Queering the Species Body: Interspecies Intimacies and Contemporary Literature

Dissertation

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Abstract

Taxonomies of biological life are historical and political products. In particular, distinctions made between humans and other species have historically served as the fulcrum upon which social hierarchies balance. For example, in formulating species according to morphology, eighteenth and nineteenth-century science helped shape anti-abolitionist claims that black slaves were inherently distinct from whites. Likewise, at the beginning of the twentieth century, a focus on reproductive relations as the bedrock of species categorization precipitated the development of state-sanctioned eugenics in the United States. This dissertation examines how the scientific, cultural, and literary imagination in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries employs theories of speciation both to augment and contest normative human identity with a special emphasis on race and sexuality. Spanning eight decades of scientific and literary activity from the 1930s to present day, I explore how late modernist and contemporary American authors intervene in what is known as the "species problem"— a set of enduring questions on how to define species and how they arise. Working at the juncture of queer theory, feminist science studies, and animal studies, I reveal authors excavating the indeterminacy of species life, and thus of race and sex, by representing intimacies between humans and other animals.

I begin by tracing a genealogy of the species body beginning with what historians refer to as "the eclipse of Darwinism." Charles Darwin's 1859 publication of *On the Origin of Species* notably triggered an ideological crisis in the scientific and political landscape. I investigate the extent to which Darwin's most radical ideas about species

porosity continue to be repackaged in order to uphold established social orders and regulatory controls. Each of my four body chapters shows authors contributing to the scientific conversations on race, sex, and species of their respective decades, for example, Djuna Barnes's novel *Nightwood* (1936) at the crest of sexology and Edward Albee's drama *The Zoo Story* (1958) on the heels of the Kinsey Reports (1948, 1953). I also turn to contemporary writing with Marian Engel's novella *Bear* (1976) written alongside feminist sex research of the 1970s and Sherman Alexie's short stories in *The Toughest Indian in the World* (2000) and Monique Truong's novel *The Book of Salt* (2003) during the rise of species-specific genomics. In bringing readers into the contact zone of interspecies intimacies, these works disrupt the popular scientific frameworks from which racial and sexual embodiment are culturally understood.

The recent explosion of interest in the nonhuman no longer permits the humanities to treat the *human* as an unproblematic category. Ultimately, this dissertation interrogates the extent to which late modernist and contemporary American literature anticipates and contributes to this turn. That the instability of racial and sexual identity in these works hinges on disrupting species distinctions indicates a theoretical invitation that has, until now, remained a blind spot in literary criticism. In interrogating this opening, I bring to light that moments of interspecies intimacy in late modernist and contemporary literature have a coherence that is both historical and formal. As literary interventions, they speak for the capacity of bodies to interact meaningfully in a multispecies world.

This project is dedicated to my Mother, my significant other, and my canine companions.

Rosmary (Maré) LeMay
Douglas Armand Dorval
Prudence & Mabel

For making me feel that I belong in each your own way,

my heart swells with gratitude.

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To Doug, growing with and alongside you over the past fourteen years has been a sacred journey. Thank you for seeing me through many transformations and for inspiring me with your own. Your support of my goals has never once wavered. In the words of Thich Nhat Hahn, may I love you in such a way that you feel free—for this is what you have given me.

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Introduction

A Genealogy of the Species Body

It seems to me that this sudden emergence of the naturalness of the species within the political artifice of a power relation is something fundamental…

—Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*

Species reeks of race and sex…

—Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet*

We who are archived in natural history and cultural museums and genomic databases as *Homo sapiens* have never been human, at least not in any luminous, singular, self-making sense, no matter how popular that idea has been to rampaging cyclopean philosophers and not a few natural scientists, to all their shame.

—Donna Haraway, "Species Matters, Humane Advocacy"

On June 27, 2013, while serving as the interim host of *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart,* John Oliver performed a series of jokes poking fun of conservative reactions to the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that had gutted the federal ban on same-sex marriage known as DOMA (The Defense of Marriage Act). Setting up the comedic climax, Oliver highlights a remark made by Senator Rand Paul that equates homosexuality with

bestiality. Paul: "If we have no laws on this [homosexuality], people take it one extension further. Does it have to be humans?" To this, Oliver interjects:

> What is it with these people and animals? Every time! This [sex] is the only issue where you go there. It's not like you go there with Obamacare. Oh thank you, Mr. President. What's next? Are we going to give health care to turtles? It's *only* when you're talking about sex that your definitely not perverted brains go straight to animals ("American Comes out of the Closet").[1]

I can think of no better place to begin my exploration into American cultural discourse around sex and species than with Oliver's witty retort. On the one hand, the skit enacts an easy take-down of a popular "slippery slope" argument.[2] The suggestion made by cultural and religious conservatives that gay sex is but a few acts away from sex with animals has understandably been met with outrage from gay rights advocates and their allies. On the other hand, the series of questions that stem from Oliver's observation bears important insight for scholars of sexuality that extends well beyond the political vitriol of the week. Why do conversations on sex so frequently bring up other animals? More precisely, why do human relationships to other animals operate as such a readily available backdrop for social anxieties around sexual deviancy? There is something suspect about the frequency with which we are reminded that humans must not sleep, marry, or desire other animals; as with Oliver's, the best jokes tend to come with a tinge of uneasiness. As *The Daily Show* makes apparent, the policing of sex seems to overlap and intersect with a telling instability at the human-animal border.

This unease is not a new cultural phenomenon. As I will show, it is reflective of deep uncertainty in American culture, science, and literature throughout the twentieth century and into the first part of the twenty-first around human biological and sexual difference from other species. Making use of outrageous 'natural' footage of sex in the animal world, Oliver advises conservatives not to use the common 'crime against nature' argument, warning "You *don't* want to bring nature into this!"[3] Although claims about nature have been used both to reinforce and contest the social regulation of sexual intimacy, beneath the surface, our relationship to nature and in particular to our own and other species, has often been a source of deep panic characterized by capture, containment, and disavowal.

My purpose in this dissertation is to explore how species—both as an episteme and taxonomical system and as an element of biological life that necessarily exceeds categorization and certitude—has shaped much of the discourse, knowledge, and anxiety circumscribing human sexuality over the past century.[4] My focus is on literature of North America that both acknowledges and responds to the imbrication of sex and species while also producing its own, and rather queer, accounts of biological life and sexual embodiment. The literary works in my study have been celebrated by scholars for their resistance to any singular or fixed sexual identity. My individual chapters deepen these analyses by placing these works in conversation with the sexual scientific writing at time in which they were written in order to better understand the cultural assimilation of science, its epistemological frameworks, and the organizing assumptions around sex and also around species, with which they grapple.

Historiographies of modern sexual subjectivity since Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* (1976) by and large emphasize the relentless inquiry into, and production of, normalcy. Certainly much of the conversation on sexual identity and practices originating in the nineteenth century and extending throughout the twentieth century has been preoccupied by the following questions: What is a *normal* human body? What are *normal* human desires? And, owing to the tendency to conflate normal with natural: What is *natural* human sexual behavior? From 19th-century sexology through the 1930s to the famed Kinsey Reports of the mid-century, to second-wave feminist sex research, and present-day genetics, sociological and scientific understandings of sex have sought to make sense of and place pressure on these questions. Additionally, as Siobhan Somerville's work, *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality* (2000) reveals, scientific understandings of sexual normality are deeply entrenched in the racialization of bodies and the policing of racial boundaries— a finding also true in Ladelle McWhorter's genealogy *Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America* (2009). As these anti-racist historians of sexuality show, Western conceptions of human sexuality are imbued with racism (5).

Yet what remains largely overlooked in examinations of human sexual normality both within the sexual sciences and cultural conversations at large is that the human species itself is a historical and political product that has undergone both definitional transformations and enduring tensions. By and large, the study of sex rests on the unacknowledged assumption that the human species is an ahistorical and ontologically static state of existence. However, these issues are by no means resolved among

biologists, and the "species problem," the question of whether there is a biological reality to species or whether such designations are entirely human constructs, is a vexed issue. Among those who do assert the existence of species, methods for determining species difference remain unsettled in the twenty-first century. For example, there are more than twenty competing species concepts currently practiced today (Kunz, *Do Species Exist?* 5). Darwin himself insisted in *On the Origin of Species* (1859) that since evolution is central to all biological life, species necessarily defy definition and therefore distinctions between them are purely arbitrary (Mayr, *The Growth of Biological Thought* 269).

Although they may be superficial, species boundaries are by no means incidental for as Ladelle McWhorter observes, those who have been historically positioned to manage human populations have held the most power to culturally define both "human" and other "species" ("Enemy of the Species" 75). Such designations have served as the basis upon which sexualized and racialized Others have been marked and marginalized, or, to use the more fitting term for my purposes, dehumanized. It is therefore difficult to be committed to a notion of humanness when it has and continues to shift and operate through constitutive exclusion. Additionally, species taxonomies emerge from culturally embedded assumptions and practices. For example, in *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science* (1993), Londa Schiebinger shows how Linnaeus's choice to call mammals 'mammals' was heavily influenced by popular iconography of women's breasts and the cultural symbol of wet-nursing. [5] In doing so, mammalia as a concept mammalia as a concept drew upon the belief that women, and in particular lower-class women who historically performed the duties of nursing, are closer to nature in ways that

men are not (Schiebinger 56). Therefore, the categories ascribed to nature we commonly use today are infused with middle-class European notions of gender (74). Interrogating the biopolitics of where the human begins and other species end is crucial to understanding the stratification of social life and, in particular, the socio-biological markers of sex and race. My dissertation explores this history from the twentieth century to present day through literary works that have intervened in the human-animal border by representing intimacies between humans and other species in ways that unsettle the bedrock of sexual categorization as it is practiced in their respective decades.

The Species Body after Darwin

My examination begins with Charles Darwin because his 1859 work, *On the Origin of Species*, easily marks the most significant ideological upheaval in how we think of biological life to date. As Elizabeth Grosz explains, "Darwin has introduced indeterminacy into a previously determinable universe, and excess into a previously functional understanding of life. Life exceeds itself, its past, its context, in making itself more and other than its history: life is that which registers and harnesses the impact of contingency…"(*Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power* 40). In introducing a natural history of biological life as indeterminate and, in effect, never providing an answer to the essence of species that his title promised, Darwin not only triggered a crisis of uncertainty among his fellow naturalists and biologists, but dominant Western culture was forced to restrategize its approach to the stratification of social life—of class, race,

gender and sexuality—that had long relied upon static interpretations of nature to justify rigid social hierarchies.

Prior to Darwin, the dominant belief, known as *polygenesis,* that human races emerged from different origins and were essentially separate species, formed the basis for most of the scientific racism practiced in the nineteenth century. Darwin placed pressure on this concept by endorsing *monogenesis*, the idea that all of humankind shares the same origin. The decades that followed were entrenched in debates around these competing concepts. Yet arguably one of Darwin's most radical ideas embedded in monogenesis — that human kinds share a common origin with all biological life and thus are closer to animals than was previously assumed—actually became the foundation for a renewed model of scientific racism. In this case, 'civilization' expressed as white men's 'evolution' and thus distance from other animal species became the new way to reinstate old beliefs about racial difference and sexual depravity. This is the subject of my first Chapter which explores Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* (1936) as an intervention into degeneracy theory, a sexological off-shoot of evolutionary biology that concerned itself with the possibility of regression.

The decades around 1900 are referred to by historians of science as "the eclipse of Darwinism." The term is attributed to prominent historian Peter Bowler in his groundbreaking research on the cultural and scientific history of evolutionary thought.[6] Bowler explains how the social challenges to Darwinism at the turn-of-the century were so pervasive that his theories of evolutionary biology were frequently criticized and largely abandoned. This may strike many as surprising given that the twentieth century

through World War II is recognized for its troubling embrace of social Darwinism, however, such beliefs are largely inconsistent with Darwin's actual writings. For example, it was Herbert Spenser, not Darwin, who was responsible for the popularization of the phrase "survival of the fittest" which Spenser used to justify laissez faire capitalism.[7] Therefore, historians such as Bowler have shown that the most popular and widely disseminated evolutionary ideas in the post-Darwinian century actually contravened Darwin's core concepts. This is true especially of his most unsettling argument that biological life is inherently entangled, innately mutable, and contingent on forces that cannot be wholly anticipated.

Although historians suggest that "the eclipse of Darwinism" ends in the sciences around 1940, cultural discussions around nature and evolution today seem to me to be still very much entrenched in the insidious repackaging of Darwin's ideas.[8] For instance, I am struck by how often students in my classes evoke the "survival of the fittest" argument, of which the popularized meaning is repudiated by modern biologists, in trying to make sense of the so-called natural effects of neoliberalism in the twenty-first century. Additionally, the narratives that species-specific genomics over the past decade have created around their projects frequently rely upon a rhetoric of the human species that is static and ontologically sound despite genomics findings that suggest otherwise. This is the subject of Chapter 4 where I examine the representation of blood lines in Sherman Alexie's *The Toughest Indian in the World* (2000) and Monique Truong's *The Book of Salt* (2003) against the backdrop of the Human Genome Project and its troubled dance with and around biological race. As I will discuss, the literary works in my archive

uncover a historical through-line between the eclipse of Darwinism and our ongoing unease around the contours of the human and its relationship to other species. Together, the genealogy I make visible, which spans nearly seventy years of scientific and literary activity from the supposed end of the eclipse to the first decade of the twenty-first century, shows the extent to which authors continue to contend with how imaginations of biological life, embodiment, and intimacy are produced, policed, and foreclosed in significant ways.

The repressive discourses around race, gender, and sexuality that social Darwinism produced explain why scholars of sexuality, until very recently, rarely look to evolutionary theory as an epistemological, ethical, or political point of departure.[9] Generally speaking, the majority of canonical scholarship in sexuality studies may be traced back to an extension and/or contestation of two major schools of thought that significantly shaped twentieth-century American intellectual history: the historical materialism of Karl Marx and/or the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud. However, both Marx and Freud were enthusiastic readers of Darwin whose writings profoundly influenced their work. This relationship has been extensively documented. For example scholar Paul Heyer examines how Marx viewed his historical materialism and critique of political economy as an extension of Darwin's natural history (*Nature, Human Nature, and Society* 13). Several letters written by Marx attest to this connection. For instance, two years after the publication of *On the Origin,* Marx wrote: "Darwin's work is most important and suits my purposes…" (Marx "Letter to Ferdinand Lassalle").[10] Similarly, Lucille Ritvo's fascinating and extensively researched book *Darwin's Influence on*

Freud: A Tale of Two Sciences (1990) shows the extent to which Freud admired and drew from Darwin, developing his own evolutionary theories as they played out in the psycho-social realm. Furthermore, in his 1917 essay, "A Difficulty in the Path of Psychoanalysis," Freud points to Darwin's revelation that man is not inherently "a being different from animals or superior to them" as a devastating blow to human narcissism (139-41).

Like these major intellectual players, American literary figures at the end of the nineteenth century and the turn of the twentieth were also hugely motivated to engage evolutionary thought, the species problem, and the overlap of sex, race, and taxonomies of biological life. Burt Bender's *The Descent of Love: Darwin and the Theory of Sexual Selection in American Fiction, 1871-1926* (1996) and *Evolution and "the Sex Problem": American Narratives During the Eclipse of Darwinism* (2004) and Michael Lundblad's *The Birth of the Jungle: Animality in Progressive Era U.S. Literature and Culture* (2013) all attest to the role that early twentieth-century American authors had in negotiating the ideological and cultural upheaval of evolutionary biology as it related to sex and race. My dissertation extends and deepens this examination into the late modernist and contemporary period. As each of my chapters shows, the works of notable North American authors--namely Djuna Barnes, Edward Albee, Marian Engel, Sherman Alexie, and Monique Truong--make use of the mutability and ontological openness of species life as a method of challenging the sexual and racial categorization in popularized accounts of science.

Twentieth-century sexual science appropriated biology in a way that captured and contained nature for the purposes of propagating sexual and racial categorization. As Chapter 1 explores, theories of speciation were fundamental to sexological formulations of degeneracy from the late nineteenth century through the 1930s and remained an important backdrop to the sexological renaissance of Alfred Kinsey in the 1940-50s, the subject of Chapter 2. This history is precisely what Michel Foucault describes in his famed quote: "the homosexual was now a species" (*The History of Sexuality Vol. 1* 43). As he explains, the proliferation of newly defined sexual identities by sexologists was akin to the naturalist producing new species; the dissemination of such categories involved strewing them with a reality and creating a "natural order" that could be then incorporated into the individual (44).

Scholars of sexuality have made much of this idea but without always unpacking the *species* of Foucault's dictum with as much rigor as the term, *homosexual*. Yet this is crucial according to the historical account of "the species body" that Foucault provides. As he explains in his lecture courses a year after completing the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*: "…the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species become the object of a political strategy, a general strategy of power…modern Western societies took on board the fundamental biological fact that human beings are a species. This is what I have called biopower" (*Security, Territory, Population* 1). Foucault's argument here and elsewhere in *The History of Sexuality* that the species body is the very platform from which modern biopower is worked grounds my examination. For as soon as bodies are demarcated according to species, he explains:

"certain sexual acts then were dangerous to the whole of society: that of individuals, generations, the species itself" (*History of Sexuality* 54). Following Foucault, I use "the species body" to name how biological life is annexed as a political technique enabling sexual and racial hierarchies constructed from species difference to gain discursive traction, thus regulating which bodies are permitted to come into contact with another and under what conditions. Therefore, the normalization of some forms of embodied experiences at the expense of others requires the "human species" to remain an unchallenged concept. Put another way, the narrow parameters drawn around human embodiment define who ought to do what and with whom, lest the tidiness of species distinctions and their reproductive future be jeopardized.

Although the human-animal border is not always straightforward in leading theories of sexuality, it is significantly complex in the works of late modernist and contemporary authors. The authors in my archive trouble the boundaries erected between and around species. More specifically, I examine a fascinating recurrence in the literature of this period that specialists of sexuality and race have largely overlooked: intimate acts between humans and nonhuman animals.

Interspecies Intimacies: Where Queer and Species Meet

Djuna Barnes's novel *Nightwood* (1936) ends with the central figure down on all fours with her lesbian lover's dog. Edward Albee's drama *The Zoo Story* (1958) begins with a queer bohemian who has been cruising the zoo, a theme that is made more explicit

in Albee's 2002 play, *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?,* which follows the fallout after a man admits to his family that he is having an affair with a goat. In the feminist romance *Bear* (1976) by Marian Engel, a historian embarks on a journey to the northern wilderness where she develops a sexual companionship with the ursine of its title. The titular story of Sherman Alexie's *The Toughest Indian in the World* (2000) explores how its Spokane narrator becomes salmon embodied after sleeping with another indigenous man, and lastly, Monique Truong's *The Book of Salt* (2003) examines the life of a gay Vietnamese cook relegated to colonial kitchens who mixes his blood with that of pigeons. The reappearance of physical intimacies between humans and other species throughout the late modernist and contemporary period is striking. That such moments coincide with literary representations of queer bodies and practices encourages me to look more deeply into how authors engage species life in queer ways and toward queer effects. These authors stand out because their works belie the tendency to represent queerness in contemporary writing as a flight from nature or contestation of it. Rather, they embrace the suppleness of biological life and the ontological questions that it raises.

As each of my four chapters explores, there is a pattern in the scholarship on these works to treat the nonhuman animals as metaphors or symbols for something else all too human. For example, in Chapter 3, I discuss how the bear of Engel's novella has been frequently read as a symbol of the protagonist's personal liberation from her bad relationships with human men. From this perspective, the hero of this heroine's story, the bear, is emptied of his materiality and repackaged to fit, even in the most well-intentioned feminist critiques, a model of subjectivity that re-centers the human (male) body and the

social orders that rely upon it as a given. This is one way of understanding Susan McHugh's claim that "textual animals locate biopolitical knowledges as following from acts of reading" ("Literary Animal Agents" 488). How we read the presence of others species in fiction says a lot about the parameters built into and around our interpretive and knowledge-making frameworks particularly as they concern how we make sense of ourselves in relationship to others in the world.

My approach to these texts troubles the tendency to read other species from a humanist lens – a lens that assumes the boundaries between species to be unproblematic, natural, and not within the scope of an author's challenge to normative sexuality. In order to place pressure on universalizing and normalizing accounts of the human, my approach to the interspecies intimacies that reappear in contemporary literature is informed by the intersections of queer theory, feminist science studies, and animal studies. In particular, I explore the generative insight made possible by the meeting of queer and species—a juncture that is encouraged and enabled by the literature itself.

I turn to queer theory because of its rich history of contesting the seemingly natural status of certain bodies over others as well as the epistemological assumptions and normalizing apparatuses embedded in much of the cultural, philosophical, and scientific discourses surrounding social and embodied difference. Queer theory has recalibrated many categories of difference with and alongside gender and sexuality including, but not limited to, race, nationality, and disability. It is also important to note that queer approaches are deeply indebted to feminist critiques of essentialized gender from which they emerged and in the history and methods of queer thinking that I engage,

queer feminisms of color are especially foundational. For example, published in the inceptive stages of queer theory, queer Chicana feminist Gloria Anzaldúa's work *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) condemns the "unnatural boundaries" used to demarcate bodies thus separating "*us* from *them"* by exploring how individuals inhabit the "vague and undetermined" places she names *borderlands* (25). Anzaldúa was one of the first figures to articulate a politics around seeing the borders of identity (of gender, sexuality, race, nationality, and language) in terms of their capacity to be crossed and/or inhabited. In my discussion of bloodlines and blood crossings in Chapter 4, I explore how her thinking extends to the limited articulations of species life.

