pudaloff points out, Bigger is strongly influenced by mass culture, especially by the “popular figure of thirties melodrama, the tough guy” (96) found in the period’s gangster movies and detective stories. Although Pudaloff does not analyze Trader Horn, the movie Bigger and Jack watch after seeing Mary in the newsreel, Bigger’s response to the film’s depiction of black sexuality is revealing: “He looked at Trader Horn unfold and saw pictures of naked black men and women whirling in wild dances and heard drums beating and then gradually the African scene changed and was replaced by images in his own mind of white men and women dressed in black and white clothes, laughing, talking, drinking and dancing” (33). Bigger then remembers his mother’s telling him “that rich white people liked Negroes” and recalls the story of a “Negro chauffer who had married a rich white girl” and had been given money by her family to leave the country (34). Finally his thoughts lead to the fantasy, discussed above, in which Mary gives him money not to reveal her “secret lover.” By means of this series of substitutions, then, the excessive, transgressive, and violent sexuality that Bigger shares with the black Africans on the screen has been sublimated into a fantasy of entering a white world of luxury based not on the exchange of women for money characteristic of patriarchal society but on the patriarch’s gift of money and white women to a deserving poor black man.

In her tender lovemaking, Bessie offers something more real than this fantasy: temporary forgetfulness of “the whole blind world which had made him ashamed and afraid”
as he is “willingly dragged into a warm night sea to rise renewed to the surface to face a world he hated” (135). If there ever is an opportunity for Bigger to balance his passive and assertive sides, this is it. He cannot, however, deal with the Bessie who trades in her own flesh. In an attempt to “blot out, kill, sweep away the Bessie on Bessie’s face and leave the other helpless and yielding before him,” he unconsciously identifies not with rich white men who like Negroes but with rich white masters who took their sexual chattel by force.

Even in his violent rebellion, then, Bigger is still conditioned by white society. When he tells Bessie how he accidentally smothered Mary in her bedroom, she knows instantly what he has repressed but recognizes as true the moment she states it: “They’ll say you raped her” (227). As will be discussed below, what W. J. Cash calls “the rape complex” (117) was not confined to the South. Racial stereotypes were spread through the North by newspapers, fiction, posters, photographs, and movies, and, as both Bessie and Bigger recognize, white Northerners would automatically assume a sexual motive for any assault on a white woman.

Bigger’s mind too has been steeped in the socially dominant dialogue, and there is evidence that his rape and murder of Bessie is the faithful execution of the stereotypical racial plot. The day after he kills Mary, Bigger sees Bessie to satisfy his desire to feel “stronger” (129), and when he makes love to her he imagines that he is continuing the interrupted act of the previous night: “He placed his hands on her breasts just as he had placed them on Mary’s last night and he was thinking of that while he kissed her” (134). This passage suggests that
Bigger is unconsciously gratifying his sexual desire for Mary through his penetration of Bessie’s body. Later, when he forces himself on Bessie before he bludgeons her with a brick, he is not thinking of Mary, but his urgent need for Bessie to see his “huge warm pole of desire” (233) seems strange, considering their many previous sexual encounters, and makes more sense as an unconscious effort to display his manhood before the white woman who he once feared.

One thing is certain, though: Bigger’s rape of Bessie is finally no more an assertion of masculinity than was the smothering of Mary: “He had to now. don’t Bigger don’t He was sorry, but he had to. He. He could not help it. . . . She should should should look. Look at how he was. . . . He was feeling bad about how she would feel but he could not help it now” (234). Even if he is not unconsciously raping Mary, by repeatedly insisting that he “could not help it” he performs the uncontrollable sexuality of the white culture’s racial mythology.

4. White Homosociality and Bigger’s Recovery of Humanity

The rage that Bigger’s murder of Mary releases among Northern whites is due largely to the spread of “the rape complex” that emerged in the South after Reconstruction, when millions of newly freed black men seemed to threaten the chastity of white women. According to Cash, southern white men were less interested in protecting “the women
themselves” than in defending “masculine pride and principles” (xxiii)—that is, in maintaining an unbroken line of descent from father to son and upholding white men’s homosocial interests and privileges. We see how such attitudes have spread to the Chicago of the 1930s when, shortly after his inquest, Bigger reads an article in the Chicago Tribune with the headline “NEGRO RAPIST FAINTS AT INQUEST” (279). Quoting the exclamation of “a terrified young white girl” that Bigger “looks exactly like an ape!” the article is filled with stereotypical images of Bigger as “a jungle beast” who raped, murdered, and incinerated Mary “in the grip of a brain-numbing sex passion” that distinguishes him from “the average, harmless, genial, grinning southern darky so beloved by the American people” (279-80). At the end of the article appears a virulently racist report about young Bigger from the editor of a Mississippi newspaper, the Jackson Daily Star. Bigger, the editor claims, sprang from “a shiftless and immoral” local family to become “an irreformable sneak thief” of the sort that whites “in Dixie” know can be influenced only by lynching “at the hands of indignant citizens.” The editor concludes by urging Northerners to adopt the Southern practices of strict segregation to keep black men from attacking white women, minimal education for blacks, and the “psychological deterrent” of imposed deference to whites. “We have found,” the editor announces with cold-blooded detachment, “that the injection of an element of constant fear has aided us greatly in handling the problem” (280-81). White Americans love the
“harmless, genial, grinning southern darky,” in other words, because he represents the triumph of their power to control the dangerous impulses they think rule the black psyche.

These attitudes have obviously become congenial to Northern whites in the novel; even psychologists at the University of Chicago seem to have accepted the rape complex, for, as one professor tells a reporter, black men believe “that white women are more attractive than the women of their own race. They just can’t help themselves” (366). In echoing Bigger’s own thoughts while raping Mary (“he could not help it”), the passage lets us see how much racial stereotypes control Bigger’s behavior, but it also indicates how racist pseudo-science deepens white male anxiety in the North. It is not surprising that shortly after his arrest Bigger is confronted with a flaming cross that “made him want to curse and kill” rather than “kneel and cry” (377) and that a violent mob is continually in the background of the later chapters. For among the consequences of the great migration of southern blacks to the North in the early decades of the twentieth century was a “resurgent Ku Klux Klan” and a dramatic increase of “[l]ynchings and other forms of racist violence” (Kimmel 129).

When Boris A. Max asserts that white men punish black men out of guilt for their own racism, he indicates that the homosociality of Northern white males is sustained by the psychological defense mechanism of projection, “a defense of very primitive origin” whereby the things a person “refuses to recognize or rejects in himself . . . are expelled from the self and located in another person or thing” (Laplanche and Pontalis 349). As Max argues,
“Of all things, men do not like to feel that they are guilty of wrong, and if you make them feel
guilt, they will try desperately to justify it on any grounds; but, failing that, . . . they will kill
that which evoked in them the condemning sense of guilt” (389-90). In other words, whites
who maintain their hegemony by oppressing blacks and exploiting the working class would
never admit to these practices but readily see the threat of oppression and exploitation in
others such as Communists and working-class blacks. White Chicagoans especially hate Max,
as Clare Eby explains, because as a Communist he functions as “the most convenient target
for [white supremacists’] anxieties about the mulatto nation aided and abetted by whites who
betrayed their ‘race’” (449). The State’s Attorney Buckley and the northern media insist that
the Communist Party aims to promote racial equality by defending Bigger, a charge
guaranteed to raise anxiety about the loss of white homosocial authority.

In contrast to the white community united in its turning Bigger into an Other, a “Negro
rapist and killer” (256), Bigger finds a way to unify his divided self and recover his humanity
by relating to others. To be sure, his reconstitution of identity is male-centric in the sense that
he sacrifices two female lives and does not reflect deeply on Bessie’s rape. He does feel some
“sympathy” for Bessie when her body is exhibited in court and understands her anger, “an
old feeling that Bessie had often described to him when she had come from long hours of hot
toil in the white folk’s kitchens, a feeling of being forever commanded by others so much
that thinking and feeling for one’s self was impossible” (331). Yet he never experiences
remorse for killing her and does not attempt to understand why she resorts to alcohol to
forget her pain. Bigger’s acquisition of humanity, then, is incomplete in its failure to
acknowledge women’s hardships and sorrows.

Even so, after his arrest the wall he has erected between himself and others begins to
crumble. When his mother tells him between sobs that his plight has made his sister Vera too
ashamed to attend school, he realizes that he has not been “alone” as he had assumed, that he
had made his family “suffer” because they were “a part of him, not only in blood, but in
spirit” (298). At this point, his assertive self refuses to yield to the tears and embraces of his
mother and siblings, but when he feels himself “alone, profoundly, inescapably” after he
signs his confession, he achieves a moment in which his assertive, masculine side and his
passive, feminine side fuse:

He lay on the cold floor sobbing; but really he was standing up strongly with
contrite heart, holding his life in his hands, staring at it with a wondering
question. He lay on the cold floor sobbing; but really he was pushing forward
with his puny strength against a world too big and too strong for him. He lay
on the cold floor sobbing; but really he was groping forward with fierce zeal
into a welter of circumstances which he felt contained a water of mercy for the
thirst of his heart and brain. (310)

For men bound by strict gender codes, tears are unmanly. Yet the unmanliness of Bigger’s
tears does not signify his indulgence in sentimentality or self-pity. Rather, it reveals the depth
of his loneliness and despair and reflects the transformation of his “tough” masculinity.³ By
repeatedly insisting that Bigger is “really” actively resisting his circumstances and “groping”
for mercy even as he apparently lies passively “on the cold floor sobbing,” the narrator offers
a vision of manliness counter to the only one Bigger has known. When Bigger recognizes that all his life he could never respond to “echoes of his feelings in the hearts of others” out of fear of “losing face with the world which had first evoked in him the song of manhood” (311), he begins to redefine his masculinity in connection with others.

Max’s sincere attempts to recognize Bigger’s feelings and experiences and to save his life further his transformation. Having found in Max’s questions “a recognition of his life, of his feelings, of his person that he had never encountered before,” Bigger feels the stirrings of a “hope” that whites might be “people like him” rather than a “white looming mountain of hate,” and he tries to “see himself in relation to other men” (360-61). This “desperate need” for human connection leads to a utopian vision of racial equality: “he was standing in the midst of a vast crowd of men, white men and black men and all men, and the sun’s rays melted away the many differences, the colors, the clothes, and drew what was common and good upward toward the sun” (362). The image here of a flowing liquid that absorbs polar opposites anticipates the moment that follows, when Bigger, as the many active verbs indicate, again expresses an emerging new masculinity by weeping in sorrow: “He ran to the door and caught the cold steel bars in his hot hands and gripped them tightly, holding himself erect. His face rested against the bars and he felt tears roll down his cheeks. His wet lips tasted salt. He sank to his knees and sobbed: ‘I don’t want to die. . . . I don’t want to die . . . .’ ” (363; emphasis mine). Flowing tears signal the breaking down of polarities—of masculine
and feminine, wish for life and despair over death—as Bigger seeks the single, unified masculine self that racism has denied him.

This is not to say that Bigger’s utopian vision is achievable or that sobbing over his lost chance at a fully human life will help him face electrocution. Not even Max fully appreciates Bigger’s individuality, for in court he uses Bigger as “a test symbol” to reform the social system (383), and he responds to Bigger’s life story with “amazement” (425) and “terror” (429). Knowing he must die under the gaze of white men who never understood him, Bigger seems to deny the transformation indicated by his tears. He tells Max he is determined not to cry at his execution, and, to Max’s horror, he declares that “what I killed for, I am!” and that at the moment he took another’s life he felt “I was really alive in this world” (429). These shocking declarations imply not a rejection of human solidarity but a means of coping with the knowledge that, as Max tells him, “Men die alone” (424). When he tells Max at their parting, “I’m all right. For real, I am” (429), he affirms the reality of an ego, an “I am,” that faces extinction not with hatred of whites but with a gesture of “friendship” (292) to the man he has wronged: “Tell. . . . Tell Mister. . . . Tell Jan hello” (430). As Robyn Wiegman argues, however, this hesitant attempt to “form male bonds” contrasts with “the image of 1930s progressive politics” offered earlier in the novel (“the sun’s rays melted away the many differences”), and *Native Son* underscores “the failure of male bonds to serve their utopic function.” Although Wiegman is right to point out “the extremity of hatred and violence that
ushers the black male into the patriarchal province of the masculine” (103), we need also to recognize the intensity of hope and trust that motivates Bigger to seek interracial communion.

“Who will win?” Max has asked about the class and racial struggle for existence. Not just the side with the greater numbers is his answer, but “the side that feels life most, the side with the most humanity” (428). Bigger’s “faint, wry, bitter smile” in the novel’s last paragraph intimates that had he survived he might have sided with the winners, for it manifests the complex and contradictory emotional life that constitutes his humanity: a sense of fulfillment from sharing his peculiar experiences with a sympathetic listener, his slight dissatisfaction that those experiences overwhelmed the listener, his loneliness due to his failure to gain “oneness” and “wholeness” with other people before it was too late (362), and a sense of guilt for tormenting his mother and family. Such a smile is possible only for one who recognizes the bitter irony in a desire for life that comes only on the verge of death. There is some hope for racial equality in the beaming face, though Bigger’s resignation to death as the prison door clangs shut in the novel’s last sentence remains an indictment of a white homosociality that brings to nothing a humanity achieved through suffering.

Notes

This chapter was previously published as the same title essay in Studies in American Naturalism 4.1 (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2009), 56-74. For this dissertation I revised the essay by adding some information and changing the wording.
1. For example, Jerry H. Bryant contends that Bigger’s murders of Mary and Bessie “bring to him the truth about himself and his world” (22). Valerie Smith claims that his killing of Mary “initiates the process by which he ultimately comes to understand the meaning of his life” (441) and that, through his contact with Boris A. Max, he recognizes “the power of language as a means of creating an identity for himself” in the racist environment (446). In contrast, James Baldwin considers Bigger a “monster created by the American republic, the present awful sum of generations of oppression” (41). Alan W. France asserts that the novel’s attempts to “achieve some sort of rapprochement between Bigger and the white male society that oppresses him” are almost “comic” against the backdrop of violence against women (158). Similarly, Barbara Johnson argues that Bessie’s voice is drowned out and that her story “can remain invisible no matter how visible it is” (123).

2. Sondra Guttman “reconsiders the usefulness of readings that either ignore the misogyny of the novel or that focus exclusively on it” (171), though she does not consider Bigger’s violence in relation to his divided masculinity as this essay does.

3. See Shamir and Travis for a collection of essays on how “the politics of emotions” produce “the narrative of masculinity as emotional restraint” (6) in America. Most essays in the collection concern whether the recovery of male affect will transform society or reinforce existing power structures. My ideas about the conflicting connotations of Bigger’s tears draws an inspiration from Tomoyuki Zettsu’s book, 『抒情するアメリカ:モダニズム文学の明滅』[Lyric America: The Glimmerings of Modernist Literature]. In this book, Zettsu addresses the rhetoric of tears, claiming that “men shed tears in sadness, frustration, horror, and delight. A signifier of tears therefore does not correspond with emotions as a signified one to another; when tears perform a literary function, they can be an appropriate rhetorical device to represent human conflicting feelings” (37; translation mine) (「人は、悲しいと泣くし、悔しいと泣くし、怖いと泣くし、嬉しいても泣くために、涙というシニフィエととしての感情と一対一には対応せず、それが文学的に機能する場合、複雑な人間感情を表象する格好の修辞的装置となる。」). Bigger’s tears suggest a softening of his tough masculine shell but have no direct power to change the society depicted in the novel. Any social change produced by the novel depends on the extent to which readers empathize with Bigger’s suffering.
Part III: Chapter 4

Postwar Homosocial Bonding:

Love and Value in *The Sun Also Rises*

Set in Europe, post-World War I, Ernest Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) describes the dynamic relationships of the protagonist Jake Barnes with other male characters: 1) Jake’s bonding with war veterans through the repudiation of Robert Cohn; 2) with Count Mippipopolous through the medium of Lady Brett Ashley; and 3) with Pedro Romero through the concession of Brett. Importantly, Jake’s homosocial communions are non-patriarchal,¹ not only because he became impotent after injuring himself in the war but also because war veterans are exploring Europe for a new life—without any certainty to find it—amid disillusionment after the war and the fluidity of values under encroaching capitalism. Although men objectify Brett as a value under the capitalist mode of commodification,² she is the *subject* of homosocial relationship between men; she is willing to be the medium through which homosocial bonds are cemented. Her manipulation of male homosocial
desires reflects not only the postwar collapse of patriarchy but also the circulation of financial criteria for judging love and friendship with the advent of consumer economy in the early 1920s. Jacob Michael Leland illuminates Jake’s struggle to construct “a masculine identity,” using his “economic” strength as a substitute for “his sexual disability” (42). Keeping in mind Brett’s control of male desires, however, we must examine more thoroughly how and to what extent Jake succeeds in restoring manliness in his relationship with Brett—especially in a taxi ride enabled by his capitalist power at the novel’s conclusion. This chapter will interpret Jake’s attempt to maintain the fragile male bonds with Cohn, the Count, and Romero in the context of postwar life and the emerging consumer society of the 1920s. By doing so, it will situate the ephemeral male relationships over Brett as a transitory phase for the establishment of postwar commercialism which defines human love in terms of materialism.

1. Jake’s Exclusion of Cohn: Sexual Injury and Sentimentality

It is a fact that Hemingway got wounded in the First World War, but it is difficult to conclude the issue over whether Hemingway actually suffered shell shock (whose indications were psychic trauma, mental confusion, or emotional distress) or just learned about the symptom from oral stories and written materials. Yet it is certain that Hemingway’s war
wound motivated him to explore the disillusionment of war veterans and their struggle to find a way to live in the postwar society in *The Sun Also Rises*: “The origin of Jake Barnes’ war wound derived from Hemingway’s imaginative extension of his own wound at Fossalta” (Meyers 190). Hemingway uses Jake as his fictional double to observe and comprehend the effect of soldiers’ physical and mental impairments on their postwar life. As the first advertisement for *The Sun Also Rises* describes, the novel depicts “a deep sense of underlying tragedy for their sense of life—all illusions shattered, all reticences dissipated” (Trogdon 44).⁵

Jake was a US Navy pilot in the Great War and got wounded while flying on the Italian front.⁶ In a letter to Thomas Bledsoe dated December 1951, Hemingway wrote: “I wondered what a man’s life would have been like after that if his penis had been lost and his testicles and spermatic cord remained intact” and I “tried to find out what his problems would be when he was in love with someone who was in love with him and there was nothing that they could do about it (SL 745).⁷ In keeping with Hemingway’s comments, Jake faces a dual dilemma: 1) he feels sexual desire despite the loss of his penis; and 2) he cannot gratify Brett’s sexual desire despite their reciprocal affection. In such a dilemma, he fails to enact “hegemonic masculinity,” “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women”
(Connell 77). This failure causes his emotional turmoil, which makes him suffer insomnia:

“for six months I never slept with the electric light off” (152). As David Blackmore argues,

“Jake’s behavior and reflections expose a deep-seated anxiety that the desire his wound forces him to repress is not exclusively heterosexual”: latently homosexual within the prescribed system of “hetero/homo classification” (54).

Jake’s disenchantment with the world has its roots in the division between the expectation for the war and the actuality of the war. As Linda Wagner-Martin points out, American people faced “the loss of promise after WWI” and “failure of belief in all of the traditional panaceas (religion, politics, economics, romance)” (5). The Great War, the military conflict between the Allied Powers and the Central Powers in Europe, was more “ironic” than any other war because it was “a hideous embarrassment to the prevailing Meliorist myth which had dominated the public consciousness for a century” and “reversed the Idea of Progress” (Fussell 7-8). The technology of warfare—poison gas, indirect artillery fire, machine guns, tanks, and aircraft—enabled slaughtering attacks on the enemy line whereas it made the conventional military tactics archaic and caused mass destruction in both sides; statistically, of the 60 million European military personnel, eight and a half million died, seven million were permanently disabled, and fifteen million were seriously injured. Fussell maintains that “the Great War was perhaps the last to be conceived as taking place within a seamless, purposeful ‘history’ involving a coherent stream of time running from past
through present to future” (21). The war ironically made the world more experienced through
the disillusion of innocent hope for progress and the discontinuation of human histories. Jake
therefore “feels tricked by the war and is dismayed at having been a pawn in an international
con game masterminded by bankers and politicians” (Martin 48).

How, then, does Jake’s sexual anxiety influence his motivation to exclude Cohn? Critics have emphasized how the anti-Semitic feelings of Jake and other veterans propel the banishment of Cohn, but we must note here that Jake initially “liked” Cohn (15). Jake had even been sympathetic towards Cohn’s circumstances at Princeton University: the
conservative institution had made him “race-conscious” (12), conscious of himself as white
but racially other. Cohn might be a nostalgic reminder of Jake’s own prewar innocence: his
naïve reliance on human goodness and love despite the knowledge of racial discrimination.

However, once Cohn finds out that as a budding novelist in New York, he could attract
female goodwill toward him, Jake begins to dislike and despise him: “[Cohn] was not so
pleasant to have around” (15-16). Cohn’s association with women despite his engagement
with Frances Clyne provokes Jake’s irritation over his sexual impotence, arousing his envy
and hatred for him. And Cohn’s interest in Brett changes their male relationship decisively:
“until he fell in love with Brett,” Jake narrates, “I never heard him make one remark that
would, in any way, detach him from other people” (52). Although Jake used to admire
Cohn’s firm body at the tennis court (Kaye 50), he disdains Cohn’s loss of passion for
winning the game and the degradation of his personality being infatuated with Brett: “When he fell in love with Brett his tennis game went all to pieces. People beat him who had never had a chance with him” (52). Cohn’s obsession with Brett becomes threatening to Jake because Cohn’s performance of hetero-masculinity signals his sexual potency over the sexually maimed Jake. Therefore, Jake’s impulse to eliminate Cohn originates in Jake’s sexual anxiety, which provokes his latent anti-Semitic feelings, once Cohn’s sexual approach to Brett threatens and challenges his hetero-masculinity.

In asking Jake to travel with him to South America, Cohn expresses naïve romanticism, which he had acquired through reading romance novels, including W. H. Hudson’s *The Purple Land*. Cohn’s romanticism clashes with Jake’s postwar disillusionment about non-realistic fancy or high expectations about the unknown. Jake refuses Cohn’s proposal, instead giving information about Brett’s past marriage and two divorces in an insulting way (46-47).

The Great War was more “ironic” than any other war because it was “a hideous embarrassment to the prevailing Meliorist myth which had dominated the public consciousness for a century” and “reversed the Idea of Progress” (Fussell 7-8). As Linda Wagner-Martin points out, American people faced “the loss of promise after WWI” and “failure of belief in all of the traditional panaceas (religion, politics, economics, romance)” (5). As Reynolds contends, “The old values—love, honor, duty, truth—were bankrupted by a war that systematically killed off a generation of European men and permanently scarred
Americans like Jake, who fought during the last months of the debacle” (Twenties 63). Only Cohn, however, “was unscathed by the most devastating war of all history to that date” (Myerson 66). Cohn’s embodiment of prewar values—the pursuit of adventure to gain the sense of “living” his “life” (18) and that of “romance” by seeking to “have a mistress” overlooking his engagement with Frances (58)—only augments Jake’s despise and hatred for him. Cohn’s confidential trip to San Sebastian with Brett and his “battle for his lady love” (182) against Mike, which gets reflected in his chivalrous belief that “true love [will] conquer all” (203), reinforces the desire of the Anglo-Saxons (Jake, Bill, and Mike) to eliminate him.⁹

The war veterans have the tendency to distinguish people, as Brett does, between “us” and “them” (40, 67), for the war implanted the habitual differentiation of comrades and enemies in their mind. Jake repudiates “Cohn’s maneuvering to affiliate himself with an elitist Anglo-Saxonism through the likes of Brett and Mike” because Jake cannot allow him “further access to all the privileges and abuses the upper class enjoy with their closed version of whiteness” (Traber 244).

Yet Jake’s “upper class” “whiteness” prompts him to suppress his own sentimental femininity constantly. Greg Forter interprets Jake’s war wound as “the loss of a genteel, sentimental, and implicitly feminine masculinity,” pointing to the paradoxical relation between the wound and masculinity: “the absence of a wound” evidences Cohn’s sentimental masculinity and the “actual loss of a penis” signals Jake’s unsentimental manliness (26-27).
In this framework, Cohn’s weeping in the presence of another person (57, 197, 206) is a sign of sentimental manhood, which violates the postwar code of manliness. However, Forter overlooks the fact that Jake’s revulsion for Cohn’s whining represents Jake’s own self-humiliation because he possesses a similar sentimental nature. He comes up with a “sentimental idea” of dining with a prostitute Georgette Hobin to avoid solitude (24). Moreover, he weeps alone at night in his room: after seeing his penis-less body in the mirror of the armoire, he tries “[not] to think about” his relationship with Brett to avoid indulgence in self-pity; however, he starts to “cry” while recalling her promiscuity (39). Once he muses on “the futile accessibility of Brett” at night (Tate 43), he becomes “sentimental” about his wound. He mentions, “It is awfully easy to be hard-boiled about everything in the daytime, but at night it is another thing” (42). His crying shows the “cracks” in the “armored exterior” of his emotional “detachment” (Cassuto 45): his disruption between the code of “hard-boiled” masculinity and the returned sentimentality. As he witnesses his own tears in the mirror, he sees his spitting image in Cohn’s weeping, which increases his aversion to Cohn’s sentimentality and evokes shame for his own inerasable “sentimental softness” (Forter 27).

Lastly, Jake’s antipathy to Cohn is also aroused by Cohn’s attentiveness to his personal appearance in preparation for his reunion with Brett: “we found that Robert Cohn had taken a bath, had had a shave and a haircut and a shampoo, and something put on his hair afterward
to make it stay down” (103). His shaved and shiny face (101, 154) must be especially unbearable to Jake because it reflects Jake’s sexual powerlessness and satirizes the growth of his beard (175)—the proof of his hormonal desire—despite his virtual loss of sexual potency. Jake’s growing beard forces him to encounter his troubling fissure between his sexual impotency and his extant virility. More important, Jake associates the beard as the characteristic feature of an army man. When a postman with a “big mustache” brings Brett’s telegram to him, Jake narrates that the mustache “looked very military” (242). Cohn’s shaved face irritates Jake not just because he detects Cohn’s secret intention to impress Brett, but also because the face reminds him that Cohn had not served in the army, that is, he was ignorant of military manliness. Whenever Cohn shows up being freshly shaven, Jake feels uncertain about sexuality, and he struggles to suppress his repugnance for Cohn and impulsion to eliminate him.