Despite early interest in the unnatural borders imposed on a natural world, queer theory throughout the nineties and until quite recently has been remarkably hesitant to engage nature. Indeed, the vast majority of queer scholarship, adopting a social constructionist approach to embodied life, has almost exclusively fashioned itself as diametrically opposed to the natural and the biological. One of the most influential figures in queer studies during its rise in the 1990s, Judith Butler, is often associated with this line of thinking due to her groundbreaking critique of biological sex in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) and *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (1993). For Butler, the assumption that binary sex is a natural biological effect is suggestive of how deeply its discursive production is concealed. Butler locates this concealment in what she calls performativity, the ritualized production, characterized by repetition and constraint, of bodily norms and their discursive significations (*Bodies that Matter* 95). Yet in focusing so much on

representational systems, much of the scholarship on performativity overdetermines their significance in ways that fall short of examining the actual bodies around which such representations are relentlessly produced and honed. Feminist historian of science Karen Barad seeks to remedy this blind spot in her essay,"Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter" (2003). Barad contends: "Performativity, properly construed, is not an invitation to turn everything (including material bodies) into words; on the contrary, performativity is precisely a contestation of the excessive power granted to language to determine what is real" (802). On the one hand, I adopt "queering" in the title of this dissertation to describe how the literature in my study historicizes and destabilizes the species body as a representational system. Yet I also follow Barad's insight by employing a queer approach that excavates from this newly opened space the body as a legitimate source of knowledge into the ontological contingency of biological life.

In her observation that "the epistemological gets bounced back and forth, but nothing more is seen," Barad shows how queer theory has often failed to adequately address questions of ontology and materiality that are so central to embodied experience (803). This is in part due to modernity's inclination toward what Stephen White terms "strong ontology" which carries with it presumptive certainty about the way the world is, including what human nature is (*Sustaining Affirmation* 6). In the context of my project, this describes the unquestioned assumption that species designations, and by extension, sexual and racial distinctions, exist matter-of-factly. The cost of these historical attitudes has been seen as outweighing the benefits of exploring what might indeed exist in the

world. Nevertheless, while epistemologies construct and delimit our ontological considerations, ontological commitments, whether explored or not, underlie much of our discussions of identity and history (White 4).

Werner Kuntz provides an example of how such suppositions operate in his book *Do Species Exist*? *Principles of Taxonomic Classification* (2012). Kuntz addresses the ontological question of his title by way of analogy: "Colors are not sharply delimited from each other; blue merges rather smoothly into green, but hardly anyone would draw on the conclusion that colors do not exist" (12). However, following the texts in my archive, I am interested in what happens to this model of existence when we delve into the evolutionary framework that Darwin asked his fellow naturalists to consider. In *On the Origin of Species* (1859), Darwin claims not only that "no clear distinction has been, or can be, drawn between species," but more importantly that species are always ever-changing (469). He goes on to state:

> Why, it may be asked, have all the most eminent living naturalists and geologists rejected this view of the mutability of species?...Whoever is led to believe that species are mutable will do good service by conscientiously expressing his conviction; for only thus can the load of prejudice by which this subject is overwhelmed be removed. (469-470)

From this understanding, species are much more like colors in a kaleidoscope, transforming in accordance to their orientations, locations, and relations to other species. These inevitable fluctuations, which resist absolute containment, are what make strange encounters between humans and other animals, as well as between genders and races, so

threatening. Additionally, if species are ontologically contingent and conditional, then the connected terms of biological sex and race begin to look similarly prismatic. Therefore, when the protagonist of Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story* suggests that one might understand people by beginning "WITH ANIMALS" whom he describes as "all colors reflecting on the oil-wet streets" (34) and Sherman Alexie's character from *The Toughest Indian in the World* wishes for others to "admit the existence of the sky, let alone the possibility that the salmon be the stars" (22), I view both authors as providing alternative imaginings of species life that are characterized by their ontological openness.

I would also add that it is expressly because ontology has fallen largely within the domain of the sciences and the cultural capital they enjoy that queer theorists ought not to simply oppose the terms of the discussion, but taking a cue from the authors in my study, as well as feminist science scholars such as Karen Barad, Elizabeth Grosz, and Donna Haraway (all of whom deeply inform this project), to grapple with ontology in new and generative ways. Again, this is precisely what the literary works in my study achieve; not only do they intervene in the epistemological frameworks through which popularized science makes sense of sex, race, and species, but they explore how bodies materialize beyond such representations. As I discuss in the next section on the organization of the chapters, each author does do so by utilizing the very material of bodies: sight, speech, and blood in ways that break open a fixed ontology of the human species.

In echoing Barad's concerns, another feminist science scholar, Stacy Alaimo, author of *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (2010) laments that "Much of queer theory has bracketed, expelled, or distanced the volatile categories of

nature and the natural, situating queer desire within an entirely social, and very human, habitat" ("Eluding Capture" 51). There are, however, an increasing number of exceptions to this rule, for example, Bruce Bagemihl's *Biological Exuberance: Animal Homosexuality and Natural Diversity* (1999), Joan Roughgarden's *Evolution's Rainbow: Diversity, Gender, and Sexuality in Nature and People* (2004), the recent collections, *Queering the Non/Human* (2008) and *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, and Desire* (2010), and Nicole Seymour's *Strange Natures: Futurity, Empathy, and the Queer Ecological Imagination* (2013). Writing from the biological sciences, the earlier works noted here tend to be on the peripheries of the literature included in queer canons and taught in queer studies classes and, as Alaimo suggests, for good reason. Although Bagemihl's and Roughgarden's exhaustive research into the sexual and gender diversity in the animal world effectively dismantles the normative hetero-biology that has long claimed objectivity and neutrality in accounts of nature, they face criticism for imposing human sexual categories onto other species, a method that I, too, find problematic.[11] However, the latter works listed above, which blend a scientific and cultural studies approach to nature, offer exciting new insight into how biological life is structured as either straight, or disavowed as debased, as well as how queer theory might abandon its reputation as anti-nature. This exciting body of work points to a new direction for queer scholarship that doesn't shy away from the representational challenges of engaging biological life. Moreover, it is representative of increasing interest in the nonhuman within the humanities. The literature in my study serves as a valuable resource and exemplifies how literary work on these issues precedes the nonhuman turn.

As I have suggested, it is precisely because biological life is inherently unstable that the boundaries delineating and circumscribing bodies must be relentlessly policed. This is what Elizabeth Grosz means when she explains: "There is an instability at the very heart of sex and bodies, the fact that the body is what it is capable of doing, and what any body is capable of doing is well beyond the tolerance of any given culture" ("Experimental Desire" 199). It is important to note that suggesting that bodies are *naturally* queer does not mean globalizing queerness as it operates socially and therefore ignoring how some bodies, particularly bodies of color and bodies that do not conform to sexual, gendered, and able-bodied norms, are marginalized in specific ways with real and material repercussions. On the contrary, it enables an account of how marginalization occurs at the very level of categorizing life especially when some are granted membership as fully "human" at the expense of others. The literary works that I explore highlight the capacity of bodies to interact untethered from species taxonomies and cultural taboo, thus expressing Anzaldúa's affirmation that the lines dividing bodies has the potential to "shrink with intimacy" (*Borderlands* 19).

Central to my inquiry is the belief that representations of physical intimacy have the potential to disrupt the readerly impulse to demarcate bodies and their experiences according to pre-determined taxonomies. These disruptions most readily reshape how we conceptualize sex and race when other species are enfolded into the representation. I use the term *interspecies* to name the kind of interventions that the authors in my study make in their fiction. This term, which develops out of Julie Livingston and Jasbir Puar's use in a co-authored essay to refer to the relationships "between different forms of biosocial life

and their political effects," is especially useful to my examination of the social and biological categorization of identity. ("Interspecies" 3). When the biological contours of the human are overdetermined, so too are the sexual and racial categories which rely on them as social markers for who and which acts count as natural, acceptable, and for the good of the species. Lingering at the threshold of species distinction, *interspecies intimacies* celebrate what Livingston and Puar have described as the fuzziness of the borders *between* species and the processes that rework biological taxonomies, redeploying them for new ends (3). The word "between" is especially generative because it acknowledges that there are differing access points and gradations of embodied experience. 'Between' represents both a departure from a given point and a going to, or toward, something or somewhere else. Physical intimacies engender this type of movement between bodies, and the authors in my archive draw their readers into the contact zones between humans and other species in their depictions of intimate acts.[12]

Lastly, this dissertation owes much to the emergent field of animal studies that feminist scientists, most notably, Donna Haraway, have helped to shape. Beginning with her groundbreaking essay, "A Cyborg Manifesto" (1985), and culminating in works like *The Companion Species Manifesto* (2003) and *When Species Meet* (2008), Haraway's wide-ranging body of work on monkeys, apes, oncomice, and dogs from the perspectives of biology, technology, ecology, philosophy, literature, and most recently, canine agility training, is representative of the expansiveness of animal studies which draws from multiple disciplines and insists upon intersectional analyses. Simply put, animal studies is

a cross-disciplinary approach to rethinking the fraught categories of "human" and "animal" from diverse social, scientific, textual, and historical vantage points.

A terse outline of the field, which is still developing, would include animal rights activism such as Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* (1975), Carol J. Adams's *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (1990), and Martha Nussbaum and Cass Sustein's edited collection, *Animal Rights* (2004) all of which emphasize the ethical and legal questions surrounding animal welfare in relationship to human struggles and the exploitation of vulnerable populations. Continental philosophy, beginning with Georges Bataille's posthumous work *Theory of Religion* (1973), has transformed the conversation through its engagement of what Jacques Derrida called "the question of the animal" in his widely cited essay "The Animal that Therefore I Am" (2002), its follow-up "And Say the Animal Responded?," as well as Giorgio Agamben's *The Open: Man and Animal* (2004). These thinkers, adopting a more theoretical approach than does the animal rights crowd, explore the philosophical themes of sameness and difference in their arguments that western consciousness is marked by a systemic disavowal of the animal.

Drawing from both animal rights (also known as critical animal studies) and continental philosophy, American scholar Cary Wolfe has been a major figure in expanding the field within literary and cultural studies particularly with his 2003 books *Animal Rites: American Culture, The Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* and *Zoontologies The Question of the Animal.* Wolfe frequently places pressure on these areas of study arguing that: "debates in the humanities and social sciences between well-intentioned critics of racism, (hetero)sexism, classism and all other-isms that are the

stock-in-trade of cultural studies almost always remain locked within an unexamined framework of speciesism" (*Animal Rites* 1). For Wolfe, the "humanist discourse of speciesism" represents the ritualized discrimination and violence against other living beings based solely on a generic characteristic, species, which he claims is made available to countenance violence against marginalized human subjects (8). It makes sense then that Wolfe's framework of the discourse of speciesism is extremely influential to my examination of how species, in its popular scientific formulations, has been used to mark sexualized and racialized embodiment throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Following suit, other literary and cultural critics have explored gender, sexuality, race, disability, and colonialism in relation to animality, for example Neel Ahuja in "Postcolonial Critique of a Multispecies World" (2009) and Susan McHugh in in *Animal Stories, Narrating Across Species Lines* (2011). The work of both authors appeared in the 2009 *PMLA* special issue on animal studies. It was in this state-of-the field issue that Michael Lundblad proposed in his article, "From Animal to Animality Studies," that a distinction can be made between critical animal studies work that prioritizes advocacy for other animals and a cultural history of animality of concern to human cultural studies. As this incomplete tour of the field reveals, animal studies is a growing discipline that connects to and places pressure on the humanities as well as the sciences.

My dissertation draws broadly from the seminal texts and thinkers of animal studies. Although the frame of my inquiry does not allow for an in-depth discussion of animality in its capacious renderings in religion, law, and social practice, I mention

examples of these throughout the dissertation. However, my focus on *species*, which is grounded specifically in twentieth- and twenty-first century sexual science and its cultural consumption, enables me to pay more detailed attention to biological assumptions about, and literary queerings of, the human-animal divide and its related categories of sex and race.

Organization of Chapters

Each chapter in my dissertation attempts to bridge the gaps between queer theory, feminist science studies, and animal studies, however the connections between literary history and the history of science organize their sequence. Beginning with late modernism (to set the stage for contemporary writing) and moving through to post-war drama, feminist literary production, and queer of color fiction, I examine how selected works from this time period query the "human" as a stable category, thus intervening in the dominant conversations on sex and race of their respective decades. These conversations include degeneracy theory in the sexual sciences at the turn of the century, the sexological renaissance of Alfred Kinsey, feminist sex research in the 1970s, and global genomics and genographic studies in the twenty-first century. Because the authors explored here use form as a means to redeploy the very conceptual and material tools that have been used to cement species hierarchies such as sight, speech, and blood, I pay special attention to each author's formal techniques, for example the visual aesthetic deployed by Djuna Barnes and the spoken monologue that is central to Edward Albee's

plays. Therefore, each chapter engages not only the scientific intervention at stake, but the author's attempts to negotiate the literary in ways that are resistant to human exceptionalism.

As I have already mentioned, the final scene of Djuna Barnes's novel *Nightwood* (1936) visualizes its enigmatic character, Robin, going down on all fours with a dog. This ending has long puzzled readers as it is unclear from the visual structure of the scene, and *Nightwood*'s visual schema in general, how to categorize this encounter. This is significant given that one of the primary ways that human distance from other animals has been conceived is through the visual. In Chapter 1: The Specter of Species in Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*, I explore the extent to which degeneracy theory, an offshoot of evolutionary biology within the sexual sciences, is best represented by Freud's insight that the human body's rise from four feet to two accompanied sight as the primary erotic register as opposed to other bodily sensorium deemed animalistic and thus, pathological. Dominant ways of seeing bodies shape the intimate possibilities that they are afforded. *Nightwood* challenges the ways we visualize species by prompting readers to redirect their sights downward, both figuratively and literally, toward intimacies between the two. I suggest that Barnes excavates Darwin's model of species as a *specter* that haunts twentieth-century desires to delineate bodies from one another and responds by producing interspecies intimacies as a *spectacle.* Additionally, this chapter explores how Barnes's novel lays the groundwork for the interventions made by more contemporary authors.

The acquisition of a consistent and discernible language has often been used as a

marker for cementing species hierarchies as well as hierarchies between humans. Drama, more than other literary forms, situates the body as linguistic; the centrality of dialogue in drama necessitates a body that speaks. This is the subject of Chapter 2: Speaking of Species in Postwar Drama. Published in the wake of the Kinsey Reports (1948, 1953), Edward Albee's drama *The Zoo Story* (1958) intervenes in the spoken confessional of the sexological renaissance by making strange encounters with nonhuman animals central to the monologues on sex that the protagonist, Jerry, performs. Although both Kinsey's and Albee's works draw attention to taboos around sexual acts, Jerry speaks in a way that defies the logical categorization of bodies underpinning Kinsey's studies. Moreover, Jerry asks that his listener reexamine the scene of the zoo where animals are organized according to heteronormative couplings.

Building on the visual and the linguistic concerns explored in the first two chapters, Chapter 3: Romancing and Revising Species in Marian Engel's *Bear* turns to the revisionist fiction of the 1976 novella. Following the relationship between the heroine, a historian named Lou, and the hero, a partially domesticated ursine, *Bear* offers a postmodern play on the romance novel, pornography, and animal fables. Engel revises popular and literary representations of women's sexuality from within the conventions of these genres. In particular, the novella contributes to the feminist challenges to the myth of the vaginal orgasm developed in the sex research of Shere Hite and Anne Koedt by examining the ways in which women's pleasure has been foreclosed in visual culture and written out of canonical literature. *Bear* reveals how historical consciousness, which is viewed as evidence of higher order thinking in humans, has been used to erase the

complexity of embodiment when it comes to women and other animals. Lou's career as an archivist enables her to revise the historical tendency to read nonhuman animals as desexualized or to map the sexual bodies of women and animals in terms of hetero-reproductive acts.

In Chapter 4: Bleeding over Species Lines in Queer of Color Fiction, I turn my attention to intersection of species distinctions and bloodlines fleshed out in Sherman Alexie's short stories in *The Toughest Indian in the World* (2000) and Monique Truong's novel *The Book of Salt* (2003). Blood possesses the capacity to spill over the divisions marking bodies; once blood mixes, it cannot be unmixed, and it is a medium not exclusively human that can spill in bodies, between bodies, and across species. In spite of this, blood has been articulated by scientific and legal institutions in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries to fix racial bodies and to regulate sexual acts. The contradictions between "one-drop" rules used against biracial populations and blood quantum laws used to determine land rights for American Indians reveal the extent to which blood has been written and re-written in the U.S. context. Alexie and Truong's fictions complicate anxieties around blood and miscegenation from the perspective of queer of color characters. Both works enact a literal bleeding over species lines. This is significant given that at the turn of the millennium gains in genetic science have generated all too familiar concerns about biological reductionism. This final chapter traces a historical through-line between eugenics of the beginning of the twentieth century and recent tensions in the twenty-first around biological reductionism prompted by the Human Genome Project and similar genomics studies. I explore how *The Toughest Indian in the World* and *The Book*

of Salt probe the limits of biological taxonomies in a moment when the "human" appears to be undergoing a radical retailoring yet remains closely mended to the politics of racism, colonialism, and heterosexism.

Overall, I see the interspecies intimacies in the literature I explore anticipating and achieving the desired effects outlined in other modes of scholarship, in particular posthumanism and new materialisms. My conclusion explores the stakes of these fields, whose scope extends beyond the framework of my individual chapters; however, I argue that literature in my study may serve as a valuable resource for them. Additionally, I probe how queer theory might be strengthened by engagement with the questions that these texts raise. My adoption of posthumanism develops from Cary Wolfe's formulation which emphasizes a re-thinking of human experience and embodiment by recontextualizing both in terms of the entire sensorium of other living beings and our capacity to interact in a multispecies world (*What is Posthumanism* xxv). As Wolfe suggests, refusing to take *Homo sapiens* as a category for granted necessarily demands a *greater* specificity for how we account for bodies. Similarly, the emergent field of new materialisms (also known as feminist materialisms) underscores how nonhuman matter plays a crucial role in our everyday practices and the processes of materialization. Like posthumanism, new materialisms refuses to cement the nature-culture dichotomies in its exploration of how matter shapes the political. Lastly, my conclusion argues that de-centering the human as the organizing principle in both the humanities and the sciences is a life-affirming project. It probes and delights in without needing to control what American Buddhist nun Pema Chödrön frequently calls in her teachings, "the

fundamental groundlessness of being human" (*Living Beautifully with Uncertainty and Change* 4). Though it may sound lofty, I believe that recognizing biological life in this way has the potential to decrease our intolerance for its inherent instability and change so that we might adopt more ethical, holistic, and compassionate approaches to ourselves and to others in the world. Above all else, these are the stakes of the literary interventions explored in this dissertation.

Chapter 1

The Specter of Species in Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*

Why do we so dread to think of our species as a species? Can it be that we are afraid of what we may find?

—John Steinbeck, *The Log from the Sea of Cortez*

God, children know something they can't tell; they like Red Riding Hood and the wolf in bed!

—Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood*

For many critics such as Dianne Chisholm, "the art of Djuna Barnes both attracts and eludes the censor" ("Obscene Modernism" 170). Indeed, Barnes's most well-known work, *Nightwood* (1936) was one of the first American novels of the twentieth century to depict lesbian desire in the wake of a highly publicized obscenity trial involving English novelist Radclyffe Hall's lesbian content in *The Well of Loneliness* (1928). Although T.S. Eliot, Barnes's editor at Faber and Faber, elected to soften some of her word choices, a central plot point of *Nightwood*—that the women protagonists, Nora Flood and Robin Vote, are lovers—evaded censorship. But when Barnes's novel was being translated for sale in France a decade later, Barnes was asked if she would agree to remove the last two pages. Arguably, the most stirring moment of *Nightwood* occurs in the final scene when

Robin is depicted at the altar of a small church down on all fours with her lover's dog. In his biography *Djuna,* Andrew Field tells of how publishers feared that the reading public "would be offended at the mere idea of a girl and a dog behaving in that manner in a church" (220). Barnes herself recognized this much when reflecting on the final scene in correspondence with her agent, she remarked: "The look of horror that will be seen on all public faces, if the book ever does get into print." (Plumb, ed. "Introduction" *Nightwood: The Original Version xxi*).[13] Whereas the homosexuality that circulates Barnes's novel may have caused the censor to pause, obscenity, so it seems, was most readily visible in the curious scene of intimacy between a woman and a dog.[14]

Kathryn Bond Stockton recently remarked that: "any reader of *Nightwood* I have known still wants to know what to do with the dog" (*The Queer Child* 103). Stockton's observation made roughly seventy years after the novel's publication suggests that this scene still produces widespread uncertainty. Indeed, in the scholarship on *Nightwood*, few can decide on exactly how to define this enigmatic exchange between species. This chapter does not seek to produce an answer to that question; on the contrary, I argue that the very potency of Barnes's interspecies intimacy rests in its enduring indeterminacy. Rather, I am motivated to understand this scene through another set of considerations. First, I place this representation alongside the backdrop of a post-Darwinian moment wherein both species difference and sexual desire become newly stratified in ways that are still recognizable today. Following the abundance of scholarship that claims *Nightwood* is a deliberate response to Barnes's contemporaries in the sexual sciences, known as sexology, I locate within the novel's commentary an acute interest in the

distinctions between humans and other species as the bedrock of sexual categorization. Secondly, I place this cryptic picture of Robin and the dog, privileged as the final moment of the story, in context with the rest of novel's content and its formal techniques, in particular, its visual schema. As I show, the use of visual language in *Nightwood* serves as an alternative model to the visual categorization of the sexed body favored by sexology. Lastly, I aim to show how this moment in literary history serves as a productive starting point for understanding more recent challenges to the human-animal border as they reappear throughout literature of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Thus, I see Barnes's novel and its final moments as the beginning, or gateway text, of a genealogy of contemporary interspecies intimacies.

As I discuss in the introduction, I use the term *interspecies intimacies* to name literary topoi that reappear in contemporary writing wherein authors represent physical contact and affective exchanges between humans and other animals in ways that disrupt the stratification of biological life. Representing intimacies at the human-animal border belies the overdetermination of the 'human' as the basis upon which social constructions of normalcy and pathology are relentlessly inscribed. For entrenched in the emphatic questions that so preoccupied the first half of twentieth century, 'What is a normal human body?' and 'What is normal human behavior?' is the presumption that the human itself is an ahistorical and ontologically static state of being.

The inclination to empty the human species from its historical and ontological precarity is remarkable given that the twentieth century inherited from Charles Darwin a detailed history of species mutability. However, as natural historian Peter Bowler reveals

in *The Eclipse of Darwinism* (1983) and *The Non-Darwinian Revolution: Reinterpreting a Historical Myth* (1988), Darwin's theories produced such deep anxiety over the sustainability of humanism and the social orders it upheld, that the crux of his most radical concept —that species are innately fluid— was chiefly ignored and/or overtly reinterpreted not only in its immediate reception, but in the century that followed.[15] As Elizabeth Grosz contends, Darwin "introduced indeterminacy into a previously determinable universe" (*Time Travels* 37).[16] The unease this produced explains why and how social hierarchies were strengthened in the wake of Darwinism.[17] The credibility of *Polygeism,* the belief that people of different races were of different origins and thus different "species" was displaced by Darwin's embrace of *monogenesis,* which posited not only that all humans shared the same origin, but so too did other forms of biological life. This reconceptualization suggested not only that there was no essential difference between human ethnic groups, but also that humans were much closer to other animals than was previously thought (Young, *Colonial Desire* 12).[18] To reconcile this ideological shift, evolutionary 'progress,' became newly defined through man's distance from its animal origins and was used to re-ascribe value to particular genders, races, and classes (Rohman *Stalking the Subject* 22). Moreover, *degeneracy theory* emerged as an offshoot of evolutionary biology wherein entire populations of people (mostly non-whites, homosexuals, prostitutes, and the mentally ill) were effectively de-humanized and in some cases, de-sexualized through sterilization programs as they were seen as evidence of regression, the belief that the evolutionary process could be reversed (Somerville "Introduction to Race" 202).

Nightwood's emergence within this climate of scientific dehumanization is what makes its final scene so compelling.[19] Whereas many of her fellow modernists responded to the ideological upheaval of evolutionary biology by overstating and/or oversimplifying the human-animal divide, Barnes, as Carrie Rohman puts it, "provides the most complex and atypical portrait of animality in modernist literature" (*Stalking* 26).[20] In my own thinking, what makes this portrait so spectacular is that it unsettles any clear idea of where the animal body ends and the human body begins. Exploring how *Nightwood,* published on the periphery of evolutionary theory and its subsequent capture, achieves this effect enables a better understanding of interventions made by contemporary authors during more subtle shifts in the cultural remaking of 'the human.'

In many ways, *Nightwood* stymies the eclipse of Darwinism that characterized the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As such, the novel is most widely recognized for its repartee with sexology. A radical new discipline that emerged on the heels of evolutionary biology and lasted through the 1930s (before being revitalized by Alfred Kinsey), sexology set out to better understand sexual behavior in the human species and did so by classifying sexual acts as well as the bodies and desires to whom they belonged. Generally speaking, the architects of sexology, such as Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis, and Magnus Hirshfield, aimed to amass knowledge on sexual behavior through biology, medicine, and population science therefore displacing the jurisdiction of religion which had long viewed sexual matters through the lens of sin (Bland & Doan, *Sexology Uncensored* 2). Likewise, they were invested in removing decisions about so-called sexual perversions from the courts and the law. Taking on the

full-scale project of classifying the diverse facets of sexuality, sexologists, on the one hand, demystified sexual behaviors that were traditionally considered sinful. On the other hand, the proliferation of sexual labels spurred by sexology —terms still in use today such as homosexual, pervert, sadist, masochist, and transvestite— effectively normalized some bodies, behaviors, and desires at the expense of others which were consequently placed under the realm of pathology. Herein lies Michel Foucault's famed 'repressive hypothesis' that as scientific discourse on sexuality expanded, the more circumscribed individuals became by the language of normal and abnormal, natural and unnatural, uniformity and perversion (*The History of Sexuality, Volume 1* 15-36). As I have suggested and will explore in more detail, these ways of organizing bodies and behaviors require that contours of the human species be narrowly defined. Degeneracy theory, a major area of some sexological study of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, is evidence of how finely the lines between human and pre-human were drawn.

In *Sexology Uncensored* (1998), editors Lucy Bland and Laura Doan show that the historiography of sexology has cast the sexual sciences as either progressive or repressive (3). More specifically, they observe that prior to the 1970s, sexology enjoyed a reputation as a revolutionary and liberating field of research, but that new insight ushered in by feminist, gay, and Foucauldian analyses overwhelmingly amended sexology as a tool of oppression (3).[21] Yet the relationship between sexologists and modernist authors provides a more complex picture to this story. Modernist literature both disseminated sexological concepts, largely inaccessible to the reading public due to obscenity laws, and also served, as Debra Moddelmog puts it: "as a crucial site of revision and resistance to

its categories and conclusions" ("Modernism and Sexology" 268). *Nightwood* exemplifies this double move. For example, one of the central voices of Barnes's novel belongs to Doctor Matthew O'Connor, a transvestite gynecologist who solicits sexual confessions and proffers protracted diagnoses that are unceasingly opaque. Several scholars have observed that the representation of the Doctor functions throughout the novel as a parody of sexology.[22] Nonetheless, *Nightwood* frequently relies upon the Doctor's voice for narration and, as a result, the themes of homosexual desire, inversion, and transvestitism that were the central objects of study in sexology circulate the story. In keeping with the sexual sciences, the descriptions of gendered and sexual *embodiment* in *Nightwood* are incredibly detailed and specific. However, it is precisely this specificity that confounds sexological formulations of gender and sexual *identity* in the novel.

Barnes's description of an acrobat and "gentleman of quality" named Frau Mann (Mrs. Man) is reflective of her interest in how bodies exceed gender categories. The narration reads:

> In her face was the tense expression of an organism surviving in an alien element. She seemed to have a skin that was the pattern of her costume: a bodice of lozenges, red and yellow, low in the back and ruffled over and under the arms…the bulge in the groin where she took the bar, one foot caught in the flex of the calf, was as solid, specialized and polished as oak. The stuff of the tights was no longer a covering, it was herself; the span of the tightly stitched crotch was so much her own flesh that she was as unsexed as a doll. (*Nightwood* 16)

The set of signs (face, skin, bulge, groin, calf, crotch, and flesh) that sexology systematically organized to signify biological sex and gender identity collapse in this description of Frau Mann. *Nightwood*'s ongoing fascination with bodies and the sexual desires they exhibit suggests that like sexology, Barnes sought to derive meaning from sex. However, by effectively "unsexing" Frau Mann, the novel contests the ways in which sexologists read, interpreted, and ascribed significance to the body. In other words, the novel shares sexology's fascinations with biology, but repudiates its epistemologies. When Barnes's friend, writer, and agent, Emily Coleman pitched the novel to T.S. Eliot, she declared: "Does not the description of the circus woman…make you know something that you did not before?" (Plumb, *xxi*).[23] This is what makes *Nightwood* one of the most striking interventions into scientific discourse of the modernist period. Like Edward Albee, Marian Engel, Monique Truong, and Sherman Alexie (contemporary authors whose works I explore in the subsequent chapters), *Nightwood* is propelled by its enchantment with bodies and their relations, but it is purposefully untethered from, and thus in contestation with, the taxonomies used to define them.

For Barnes, Frau Mann's costume, its patterns, colors, and ruffles, the polished oak of the bar, and the stitching in her tights are crucial to understanding the shaping of her form. Indeed, the narration adds that: "something of the bar was in her wrists, the tan bark in her walk" (15). One could read Barnes's admixture of the inorganic and organic, the synthetic and the biological as a method of confusing the very binaries of unnatural and natural that structured the sexual sciences. Such an interpretation might also suggest that *Nightwood* exhibits the modernist tendency to juxtapose binaries toward a

postmodern effect of their undoing. Yet from the vantage point that *Nightwood* arouses, Barnes appears to be less interested in exposing the "natural" as artifice and instead, motivated to take up Darwin's invitation to reengage life and the living through its ontological openness (Grosz, *Time Travels* 37). In other words, Barnes's aesthetic explores the capacity for bodies to be shaped, formed, displaced, and propelled by other forms of life, objects, and matter that have traditionally been casted outside the realm of influence on the human. From the description of Frau Mann, Barnes explores what happens to bodies in the zones of contact between the human and the nonhuman. The formal techniques that *Nightwood* utilizes to bring readers into this space of activity contribute to the novel's reputation as a notoriously difficult and eccentric text. Adding to this, scholars have suggested that the novel cannot be contained by the conventions of its literary periodization.

Carolyn Allen is one of many authors who identify Djuna Barnes as standing a part from her fellow modernists.[24] In her book *Following Djuna* (1996), Allen positions *Nightwood* against *The Well of Loneliness,* claiming that whereas Radclyffe Hall's realist portrait of sexual inversion is overly focused on a "singular identity" and "unified subjectivity," Barnes's nonlinearity paves way for more "dyadic" relations (13).[25] Identifying a "Barnesian tradition," Allen argues that *Nightwood* has influenced the dynamic shape that eroticism and intimacy take in contemporary lesbian fiction (14). Therefore, she claims that: "reading directions lead back to Barnes as well as forward from her" (14).

In my own 'following' of Djuna Barnes in the five years of researching and composing this chapter, I have had difficulty keeping pace with the explosion of new scholarship that revisits her life's work. Renewed attention to Barnes has coincided, in particular, with the growing interest in queer approaches to modernism. For example, Daniella Caselli writes in *Improper Modernism: Djuna Barnes's Bewildering Corpus* (2009) that Barnes is "a queer late modernist" whose writing both "resists incorporation within literary history" and refuses modernist standards of acceptability (258). Similarly, Julie Taylor's book *Djuna Barnes and Affective Modernism* (2012) claims that Barnes is "a case-in-point for the queering of literary modernism" (3). These works along with recent publications such as Diane Warren's *Barnes's Consuming Fictions* (2008) and Monika Faltejksova's *Djuna Barnes, T.S. Eliot and the Gender Dynamics of Modernism: Tracing Nightwood* (2010) fulfill Allen's prediction that Barnes would be magnet for queer reading practices in the twenty-first century.

Among the many thinkers who have reexamined *Nightwood*'s historical and formal salience for queer studies, two authors in particular help to ground my examination of the novel's destabilization of the species body in its humanist and sexological formations. The first is Dana Seitler whose analysis of *Nightwood* in her 2008 book, *Atavistic Tendencies: The Culture of Science in American Modernity* explains that Barnes's fascination with "bestial bodies and affiliations" is a direct response to degeneration theory (123). Seitler emphasizes that in keeping with sexological epistemologies, degeneration theory "rested on the belief that deviance manifests itself in the visible body" (96).[26] Moreover, sexology considered it both possible and critical to

narrativize the so-called regressive traits that were thought to be hypervisible in abnormal bodies (127). This explains the formal complexity of *Nightwood*'s engagement with the visual, what Brian Glavey in his 2009 essay in *PMLA* refers to as Barnes's "strategy of queer ekphrasis" ("Dazzing Estrangement" 750). Glavey's essay shows how *Nightwood*'s formal characteristics are what confound attempts to place the novel squarely within any one literary period. More specifically, he argues that Barnes's highly visual aesthetic imagines "a way of seeing that doesn't transform the visible world into an object to be classified and controlled" and that such ways of seeing might be describe as queer (752). Together, Seitler's and Glavey's scholarship provides a means for understanding how *Nightwood* queers the species body by evoking the embodied signs and movements deemed regressive and deviant and by visualizing them in ways that obstruct categorization.[27]

Over the next several sections, I will examine *Nightwood*'s visualization of the indeterminacy of species distinctions that render sexual categories untenable. In doing so, I aim to provide a guided tour of the stage that Barnes ultimately sets to prepare readers for the novel's final scene. I conclude in the final section entitled "Homo-Candid Intimacies" that the famed altar where Robin goes down on all fours with Nora's dog establishes interspecies intimacy as an act of resistance and a site of revision – a strategy that contemporary authors, whether consciously or not, have adapted from Barnes each in their own time and way. In doing so, Barnes reveals how modern subjectivity requires the containment of species life. Thus, I suggest that Barnes observes species as a *specter*, or haunting, that vexes twentieth-century desires to delineate bodies from one another and to

predict their lines of intimacy. As I will show, *Nightwood* engages this specter by bringing embodiment into focus as a *spectacle* in all of its perplexing detail.

Sight, Time, & Species

Looking, as Donna Haraway reminds us, is at the very root of the word, *species*; the Latin *specere* means 'to look' and 'to behold' (*When Species Meet* 17).[28] Contemporary scholarship on the animal from John Berger's seminal essay, "Why Look at Animals?" (1980) to Jacques Derrida's "The Animal That Therefore I Am" (1997) and Akira Mizuta Lippit's *Electric Animal* (2000) have all argued that to behold other species in modernity from a Western lens is to see an abyss, a disavowal, a specter of an insurmountable past. Sexology strove to trace the imprints of this primitive past by locating on the human body evidence of regression and specifically regression to a nonhuman animal state. Although *Nightwood*'s visual aesthetic is characterized by its specificity (from the Latin specificus which means to make a view, or look, or type), it nonetheless resists the tendency to visualize time and species through the linearity that theories of degeneracy privileged.

"Sometimes one meets a woman who is beast turning human. Such a person's every movement will reduce to an image of a forgotten experience" (*N* 41). This is how readers are first introduced to *Nightwood*'s enigmatic protagonist, Robin Vote. In Barnes's description of Robin, whose name evokes the bird, the most primitive term "beast" stands between the movement from "woman" to "human." Not only does this

stylistic sequence disorganize the regressive narrative of degeneracy, but it belies the linear model of evolutionary progress known as *orthogenesi*s upon which it relies. Orthogenesis, a popularized concept in the eclipse of Darwinism which hypothesized that life innately evolves in a unilinear fashion, literally means "evolution in a straight line" (Bowler *Evolution* 268). *Nightwood's* refusal to provide readers with this straight line demonstrates Barnes's interest in excavating queer configurations that had been jettisoned in the reinterpretation of evolutionary theory. Additionally, this "forgotten experience" which lives in Robin's "every movement" invokes the specter of species as that which is never entirely human or nonhuman. Thus, the novel recovers the queer potential that is the heart of Darwinian theory by illustrating that biological life is never fully at home in any one category. Robin, who is a perpetual wanderer throughout the novel, embodies this vision of uprootedness.

Although Barnes represents her protagonist as an "image," she is not an entirely static one. This is precisely what the narration warns against when it states that: "The woman who presents herself to the spectator as a "picture" forever arranged is, for the contemplative mind the chiefest danger" (41). In challenging the linear and permanent arrangements that were popularized in the wake of evolutionary biology, the plot of *Nightwood* meanders, much like its protagonist, in multifarious directions. The story follows Robin's movements as a flâneuse and the lovers who lose her to the night. A popular representation of nineteenth-century Paris, a flâneur is a man linked with dandyism, prone to aimless wandering, idling, and/or leisurely strolling in an urban setting. In his essay, "The Painter of Modern Life" (1863), written four years after the

publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859), poet Charles Baudelaire extols flânerie:

> For the perfect *flâneur*, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite… Thus the lover of universal life enters into the crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of electric energy. Or we might liken him to a mirror as vast as the crowd itself; or a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness, responding to each one of its movements and reproducing the multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of elements of life. He is an "I" with an insatiable appetite for the "non-I," at every instant rendering and explaining it in pictures more living than life itself, which is always unstable and fugitive. (*The Painter of Modern Life* 9)

Though I cannot speculate as to whether Baudelaire and Darwin had any interest in one another's writings, the former's insistence that "The lover of life makes the whole world his family" resonates with the fundamental belief held by Darwin that all living creatures share a common ancestry (9). Moreover, Baudelaire's fascination with life as ontologically "unstable," unceasingly "fugitive," and an ever-moving "multiplicity" wherein the "I" of human subjectivity implodes is precisely what infused panic into the post-Darwinian century.

It is much more likely that Djuna Barnes read Baudelaire who was a source of inspiration to her contemporaries in the intelligentsia of the 1930s and in particular to Walter Benjamin who saw the figure of the flâneur as providing an ever-shifting model of

spectatorship that foils consumer capitalism (*Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of Capitalism*). Much like the flaneur in Baudelaire's description, Robin refuses to stay put in any one home with any one lover. Indeed, though she and Nora are happy traveling Europe together, once Nora purchases an apartment in Paris where they could be alone and "apart from the world," Robin begins to leave each night to roam the city streets in an attempt, as the Doctor observes, "to get the world home" (*N* 62, 66). In keeping with Baudelaire's flâneur, Robin becomes enmeshed in the ebb and flow of the crowd: "If she diverted, as was sometimes the case, by the interposition of a company of soldiers, a wedding or a funeral, then by her agitation she seemed a part of the function to the persons she stumbled against, as a moth by his very entanglement with the heat…" (65-66). *Nightwood* gives representation to Baudelaire's flâneur whose "passion and profession are to become one flesh with the crowd" (*The Painter* 9). Moreover, in comparing Robin's relationship to other bodies as a moth entangled to a flame, the novel attests to "the multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of elements of life." Such flickers repeat themselves throughout *Nightwood* and most notably in the final scene where two candles on the altar of the chapel set the stage for visualizing Robin's interspecies intimacy with the dog. Moreover, as I will explore, it is precisely the novel's utilization of fitful light that obstructs Nora, and Robin's other lovers, from fully capturing her in their sights.

Interest in flânerie coincided with the rise of visual technologies such as photography and cinema as it was thought that the flâneur embodied the experience of a moving picture or roving lens, the very qualities that characterize *Nightwood*'s prose.[29]

Yet Barnes revises the iconic dandy as a chimeric and bestial woman.[30] In *The Enchantment of Modern Life* (2001), Jane Bennett dismantles the longstanding image of modernity as one of "disenchantment or of one of reason and control" (3). Observing a number of literary and artistic works that attest to her "alter-tale" of modernity, Bennett hones in on their use of *enchantment* as "a state of wonder" accompanied by "the temporary suspension of chronological time and bodily movement" (5). Though *Nightwood* is not included in Bennett's archive, the characters who encounter Robin in their sights experience this enchanting destabilization of chronological time. Indeed, it is Robin who structures the lines of sight and seeing that characterize the novel's delight with the "flickering" impermanence of sex and species.

This flickering effect of *Nightwood's* visual schema is exemplified by the visual experiences of Felix Volkbein, a falsified baron obsessed with the permanence that titles and heirs promise, is the first of Robin Vote's many lovers. Unable to fully visualize Robin, Felix confesses to the Doctor: "If I should try to put it into words, I mean how I did see her, it would be incomprehensible, for the simple reason that I find that I never did have a really clear idea of her at any time. I had an image of her, but that is not the same thing. An image is a stop the mind makes between uncertainties" (*N* 119).This passage provides insight into how Barnes makes use of an imagistic aesthetic. Although bodies in *Nightwood* are meticulously detailed, the pictures drawn are but "stops" amid perpetual movements. When Felix does observe Robin, however: "he felt that he was looking upon a figurehead in a museum, which though static, no longer roosting on its cutwater, seemed yet to be going against the wind" (*N* 41). The stylistic qualities of

Barnes's prose are observable in her depiction of bodies that are at once still *and* moving. Additionally, much like the description of Frau Mann, the novel locates an animacy in the entanglement of Robin's body with nonhuman objects: "Her legs, in white flannel trousers were spread as in a dance, the thick-lacquered pumps looking too lively for the arrested step" (38). Put another way, Barnes specifies Robin's body always in proportion to its capacity to transmogrify into something else. This is another way of describing Glavey's concept of queer ekphrakis which "introduces a temporal disjunction that prevents an identity from ever cohering" (756). However, I would add that *Nightwood*'s queer ekphrakis is deeply connected to the novel's engagement with evolutionary biology; Barnes's aesthetic reveals that bodies are always a process of transformation even if the directions from one moment to another are imperceptible. This explains why Robin is pictured as a series of detailed snapshots that though seemingly transfixed, promise to move. Functioning like a film reel, *Nightwood* seeks to temporarily distill the dazzling transfigurations of bodies over time.

The first deep description of Robin that readers receive so closely parallels Darwin's own reflections on biological life as an "entangled bank" that it compels me to offer a brief comparison. In his conclusion to *On the Origin of Species*, Darwin writes:

> It is interesting to contemplate an entangled bank, clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds singing in the bushes, with various insects flitting about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth, and to reflect that these elaborately constructed forms, so different from each other, and dependent on each other in so complex a manner…There is a grandeur in this view of life, with

> its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved. (478)

This passage is striking in its resemblance to Barnes's description of Robin who is first found by Felix and the Doctor in a deep slumber: "On a bed, surrounded by a confusion of potted plants, exotic palms and cut flowers, faintly over-sung by the notes of unseen birds, which seemed to have been forgotten…" (*N* 37). In the array of plants and the crooning of birds, Barnes performs her own rendition of Darwin's origin story. She also evokes the damp earth crawling with worms that appears in Darwin's passage when she describes Robin's scent: "The perfume that her body exhaled was of the quality of that ear-flesh, fungi, which smells of captured dampness…" (38). Lastly, the narration reads: "Like a painting by the *douanier* Rousseau, she seemed to lie in a jungle." In naming the "*artiste animalier*" Henri Rousseau and conjuring his painting, *The Dream* (1910) to accompany Robin's sleeping figure, the connection between Barnes and Darwin is made all the more convincing for as Fae Brauer shows in *The Art of Evolution* (2008), Darwin's theories were immensely influential to the painter (207). Brauer goes so far as to suggest that *The Dream* is, indeed, a "Dream of Darwin's Evolution" (218).

The forgotten sounds of unseen birds follow Robin throughout the novel for as Nora later observes, the haunting cadence that Robin would occasionally slip into made it sound to Nora as if she were singing.[31] Thus, Barnes plays on her character's name, Robin, to evoke the birds that are heard from the bushes as Darwin describes. This is

distressing for Nora who would observe notes sounding from a room where Robin herself was "unseen" like "an echo of her unknown life more nearly tuned to its origin" (*N* 63). Though *Nightwood* is motivated to return to earthly origins as a method for exploring bodies and behaviors, the novel consistently refuses to visualize a singular origin point therefore reminding its readers that species life is made of the complex entanglements that Darwin names. The Doctor directly addresses the relationship between time and species when he confronts Nora: "…beat life like a dinner bell, yet there is one hour that won't ring—the hour of disentanglement" (148).