2. A Pastoral Fishing Trip: Jake’s Comradeship with Bill and Wilson-Harris

Bill Gorton, another war veteran, holds hatred toward Cohn, especially when Cohn shows “an air of superior knowledge” about Brett and Mike’s late arrival in Pamplona (101). Bill’s hostility toward Cohn stems not only from his own anti-Semitism (“Well, let him not get superior and Jewish” [102]) but also from Cohn’s apathy towards emotion-evoking things.
When Bill and Jake see the beautiful scenery of Spain during the car trip to Pamplona, Cohn is “asleep” and Bill nods his head to Jake to confirm their shared appreciation of the landscape’s beauty (99). If war veterans need to recover their deadened emotions through rituals, including trips, hiking, fishing, and bullfighting—“Romero’s bull-fighting gave real emotion” (171)—they regard Cohn’s indifferences to the rituals as a sign of his non-participation in the war or his non-appreciation of life. The most outrageous moment is his putting a damper on the expectant excitement for bullfighting with his wet-blanket remark: “I’m only afraid I may be bored” (165). If so, Cohn should not go for watching it, much less making such remarks; the only reason for his participation is that he wants to accompany Brett at all times. Referring to Cohn’s pretending knowledge about Brett’s return, Bill denounces Cohn’s disrespect for bullfighting: “He’s got this Jewish superiority so strong that he thinks the only emotion he’ll get out of the fight will be being bored” (166).

In order to wait for Brett’s arrival, he cancels a fishing trip to Burguete, Spain. Bill’s statement to Jake—Cohn “makes me sick, and he can go to hell, and I’m damn glad he’s staying here so we won’t have him fishing with us” (108)—not only expresses his irritation over Cohn’s transparent intentions but also suggests that the fishing trip will be an exploration of a homosocial bonding between war veterans except for Cohn. Because of “no word from Robert Cohn nor from Brett and Mike” (130), they can appropriate the homosocial space at Burguete apart from the worldly heterosexual affair.
Bill knows about Jake’s sexually mutilated body, as suggested by the following conversation: “One group claims women support you. Another group claims you’re impotent.’ . . . ‘No,’ I said. ‘I just had an accident.’ . . . ‘Never mention that,’ Bill said. ‘That’s the sort of thing that can’t be spoken of. That’s what you ought to work up into a mystery’” (120). Bill’s singing of “The Bells are Ringing for Me and My Gal” echoes ironically under the circumstances of Jake’s sexually disabling wound, but it paradoxically indicates his sympathy for Jake’s life. As H. R. Stoneback points out, this song expresses “a soldier’s longing for home” and refers to what Jake will never have: “a wedding, a wife, a home with kids—and the bells will never ring in ‘Love-land’ for Jake and Brett” (201-02). Bill chants this song with “irony” and “pity” because, as Peter L. Hays points out, Jake “cannot consummate ordinary sexual intercourse; he cannot father children. The conventional social structures—dating, marriage, family—are denied him” (13). Bill and Jake share the “irony” that “[war’s] means are so melodramatically disproportionate to its presumed ends” (Fussell 7). Bill repeatedly urges Jake to say something ironical and pitiful because he wants Jake to detach himself from his wounding by expressing another ironical and pitiful thing.

Jake and Bill’s fishing expedition has the potential to heal their war psychic wounds, as Philip Young interprets Nick Adam’s trout fishing in “Now I Lay Me” and “Big Two-Hearted River” as “psychic restoration” from his war trauma (43). As Scott Donaldson points out, “the interlude at Burguete stands in idyllic counterpoint to the sophisticated
pretentiousness of Paris and the destructive passions of Pamplona” (“Humor” 37). This pastoral interlude is “a clear contrast to whatever turmoil they had experienced in wartime” (Wagner-Martin 9). Through drinking wine and listening to the wind (116), they stimulate their numb emotion and re-synchronize their bodies to the rhythm of nature. The homosocial trip is not only “a release from social and sexual competition, an anodyne to the stress of café society” (Martin 58), but also a regenerative process of separating themselves from the chaos of the war.

The surge of homosocial desire during the fishing trip promotes Bill to confess his homoerotic affection for Jake.

“And you’re a hell of a good guy. Anybody ever tell you were a good guy?”
“T’m not a good guy.”
“Listen. You’re a hell of a good guy, and I’m fonder of you than anybody on earth. I couldn’t tell you that in New York. It’d mean I was a faggot. That was what the Civil War was about Abraham Lincoln was a faggot. He was in love with General Grant. So was Jefferson Davis. Lincoln just freed the slaves on a bet. The Dred Scott case was framed by the Anti-Saloon League. Sex explains it all. The Colonel’s Lady and Judy O’Grady are Lesbians under their skin” (121).

Any close friendship between people of the same-sex includes some kind of homoerotic attachment, but the heteronormative environment forbids men to be clearly aware of it. Bill assumes that if men verbalize their intimate feelings toward men in public (i.e. New York) in the 1920s, they would be classified as homosexual. In Gay New York, George Chauncey illuminates the gay world that existed before the consolidation of “the hetero-homosexual
binarism” as the hegemonic sexual regime in American culture (13). Yet Chauncey examines not only the making of the gay world but also the emergence of the heterosexual masculinity; homosexuality and heterosexuality are historically interdependent categories that evolved in the beginning of the twentieth century and shaped each other. The heteronormative system constituted itself and established its boundaries by creating the gay world as a stigmatized “other.” In that system, heterosexual men established themselves by showing their difference from the gay subculture. Chauncey argues that the emergence of urban male sexual types like the “fairy,” who is highly feminized and has a sexual interest in men, led to “a new policing of male intimacy and exclusion of sexual desire for other men” (115-16); consequently, the category of heterosexual masculinity emerged and the dominant culture compelled men to define themselves in terms of their exclusive sexual interest in women (111-27).

Jake also internalizes homophobia, as shown in Jake’s homophobic reaction to the homosexuals who accompany Brett at a dancing club in Paris: “Somehow they always made me angry. I know they are supposed to be amusing, and you should be tolerant, but I wanted to swing on one, any one, anything to shatter that superior, simpering composure” (28). Yet, Jake’s “angry” probably comes from his frustrating incapacity to perform heterosexual masculine role. Blackmore claims, “Because Jake cannot perform the defining heterosexual act which the gay men choose not to perform, he inhabits with them a common space outside the realm of orthodox heterosexual manhood” (55). This “similarity” (Davidson 92) between
Jake and the gay men provokes Jake’s homophobic resentment because he has to differentiate himself from them in the heteronormative culture.

However, when Bill and Jake make a concrete attempt at male bonding in Burguete, where the same-sex love is not socially or culturally prohibited, it is easier for them to be conscious of it and express it, and even eroticize their communion. Bill’s remark, “I couldn’t tell you that in New York,” functions as the severance of homosocial from homosexual desires. “Defending himself from any potential ‘charge’ of homosexuality,” as Ira Elliot argues, “Bill quickly adds that had they been in New York, he wouldn’t be able to voice his affection for Jake without being a ‘faggot’” (75). Importantly, this denial of his homosexual desire for Jake results in the cementation of his affiliation with Jake. Although this interpretation might lead to the reinforcement of the heteronormative regime (that compels homophobic behavior and thoughts), Bill, who experienced the military service in the Great War, internalizes the system of homosociality—male bonding necessitates the exclusion of any homosexual nuance—so that he has to display homophobia before deepening his bonding with Jake. His expression of homophobia serves as the repudiation of homosexuality in his affection for Jake and the basic thrust of reinforcing homosociality. By calling each other, “Old Bill” and “You bum!” (121), however, Bill and Jake make sure that their homosocial tie is detached from homosexual elements. While drinking wine in the bliss of rich nature, Bill tries to secure their bonds by saying: “Let us rejoice in our blessings. Let us
utilize the fowls of the air. Let us utilize the product of the vine. Will you utilize a little, brother?” (126). Jake answers back, “After you, brother” (126); thus, the two males swear brotherhood.

In a similar vein, Bill and Jake form a close bond with Wilson-Harris, an English war veteran, through fishing and playing three-handed bridge. When the Americans must leave for Pamplona, Wilson-Harris asks them to “utilize” a pub, treating them a bottle of wine apiece (133). He insinuates his affection for them in his evaluation of their relationship: “You don’t know what it’s meant to me to have you chaps up here” and “Really you don’t know how much it means. I’ve not had much fun since the war” (134). If he experienced shellshock in the British trench, he also seeks the healing of his psychic trauma during the fishing activity. As Jake and Bill are about to leave, Wilson-Harris gives them each a present, an envelope of hand-tied fishing flies, so that he “openly demonstrates that he respects the values of the American pair and cherishes the time they have spent together” (Harris 188). The comradeship across nations enables their temporal fulfillment of their postwar existential void while they are steeped in rich nature, a setting devoid of technology.

3. Brett’s Subjectivity in Jake’s Rivalry with the Count
If Cohn’s lack of war experiences motivates Jake to expel him, Brett’s war experiences work to reinforce her bonding with Jake. Brett is a war victim due to her psychological wounds as the result of irrational violence. She witnessed the tragic nature of the war by nursing injured or dying soldiers as a VAD and her “true love” died of dysentery in the war (46). In order to seek her unattainable “true love,” she must repeatedly nurture injured veterans/fighters (her first husband, Jake, Michael Campbell, and Romero) after the war. She takes care of her first husband, a returned veteran who served as a sailor, despite his nightly violence against her (207). Her psychological war wounds qualify her as a member of the postwar male group. Her tendency to distinguish people between “us” and “them” suggests that the war implanted the habitual differentiation of comrades and enemies in her mind. Precisely, however, she is not a true member of the group not only because of her disrespect for Romero’s offering of a bull’s ear (she puts it roughly into a desk drawer [203]) but also because of her biological sex of woman. In the postwar capitalist world, men tend to objectify her and exchange her among themselves to express respect for their male fellows.

Yet it is true that Brett and Jake develop their relationship with the mutual understanding of their war wounds. She recognizes Jake’s war wounds and shows affection for him, whom she sees as a substitute for her dead fiancé. Jake, too, senses her psychological scars and her “miserable” feeling hidden behind her smiles and loves her (32). In her second visit to Jake’s apartment with Count Mippipopolous, seeing Jake’s trembling hands, Brett
realizes that he is emotionally disturbed. She sends the Count off to buy champagne.

Meanwhile, she comforts Jake, stroking his head to bring relief to his headache (62). Jake, on the other hand, notices her uneasiness and loneliness in her shaky hands and reads her anxiety in her gaze: “She looked as though there were nothing on earth she would not look at like that, and really she was afraid of so many things” (34-35). “Although Jake cannot penetrate Brett physically, he can realize her spiritually, as her eyes become the windows of her soul” (Miller 174). Their interaction not only troubles each other’s sexuality—provokes Jake’s sexual uneasiness and Brett’s sexual frustration—but also endorses each other’s life through the sharing of suffering.

Although Brett is normally defined as New Woman (Hays 13), it must be noted that her character has two sides: a woman achieving autonomy and a woman relying on the male society. Wendy Martin keenly claims, “If Brett has gained a measure of freedom in leaving the traditional household, she is still very much dependent on men, who provide an arena in which she can be attractive and socially active as well as financially secure” (71). How should we interpret this conflict between her independence and dependence within male homosociality? The answer to this question is that she makes use of men’s financial power to enhance her beauty while she allows her body to be exchanged between them so that she can continue to enhance her value in the postwar capitalist environment.
First, we must examine how men have developed their thoughts on the exchange of something in the emerging capitalist society after the war. Given Jake’s bank statement reveals a favorable balance in the United States (38), we can assume that Jake takes advantage of the extremely low prices in Paris after the war, “spending more money than a single man in Paris needs to spend” (Reynolds Twenties 81). Jake acknowledges the encroachment of American capitalism into Paris in the 1920s, as he reports how Americans inundate a restaurant on the far side of the Ile Saint Louis once it is placed on the American Women’s Club list (82). Significantly, Jake’s concept of money is interconnected with his loss of his penis:

I thought I had paid for everything. Not like the woman pays and pays and pays. No idea of retribution or punishment. Just exchange of values. You gave up something and got something else. Or you worked for something. You paid some way for everything that was any good. I paid my way into enough things that I liked, so that I had a good time. Either you paid by learning about them, or by experience, or by taking chances, or by money. Enjoying living was learning to get your money’s worth and knowing when you had it. You could get your money’s worth. The world was a good place to buy in. It seemed like a fine philosophy. . . . Perhaps that wasn’t true. . . . All I wanted to know was how to live in it. Maybe if you found out how to live in it you learned from that what it was all about. (152)

His postwar philosophy of life is that one gets something in exchange for paying something. It probably originates in his unbearable sense of loss: although he sacrifices his own penis, a symbol of conventional masculinity—male raison d’être—in the war, he has not acquired anything in return for this sacrifice. The Italian officer’s condolence, “‘You, a foreigner, an Englishman . . . have given more than your life.’ . . . ‘Che mala fortuna!’” sounds “funny” to
Jake (39), because it raises two questions: 1) for what and to where has he given his penis?; and 2) if he has given “more than [his] life,” how should he lead the rest of his life? Jake has no immediate answers; therefore, he needs to explore “how to live in [the world]” (152). While struggling to find a way to “enjoy his life” in the vacuum of the postwar world, he has reached the moral conviction of “exchange of values”: you must pay for what you get and receive “your money’s worth.” Bill also states that people exchange values through the medium of money: “Mean everything in the world to you after you bought it. Simple exchange of values. You give them money. They give you a stuffed dog” (78). This statement points to the spread of the capitalist monetary system in the aftermath of the war: money becomes the standard value of exchange after the dissipation of ethical values.

Then, what values do men attach to Brett? Although Thorstein B. Veblen examines the origin of mass desire for class ascendency in American urban society at the end of the nineteenth century, Veblen’s concept of “conspicuous consumption” can be applied to the analysis of the exchange of Brett between men in Europe in the 1920s. As we will see, there is a growing awareness among men that money is the means for showing “pecuniary strength” and gaining “repute” (Veblen 84). They consume female attractiveness as a commodity which produces the “spectacular effect” (Veblen 111) of proving their wealth and pecuniary success in the industrial society.
Stephen P. Clifford contends that Jake and the Count “are presumably competing for Brett as prize” while employing “war wounds/soldierly experiences as the most obvious currency of exchange” (210-12). Yet, according to Clifford, the exchange between them “is not about Brett at all”; she “becomes a medium or a landscape, through which the men may affirm each other as members of the same patriarchal society” (212-13). Certainly, in front of Brett, the Count presents Jake an American cigar-case as a sign of his initial step to forge friendship with Jake (64). The exhibition of the Count’s arrow wounds is not necessarily a proof of his masculinity (67), as he sustained them unexpectedly on a business trip rather than on a battlefield. Yet it elicits Jake and Brett’s admiration because, as Kurt J. Krueger argues, “[t]hrough their own experiences in World War I, Brett and Jake have come to question the value of courage, honor, and patriotism in their personal economies” (334). In addition, his long-term hardships through seven wars and four revolutions draw their respect for him. The Count uses Brett as a canvas on which he describes his personal fighting stories to prove his honorable manhood and earn the esteem of a young war veteran, Jake.

It must be noted, however, that Brett is the subject of the male homosocial relationship: she is willing to become a “medium” of cementing male bonds and triggering the male struggle to win her. It is Brett who induces men to attach some value to her sexual allure and to exchange her as a prize for their manliness. For example, Brett refuses the Count’s offer of $10,000 to accompany him to Biarritz, Cannes, or Monte Carlo for a weekend (41); however,
by reporting this offer to Jake, she forces him to recognize the high value that the Count attaches to her. Moreover, she incites rivalry between them by informing Jake that the Count is “one of us” (40, 67) and “Told [the Count] I was in love with you” (41). Based upon the frequent association of the term “funny” with Jake’s loss of male potency in the text (34, 35, 38), we can assume that the Count is impotent somewhat due to war wounding (Stoneback 177-78). If so, the aim of his asking Brett to take a trip with him is not to have sex with her. After he becomes impotent, he finds time to spend with attractive women valuable in itself. He purchases expensive champagne and the oldest brandy in a restaurant to show his monetary strength and his high evaluation of the time he spends with Brett and Jake (66, 68). His remarks to Brett, claiming that “I am always in love” and love “has got a place in my values” (67), convey that the money he spends on her indicates his high estimation of her attraction. He even perceives her beauty as a mirror that reflects his financial power and in turn assesses his own “values” of success. Although he partially objectifies her as a “conspicuous” commodity to prove his economic success, Brett does not care; rather she welcomes the objectification, which enhances her own value among men.16 Being aware of the market value of her beauty, estimated by male gaze, she functions as the embodiment of cash flow and the enhancement of values through the circulation of her body. In this sense, Brett is a capitalist who controls the desire of male consumers.
The Count’s offering of money, however, does not relieve her restlessness. She knows the temporality and emptiness of her relationship with the Count. What she truly wants is not men’s attachment of value to her but the psychological fulfillment of her desire to live with her “true love.” Dancing closely with Jake arouses her “miserable” feeling again because the act reminds her of their impossible consummation of sexual desire (70). A black drummer’s shouting, “You can’t two time—” (70), echoes that her promiscuous affairs are fated to collapse sooner or later, only reconfirming the vacuum in her life. The Count’s question of why Jake and Brett do not marry is poignant because of the impossibility owing to Jake’s sexual defect. Jake knows that he and Brett must repeatedly experience the same agony over their relationship: “I had the feeling as in a nightmare of it all being something repeated, something I had been through and that now I must go through again” (71).

The Count ultimately returns Brett to Jake in the dance hall: “‘Brett wants to go,’ I said to the count. He nodded. ‘Does she? That’s fine. You take the car. I’m going to stay here for a while, Mr. Barnes.’ We shook hands” (71). The Count makes this concession owing to his affinity for Jake as they have had a good dinner together. This compromise can be seen as his way of paying homage to the energy of the young dancers, Jake and Brett. Jake’s attempt to pass a note to the Count at this juncture suggests that he acknowledges the Count’s high evaluation of Brett. Jake tries now to return the attached high value because he leaves with Brett, the manifestation of this value. The Count, however, refuses to receive the note; hence,
he gives Brett back to Jake without giving back the value attached to her. Even if an exchange of values apparently constitutes an exchange of equivalents, the exchange itself generally includes non-equivalence—the difference of qualities between exchanged objects and the relative assessment of exchanged objects depending on situations and conditions—which leaves surplus values. In the triangle between the Count, Brett, and Jake, such surplus values are especially large because the Count did not allow Jake to return the value of Brett. The retained surplus values guarantee the values of their homosocial relationship.

4. “Aficion” in Spain: Jake’s Homoerotic Passion for Romero

In Pamplona, Jake is admitted to the club of aficionados, men who are “passionate about the bull-fights” (136). This club is a male pseudo-homosexual group, where the members are bonded by their common faith in male bullfighters. The smile of President Montoya signals an erotic intimacy with Jake: “He always smiles as though bull-fighting were a very special secret between the two of us; a rather shocking but really very deep secret that we knew about. He always smiled as though there were something lewd about the secret to outsiders, but that it was something that we understood” (136). The male sharing of sexual “secret” constitutes the tie of the club. Montoya’s act of putting a hand on Jake’s shoulder is “not overtly sexual” but it “certainly suggests sexuality because it is the symbol of a shared
passion, just as the touching of sexual partners represents mutual passion” (O’Sullivan 91).

Other Spanish aficionados also confirm the American’s possession of *aficion* by their “actual touching” (137).

Jake’s gazes at Romero, which display his homoerotic interest in the young and talented bullfighter: “He was the best-looking boy I have ever seen” (167). Jake even expresses in a sexual tone how he and Bill were excited about Romero’s bullfight on the first day of the fiesta. “We had that *disturbed* emotional feeling that always comes after a bullfight, and the feeling of *elation* that comes after a good bull-fight” (168; emphasis added).

Jake’s observation of Romero’s work on the second day entails his admiration for the beauty and greatness of Romero’s performance: “Romero’s bull-fighting gave real emotion, because he kept the absolute purity of line in his movements and always quietly and calmly let the horns pass him close each time” (171). Romero’s performance, which invites the highest danger of death and maintains a straight physical line without showing any fear, is the embodiment of the code hero in Hemingway’s novels. The beauty of Romero’s work on the boundary between life and death arouses Jake’s emotions (which was made insensitive in the war) and attracts his adoration. “Jake’s descriptions of the meeting of the bull and bullfighter imply more than flirtation; the encounter evokes images of sexual foreplay and consummation” (Moddelmog 96). The fatigue of Jake and Bill after the bullfighting suggests that their passionate watching was a sort of vicarious coital act. When Jake brings Brett and
Romero together, he gazes at the smoky hue of Romero’s hand and states, “It was clear and smooth and very brown” (189). If the act of putting a lighted cigarette in mouth is a metaphor of fellatio, Jake’s gaze upon Romero’s smoke-colored hand connotes his homoerotic attraction towards the bullfighter.

Jake’s emotion gets most stimulated when he watches Romero dominate the fighting: “Romero had the old thing, the holding of his purity of line through the maximum of exposure, while he dominated the bull by making him realize he was unattainable, while he prepared him for the killing” (172). If Jake superimposes Romero’s bullfighting upon soldiers battling in the war, he must find Romero’s “unattainable” controlling power quite fascinating, because soldiers in the battlefield cannot dominate enemies like Romero and their life and death depend on the opponents and circumstances. Jake treats Romero as an incarnation of a brave and invincible warrior. “The perfect bullfight is thus one in which death in the form of a brave bull is conquered artistically and valiantly, thereby allowing the bullfighter and, vicariously, the spectators to make a gesture of defiance at their own ultimate fate, even a temporary victory over it” (Kinnamon 54).

Jake’s introduction of Brett to Romero sublimates his homoerotic feeling for Romero, expressing his respect for his exemplification of traditional values. Considering this exchange in line with Jake’s philosophy of life, he presents the image of utmost value to Romero by conceding the beloved to the idol. In exchange for it, however, he does not receive any clear
values from Romero. He could gratuitously allow Romero, unlike Cohn, to develop his relationship with Brett. He in effect permits Romero to pierce vicariously her body with a functioning penis. “When Brett and Pedro consummate their desire for each other,” in Moddelmog’s words, “Pedro also becomes Jake’s surrogate, fulfilling his desire for Brett and hers for him, while Brett becomes Jake’s ‘extension’ for satisfying his infatuation with Pedro” (98).

Yet his concession of Brett to the bullfighter is a betrayal of the select club of aficion because Romero’s wallowing in carnal pleasures corrupts the traditional values that he embodies. Surely, American tourists who consume Romero’s performance as “a spectacle” (169, 170) bring large profits to the bullfighting business. The success of the business itself is based on the capitalist monetary system, as the President would not change a weak-sighted bull against which Romero fights because Jake says, “They’ve paid for him. They don’t want to lose their money” (221). For aficionados, however, Romero is a sacred bullfighter whom they must distinguish sharply from “commercial” bullfighters (136). Montoya refuses to pass Romero an invitation from the American ambassador to coffee after dinner at the Grand Hotel (175), so that Romero will not be exposed to the flattery of Americans who cannot appreciate his “worth” (176). Romero himself is aware of the club’s prohibition against his subjection to foreign culture as he conceals his English-speaking ability from
aficionados: “I must not let anybody know. It would be very bad, a torero who speaks English” (190).

But Jake’s concession eventually instigates Cohn’s violence against Romero (205-06). Although that battle exposes the ugliness of Cohn’s impulsive acts and the dignity of Romero’s indomitability, it signifies for the club that Jake “commits the ultimate iconoclasm by transforming Romero from transcendent symbol into a particular person and the subject, furthermore, of Brett’s concrete and manifest sexual desire” (Davidson 97). In leaving Brett and Romero at a café, he feels the gaze of aficionados unpleasant and accusing (191) because he has infringed the code of the closeted idolatrous group. Jake probably anticipates their separation at the moment of the exchange. It is unlikely that Brett, a 34-year-old woman who has had two divorces and is abandoning her fiancé, and Romero, a 19 year-old boy who has had relationships with only two women, will maintain their love affair for a long time. Yet, by sending Romero off to the secular world, Jake earned the displeasure of the aficionados, who regard this act as the encroachment of American capitalism into the Spanish traditional primitive territory of bullfighting. Montoya never forgives the contravention (213, 232), and Jake loses the membership because American tourists, including Jake, violate the sanctity of bullfighting.

Importantly, however, the active role of this introduction is played out by Brett. She says to Jake that she is “a goner” and asks him to “go and find [Romero]” (187-88); in that
sense, she arranges—through Jake—her meeting with Romero. As Linda Patterson Miller argues, after appreciating Romero’s performance as “real,” Brett pursues him as “the catalyst for her personal breakthrough,” for breaking free of her public image and becoming “real” herself (179). “Brett’s central attraction to Romero is not based mostly on a sexual craving but rather on the fact that she has seen in him the mirror of herself” (Miller 179). In the ephemeral homosocial environment, Brett attains the subjectivity of socializing with men on her own initiative; the absence of a patriarchal network allows the active woman to manipulate social norms to some extent. Although her line, “God knows, I’ve never felt such a bitch” (188), expresses her inner conflict between her irrepresible desire for sexual advances to Romero and her internalized gender code of female passivity, she must move on to initiate her love affair with Romero to gain the “real” self. Utilizing Jake’s veneration for Romero, she leads him to set up a meeting between her and Romero. Jake sums up his own actions thus, “Send a girl off with one man. Introduce her to another to go off with him. Now go and bring her back. And sign the wire with love. That was it all right” (243); in fact, however, Jake is manipulated by Brett to “introduce her to [Romero] to go off with him.” In this non-patriarchal and transient environment, Brett enacts a traditional masculine role, developing a heterosexual relationship with a woman (feminine Romero) through the male rival/friend’s introduction of himself to her. The triangular love affair between Jake, Brett,
and Romero conceals female manipulation of male homoerotic attachment behind the
fruition and collapse of heterosexual love in the postwar capitalist landscape.