Nightwood's intertexuality with both Darwin's theories and Rousseau's art is evidence of Barnes's intervention into evolutionary biology. Like Rousseau, Barnes utilizes her craft to visualize the "endless forms" of Robin's body in constant evolution (Darwin 478). Moreover, the novel proposes that the ontological openness of life has been all too quickly eclipsed. Perhaps this is why Barnes had such difficulty finding a publisher for her manuscript. As she explains in a letter to her writer friend and agent, Emily Coleman, "they all say it is not a novel; that there is no continuity of life in it" (Plumb x-xi).[32] It is precisely this lack of continuity, stability, or linear progression to biological life that makes *Nightwood* visibly queer to contemporary readers. This is also what I mean when I suggest that *Nightwood* engages biological life through the specter of species whose circuitous pull on both the past and the indeterminate future haunts the twentieth-century present.

Sex & Species

In Emily Coleman's letters to T.S. Eliot endorsing Barnes's manuscript, she insists: "Can you read that and not see that something new has been said about the very heart of sex?—going beyond sex…*where no modern writer ever goes?*" (Plumb xxi).[33] The desire to *say something* about the essence of sex certainly characterizes the post-Darwinian century and the sexual sciences in particular. For example, Havelock Ellis himself declared sex as "the central problem of life" and implored that "Sex lies at the root of life, and we can never learn to reverence life until we know how to understand sex" (*Studies in the Psychology of Sex Vol 1* xx). However, when it came to understanding homosexuality, also referred to as sexual inversion, an especially popular explanation was that same-sex attraction was evidence of either arrested or regressive evolution (Rosario *Homosexuality and Science* 23). In *Nightwood,* the figure with the most to say, and thus, the most to say about sex, is the novel's very own physician, Doctor Matthew O'Connor. While the Doctor's edicts on inversion frequently turn toward animality, he does so in ways that embrace rather than reject the impermanence that rests at very heart of both sex and species.

In his 2013 examination of animality in progressive-era American literature, Michael Lundblad locates what he terms 'a discourse of the jungle' wherein nonhuman animals, and more abstractly, animal nature, emerge as widely available representations for examining human bodies, behaviors, and hierarchies (*The Birth of a Jungle* 3). Attributing the proliferation of a jungle discourse to the intersecting frameworks of social Darwinism and emergent theories of sexuality, he explains how writers in the late

nineteenth century turned to animality by appropriating the themes of survival of the fittest and sexual selection in ways that normalized whiteness and heterosexuality (4-5).[34] However, Lundblad locates a shift in literature at the turn of the twentieth century and suggests that authors began to take a more complex approach to other species that coincided with their openness to non-normative bodies and desires. For example, he follows Eve Sedgwick's famed anti-homophobic analysis that the "Beast" of Henry James's story, "Beast of the Jungle" (1903) is a metaphor for the normalizing apparatus of compulsory heterosexuality. Pushing Sedgwick's reading further, Lundblad asks: what if the beast isn't a mechanism for policing straightness; rather, what if the beast represents queer desire, in general, as a force of nature? (47). Although *Nightwood*, published three decades later, does not appear in Lundblad's study, Barnes's treatment of animality sustains his argument well into the 1930s. The novel resists the ideological recuperation of evolutionary biology by returning readers to the scene of Darwin's entangled bank. In doing so, she re-opens the specter of species as a method of exploring and celebrating queer forms of embodiment and desire.

Teresa de Lauretis observes that next to "the night," the Doctor's favorite metaphor for sex is "the brawl of the Beast" ("*Nightwood* and 'The Terror of Uncertain Signs'" 122). For example, when treating Nora, the Doctor lectures her: "The Brawl of the Beast leaves a path for the Beast. You wash your brawl with every thought, with every gesture, with every conceivable emollient and *savon*, and expect to find your way again" (*N* 91). Rather than treat the Doctor's reference to beast as a mere metaphor for sexual desire as de Lauretis does, I am interested in how the Doctor's monologues

represent animality as both an historical construct and a material condition. Indeed, Barnes recognized the historical shift around the human-animal border prompted by theories of degeneracy and actively sought to thwart it; having initially wanted to name the novel, *Night Beast,* she lamented in a letter to Coleman, "the debased meaning now put on that nice word, beast."[35] The Doctor's monologues reveal an attempt, on Barnes's part, to redeem animality as a site of pleasure and possibility that exceeds normative configurations of the human body and sexual subjectivity.

From this perspective, the Doctor appears to accuse Nora of cleansing herself of the animal that is inextricably linked with her own flesh, something that her lover, Robin, on the contrary, does not do. In suggesting that Nora does so by using every thought and gesture at her disposal, the Doctor establishes that much like gender identity is performed through a series of exclusions, modern human identity presents itself through a disavowal of the animal. De Lauretis claims that the Doctor's monologues show how *Nightwood* creates a space for sexuality to move outside of capture or fixed identity where it can rather, much like Robin, act as "an undomesticated, unsymbolizable force"(122). I would revise de Lauretis's reading to suggest that the Doctor's vision of sex as undomesticated is inextricably tied to the novel's engagement with species as unsymbolizable.

In evoking the specter of species in his ornate soliloquies, the Doctor models how his very own body exceeds the human-animal border. In one of the most memorable passages of the novel, the Doctor tells Nora of the eye-opening adventure that brought him to expose himself in a church. "Matthew," he recounts his own thoughts for her: "tonight you must find a small church where there are no people, where you can be alone

like an animal, and yet think" (139). Not entirely alone at *The Church of Saint Merri*, Matthew kneels in a corner:

> I was crying and striking my left hand against the *priedieu*, and all the while Tiny O'Toole was lying in a swoon. I said, 'I have tried to seek, and I only find.' I said, 'It is I, my Lord, who know there's beauty in any permanent mistake like me. Haven't I said it so? But, I says, 'I'm not able to stay permanent unless you help me, O Book of Concealment! '*C'est le plaisir qui me bouleverse!* [This is the pleasure that distresses me!] The roaring lion goes forth, seeking his own fury! So tell me, what is permanent of me, me or him?' (139-134).[36]

In returning to the church, whose authority on sexual matters sexology sought to overthrow, the Doctor re-opens one of the most pressing issues about sex and species that the sexologists sought to resolve; namely, that inversion is not a rejection of God and an embrace of sin, but rather occurs naturally, or, as the Doctor puts it, as a "permanent mistake" of nature. Yet the Doctor also exclaims that he is incapable of such permanence. Absorbing this lesson-in-a-story, Nora arrives at new insight into Robin: "her life was a *continual accident*" (144).[37] Herein lies the central polemic that *Nightwood* unearths. The Doctor is unable to accept that sexual desire as the church views it is a mistake of sin, nor can he reconcile that biological life, as sexology sees it, can be known through permanent divisions.

Earlier in the novel, the Doctor is found by Nora: "in a woman's flannel nightgown," "framed in a golden semi-circle wig with long pendent curls," and "heavily rouged with his lashes painted" (85). There are several directions that one could take in

fleshing out Barnes's portrait of the doctor's transvestitism. On the one hand, the scene inside the pews of *Saint Merri* expresses the Doctor's struggle or "brawl" against gender and sexual permanency. However, to read this scene only from a perspective of gender and sexuality misses the novel's larger engagement with the eclipse of Darwinism as the bedrock of modern sexual categorization. For in positing himself as both human and beast, the Doctor repudiates the belief that degeneracy theory held that in order to be fully human, one's so-called nature must abandon, in a straight and narrow line, the animal. In his advice to Nora, the Doctor explains: "You have been unwise enough to make a formula; you have dressed the unknowable in the garments of the known…Bend down the tree of knowledge and you'll unroost a strange bird" (145). Evoking the strange bird of Robin, "the girl who resembles a boy," and "the woman who is beast turning human," the Doctor suggests that much like himself, she will always exceed the epistemological frameworks of humanism and sexology that seeks to capture them both.

Night Vision: an Epistemology of the Ground

Nightwood's engagement with sexual and species life does not rely upon its capture and instead remains open to its complex entanglements. This is evinced in the Doctor's story at *Saint Merri* when he exclaims: "I have tried to seek and only I find" (140). The acts of seeking and of finding are unremitting throughout *Nightwood*. In doing so, the novel repudiates any complete and totalitizing vision of biological life. This is reflected in the fact that the story revolves around its ephemeral center, Robin, the strange

bird who is in a perpetual state of flight. If readers are sent, as Robin's lovers are, in a whirlwind of seeking, then what are we to make of where we ultimately find her; not in flight, but on the ground with Nora's dog? Of the novel's ending Barnes wrote: "…it seems to me that the very act with the dog is pointed enough, and anything more than that would spoil the scene anyway; as for what the end promises (?) let the reader make up his own mind, if he's not an idiot he'll know" (Plumb xv).[38] These comments reveal Barnes's expectation that her readers would arrive at some knowledge about the significance of the novel's ending. However, this is no easy task for as I have mentioned the exchange between Robin and the dog has long been a source of confusion for scholars and readers alike. To reconcile this tension, it is necessary to understand how refusing the epistemological capture of Robin opens up possibilities for other types of knowledge making. Indeed, *Nightwood* produces an alternative epistemology of bodies and desires in its visual schematic of the night and, as I will explore, in doing so, Barnes provides readers the tools needed to acknowledge the significance of the interspecies intimacies that ensue.

On the one hand, the pervasive control and regulation of bodies requires that the contours of gender and sexuality be acutely visible. Indeed, as Dana Seitler's work shows, the sexual sciences participated in disentangling bodies and their desires via the visual register (127). In this way, biopolitics both shapes and is shaped by how we see bodies. Functioning like a circuit breaker with only a fraction of the switches on, normative visual orientations limit the configurations and desires afforded to bodies. Simply put, regularized habits of sight determine what becomes available to see.[39] This

includes both bodies and desires deemed normal and those that are pathologized. Moreover, it explains how specific fragments of embodiment are rendered more conspicuous in the mainstream visual imagination while the messy, deviant, or potentially queer capacities of bodies and their parts are highly controlled, or sometimes not pictured at all.

Connecting seeing sex to seeing species, evolutionary biologist Joan Roughgarden debunks the gendered and sexual myths that we commonly hold about the animal world, for example that "an organism is solely male or female for life," or that "males and females look different from one another" (*Evolution's Rainbow* 27-28). Indeed, Roughgarden's heuristic of "biological rainbows" responds to a gap in how we have come to visualize sex, gender, and species. Her explanation that "rainbows interfere with any attempt to stuff living beings into neat categories" is useful because it draws on the understanding that identifying where one color begins and another ends is a problematic task. Not only does Roughgarden's concept of the rainbow address the need to expose readers to more nuanced ways of viewing sex and gender in the animal world but it exemplifies the extent to which dominant representations have closed off possibilities for seeing the gender ambiguity and sexual diversity in biological life. For example, the outline of a body standing upright on two feet registers in Western visual consciousness as human whereas a figure depicted on all fours is suspected of being sub or nonhuman. Represented over time, these categorical outlines succeed in narrowing the visual and ontological possibilities we afford to both human and nonhuman bodies.

The process of rendering some bodies and desires visible at the expense of others is the precisely the backdrop of sexology with which *Nightwood* grapples. Barnes does so by shutting down the circuit breaker all together and thus recalibrating her reader's vision toward knowledge about the body that had been previously closed off. This is what Donna Haraway means when she affirms that embracing limited knowledge "allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see" ("The Persistence of Vision" 285). Barnes prompts readers to re-examine their practices of seeing by bringing them into the night.

The role of night is more than just a trope in *Nightwood*; it is the very material through which bodies are seen. Nowhere is this more palpable than in the chapter, "Watchman, What of the Night?" when the Doctor implores Nora to consider nighttime:

> ""I can see you have not! You should, for the night has been going on for a long time." She said: "I've never known it before—I thought I did, but it was not knowing at all." "Exactly," said the doctor. "You thought you knew, and hadn't even shuffled the cards…the Great Enigma can't be thought of unless you turn the head the other way, and come upon thinking with the eye that you fear, which is called the back of the head; it's the one we use when looking at the beloved in a dark place…." (*N* 88-89)

In asking Nora to 'shuffle the cards' and reshape her vision, the Doctor provides insight into how we might come to know bodies and desires differently. He asks: "Listen! Do things look in the ten and twelve of noon as they look in the dark? Is the hand, the face, the foot, the same face and hand and foot seen by the sun?" (92). Here, the Doctor affirms

that though one loses the security that light provides, in darkness, the instability at the very heart of bodies and their desires offers moments of clarity. Additionally, he tries to persuade Nora that "The darkness is the closet in which your lover roosts her heart…" (95). The monologues in this chapter grow increasingly obscure as they do dark as the materiality of night subsumes the characters and its plot. And yet embedded in the Doctor's pronouncements is the very visual epistemology of the novel and its ontological considerations.

Stumbling in the dark, our gaze is propelled downwards toward our feet; that the Doctor plays on the motif of seeing feet in the night is significant. In *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), Freud theorizes that human subjectivity hinges on the very moment that man rose from four feet to two (52). Reinterpreting Darwin's idea of common *descent* as an *ascent,* Freud attributes this upward movement to "a cultural trend toward cleanliness." Moreover, he suggests that in elevating himself from the ground, man no longer finds base sensations such as taste and smell erotically charged. Rather, the primary erotic register that accompanies ascension is sight.[40] *Nightwood* confronts this sexological bidpedalism not only when the Doctor condemns Nora for washing "the brawl of the beast" from her flesh, but even more explicitly when he angrily shouts: "May you die standing upright! May you be damned upward!" (*N* 102).

This next passage reveals how deeply Barnes's visual aesthetic of the night contrasts with the bipedal human embedded in sexological thought. Of Nora, the Doctor asks:

> Have you ever glanced at one when the night was well down, and seen it and what it looked like and resembled most, with its one coping and a hundred legs? A centipede. And you look down and choose your feet, and ten to one, you find a bird with a light wing… I am a doctor and a collector and a talker of Latin and a sort of petropus of the twilight and physiognomist that can't be flustered by the wrong feature on the right face…. (98-99)

The Doctor's monologues explore how scientific and representational systems flatten bodies by dividing them by twos such as self and other, human and animal, two feet and four feet. Haunting such systems of representation are their unseen leftovers, what I have called the specter of species, where embodiment is experienced as a multiplicity. In multiplying feet, ten to one, the Doctor rejects the ascension narrative of sexology and the progressive model of evolution upon which theories of degeneracy relied. This passage, like others before it, returns readers again to the damp earth of Darwin's entangled bank, crawling not only with worms (representing the singular) but with centipedes as well (representing the multiple). *Nightwood* reminds us that there is no singular origin, or fixed ontology, but rather ontologies of becoming more and many.

The Doctor's speech also showcases the novel's deliberate intervention into the history of species and the sexual sciences. The Doctor's identification of himself as "a talker of Latin" invokes the Linnaean system through which species distinctions are named. Yet the Doctor establishes himself as a "petropus" meaning corrupt matter (pus) of the ground (petro). As I explore in Chapter 3, Marian Engel' *s Bear* (1976) like Barnes's *Nightwood* embraces the ground as a site of erotic excess. More specifically,

Engel displaces the significance of the visual as secondary in a wider field of erotic sensorium. At the same time, she raises the titular animal of the novella from four feet to two thus contesting bipedalism in his humanist formulation. However, unlike *Bear, Nightwood* does not remove vision from the erotic. On the contrary, Barnes adopts a highly visual aesthetic that redirects the reader's gaze downward, back toward the ground where Robin is finally seen.

To this point, I have provided a guided tour of *Nightwood's* visual aesthetic from which the destabilization of both sex and species is made possible. Additionally, I have suggested that Barnes establishes an alternative epistemology of biological life that attends to its ontological openness so often foreclosed in our habits of seeing. In this next section, I examine the infamous encounter between Robin and the dog and the novel's strategic use of interspecies intimacies as an intervention in the history of modern sexuality.

Homo-Canid Intimacies

Where Robin is ultimately found in the final pages, swinging on the floor with Nora's dog, only two candles are burning: "Their light fell across the floor and the dusty benches" (178). The narration calls this scene, like so many others in the novel, an "image." And yet, if we are to take the concerns of the early publishers seriously, this image somehow becomes *too much to see*.

> Before the image lay flowers and toys. Standing before them in her boy's trousers was Robin. Her pose, startled and broken, was caught at the point where her hand had reached almost to the shoulder, and at the moment Nora's body struck the wood, Robin began going down. Sliding down she went; down, her hair swinging, her arms held out, and the dog stood there, rearing back, his forelegs slanting, his paws trembling under the trembling of his rump, his hackle standing; his mouth open, his tongue slung sideways over his sharp bright teeth; whining and waiting. And down she went, until her head swung against his; on all fours now, dragging her knees. The veins stood out in her neck, under her ears, swelled in her arms, and wide and throbbing rose up on her fingers as she moved forward. (178-179)

In this candle-lit image, the narration crafts a visualization of embodiment through toys, boy's trousers, hair swinging, paws, rump, tongue, teeth, dragging knees, swelling veins. The scene highlights the movements and subtle details of the two bodies as if they were seen through two flickering candles, an effect that obscures the individuation between bodies along species lines. Indeed, the objects and movements become the focus as both Robin and the dog's bodies seem more similar than distant in their shared swinging, trembling, and throbbing. In this flickering light, *Nightwood* challenges readers to re-visualize the species body not through individuation, but as a queer assemblage.

In art, assemblage is a process of putting together found materials. From a biological perspective, the term signifies an environmental community wherein more than one species exist and function as a unit. In the final scene of *Nightwood*, the objects

and bodies found are represented in such a way that they mutually constitute one another. What makes an assemblage, and this assemblage in particular, queer? Jasbir Puar in her extensive work on this topic explains that a queer assemblage involves bodies that "interpenetrate, swirl together, and transmit affects to each other" ("Queer Times, Queer Assemblages" 122). In doing so, traditional ways of knowing bodies through identification, categorization, and signification collapse. Indeed, the final scene of the novel achieves this much when it describes the physical exchanges between Robin and the dog.

> Then she began to bark also, crawling after him—barking in a fit of laughter, obscene and touching. The dog began to cry then, running with her, head-on with her head as if to circumvent her; soft and slow his feet went padding. He ran this way and that, low down in his throat crying, and she grinning and crying with him; crying in shorter and shorter spaces, moving head to head, until she gave up, lying out, her hands beside her, her face turned down and weeping; and the dog too gave up then, and lay down, his eyes bloodshot, his head flat along her knees. (*N* 180)

As I have suggested, the ostensible obscenity of this encounter is located in its visual excess—the same excess that makes it difficult to discern what exactly is happening. When the narration describes this encounter as both "obscene and touching," I take that to mean that the zones of contact wherein the two bodies touch, both physically and affectively, provide us with an image that is too much to see and thus beyond the visual registers through which we have *learned* to see. It is as if the switch points on the circuit

breaker have been all together reorganized so that the contact zones between bodies create their own forms, untethered from taxonomies or coherent subjectivities. Moreover, the lines of agency typically ascribed to the human and the animal are commingled. Between his trembling and her dragging, the interdependent agencies of the dog and Robin are mapped onto the body by what it is capable of doing as a whole and as an assemblage. Furthermore, the assemblage of their corporeal encounter confounds dominant narratives of what play, danger, and sex *look like* as such boundaries implode in the flickering candlelight of the altar.

On the one hand, the perplexity of this scene can be measured by the extent to which readers disagree on what is happening between Robin and the dog: Are they wrestling, is it loving, are they fighting, is it erotic? When I ask myself these questions, my tendency is to search for visual clues in the text to make sense of who is in control, who has power, who is threatened and who the threat, only to find that the novel's visual schema works against such visualizations of subjectivity. On the other hand, the sexual nature of this encounter, which Cheryl Plumb suggests was toned down from the first draft to the final manuscript, is nonetheless palpable even if the bodies, acts, and identities are not (xv). Indeed, the fact that Robin and the dog claw, bite, chase, and drag each other in this scene toys with the deeply held belief in sexology that sexual selection is marked by struggle.

What does this scene of sexual struggle *between* species tell us about sex and "the very heart of it," to use Coleman's words? (Plumb xxi).[41] Perhaps the best place to begin is with the dog of the novel given that the sexual history of dogs in Western culture

underwent a major shift that implicitly gave way to the rise of sexology, eugenics, and the forced sterilization of human populations in the U.S. Harriet Ritvo's history of turn-of-the-century dog breeding in *The Animal Estate* (1989) observes that the manipulation of physical attributes to fit standards, such as those of Kennel Clubs, breeding manuals, and competitions not only reflected their value as property to owners, but historically operated as sites for exercising cultural anxieties about race, class, and sexual difference (84). One can still see this at work in present-day institutions such as the American Kennel Club where physical attributes of anything from coloring, shape of hips, or length of nose, either add to or diminish the purity and value of a given dog. Not only are certain breeds more costly and thus reflective of social class, but they even carry with them names of assumed origin for example, "Irish Setter," "Japanese Chin" and "Rhodesian Ridgeback" that further cement the language of dog breeding with a discourse of race. Moreover, the exhaustive efforts required to keep pure breeds unsullied from the less desirable traits of other dog breeds normalizes their sexual and morphological differences despite the fact that their reproduction is mediated by human technologies.[42] All of this is to say that contemporary dog breeding takes on the beliefs and values of eugenics from which it gave birth. On the other side of the breeding spectrum is the popularization of spay and neuter practices, commonly referred to de-sexing, which coincided with growing interest in compulsory sterilization programs of human populations in the United States. For example, some of the biggest advocates for state sanctioned sterilization programs pointed to the sexual alteration of domestic animals for justification (Stern, *Eugenic Nation* 103).[43]

Few countries control the visibility of animal sexuality as much as the United States. Beginning in the twentieth century, the conditions of mating, pregnancy, and newly born litters are removed from the public's view with much cost and effort. Although city municipalities and animal advocates offer compelling and convincing reasons for spay and neuter practices, the fact that what we see of animal sex is so highly controlled causes me pause.[44] I also wonder about the extent to which alteration practices reflect a desire for the family pet, a modernized icon of social acceptability and family values, to be desexualized. Just as breeding technologies mold the appearance of features such as color, size, shape, etc. spay and neuter practices limit what strange intimacies might be seen between nonhuman animals as well as between humans and nonhuman animals.