As Romero hopes for marriage and wants Brett to behave as a lady (246), however,
their love affair cools down. When they separate each other in Hotel Montana, Brett, though
she has no money, refuses Romero’s offer of money, lying that she has “scads of” it (246).
Brett turns down the offer either because she cannot accept financial support from a male
fifteen years younger to her, or because she does not want to feel like a “bitch” or harlot who
receives money for sex. When she decides not “to be one of these bitches that ruins children”
(247), as Lorie Watkins Fulton asserts, it seems that “she moves toward her own definition of
morality,” searching for “a way to make sense of the changed world around her” (71-72). Yet,
as we will see, her taxi ride enabled by Jake’s capitalist power in the novel’s last scene
indicates that she continues to have a tough will to make use of men’s money to gain and
relish freedom. Given Brett’s augmented value through the exchange of her body between
men, her refusal of Romero’s money consolidates her current enhanced value. If she received
his money, her value would have been assessed by the money; the value of their passionate
love would have been represented by the money. Her value reaches the highest point at the
fiesta and its movement ceases with her separation from Romero. Her tears when she says
that she will return to Mike for marriage—“I’m going back to Mike.’ I could feel her crying
as I held her close” (247)—signify her complex feelings: her desire for overcoming her regret for Romero and her guilt for betraying Mike and Jake.

5. Jake’s Redefinition of Love in Postwar Capitalism

At the peak of the fiesta in Pamplona Jake observes the temporary suspension of capital circulation:

The peasants were in the outlying wine-shops. There they were drinking, getting ready for the fiesta. They had come in so recently from the plains and the hills that it was necessary that they make their shifting in values gradually. They could not start in paying café prices. They got their money’s worth in the wine-shops. Money still had a definite value in hours worked and bushels of grain sold. Late in the fiesta it would not matter what they paid, nor where they bought. (156)

This observation conveys that when the primitive human passion in fiesta is reaching the boiling point, the artificial value system of commercialism starts breaking down. On the contrary, the monetary standard in France is well organized and stabilized: every appreciation of values is on “a clear financial basis” (237). When Jake returns to Bayonne after the fiesta, he tries to become friends with a waiter at a café by overtipping: “If you want people to like you you have only to spend a little money. I spent a little money and the waiter liked me. He appreciated my valuable qualities. He would be glad to see me back” (237).
In contrast with his appreciation of true friendship with Bill during the fishing trip, this overtipping indicates Jake’s comprehension of how the permeation of capitalism subverts the foundation of human relationships. The exchange of living necessities in an agricultural community entails the contact of soul and personality, but by paying extra money, Jake displays his value as a good customer, forming the worker-consumer relationship in commercialism. Jake now resigns himself to the emerging capitalist system, which enables him to travel around forming various superficial human relationships. This resignation appears ironical because Jake has tried to steep himself in non-capitalist landscapes: the pastoral Burguete expedition and the primitive Spanish bullring. Yet, it is not ironical but rather natural because it is his economic power that enables him to attempt repeatedly to escape from the capitalist space. We must recall that in order to go down to Pamplona, Jake pays for a motor car and hires one at a garage for four hundred francs in Bayonne (97). All the attempts are carried out in consumerism except at the peak of the fiesta.

In the novel’s last scene, Jake’s money enables him to take a taxi tour around the town of Madrid with Brett. By tipping a waiter to call for a taxi and directing the driver where to go with the fare (250), he embodies the power of capitalism to control time and space, as well as workers. Their taxi is the incarnation of American capitalism in Spain. His financial strength is a compensation for his lack of manhood, sexual impotence: “Because the war has compromised his ability to perform sexually, Jake recovers that power and agency on
economic terms” (Leland 42). Most important, however, Jake can fantasize his sexual intercourse with Brett in the cab moved by his capital power:

   The driver started up the street. I settled back. Brett moved close to me. We sat close against each other. I put my arm around her and she rested against me comfortably. It was very hot and bright, and the houses looked sharply white. We turned out onto the Gran Via.
   “Oh, Jake,” Brett said, “we could have had such a damned good time together.”
   Ahead was a mounted policeman in khaki directing traffic. He raised his baton. The car slowed suddenly pressing Brett against me.
   “Yes,” I said. “Isn’t it pretty to think so?” (250-51)

The “hot” and “bright” atmosphere implies that the continued physical contact between Jake and Brett causes the sexual glow of their bodies. We must recall here that Jake’s touch makes her “simply turn all to jelly” (34). The taxi’s entry into the centre of the town, the Gran Via, suggests the approaching culmination of their communion. In this context, Brett’s line, “we could have had such a damned good time together,” echoes their imaginary “good” sex in the taxi; the raised baton of the mounted policeman is a sign of male ejaculation; and the declining speed of the taxi is a metaphor for male and female detumescence after coitus. In the taxi as a compensation for his sexual potency, Jake could imagine the restoration of heterosexual masculinity.

But at the realistic level—given Jake’s sexual injury—this scene shows the pathetic barrenness of their love (especially on Jake’s side) in the postwar vacuum. Brett then might dream here, as Clifford argues, that the two “could have had such a damned good time together” if only Jake had a penis (189). Although Brett tells Jake that she has decided to
return to Mike (whose Scottish family has “loads of money” [70] though he “went bankrupt” [141] through bridge games in Cannes) for marriage as he is “so damned nice” and “so awful” (247), it is Jake who she truly loves. Keeping in mind her repetitive failure to live with one particular man and her guilt for wrecking wounded men in the end rather than nursing them, she is confessing her sincere wish to live with Jake.

However, considering that her breaking up with Romero is due partially to his desire to enclose her within the prevailing gender conventions (246), Brett is not necessarily obsessed with the restoration of Jake’s phallic symbol. Rather than spending her life being Romero’s lady and staying within the male patriarchal system, she finds pleasure in living as a woman free from gender restraints and floating around Europe as she feels inclined to do. Hence, she may be suggesting here a faint hope that the two “could have a damned good time together” only if they could gain the psychological fulfillment of their desire while “pressing” “against” each other as they are doing now.

Jake’s answer, “Isn’t it pretty to think so?,” after the car slowed down conveys that he could also imagine their happy life without sexual intercourse. This answer reflects back on the preceding scene in which Frances questions Cohn “Isn’t it so, Robert?” (58) to ridicule his quest for romance without getting married. Cohn tries to have a new mistress so that he can gratify his lust and show off his sexual potency, whereas Jake indeed has to contend himself with platonic love in order to compromise with his war wound. In this context, the
policeman in “khaki” evokes the image of a soldier in the battlefield; hence, the slowing down of the taxi by the policeman acts as a metaphor for Jake’s sexual disability. Referring to Jake’s use of the word “pretty” in his final line, Wolfgang E. H. Rudat argues that Jake “meets Brett’s psychological-castration attempt”—her “masculine use of the word damned”—“by verbally withdrawing into the safe position of the homosexual on whom she could not and would not make any sexual demands: he terminates the bizarre relationship between a sexually crippled man and a highly sexed woman in an appropriately bizarre fashion” (“Wound” 198). While I agree with Rudat’s claim that “Jake finally comes to grips with his sexual status” (“Otherness” 174), I disagree with his idea of “Brett’s psychological-castration” because, as we have seen, Brett and Jake decide to fulfill their mutual psychological emptiness by touching each other rather than having sex; therefore, she does not intend here to demand sex nor castrate him psychologically by the use of the word “damned.” Their final conversation reflects some compassion and sympathy for each other. However, Rudat’s argument is important for the psychoanalysis of Jake’s use of a feminine word “pretty.” The term depicts Jake’s struggle to live as a heterosexual, who has lost sexual potency, and thereby is compelled to pursue psychological love outside the social norm of coital love.19

The slowdown of the taxi by the policeman also implies that Jake’s (American) enjoyment of money in Europe will not continue forever, as the Great Depression indeed
gripped the United States later in 1929. Jake anticipates that his capitalist power will decline some time later, and that Brett will “tromper” him in some way (62). He realizes that the Brett-ness of Brett provokes her to pursue her first love, the lost “true love,” and repeat having sex with war veterans and abandoning them as if she were punishing herself for her promiscuity. She continues to render herself as an object of exchange among men in order to enhance her market value under the principle of capitalism. We must recall here that Jake has held a fatalistic view of life through the war: “a feeling of things coming that you could not prevent happening” (150).

One thing is certain, though: even if the absurd world does not heal their absurd wounds (Jake’s penis never functions properly and Brett’s suffering of the abuse by her first husband continues to haunt her), the sun, which is associated with Brett’s “radiant” happiness in Jake’s mind (211), rises every morning. In a letter of November 1926 to Maxwell Perkins, Hemingway wrote that he had “a great deal of fondness and admiration for the earth” and the novel was not meant to be “a hollow or bitter satire” but “a damn tragedy with the earth abiding for ever as the hero” (SL 229). If “[t]he origin of Jake Barnes’ war wound derived from Hemingway’s imaginative extension of his own wound at Fossalta” (Meyers 190), Hemingway employed Jake as his fictional double to observe and comprehend the effect of soldiers’ physical and mental impairments on their postwar life. Although Jake knows the ineffectiveness of spatial movements, as he says, “You can’t get away from yourself by
moving from one place to another” (19), he has to repeat moving as an “expatriate” (120) while relying on his capital power. His sense of loneliness will deepen because no matter how much he tries to develop a new human relationship, that relationship will be in essence hollow and depend on his monetary strength; likewise, no matter how hard he and Brett press their bodies together, they are unable to remove the root of their emptiness: their war wounds. In the final scene, Hemingway describes how severely the isolated man determines to endure the ever-deepening solitude in the postwar capitalist world. Trusting the rise of the sun every morning, however, Jake struggles to find the value of his particular love with Brett—even if she will leave him someday forever—in the emerging consumer landscape and to look up at the shimmer of bliss in her face from the depths of the disillusionment of his postwar generation.

Notes

1. Even if the homosocial bonding in The Sun Also Rises is non-patriarchal, male characters still internalize and express homophobia. David Blackmore resists reading the masculine relationships in the novel through the lens of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s concept of the homosocial: “Instead of acknowledging in an affirmative way the proximity between Jake’s emotional attachment to Bill and the sexual relationships of Brett’s gay friends on what Eve Sedgwick calls “the continuum of male homosocial bonds”—Hemingway falls back into the trap of “male homosexual panic” (65). It must be noted that a homosocial system is not universal or changeless but it is conditioned by the times, regions, races, and classes and has undergone historical changes. In fact, Sedgwick’s analysis is focused chiefly on the mid-eighteenth- to mid-nineteenth century English novels. We must analyze the
idiosyncratic homosocial structures in *The Sun Also Rises* in the postwar capitalistic environment of the 1920s.

2. Sam S. Baskett presents an extensive analysis of how the male characters view Brett as “an uncertain image of great value,” arguing that “the value each affixes to Brett is a function of his value of himself and the life he is able to live” (45-46). Baskett, however, does not examine the exchange of Brett’s value between men in relation to the war and capitalism.

3. Leland’s argument draws upon Scott Donaldson, “Hemingway’s Morality and Compensation” (401-05) and Michael S. Reynolds, *The Sun Also Rises: A Novel of the Twenties* (78-82). Regarding the role of money in male friendship and male characters’ compensation for their weakness, see Patrick D. Morrow, “The Bought Generation: Another Look at Money in *The Sun Also Rises*.” Morrow writes that “Money appears to be Jake’s only means for overcoming his impotence and achieving some measure of power” (55).

4. The war damaged soldiers’ psyche as well as their body. The major mental damage was shell shock whose indications were psychic trauma, mental confusion, or emotional distress. Referring to the fact that Hemingway was wounded in the war, Philip Young proposes a war trauma theory of Hemingway’s characters, such as Nick Adams, Jake Barnes, Frederic Henry, and Robert Jordan. By demonstrating their indications of shell shock symptoms, Young insists that they are to some extent literal transcriptions of Hemingway’s war experiences. Yet James Nagel’s close examination of Hemingway’s service in the Great War suggests that Hemingway himself did not suffer shell shock, though he was actually wounded during the war. According to Nagel, Hemingway was not in the Italian army but served as an American Red Cross ambulance driver and dispenser of refreshments for the Italian soldiers. It is certain that he got injured at Fossalta di Piave on July 8, 1918, but it happened while he was “distributing coffee and chocolate and bringing supplies to the front line” (Nagel 216). Although various accounts of his wounds make it difficult to identify the facts, Nagel argues for the consistency of four points: 1) “Hemingway was at the front lines when he was struck by a trench mortar explosion”; 2) “he had something like 237 wounds”; 3) “he rendered assistance to another wounded man”; and 4) “he was hit a second time by machine-gun bullets” (Nagel 217).

The point is whether he actually suffered from shell shock or not. There is no decisive biographical evidence of his suffering from shell shock. His younger brother Leicester writes that Ernest “was plagued by insomnia and couldn’t sleep unless he had a light in his room” (*Brother* 48); however, when Hemingway returned home, Leicester was a child and his testimony is not so reliable. In addition, as Nagel examines, the diary of Agnes von Kurowsky, Hemingway’s letters home, and the official records of the American Red Cross Hospital in Italy show “no sign of [Hemingway’s] shell shock whatever” (214). Hemingway possibly heard about or witnessed the cases of shell shock victims while in Italy, and “found them an intriguing metaphor for the cultural destruction Western civilization had just
experienced” (Nagel 214). He might even perform the victim of shell shock to construct his public image of a macho man.

As Matthew C. Stewart asserts, however, there is a possibility that Hemingway suffered psychic trauma. In a letter 1948 to Malcom Cowley, Hemingway wrote that “In the first war, I now see, I was hurt very badly; in the body, mind and spirit; and also morally” (qtd. in Cowley, “Wound” 229; Steward also quotes this passage [204]). He did not show the signs of his mental suffering for a while after he got shell-shocked, but Stewart argues that his psychical wounding was latent as “trauma” and “with the passage of time he came to a deeper awareness and a better understanding of the war’s effects upon him” (205).

5. Robert W. Trogdon notes the first advertisement for The Sun Also Rises from Charles Scribner’s Sons Supplement to List of Spring Publications—1926, which is collected in the microfilm copies in the South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina.

6. The published version of the novel does not clarify that Jake was “an American aviator wounded while flying in Italy,” but the manuscript does (Reynolds Paris 308).

7. In his Paris Review interview (1958), Hemingway also mentioned that Jake was not “emasculated” because “his testicles were intact and not damaged” and “he was capable of all normal feelings as a man,” though “incapable of consummating them” (Conversations 120).

8. As to historical investigation about anti-Semitism in the 1920s, see Reynold, “Historical” (54). Yet Daniel S. Traber criticizes Reynold’s argument for overlooking Hemingway’s ideological depiction of Cohn; Hemingway expresses his anti-Semitism despite his knowledge of anti-Semitism as ideological discrimination (171). For a careful examination of Hemingway’s characterization of Cohn in relation to anti-Semitism, see Jeremy Kaye (48).

9. H. R. Stoneback provides historical materials to corroborate Cohn’s status as minority in Princeton University in the early 1900s (8-9).

10. Kaye argues that “Cohn performs white masculinity so well, in fact, that he exposes its very nature as a construct rather than an essential identity” (51) and that “Because Cohn is so close to the white masculine ideal, his Jewishness becomes even more threatening to Jake” (52). I agree with the former argument but take issues with the latter because Jake knows Cohn cries after bringing up separation from Frances (57-58), which goes against “the white masculine ideal.” Cohn even cries while apologizing to Jake for beating him down (197-98) and fighting against Pedro Romero (206). We must contend that both Cohn’s performance of white masculinity and his failure to follow the code of white masculinity spawn Jake’s hatred and antagonism toward him.

11. In a letter of December 1926 to Maxwell Perkins, Hemingway wrote: “As a matter of fact I have not been at all hard boiled since July 8 1918—on the night of which I discovered that that also was Vanity” (SL 240). Jake’s compulsive pursuit of a “hard-boiled” life style after the war is due largely to his war experiences (38): soldiers must paralyze their
sensitivity in the battlefield because if they responded to individual occurrences, such as the sudden attack from enemy and the absurd death of comrades, with sensibility, their mind would go insane. The battlefield compels their performance of unsentimental and insensitive masculinity.

12. For the British troops, the Battle of Somme on July 1, 1916 was the deadliest one: sixty hundred British soldiers were killed or wounded on that day alone by the Germans’ gun-shooting from the deep dugouts (Oliver 9). In contrast to the cleanliness and elaboration of the German trenches, the circumstances of the British trenches were rather inferior: muddy, smelly, lousy, and rats-infected. “To be in the trenches was to experience an unreal, unforgettable enclosure and constraint, as well as a sense of being unoriented and lost” (Fussell 51).

13. Hemingway describes the scene of Jake and Brett’s interaction right after she asked the Count for champagne in the following way:

“Poor old darling.” She stroked my head.
“What did you say to him?” I was lying with my face away from her. I did not want to see her.
“Sent him for champagne. He loves to go for champagne.”
Then later: “Do you feel better, darling? Is the head any better?”
“It’s better.” (62; emphasis added)

Chaman Nahal considers what Brett did to Jake before “Then,” pointing out the possibility of some sort of erotic activity other than genital intercourse between them: “Jake receives and Brett gives him a perverted sexual satisfaction” (44). As Stoneback writes, however, circumstantial evidences, such as Jake’s dressing and his face being turned away from Brett while she “stroked” his head, support that they do not have a sexual relationship (97-98). This essay will consider that they agree to explore their life founded upon emotional ties, non-sexual love, in the novel’s last scene, we read this scene as a transitory phase for reaching that agreement.

14. Peter L. Hays rightly analyzes Hemingway’s characterization of Brett as New Woman: “Hemingway shows us Brett, with neither corset nor bra. . ., with short-cropped hair like a boy’s, wearing men’s hats, unstockinged, and arrogating to herself what had heretofore been male prerogatives: drinking and smoking in public and being sexually active without qualm and with little or no remorse” (13). Kevin Floyd examines Brett’s “gender ambiguity,” revealing the subversion of the desiring subject and the desired object in the Jake–Brett relationship: “That Brett is both a woman and a desiring subject is registered here in terms of an agonizing contradiction, a question about how to situate her body in relation to a dyadic conception of males as desiring subjects and females as sexually inert objects, a question beyond resolution within the available sexual terms” (92). In his short story “Soldier’s Home,” Hemingway depicts a war veteran Harold Krebs’s gaze upon New Women in his hometown, Oklahoma, after World War I: “Most of them had their hair cut short. . . They all
wore sweaters and shirt waists with round Dutch collars. . . . He liked their bobbed hair and the way they walked” (112). We must pay attention to the difference in the war experiences between those girls and Brett. Feeling alienated from the innocent girl’s “world” (113), Harold is unwilling to communicate with them though he likes watching them. In contrast, Jake shares the sense of loss after the war with a war victim Brett, constructing his emotional bond with her.

15. Scott Donaldson asserts that Jake always tries to make exact “financial transactions” by following “the moral code of compensation” (“Compensation” 402, 409). Yet, as George Cheatham contends, Jake’s obsession with financial exactitude sometimes causes his immoral behaviors, and his loss of a penis releases his fear and desire for “the morality of surplus” and “the exceeding of exact equivalence” (27, 28). “Without a penis,” according to Cheatham, “with this nothing in the middle caused by the destructive excess of the war, Jake no longer fits” (30).

16. Brett increasingly enhances her own value through the continuous exchange of herself between men, as if she embodied the value structure of the capitalist economy in the 1920s. The subjectivity of Brett in male exchange of her is similar to the independent movement of “value” in the capitalist mode of production. In Capital, Karl Marx writes that “value is the subject of a process in which, while constantly assuming the form in turn of money and commodities, it changes its own magnitude, throws off surplus-value from itself considered as original values, and thus valorizes itself independently. . . . Value therefore now becomes value in process, money in process and, as such, capital” (255-56).

17. Romero’s smooth hands evoke his femininity (189). His graceful performance paradoxically leads to the audiences’ objectification of him. In terms of the dynamics of gaze, he is the object to be seen during his performance. His position as an idol permits aficionados to observe his manners even while he is out of the ring.

18. Pertinent here is Jake’s relationship with Brett. No matter how deeply he loves her, she is an “unattainable,” ultimate object of desire. As the bull cannot stab Romero with a horn, Jake cannot insert his penis into Brett. Mike’s curse against Cohn as “a steer” points to Cohn’s being “alone” in their group that causes other members “dangerous” charge against him like a bull’s goring of a steer in the ring, his confidential trip to San Sebastian with Brett like steers who “never say anything,” and his following around Brett like a “poor bloody” steer despite no more possibility to have sex with her (144-46). It also echoes, however, as a satire about Jake’s sexual disability. As long as Brett wants Jake to be with her, he is not an obnoxious stalking steer like Cohn but a lovable “friend” (like bulls as “friends” [189] for Romero) or an emasculated, feminized steer. In another context, Jake looks like a steer: if steers serve to “quiet down” bulls and prevent them from “goring each other” (138), Jake stands like a steer between Mike and Cohn to mediate their quarrel over Brett; however, Jake is beaten down (“gored”) by Cohn as a bull (195). In any events, Jake’s genital wound renders him a steer-like feminized impotent in the masculine phallic bullfighting zone.
19. In his queer reading, J. F. Buckley argues that in the final scene Jake “dismisses—in a very campy fashion—strict heterosexual prescriptions for desire” (73), noting that he “‘nearly comes out’” (85). In her disability reading, Dana Fore insists that Jake’s choice of the word “pretty” might be “a sign that—despite occasional glimpses of his sexual potential—Jake has finally accepted the life society has mapped out for him as a disable man” (86): an asexual life.
Chapter 5

**Frederic’s Conflict between Homosociality and Heterosexuality:**

**War, Marvell, and Sculpture in *A Farewell to Arms***

Proponents of social constructionism assert that identity is not a natural given but an unfixed existence where social categories such as race, sex, and gender are constructed over time. In the case of gender, Judith Butler argues that gender is the effect of discourse and performance, “a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (45). Gender identities are the individual acts of conforming to, contesting, and compromising with prevailing conventions within a heteronormative culture.

For many years, Ernest Hemingway had been regarded as a symbol of unabashed hetero-masculinity. He performed as a highly macho man; he fell in love with many women and married four times; he often went on hunting and fishing expeditions to prove his strength and bravery. That myth, however, has been radically modified since the posthumous
publication of *The Garden of the Eden* in 1986; the novel depicts the inversion of a couple’s sexual roles and the couple’s imaginary transformation into the same sex in the act of coitus. Researchers such as Mark Spilka, Carl P. Eby, and Debra A. Moddelmog have examined the hidden side of Hemingway’s hetero-masculinity, revealing new insights concerning androgyny, femininity, and transgressive desires in his fiction. Although it cannot be simply assumed that Hemingway’s novels embody a straightforward transcription of the author’s psyche, sexual or otherwise, many of the writings themselves reflect his concern about unstable gender and sexuality in some way. Placing *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) in a historical context shows that the novel depicts male anxieties and tensions around gender and sexual roles that were fairly prevalent during and after the Great War.

This chapter clarifies that Frederic Henry, a protagonist in the novel, expresses anxieties about the construction and performance of sexual and gender identities in the army, a homosocial institution, and in the postwar civil society, a heterosexual landscape. In *Between Men*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick asserts that patriarchal culture constitutes a homosocial network through “male traffic in women”: “the use of women as exchangeable, perhaps symbolic, property for the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men with men” (25-26). According to Sedgwick, homosociality has a contradictory structure. It is, on the one hand, a homoerotic system in which male homoeroticism is intensively evoked in order to strengthen the male bonds, and, on the other hand, a homophobic system in which any concomitant homosexual nuance is thoroughly excluded in order to do so. In addition, it
is a heteronormative regime in which men must incorporate women as lovers into the
patriarchy through the ritual exchange of them, especially, marriage, whereas it is a
misogynistic regime in which men must socially marginalize women because the ascendency
of women has the potential to endanger men’s interests and privilege. Frederic’s movement
from the extremely homosocial army to the privatized heterosexual space with Catherine
Barkley triggers the fluidity and subversion of his gender and sexuality. Although Stephen P.
Clifford examines Frederic’s struggle between his commitment to the homosocial masculine
world and his decision to live with Catherine, he does not fully pursue Frederic’s
undercurrent homoerotic desire—his secret yearning for male bonding—even when he
enjoys his heterosexual life in Milan and Switzerland. By examining Frederic’s transgressive
desire in his quotation of Andrew Marvell’s poem “To His Coy Mistress” and the sculptures’
representation of masculinity in the novel, this chapter provides the clear account of how the
pressure of homosocial military experience disturbs his hetero-masculinity and how such
experience continuously influences his heterosexual relationship with Catherine. The analysis
of the sustained conflict between homosociality and heterosexuality, the theme not only of
that time but of even ours, offers an insight into how gender and sexual identities are fluid,
fragile, and always in the process of being defined in response to environments.

1. Homosocial Bonding in the Army: Frederic and Rinaldi
Agnes von Kurowsky’s diary during World War I collected in *Hemingway in Love and War* documents not only the love affair between Hemingway and Agnes but also the intimate relationship between Hemingway and Italian Captain Enrico Serena. Captain Serena is the “prototype” of Captain Rinaldi in *A Farewell to Arms*, and Agnes’s diary shows the two men’s close association: Captain Serena “took quite a fancy to Mr. Hemingway”; “Mr. Hemingway is devoted to that man [Captain Serena]—and they tell each other all their secrets” (Villard 33, 62, 67). When the Captain did not show up for dinner with Agnes and Hemingway, Hemingway became restless: “. . .how the Kid worried. He was sure ‘we’ had been jilted” (Villard 72). It is important to note that as the two men interacted with Agnes, the male intimacy developed. After the Captain asked her to dinner, he and Hemingway became kindred spirits; just before the Captain went back to battlefield, Hemingway started to love her: “Now, Ernest Hemingway has a case on me, or thinks he has . . . Ernest Hemingway is getting earnest” (Villard 72). At that time, in a letter of August 1918 to his mother Grace, Hemingway wrote not only about his falling in love with Agnes (“Mom I’m in love”) but also his friendships with comrades, probably including the Captain: “. . .you want to be prepared for a lot of visitors after the war now because I’ve got a lot of pals coming to see me in Chicago. That’s the best thing about this mess, the friends that it makes. And when you are looking at death all the time you get to know your friends too” (Villard 181). After
Hemingway returned to the front, Agnes also put down her affection for him in diary: “I wrote to the Kid last night at midnight as per order. It was the most dismal night I ever spent on night duty. I missed him so much” (Villard 82). We do not have clear evidence of rivalry between Hemingway and Captain Serena over Kurowsky, but we can speculate that their male homosocial relationship produced and intensified their heterosexual love for her.¹

Drawing upon Sedgwick’s theory, Peter F. Cohen shows a homosocial relationship between Frederic and Rinaldi through the exchange of Catherine between them.² Cohen evidences Frederic’s intimate feeling toward Rinaldi by analyzing his gaze upon Rinaldi. After coming back to the front from a leave for a trip around Italy, Frederic, stripped to the waist, watches Rinaldi on the bed: “While I rubbed myself with a towel I looked around the room and out the window and at Rinaldi lying with his eyes closed on the bed. He was good-looking . . . we were great friends” (12). The sexual images of the nakedness and the bed characterize Frederic’s gaze as erotic. In order to foreground Frederic’s sexuality in the army, however, we must emphasize two more points that Cohen does not fully tackle: 1) the function of the bawdyhouse as a means of breaking the continuum between homosociality and homosexuality; and 2) soldier’s misogyny and homophobia as the driving forces to reinforce homosociality.