To the extent that sexual behavior in domesticated dogs enters representation, it passes through a narrow vision of either the controlled impulses of the pure bred and the domesticated family pet kept in a state of infantilized pre-pubescence. The unruly body of the bitch in heat or the impregnated mongrel serves as contrasting images used in campaigns to justify the sexual alteration of dogs. Thus, the bodies of dogs not only serve as texts upon which to inscribe and read racialized differentiation, but also for upholding sexual norms and sexual knowledge. Perhaps it is representation dog which led Emily Coleman to claim that Barnes's exploration into sex goes "*where no modern writer ever goes*" (Plumb xxi).[45]

The dog of *Nightwood* is neither represented as a model of superb sexual selection nor as a desexualized surrogate child. Rather, Barnes foregrounds the zones of contact

between the dog and Robin as a queer assemblage through their exchanges of whimpering, grinning, barking, crying—exchanges that read very much as sexual in nature yet are nonetheless untethered from the stratification of species upon which our cultural and scientific understandings of sex are worked.

The scene where Nora finds the Doctor in a woman's flannel nightgown and heavily rouged offers a penultimate parallel to the homo-canid intimacy at the novel's conclusion. Upon finding him, Nora exclaims: "God, children know something they can't tell; they like Red Riding Hood and the wolf in bed!" (*N* 85). Of all the witty phrases circulating in Barnes's novel, arguably none is as pleasurable nor as pithy as Nora's revelation that children share the open secret of liking Red Riding Hood and the wolf in a forbidden intimacy. In the intimate space of the Doctor's bed, the identities ascribed to bodies such as man, girl, wolf, human become delightfully indiscernible to Nora. The destabilization of sex and species that accompanies Nora's revelation of the Doctor as *both* Red Riding Hood and the wolf intensifies the novel's engagement with sex and species. The Doctor explains: "Let a man lay himself down in the Great Bed and his 'identity' is no longer his own …He neither knows himself nor his outriders; he berserks a fearful dimension and dismounts, miraculously, in bed" (87). In positioning the bed as a site of "dismounting," which denotes removing something from its frame, the Doctor names sexual intimacy as the method by which bodies exceed the identities and categories to which they are seemingly bound.

Nightwood's utilization of interspecies intimacies confounds the stratification of biological life in a crucial moment in the cultural and scientific re-making of the human-

animal border. Darwin's theories of evolution countered previous assumptions that species differences were immutable and could be visibly located in the morphologies of the body. Rather, he introduced sexual reproduction, a far more unpredictable and uncontrollable variable, as the means through which all biological life mutates. Furthermore, unlike those who reinterpreted his theories, Darwin consistently rejected a fixed ontology of species life at several junctures in the text such as when he declares: "we shall at least be freed from the vain search for the undiscovered and undiscoverable essence of the term species" (474). That is to say that Darwin never answered the question of origin, or the essence of species, presumed by his famed title.

Nightwood not only excavates the ontological openness and complex entanglements embedded yet forgotten in evolutionary biology, but it pushes them further than Darwin ever did by prompting readers to think of sex and intimacy beyond the terms of heterosexual reproduction. This is deliberate on Barnes's part and is evidenced in her correspondence with her agent. Here she insists that Robin had to marry and bear a child with Felix so that readers could not attribute Robin's same-sex desire and interspecies intimacies on her inability to find a man and make a child (Plumb xx). Furthermore, the final scene prompts readers toward the very questions that are at the heart of sex, for example: How does intimacy, sexual desire, and affect travel across bodies in ways that are unpredictable and untraceable? How does contact with other bodies re-shape them in ways that our current habits of viewing biological life cannot foresee? Lastly, how might engaging the specter of species as unfixed, always moving, and ever evolving place pressure on how we learn to see?

The formal framework that *Nightwood* builds to explore these questions reappears in literature throughout the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries as authors grapple with ideological shifts in the sexual and human sciences. The themes and methods that Barnes brings to *Nightwood* resurface profoundly in Edward Albee's drama *The Zoo Story* (1958) particularly around the use of the monologue to name and confront interspecies intimacies, as I will explore in Chapter 2. Like Barnes, Marian Engel's *Bear* (1976), the subject of Chapter 3, utilizes an epistemology of the ground to revisualize the human-animal? border while updating Barnes's interspecies intimacies in its intervention in feminist sex research. Lastly, Chapter 4 which covers Sherman Alexie's and Monique Troung's treatment of blood in the wake of the genomic revolution shows the extent to which Barnes's engagement with the contact zones between bodies becomes a useful tool for challenging the racialization and sexualization of biological life in the twenty-first century.

Chapter 2

Speaking of Species in the Drama of Edward Albee

Males do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexual and homosexual. The world is not to be divided into sheep and goats. Not all things are black nor all things white. It is a fundamental of taxonomy that nature rarely deals with discrete categories. Only the human mind invents categories and tries to force facts into separated pigeon-holes.

—Alfred Kinsey, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*

JERRY: What were you trying to do? Make sense out of things? Bring order? The old pigeonhole bit?

—Edward Albee, *The Zoo Story*

The saying "The only unnatural sex act is the one which you cannot perform" is widely attributed to famed sex researcher, Alfred Kinsey. Kinsey's younger contemporary, American dramatist Edward Albee whose work spans six decades and counting, has taken the idea of (un)natural sex and 'performance,' at least insofar as the theater is concerned, to new heights. Beginning in 1958 with the one-act play *The Zoo Story* which explores the sexual confessions of a queer beatnick from Greenwich Village who is fascinated with other animals, Albee's interest in how commonly held beliefs

about sex are informed by human relationships to other species recurs throughout his life's work.[46] However, until his 2002 play, *The Goat, or, Who is Sylvia*?, which examines one family man's sexual affair with the farmyard animal of its title, this aspect of his corpus has been largely unexamined. Albee's plays resist reducing sexual desires and acts to identity categories and yet, as the subject matter of *The Goat* suggests, they also grapple in meaningful ways with Kinsey's belief that the diversity of both sexual and species life is evidence that: "The world is not to be divided into sheeps and goats" (*Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* 539).

The Goat, or, Who is Sylvia? first appeared on stage in 2002 just as U.S. conservative politicians in their opposition to same-sex marriage began to make wide use of the slippery slope argument that sanctioning gay relationships could very well lead to sex with animals.[47] Within this cultural climate, still relevant today, where gay rights advocates and allies focus their energies on seeking entry into the historically conservative institution of marriage it is commonplace to craft an image of social acceptability for gay people, practices, and lives, thus creating distance from accusations of sexual deviancy. Therefore, the zoophilia that is central to the plot of *The Goat* illustrates how deeply Albee seeks to test the limits of his audience's tolerance on these issues.[48]

Similarly, Alfred Kinsey also tackles interspecies sex in the 'Animal Contacts' chapters of his controversial studies on human sexuality known as the Kinsey Reports (1948, 1953). That he did so not only during a six-year period of repressive McCarthyism but following renewed agreement among his fellow taxonomists that species ought to be

defined according to their reproductive isolation from one another (known as "the biological species concept") suggests how very radical Kinsey's reports were not only within the cultural backdrop of the 1950s, but within the scientific community as well. In his own way, Kinsey placed pressure on the assumption that species categories are a condition of reproductive relations and vice versa in his assertion that: "There is no sufficient explanation, either in biologic or psychological science, for the confinement of sexual activity to contacts between females and males of the same species" (*Report on Sexuality in the Human Female* 504).This chapter and the one that follows do not advocate that queer theory ought to champion sex with other animals. However, as I explore in my introduction, the societal anxieties produced around this topic are worthy of deeper exploration —a task that Edward Albee's drama and Alfred Kinsey's research both enact and enable. More specifically, this chapter explores the connections between Albee's staging of interspecies intimacies in his corpus from 1958-2004 with a special focus on his first play, *The Zoo Story,* as a touchstone moment in Albee's career that draws from and responds to the visibility of Alfred Kinsey in his dual roles as a sexologist and zoologist. When read together, the two authors reveal the unique and ongoing challenges of representing sex and species in modern American science and culture.

How Albee and Kinsey reflect upon their work on sex and species is fraught with tensions produced not only by cultural taboo, but by the very approaches brought to their craft. In the Kinsey Reports, there is an observable conflict between the scientist's written interpretations, which frequently make the case that sexuality is inherently fluid, and the

taxonomical and statistical systematics he utilizes to translate the dynamic and abundant interviews he conducted with individuals into objective, neutralized, and chartable data. In other words, Kinsey's stated beliefs about sexual behavior appear at times to be at odds with the methodology that he employs.

As I will explore in more detail, the monologue, which factors heavily into Albee's literary study, resists the containment of sex and species found in Kinsey's numerical charts. This is not to suggest that the humanities and the literary are somehow oppositional to the sciences; on the contrary, this dissertation seeks to work against that assumption. Producers of literature can exercise their own brand of speciesist categories and Albee is of no exception. For example, in his commentary in an *L.A. Times* opinion piece titled "Chimps Don't Draw" (2006), he claims that artistic expression belongs exclusively to Homo sapiens and thus, defines humans as a species. Though Albee blithely remains open to the possibility that a chimp or gorilla might one day write a play, he contends: "We are the only animal that has invented metaphor to define ourselves to ourselves" ("Chimps Don't Draw" n. pag.). Whether or not this is true (and whether or not it is even possible to ascertain in our present moment) is complicated by the representations of other animals circulating Albee's drama. His plays frequently represent species in ways that exceed both the easy distinctions and the metaphorical reductions that the author may or may not personally value. For instance, in the final scene of *The Goat,* Sylvia is killed and her corpse brought onto stage. Although it is not a real corpse, the visceral representation of Sylvia's dead body produces more than just a metaphorical effect. As this example reveals, Albee's writing points readers toward the very real and

material conditions of animal lives, a theme that begins as early as his first play, *The Zoo Story*. The fact that Martin is capable of having sex with Sylvia also highlights the porosity of the human-animal border and the anxieties it produces in Albee's human characters as well as his real-life audience. Put another way, Albee deploys artistic expression in ways that undermine the human species as a fixed and unmoving borderline. Overall, there are telling divergences between the expressed beliefs that both Kinsey and Albee hold about their work and the effects that the formal qualities of their works produce.

Edward Albee's plays are known primarily for their grim portrayals of marriage, the nuclear family, and bourgeois anxieties circulating sex, reproduction, and futurity in post-World War II America. These themes congeal in arguably his most famous work *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962), which in three acts depicts the volatile emotional games that a husband and wife, George and Martha (named after America's first First Couple), play around the issues of sex, adultery, and pregnancy in the company of their newly-wed dinner guests. However, *The Zoo Story*, Albee's first and lesser-discussed work provides insight into an unexamined aspect of the playwright's corpus that deepens his critique of heteronormativity in *Who's Afraid* and other works. *The Zoo Story* details an encounter in Central Park between two men who are strangers to one another, Jerry, an offbeat bohemian who was once was "a h-o-m-o-s-e-x-u-a-l" and Peter a straight-laced, upper-middle-class married man (25). Opening with the lines, "I've been to the zoo. I said I've been to the zoo. MISTER, I'VE BEEN TO THE ZOO!," Jerry interrupts Peter's reading in order to take him on a garrulous tour of his personal quest to

understand how humans exist with other species (12). As he explains: "I went to the zoo to find out more about the way people exist with animals, and the way animals exist with each other, and with people too" (39-40). In an absurd series of events set forth by Jerry's crass monologues, Jerry is killed on a knife that Peter holds before the reader ever gains a coherent explanation of what he did, indeed, learn at the zoo. Examining Albee's earliest play enables me better understanding not only of how the playwright eventually came to write about the taboo topic of zoophilia in *The Goat*, but also of how his exploration of sexuality takes place against the backdrop of the human-animal border.

Recent scholarship on *The Zoo Story* is surprisingly scarce and in the very initial criticism on Albee that emerged following the success of *Who's Afraid?*, critics tend to re-center human subjectivity despite the play's compelling exploration into the lives of other animals. For example, Carol Sykes describes Jerry's attraction to the zoo as a metaphor for contemporary American life and in particular New York City "where people exist like zoo animals" ("Albee's Beast Fables" 455). Similarly, Mary M. Nilan suggests that Jerry's curiosity about the zoo is reflective of Albee's interest in the polarization of modern society ("Albee's *The Zoo Story*: Alienated Man and the Nature of Love" 55). And Rose A. Zimbardo contends that Jerry's contact with other animals in the play is entirely symbolic and stands in as a model "of the most human relationships" ("Symbolism and Naturalism in Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story* 12). This chapter updates scholarship on *The Zoo Story* and takes seriously both the zoo as an institution and zoology as an episteme that shapes and structures how we understand other species as well as how we talk about sex and sexuality. Moreover, I suggest that Albee's dramas,

which are riddled with miscommunications between characters, as well as between humans and other animals, have the effect of calling into question metaphorical language as a stable marker of humanness.

It is understandable that the initial reaction to *The Zoo Story* focused on the story's portrayal of intimacy, sex, and desire while leaving the distinctions between species unexamined. When the play was written in 1958, Alfred Kinsey had passed away two years earlier, but U.S. culture was still reeling over his provocative reports on sex completed in 1953. Translated into thirteen languages, Kinsey's frank discussion of sexual behavior in two volumes, one on the human male and the other on the human female, made some startling claims, for instance that homosexuality in the U.S. population was far more prevalent than had been previously believed. The Kinsey Reports preceded the so-called sexual revolution and renewed interest in the scientific study of sexual desire within a six-year period of McCarthyism (1950-1956) that was openly hostile toward deviant sexual activity. Jerry's admission to Peter in *The Zoo Story* that when he was fifteen, he had engaged in sex with another man is representative of the 37% of men whom Kinsey reported had at least one homosexual experience (*Human Male* 656). Albee need not have read Kinsey's volumes in order to have encountered his impact which included extensive media coverage; for example, he was featured in *Time Magazine* twice (a publication that Peter from *The Zoo Story* frequently reads), and popular singer/actress Martha Raye sold five-hundred thousand copies of her phonographic record named "Ohh, Dr. Kinsey!" despite it being banned by the major broadcasting companies (Clark, *Indiana University: Midwestern Pioneer* 263).[49] The

decline of McCarthyism along with growing curiosity about sexual matters produced by Kinsey's work set the stage both figuratively and literally for Albee's overt examination of homosexuality in *The Zoo Story*.

Kinsey's work re-opened cultural interest in sexual behavior just as debates around "the species problem," namely, how exactly to define species across multiple species concepts, had arrived at partial closure owing to figures such as notable evolutionary biologist and zoologist, Ernst Mayr. Mayr was a key architect behind what is known as "the modern synthesis" (also referred to as the "synthetic theory of evolution") that brought together previously compartmentalized fields of knowledge such biology, physiology, genetics, zoology, and pathology toward general agreement about key issues on evolution and speciation (Mary vii). Although he is considered by many to be one of the twentieth century's greatest Darwinists, Mayr vehemently disagreed with Darwin's belief that species distinctions were merely man-made groupings that failed to coherently reflect reality (Kunz, *Do Species Exist?* 20). Nonetheless, Mayr's thinking by and large triumphed over Darwin's throughout the second half of the twentieth century. Moreover, the overlapping discourses of sex and species became even more tightly interwoven in the mid-twentieth century due to Mayr's widely accepted formulation that species could be distinguished by way of sexual reproduction; species lines were drawn according to which bodies were capable and incapable of reproducing in sexual relations. Additionally, Kinsey was a reader of Mayr's work which is cited in the section on 'The Taxonomic Approach' in the first of Kinsey's volumes, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) (17).

The connections between sexology and zoology during this time are important context to understanding *The Zoo Story*'s engagement with both sex and species. As I have suggested, Jerry's sexual confessions to Peter would have evoked for readers the anonymous participants of Kinsey's studies. Yet his lengthy monologues on sex which revolve around his visit to the zoo and a story he tells about his interactions with his landlady's dog serve as a reminder of how deeply zoology influenced Kinsey's studies on human sexual behavior. Indeed, before he was a famous researcher of human sexual behavior, Kinsey was a zoologist and was responsible for cataloguing the literal birds and bees. His research career began in entomology and he was particularly fond of gall wasps of which he claimed at the time to have identified sixteen new species ("New Species and Synonymy of American Cynipdae" 293). These beginnings are alluded to in Jerry's declaration that: "it's just that if you can't deal with people, you have to make a start somewhere. WITH ANIMALS!" (*Zoo* 34). Additionally, Kinsey's widely distributed textbook, *An Introduction to Biology* (1926), published a year after the contentious Scopes Monkey trial, was unique in that it framed evolution not as a ladder leading to *Homo sapiens* as the crown of creation, but via an ecological perspective where no one species was prioritized over another (Ladouceur, "If Kinsey's Textbook Could Talk" 2).

Kinsey's hesitancy to produce hierarchal categories among species in his early work is, in part, consistent with his discussion of sexual identity. For instance, in his chapter on "The Homosexual Outlet" in Volume 1, Kinsey repudiates the tendency among scientists and psychologists to uncritically ascribe sexual identities to humans and other animals. He states:

> It would encourage clearer thinking on these matters if persons were not characterized as heterosexual or homosexual, but as individuals who have had certain amounts of heterosexual experience and certain amounts of homosexual experience. Instead of using these terms as substantives which stand for persons, or even adjectives to describe persons, they may better be used to describe the nature of the overt sexual relations, or of the stimuli to which an individual erotically responds. (*Human Male* 617)

This comment suggests that Kinsey was far more interested in understanding bodies and their desires through their temporary and contingent relations to one another rather than through fixed categories.

In this way, Kinsey questioned the tendency of previous sexologists to understand the spectrum of human sexual diversity via identity categories. In her analysis of his course on marriage at Indiana University, which took place in the years between 1938 and 1940 and initiated his research study, Donna Drucker shows how in the classroom, Kinsey also sought to unsettle his students' beliefs about biological sex ("A Noble Experiment" 246). Drucker explains that in his most popular lecture on "Individual Variation," he would draw graphs on the chalkboard of the average clitoris and penis lengths, indicating how they would overlap. Drucker claims: "His aim in doing so was to show how men and women diverge both within and between the sexes, and to demonstrate that these divergences blur rather than reify sexual differences" (246). Nevertheless, Kinsey's statistical approach necessarily relied upon the proliferation of differences including, at the most basic level, separating his volumes according to a

binary notion of sex that in other respects he demonstrated to be unstable. Moreover, he treated his sample of individuals as "representative of the species" despite the fact that his first volume collected data from exclusively white men ("How to Stop Gin Rummy" n. pag.). Thus, the Kinsey Reports illustrate the contradictions underlining Kinsey's work not only in relation to biological sex and race, but in regards to species as well. More specifically, Kinsey's statistical approach, which was held together by sexual and species categories (and implicitly along racial lines), is seemingly inconsistent with his general belief that "nature rarely deals with discrete categories" (*Human Male* 539).

Pointing to his difficulties assessing, for example, when a female orgasm begins and ends or how to distinguish between affection and sexual desire, Elizabeth Grosz observes that:

> Statistics provide Kinsey with the cover of objectivity, with the protection of scientific rigor. Yet there are many points in the two volumes at which the question of the incalculable or nonnumerable problematizes his research goals, where there is an inherent undecidability that renders statistical analysis problematic: it becomes less and less clear what is being measured and whether the measurement is not an effect of the analysis rather than the phenomenon itself. (*Time Travels* 205)

Grosz contends that Kinsey was aware and self-critical of the limitations of his statistical method (207). His chapter in the first volume entitled "Statistical Problems" shows him grappling with the obstacles posed by his methodologies. Nonetheless, although the Kinsey Reports recalibrate dominant understandings of sexual behavior, particularly in

regard to their frequency and range, Grosz argues that a reliance on numerical calculation and formulae "loses what is sexual about sexual behavior" (209). More specifically she claims that it "loses contact with what is most central to its objects [of study]: their continuity, their mutual embeddedness, their intensity, their dynamism…" (208). The disparities between the dynamism of biological life and the zoological categories circumscribing it are precisely what Albee's *The Zoo Story* exploits.

Isolating & Quantifying Sex & Species

The Zoo Story challenges how we think about sexual and species distinctions as well as the quantitative approach that potentially undermines Kinsey's better intentions. For starters, Albee's play illustrates that the stratification of species life evinced by the institutions of zoos and zoology is not a biological phenomenon but might be best be understood as theater. Indeed, the Greek word *theater* which means 'to behold,' particularly within a 'place for viewing,' is similar to the Latin origin of *species* meaning 'to look,' or 'to behold.' As I explore in Chapter 1, the relationship between species and spectacle was of special interest to late modernist author Djuna Barnes in her 1936 novel, *Nightwood*. Additionally, from the perspective of performance studies, theater and species are not only linguistically bound but, as Una Chaudhuri suggests, their institutional practices are interwoven ("(De)Facing the Animal" 9).[50] In particular, Chaudhuri uses the term, *zooësis* to describe "the manifold performances of speciesism—the valuing of some forms of life over others based solely on species—engendered in

practices such as "pet keeping, dog shows, equestrian displays, rodeos, bullfighting, animal sacrifice, scientific experimentation, species preservation, taxidermy, hunting, fur wearing, meat eating —each with its own archive and repertory, its own spatialities and temporalities, its own performers and spectators" (9). The examples of *zooësis* that Chaudhuri name all rely upon the zoological practice of categorizing as well as the spatial relations of speciesism that we find in zoo keeping. As Jerry explains to Peter, his quest to understand humans and other species by way of the zoo "wasn't a fair test, what with everyone separated by bars from everyone else, the animals for the most part from each other, and always the people from the animals. But, if it's a zoo, that's the way it is" (*Zoo* 40). For Jerry, the control exerted over humans and other animals, including the barriers that limit their ability encounter one another, intimately signifies that knowledge gained from zoos hinders rather than reveals truth about biological life.