Paul Fussell, a literary historian, illustrates that some soldiers at front-line in the Great War felt “passions” for comrades as “antidotes against loneliness and terror” and experienced
“the homoerotic,” “a sublimated (i.e., ‘chaste’) form of temporary homosexuality” (272).³

Although the modern definition of sexuality centers upon genital activity, human beings have various expressions of a non-sexualized profound attachment to the same-sex: for example, a non-genital physical contact, an intimate conversation, or a relationship of deep trust. Servicemen tend to experience ambiguous sexuality, relations between men that are not necessarily sexual but homoerotic. Yet the troops, the zone of heterosexism, must exclude any concomitant homosexual nuance. The Villa Rossa is a bordello for soldiers to have an outlet for their sexual desires, but its concealed function is to strengthen the emotionally charged homosocial bonding between them; they tighten the bonds by drinking and singing together in the brothel (32). The whorehouse enables them to distinguish homosociality from homosexuality and to maintain the homosocial regime in the army.

The army bears the characteristics of misogyny and homophobia. Upon Frederic’s return from a leave in Italy, Rinaldi says to him: “You’re dirty. . . . You ought to wash” (11). On the symbolic level, these expressions suggest his body’s pollution by his sexual activity during his leave and his need to purify his body in order to re-enter the homosocial system. When Rinaldi visits wounded Frederic in the Milan hospital and teases Frederic’s relationship with Catherine, he expresses his sexism through a dichotomy between the “good girl” to have a romantic relationship with and the “woman” to gratify male carnal desire. He displays his misogyny by stating that “a good girl,” like Catherine, troubles Frederic (66).
Soldiers set the celibate priest as a screen onto which they project their homophobia.\textsuperscript{4} Because they cannot strictly categorize him as heterosexual, they unconsciously regard him as an element to obscure the difference between homosociality and homosexuality in the army. The captain’s five-fingered baiting of the priest and the following soldier’s laughing imply the priest’s masturbating every night (8-9), but the two scenes also suggest the males’ compulsion to prove their heterosexuality through sexual intercourse with women. By despising and teasing the priest, soldiers project their anxiety about homosexuality onto the unstable contour of his sexuality so that they can alleviate their fear of homosexuality and reinforce their solidarity.

Frederic, however, does not participate in abusing the priest for three reasons. First, he is an American and does not fully commit himself to the Italian Army which compels the homophobic behavior. Second, he is an ambulance driver whose image is associated with the homosexual as a feminized man caring for soldiers; therefore, his despising the priest would literally signify the self-contempt. Third and most importantly, he feels affinity toward the moral and ascetic life of the priest. In spite of the priest’s advice, he chose to visit whores in Italy for a leave rather than hunt with men in the priest’s homeland, Abruzzi (13). He did so probably because the homosocial pressure of the military coerced him to follow the code of the heterosexual masculine conduct. Yet he actually craves hunting, as he explains to the priest “how we did not do the things we wanted to do” (13).\textsuperscript{5} As Ira Elliott points out,
“Frederic sees himself as a friend to the young priest,” which suggests that “he is perhaps willing to entertain other possibilities in regard to traditional gender and sex classifications” (295). Frederic, who forms the intimate relationship with the priest, tends to deviate from the gender norms of homosocial environment: he unconsciously hopes to form male-bonding in a space where he is not necessarily forced to enact homophobic behavior.

*A Farewell to Arms* describes Frederic and Catherine’s romance as a struggle for the subject and the object. Apparently their relationship forms the typical structure of a man as the desiring/seeing subject and a woman as the desired/seen object. Tomoyuki Zettsu presents a deconstructive reading of masculinity in Hemingway’s short story “The Sea Change,” revealing the male character’s transformation from the seeing man into the seen man. Zettsu’s reading enables us to analyze the dynamics of the gaze in *A Farewell to Arms*. The first time Frederic and Catherine meet, he objectifies her by reducing her to a body part, hair: “We sat down on a bench and I looked at her. ‘You have beautiful hair,’ I said” (19). At their second meeting, he requests her to “drop the war” (26) so that he can enjoy a pseudo-heterosexual affair with her. Yet, when he tries to kiss her, she slaps his face hard, and he narrates: “She was looking at me in the dark. I was angry and yet certain, seeing it all ahead like the moves in a chess game” (26). Although he still thinks of himself as the desiring/seeing subject, like “a chess game” controller, he discovers the subjectivity of Catherine, who he thought to be the object for his control. Frederic recognizes the unsettling
possibility that he, who has assumed himself to be the dominating subject, can instead be the object. His anger comes from the instability and fragility of being the male subject. As Ernest Lockridge argues, Catherine plays the game with Frederic as her lost fiancé’s surrogate so that she seems to heal her psychological wounds (173, 177). “The irony is that while he thinks he is playing with Catherine, he is blithely oblivious to the fact that she is using him” (Spanier 134).  

Frederic’s perception of the imminence of the war is at first immature: “[This war] seemed no more dangerous to me myself than war in the movies” (37). But a trench motor, which kills Passini and wounds Frederic’s leg (55), forces him to realize the brutality of the war and the powerlessness of soldiers in face of the technological power of the war. His wounding renders him passive. In his first sexual encounter with Catherine in the Milan hospital, Frederic is sexually receptive and feminized. As Mark Spilka points out, he “would have to lie on his back to perform properly, given the nature of his leg wounds, and Catherine would have to lie on top of him” (212-13). Certainly her mounting of him is “an extra-nursely tending to the wounded patient” (Clifford 241), but it is clear that his wounds prevent him from enacting the sexually dominating subject, and she instead assumes the superior position. Moreover, as Alex Vernon asserts, “the enema Catherine administers to him prior to his operation” strengthens “Frederic’s relative position of passivity to Catherine, a position, in Hemingway’s day, considered feminine—and for a man, queer” (43). His wounding
subverts normative hetero-masculinity, and he struggles to recover his subjectivity in a relationship with Catherine.

2. A “Split” Heterosexuality: Frederic and Catherine

Their love relationship flourishes into sexual passion in Milan and shows the passionate moment just before Frederic goes back to the front. Nevertheless, a split appears in his affection: his quotation of lines from Andrew Marvell’s poem “To His Coy Mistress” displays the subversion of hetero-masculinity. After making love with Catherine, he has a meal with her and recalls the poem.

“We have such a fine time,” Catherine said. “I don’t take any interest in anything else any more. I’m so very happy married to you.”

The waiter came and took away the things. After a while we were very still and we could hear the rain. Down below on the street a motor car honked.

“ ‘But at my back I always hear
Time’s wingèd chariot hurrying near,’ ”

I said.

“I know that poem,” Catherine said. “It’s by Marvell. But it’s about a girl who wouldn’t live with a man.” (154)

“To His Coy Mistress” is a poem by Marvell around 1650. This poem depicts the motif of “carpe diem” (seize the day): The male speaker argues that if he and the lady had infinite space and time, the lady’s “coyness” would not be a crime, but human beings are fated to die
and “worms shall try” your “long preserved virginity” in the grave. The first and second stanzas of the poem are as follows:

Had we but world enough, and time,
This coyness lady were no crime.
We would sit down, and think which way
To walk, and pass our long love’s day.

... But at my back I always hear
Time’s wingèd chariot hurrying near:
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found;
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
My echoing song: then worms shall try
That long preserved virginity:
And your quaint honour turn to dust;
And into ashes all my lust.
The grave’s a fine and private place,
But none I think do there embrace. (“To His Coy Mistress” 81-83)

Because the speaker is courting a virgin whereas Frederic and Catherine have had sexual relations, the relationship of the speaker and the virgin does not directly reflect that of Frederic and Catherine. Yet the two relationships have some common features, and Frederic unconsciously superimposes his real life upon the world of the poem.

It is obvious that hearing the motor’s honk reminds Frederic of the poem in which the speaker personifies Time as the driver of a chariot with wings. His quotation mirrors his division between his enjoyment of heterosexual love and the pressure to return to the front. He has been steeped in happiness because he gained the sense of “home” (153) after having sex with her and listened to the word “married” from her; therefore, the sorrow of the
separation recalls the poem in his mind. Yet Frederic’s quotation might also express his irritation over Catherine’s hesitation to make love. Although he quotes the poem after sex, his repressed dissatisfaction about her hesitation might return through the quotation. She hesitates when she regards herself to be “a whore,” seeing herself in one of the mirrors in a hotel room (152). Because she heard an episode about the Italian’s shooting of birds using twirling mirrors (149), she associates herself with the birds and feels that she, reflected in the mirrors, is “a whore” sexually objectified by male desire. She is unwilling to accept the feminine passive position, and she refuses to have a sexual relationship with him. At that time he reveals his dissatisfaction: “Oh, hell, I thought, do we have to argue now?” (152). Although his early fantasy of his pleasure in sex with Catherine “all night in the hot night in Milan” (37-38) is partially realized, he fails to construct a masculine subjectivity by leading her to bed. His irritation over the failure evokes this poem in his mind.

Importantly, this poem is one of Hemingway’s favorite poems. He heard that T.S. Eliot “admired” the poem, and read it in the 1920s (Lynn 246). In a January 1926 letter to Ernest Walsh, he insists that the literary quality of modern poetry is lower than that of classics, including “To His Coy Mistress” (SL 189). Also, the narrator in Death in the Afternoon (1932) alludes to the second section of the poem (“then worms shall try / That long preserved virginity: / And your quaint honour turn to dust; / And into ashes all my lust.”) in the following way: “But regardless of how they started I hope to see the finish of a few, and
speculate how worms will try that long preserved sterility; with their quaint pamphlets gone
to bust and into foot-notes all their lust” (139). Why did Hemingway prefer this poem?

The speaker in the poem sings “Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound / My echoing
song” after the lines recited above. Frederic does not quote these lines but probably
remembers them as Hemingway surely did. Interestingly, Robert H. Ray asserts that Marvell
adapted in this poem the “Echo and Narcissus” story from Book 3 of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*
(386). Ray goes on to argue that the male speaker compares himself to female Echo and the
lady to male Narcissus:

> For further evidence, one can see that other facets of Marvell’s poem reflect
> Ovid’s account of Echo and Narcissus. In the context of the poem as a whole,
> Marvell’s male speaker actually makes himself comparable to the female
> Echo. The speaker is longing for the love of an unresponsive female who,
> ironically, is comparable to the male Narcissus. (387)

In other words, the speaker likens his echoing in his lover’s grave to Echo’s echoing after
Narcissus’s death. Hemingway was possibly required to read *A Term of Ovid: Ten Stories
from the Metamorphoses, for Boys and Girls* (1900) in high school and he owned *Tales from
Greek Mythology* (1928) which involves a chapter “Echo and Narcissus” (Reynolds 42, 172).
According to Moddelmog, in the manuscript of *The Garden of Eden*, “Catherine asks David
to change like the [lesbian] sculpture in the Rodin museum,” *The Metamorphoses of Ovid*
(1886), which “depicts two women embracing, one reclining in the arms of the other who is
kneeling over her” (69). No doubt Hemingway read the motif of homosexual desire in Ovid’s
*Metamorphoses.*
It can be speculated, then, that he continued to have deep interest in the story of “Echo and Narcissus” since he was a high school student and that he associated the particular world of the story with “To His Coy Mistress” in the 1920s. Because he knew the “Echo and Narcissus” story, it is possible that when he read the passage “My echoing song” in the poem, he recalled the Greek tale and noticed the hidden motif in the poem: the analogy of the male speaker and Echo. It should be noted here that Catherine, recalling her dead fiancé, asks Frederic to repeat her lines: “You did say you loved me, didn’t you?” / “Yes,” I lied. “I love you.” I had not said it before. / “And you call me Catherine?” / “Catherine.” . . . / “Say, ‘I’ve come back to Catherine in the night.’ ” / “I’ve come back to Catherine in the night” (30; emphasis mine). In other scenes he also echoes her words, “rotten” (31, 35) and “show” (31, 43). Frederic’s echoing suggests that Hemingway partially modeled a love affair between Frederic and Catherine on the story of “Echo and Narcissus,” so that Frederic’s quotation shows the correspondence between Frederic and Echo in the role of courting. When quoting the Marvell’s poem, Frederic identifies with the speaker who compares himself to Echo. This identification alludes to the indeterminacy of his sexuality and gender.

More importantly, this poem has another hidden motif: the inversion of sexual identities. Insofar as the male speaker who identifies with Echo courts Narcissus, we can interpret this courting as a love song by a man in the guise of a woman. As Paul Hammond claims, Marvell “is casting himself as Echo in pursuit of Narcissus, the poet in pursuit of the
unresponsive and unattainable boy,” and then, he could only imagine courting a woman “if he imagined himself courting a boy” (224). It is because this heterosexual love poem secretly intimates homosexual affection that it fascinated Hemingway. If so, we can assume that Hemingway had Frederic, like the male speaker, unconsciously express his love for Catherine through imagining himself loving a boy. Frederic as a woman in love makes advances to Catherine as a beautiful boy. Emphasizing that Frederic quotes this poem just before leaving for the front, we can speculate that Frederic might imagine his comrades-in-arms behind Catherine and that a surge of his affinity for the homosocial elements leads to his quotation. Just before shifting to male communion, he implies his intimate feelings toward fellow soldiers with the image of “chariot.” If Narcissus is the origin of love for the same sex, Frederic as Echo returns to the army which produces emotional and physical intimacy between soldiers as Narcissuses.

In fact, upon returning to the front, Frederic reunites his bonds with war compatriots, especially Rinaldi. After palpating the condition of Frederic’s knee and asking for a kiss, Rinaldi drinks cognac, saying, “I will get you drunk and take out your liver and put you in a good Italian liver and make you a man again” (168). Rinaldi’s alcoholism reflects his anguish over the war’s cruelty and emptiness, but he welcomes Frederic back and tries to transform his “best friend” and “war brother” (171) into a sturdy “man” in the battlefield. And Frederic narrates that “I was glad to see Rinaldi again. He had spent two years teasing me and I had
always liked it. We understood each other well” (169). The two men talk about Frederic’s relationship with Catherine over drinks, thereby reconfirming their comradeship developed through the exchange of her between them.

3. Gender as a Soldier/Civilian: The Subversion of Frederic’s Masculinity

After the Caporetto retreat, however, Frederic detaches himself from the social context of the war: “I was through. . . it was not my show any more . . . I wondered what had become of the priest at the mess. . . I would never see [Rinaldi] now. I would never see any of them now. That life was over” (232-33). He makes “a separate peace” (243) with the war and travels to Stresa to see Catherine again (243). Yet, even after he withdraws into a privatized world with Catherine, his war scar deeply inscribed in his mind does not go away. Recalling his emotional entanglement with the war, he continuously experiences the conflict between homosociality and heterosexuality.

For example, his sense of being “a criminal” in the morning after he makes love arises from his consciousness that he has “deserted from the army” (251). Behind the consciousness he feels guilty for his escape from the Italian officers’ executions in spite of his shooting at the deserting sergeant during the retreat. This guilt provokes his feeling “strange” in civilian clothes (258). Because he is still “liable to be shot as a deserting soldier;” as Thomas
Strychacz claims, he “remains a soldier masquerading as a civilian, not a civilian who has shucked off the masquerade of being a soldier” (99). He tells Catherine that “Sometimes I wonder about the front and about people I know but I don’t worry. I don’t think about anything much” (298). These phrases indicate his paradoxical psychological state that he has to recall the front and comrades unless he keeps telling himself not to do so. The fact that some comrades are dead and others are still engaged in war service evokes his guilt for surviving and enjoying reunion with Catherine. Thus, this double sense of guilt prevents a soldierly masculinity from shifting to a civilian one, just as his mind cannot escape the homosocial battlefield.

In Lausanne, while reading the news of a war he has renounced, he enjoys drinking whisky alone: “Good whiskey was very pleasant. It was one of the pleasant parts of life” (310). He must be recollecting night time at the front, for he had social drinking with Rinaldi, the priest, and comrades (6, 38-40, 69-70, 168-76). He might even forget the present time with Catherine, looking back to the past drinking with nostalgia. Because Catherine recognizes his homosocial desire, she asks him whether he wants to “go on a trip somewhere by yourself” and “be with men and ski” (297) when it snows three days before Christmas in Montreux. Although this question might be her consideration for his boredom of a humdrum life in the mountains, it is a keen inquiry which detects his unconscious desire and affinity for
returning to the world of “men without women.” It reveals the instability of his gender and sexuality, situated as he is between heterosexuality and homosociality.

Catherine’s request him to grow his beard (298) destabilizes his gender identity because his beard is associated with several different gender images. On the one hand, his beard is connected to the masculine behavior in the army because he had grown a beard until a barber shaved in the Milan hospital (90). On the other hand, it is connected to femininity because it reminds her of a “woodcutter” with “tiny gold earrings” (303). Although he argues that the person wearing the earrings is not a woodcutter but a “chamois hunter,” his beard ironically leads her to recall the “feminine” earrings. When he shadow-boxes in front of the mirror of a gymnasium, he thinks that “it looked so strange to see a man with a beard boxing” and that “it was funny” (311). Frederic, through boxing, attempts to recreate his manhood undermined by his injury, military defeat, and his forced desertion from the army. Ironically, however, his shadow-boxing with a beard blurs his gender identity because that act evokes ambiguous associations with gender formation: the military masculinization and the civilian masculinization and feminization.

Frederic’s notion of gender characteristics is also subverted by Catherine’s suggestion of growing hair: “let [your hair] grow a little longer and I could cut mine and we’d be just alike only one of us blonde and one of us dark. . . . I want you so much I want to be you too” (299). Cutting their hair the same length signifies a merging of her femininity and his
masculinity and challenges the validity of defining gender within a traditional binarism between masculinity and femininity. In the preceding scenes—Frederic’s fascination with Catherine’s brushing her hair and his hesitation to leave for a homosocial poolroom (258-59)—Hemingway describes how Frederic’s desire is controlled by Catherine’s hair as “fetish.” Her suggestion of cutting her hair short foregrounds the suppression of her femininity and the emergence of her masculinity. In *The Garden of Eden*, Hemingway connects haircutting to transformative sexuality and describes a scene: when Catherine Bourne has her hair cut the second time, David Bourne takes a good look at “the sculptured tawny head” (46). Hemingway also depicts a coiffeur who is giving Catherine “a boy’s haircut” as “a sculptor” (*Garden* 80). As we confirmed, he refers to a Rodin’s bronze sculpture representing lesbians, *The Metamorphoses of Ovid*, in the manuscript of *The Garden of Eden* (Moddelmog 69), and Catherine gets tanned almost black like a bronze statue. She aims to “become a lesbian statue” as the seen object so that she can visualize homosexuality to subvert the order of heterosexism (Ogasawara 26). The bronze statue functions as a metaphor of “the subversion of normative masculinity” in *The Garden of Eden*. Hemingway employs a hairdresser/a sculptor as an artist visualizing the transformation of sexuality. Although Hemingway does not have any hairdressers associated with a sculptor in *A Farewell to Arms*, we can infer that in his imagination Catherine’s asking Frederic to cut
their hair the same length intimates the possible transformation of sexuality and aims at subverting the existing order of gender.

4. A Farewell to What?: Catherine’s Death

Throughout the novel, Catherine transforms from the object of male desire into the controlling subject of male desire. This transformation deconstructs a normative binary opposition between a man as the desiring subject and a woman as the desired object. It also prompts Frederic to explore a profound and trustful love relationship with her. While nursing her in childbirth, he finally achieves self-sacrificed love defined by the priest: “When you love you wish to do things for. You wish to sacrifice for. You wish to serve” (72). After she hemorrhages, his love is united with agape and becomes “a religious feeling” (263) suggested by the Count Greffi: “I prayed that she would not [die]. Don’t let her die. Oh, God, please don’t let her die” (330).

Catherine’s death deepens Frederic’s understanding of the tragic nature of the world. By encountering Passini’s death in the dugout at the front (55) and the Italians’ killing of Aymo during the Caporetto retreat (218), he recognizes the absurdity of human death in war. Facing Catherine’s hard labor and stillbirth, he comes to share a fatalistic view of human existence: “they killed you in the end. You could count on that. Stay around and they would
kill you” (327). Her suffering reminds him of the ants burning at the end of the log in camp. Thinking he could have been “a messiah” who saves the ants, he did nothing but “throw a tin cup of water on the log, so that [he] would have the cup empty to put whiskey in,” and “the cup of water on the burning log only steamed the ants” (328). He uses the ants as human analogue: the hand of fate controls human life and even if the fate changes the setting on a whim, men are doomed to die in the end. It should be noted that this pessimism originates in his war experiences and develops during her childbirth.

On the other hand, Catherine has understood the rule of this doom since she lost her fiancé in the Battle of Somme. She is meeting her end bravely: “I’m going to die. . . . I hate it.’ ‘Don’t worry, darling. . . . I’m not a bit afraid. It’s just a dirty trick.’ ‘You dear, brave sweet’” (330-31). Her battling instructs him “how to survive in a hostile and chaotic world in which an individual can gain at most a limited autonomy—through scrupulous adherence to roles and rituals of one’s own devising” (Spanier 132). In spite of her pain and suffering,10 she smiles and concerns herself about his future: “I want you to have girls” after her death (331). In contrast to her masculine preparation for death, he faces his incompetence to save her life like a “fake doctor with a beard” (319) and helplessly cries (330). This shows the reverse of traditional gender roles: while she is facing the crisis of life like a front-line soldier, he is just watching over her battle like a home-front female. Her act of childbirth as the
culmination of femininity paradoxically embodies ideal masculinity, and in her exhibitions of
courage and stoicism just before her death Frederic discovers a model of masculine conduct.

Frederic’s last narration implies the disturbance of his gender and sexuality.

But after I had got them out and shut the door and turned off the light it wasn’t any good. It was like saying good-by to a statue. After a while I went out and left the hospital and walked back to the hotel in the rain. (332)

His regard of her body as “a statue” comes from double concept of sculpture in
Hemingway’s works: the one is a bronze statue as the subversion of normative masculinity
and the other is a marble statue as the reinforcement of normative masculinity. It is unclear
whether the “statue” in the last scene is made of bronze or marble, but either is possible
because the room’s lighting is off. If Frederic compares her remains to a bronze figure, it is
because his intimacy with her suggests his deviation from heterosexuality and prevents his
reconstruction of normative masculinity. Although it is too hasty to directly connect this
metaphor of a bronze statue (the metaphor was developing in Hemingway’s imagination and
it was used later in The Garden of Eden) to the last scene of A Farewell to Arms, we can
argue that one of the reasons for Hemingway’s figuration of Catherine’s body as a “statue” is
to imply the disturbance of Frederic’s hetero-masculinity in his love affair with her.

On the other hand, the latter marble figure as the reinforcement of normative
masculinity suggests that Frederic sees her corpse as the embodiment of the masculine ideals
of bravery and honor like a Greek statue. In the beginning of Chapter 6, Frederic looks at
“uniformly classical” “marble busts” and says that sculpture “seemed a dull business” and the
busts “looked like a cemetery” (28). In classical Greece portrait busts “represented a
generalized ideal of beauty at the expense of individual characteristics” (Grossman 53). Even
if Frederic tried to “make out whether [the busts] were members of the family or what,” he
could not “tell anything about them” (28), and sculpture seemed “dull.” A technical book on
sculpture, *Greek and Roman Sculpture in American Collections*, published in 1924,
emphasizes that Greek statues have three tendencies: “fondness for the human figure, passion
for beauty, and idealism” (Chase 203). In the 1920s Hemingway must have shared the
conception of Greek sculpture as a visual art for praising the aesthetic beauty of the male
body or male honorable military exploits. The marble figure functions as the metaphor for the
reinforcement of normative masculinity in *A Farewell to Arms*. The reason for Frederic’s
dislike of sculpture in Chapter 6 is that he develops a distrust for the militarized manhood
constructed by abstract words, such as “glory, honor, courage, or hallow” (185). He considers
them “obscene” besides the “concrete” names of places (185) because he has found in the
battlefield “the emptiness of the language of both religious sacrifice and warrior fame”
(Braudy 381). Yet Catherine’s battle against the fate is “concrete” and “courageous” and it
manifests the ideal of masculine behavior; therefore, he compares her body to the sculpture
with admiration.

The point is, however, that he says farewell to the “statue.” As James Nagel contends,
his retrospective narration serves as a therapeutic working for “coming to terms emotionally
with” the sorrowful memories (161). We can assume that until the recounting, for about ten years, he “has not replaced Catherine emotionally” (Nagel 168) because he considers that their idiosyncratic love—“we could feel alone when we were together, alone against the others”—“has only happened to me like that once” (249). The act of the telling, therefore, might lead to the healing of his psychic wound and his resumption of a heterosexual life. However, his bidding farewell to the “statue” suggests the insecurity of his gender and sexuality prior to the retelling because his separation from two contradictory concepts of bronze and marble makes it ambiguous whether he returns to normative masculinity or distances himself from it. This ambiguity signifies the confusion of the ending which inscribes the coexistence of Frederic’s instability of love and the author’s interest in fluid love. Frederic’s use of the “statue” in his last narration prevents the novel from withdrawing into a heterosexual narrative, leaving his gender and sexuality unresolved and indeterminate. Yet the ending retains the bipolar structure of masculinity and femininity; in this sense, we can position A Farewell to Arms as a transitory work in the process of developing the world of The Garden of Eden which depicts the conflation and collapse of the polarized gender structure.

Notes
A large part of this chapter appeared as the same title essay in *The Midwest Quarterly* 53.1 (Pittsburg: Pittsburg State University, 2011), 26-44. An early version of this essay was orally presented at The American Literature Society of Japan Conference at Rissyo University, Tokyo, Japan, on 9 October 2010.

1. Hemingway had intimate relationships with friends, such as Bill Smith, Jim Gamble, and Evan Shipman. During his convalescence in the Great War, Hemingway spent a week in Taormina, Sicily at Red Cross Captain Gamble’s invitation. They became kindred spirits, and Gamble not only paid Hemingway’s bills in Sicily but also “offered to support him for an entire year so that the two of them could travel in Europe together” (Lynn 89). Yet Agnes would not let Hemingway accept the offer because she tried to get him to return to America. After repatriation Hemingway sent an effusive letter to Gamble: “Every minute of every day I kick myself for not being at Taormina with you. It makes me so damned homesick for Italy and whenever I think that I might be there and with you” (SL 21).

2. Hemingway also describes Catherine’s homoerotic relationship with Helen Ferguson. On this subject, see Miriam Mandel’s “Ferguson and Lesbian Love.” Janet Lee points out lesbianism in the FANY (First Aid Nursing Yeomanry): The FANY would “have been able (at least temporarily) to avoid the constraints of marriage and domestic responsibility: some experienced the war as a freedom that postponed marriage; some would have preferred romantic partnerships with women” (212-13).

3. The military in *A Farewell to Arms* can be regarded as “a battlefield family” in which the family “takes its meals together, jokes familiarly at the table, enjoys the same diversion (the prostitutes), and even shares the same sensations of the war: ‘in the dark we heard the troops marching under the window’ ” (Elliot 293). For an examination of male homoeroticism in World War I, see Fussell (270-309). For a discussion of military friendship in the First World War, see Brian Joseph Martin (10-12). Given Michel Foucault’s understanding of male affection and friendship in the army, Martin contends that friendship was “a military technique for individual survival and collective success in combat, where men are trained to love and protect their fellow comrades in order to better hate and kill their enemies” (11).

4. In *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), Sedgwick points out “enforcement of homophobic rules in the armed services” in the United States (186). She argues: “In these institutions, where both men’s manipulability and their potential for violence are at the highest possible premium, the prescription of the most intimate male bonding and the proscription of (the remarkably cognate) ‘homosexuality’ are both stronger than in civilian society—are, in fact, close to absolute” (186).

5. In a letter November 1918 to his family, Hemingway wrote of the invitation to Abruzzi by an Italian officer (probably Nick Neroni): “After my treatments are finished I’ve been invited by an Italian officer to take two weeks shooting and trout fishing in the province of Abruzzi. He wants me to spend Christmas and New Years at his country home and
guarantees fine quail, pheasant and rabbit shooting. Abruzzi is very mountainous and is in the south of Italy and will be beautiful in December. There are also several good trout rivers and Nick claims the fishing is good. So I’ll take my permission there” (Villard 189).

6. For a survey of critical responses to Catherine, see Spanier’s “Hemingway’s Unknown Soldier” (76-81) and Rena Sanderson’s “Hemingway and Gender History” (180-82).

7. Spilka contends that Hemingway apparently did not feel fear of “female dominance” when he wrote this scene “perhaps because he saw good androgynous women like Catherine as unthreatening to his essential maleness, in the initial stages of love, and to that side of the male ego—male identity—the bitch woman seemed so immediately to jeopardize” (213).

8. In The Waste Land (1922), T. S. Eliot alludes to “To His Coy Mistress” in the following way:

When Lil’s husband got demobbed, I said—
I didn’t mince my words, I said to her myself,
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
Now Albert’s coming back, make yourself a bit smart.
He’ll want to know what you done with that money
he gave you
To get yourself some teeth. He did, I was there.
You have them all out, Lil, and get a nice set,
He said, I swear, I can’t bear to look at you.
And no more can’t I, I said, and think of poor Albert,
He’s been in the army four years, he wants a good
time,
And if you don’t give it him, there’s others will, I said.
Oh is there, she said. Something o’ that, I said.
Then I’ll know who to thank, she said, and give me
a straight look.
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
.
.
Well, if Albert won’t leave you alone, there it is, I said,
What you get married for if you don’t want children?
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
Well, that Sunday Albert was home, they had a hot
gammon,
And they asked me in to dinner, to get the beauty of it
hot—
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME (34-35)
It can be speculated that Eliot’s composition of female shyness against the backdrop of World War I inspired Hemingway’s depiction of Frederic’s quotation of “To His Coy Mistress.”

9. For an insightful analysis of hair as a fetish, see Eby’s Hemingway’s Fetishism. It must be recalled that when Frederic is veiled in Catherine’s hair in his hospital room at night, Frederic feels as if he is returning to “home” or the womb: “we would both be inside of [her hair], and it was the feeling of inside a tent or behind a falls” (114). Catherine’s hair as a fetish functions as a reminder of Frederic’s sense of “home,” which is severed from a homosocial regime.

10. For Hemingway’s revision of the ending of A Farewell to Arms, see Robert W. Trogdon (75-77). In a letter of 26 November 1926 to Hemingway, his editor Maxwell Perkins questions “the intense pain of the hospital episode,” writing that “the reader suffers and shudders not because it is Catherine, but merely because of the horror of the thing itself,- while Henry, on the spot, poor devil, would suffer because it was Catherine” (Only Thing 99). Trogdon summarizes that Perkins “advised modifying the depiction of Catherine’s labor and death, since the description Hemingway had might shock and distract the reader from the story” (77).

11. In this note, I offer a speculation about Frederic’s life after Catherine’s death—after his saying goodbye to the “statue.” As the major grieves over his wife’s sudden death and believes that a man should not marry in “In Another Country,” or as a returned soldier Krebs Harold is unwilling to associate with women in “Soldier’s Home,” Frederic might have mourned the loss of Catherine and refrained from loving women who cannot share his nihilism. If we recall his wish to visit Abruzzi during his war service and his promise to the priest that “If I ever get it [love] I will tell you” (72), we can infer that Frederic, who had understood the priest’s definition of “love” through serving to Catherine, decided to meet the priest again and settle down to a male hunting life, at least for a while, in Abruzzi, the middle space between the military homosocial and the civilian heterosexual ones. There must have stretched a pastoral landscape where once he falls in love he can serenade (73) and he can consecrate male bonding through hunting without experiencing homosexual panic.
F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* (1925) is a narrative of a poor young man’s dream of realizing his love for a young woman from a rich, respectable family. Fitzgerald told “a friend that ‘the whole idea of Gatsby is the unfairness of a poor young man not being able to marry a girl with money. This theme comes up again and again because I lived it’” (Turnbull 150). His employment of the narrative theme derives from his own love experiences: his love relationship with Ginevra King and his (once dissolved) engagement and marriage with Zelda Sayre.

Fitzgerald’s first meeting with King—a student at Westover, a Connecticut girl’s school, and from a rich family in Illinois—was on January 4, 1915. At that time he was a Princeton University student and was visiting home during Christmas break. After a movie date, he “promptly fell in love with Ginevra, who matched his dreams of the perfect girl:
beautiful, rich, socially secure, and sought after” (Grandeur 54). After returning to Princeton, he wrote her almost daily love letters. He visited her at Westover in February and at her hometown of Lake Forest in June. However, Ginevra was dismissed from Westover in March 1916, and her love for Fitzgerald seemed to fade during his visit to Lake Forrest in August of that year. Referring to this “unsatisfactory” meeting, Matthew J. Bruccoli maintains that “Fitzgerald was no longer her number-one suitor, and the competition included sons of wealth. It was pointedly remarked in Fitzgerald’s hearing that poor boys shouldn’t think of marrying rich girls” (Grandeur 63-64).

This painful experience caused Fitzgerald’s obsession with money, which overshadowed his relationship with Zelda Sayer. Fitzgerald first met eighteen-year-old Zelda at the Country Club of Montgomery, Alabama, in July 1918. He was attracted to her, an ideal woman who was “beautiful, independent, socially secure (although not wealthy), and responsive to his ambitions” (Grandeur 87). He started to be her number-one suitor during the summer of 1918, and both of them fell in love, but she was circumspect about marriage to “an unpublished writer with no money” (Grandeur 91). Although Fitzgerald became engaged to Zelda, she broke off it on account of his insufficient economic strength in June 1919. Recollecting his struggle to make a publishing contract in order to win Zelda’s trust and marry her, Fitzgerald wrote:

It was one of those tragic loves doomed for lack of money, and one day the girl closed it out on the basis of common sense. During a long summer of despair I wrote a novel instead of letters, so it came out all right for a different person.
The man with the jingle of money in his pocket who married the girl a year later would always cherish an abiding mist, an animosity, toward the leisure class—not the conviction of a revolutionist but the smouldering hatred of a peasant. ("The Crack-Up" 77)

After Scribners accepted his manuscript for *This Side of Paradise* in September 1919, Fitzgerald reengaged Zelda in November 1919 and married her in April 1920. He projects these personal relationships with Ginevra and Zelda onto the love romances in *The Great Gatsby* as well as in his short stories, such as “Winter Dreams” (1922) and “‘The Sensible Thing’” (1924).¹ The romances in the stories include the motif of class conflict: a poor young man strives to overcome class prejudice by getting rich in order to marry a rich woman. In the former story, Dexter Green ends up failing to achieve Judy Jones’ love even when he becomes wealthy; in the latter story, George O’Kelly obtains Jonquil Cary’s love after he becomes rich, but their relationship is tainted with her initial rejection.

Several researchers, including Roger Lewis and Richard Godden, have examined the connection between the acquisition of wealth and the realization of love of *The Great Gatsby* in the context of a heterosexual narrative. Lewis, examining the relationship between love and money, argues that “the means by which Gatsby expresses his feelings for Daisy—even though those feelings are sincere—by showing off his possessions” which he did not enjoy when he first met her (45). Godden analyzes Gatsby’s love for Daisy as his “access to a dominant class,” claiming that “Marriage would allow him to harden his liquid assets, but would separate him from his origins and more importantly from those among whom he
works—the Wolfsheim milieu. Further, his love ties him to a woman formed to display merchandise, who consequently has repressed her body and cashed in her voice” (83). This chapter, however, will reinterpret the class conflict issue of the novel in terms of the fragility of male bonding during the 1920s’ capitalist environment. To be sure, Gatsby’s devotion to his passionate love to Daisy is so consistent that we naturally identify him as a heterosexual man. Yet it should be noted that most of his life for thirty-two years is characterized by distance from women and intimacy with men: Gatsby “knew women early” but “since they spoiled him he became contemptuous of them” (104). This suggests that until he meets Daisy again at the age of thirty-two, he does not fall into a close relationship with a woman. As a lieutenant, he distinguishes himself on the field of battle, and after the war he carefully works on the construction of male bonding in order to regain Daisy. The text implies that except for his early sex with women, for thirty-two years his enjoyment of heterosexual love is limited to a span of two short periods: one and a half months in Louisville before his field service in 1917 and two months in New York after his reunion with Daisy in 1922. He spends the rest of his life forming homosocial relationships rather than heterosexual ones. Is it then possible to assume that his pursuit of heterosexual love is propelled only by his desire to belong to the upper class? For Gatsby, Daisy is a valuable object, serving as proof of his financial success and his superior class status. The rise of capitalism in the early twentieth century caused the appearance of the emergent new rich and aroused male desire for class ascendancy. Insofar as
he associates Daisy with money and needs to obtain wealth to win Daisy back, his romantic desire comes partially from his wish to achieve affluence and belong to a more opulent social class. In this sense, Daisy functions as the medium of his affiliation with the upper class. His struggle for her with Tom, an “enormously wealthy” man (10), necessarily entails the conflict of two masculinities between the newly rich man and the ancestrally upper class man.

Nick Carraway, the narrator, is also under the influence of capitalism’s power to foster the pursuit of profits. He moves from the Midwest to the East at the age of twenty-nine to take a job as bond salesman in New York. Critics such as Keath Fraser, Edward Wasiolek, Frances Kerr, and Louis Tyson have provided analyses of Nick’s sexual ambiguity and his homoerotic attraction to Gatsby. Fraser examines Nick’s concealment of “his own ambivalent sexuality” (341) throughout his narration. Wasiolek insists that Nick loves Gatsby because “Gatsby throws a veil of glamor and fateful romance over his displaced homosexuality” (21). Kerr shows “troubling fissures” in Nick’s personality between his “fear of being perceived as feminine and the secret knowledge that he is feminine” (410), clarifying how Nick is drawn to masculinity in Jordan and femininity in Gatsby. By viewing Nick as “the medium of a closeted gay sensibility” (346), Tyson argues that because of “Nick’s homoerotic attraction to Gatsby,” he makes an effort to “help Gatsby rekindle his affair with the unsuspecting Daisy” so that he can be “involved in his personal life” (350). It must be noted, however, that Nick’s homoeroticism is the expression of his non-sexualized
attachment to Gatsby: an intimate conversation or a relationship of deep trust. He does not identify himself as a homosexual man. Even so, it is true that the intensity of his curiosity about Gatsby motivates him to develop a homosocial bonding with him. Given the potential of capitalism to strengthen male bonding, Nick’s homosocial desire for Gatsby might reflect his concealed yearning for the fabulous life style of the upper class despite his contempt for it. Nick, a man of the upper middle class, recognizes and sympathizes with the friendly esteem behind Gatsby’s ambition to achieve wealth. Nick’s work as a bond salesman indicates his desire to cash in on the new wealth of the 1920s, even though he is part of the upper class of Daisy and Tom. It is possible that his affinity for Gatsby springs partially from his concealed desire to attain wealth as Gatsby does.

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how the logic of capitalism in 1920s New York influences and manipulates the undercurrent of male homosocial desire in a heterosexual romance. By applying Sedgwick’s concept of “homosocial” desire to the novel in the historical context of 1920s capitalist society, I will demonstrate that Gatsby’s heterosexual love for Daisy originates in his homosocial desire to construct solidarity with the upper-class men through Daisy’s attractive body, and that Nick’s heterosexual relationship with Jordan Baker centers around his homosocial desire to imitate and identify with Gatsby, a man who dreams of attaining a fascinating woman as the embodiment of wealth.
1. Gatsby’s Class Ascendancy: Seeking a “Father”

James Gatz (Gatsby’s legal name) leaves his house at the age of seventeen to deny his origins, a son of “shiftless” and “unsuccessful” farmer parents in North Dakota. Since “his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all,” he invents “Jay Gatsby” and continues to be “faithful” to “his Platonic conception of himself,” “a son of God” who serves “a vast, vulgar and meretricious beauty” (104). He engages in clam digging and salmon fishing on the shore of Lake Superior, and works as a janitor to pay his way through the Lutheran college in southern Minnesota. While hiding and suppressing his roots as shameful, he constantly dreams of rising to the economically wealthy class. Most important, his pursuit of wealth entails the psychological killing of his poor father, Henry C. Gatz.

Surely Gatsby continues to have a special affection for his father, as he writes, “Be better to parents” in his boyhood schedule, sends his father a picture of his house in Long Island, and goes back home to see his father and buys him a house two years before his own death (180-82). Yet the son has to “run off from home” at the age of seventeen to carve out a career for himself and make “a success” in the future (181). He has to stoically sever himself from his father despite his love for him so that he can deny and overcome his low birth. As a result, he needs to seek a substitute for his father, an ideal father who will help him realize his dream.
Dan Cody is the first surrogate father who incites Gatsby’s longing for wealth. Cody became a millionaire through his transactions in Montana copper. When fifty-year-old Cody drops his yacht’s anchor in the shallows along the shore of Lake Superior, Gatsby thinks the yacht “represented all the beauty and glamor in the world” (106). By warning Cody that his yacht is in danger on the lake flat, Gatsby prevents its wreck; consequently, Cody trusts Gatsby and allows him to sail with him for five years afterwards. The relationship between the two men assumes a form of male bonding typical since the Greek Era: a pseudo father-son relationship between a mentor and a disciple. Even though he decides not to be addicted to women and alcohol like Cody (106), Gatsby treats him as an ideal “father” with respect, and Cody educates him as an obedient “son” with kindness: “[Gatsby] was left with his singularly appropriate education; the vague contour of Jay Gatsby had filled out to the substantiality of a man” (107). Although Gatsby does not inherit Cody’s fortune because he is swindled by Cody’s lover Ella Kaye, he hangs “[a] large photograph of an elderly man in yachting costume . . . on the wall over his desk” (98). His remark to Nick, “[Cody]’s dead now. He used to be my best friend years ago” (99), suggests both his unfailing affection for “the father” and his emulation of “the father’s” showy life style.

Gatsby’s desire for class ascendancy promotes his love affair with Daisy in Louisville. In September 1917, the twenty-seven-year-old lieutenant Gatsby gets to know Daisy, an eighteen-year-old girl from a rich family. His meeting with “the first ‘nice’ girl he had ever
known” is an encounter with the wealth of the upper class. When he calls at her house with other officers from Camp Taylor, the beauty and splendor of her house “amazed” him and “what gave [the house] an air of breathless intensity was that Daisy lived there” (155). His love for her derives not from the richness of her interior but from the attraction of her appearance and the affluence of her family, which enhances her exterior beauty. He is fascinated not with her inner essence but with her elegant behavior engendered by wealth. Her inaccessibility to him enhances her desirability and intensifies his yearning for the value of the upper class: the beneficial life of the upper class evidenced by her beauty. His dream of winning Daisy is in fact that of belonging to the upper class, leading him to form homosocial relationships with men of the leisure class. Joyce A. Rowe rightly states: “His vision represents a kind of aestheticized materialism—the pursuit of a grail which conjoins wealth and power with all the beauty, vitality, and wonder of the world, which he incarnates in the fragile loveliness of the rich, well-born American girl” (102). When he kisses her for the first time, Gatsby romantically dispels from his mind the materialistic wall of hierarchy standing between Daisy and himself and “makes Daisy the embodiment of his dream” (Perr 65):

He knew that when he kissed this girl, and forever wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath, his mind would never romp again like the mind of God. So he waited, listening for a moment longer to the turning fork that had been struck upon a star. Then he kissed her. At his lips’ touch she blossomed for him like a flower and the incarnation was complete. (117)
Comparing the incarnation of God in Christ with the rose as the representation of divine love in Dante’s *Paradiso*, Gatsby regards Daisy as the incarnation of God in a blossoming “flower,” though what his God represents is wealth and money.

As if illustrating René Girard’s theory of “triangular desire”—one desires the object through an imitation of a model which is presumed to desire the same object—Gatsby’s affection for Daisy is reinforced by his assumption of rivalries: “It excited him too that many men had already loved Daisy—it increased her value in his eyes. He felt their presence all about the house, pervading the air with the shades and echoes of still vibrant emotions” (156). His position as a lieutenant enables his participation in the competition for Daisy, but because of his lack of “comfortable family standing behind him,” he cannot propose to her. Gatsby understands that “her sense of happiness and the good life depends on money and property” (Callahan 147). He therefore needs to “let her believe that he was a person from much the same strata as herself—that he was fully able to take care of her” (156). His assumption of rivalries includes self-deception: He regards men of the wealthy class as his competitors despite his poverty. Yet this assumption suggests how much he desires to ascend to the wealthy class. In this sense, his attraction for Daisy is a stand-in for his homosocial desire for his fellow officers. By being with her, he can fantasize about socializing with them; by winning her back, he can fancy himself as belonging to the upper class.
After the Great War’s armistice in November 1918, Gatsby is offered an opportunity to study at Oxford University for five months. Why did Gatsby not immediately return home despite Daisy’s possible marriage with other man? Nick reveals that “After the Armistice [Gatsby] tried frantically to get home but some complication or misunderstanding sent him to Oxford instead. He was worried now—there was a quality of nervous despair in Daisy’s letters” (158); even so, however, he could have quit the university to return to America. Since Gatsby knows that he would not have been financially eligible to court Daisy even if he had returned home right after the truce, he probably determines to pursue his studies diligently at Oxford University where he can learn the knowledge and skills necessary for success in business. His studies at the university are aimed at forming future homosocial relationships with the upper-class men.

After returning to the United States, Gatsby makes an enormous fortune as an outlaw with the help of the Jewish gambler Meyer Wolfshiem, the second substitute for Gatsby’s father. Wolfshiem finds Gatsby to be a penniless but “fine appearing gentlemanly young man,” and decides to “[raise] him up out of nothing, right out of the gutter” (179). Reflecting on his first impression of Gatsby, Wolfshiem tells Nick how his homosocial desire for Gatsby arose: “I made the pleasure of his acquaintance just after the war. But I knew I had discovered a man of fine breeding after I talked with him an hour. I said to myself: ‘There’s the kind of man you’d like to take home and introduce to your mother and sister’ ” (76-77). It
is doubtful that the keen mobster Wolfshiem thinks of Gatsby as “a man of fine breeding”; rather he senses what Gatsby appears to be, what he wants people to think he is. Wolfshiem detects Gatsby’s concealment of his origins and finds in that concealment the possibility that Gatsby could force his way up to the top in the gangster world. He recognizes Gatsby’s tenacious vitality and his insatiable lust for wealth. Wolfshiem discovers Gatsby’s “sincerity” for abiding by their contract and the law of the underworld in order to obtain opulence. Wolfshiem therefore imagines “male traffic in women” (Sedgwick defines this concept from Gayle Rubin as the central promoter of male homosocial relations [Between Men 25-26]), introducing his family’s women to Gatsby, which intimates his crave to bring Gatsby into his homosocial organization. In fact, Gatsby works with Wolfshiem in the underworld of gambling and bootlegging liquor in the Prohibition era so that he can access to higher society by making his fortune in the underworld.5 His solidarity with his substitute father Wolfshiem enables him to attain enough wealth to approach Daisy again.

Yet Wolfshiem points out Gatsby’s misogyny: “Gatsby’s very careful about women. He would never so much as look at a friend’s wife” (77). Nick describes Gatsby as “contemptuous” of women, “of young virgins because they were ignorant, of the others because they were hysterical about things which in his overwhelming self-absorption he took for granted” (104). Gatsby’s misogyny reflects his desire to cement bonds with upper-class men without wallowing in women and alcohol like Cody in the process of his class
ascendancy. If Daisy is the source of his yearning for wealth and “his point of access to a dominant class” (Godden 83), we can understand that his life focuses on the construction of male bonding with men from the more wealthy classes through his pursuit of Daisy.

2. Gatsby’s Capitalist Homosocial Desire

Gatsby’s dream of class ascendancy can also be explained from the perspective of economic anthropology. In The Theory of the Leisure Class (1899), Thorstein B. Veblen examines the code of “conspicuous consumption” underlying American urban culture of the end of the nineteenth century, analyzing the origin of mass desire for class ascendancy in the following way:

The leisure class stands at the head of the social structure in point of reputability; and its manner of life and its standards of worth therefore afford the norm of reputability for the community. The observance of these standards, in some degree of approximation, becomes incumbent upon all classes lower in the scale. In modern civilized communities the lines of demarcation between social classes have grown vague and transient, and wherever this happens the norm of reputability imposed by the upper class extends its coercive influence with but slight hindrance down through the social structure to the lowest strata. The result is that the members of each stratum accept as their ideal of decency the scheme of life in vogue in the next higher stratum, and bend their energies to live up to that ideal. On pain of forfeiting their good name and their self-respect in case of failure, they must conform to the accepted code, at least in appearance. (84)
Gatsby internalizes the capitalist system as the means through which to achieve his “ideal decency,” the life style of the next-higher class. He continuously endeavors to ascend classes while emulating the civility and rules of the higher social ranks. It must be noted, however, that “he is completely innocent of the limits of what money can do, a man who, we feel, would believe every word of an advertisement. Daisy even makes this identification: “‘You resemble the advertisement of the man’” (Lewis 51). Daisy here suggests that Gatsby represents the commercialism of New York and that his wealth springs from his obedience to the capitalist system. As host of parties at his colossal mansion, he is imitating upper-class customs. Veblen writes: “Conspicuous consumption of valuable goods is a means of reputability to the gentleman of leisure. As wealth accumulates on his hands, his own unaided effort will not avail to sufficiently put his opulence in evidence by this method. The aid of friends and competitors is therefore brought in by resorting to the giving of valuable presents and expensive feasts and entertainments” (75). Referring to Nick’s narration—“personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures” (6)—Gatsby tries to construct his masculinity through the constant performance of ideal “gestures” like those of the upper-class men. He aims to verify his lofty status and enact upper-class masculinity through the hosting of gorgeous parties. After Gatsby’s death Nick recalls: “those gleaming, dazzling parties of his were with me so vividly that I could still hear the music and the laughter faint and incessant from his garden and the cars going up and down his drive” (188). Gatsby also tries to display
his wealth as a sign of upper-class masculinity through the plentiful catering at the party and the exhibition of luxurious possessions, such as the property and the car.

Gatsby, through Jordan, asks Nick to arrange the reunion with Daisy: “‘He wants to know—’ continued Jordan ‘—if you’ll invite Daisy to your house some afternoon and then let him come over’” (83). In exchange for Nick’s arrangement of the reunion between Gatsby and Daisy, Gatsby suggests a moneymaking scheme to Nick:

“Well, this would interest you. It wouldn’t take up much of your time and you might pick up a nice bit of money. It happens to be a rather confidential sort of thing.”

I realize now that under different circumstances that conversation might have been one of the crises of my life. But, because the offer was obviously and tactlessly for a service to be rendered, I had no choice except to cut him off there.

“I’ve got my hands full,” I said. “I’m much obliged but I couldn’t take on any more work.” (88)

Nick refuses to receive “confidential” tips (probably on a bet and bootlegging), reflecting that his acceptance of Gatsby’s offer would be “one of the crises of my life.” If Nick had taken part in the scheme, he would have made a “connexion” (88) with Gatsby’s business and deepened his affiliation with Gatsby. This offer is not just in return for Nick’s agreement to arrange the reunion but a request to formalizing their male solidarity. Gatsby attempts to involve Nick in the illegal business and create a partnership with him. It can be speculated that this moneymaking scheme would have brought huge profits to Nick because it is offered in exchange for something of the utmost value for Gatsby, his reunion with Daisy. Gatsby hopes to develop intimacy with Nick, Daisy’s cousin, to win her trust and marry her. His
friendship with Nick serves to impress upon her Gatsby’s status as an upper-class man. In this sense, the arrangement suggests the possibility that the offer of a job in exchange for a woman works to constitute male bonding within the capitalist society.