As Jerry's observation reveals, zoos are sites where nonhuman animals are not only categorized but are systemically isolated. The spatial isolation that zoos perform evokes Ernst Mayr's popular theory of speciation known as "the biological species concept" (the BSC hereafter) formulated in his groundbreaking book, *Systematics and the Origin of Species from the Viewpoint of a Zoologist* (1942). The BSC holds that species differences can be best understood through *reproductive isolation*; species are determined according to a community's ability to interbreed with each other and, simultaneously, that community's failure to reproduce with others. In this way, the naturalization of hetero-reproductive sex and the stigmatization of non-reproductive intimate relationships among

humans find support in Mayr's concept. More specifically, the BSC contends that the inability to hybridize is the dividing line between species.

As early as his 1859 publication, *On the Origin of Species,* Darwin opposed reproductive isolation as a logical borderline claiming that: "To grant species the special power of producing hybrids, and then to stop their further propagation by different degrees of sterility, not strictly related to the facility of the first union between their parents, seems to be a strange arrangement" (257). Though historians of science have argued that the eclipse of Darwinism ended with Ernst Mayr and the modern synthesis, this example suggests otherwise.[51] Moreover it places Mayr within Michel Foucault's genealogy of nineteenth-century science that was obsessed with reproduction despite inconsistencies in knowledge between the growing discourse of sexuality and what is known about animal and plant reproduction (*The History of Sexuality V. 1* 54). Indeed, many forms of biological life hybridize despite the species designations ascribed to them; for example, lions and tigers in captivity have the capacity to reproduce offspring therefore raising doubts about the efficacy of Mayr's widely popular concept. And, in the mid-twentieth century, there were examples of hybridization of which Kinsey himself was aware. For example, in pointing to the existence of inter-specific mating and inter-specific hybrids in birds he contends in 1953 that: "evidence is beginning to accumulate that individuals of quite unrelated species do make inter-specific contacts more than biologists have heretofore allowed" (*Human Female* 504). Therefore, isolating species from one another in the discourse of zoological taxonomy maintains the illusion of clear and distinct species lines; the very cage bars that structure the spatial relations of the zoo

mimic and achieve this effect. As I will explore, Jerry's monologues which speak of interspecies intimacies undo these isolating mechanisms, both of discourse and of space.

It is worth nothing here that because zoos are a direct product of nineteenth-century imperialism, they are ensconced within the violent asymmetrical relations of power practiced under colonialism and slavery. As John Berger in his famous essay "Why Look at Animals" (1980) explains, modern zoos began as private royal menageries that showcased animals captured during colonial exploits or received as gifts in subservient diplomatic relations (21). Thus, Berger argues that the rise of the public zoo in the nineteenth century was "an endorsement of modern colonial power" and like most colonial institutions, crafted an image of itself as advancing public knowledge (21).[52] The lines dividing life that Jerry finds problematic were once also drawn around human specimens. For example, The Cincinnati Zoo, originally known as the Cincinnati Zoological Company, featured one hundred Sioux Native Americans over a three-month period in 1896 thus demonstrating how both humans and other animals have been positioned by the institution of the zoo as objects the colonial gaze (Ohio Historical Society n. pag.). Today, the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden boasts one of the first and largest exhibits in the U.S. of western lowland gorillas and has become famous for its large-scale breeding program of gorillas, earning it the title of the "Sexiest Zoo in America" (Ohio Historical Society n. pag.).[53] The zoo's original capture of the gorillas from Central Africa along with its famous breeding program illustrate how the practices of trafficking and forced impregnation so central to the history of human slavery remain embedded in the cultural practices of zoo keeping and animal captivity.

Although *The Zoo Story* never does take its reader to the zoo, preferring instead a bench in Central Park, Jerry's encounter with Peter reveals how speciesism and heternormativity intersect. When he is not divulging his own personal revelations, Jerry begins to uncover some telling details about Peter. In particular, he discovers that Peter's white upper-middle-class married life is marked by his tendency to collect objects and animals by twos. Not only does he own two televisions, but he also has two cats and two parakeets that are kept in a cage by his two children (*Zoo* 18). The excessive coupling of twos that describes Peter's life throughout *The Zoo Story* is important to note as it points to his identity as being overdetermined by the demand that species must come in two, a formulation that is also deeply heterosexist and connects the Book of Genesis (which includes the myth of Noah's Ark) to the two volumes of the Kinsey Reports wherein the human species is divided according to binary sex.

Albee describes Peter's life according to details that are quantifiable. This also includes how much money he earns as an executive in textbook publishing to which Jerry mocks: "Say, what's the dividing line between upper-middle class and lower-upper-middle class?" (20). The quantitative approach that Kinsey brought to his studies on sexual behavior are evoked in the information that Albee provides about Peter. Therefore, we might read Jerry, who makes sense of this stranger by enumerating his relations to others as a parody of the methods of the famed sexologist.

Unlike Peter, Jerry's only identification is that of a "*permanent transient*" (37). While Peter has a wife, two children, two cats, and two parakeets, Jerry owns two picture frames, both of which are empty. This disturbs Peter who inquires why Jerry does not fill

them with "your parents…perhaps…a girlfriend…" (23). Thus, the picture frames are suggestive of the heteronormative family structure which ought to fill them while also alluding to the bars of a cage "all neat and framed" such as in the zoo or those confining Peter's parakeets (23). Indeed, Jerry establishes the link between heteronormativity and zooësis when he reproaches Peter: "Look! Are you going to tell me to get married and have two parakeets?" (25). Additionally, Jerry hits on an observed weakness in Peter's carefully plotted life of binary divisions; Peter has two daughters instead of a daughter and a son. When the men begin to fight at the end of the story, Jerry reminds Peter of this detail in his otherwise perfectly divided life.

In sharing with Peter the details of his own life, Jerry tells of how he has never slept with the same woman twice. The only time he engaged in sex more than once with the same person was with a man. As he tells it:

> I've never see the little ladies more than once. I've never been able to have sex with, or, how is it put?... to make love with anybody more than once. Once; that's it…Oh wait; for a week and a half, when I was fifteen… and I hang my head in shame that puberty was late…I was a h-o-m-o-s-e-x-u-a-l. I mean, I was queer…(*Very fast*)…queer, queer, queer…with bells ringing, banners snapping in the wind. (25)

It is striking that Jerry insists on telling Peter not that he *is* a homosexual, but that he *was* a homosexual. Here, Jerry responds to Kinsey's rejection of categorizing people by any one singular and unchanging sexual identity. Thus, I do not read this use of the past tense as a suggestion that Jerry has overcome homosexuality, but rather that he no longer

identifies with the sexological term preferring instead to understand his sexuality according to a range of experiences with patterns that shift across time.

As Jerry begins to describe his sexual encounter with a sixteen year old boy, his description is replete with numbers and, in particular, of dates and of times, further connecting Albee's play to Kinsey's collection of numerical data. For example, he states:

> And for those eleven days, I met at least twice a day with the park superintendent's son…a Greek boy, whose birthday was the same as mine, except he was a year older. I think I was very much in love…maybe just with sex. But that was the jazz of a very special hotel, wasn't it? And now; oh, do I love the little ladies; really, I love them. For about an hour. (25)

In listing the time-based details such as eleven days, twice a day, birthday, year, and hour, Jerry's sexual confession produces the very type of information on frequency that was of interest to Kinsey.

The Sexological Confessional & The Inducement to Speak

What if Alfred Kinsey, rather than Peter, were on the receiving end of Jerry's sexual confessions? What, from his interview methods and statistical systematics, might Kinsey have made of Jerry's personal experiences as they are spoken in Albee's *The Zoo Story*? The next two sections engage this thought experiment in order to better understand how Albee's first play draws from and responds to the formal elements characterizing the sexological renaissance of Alfred Kinsey and its zoological roots. Indeed, given that Peter

is a publisher of textbooks, he is positioned as an intermediary between Kinsey, a textbook author, and Jerry who would have likely belonged to the category of individuals that Kinsey clustered into "lower level and underworld groups." Placing the sexological interview as it is described in the Kinsey Reports in conversation with the confessions detailed in *The Zoo Story* clarifies the formal qualities that characterize Albee's intervention. As I will discuss, Jerry's monologues initially evoke the sexological interview but then begin to shift dramatically in ways that frustrate attempts to control or qualify his experiences.

In *The History of Sexuality* (1976), Michel Foucault observes that the confession has become one of the West's "most highly valued techniques for producing truth" (59). More specifically, Foucault traces the transformation of the confessional once belonging exclusively to the realm of Catholicism in the eighteenth century to its reconstitution in nineteenth-century medicine and psychiatry. Kinsey's twentieth-century studies belong in meaningful ways to the history that Foucault details. For example, in his interviews, Kinsey asked questions that always placed "the burden of denial on the subject" (*Human Male* 53). Instead of asking whether the subject has ever engaged in a given activity, Kinsey would ask them *when* they first engaged in *every* type of activity (53). It is in this way that the sexological interview most directly appropriates the Christian confessional which presumes always and already that one has engaged in deviant activities.

In his account, Foucault describes how the clinician must earn the trust of the confessor which Kinsey also talks about at great length in his subsection on "Establishing Rapport" (48). It is here where one can observe how closely Kinsey's interview

methodology fits into Foucault's rubric; Foucault argues that the interview and questionnaire formats, both of which Kinsey utilizes, function to compel the subject to recollect and speak his personal history and memories (*History of Sexuality* 65). Indeed, Kinsey describes in his first volume the importance of mastering what Foucault calls "the inducement to speak" (65). Kinsey:

> …it is imperative that one become a master of every scientific device and of the arts by which any man has ever been persuaded any other man into exposing his activities and his innermost thoughts. Failing to win that much from the subject, no statistical accumulation, however large, can adequately portray what the human animal is doing. (*Human Male* 35)

Although as this passage suggests, Kinsey's research both hinges on and perpetuates the inducement to speak that Foucault condemns, it is important to note (as my introductory and first chapters do) that this practice emerges prior to Kinsey in nineteenth-century sexual science with figures such as Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis whom Foucault names as the first to assemble a widespread "lyrical outpouring from the sexual mosaic" (*History of Sexuality* 64).

Kinsey differed from his predecessors in that he insisted upon destabilizing the division of sexual behavior into normal and abnormal as well as disentangling sexual acts from sexual identities. Nonetheless, by the 1950s, to privately obsess over the status of one's own sexual normality was commonplace in U.S. cultural life. As the profusion of letters that Kinsey received from individuals around the country show, many were eager to confess the details of their sexual lives and concerns to the notorious doctor. As one

writer (whose name is withheld) inquires in a letter to "Dr. Kinsey" dated May 18, 1950: "The thing I desire explained is very simply this: I have absolutely no sexual sensitivity in my lips or mouth…It is very important to me to know whether this is a somewhat common phenomenon or if I am slightly abnormal in this respect" ("Letter to Dr. Kinsey" n. pag.). The writer then volunteers the following information: "Perhaps also relevant is the fact that from birth I have had but one testicle" (n. pag.). Kinsey's correspondence reflects both his empathy for others and his distrust of the normal/abnormal dichotomy that so troubled them. For example, he responds to one man in a letter dated Jan 19, 1948: "One of the worst things that can happen to a person is to have them feel that they are abnormal and different from other persons. You must not feel that for that probably is not true" (Kinsey, "Letter from Alfred Kinsey, Jan 10, 1948" n. pag.). Nonetheless, Kinsey's ambitions to grow his research sample meant that he always encouraged his writers to meet with him in person and "secure a whole history of the sort we get in personal interviews" (n. pag). Although by the time Kinsey rose to fame, Foucault had already claimed "Western man had become a confessing animal," one could argue that the famed sexologist capitalized on the cultural phenomenon that Foucault names (*History of Sexuality* 59).

On the one hand, Jerry from *The Zoo Story* serves as a parody of the sexologist, who, like Kinsey, preps and grooms strangers to confess to him. As he tells Peter: "I like to talk to somebody, really *talk;* like get to know somebody, know all about him" to which Peter "(*Lightly laughing, still a little uncomfortable)*" responds: "And am I the guinea pig for today?" (*Zoo* 65). "Who better than a nice married man…?," Peter replies

thus evoking the types of persons that comprised much of the Kinsey Reports as well as the students from whom he collected data in conjunction with his popular marriage course at Indiana University. On the other hand, the delight that Jerry derives in confessing also makes him a prime candidate for one of Kinsey's case studies. Jerry's desire to confess places him in the company of those who wrote and readily shared the details of their sexual lives to Kinsey.

Although Jerry possesses the traits of Foucault's confessing animal and enumerates his sexual experiences with ease, his monologues are tangential, equivocal, and incomplete when he speaks of other animals. Kinsey, who was wary of and refused to collect data from participants with "poor memories, hallucinations, or fantasies that distorted the facts," would have had a difficult time translating Jerry's encounters with other species into concrete data (*Human Male* 37). It is curious that Jerry's promise to tell Peter what took place at the zoo is never fully granted. Rather, Jerry circumvents the zoo story at each and every opportunity; even when he claims he is giving Peter a precise account, his speech patterns tell otherwise. In the following passage, Jerry, gives Peter his final word on the matter:

> And now I'll tell you what happened at the zoo. I think… I think this is what happened at the zoo…I think. I think that while I was at the zoo I decided that I would walk north…northerly, rather…until I found you…or somebody…and I decided that I would talk to you...I would tell you things…and things that I would tell you would…Well, here we are. You see? Here we *are.* And now I've

> told you what you wanted to know, haven't I? And now you know all about what happened at the zoo. (*Zoo* 48)

It is precisely when Jerry is speaking of other species that his monologues resist numerical containment or narrative coherence thus frustrating any attempt to quantify or control them.

In his book, *Reading Zoos: Representations of Animals and Captivity* (1998), Randy Malamud observes that: "the zoo story in *The Zoo Story,* finally, remains literally unvoiced" (55). Malamud attributes this to the fact that as an institution, the modern zoo falls into "a modernist abyss of mute ineffatability" (55). In other words, in having the zoo *story* stand in place for the *actual* zoo, Albee shows that the image of biological life that the zoo constructs is a substitute for the real thing. Although I agree with Malamud that Albee by way of Jerry exposes how the zoo places the real lives of other species under erasure, I am also interested in what is preserved in the gaps and fissures in Jerry's speech. As I aim to show, the monologues wherein Jerry details his encounters with other animals resist containment, thus freeing biological life from the master narratives of species that structure zoology and buttress sexology.[54]

Speech, Species, and Orientations

More than other forms of literature, drama situates the body as a speaking body. Whether one reads stage notes that dictate how and/or where lines ought to be spoken or whether one witnesses them performed live, the dialogue that is so central to drama by

and large necessitates a body that speaks. Thus, it seems to me that drama is a particularly fertile medium for understanding the interplay between saying and doing, discourse and embodiment, as well as words (epistemology) and the world (ontology).[55] The formal elements at work in Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story* deploy speech in ways that excavate these entanglements while jamming attempts to translate embodied experience onto a ready-made discourse that necessarily privileges the human.

Literary scholars frequently turn to the work of J.L. Austin whose lectures at Harvard (1951-1955) published under the title, *How to Do Things with Words,* theorize how language operates as a site of both saying and doing. In particular, Austin highlights what he calls performative utterances that rather than simply describe something, enact something. These include pledges, blessings, bets, dares, apologies, and confessions, etc. Austin points to the words "I do" as uttered in a marriage ceremony to exemplify his argument that speech has the potential to doubly function as a representation and an act (*How to Do Things with Words* 5). However, Austin voids from consideration performative utterances that are spoken by an actor on stage or in a soliloquy or poem, deeming these renditions "peculiar" and even "parasistic" on the "normal use of language" (22). Queer scholars have picked up on this dismissal, most notably Eve Sedgwick in her coauthored introduction with Andrew Parker to *Performativity and Performance* (1995) and Judith Butler in *Excitable Speech* (1997). For Parker and Sedgwick, the fact that Austin goes to great lengths to disavow theatrical speech as perverted, abnormal, and diseased is evidence of his "normatively homophobic thematic." Thus, Sedgwick suggests that the performative utterance "has thus been from

its inception already infected with queerness" ("Introduction: Performativity and Performance" 5). From this vantage point, *The Zoo Story* not only engages queerness in its content, such as when Jerry states that he was "queer, queer, queer…with bells ringing," but also by the very formal qualities of drama (*Zoo* 22).

Albee's theatrical deployment of language more than just perverts the so-called "normal" usage that Austin privileges. Jerry's monologues, especially when he is speaking of other animals, make use of speech acts in ways that ultimately resist epistemological capture thus interfering in the reader's attempt to categorize species. We see this in his final monologue on the zoo story when he states, "And now I'll tell you what happened at the zoo," and then without ever performing or fulfilling this pledge, "And now I've told you what you wanted to know" (48). These examples from *The Zoo Story* correspond with what Eve Sedgwick terms "periperformative utterances" in her book *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (2003) (68). As she explains: "Periperformative utterances aren't just about performative utterances in a referential sense: they cluster around them, they are near them or next to them or crowding against them; they are in the neighborhood of the performative" (68). Sedgwick's formulation provides a useful framework for understanding how Jerry's monologues jam the logics of the sexological confessional. Moreover, it shows how Jerry's speech functions in a concerted relationship to his physical orientations. Indeed, the root word, *peri*, describes a spatial relationship as in 'around' and/or 'near.'[56]

Jerry's monologues operate in strikingly similar ways to the examples of periperformative utterances that Sedgwick herself details. A scholar of Henry James,

Sedgwick interrogates his 1904 novel *The Golden Bowl* as offering prime examples. In particular, she looks at Charlotte Stant's monologue to her ex-lover on the eve of his marriage to another woman. Sedgwick quotes her:

> "I wanted you to understand. I wanted you that is, to hear. I don't care, I think, whether you understand or not. If I ask nothing of you I don't—I mayn't—ask even so much as that…What you may think of me—that it doesn't in the least matter. What I want is that it shall always be with you—so that you'll never be able quite to get rid of it—that I *did.* I won't say that *you* did—you may make as little of that as you like. But that I was her with you where we are and *as* we are—I just saying this…That's all." (quoted in *Touching Feeling* 74)

Sedgwick explains that the circularity of Charlotte's utterances places them in "a complicated relation to the performative utterance of the marriage vow about to occur" by forestalling and displacing the heteronormative speech act (74). Pointing to Charlotte's mention of unspecified sexual acts" ('I *did* [it]… I won't say that *you* did [it]')" Sedgwick argues that the novel refuses to have its character "fill a preexisting performative convention, but rather must move elaborately athwart, in creating a nonce one" (74). Although the speech trajectories in *The Zoo Story* are formally similar to those in James's novel (structured by their movements, lacunae, spits and sputters), Albee's play is unique in that the periperformative that it engages intervenes specifically in the sexual and zoological sciences; the "nonce" utterances render it impossible to translate Jerry's speech or chart his movements according to legible data.

As I have discussed, the discourse of zoology and the spatial relations of zoo-keeping operate as mechanisms to isolate and divide species from one another. Rather than fit the zoo story into these discursive and spatial frameworks, the periperformative utterances that characterize Jerry's speech circumvent them. For example, although he promises to tell (and thus perform the story of) the zoo, Jerry's monologues are instead marked by their detours in both speech and in space: "I think… I think this is what happened at the zoo…I think. I think that while I was at the zoo I decided that I would walk north…northerly, rather" (*Zoo* 48). In making use of speech acts that both say and do in ways that are inherently subversive, Albee's drama brings the listener within "the neighborhood," of the zoo to use Sedgwick's phrase without confining his characters to its logic (*Touching Feeling* 68).

The periperformative utterances in *The Zoo Story* function as linguistic bypasses that are duplicated in his literal physical movements. For example, earlier in the play he tells Peter:

> JERRY: Do you know what I did before I went to the zoo today? I walked all the way up Fifth Avenue from Washington Square; all the way.
>
> PETER: Oh; you live in the Village! (This seems to *enlighten* PETER)
>
> JERRY: No, I don't. I took the subway down to the Village so I could walk all the way up Fifth Avenue to the zoo. It's one of those things a person has to do; sometimes a person has to go a very long distance out of his way to come back to a short distance correctly. (21)

In this passage, Jerry explains how his path to the zoo is one of deviations; he ignores the prescribed lines or ready-made grids of the city in favor of another set of orientations. In response, Peter tries to make sense of Jerry and his deviant way of walking by assuming that he lives in Greenwich Village. Yet his attempt to re-position Jerry back onto a legible map, one that would recuperate him also into the identity categories associated with the Village in the 1950s—beatnicks, nonconformists, homosexual—-ultimately fails. This only elevates the tension between the two men: "PETER (almost pouting): Oh, I thought you lived in the Village. JERRY: What were you trying to do? Make sense out of things? Bring order? The old pigeonhole bit?" (21-22). Peter's desire to "bring order" to Jerry's behavior positions him in the role of the sexologist or zoologist. Moreover, using the popular nineteenth-century phrase, 'pigeonhole,' originally used to describe a literal hole for containing pigeons and then developed metaphorically as a verb for narrowly categorizing someone, Jerry cleverly shows how the containment of species life is the basis upon which sexual identity is produced.

Speaking of Interspecies Intimacies

Upon first glance, one might assume that literature is unlikely to disrupt the stratification of biological life given that seminal thinkers on the issue, namely Jacques Derrida in "The Animal that Therefore I Am" (1999) and Giorgio Agamben in *The Open: Man and Animal* (2004), contend that the disavowal of other animals is grounded in the linguistic register. For these authors, humans are the only species to ascribe themselves a

name; in doing so, they discursively divide themselves from the rest of the natural world. As I have mentioned, Albee makes a related claim in a 2006 editorial essay where he states that humans are the only species to use metaphor "to define ourselves to ourselves" ("Chimps Don't Draw" n.pag.). However, *The Zoo Story* demonstrates that language need not be disembodied from biological life; on the contrary, spoken language is an embodied act and therefore is very much of, not separate from, the worldly and the living.

In her essay, "An Ape Among Many: Animal Co-Authorship and Transpecies Epistemic Authority," American psychologist and ecologist Gay A. Bradshaw challenges the idea that the language barrier between humans and other animals has yet to be overcome. Pointing to a thirty-year study of English language aptitude among nonhuman primates that includes both human researchers and bonobo subjects, Bradshaw shows how bonobos can comprehend spoken language and symbols, decode sentence structures, and express learning of concepts like number and quantity ("Animal Co-Authorship" 17). However, it is not the measured ability for nonhuman primates to acquire so-called human language that interests Bradshaw. Instead, she looks at how humans and bonobos are co-collaborators in the study and thus argues that they "have cultivated meaning *together* across species lines" (17). This perspective is similar to that held by Barbara Smuts, an anthropologist and psychologist who has worked with baboons, dolphins, and chimpanzees. For Smuts, intimacy with other species and in particular with her own canine companion named Sufi has taught her a deep appreciation for the subtlety of language including speech, gestures, and postures ("Reflections" 115-116). Like these thinkers, my reading of *The Zoo Story* approaches language as one of many corporeal and

communicative acts. I suggest that the entanglement of species life can be approached within a language-based medium like drama especially given how dramatic speech functions as an embodied act. Therefore, the lines dividing words and biological life, the natural and the cultural, the linguistic and the corporeal are not as stringent as they may appear. Sedgwick suggests this when she claims that the borders of the linguistic and nonlinguistic are "endlessly changing, permeable, and entirely unsusceptible to any one articulation" (*Touching Feeling* 6). Some the most striking examples in Albee's dramas are when characters use speech to describe their intimacies with other species. Such speech acts reveal that the borders dividing human and nonhuman bodies are equally porous.

Albee's 1975 play, *Seascape* provides a compelling example of the author's engagement with language that exceeds human subjectivity. In two acts, *Seascape* tells the story of a nearly retired married couple named Nancy and Charlie who, while enjoying a beachside vacation, are approached by two human-sized lizards named Leslie and Sarah. Initially terrified of one another, the couples begin to communicate their curiosity about each other's lives and bodies. For instance, Leslie and Sarah are curious about the names that Nancy and Charlie give their sexual parts and they discuss at length the proper term, mammaries (*Seascape* 393). Charlie who, as a child, had longed to be a fish is surprised to find that Leslie and Sarah are prejudiced toward fish whom they speak of in racialized terms calling them "dirty" and claiming that "there's too many of them; they're all over the place" (401). These exchanges connect in significant ways to Albee's interest in how species difference serves as the bedrock of sexualized and racialized

categorization. However, it is when the two couples try to connect across the presumed abyss of their separate dialects that Albee's examination seems to question rather than reify metaphorical language. When Nancy tries to explain emotions to Sarah such as pride, jealously, frustration, and loss, she is unable to fully convey them, for as Charlie observes, she overly relies on words that describe other words. Eventually, Sarah begins to cry at her own emotional response to their discussion about emotion. In *Seascape*, Albee shows how Sarah's tears speak more loudly than any linguistic symbol. *Seascape* is reflective of Albee's ongoing interest (whether acknowledged or not) in how the experiences of bodies exceed both the parameters of language as well as the species categories ascribed to them—a theme that is evident in the culminating scenes of his first play, *The Zoo Story.*

Arguably the most fascinating monologue of *The Zoo Story* is its lengthiest called "THE STORY OF JERRY AND THE DOG" which functions as another circumvention of the zoo story (30). [57] From here, Jerry proceeds to tells Peter about his encounters with his landlady's dog that, unlike the indifferent animals one might find at the zoo, is expressive in his antipathy for Jerry. In his response to the dog's dislike of him, Jerry sets out to poison and kill the animal, a plot line that Albee recycles in his 1966 play, *A Delicate Balance,* between a man and his cat. Initially, Albee provides us with the metaphorical "dog eat dog world" that stems from and gains traction in zoological hierarchies. However, Jerry tells of how he suddenly experiences a change of heart and earnestly wants the dog to live "so that I could see what our new relationship might come

to" (33). I read this sudden shift in Jerry's attitude as a rejection of the animal metaphors that have the effect of flattening biological life such as "dog eat dog." Instead, Jerry desires to engage with the canine in a meaningful way untethered from metaphorical reductions.

The dog does, indeed, live and in their next meeting stares back at Jerry in a striking encounter in the hallway. The effect that the dog's look has on Jerry alters his preconceptions of what divides them. This type of looking is precisely what Berger claims is lost by the structure of the zoo where "even if the animal is up against the bars, less than a foot from you... *you are looking at something that has been rendered absolutely marginal"* ("Why Look at Animals?" 24). Berger explains that because of this marginalization wherein animals serve as mere tokens, "nowhere in a zoo can a stranger encounter the look of an animal. At the most, the animal's gaze flickers and passes on. They look sideways" (28). Albee excavates this look in the exchange between Jerry and the dog; rather than marginalizing the creature, the dog is centralized as a key agent of the story. Jerry describes his experience of looking back at the animal as lasting anywhere between "twenty seconds or two hours" (*Zoo* 33) which marks a shift from the exact calculations of frequency and time provided to us earlier in the play.

It is this intimacy with the dog that Jerry claims is responsible for teaching him how to love. He explains to Peter that:

> It's just…it's just that…(JERRY *is abnormally tense now*)…it's just that if you can't deal with people, you have to make a start somewhere. WITH ANIMALS!

(*Much faster now, and like a conspirator*). Don't you see? A person has to have a way of dealing with SOMETHING. If not with people…if not with people…SOMETHING. With a bed, with a cockroach, last steps. With a cockroach, with a…with a…with a carpet, a roll of toilet paper…no, not that, either…that's a mirror, too; always check bleeding. You see how hard it is to find things? With a street corner, and too many lights, all colors reflecting on the oil-wet streets…with a wisp of smoke, a wisp…of smoke…with …with pornographic paying cards, with a strongbox…WITHOUT A LOCK… (34)

Here, Jerry's monologue displaces the human as the solitary agent and locus of embodied experience enlisting instead animals, objects, insects, and colors to exert an effect on him. For Sedgwick, the rhetorical force of the periperformative rests in its ability to "concentrate in unpredictable clusters, outcrops, geological amalgrams" (*Touching Feeling* 75). This linguistic formulation is also true of evolutionary theory as it described in Darwin's writings as ontologically open and unceasingly indeterminate (Grosz *Time Travels* 40). Jerry's monologue achieves both effects; unlike the story we might get from the zoo or zoology, where life is divided, Jerry's story reveals how the material world is ontologically entangled.

Jerry continues to express his desire to engage the material world as innately porous. He tells Peter: "Where better to make a beginning...to understand and just possibly be understood…a beginning of an understanding, than with…than with… A DOG. Just that; a dog" (*Zoo* 35). By beginning with a dog, Jerry de-centers the species hierarchies that the zoo performs. Instead, the intimacy that he shares with a strange

canine in the dark hallway of his apartment building sets forth a series of embodied experiences that can't be quantified or contained by the logic structuring the sexological interview.

In her book *Tendencies* (1993), Sedgwick explains that one way to understand "queer" is as an "open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances, and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically (8). The next passage captures the queer potential of Albee's writing through Jerry's resistance to translate corporeal acts into a master narrative that easily pins down gender, race, subject, object, human, or animal, and instead thrives in the lapses and excesses of meaning that Sedgwick names. Jerry, growing increasingly intense continues to reflect on where one might locate a beginning, or an origin point, or a new ontology:

> …with love, with vomiting, with crying, with fury because pretty little ladies aren't pretty little ladies, with making money with your body which is an act of love and I could prove it, with howling because you're alive; with God. How about that? WITH GOD WHO IS A COLORED QUEEN WHO WEARS A KIMONO AND PLUCKS HIS EYEBROWS, WHO IS A WOMAN WHO CRIES WITH DETERMINATION BEHIND HER CLOSED DOOR. (*Zoo* 35)

In what becomes a cacophony of speech acts (Albee's stage notes indicate that actor who plays Jerry must make use of "a great deal of action"), Jerry destabilizes the normative chains of signifying both gender and race while also giving bodily acts such as vomiting, crying, and howling their own agency untethered from any singular or unifying

subjectivity (29). This monologue exemplifies *The Zoo Story's* intervention into the biological and sexual sciences. Though Albee himself may believe that language verifies human exceptionalism, the spoken monologue that appears in his plays resists a fixed ontology of human allowing the human to be displaced by a host of embodied sensorium and experiences that cannot be easily discerned.

"The Story of Jerry and the Dog" is strikingly similar to monologues that appear elsewhere in Albee's corpus. For example, in *The Goat,* Martin's utterances are equally periperformative as they brush up against or cluster around Austian declarations of love without objectifying Sylvia, the goat, or reducing her to an object or metaphor. Whereas Jerry uses the term "something" to give voice to his encounters with the nonhuman, Martin positions Sylvia using the negatives, "nothing" and "cannot":

> It was as if an alien came out of whatever it was, and it…took me with it, and it was….an ecstasy, and a purity, and a …..love of an ….. un-i-mag-in-able kind, and it relates to nothing *whatever*, to nothing that can be *related* to! Don't you see the…don't you see the "thing" that happened to me? What nobody understands? Why can't I feel what I'm supposed to?! Because it relates to nothing? It can't have happened! It did, but it *can't* have! (*The Goat* 81).

Like Jerry from *The Zoo Story*, Martin from *The Goat* would likely frustrate Kinsey's attempts to make narrative or numerical sense of his behavior. Although both characters meet the criteria for the sexological interview in that they are both compelled to speak, how Jerry and Martin speak stymies attempts to translate their experiences into chartable data. Indeed, Martin serves as an anomaly according to the findings of Kinsey's first

volume which suggest that human sexual contact with nonhuman animals occurs almost exclusively among young, uneducated, farm boys and is "extremely rare" among married males (*Human Male* 673). In *The Zoo Story,* Jerry's character brings the reader on a journey to figure out or make sense of his behavior only to ultimately stonewall such attempts when it comes to his most meaningful experiences with other species. Albee's engagement with biological life as ontologically exceeding numerical and linguistic interpretations is evident in *Seascape* as well when discussing evolutionary theory, Charlie explains: "It's called flux. And it's always going on; right now, to all of us. SARAH: (*Shy).* Is it for the better? CHARLIE: "Is it for the *better*? I don't *know.* Progress is a set of assumptions" (*Seascape* 412).

By end of *The Zoo Story*, Jerry has stolen the very bench that Peter sits upon. The stability of Peter's heteronormative life, his wife, two children, two cats, and two parakeets dissolves even while Peter spirals into a frenzy to maintain his seat. In this final fight scene, Peter finds himself holding Jerry's knife as Jerry incites him to fight: "fight for that bench; fight for your parakeets; fight for your cats, fight for your two daughters; fight for your wife; fight for your manhood, you pathetic little vegetable" (*Zoo* 47). Jerry then throws his body onto the knife that Peter is holding and before dying tells Peter: "you're an animal. You're an animal, too" (49). These last lines of Jerry's suggest that the most potent use of language in Albee's *The Zoo Story* is used to question, rather than inscribe, human exceptionalism.[58]

In 2004, Albee wrote a brand new prequel to *The Zoo Story* called *At Home in the Zoo.* The new material explores Peter's life more closely and details the events that led

him to take to Central park to read his textbook on the fateful day he meets Jerry. At the time that Albee added the prequel, fascination with Alfred Kinsey was being renewed on the theater stage. In 2003, Steve Morgan Haskell's play *Fucking Wasps* was produced and *Dr. Sex,* a musical about Kinsey and his wife, appeared the same year as Albee's *At Home at the Zoo* which follows Peter and his wife. That *The Zoo Story* re-appeared at this very time further suggests that Albee's work continues to function as an intervention into this period of sexological and zoological research. Even more telling is that the beginning lines of the first act now read: "We should talk" (*At Home at the Zoo* 9). However, talking in *The Zoo Story* ultimately entangles bodies and desires as opposed to sorting them into the monolithic significations that characterize the zoological imagination.

Chapter 3

Revising the Species in Marian Engel's *Bear*

Females… rarely, either in their conversation, in their written literature, or in their art, deal with fantastic or impossible sorts of sexual activity.

—Alfred Kinsey, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*

And like no human being she had ever known it preserved her pleasure. When she came, she whimpered, and the bear licked her tears.

—Marian Engel, *Bear*

When Marian Engel was awarded Canada's top literary honor, the Governor General's Award, for her novella *Bear* in 1976, the contours of obscenity had been significantly reshaped from when Djuna Barnes wrote *Nightwood* in 1936 and Edward Albee produced *The Zoo Story* in 1958. Yet even on the heels of the sexual revolution, the interspecies intimacies that are the centerpiece of Engel's plot raised eyebrows. *Bear* tells a story about an archivist named Lou who is sent by the Historical Institute in Toronto for whom she works to catalogue the late Colonel Joceyln Cary's gifted estate on an isolated island in Northern Ontario. It is there that Engel depicts the all-consuming romance, replete with explicit scenes of sex, between the heroine and the island's only other inhabitant, a partially domesticated ursine. Although lauded by many, the novella did not escape immediate outrage by some who saw it as "too extreme and too

implausible to be read without snickering" (Moss Review of *Bear* 31). One reviewer deemed it: "a pastoral fable that degenerates into porno fantasy" (quoted from Verduyn *Lifelines* 118). And Scott Symon's attack of Engel, her fiction, and all who praised it in his 1977 essay in *West Coast Review* titled: "The Canadian Bestiary: Ongoing Literary Depravity" was especially scathing at the time. Given all the fuss over its deviant sexual content, it is somewhat surprising that *Bear,* though it is more widely read among ecocritics, remains absent from the queer literary canon. This chapter interrogates both the shape of this absence and the stakes of it.

One could easily argue that the snickering and outrage that *Bear* received is in part a masculinist reaction to a woman writer representing explicit sexual pleasure that excludes human men. Indeed, among the hundreds of representations of the Greek myth of interspecies sex known as "Leda and the Swan," William Butler Yeats's sonnet written in 1924 to much acclaim failed to receive the same backlash as *Bear* did in 1976 or even Yeats's contemporary, Radclyffe Hall whose lesbian novel *The Well of Loneliness* was tried for obscenity in 1928. Harold Bloom even named the sonnet a masterpiece in 1972, four years before *Bear* was published (*Yeats* 363). Like Yeats, Engel explicitly draws on mythology; Lou's archival work uncovers that the previous owners of the island estate had collected bear legends from around the world. *Bear* incorporates mythology from Wales, Ireland, Japan, and Newfoundland into the story as well as Eskimo, Ruthenian, and Norwegian lore, and a 1604 song from the Ursuline Order of Women. However, unlike Yeats's "Leda and the Swan" which describes the rape of Leda by the god Zeus disguised as the title animal, Engel's story filters through and discards myths that enact

violence upon women and nonhuman animals. For example, Lou shudders upon reading a story about the Ainu bear sacrifice which involves garroting a bear cub taken from its mother; instead, she lingers on myths like the "Old Finnish Legend" that claims that "*The offspring of a woman and a bear is a hero*" (*Bear* 99). This revisionist element of Engel's writing is what made her one of Canada's top feminist authors. Moreover, that Lou both takes pleasure in and benefits from her sexual encounters with bear stands apart from other representations of interspecies sex where women tend to experience pain and harm against their will.

As I state in earlier chapters, this dissertation does not seek to make a case for sex with other animals, but it does delve into the anxieties produced by the topic which persist despite broad representation across literary genres and periods. Engel's depiction of interspecies eroticism is unique in that it defies Western tropes of the powerless woman and the abject pregnancy. In abandoning these conventions, *Bear* reads as particularly deviant even for a post-sexual revolution audience. Additionally, even among feminist scholarship that celebrates Engel's evocative challenge to heteropatriarchal conceptions of women's sexual pleasure, there is a tendency to conceal, explain away, or handle with kid gloves the actual sex between Lou and the bear.

When friend of Marian Engel, Adele Wiseman, initially pitched *Bear* to publishers, she admitted that: "the physical stuff will provide the public furor" (Panofsky *The Force of Vocation* 128). This chapter takes the "physical stuff" of Engel's story seriously. This is especially important given that *Bear* emerged in the mid-1970s during a moment of heightened consciousness with regards to how bodies and sexual acts are

policed and politicized.[59] Attending to the material specificity of the interspecies intimacies in *Bear* and the reactions to it enables me to probe the limits of the scientific, political, and literary imagination over the course of several upheavals in the conversation on human sexuality during the 1960s, 70s, and 80s. These include inconsistencies between popular beliefs about women's anatomy and the findings of contemporary sexology, debates among feminists over the parameters of sexual freedom and the limitations of identity politics, and the growth of poststructuralism characterized by its turn away from the natural status of bodies and desires and toward the ways that knowledge about them is socially constructed and regulated across overlapping ideologies. These shifts in the larger conversation about sex and bodies set the stage for the development of queer theory by the 1990s.

On a general level, this chapter turns to *Bear* as a barometer for understanding the increasing pressures building around the "physical stuff" that eventually gave rise to queer theory.[60] More specifically, I place Engel's writing in the center of a panorama between the belief expressed in the 1971 health manual/political treatise *Our Bodies Ourselves* that "We are our bodies" and the argument developed in Judith Butler's 1990 seminal work *Gender Trouble* that our bodies are the sites of cultural inscription. Pushing against the unexamined terms of both claims, Engel asks readers to consider: What happens to our material bodies as well as to the cultural significations of sex, gender, and sexuality when one engages intimately across *species* lines? *Bear* begins to formulate possible answers to this question. A meditation on how the lines dividing biological life are more porous that our epistemologies allow, the novella shows how crossing the

borders of species has the potential to dissolve reductive preconceptions of who it is we think "we" are. On the one hand, I seek to show how Engel's novella, rendered obscure in the epicenter of several tensions and transitions, anticipates and aids in the development of queer theory and its critique of identity politics. On the other hand, *Bear*'s refusal to couch sexual embodiment and pleasure safely within the human species places pressure on an unacknowledged commitment to human subjectivity circulating queer theory of the 1990s. Overall, the goal of this chapter is to recover what queer theory left behind by omitting from the scope of its challenge the boundaries between species that *Bear* radically unsettles.

Over the next several sections, I trace the breadth of conversations on sex—and implicitly on species—with which Engel's small, but potent story intervenes. I begin with Engel's revisionist framework in order to examine how *Bear* works from within the conventions of pastoral literature in order to expose its underlying assumption that nature is a site of purity and passivity. Turning to the feminist sex research of Anne Koedt in "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm" (1968), I explore how Engel advances Koedt's argument that women's sexual anatomy has been understood only in relationship to men's; in replacing the hero of her romance story with a nonhuman bear, Engel foregrounds sexual pleasure that is irrevocably untethered from heteroreproductive acts. Finally, I turn to the controversies leading up to the Sex Wars of the 1980s. More specifically, I place Engel's novella in conversation with women's romance reading and the contentious anti-pornography legislation (1983) proposed by Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon. In doing so, I show how Engel's use of interspecies intimacies

allows her to embrace the fleshiness of sex that is absent in the grocery story romance while also circumventing the structural inequality of heterosexism privileged by mainstream pornography. Together, this organization helps me to explore how *Bear* serves not only as a challenge to the epistemologies brought to representations of nature, but also as an ontological contestation that posits the materiality of species life as a potential site of queer transformation.

Perverting Nature

One of the ways that the biological life has been sublimated and tamed is through literary representations that posit nature and culture as dichotomous—a feature that is especially true of pastoral literature. In this framework, nature as well as women and people of color are portrayed as passive and idyllic slates upon which the actions of white men are written. In the pastoral, virtuous actions on behalf of the shepherds of nature preserve its purity with an explicit contrast to the abject filth and corruption of urban life. Engel's particular approach to troubling these binaries draws in part from postmodernist poetics and the strategies of feminist literary figures during the 1970s (Verduyn *Lifelines Marian Engel's Writings* 4). In keeping with these movements, *Bear* works within the conventions of literary genre in order to contest and subvert its embedded assumptions (Hutcheon *Politics of Postmodernism* 101). Engel's contemporary, Adrienne Rich names this strategy "revision" and describes it as "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction" (*On Lies, Secrets, and Silence*

18). Indeed, in reflecting upon her own work, Engel claims: "One of the things fiction writers can do is lay out the cards a little differently so that the pattern can be more clearly seen…their job is devising different ways of seeing" ("Interview with Grame Gibson" 89). This is precisely what the protagonist, Lou, whose profession of archivist, is equipped to achieve.

Like Rich, whose celebrated poem, "Diving into the Wreck" (1973) describes how women writers and readers must reexamine the "book of myths in which our names do not appear," Engel shows interest in recovering figures who have been placed under erasure. For example, half-way through *Bear,* readers learn that the late Colonel Jocelyn Cary was, to Lou's surprise, a woman. Moreover, she was the first on the island to have worn pants and whose large hands were described as the size of a man's (*Bear* 78). Lou's only acquaintance on the mainland, a man whose name "Homer" plays on the foundations of the Western literary canon, describes Colonel Cary dismissively as an "imitation man" (81). Thus, *Bear* reflects upon the failures of dominant literary history to adequately account for figures whose bodies exceed and blur conventional gender norms. Additionally, Lou learns that one of the Colonel's beloved bears who had followed her around like a dog was shot and killed by a hunter who fashioned himself as macho Ernest Hemingway. Thus, in addition to exploring the binaries that represent men and heterosexuality at the expense of women and queerness, Engel also reveals how the dichotomy between humans and nonhuman animals strengthens social hierarchies and countenances violence.