After meeting Daisy for the first time in five years at Nick’s house, Gatsby takes her to tour his magnificent house. Following the tour, Nick conveys that Gatsby’s display of the household goods elicits Daisy’s admiration: “He hadn’t once ceased looking at Daisy and I think he revalued everything in his house according to the measure of response it drew from her well-loved eyes” (96). If she functions as a sign of his masculine success, her admiration confirms his rise to the wealthy class. As Kent Cartwright argues, “Just as Daisy’s house is the symbol of the magical, transforming power of wealth, the tour of Gatsby’s house is a ritual demonstration of his rightful entry into Daisy’s world and beyond Daisy’s world into a self-created beatitude of money” (225). Recalling that Gatsby once admired Daisy’s magnificent house, we can also interpret his act of taking her on a tour of his won house as an act of self-love, his narcissistic dedication to the once-yearning self-figure.

As evidence of his financial wealth, Gatsby displays his gorgeous collection of fine colorful shirts sent from England every season so that he can present himself as an admirable successful man in front of Daisy.

He took out a pile of shirts and began throwing them one by one before us, shirts of sheer linen and thick silk and fine flannel which lost their folds as they fell and covered the table in many-colored disarray. While we admired he brought more and the soft rich heap mounted higher—shirts with stripes and scrolls and plaids in coral and apple green and lavender and faint orange with
monograms of Indian blue. Suddenly with a strained sound Daisy bent her head into the shirts and began to cry stormily. “They’re such beautiful shirts,” she sobbed, her voice muffled in the thick folds. “It makes me sad because I’ve never seen such—such beautiful shirts before.” (97-98)

Daisy’s crying signifies the disturbance of her emotions because of his “beautiful” shirts, which represent his opulence. As Michael Spindler writes, “Daisy’s oddly emotional response to this display of conspicuous consumption betrays her recognition that Gatsby has overcome the social barriers that separated them and is now directly asking for her favour” (137). She feels pleased to know that Gatsby, once a poor lieutenant, has become wealthy and invited her to his gorgeous house. At the same time, however, she faces the reality that she is Tom’s wife and the mother of their daughter, though Gatsby’s wealth rekindles her affection for him. She feels “sad,” torn between her romantic affection for Gatsby and her real married life. Moreover, if Nick/Fitzgerald’s narration fails to describe her mind after the reunion,7 we can speculate that she intuitively regards Tom’s wealth in East Egg as more established and stable than the newly rich Gatsby’s in West Egg. Indeed, when Daisy participates in Gatsby’s party later, she is aware of the boundary of classes: “She was appalled by West Egg, this unprecedented ‘place’ that Broadway had begotten upon a Long Island fishing village—appalled by its raw vigor that chafed under the old euphemisms and by the too obtrusive fate that herded its inhabitants along a short cut from nothing to nothing. She saw something awful in the very simplicity she failed to understand” (114). The beauty of Gatsby’s shirts ironically foreshadows the ultimate defeat of Gatsby’s romantic dream. Yet
Gatsby innocently misunderstands her tears, believing that he has proved himself as an eligible rich man and is getting closer to achieving his dream of winning her back.

3. Tom’s Dominating Masculinity: The Feminization of Gatsby

The capitalist economy causes class mobility. It drives people to long for wealth and pursue profits endlessly while ruthlessly and decisively dividing them into winners and losers. By exploiting laborers as the workforce, the winners can ascend to the upper class while improving their profits and acquiring wealth. However, parvenus are despised by the upper classes with high noble lineage and immense inherited wealth. No matter how rich they become, parvenus are not accepted as members of the exclusive high society and, in reality, they cannot be as rich as the traditional, authentic upper classes. The capitalist mode of economy, on the one hand, brings about class mobility and continuously renews the social network of human relationships, and, on the other hand, leaves intact the unscalable wall between the new emerging wealthy classes (West Egg) and the old traditional wealthy classes (East Egg). This wall emerges in the struggle between Gatsby and Tom for Daisy, and the novel reflects the bright and dark sides of the American Dream.

Nick’s narration stresses Tom Buchanan’s physical cruelty: his “hulking” body has bruised Daisy’s finger and his single punch breaks Myrtle Wilson’s nose. Brian Way
contends that “Tom’s style of physical dominance, his capacity for exerting leverage, are not expressions merely of his individual strength but of the power of a class” (102). Snobbish Tom smells something suspicious about Gatsby’s education at Oxford University and feminizes Gatsby by despising him as a man wearing “a pink suit” (129), an intimation of his femininity. He has investigated the source of Gatsby’s ample funds for holding gorgeous parties, finding that Gatsby is a bootlegger and a gambler. When Tom discloses Gatsby’s fabricated image as a well-educated man with noble family background in the presence of Daisy, Gatsby loses his invented self-image as a leisure-class man. Tom’s denouncement of Gatsby as “Mr. Nobody from Nowhere” (137) illuminates the fragile fiction of Gatsby’s masculinity as an upper-class male and exposes his status as an industrial working male.

This rivalry for Daisy’s affections prevents the two men from constructing a homosocial bond. “Daisy is an emotional and figurative currency between the two men, a valuable prize . . . over which they battle for possession” (McGowan 154). Referring to the theories of Girard and Veblen, Patricia Bizzell argues that “Gatsby’s ideal model and the human object of his desire are chosen through the mediation of the American ideology of pecuniary emulation” (119). Although Bizzell’s argument is basically right, Bizzell misses Gatsby’s hostility for Tom which prevents him from identifying with Tom. To be sure, Gatsby’s efforts to become a wealthy man are partially “intensified by competitive imitation of a specific rival, Daisy’s husband Tom Buchanan” (Bizzell 115), but Gatsby attempts to
differentiate himself from Tom by proving his devoted love for Daisy in contrast to Tom’s infidelity. The intensity of Gatsby’s affection for Daisy (even if it is blind) enables his ultimate separation from a wealthy model for “pecuniary emulation.”

While Gatsby regards his acquisition of Daisy’s love as the mark of his class ascendancy, Tom sees her as the evidence of his social heredity and status. Tom expresses his stark classism in his first interaction with Gatsby:

“My God, I believe the man’s coming,” said Tom.
“Doesn’t he know she doesn’t want him?”
“She says she does want him.”
“She has a big dinner party and he won’t know a soul there.” He frowned.
“I wonder where in devil he met Daisy. By God, I may be old-fashioned in my idea but women run around too much these days to suit me. They meet all kinds of crazy fish.” (109-10)

Despite his adultery with Myrtle Wilson, Tom forbids his wife Daisy from misconduct; she must always be within his control, for the possession of Daisy as property is the proof of Tom’s social heritage and status. In his eyes, his woman’s social intercourse with an upstart mirrors class mobility: the rise of the lower-class and the weakening of the upper class’s domination. The upper class women’s neglect of “family life” and “family institutions” (137) and their enjoyment of free love disturb patriarchal standards and release the upper-class men’s anxiety and fears about nouveaux riches; as a result, the men reinforce the defense mechanism of maintaining their social class’s stability through the exclusion of parvenus. Tom is “a delinquent protected by social conventions which conceal his misdeeds, who tries to camouflage his misbehavior by appealing to a moral order” (Lena 53).
The patriarchal Tom ensconces Daisy in family by demanding her to be a chaste wife and a childbearing mother. On the other hand, he satisfies his salacious desire outside family through his affair with Myrtle Wilson, wife of the lowly car repairman and salesman George B. Wilson. By stealing the lower-class man’s wife and showing off his economic power at parties in the company of his mistress, he proves himself to be an economically and sexually masculine man of the upper class. Tom’s consumption of his mistress Myrtle through his wealth constitutes a part of his bourgeois masculinity.

Yet Tom attempts to restore his relationship with Daisy once he realizes her attachment to Gatsby: “[Daisy] had told Gatsby that she loved him, and Tom Buchanan saw. He was astounded. His mouth opened a little and he looked at Gatsby and then back at Daisy as if he had just recognized her as someone he knew a long time ago” (125). Tom here recognizes Daisy’s value as a trophy to verify his social status. Daisy is “the most expensive item on the market” “when he gives her on the night before they are married a string of pearls valued at $350,000” (Fetterley 75). If his wife committed adultery with the new rich and it became known to public, it would cause cracks to appear in the social network constructed through her. Therefore, Tom must dominate Daisy as a good wife and wise mother in order to maintain his upper class masculinity. By explaining that his relationship with Myrtle is a “spree” and that he loves Daisy “all the time” (138), he suggests the classism in his love affairs: an upper-class man like Tom can love and marry a “nice” woman like Daisy, not a
working-class woman like Myrtle. Myrtle is just a sexual object for him in the capitalistic environment. Tom wins victory in the struggle for Daisy because “Daisy will never give up the security of established Buchanan money for the tenuous and illegal fortune Gatsby has amassed as Meyer Wolfshiem’s lieutenant” (Lehan 108).

4. Nick’s Homoeroticism in His Relationships with Gatsby and Jordan

Nick is a veteran of World War I who acknowledges the vacuum of the war and feels disillusioned about civilization and society.

I graduated from New Haven in 1915, just a quarter of a century after my father, and a little later I participated in that delayed Teutonic migration known as the Great War. I enjoyed the counter-raid so thoroughly that I came back restless. Instead of being the warm center of the world the middle-west now seemed like the ragged edge of the universe—so I decided to go east and learn the bond business. Everybody I knew was in the bond business so I supposed it could support one more single man. All my aunts and uncles talked it over as if they were choosing a prep-school for me and finally said “Why—yes-es” with very grave, hesitant faces. Father agreed to finance me for a year and after various delays I came east, permanently, I thought, in the spring of twenty-two. (7)

After the war, he spends a few years without getting a regular job or getting married in a town in the Midwest, “the ragged edge of the universe.” Although the masculine ideal during the war was to fight courageously at the front, he has to reconstruct his masculinity according to the definition of a civilian man after the war. He decides to engage in “the bond business”
in New York in an attempt to find hope for his post-war life. His meeting with Gatsby is inspirational for him; in contrast with his disillusionment with the world and his loneliness in civilian life, Gatsby possesses “an extraordinary gift for hope” and “a romantic readiness” (6). Gatsby has military exploits, pursues his dream of winning Daisy, leads a splendid life, and is successful in business (no matter what business it is) in New York. Nick’s first meeting with Gatsby begins with the confirmation of the bond of comrades-in-arms.

At a lull in the entertainment the man looked at me and smiled.

“Your face is familiar,” he said politely. “Weren’t you in the Third Division during the war?”

“Why, yes. I was in the Ninth Machine-Gun Battalion.”

“I was in the Seventh Infantry until June nineteen-eighteen. I knew I’d seen you somewhere before.” (51-52)

The sharing of war experiences in the same division forms their intimacy and promotes their solidarity, as Cartwright points out that “Nick and Gatsby had established the bond of war experience between them before they even learned each other’s names” and “the restlessness that Nick has noticed in Gatsby” “recalls again, like Nick’s own restlessness, the agitations of the combat veteran” (223).

When Nick apologizes to Gatsby for his failure to recognize him immediately at their first meeting, Gatsby smiles back. Nick’s way of understanding his smile intimates his close interest in him.

He smiled understandingly—much more than understandably. It was one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it, that you may come across four or five times in life. It faced—or seemed to face—the whole external world for an instant, and then concentrated on you with an irresistible prejudice in your favor. It understood you just so far as you wanted to be
understood, believed in you as you would like to believe in yourself and assured you that it had precisely the impression of you that, at your best, you hoped to convey. Precisely at that point it vanished—and I was looking at an elegant young rough-neck, a year or two over thirty, whose elaborate formality of speech just missed being absurd. Some time before he introduced himself I’d got a strong impression that he was picking his words with care.” (52)

Gatsby shows unconditionally friendly feelings for Nick, wanting to be on good terms with him, and his smile is a salve for Nick, who feels alienation from the world and seeks a human bond. It gives Nick a feeling of trust for Gatsby and suggests the possibility of resolving the solitude in Nick just before he turns thirty. It is as if Nick is observing Gatsby’s smile when Nick falling in love with someone. Godden contends that “his smile obliterates the actual relations and contexts that produce it, presenting itself as a unique facet of the onlooker’s need” (87). Nick recollects that Gatsby’s smile fuels his desire to understand and identify with Gatsby. He starts to follow Gatsby in order to understand his feelings and behaviors. As I will elaborate later, Nick’s love affair with Jordan is both his imitation of the love relationship between Gatsby and Daisy and his entry into Gatsby’s private life.

Nick’s special interest in Gatsby is due partially to his secret yearning for the leisure class. To be sure, Nick despises Gatsby’s pursuit of wealth, but, as Godden asserts, “[h]is reasons for doing so much for” Gatsby “stem from a suppressed ambivalence towards his own class” (92). Nick, the son of a wholesale hardware business-man in a Middle-western city, moved to New York to work in the bond business. His expectation that he would live there “permanently” suggests his determination to achieve success and become a financially
independent man (preferably a rich man) in the capitalist megalopolis. Indeed, in the original manuscript of the novel, Fitzgerald wrote about Nick’s surging desire for financial success in relation to Jordan: “I thought that I loved her and I wanted money with a sudden physical pang” (Facsimile 123). Moreover, Nick’s interpretation of Daisy’s smirk reflects his suppressed inferiority about his class: “I waited, and sure enough, in a moment she looked at me with an absolute smirk on her lovely face, as if she had asserted her membership in a rather distinguished secret society to which she and Tom belonged” (22). In addition, his agreement with Gatsby’s association of her voice with “money” (134) implies his unconscious craving to acquire wealth. Thus, Nick’s secret yearning for the leisure class promotes his concern about and his involvement in Gatsby’s dream of winning Daisy—ascending to higher-class status. If Nick is to some extent an alter ego of Fitzgerald, Gatsby is the object with which Fitzgerald (Nick) desires to identify himself. Fitzgerald wrote, “When I like men I want to be like them—I want to lose the outer qualities that give me my individuality and be like them. I don’t want the man I want to absorb into myself all the qualities that make him attractive and leave him out” (Notebooks 146).

Although the scene in which Gatsby and Nick cross the Queensboro Bridge in Gatsby’s gorgeous car describes the bright side of the American Dream (“The city seen from the Queensboro Bridge is always the city seen for the first time, in its first wild promise of all the mystery and the beauty in the world” [73]) and the rise of African-Americans in the
1920s (“As we crossed Blackwells Island a limousine passed us, driven by a white chauffeur, in which sat three modish Negroes, two bucks and a girl” [73]), it also implies Nick’s surging curiosity about Gatsby. Nick narrates:

“Anything can happen now that we’ve slid over this bridge,” I thought; “anything at all. . . .”

Even Gatsby could happen, without any particular wonder. (73)

Recall that Nick begins his romantic relationship with Jordan under a “bridge” (84) and on a “bridge” (143). The novel uses a bridge as a metaphor for the line of love; then, Nick’s crossing the Queensboro Bridge in Gatsby’s car suggests that “anything can happen”: when he crosses the bridge with Gatsby, he is transgressing the boundary of his heterosexuality while intensifying his attraction to Gatsby. In Manhattan he develops his kinship with Gatsby while having lunch with him and afterward arranges the reunion between Gatsby and Daisy.

Nick’s romantic relationship with Jordan blurs customary gender images in heterosexual relationships. First, before Daisy comes up with the idea that she will arrange a marriage between Nick and Jordan, she compares Nick to “a rose”: “‘I love to see you at my table, Nick. You remind me of a—of a rose, an absolute rose. Doesn’t he?’ She turned to Miss Baker for confirmation. ‘An absolute rose?’” (19). Even though she is “extemporizing” these phrases, as Nick narrates (19), she might notice his feminine elements associated with “a rose.” If this association works to impress upon Jordan that he is a romantic bachelor, Daisy might intend to act as the go-between for Nick and Jordan to secretly reinforce her affiliations with them: “In fact I think I’ll arrange a marriage. Come over often, Nick, and I’ll
sort of—oh—fling you together. You know—lock you up accidentally in linen closets and push you out to sea in a boat, and all that sort of thing—” (23).

On the other hand, Nick regards Jordan as a masculine woman: “I enjoyed looking at her. She was a slender, small-breasted girl with an erect carriage which she accentuated by throwing her body backward at the shoulders like a young cadet” (15). His association of Jordan with “a young cadet” implies Nick’s sexual orientation toward masculine women instead of feminine ones. Her neutral name of Jordan, her occupation as a professional golf player (62), and her “hard jaunty body” (63) emphasize the masculine side of her character. Also, Nick’s lover back in Minnesota is a masculine woman: “a faint mustache of perspiration appeared on her upper lip” when she plays tennis (64). Once the rumor of Nick’s engagement to the woman goes around his hometown (24), he moves to New York and tries to break off from her (64). His evasion of intimacy with women implies the precariousness of his sexuality as well as his deviation from heterosexuality.8

Nick keeps a moderate distance from Jordan even when he has sexual interest in her: “Her grey sun-strained eyes stared straight ahead, but she had deliberately shifted our relations, and for a moment I thought I loved her. But I am slow thinking and full of interior rules that act as brakes on my desires . . .” (63-64). Nick’s romantic relationship with Jordan seems to be propelled as much by his homoerotic curiosity about Gatsby as his heterosexual/homoerotic interest in her. In fact, the development of his affair with Jordan
enables his deep involvement in Gatsby’s private life. Nick attempts to approach Jordan only after he hears from her about the meeting and separation of Gatsby and Daisy, and about Gatsby’s aspiring plan to reunite with Daisy: “It was dark now and as we dipped under a little bridge I put my arm around Jordan’s golden shoulder and drew her toward me and asked her to dinner. Suddenly I wasn’t thinking of Daisy and Gatsby any more but of this clean, hard, limited person who dealt in universal skepticism and who leaned back jauntily just within the circle of my arm” (84). Moreover, hearing that Gatsby wants Nick to invite Daisy without letting her know who wants to see her, Nick starts to feel romantic about his relationship with Jordan, though he does not seem to care who it is he loves: “Unlike Gatsby and Tom Buchanan I had no girl whose disembodied face floated along the dark cornices and blinding signs and so I drew up the girl beside me, tightening my arms. Her wan scornful mouth smiled and so I drew her up again, closer, this time to my face” (85). If Nick’s access to Jordan is fueled by Gatsby’s romantic dream, that access is partially the emulation and re-experiencing of the love relationship between Gatsby and Daisy. In terms of the influence of Gatsby’s love affair on Nick’s romance, Nick’s intimacy with Jordan is produced and influenced by Nick’s attachment to Gatsby.

In the meeting between Gatsby and Daisy after five years’ separation, Nick plays the role of mediator in calming down the restless two: “I tried to go then, but they wouldn’t hear of it; perhaps my presence made them feel more satisfactorily alone” (99). His introduction
of Daisy as being of the utmost value to Gatsby enables Nick to step into Gatsby’s private life and develop intimacy with Gatsby. This arrangement functions not only to rekindle Gatsby’s affair with Daisy but also develop Nick’s friendship with Gatsby. In fact, after the reunion Gatsby invites both Daisy and Nick to his house to show off his possessions. Moreover, later, Gatsby reveals to Nick his love affair with Daisy in Louisville and their promise of marriage after the war.

It must be noted that when Nick turns thirty years old, he feels the desolation of a single man, and he deepens his love relationship with Jordan in order to fill the void of his solitude. Nick narrates:

Thirty—the promise of a decade of loneliness, a thinning list of single men to know, a thinning brief-case of enthusiasm, thinning hair. But there was Jordan beside me who, unlike Daisy, was too wise ever to carry well-forgotten dreams from age to age. As we passed over the dark bridge her wan face fell lazily against my coat’s shoulder and formidable stroke of thirty died away with the reassuring pressure of her hand. (143)

At Yale (a male-only institute until 1969), Nick must have developed his fraternal love for fellow male students. During the First World War, he must have experienced male homosocial bonding with his fellow soldiers in the army, like Frederic Henry in A Farewell to Arms (Fussell 272). Before and after the war, he probably enjoyed male close acquaintances in his twenties back in Minnesota. As he gets closer to thirty, however, his friends in his hometown get married one after another so that a bachelor Nick does not have much opportunity to get together with men. In New York, he has membership in the Yale
Club, but he does not attend the social gathering. The lack of homosocial spaces in New York releases and intensifies Nick’s gloomy isolation. His yearning for male bonding reinforces his attraction to Jordan.

Interestingly, right after Gatsby’s death, Nick feels too distracted to work, and even refuses to meet Jordan for a date. “When I had finished she told me without comment that she was engaged to another man. I doubted that though there were several she could have married at a nod of her head but I pretended to be surprised. For just a minute I wondered if I wasn’t making a mistake, then I thought it all over again quickly and got up to say goodbye” (185). His reflection as he parts with her upon their separation shows his dry feeling about Jordan. From a homosocial point of view, he loses his interest in her because she no longer functions as the medium of fostering his homosocial bonding with Gatsby. Their relationship is contingent on Nick’s homosocial/homoerotic desire for Gatsby.

5. Nick’s Solidarity with Gatsby and Return to His Hometown

Gatsby’s death exposes the fragility of male homosocial relationships under the capitalism of the East. Those who were involved in Gatsby’s business and those who joined Gatsby’s parties assume an attitude of indifference to his end and sever their connections with him. Even Wolfshiem, Gatsby’s business partner and his substitute father, who said
once to Nick, “‘Fine fellow, isn’t he? Handsome to look at and a perfect gentleman’” (76),
tries to break off his connection with the dead Gatsby. A gambler, Wolfshiem’s pragmatic
thoughts about friendship—“Let us learn to show our friendship for a man when he is alive
and not after he is dead” (180)—reflect that capitalism reduces human relationships to
monetary ones. In Wolfshiem’s mind, Gatsby’s death justifies the logic that the end of
business is the end of friendship.

Nick’s sense of “scornful solidarity between Gatsby and [him] against them all” (173)
leads him to conduct Gatsby’s funeral, but Nick realizes that the East has “a quality of
distortion” (185): Capital industry continuously produces and intensifies the human dream of
getting rich, while making the human bond vulnerable and barren. In the Jazz Age, people
indulge in one-night stands while drinking and lose their interest in others. Nick recalls his
“fantastic” dream: “In the foreground four solemn men in dress suits are walking along the
sidewalk with a stretcher on which lies a drunken woman in a white evening dress. Her hand,
which dangles over the side, sparkles cold with jewels. Gravely the men turn in at a house—
the wrong house. But no one knows the woman’s name, and no one cares” (185). This image
haunts Nick and he decides to move back to the West. He closes his narration by reflecting
on Gatsby’s dream:

And as I sat there, brooding on the old unknown world, I thought of
Gatsby’s wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy’s
dock. He had come a long way to this blue lawn and his dream must have
seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did not know that it
was already behind him, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.  

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that’s no matter—tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther. . . . And one fine morning—

So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past. (189)

The novel’s ending implies Nick’s departure from the capitalist landscape of the mercenary pursuit of profit. While drifting back to past memories and dreams, he keenly senses that the American people can no longer cling to the American Dream, and that even if they ride a tide of capitalism to attain wealth, they have to live in a desolate world centered on monetary instead of human bonds. After acknowledging his defeat by capitalism, he determines to move from the East (an industrial society) to the Midwest (an agrarian society) which still values human relationships over monetary ones, while still being attracted by the vestiges of the American Dream and savoring the hollowness of the dream with memories of Gatsby.

Nick’s determination, however, is inconsistent with the author’s life. After Fitzgerald and Zelda left Black Bear Lake in Minnesota in 1922, they never returned to St. Paul to settle down. In a letter to Mrs. William Hamm (the former Marie Hersey), Fitzgerald wrote that “… I no longer regard St. Paul as my home any more than the eastern seaboard or the Riviera. This is said with no disloyalty but simply because after all my father was an easterner and I went East to college and I never did quite adjust myself to those damn Minnesota winters. It was always freezing my cheeks, being a rotten skater, etc.—though many events there will always fill me with a tremendous nostalgia” (Letters 270-71). What were the writer’s
feelings when he allowed Nick’s return to his hometown? Fitzgerald could not permit himself to go back to Minnesota, though he sought human bonds there, just like Nick. In the same letter he wrote, “I send you this letter as a desperate bid for some news of St. Paul and the following people: the Kalmans, Flandraus, Jacksons, Clarks and Kit Ordway. . . . So many of us have emigrated—Katherine Tighe, etc.—and so many new names keep popping up whenever I get hold of a St. Paul paper that I cling in spirit to the few friends I still have there” (*Letters* 271). Thinking about home with “a tremendous nostalgia,” he had to enact the role of a Jazz-Age hero in the East and devote himself to the materialistic world. The last scene of this novel mirrors the author’s projection of his “nostalgia” onto Nick and his acknowledgement of his own merciless fate of living as “Fitzgerald” in the East without returning to the Midwest, as Nick does.

### Notes

1. “Winter Dreams” and “‘The Sensible Thing’” are to some extent Fitzgerald’s autobiographical stories in which he superimposed his love experiences upon fictional characters. The former story depicts the flourish and loss of Dexter Green’s love for an attractive rich woman Judy Jones. After a fourteen-year-old golf caddie Dexter encounters an eleven-year-old Judy at the Sherry Island Golf Club in Minnesota, he becomes obsessed with “winter dreams” of attaining “glittering things” (221) and associating with (marrying) a beautiful wealthy woman like Judy. After his success in the laundry business, he gets engaged with Judy, breaks off with her, and reengages her, but she disappears from him in the end. After moving to New York, he hears about her faded beauty and her unhappy married life, acknowledging the loss of not only his dreams but also his sensibility for youth: “Now that thing is gone, that thing is gone. I cannot cry. I cannot care. That thing will come
back no more” (236). The latter story describes the pursuit and abandonment of George O’Kelly’s love for Jonquil Cary. George, a poor worker at an insurance company in New York, dreams of becoming rich and marrying Cary, his beautiful fiancé in Tennessee. They once break off due to her anxiety about “the prospect of marrying into a life of poverty” (291), but after getting a job in a construction plant and becoming the chief of the Peru expedition, George “recapture[s]” her love and could marry her if he tried.

2. In Tender Is the Night Fitzgerald describes his (Dick Diver’s) special affection for his father: “Dick loved his father—again and again he referred judgments to what his father would probably have thought or done. Dick was born several months after the death of two young sisters and his father, guessing what would be the effect on Dick’s mother, had saved him from a spoiling by becoming his moral guide” (222).

3. In “Winter Dreams” Fitzgerald describes how the Joneses house impresses Dexter and how he associates the house with his beloved Judy: “The dark street lightened, the dwellings of the rich loomed up around them, he stopped his coupé in front of the great white bulk of the Mortimer Joneses house, somnolent, gorgeous, drenched with the splendor of the damp moonlight. Its solidity startled him. The strong walls, the steel of the girders, the breadth and beam and pomp of it were there only to bring out the contrast with the young beauty beside him. It was sturdy to accentuate her slightness—as if to show what a breeze could be generated by a butterfly’s wing” (232). According to Brucoli’s research, “Fitzgerald removed Dexter Green’s response to Judy Jone’s home from [Metropolitan Magazine’s] text and wrote it into [The Great Gatsby] as Jay Gatsby’s response to Daisy Fay’s home” (Fitzgerald Short Stories 217).

4. As note 3 introduced, the quoted passage in The Great Gatsby was originally written in the first version of “Winter Dreams” published in Metropolitan Magazine (December 1922). In “‘The Sensible Thing’” Fitzgerald also writes the reinforcement of one’s desire through the assumption of rivalries: “This was true—when he had first come to the city there had been already a dozen boys around her, responding to her picturesque fragility with adolescent worship, and a few of them perceiving that her beautiful eyes were also sane and kind” (293).

5. Thomas H. Pauly presents Gatsby as more a dangerous gangster behind his refined style than the one Nick describes. Examining real gangsters in the 1920s, Pauly argues that Gatsby’s wealth evidences his involvement in cunning crimes during Prohibition.

6. Ironically, however, the upper class customs which Gatsby emulates are morally corrupted, as Tom has an affair with the working-class mistress Myrtle Willson in public. Through the affairs Tom arrogantly shows off his economic power and sexual potency. Most ironical is that Gatsby’s life style of “conspicuous consumption” enables his extramarital relations with Daisy.

7. For Fitzgerald’s acknowledgment of his failure to develop Daisy’s character, see his letters to Maxwell Perkins, Edmund Wilson, and H. L. Mencken (A Life in Letters 107,
Fitzgerald writes in a letter to Wilson that “The worst fault in it, I think is a BIG FAULT: I gave no account (and had no feeling about or knowledge of) the emotional relations between Gatsby and Daisy from the time of their reunion to the catastrophe” (Letters 109). Sarah Beebe Fryer examines Nick (Fitzgerald’s) incomplete description of Daisy’s emotions, revealing her conflicts, after her reunion with Gatsby, between her romantic affection for Gatsby and her realistic “need for stability” (161) through marriage with Tom.

8. The text suggests Nick’s evasion from intimacy with women in other scenes. In New York he has “a short affair with a girl who lived in Jersey City and worked in the accounting department,” but he lets it “blow quietly away” after her brother begins “throwing mean looks” in his direction (61). Moreover, Nick seems to satisfy himself with fantasizing that he follows a strange beautiful woman, only seeing her off at her apartment.

9. As I introduced in the essay on A Farewell to Arms, Paul Fussell illustrates that some soldiers at front-line in the Great War felt “passions” for comrades as “antidotes against loneliness and terror” and experienced “the homoerotic,” “a sublimated (i.e., ‘chaste’) form of temporary homosexuality” (272).

10. Although Anson Hunter in “The Rich Boy” was born in a bourgeois family, his “solitude” (344) due to his loss of acquaintance with male friends and female lovers (340, 343) is common to Nick’s.

11. Haruki Murakami, a Japanese contemporary novelist and a translator of Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby and short stories, cites the same passages in his writing 「ホワイトベア湖の夢」 [“Dreams in White Bear Lake”] (116). Recalling his travel to Minnesota, Murakami writes about the Fitzgeralds’ staying at the White Bear Yacht Club in the summer of 1922: as a result of the couple’s nightly drinking and spree at the Club, the trustees compelled them to leave the Club, and they left for New York and never returned to the Lake. Murakami points out that Fitzgerald created “Winter Dreams” in September 1922, the month after he was dispelled from the Club, arguing that dreams in the short story are those in Fitzgerald’s boyhood and that Fitzgerald depicted the birth and death of the dreams by representing them in White Bear Lake (named as Black Bear Lake in the story) with nostalgia.
Chapter 7

Dick’s Performance of Defeat:

Money and Scholarship in Tender Is the Night

F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote in February 1936 that “all life is a process of breaking down” (“The Crack-UP” 69). This reflects his complex feelings about his declining life with Zelda Sayre, his beautiful but mentally ill wife. In early 1930 Zelda had her first nervous breakdown and was institutionalized in Switzerland. Acknowledging how their marriage interfered with his writing and led to his own mental deterioration, Fitzgerald created the narrative of Tender Is the Night (1934), in which the psychiatrist Dick Diver marries the psychopathic patient Nicole Warren Diver and their marriage falls to ruin. As Richard D. Lehan argues, Fitzgerald brings his emotion about Zelda’s breakdown to the novel, “making Nicole into the spirit of Zelda, who drains Dick Diver of strength and energy” (128). In this sense, Fitzgerald’s description of Dick’s self-destructive life is his own attempt to re-experience and comprehend his agonizing relationship with Zelda. “In achieving Zelda’s
impossible cure in fiction,” Matthew J. Bruccoli states, “Fitzgerald may have been trying to absolve himself of whatever guilt he felt for his wife’s madness—as well as to punish himself for his dissipation” (336). The writing of the novel was “not only an act of contrition for Fitzgerald, but also an act of redemption” (Stern 1994, 36).

Yet this raises a number of questions, including why Fitzgerald employs his double Dick as a psychiatrist and why Fitzgerald does not depict Dick’s interiority after Book 3 Chapter 5. The answer to the first question is not just that Fitzgerald became familiar with psychotherapy through his meeting and correspondence with Zelda’s doctors, but also that he identified with a psychiatrist, trying to observe and analyze Nicole/Zelda’s madness or schizophrenia. The creation of a psychiatrist alter ego enables him to dive into Nicole/Zelda’s mind and reveal the psychological process of Dick’s separation from Nicole—perhaps even that of his own separation from Zelda.

In order to probe Nicole/Zelda’s mental illness, Fitzgerald depicts Dick’s partnership with pathologist Franz Gregorovius as a background to the Dick–Nicole relationship. In Between Men, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick develops Gayle Rubin’s concept of “male traffic in women”—“the use of women as exchangeable, perhaps symbolic, property for the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men with men” (25-26)—into the concept of male “homosocial” relation—male bonding cemented through the exchange of women between men. As we will see, because the development and eventual collapse of Dick’s love for
Nicole parallels that of his intimacy with Franz, Dick’s affection for Nicole is driven both by his dream of becoming a great psychiatrist and by his wish to form a male bond with Franz. The point is that Dick’s ambition to become a leading psychiatrist in Europe serves to develop his male bonding with the European Franz through the intervention of Nicole’s insanity. By focusing on the conflict between and merging of heterosexual love and homosocial orientation in Dick’s research life, this chapter will clarify how Nicole’s money, the embodiment of American capitalism, threatens Dick’s masculinity as a researcher and affects his collaborative relationship with Franz.

Connected to Fitzgerald’s decline and his fictionalized account of his troubles is that Fitzgerald shifts the narrative point of view from Dick to Nicole after Book 3 Chapter 5; as a result, the reasons for Dick’s breakdown—his alcoholism, his loss of morality, and his reclusion into smaller towns—remain ambiguous (Stavola 146). Malcolm Cowley makes a similar point, arguing that “Dick fades like a friend who is withdrawing into a private world or sinking to another level of society and, in spite of knowing so much about him, we are never quite certain of the reasons for his decline” (109). Yet, given that Fitzgerald was working on the novel when he “for the first time seriously considered divorcing Zelda” (Milford 330), he seems to write *Tender Is the Night* as a “confessional” novel through which he implies and conceals his wish and plan to break off from Zelda despite his lingering affection for her. If Fitzgerald had delineated Dick’s interiority in Book 3, it would have to
have mercilessly exposed his own desire for separation from Zelda, which might have resulted in the exacerbation of her disease and the deepening of their hatred of each other. It was therefore too painful and too much of a struggle for the author to verbalize Dick’s inner thoughts. However, this does not necessarily mean that we have no clues as to Dick’s determination and scheme to break up with Nicole.

This chapter will offer an interpretation of Dick’s ruin as a sort of performance and ritual of his own devising, which reveals that he recognizes the defeat of his scholarly life due to Nicole’s capital power. It will also demonstrate that he intentionally intensifies Nicole’s scorn for him by showing off his physical decline and his loss of power to organize people so that Nicole can complete transference of her love to Tommy Barban.

1. The Conflict between Scholarship and Love

Dick’s life is characterized by the clash of homosocial academic life and heterosexual love. He tells Franz that he aspired to be a psychiatrist because “there was a girl at St. Hilda’s in Oxford that went to the same lectures” (153); his pursuit of scholarship is intermingled with his enjoyment of heterosexual love from the beginning. However, due to his career goal of being accomplished in his studies, he has never been absorbed in love affairs, at least until he meets Nicole. In fact, he has no serious love affairs (or no serious love affair is indicated
in the text) while devoting himself to studying to obtain a doctorate in Vienna. He engages in academic work “with a floor rug over his shoulders, with the fine quiet of the scholar which is nearest of all things to heavenly peace” (130). He shares an apartment with Elkins, second secretary at the Embassy, and “there were two nice girl visitors—which was that and not too much of it, nor too much of the Embassy either” (130). Dick might have a sexual relationship with one of the girls, but “women occupy a minor, carefully contained place” (Fetterley 2006, 103) in his pursuit of scholarship.

Dick’s asceticism derives from his ambition to be “a good psychologist—maybe to be the greatest one that ever lived” (147). In order to accomplish “the world’s rarest work” (149), he “[finds] time to complete the short textbook and assemble the material for his next venture” (132) during his duty with a neurological unit in France. After the war, he commits to work at Dr. Dohmler’s clinic in Zurich. If mental patients embody the corruptions of the world before and during the war, Switzerland, a nonaligned nation, is a symbolic place where doctors are involved in treating the madness of the past world. Dick bears the burden of the world’s disease as if he were a pastor, like his father, who listened to confessions and human anguish in church.

The turning point of Dick’s career—his meeting with Nicole—happens at the clinic. Nicole’s arrival causes repetitive conflicts between his commitment to work and his fascination with her beauty. It must be noted that Franz works to both develop and obstruct
the love relationship between Dick and Nicole. He monitors Nicole’s embryonic attachment to Dick by reading her early letters to him, letters that show her pathological tendency. Although Franz stops reading them once he starts to blame himself for looking into her private emotions which are expressed in more orderly words, he observes as her doctor her deepening love for Dick. Recognizing that she is also Dick’s patient (133) and that he has cooperated with Dick to cure her mental disease, he reports to Dick that her madness stems from her father’s incestuous advances and even rape.\(^5\) This report suggests that Franz deeply trusts Dick and fosters their cooperation in treating Nicole’s schizophrenia. Franz is “intensely proud of” his treatment and her recovery with Dick’s “accidental assistance” through his correspondence with her (134). Franz reveals the secret of her case to Dick precisely because he admires Dick’s intelligence and talent and wishes to cement their communion in the academic society of psychiatry. The sharing of Nicole between male psychiatrists leads to the formation of a male bond in academia and the accumulation of research achievements. Dick respects Dr. Dohmler but regards him as part of “the ghostly generations behind him” (170). In Dick’s view, Dr. Dohmler practices outmoded forms of psychiatry on Nicole. In terms of Freudian theory, Dick both wants to “supplant his father,” a poor priest in America, and “rival the father of psychoanalysis, modernity’s secular survivor” in Europe (Nowlin 67). In other words, Dick, as a “son” of a country that achieved independence from Europe, now challenges Dr. Dohmler as a “father” who represents the
tradition and authority of European psychotherapy. Dick’s developing love affair with Nicole is spurred not just by her beauty but also by his determined ambition to confront and overcome fatherly authority and traditional psychoanalytic treatment.

However, Franz disagrees with Dick’s notion of marrying Nicole: “What! And devote half your life to being doctor and nurse and all—never! I know what these cases are. One time in twenty it’s finished in the first push—better never see her again!” (156). Franz here reminds Dick that “there is virtually no chance of building a happy marriage upon a mental patient’s transference to her psychiatrist” (Way 127). Transference is “a process of actualisation of unconscious wishes” that “uses specific objects and operates in the framework of a specific relationship established with these objects” and, importantly, “In the transference, infantile prototypes re-emerge and are experienced with a strong sensation of immediacy” (Laplanche and Pontalis 455).6 Franz is concerned that Nicole’s inerasable animosity toward her father will put an end to her married life with Dick in the end (though her unfulfilled affection for her father will work to reinforce her attachment to Dick). This dissent comes not only from Franz’s apprehension about Nicole’s disturbance of Dick’s academic career but also from his uneasiness about the end of the homosocial relationship premised upon the common ownership of Nicole. Certainly this relates to Franz’s sense of rivalry with Dick, hidden in their bonding and Franz’s unconscious resistance to letting Dick
preside over Nicole’s case, but it also manifests Franz’s homosocial desire for renewing and reinforcing his ties to Dick through their continued treatment of Nicole’s schizophrenia.

Following Dr. Dohmler and Franz’s suggestion that Dick “must be most kind and yet eliminate himself” (157), Dick induces Nicole to detach herself from him by recommending that she go back to America and have a happy marriage. The task of the psychiatrist is to become the object of a patient’s unconscious wishes in order to actualize them and then to terminate transference by severing the patient’s feelings toward himself at the final stage of treatment. Yet Dick feels dissatisfaction that “The pathological origin and mechanistic defeat of the affair left a flat and metallic taste. Nicole’s emotions had been used unfairly” (161), and he realizes that he is emotionally involved in her case (162). His accidental meeting with her on a funicular in Montreux refuels his attachment to her. Although he recognizes that “the logic of his life tend[s] away from the girl” (152) and he needs to work on “his proofs for the book” which is “to be presented to the German-speaking world of psychiatry” (162), he falls in love and decides to marry her. His marriage is not at all for Nicole’s money, as Baby Warren suspects (174). Rather, her money obstructs his career goals, as we will confirm later.

First, Dick’s basic motivation for action—“he used to think that he wanted to be good, he wanted to be kind, he wanted to be brave and wise, but it was all pretty difficult. He wanted to be loved, too, if he could fit it in” (149)—prevents his complete absorption in academic work while it fosters his fascination with Nicole. His wish to be “good” and “kind”
forbids his mechanic separation from her, and his wish to be needed and “loved” promotes his association with her. In order to cure the trauma of the incest inflicted by Nicole’s father, he must play the triple role of husband, father, and psychiatrist in his married life with her. His father’s education—to be “good” and “kind”—constitutes the basis for Dick’s ideal self-image.

Second, his “American” “reasoning” that he needs to experience “misfortune” and sacrifice his “intactness” (131) to become the “greatest” psychiatrist leads him to deeply involve himself in Nicole, a patient unlikely to recover completely. The reason why “he is undoubtedly attracted by a situation in which defeat is almost inevitable” (Way 127) is that Nicole paradoxically enables him to get closer to moral completeness while making him suffer hardships. His treatment of Nicole (an American upper-class woman) in Europe (the most advanced place of psychiatry) is motivated by his sense of responsibility as an American doctor educated and trained in Europe. His engagement in the treatment shatters his innocent “illusions of central strength and health, and of the essential goodness of people” (132) so that he attempts to become an experienced, leading psychiatrist in Europe who administers cutting-edge therapy.

His marriage works at first to reconcile his enjoyment of heterosexual love with his pursuit of scholarship. As he recalls that “he had never felt more sure of himself, more thoroughly his own man, than at the time of his marriage to Nicole” (220), the incipient
conjugal life is equivalent to case studies: He can balance his affectionate treatment of Nicole’s insanity and his commitment to study. In wedlock, he dedicates himself to work, as Nicole remembers, “You’ve taught me that work is everything and I believe you. You used to say a man knows things and when he stops knowing things he’s like anybody else. . .” (178). Brian Way rightly argues that “The work house, which he builds with his own money in a remote corner of the villa garden, is an indication of his determination not to give up scientific research” (126).

The blissful time, however, runs short. After Nicole gives birth to their second child, Topsy, she suffers a relapse of her disease, probably due to her unconscious fear about the rape of her daughter by a father figure—Dick or an older man: “I [Nicole] was gone again by that time—trains and beaches they were all one. That was why he [Dick] took me travelling but after my second child, my little girl, Topsy, was born everything got dark again” (177). Nicole’s rape by her father forces her to see her own body as erotic: the desired, seducing body. This traumatic experience provokes her agonizing anxiety about Dick’s (her father’s substitute’s) rape of her daughter: Dick also might desire his daughter as a sexual object. Nicole’s madness serves as her revenge against her father, demanding Dick’s self-sacrificing devotion to her. Her relapse causes the subversion of Dick’s gender because his behavior becomes more feminine like a nurse. Judith Fetterley notes, “Dick plays out the role of wife as mother, and the trajectories described by that relationship define the essence of the
feminine career: namely, the giving over of energy, health, sanity, even identity, from the self to the other” (108).

Moreover, the dilemma between Dick’s affluent life and his studies’ stagnation threatens his masculinity as a scholar. He encounters “a discrepancy between the growing luxury in which the Divers lived, and the need for display which apparently went along with it” (182). Despite his suspicion that “patient” researchers are “callously anticipating him” (182-83), Nicole’s financial power encroaches upon his ascetic scholarly life, hindering the progress of his work: “Naturally Nicole, wanting to own him, wanting him to stand still forever, encouraged any slackness on his part, and in multiplying ways he was constantly inundated by a trickling of goods and money” (187). His dependence upon Nicole’s money reverses normative gender roles: Economically, Nicole is a man and Dick is a woman.

Referring to Giles Deleuz and Felix Guattari’s Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia (1972), Takaki Hiraishi demonstrates that Nicole manifests the combined characteristics of modern capitalism: wealth, schizophrenic mentality, and beauty (287-88). Wealth allowed for female bourgeoisies’ freedom from social codes in the 1920s. In fact, flappers, who were exempted from laboring for a living, had nothing to do except spend money and time gaudily enhancing their beauty. Their economic power enabled them to be fascinating subjects who manipulated and controlled men. As Hiraishi asserts, Nicole’s attractiveness is similar to “the
Nicole’s worsening madness continues to damage Dick’s masculine pride in scholarly work: “His work became confused with Nicole’s problems; in addition, her income had increased so fast of late that it seemed to belittle his work. Also, for the purpose of her cure, he had for many years pretended to a rigid domesticity from which he was drifting away, and this pretense became more arduous in this effortless immobility, in which he was inevitably subjected to microscopic examination” (188). In other words, the development of American capitalism in the shape of Nicole’s madness undermines Dick’s research life and disturbs its value. His agonizing anxiety about gender inscribes the permeation and expansion of American capitalism into his academic life in Europe.

2. The Fissure of Dick’s Homosocial Bonding with Franz

Franz’s proposal of a clinic management partnership with Dick assumes that the partnership will bring fruitful results for each man’s research through the agency of rich patients. Being in charge of management and business, Franz practices the clinical method (hypnotism [133]) advocated by Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer in the late nineteenth century; Dick practices his own clinical method and engages in the construction of a new
psychopathological theory. As Franz suggests, the clinic provides “the atmosphere and regularity . . . at hand” (192) for Nicole’s convalescence. Franz believes that the joint management might alleviate Dick’s anxiousness about his research’s stagnation and his anguish over Nicole’s relapse.

Interestingly, Dick compares the thinking of psychopathic patients to the image of a “circle” (200). Dick tells Franz that he and Nicole are “beginning to turn in a circle” and that “Living on this scale, there’s an unavoidable series of strains, and Nicole doesn’t survive them” (197). Her madness repeats a cycle of recovery and relapse so that she is unable to get outside the circle of the disease. The emergence of a merry-go-round (207) and a Ferris wheel (208) when she goes insane at an amusement park is symbolic; her insanity is endlessly circulating within the fabulous orbit of the vehicles. With her relapse, Dick’s research is descending spirally without moving toward the outside of the loop.

In order to break out of the endless vicious circle, Dick agrees to the joint management partnership: “I hope we’ll be able to do it, Franz. There’s nobody I’d rather try it with than you” (197). It is unknown whether the joint management will be successful, but Franz is the only reliable friend for Dick because they studied in the same medical school in Zurich and cooperated to cure Nicole’s disease in Dr. Dohmler’s clinic. Mutual respect is necessary for the partnership to work. Not only Dick’s need to develop his research, but also his desire to strengthen his male bonding with Franz motivate him to move into management.
However, the management position is totally dependent upon the economic power of the Warrens. Nicole’s sister, Baby Warren, is a representative of rich “emergent Amazons” (195), and her lines—“what could be better in [Nicole’s] condition than if she fell in love with some good doctor”—give Dick the impression that “the Warrens were going to buy Nicole a doctor” (169). After his marriage to Nicole, Dick’s life of research is controlled by the Warrens’ money: “he had been swallowed up like a gigolo, and somehow permitted his arsenal to be locked up in the Warren safety-deposit vaults” (220). When he consults with Baby about the funding for the clinic, he senses her unspoken threat: “We own you, and you’ll admit it sooner or later. It is absurd to keep up the pretense of independence” (195). The words intimate his inferiority complex about economic strength and his injured masculine pride as breadwinner. As Tiffany Joseph asserts, “his lack of financial power is problematic in terms of Victorian notions of manhood that still influenced postwar ideas of gender” (69). Baby’s “cold rich insolence” (195) reveals not only the economic relationship of Dick and the Warrens but also that of the European clinic and American capitalism. The clinic is subjected to American capitalism on the plane of economic structure because it is supported by the medical expenses of American rich neurasthenics. Thus, the economic subject of the clinic is patients rather than doctors; in this sense, doctors are positioned as feminine. Furthermore, the clinic is the site of double commodification: Dick and Franz’s partnership commodifies Nicole’s madness, whereas the Warrens’ economic power
commodifies the doctors who treat her disease. The latter commodification circumvents Dick’s scholarly ambition, eventually disrupting the two men’s solidarity.

Nicole’s deteriorating mental condition and her economic affluence deprive Dick of his ability to control situations. Her sudden grabbing of his steering wheel, which forces the family to face the imminent danger of potentially falling over a cliff, is emblematic of his loss of control. Dick recognizes that Nicole’s destructive madness puts their children’s lives in jeopardy as well as her own, and that this time she needs to recover by herself with a nurse’s help rather than his cure. Dick becomes so exhausted that he applies for a three-month leave of absence from the clinic in order to rest, but this application causes a subtle split to appear in the solidarity between Dick and Franz.

“You wish a real leave of abstinence.”
“The word is ‘absence.’ Look here: if I go to Berlin to the Psychiatric Congress could you manage to keep the peace? For three months she’s been all right and she likes her nurse. My God, you’re the only human being in this world I can ask this of.” (213)

Dick can leave his loving wife only with his reliable partner Franz, who knows the origin of her madness, and understands her lapses, but this trust slightly confuses Franz: “Franz grunted, considering whether or not he could be trusted to think always of his partner’s interest” (213). Although Franz’s concession of Nicole to Dick deepens their male tie in the end, Dick’s returning her to him (even if it is temporary) works against their continuing cordiality. In effect, Dick’s returning of Franz’s homosocial gift disturbs their male
friendship; if she were to have a severe relapse of madness during Dick’s absence, the responsibility would fall on Franz and the reputation of the clinic would go down. Franz cannot always prioritize “his partner’s interest.”

In fact, Dick’s desperate fighting with Italian cab drivers in Rome further impairs his alliance with Franz. While Franz’s wife Kaethe insists that the alcoholic Dick’s unhealed scars are the result of debauchery instead of shipboard boxing, Franz defends him by stating that he is “a serious man” and that he is “the most brilliant—more brilliant than I could ever be” (261). After the quarrel, however, Franz no longer believes that Dick is a serious person and loses his trust in him. This sudden change of mind originates in Franz’s unconscious ill feelings against Dick regarding Nicole’s treatment. The feelings emerge both from Dick’s marriage to her, disregarding Franz’s opposition, and from Dick’s absence on the trip, during which he abandons his responsibility for Nicole. Kaethe’s insistence incites Franz’s long-term repressed dissatisfaction and intensifies his concealed rivalry with Dick. Although he senses that “No friendship worth the name was ever destroyed in an hour without some painful flesh being torn” (262), the dissatisfaction and rivalry lead him to plan on dissolving the partnership. He has found new financial support as an alternative to Nicole’s money, and he readily consents to the dissolution of their partnership once Dick raises the issue.

This collapse of male bonding can be seen as an inversion of the end of Dick’s friendship with Abe North: Franz drives Dick out of the clinic while Dick casts Abe out of
his friends’ circle. Dick and Abe have developed their close relationship through the medium of Nicole: Nicole says that “Abe used to be so nice . . . when Dick and I were first married. . . . He’d come to stay with us for weeks and weeks . . . he’d play—sometimes he’d be in the library with a muted piano, making love to it by the hour” (111). Abe has “love[d]” Nicole “for years”; Nicole has “liked Abe better than any one except Dick” (93); and Dick has “loved” (72) the once-talented musician Abe. They thus lead “a life of leisure” (112) together on the beach in the Riviera. However, as Abe loses “his moral code” (43) and becomes an alcoholic, Dick, who has “long lost hope” (72) in him, does not try to save him from dissipation: “If Abe was my room-mate in college, tight for the first time, it’d be different. Now there’s nothing to do”’ (90). After Abe interferes with Dick’s affair with Rosemary in the Hotel Roi George (118), Dick rejects and abandons him; in the end, he finds that Abe was “beaten to death in a speakeasy” in New York (218). Dick’s breaking off with Abe prefigures Franz’s severance of relations with Dick.

Yet Dick feels “relieved” about the dissolution of his partnership with Franz because “Not without desperation he had long felt the ethics of his profession dissolving into a lifeless mass” (276), but this break is painful. It signifies a double end in his life: that of the male intimacy based on the exchange of Nicole between the two men, and that of his dream of curing mental disease and becoming a brilliant psychologist. He can no longer make a social circle by uniting various kinds of people to bring pleasure and happiness to them, as he used
to do on the beach in the Riviera. His parting from Franz is the beginning of Dick’s “crack-up,” foreshadowing his dulling social skills and his loss of ties to others. Dick must tread a path of decline after he loses the basis for his academic life: his homosocial interaction with Franz.

3. Dick’s Concession of Nicole to Tommy

The rivalry between Dick and Tommy Barban over Nicole is manipulated both by Nicole’s establishment as an independent subject and by Dick’s secret plan to break away from her. From Book 3 Chapter 5 to the end of the novel, the story is narrated from Nicole’s point of view, so we have almost no direct access to Dick’s inner thoughts and motivations. The reader is therefore tasked with determining the reasons for his behavior. Yet we must first explore how Nicole’s affair with Tommy derives from her wish to be independent from Dick.

Her recovery intensifies her desire to support herself: “If she need not, in her spirit, be forever one with Dick as he had appeared last night, she must be something in addition, not just an image on his mind, condemned to endless parades around the circumference of a medal” (298). Nicole desires to depart from Dick’s protection as an independent subject. She unconsciously regards Dick as a “father” who has prevented her freedom; she must revenge
the “father” by inflicting psychological punishment on him. When Dick’s speech and behavior are getting on her nerves, she meets Tommy, a professional soldier who regards himself as a hero with courage and a fighter for any country. Tommy “has a code of honour” (Way 133) and he is “the apparent embodiment of social expectations of manhood” (Joseph 73) in the novel. If Dick plays the feminine role of curing Nicole’s disease, Tommy plays the masculine role of seducing her into an affair. Nicole is instinctively attracted to Tommy because being loved by Tommy, who has loved many types of women, proves her idiosyncratic attraction, which “transcend[s] the universals of her body” (318). Her affair with Tommy is the process of her psychological independence and regeneration: “Moment by moment all that Dick had taught her fell away and she was ever nearer to what she had been in the beginning, prototype of that obscure yielding up of swords that was going on in the world about her. Tangled with love in the moonlight she welcomed the anarchy of her lover” (320).

By the time Nicole and Tommy begin their affair, Dick is not struggling for her anymore, but Nicole feels pleasure in imagining that the two men vie for her. Perceiving Tommy walking into the barber shop where she and Dick are having their hair cut, Nicole considers with “a flush of joy” that there is going to be “some sort of showdown” between the two men (329). The reason for her “joy” is that she can confirm her own value and attraction by controlling men’s emotions and manipulating their conflict. Tommy represents
her dissatisfaction with Dick: “You treat her always like a patient because she was once sick” (331). She wishes to extricate herself from the doctor–patient relationship to build a new love relationship with equal status as an independent woman. As Sarah Beebe Fryer’s feminist reading shows, Nicole can be regarded as “an embryonic New Woman,” and when she expresses “her displeasure with Dick’s deterioration,” she “begins to declare her independence, parting irrevocably from the past and ensuring her survival” (90). She determines to divorce Dick and choose Tommy as her second husband.

However, there is the possibility that Dick may be intentionally manipulating her emotions to move toward their divorce. His accumulated observation of her mental structure enables him to foresee how he should act in order to drive her to fall in love with Tommy and sever herself from him. Dick’s plan to separate from her probably begins with her passing a jar of camphor rub to Tommy in the following scene:

She heard Dick grow silent at her side; she took a step off from him and waved as the car drove off with Tommy and the special camphor rub. Then she turned to take her own medicine.

“There was no necessity for that gesture,” Dick said. “There are four of us here—and for years whenever there’s a cough—”

They looked at each other.

“We can always get another jar—” then she lost her nerve and presently followed him upstairs where he lay down on his own bed and said nothing.

(299)

Dick resents Nicole not so much because her giving of the rub offends his dignity as a doctor/husband, but because it denies the memories of his family associated with the rub—the memories of caring for a sick family member. Her remark, “We can always get another
jar,” suggests her idea that money is the center uniting the family and her obliviousness to the priceless spirit of family bond, affection, and sympathy. Once Nicole starts to hate Dick, it is almost impossible to recover family affection. It is because of his love for her that Dick must part with her.

As a psychiatrist, Dick plans to propel the transference of Nicole’s love to Tommy. Nicole feels that “[his plans] worked well and they had an all-inclusive logic about them which Nicole was not able to command” (311). At the first stage of the transference, his calculated performance induces her hostility toward him. He tries to lift a man on his shoulders on a beach (a symbolic site of his youth where he generated “excitement” to make his friends “livelier” [19]), but fails. This failure does not just signal the decline of his physical power, which comes with age. Although Bruce L. Grenberg is right to argue that Dick’s attempt at the acrobatics is “a synecdoche of Dick’s longtime efforts to lift everyone—especially Nicole” (238), we need also to recognize his performance in his own play: He deliberately makes the humiliating failure in order to evoke Nicole’s hatred and irritation. Nicole regards his performance as “physical showing-off for Rosemary” (304), but, as Dick has already considered that “Rome was the end of his dream of Rosemary” (240), he does not necessarily give this display of his physical power for Rosemary. Even if the performance includes his desire to show his manhood in front of people, his primary objective is to attract Nicole’s scorn through his disgraceful behavior.
Dick exposes this feature of his performance when he teaches an important technique for Rosemary to perform on a stage.

“…on the stage you’re trying to entertain—the audience can do the ‘responding’ for themselves. First the actress has lines to follow, then she has to get the audience’s attention back on herself, away from the murdered Chinese or whatever the thing is. So she must do something unexpected. If the audience thinks the character is hard she goes soft on them—if they think she’s soft she goes hard. You go all out of character—you understand?”

“I don’t quite,” admitted Rosemary. “How do you mean out of character?”

“You do the unexpected thing until you’ve manœuvred the audience back from the objective fact to yourself. Then you slide into character again.” (310)

Creating a scenario for divorce, Dick plays the role of shifting his wife’s love to another man by fostering her scorn and hatred for himself and promoting her independence from himself. On the beach, in order to entertain the audience, he dares to attempt the lifting challenge, and in order to gain their attention, he repeats the “unexpected” failures. Thus, as planned, he enhances Nicole’s hostility (“She hated the beach, resented the places where she had played planet to Dick’s sun” [310]) and promotes her self-reliance (“Why, I’m almost complete,” she thought. “I’m practically standing alone, without him.” [311]).

In a February 1934 letter to Maxwell Perkins, Fitzgerald insisted that Tender Is the Night must include the scene in which Dick bails Mary North and Lady Caroline out of a jail in Cannes. After a call from the police office, Dick believes that he will “undertake to deal with” the case; for “the old fatal pleasingness, the old forceful charm, swept back with its cry of ‘Use me!’” (324). Fitzgerald claimed that this description of Dick’s assistance is indispensable for “the effectiveness of the finale to show Dick in the dignified and
responsible aspect toward the world and his neighbors” (Letters 246). Fitzgerald went on to argue that “it is legitimate to ruin Dick but it is by no means legitimate to make him an ineffectual,” saying that in the proof he is “pointing up the fact that his intention dominated” the whole Book 3 (Letters 246). Fitzgerald created Dick as a “dignified” and “responsible” character who intends to enact a performance that demeans himself so that Nicole can transfer her love to Tommy.

At the second stage of the transference, Dick gives Nicole the chance to write Tommy “a short provocative letter” (311). Dick must speculate that her writing a letter to Tommy, who is also, significantly, a soldier, promotes her transference to him. When Dick first meets Nicole at Dohmler’s clinic, he wears an American uniform (134), which makes him “handsome” (136), as Nicole writes in a letter to him. Her father’s rape breaches a taboo, which implants in Nicole’s mind a sense of guilt for seducing him and betraying her mother. The sense of guilt, though it is repressed and unconscious, compels her to seek a “father” figure in her lovers. In “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” Freud argues that the subject who suffers “trauma” (29) displays “a compulsion repetition” (35): The subject compels herself to repeat the same experience in such a way to force herself into a predicament. By making “incestuous” love with the “fathers,” she not only fulfills her need for affection from her real father but also repeats the committing of a sin and punishing the sinful self. Her trauma of rape forces her to demand the role of both a protector and an aggressor in her lovers;
therefore, the image of “soldier” fascinates her. For Nicole, a military uniform serves to foster the transference of her love from Dick to a stronger father figure, Tommy.

Acknowledging this function of the uniform, Dick allows Nicole to send a letter to Tommy and never tries to forbid her intimacy with Tommy. Rather, his trip to Provence allows her to have a physical relationship with Tommy. After his return home, while talking with her, Dick appears calm and composed, not showing his internal shock: “Don’t tell me about it. It doesn’t matter what you do, only I don’t want to know anything definitely” (321). Yet his behavior in his room—“Once he clenched his fists and leaned forward, once [his own story] brought into his face an expression of torment and despair—when this passed its stamp lingered in his eyes” (323)—indicates that his heart is surely wounded because of his remaining affection for her. He is suppressing his regret for her. Nonetheless, when she vehemently blames him, Dick recognizes it is his fault, in a way, that she believes she has “achieved her victory” and, as a result, can “cut the cord forever” that bounded her to him (324). Although Nicole “is not cured, has not worked out the original neurosis, but simply switched doctors, under the pretext that the new man is a more forceful father figure than the man she has used up” (Burton 470), Dick succeeds in his transference of her love to Tommy and his acquisition of freedom: “The case was finished. Doctor Diver was at liberty” (324).

At the café, Dick talks with Tommy and Nicole and consents to the divorce. He controls this discussion with calmness, conceding his wife to the adulterer. When Tommy
insists, “I shall hold you strictly accountable for any abuse of the fact that you continue to
inhabit the same house,” Dick responds that “I never did go in for making love to dry loins”
(333). This response conveys what is behind the surface of the shocking words that Nicole no
longer loves him and he has no lingering attachment to her. By leaving her with good grace,
he pushes their happiness forward even if he still loves her. Tommy, who acknowledges the
intent and effect of Dick’s behavior, states that “He was fair enough” (333). When the two
men complete the exchange of the woman, the new husband admires the leaving man.

The point is that even if Nicole eventually deserts Dick to live with the stronger
“father,” Dick must feel guilty about their separation because he knows that he has
manipulated her emotions to propel her to part with him. Acknowledging that Nicole desires
to separate from Dick as a “father” to become an independent woman, Dick has deliberately
arranged the stage on which Nicole believes she has revenged and punished the impotent
“father” who has no ability to cure her madness and restricts her freedom. In other words,
Dick recognizes that he himself has deserted Nicole to gain freedom from her insanity.

Ironically, however, his freedom does not enable his devotion to psychoanalysis
research nor his formation of new human relationships in Europe. He has no will or strength
to live through European academia or society with his guilt over abandoning Nicole. After
going back to America, Dick practices general medicine and works on a treatise on some
medical subject, but he recluses himself from both psychiatric academia and from cities—he
moves into a smaller town every time he moves. First he returns to Buffalo where his father died, but his office is “without success” (337). In Lockport he settles down for a while to study and practice his treatment, but he leaves town because of scandals involving his love affair and a medical lawsuit. These events virtually put an end to his profession, though Nicole likes to think that his career is still “biding its time” (338).

His refusal to answer Nicole’s question of whether he needs money suggests not only his hesitation to return to a city but also his will to spend the rest of his life outside capitalist society. The text does not describe his situation clearly, but he “practices” in Genevra and hires someone to “keep his house for him” (338), so at least until he leaves Genevra, he probably intends to accomplish his research while treating local people. This is not so much the defeat of Dick’s dream of becoming “the greatest [psychologist] that ever lived” due to the monetary system of capitalism as the return of Dick to his father’s belief that “nothing could be superior to ‘good instincts,’ honor, courtesy, and courage” (223). Although “his father’s struggles in poor parishes” implanted “a desire for money” in Dick (220) and strengthened his ambition for wealth, he chooses a life of valuing the treatment of patients in Genevra over his own interests in the capitalist landscape. Yet it is unknown whether he continues to practice in a smaller town after leaving Genevra. Recalling his promising career prospects as a psychiatrist in Europe before marrying Nicole, Dick’s degradation in the last
scene confirms that his marriage has accelerated and completed “the process of breaking down.”

Fitzgerald had no intention of describing the continued challenge of the “son” against the “father” in Europe; rather, he closed the novel with Dick’s return to his mother country, or the “inexperienced” landscape of his own father’s merciful love. Yet this ending must not be interpreted as narcissistic and infantile, nor as a sign of Fitzgerald’s immaturity as a professional writer. In the ending, we must see the depth of Fitzgerald’s anguish over his wife’s deteriorating madness. He could not write about his alter ego’s life in Europe without Nicole. Fitzgerald’s life as a writer could not have existed without Zelda, even if they desired to gain freedom from each other. Considering that Fitzgerald struggled to retain his married life with the insane Zelda while writing *Tender Is the Night*, the last scene reflects a complicated mixture of the author’s ambivalence: Fitzgerald’s sense of guilt for not providing Zelda with relief from her disease and his wish to concentrate on creative writing without entangling himself in her madness.

**Notes**

1. For the process of Zelda’s mental collapse until the publication of *Tender Is the Night*, See Matthew J. Bruccoli’s *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur* (286-357) and Nancy Milford (183-350). Although she suffered a relapse in the fall of 1930, her condition improved in the spring of 1931 and she was allowed to spend two happy weeks with her husband and daughter Scottie in Paris in July 1931. She was discharged in September 1931, but once she
engaged in writing a novel (later published in 1932 titled as *Save Me the Waltz*), a spot of eczema appeared on her neck, “an ominous sign when accompanied by irrational outbursts” (*Grandeur* 320). She entered the Psychiatric Clinic of the Johns Hopkins University Hospital in February 1932. She was discharged from the clinic in June 1932, though she “was not regarded as cured” (*Grandeur* 325).

2. Lehan further points out that Fitzgerald “complicated his own relationship with Zelda by making Dick the victim of the very rich” (128) and that Dick’s decline comes partially from “his own weak will” (132). Eugene White asserts that Dick’s “powerful love for Nicole” leads to his marriage despite “his realization of what marriage to her will mean to his future” (126). In terms of the restoration of masculinity after the World War I, Tiffany Joseph examines Dick’s marriage to Nicole: his marriage “might be seen as an attempt to replace what he has lost by not being a combatant in the war, a way of reasserting his masculinity by reclaiming his status as manly hero” (71). It can be speculated that Fitzgerald superimposed his own lack of actual fighting in the war upon the postwar life of a non-combatant Dick.

3. After his conference with Zelda about their marriage and their rivalry over creative activity on May 28, 1933, Fitzgerald “consulted a lawyer about the possible conditions under which he could be free of her” (Milford 330). For the transcript of the conference, see Bruccoli’s *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur* (345-50).

4. Fitzgerald defines “first-rate intelligence” as “the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function” (“The Crack-UP” 69). Dick’s tension between academia and romance must have been a suitable topic for Fitzgerald’s philosophy of creative writing.

5. Bruce L. Grenberg’s examination of Nicole’s letters clarifies that her father’s fabrications worsen her disease: “her pain and disorientation originate not so much with the rape itself as with her awareness that her father had bred her a victim to his lies. Her trust in him and in his self-proclaimed, selfless love had made her vulnerable to unexpected attack” (*CE* 215).

6. According to Laplanche and Pontalis, “inasmuch as [transference] offers a superlative way for the subject as for the analyst to grasp the elements of the infantile conflict *in vitro* and *in statu nascendi*, the transference becomes the terrain upon which the patient’s unique set of problems is played out with an ineluctable immediacy, the area where the subject finds himself face to face with the existence, the permanence and the force of his unconscious wishes and phantasies (458). In “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” Freud writes that the patient “is obliged to repeat the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of, as the physician would prefer to see, remembering it as something belonging to the past. These reproductions, which emerge with such unwished-for exactitude, always have as their subject some portion of infantile sexual life—of the Oedipus complex, that is, and its
derivatives; and they are invariably acted out in the sphere of the transference, of the patient’s relation to the physician “(18).

7. Matthew J. Bruccoli’s biography refers to Zelda’s riding a Ferris wheel with John Dos Passos in September 1922. After looking at rented houses in Great Neck, Long Island, Fitzgerald and Zelda drove back to New York with Dos Passos, but they “stopped at an amusement park on the way” “at her insistence.” “Fitzgerald remained in the car with a bottle while Zelda rode the Ferris wheel with Dos Passos.” Bruccoli cites Dos Passos’s memoir of his acknowledgement of “unreachable territories of her mind” (171): “The gulf that opened between Zelda and me, sitting up on that rickety Ferris wheel, was something I couldn’t explain. It was only looking back at it years later that it occurred to me that, even the first day we knew each other, I had come up against that basic fissure in her mental processes that was to have such tragic consequences. Though she was so very lovely I had come upon something frightened and repelled me, even physically” (The Best Times 129-30).

8. See Way (131-32) for the roles of Baby’s economic power. Milton R. Stern (1994) points out that in the postwar world Baby’s assumes “independent power” based on her “independent ‘male’ control of money” (40). Insofar as “the self-made man” is an ideal manhood for Americans (Kimmel), Warren’s money continues to destabilize Dick’s masculine identity.

9. For the careful analysis of Dick’s excessive drinking, see John W. Crowley’s The White Logic: Alcoholism and Gender in American Modernist Fiction (65-89). Crowley correctly argues that “[Dick’s] loss of emotional and moral control” in Book I foreshadows “the future course of his alcoholism” (79), but in the last scene of the novel he “retain[s] something of his charm and gentility to the bitter end” “despite his personal disintegration” (81).
Conclusion

This study has examined various homosocial systems—a rigid system regulated by racial and gender codes and a transformative system conditioned by the postwar capitalist environment—in representative American novels of the 1920s and 1930s. It has also analyzed masochistic and sadistic masculinities—the introspective, self-destructive self and the reflexive, aggressive self—of male characters depicted as living in these systems.

I have applied Sedgwick’s theory of the homosocial to the analysis of male relationships within the historical and cultural contexts of America and Europe from the 1900s to the 1930s. However, note that each literary text resists, as well as exemplifies, the theoretical framework laid out by Sedgwick. If Sedgwick mainly characterizes the homosocial structure of a patriarchal aristocratic society as homophobic and misogynistic, Faulkner’s and Wright’s texts reveal how sweepingly and thoroughly racist discourse shadows and controls male bonding and how that bonding is formed or severed in connection with the racial conflict between whites and blacks. In *Light in August*, for example, the southern white community restores order and solidifies male bonding through the castration of a possible black man, Christmas, under the law against miscegenation. In castrating
Christmas, Percy displays his homophobic reaction to the interracial intimacy between Christmas and Hightower and his negro-phobic reaction to Christmas’s sexually approaching a white woman, Joanna. In *Absalom, Absalom!*, Quentin, a white southerner living in the 1920s, imagines that the southern white supremacist ideology of the nineteenth century forbids not only heterosexual love between a white woman and a black man but also homosocial intimacy between a white man and a black man. His imagination reflects how the conventional interlocking of white homosociality with racism never allows for the transgression of racial boundaries. Wright’s *Native Son* describes the racial hierarchy of the homosocial structure of 1930s Chicago: how the oppression of black men by the white dominant culture works to reinforce white male bonding.

Meanwhile, Hemingway’s and Fitzgerald’s texts illuminate how deeply and pervasively postwar disillusionment about the world and the advent of commercialism affect and transform male sociality and partnership. In *The Sun Also Rises*, for instance, Jake’s grouping with war veterans provides space where Brett can manipulate and control male desires amid the disturbance of fluid values due to the postwar emergence of commercialism. Because of the men’s loss of patriarchal authority (represented by Jake’s sexual injury), Brett is able to induce men to exchange her body between them to pursue gender freedom, though the men apparently presume to strengthen their bonding while competing for Brett. Although *A Farewell to Arms* illustrates the formation of male bonding through the exchange of
women in the army, it also brings into relief how Catherine detects and controls male homosocial desire in the postwar landscape as well as on the war front. Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* describes the dynamics of male desire for class ascendancy in the developing system of commercialism. It illuminates how the capitalist environment of New York offers a stage where Gatsby and Nick might be able to ascend to the upper class: Gatsby’s love for Daisy is continuously fueled by his ambition to establish himself as an upper-class male, and the assistance Nick provides to help Gatsby attain his dream is a substitute for his own secret yearning for male bonding. *Tender Is the Night* clarifies how Nicole’s insanity foments and disrupts the male bonding between two psychiatrists, Dick and Franz. Although the treatment of Nicole’s madness, which brings American money to a European hospital, functions at first as a financial basis for the two men’s partnership, it ends in a collapse of their male bonding.

Thus, I historicize a variety of particular homosocial structures that are conditioned and constructed by racism, the Great War, and capitalism in America and Europe from the 1900s to the 1930s, revealing male anguish and hope that exist deep within the mind of the individual in the midst of social repression and cultural disorder. Yet my research project is not complete, because it has implications beyond just the novels that I have examined here. I still need to study other literary works in order to throw light on the diverse aspects of male homosocial relationships and the multiple layers of male minds and behaviors in early-twentieth-century America. Faulkner’s *Go Down, Moses* (1942), for example, depicts that
Issac McCuslin, “the only and last descendant in the male line” (245), desires peace from his ancestor’s guilt for miscegenation: his grandfather Carothers McCuslin had a sex with not only his slave Eunice but also a mulatto Tomasina born between Eunice and him, and Eunice “[d]rownd herself” on Christmas day and Tomasina gave a birth to Carothers’s son Turl (256-57). Issac’s despair over his grandfather’s acts and his family’s plantation management leads to his refusal to inherit the cursed land of the McCuslins, that is, his reclusion from the paternal line that has sacrificed black women as sexual exploits as well as black men as workforces. At the same time, however, he must endure living in the South without leaving offspring while reflecting upon his forefather’s and his family’s sins. If Issac succeeds to Faulkner’s anguish over acceptance and rejection of southern guilt, I must examine how and to what extent Isaac’s agony represents Faulkner’s inner voice and exhibits the historical burden of white male southerners. Also, Faulkner’s short story “Dry September” (1931) represents the southern white community’s obsession with the “rape complex”: John McLendon kills a black innocent, obedient man Will Mayes for his allegedly rape of a white middle-aged, unmarried woman Minnie Cooper. John, a white supremacist like Percy in Light in August, insists on lynching Will despite no evidence of his raping: “are you going to sit there and let a black son rape a white woman on the streets of Jefferson?” (171). Minnie’s lying of Will’s sexual assault on her evokes and augments John’s fear of black people’s class ascendancy or his own social decline. As a result, John must murder Will to appease his
anxiety about the rise of black people (rather than to protect the white woman); his murder serves to tighten the white homosocial community by enclosing other black men in their “place”—never letting them threaten white properties, especially white female body.

As another example, Hemingway’s *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940) describes Robert Jordan’s deliberate construction of (homo) social bonding with Republican guerillas in the Spanish Civil War. This novel illuminates the formation of Robert’s bonding with a female gypsy Pilar (rather than her husband Pablo) through the exchange of a beautiful, once-sexually-assaulted woman Maria. Considering whether it is good to kill Pablo, Robert narrates, “Without the woman [Pilar] there is no organization nor any discipline here and with the woman it can be very good” (63). It is important to analyze Pilar’s female masculinity—“Here I command! . . . Here no one commands but me” (55)—in the battlefield to develop our understanding of this peculiar structure of (homo) sociality. Assuming that Pilar resembles Gertrude Stein in some way, I must examine how Hemingway reflects his relationship with Stein in Jordan’s (homo) social bond with Pilar. Comparing with *A Farewell to Arms*, I will clarify the sustained tension between homosociality and heterosexuality and the assertion and anxiety of Jordan’s masculinity, thereby exploring Hemingway’s understanding of gender instability or inverted gender in the (homo) social battle ground.
Furthermore, by comparing a contemporary Japanese postmodernist writer Haruki Murakami’s *Norwegian Wood* (original 1987; translation 2000) with American modernist novels (especially *The Great Gatsby*), I will go into detail concerning the differences and similarities in homosocial ideology between America and Japan and their respective social and historical problems through the examination of those literary texts. *Norwegian Wood* describes Toru Watanabe’s unprolific affection for Naoko after their reunion in Tokyo. When they were high school students in their hometown Kobe, they encountered the sudden suicide of their best friend and her boyfriend Kizuki. In my reading, Toru’s devotion to Naoko (suffering from mental disease) is partially motivated by his sense of guilt for his friend’s unexplainable death and his unconscious attempt to recover his friendship with Kizuki. By placing Kizuki’s suicide and Naoko’s mental disease (resonant with Nicole’s insanity in *Tender Is the Night*) in the context of Japanese rehabilitation and radical student movement after World War II, I will analyze how Toru’s heterosexual (homosocial) love mirrors his desire for real human connectedness in the midst of loneliness and isolation, whereas the surrounding capitalist world steadily renders such connectedness barren and impossible. Also, by foregrounding the fact that Toru’s relationship with an intelligent manly (sadistic) college student Nagasawa originates in their shared admiration for *The Great Gatsby*, I will reveal the resonance of male homosocial desire between *Norwegian Wood* and *The Great Gatsby* and examine how differently Toru and Nagasawa reenact heterosexual masculinity in 1960-


70’s Japanese capitalist culture. On the one hand, Toru seeks human connectedness (though he has sexual intercourse with women while feeling the sense of emptiness), and, on the other hand, Nagasawa leads a life of sexual pleasure as if he trusted no human connection (though he has a girlfriend Hatsumi with a gentle humane manner). This comparative research will clarify how the influence of American modernism transhistorically and transnationally flows into the Japanese novel and how the Japanese novel reversely throws light on the features of American modernism: the conflict between individuals (humanity) and the homosocial system, male homosocial desire for recovering the (lost) male bonding, and male homosocial yearning for communal solidarity in the ever-changing society.

This dissertation adds to the extant scholarship a clear account of male homosocial relationships that existed in the cultural landscape of America and Europe from the 1900s to the 1930s. The fluidity and diversity of American male sociality suggests that America faced turbulent times in the early twentieth century when southerners sought to maintain and reinforce a rigid racist regime under Jim Crow laws, and when American expatriates in Europe and American residents of New York repeated the formation and collapse of the fragile, ephemeral male bonding in the emerging and developing commercialized society.
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