As I have mentioned, Lou's role as an archivist explicitly works toward the novel's revisionist politics. That Lou must journey away from the city and into the wilderness enables Engel to enact and revise representations of nature from within the conventions of pastoral writing. For example, Homer describes how the locals "send all the tourists down to gaggle at that house Longfellow was supposed to have written that Indian poem in"(*Bear* 22). Here, Engel refers to the pastoral epic *The Song of Hiawatha* (1855) which Henry Longfellow adapted from the writings of nineteenth-century ethnographer and nature writer, Henry Schoolcraft. The poem is especially notable for having developed the stereotype of the noble savage who represents an idealized vision of indigeneity as synonymous with the natural environment uncorrupted by man.

Although *Bear* assumes the setting of the pastoral, the description readers receive of the nonhuman protagonist destabilizes the binaries of nature/culture that underpin the genre. Bear is described by Engel in terms that resist sentimentalizing him as either exotically wild on the one hand or soft and honeyed on the other. For example, Lou explains: "you have these ideas about bears: that they are toys, or something fierce and ogreish in the woods… But this bear is a lump" (34). She goes on: "its nose was more pointed than she expected——years of corruption by teddy bears, she supposed—and its eyes were genuinely piggish and ugly" (35). As Lou's intimacy with bear develops, they share cornflakes with powdered milk and even develop a morning defecation routine with another (49, 121). Together, along with Engel's descriptions, these acts blur the neat and tidy lines separating the artificial from the natural and the civil from the abject that structure Western representations of nature. Later, as Lou and bear's bodies meet in the

physical and graphic scenes of sex, these boundary lines are destabilized even further. Thus, Engel sullies the purity of the nature myth propagated by the pastoral from the inside out; in doing so, she unearths the queer potential of nature and of biological life.

Alfred Kinsey, whose famed reports on human sexuality foreshadowed the sexual revolution, was aware that farm boys and shepherds could very well smear the moral and legal codes separating man from nature. Though he does not describe it in those terms, his data on human sexual behavior revealed that between 26-28% of rural males of the college level have had some animal experience to the point of orgasm, an occurrence that Kinsey insists need not worry the clinician (*Human Male* 671). For, as Kinsey notes, such animal contacts are "replaced by coitus with human female as soon as that is available" (677). Writing from the perspective of a female character, *Bear* works against the patriarchal notion of replacement wherein women's and animal's bodies are exchangeable vessels for men's desires. More specifically, the novel challenges the implicit assumption that hetero-penetrative sex is the most desirable precisely because it is deemed most natural.

Beyond Myth: Revising Anatomy

Kinsey himself was fascinated by the breadth of interspecies erotica produced from the earliest records of human history to the art and literature of the twentieth century and his own personal collection of artifacts housed at the Kinsey Institute in Indiana University includes many examples (*Report on Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*

502). As he describes in 1953 in the second volume of the Kinsey Reports, the sexual pairings between human females and other species depicted in art include creatures as diverse as "bears, apes, bulls, goats, horses, ponies, wolves, snakes, crocodiles, and still lower vertebrate" (502). Nonetheless, Kinsey believed that for a woman to author fantastical or impossible types of sexual activity was outside of the realm of consideration. In his reasoning, he claims that females "are less inclined to be interested in activities which lie beyond the immediately available techniques" (502). Engel's *Bear* draws, in part, on Kinsey's assumption that women are realists, but in doing so she undermines his conclusions. For example, Lou's lover is neither mystical nor unavailable. Speaking in the first person narration, Lou makes it clear to the reader that: "This is a bear. Not a toy bear, not a Pooh bear, not an airlines Koala bear. A real bear" (Engel *Bear* 34). Through Lou's disclosure of bear's realness, Engel insists that one ought not to read the novella as a fantasy or as a metaphor for something else other than a literal sexual relationship between a human woman and a nonhuman bear. In this way, Engel incorporates into her story the very literalism that Kinsey claims prevents women from representing interspecies sex.

Because he is partially domesticated, bear is also physically available to Lou, lounging under her feet as she reads at night and joining her for morning swims. As opposed to the interspecies erotica that interests Kinsey where animals are the manifestations of gods and the erotic plotlines fulfill ready-made aphorisms and cautionary wisdom, the sex between Lou and the bear occurs precisely because he is both very real and very near. Again, *Bear* conforms to Kinsey's interpretation that the human

female prefers sex that is pragmatic; however, it is precisely the realism of this sexual pairing which allows for a deep description of both female and bear anatomy. As Engel reveals, the glaringly real is far more provocative and destabilizing than even myth allows.

It is worth noting that although Kinsey excludes women from the realm of interspecies myth-making, his chapter on "Animal Contacts" uncovers that interspecies sex is more common in the natural world than is often assumed (*Human Female* 509). He contends that though certain anatomical considerations prevent some forms of mating, "individuals of quite unrelated species do make inter-specific contacts more often than biologists have heretofore allowed" (*Human Female* 503-504). Among human females, Kinsey reveals that 1.7 percent of pre-adolescent girls experience their first orgasm in contact with other species of animals; in adults, that number increases to 3.6 percent (505). Moreover, although the majority of myths that depict female sexual pairings with other animals are largely concerned with coitus, nearly all of the recorded animal contacts between women and other species in Kinsey's research involve non-penetrative sex. This is also true of Engel's *Bear* as the sex between the heroine and hero is exclusive to cunninglingus. Although anatomy prevents bear from penetrating Lou, his ability to perform oral sex on her is precisely what preserves Lou's pleasure. Kinsey's work in this chapter and elsewhere in *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* implicitly shows that representations of women's sexuality overestimates hetero-penetrative sex, a pattern that feminists by the late 1960s sought to make explicit.

Feminist Anne Koedt was especially interested in the details and implications of Kinsey's research on female sexual behavior as well as the findings by mid-century sexologists like G. Lombard Kelly in *Sexual Feeling in Married Men and Women* (1963) and William H. Masters and Virginia E. Johnson in *Human Sexual Response* (1966). In her well-known and widely disseminated essay, "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm" (1968), Koedt makes explicit that the anatomical evidence of these studies acknowledges the clitoris, not the vagina, as the primary source of orgasm. For example, Kinsey concludes that the vagina "is of minimum importance in contributing to the erotic responses of the female. It may even contribute more to the sexual arousal of the male than it does to the arousal of the female" (*Human Female* 592). Thus, Koedt argues that social knowledge about female anatomy remains bound to men's. She states: "Women have thus been defined sexually in terms of what pleasures men; our own biology has not been properly analyzed" ("The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm 244). Koedt suggests that grounding women's sexual pleasure in the body's anatomy—a characteristic that is shared also by Engel in *Bear*— is a powerful method for redefining women's sexuality and discarding "normal" frameworks for sexual pleasure (222). Although, she turns to the evidence produced by mid-century sexologists such as Kinsey, Kelly, and Masters and Johnson, she argues that their focus on modernizing marriage hindered their ability to follow their findings to their logical conclusions (243). Instead, Koedt sought to show that women's sexual gratification was autonomous from men's, and thus neither bound by intercourse nor to heterosexuality.

As Jane Gerhard explains, "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm" works against two constructions of female sexuality: the sexually passive woman of psychoanalysis and the liberated woman of the sexual revolution, both of whom share "an essential heterosexuality" that over represents the vaginal orgasm ("Revisiting "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm"" 451). In the first, the "transfer theory" popularized by Freud in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) acknowledges the clitoris as a source of sexual satisfaction but sees it is as the erotic register of the girl child and a manifestation of her identification with the penis. Freud argues that upon reaching adulthood, a girl's erotic zones would be properly transferred to the vagina which he views as the source of a more mature and robust orgasm that effectively joins women's pleasure with the natural order of reproduction. The failure to abandon one's erotic attachment to clitoris was thus theorized as the cause of women's inability to achieve orgasm through the vagina, known as frigidity. Koedt recognizes that modern men and women need not have read Freud to have encountered these general beliefs about women's sexual inadequacy which infiltrated literature, parenting and marriage books, doctor's offices, Hollywood movies, and mainstream magazines (Gerhard 460).

On the one hand, Koedt's essay challenges in particular the assumption that women's bodies are pathologically frigid if they do not confirm the naturalization of heterosexuality and the belief that reproductive forms of sex are the most erotic. On the other hand, Gerhard suggests that transfer theory actually holds an unintended and ironic consequence of establishing girlhood and its attachment to the penis-like clitoris as queer. She explains:

> Within the terms of psychoanalysis, the girl, for a brief moment, existed between sexual identities, she was neither purely masculine nor feminine, neither simply homosexual nor purely heterosexual, but somehow all of these at once. The outcome of such a liminality, of a temporarily existing between genders and sexualities, was an instability at the heart of girl's heterosexually identity. ("Revisiting "The Myth"" 453)

Marian Engel's *Bear* exploits this unintended effect of the transfer theory that Gerhard names by staging a regression to girlhood for Lou with each clitoral orgasm brought about by bear. For example, in the very beginning of the novella, Lou is described in terms that evoke frigidity. She is "a mole, buried deep in her office…scurrying hastily through the tube of winter" (*Bear* 11). Engel describes how although she does not like cold air on her skin, Lou also dislikes the spring sunbeams that filter through her musty office exposing the dust and ash of life and the "flaws in her plodding private world" (12). Yet in the peak of her romance with bear, Lou is described as child-like:

> When there were no motorboats she now swam with the bear, swam for hours, splashing and fishing him pretty stones which he accepted gravely and held to his short-sighted eyes. On the shore, he tossed her pinecones... They sat with their legs splayed on the grass and rolled it between them. She tried to toss it, but he seemed to be afraid, not able to catch it, so they rolled it gravel, hour, it seemed, after hour. Swam again, Played seal games. He swam underneath her and blew bubbles at her breasts. She spread her legs to catch them. (117)

This description of Lou differs dramatically from the beginning of the novella, a woman left "cold" by human men including the Director of the Institute who "fucked her" weekly (92). Indeed, the more non-reproductive sex that Lou engages in with bear, the more she regresses to a queer state of girlhood. In this way, Lou's own body becomes the site of queer transformation.

Lou does not only deviate from the prescribed boundaries of gender, her body also begins to straddle the lines between human and nonhuman. Engel writes: "Her flesh, her hair, her teeth and her fingernails smelled of bear, and this smell was very sweet to her" (120). By physically taking on the materiality of another species, Engel explores how the borders separating bodies are more porous that is typically assumed.

What makes Koedt a particularly compelling pairing with Engel is that both authors ground their analysis in the body itself and its anatomical capacity to defy representational systems. Indeed, like Koedt, who turns to the anatomical evidence gathered by sexologists like Masters and Johnson, Lou becomes equally engrossed in anatomy. Additionally, the orgasms that Lou achieves with bear have the double effect of both repudiating hetero-penetrative sex as the preferred method of women's sexual pleasure and negating the forced erotic underpinnings of reproduction. Indeed, the interspecies sex of *Bear* radically contests the ways in which the human species and its reproductive futures have been inscribed and regulated on women's bodies.

Lou's quest to document a straightforward history of colonial settlement in the region becomes increasingly frustrated by the tiny notes that Colonel Cary has left behind which fall out of the contents of the library. Detailing zoological curiosa, they stray from

the master narratives that Lou's employer, the Historical Institute in Toronto, desires to know (91). For example, from an encyclopedia, Lou discovers the Colonel's hand-written details on ursus "*In the Linnean System*" that read: "*Tongue has a longitudal groove. Kidneys lobed as in bunches of grapes; no seminal vesticles. Bone in penis. In the female, the vagina is longitudinally ridged. Clitoris resides in a deep cavity*" (43-44). Initially, these driftless notes, which are also strikingly specific in their detail, make Lou feel "weak, unable to free herself from the concrete" "like some French novelist who having discarded plot and character was left to build an abstract structure, and was too tradition bound to do so" (84). However, the more comfortable Lou becomes with this type of reading, the more she finds herself abandoning an abstracted and removed narrative of the estate; instead, she becomes delightfully lost in their concrete content. Moreover, Lou is compelled to engage in physical contact with the bear of whom the notes speak. For instance, the details describing the longitudal groove of the ursine tongue are the very basis upon which Lou recognizes bear's capacity to perform cunninglingis. Thus, Engel plays with name of the encyclopedia's publisher, "The Society for the Promotion of Useful Knowledge" and like Koedt, she uncovers anatomy as a site of sexual liberation (84).

While reading the autobiography of Edward Trelawny, companion to Lord Byron, Lou recalls that the famous romantic poet had kept a pet bear in his Cambridge dormitory. At this realization, she exclaims: "Trelawney, Colonel Cary. The bear. There was some connection, some unfingerable intimacy among them, some tie between longing and desire and the achievable" (91). This prompts Lou to rub her feet deeper into

bear's fur before undressing herself and lying down beside him awaiting the "achievable" to happen. The narration then describes what happens next:

> He put out his moley tongue. It was fat, and, as the Cyclopaedia says, vertically ridged. He begin to lick her. A fat, freckled, pink and black tongue. It licked. It rasped, to a degree. It probed. It felt very warm and good and strange. What the hell did Byron do with his bear? She wondered…The tongue that was muscular but also capable of lengthening itself like an eel found all her secret places. And like no human being she had ever known it preserved in her pleasure (93).

In this scene, Lou engages with the fleshiness of bear's body and its capacity to interact with her own. Stacy Alaimo in her book *Undomesticated Ground* (2000) refers to the encyclopedic notes that Lou finds as "distant, scientific, disembodied fragments of information," which contrast with the real material bear who manages to ascend the stairs into the library and thus draw Lou and the reader's attention to the concreteness of his presence (151). However, from another vantage point one could argue that like Koedt, Engel reinserts materiality back into the removed language of zoological taxonomy.

Anatomical notes are revised by Engel as erotic when physically read as Lou does, "running her bare foot over his thick, soft coat, exploring it with her toes, finding it had depths and depths, layers and layers" (*Bear* 57). In this scene, the foot replaces the eye as it seeks and finds an animacy in bear's fur that is denied by the removed distance of reading alone. Thus, the novella promotes, as Alaimo suggests, a deeply embodied form of knowledge. Indeed, as Lou becomes immersed in her romance with bear, she grows wary of her profession. She explains: "You could take any life and shuffle it on

cards…lay it out in a pyramid solitaire" (83). What once seemed "beautiful, capable of making an order of their own, capable of being in the end filed and sorted so that she could find a structure" to Lou now seems vacant compared to the corporeal intimacies that she experiences bear (83). Lou's intimacies with bear produce a more fully fleshed out account of the body than the library catalogue allows.

In addition to animating the body's materiality, the substances of the body deemed off limits according to acceptable sexuality are embraced by Lou who begins to "shit with bear" and who finds that his licking becomes more assiduous when she is menstruating (49). As I mention, beginning the novel as a committed archivist, Lou's intimacies with bear lead her to grow disdainful of what she finds in the library: works that are dismissive of women and advocate for an untenable degree of cleanliness. In reading a Post-Victorian biography of Beau Brummell, Lou remarks:

> How she disapproved of him, how she admired him. His egg-like perfect sense of himself never faltered…who would not touch reality with a barge-pole, who invented the necktie and made it fashionable to be clean…really! She looked up at Cary and down at the bear and was suddenly exquisitely happy. Worlds changed. Two men in scarlet uniforms…She felt victorious over them; she felt she was their inheritor: a woman rubbing her foot in the thick black pelt of a bear was more than they could have imagined. (57)

Engel's particular focus on representations of nature formulated for example, in the generic conventions for example of pastoral literature and zoological taxonomy, allows her to challenge the taming of species life and thus the limited articulations of human

identity that augment reductive treatments of gender, sex, and sexuality. However, the strength of *Bear* resides not simply in Engel's ability to confront the problematic epistemologies brought to literary and scientific history. The physical intimacy that Lou shares with bear effectively exceeds the bounds of her archival project—and by extension, Engel's own revisionism. As Catriona Sandilands observes in her essay "Wild Democracy" (1997), the world that Lou inhabits "represents the sensuous present; it is a world of smell, touch, and bodily presence, of shit, fur, and blood" (137). For Sandilands, this bodily presence is crucial. As she explains, it provides a "recognition of nature as marking the places where human speech cannot reach, as resisting the tendency of human language to take an ideological stance" (142). In my own thinking, this is precisely what makes *Bear* such a queer text. As I will explore in the next section, Engel's novella emerges just prior to the Sex Wars beginning in the late 1970s through the 1980s. This moment, characterized by debates between anti-pornography activists Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin and those who coined themselves "pro-sex" feminists was a polarizing moment for second-wave feminism that gave way to the rise of queer theory.

Romancing the Animal & Revising Pornography

In addition to reworking the conventions of pastoral literature and zoological taxonomy from within, Engel is also interested in genres that have been particularly divisive among feminists, namely, romance reading and pornography. These two genres

tend to reflect the figure of the "liberated modern woman" that Gerhard describes as being necessarily heterosexual. Although *Bear* legitimates both genres, it also pushes against the heternormative terms of their consumption.

Exemplifying the novel's visual play with the romance genre, *Bear's* original paperback cover in 1976 by Bantam Books appealed to the aesthetic of pulp romance novels. Featuring a half nude woman with long flowing hair entangled with the figure behind her, the cover replaces a hero's locks with the fur of a dark bear as he hovers over the heroine's naked skin, his claws and her hand almost touching. In noting the jacket's flirtation with the bodice ripper, Stacy Alaimo claims that: "*Bear* acts out Moby-Dick as a grocery store romance" (Undomesticated 149). Engel's interest in pulp romance takes on added significance when considering that Toronto is home to one of the world's largest publishers of romance fiction, Harlequin, which was caught up in a so-called "Romance War" with another publisher beginning in the mid-70s at the time that Engel was writing.[61] A few years later in 1979, Janice Radway began interviewing the Smithton women for her famous study, *Reading the Romance* (1984), which challenged the reactions from, on the one hand, conservatives who were concerned that wholesome stay-at-home mothers were consuming porn by the pulp and, on the other hand, feminists who saw the reading material as patriarchal fantasies for unenlightened women. The hype over romance reading at the time of the novella's publication makes Engel's choice to cast her heroine and hero as, respectively, a woman and bear particularly political, especially given the novel's explicit scenes of sex between the romantic couple.

Although *Bear* reads as a romance novel, the novella actually began as a pornographic story as Engel told the Toronto Star in 1976. As she put it: "All pornography takes place in an isolated palace so I built my isolated palace…then in walked the bear" (3). Pornography is a visual genre; regardless of the medium, it is concerned with the visualization of bodies, their forms, movements, and capacities even while mainstream pornography, in its subordination of women, has been driven to limit them.

Coral Ann Howells recognizes that both genres of romance and pornography are at stake in Engel's fiction stating that: "Not only does this novel expose the hidden dynamics of women's romantic fiction, it also turns upside down the power fantasies of conventional male-oriented pornography" (109). Although Engel herself suggests that in its journey toward novel, *Bear* could not sustain itself as a pornographic story, Howells sees Engel's work as retaining key features of porn especially: "its desire to transgress or transcend limits within the self" (109). Using Anne Barr Snitow's definition of pornography as "the explosion of the boundaries of the self…a fantasy of an extreme state in which all social constraints are overwhelmed by a flood of sexual energy," Howells relies on a formulation of the genre that is very different from definitions emerging at the time by anti-pornography activists such as Andrea Dworkin and Catharine Mackinnon ("Mass Market Romance 269). Dworkin and MacKinnon's proposed definition of pornography in 1983 as "the sexually explicit subordination of women" does not describe the empowerment story of Bear's woman protagonist, Lou ("Model Antipornography Civil Rights Ordinance" 138). And even when the novel rubs

up against the humanist impulses of Dworkin and MacKinnon's legalese, a) "women are presented dehumanized" and b) shown as "filthy" or "bleeding," the novel resists the commodification that make these particular representations problematic for pornography opponents (138-142).

The filth and blood that Engel presents in her scenes of intimacy are untethered from traditional forms of dominance. Lou's menstrual blood is revised as erotic because its scent incites bear's tongue to lick. Dworkin and Mackinnon's concern here is the degradation of women in pornography by downgrading their "human" bodies in status through assuming particular forms and functions linked visually with animality: near the ground, on all fours, without voice, etc. Whereas this process of degradation of women is inscribed on the body symbolically through asymmetrical relations of man/woman, human/animal, Engel re-vises degradation by visualizing the abject matter of bodies as shared, between and across species. The defecation routine that Lou and bear enjoy is just one example of their bodies assuming the same positions and producing the same substance. Additionally, although Dworkin and MacKinnon include the mention of "animals" in their ordinance, *Bear* averts the act of penetration that the opponents see as central to violence against women in bestiality pornography.

Bear precedes the first version of the Dworkin-MacKinnon Ordinance by seven years, however, the novel plays with the boundaries of extreme states "beyond social constraint" that pro-sex feminists celebrate while resisting the subordination of women that the anti-pornography feminists decry. More than just straddling these two positions, Engel complicates the role of filth, blood, and species boundaries in representations of

sex that challenges the presumed humanist subjectivity on both sides of the debate. Rather than rehashing the debates made by feminist opponents of pornography and the sex-positive movement, I am more interested in how Engel's *Bear* promotes an anti-humanist model of sexual representation in the middle of vibrant civil rights dialogues which show a tendency to enact an exclusion of other species through a narrow human rights model. The interspecies intimacies that are front and center of *Bear* instead confound problematic discussions of which bodies occupy subject versus object positions.

As with the other works in my dissertation, the reactions to interspecies intimacies are just as revealing as the texts themselves. Exemplifying the tendency to evade the interspecies intimacies that are so central to Engel's novella, the scholarship in the immediate aftermath of its publication tries to compensate for Engel's queer imagination by explaining the bestiality away, namely, as a moral tale on what it means to be "human." For instance, Donald Hair's 1982 review in *Canadian Literature* argues that Lou's sexual experiences with the bear leads to a "renewal of her fully human self" which, he claims, began as a "fragmented individual with dried-up feelings and a barren intellect" and becomes "whole" (34). More explicitly, Hair argues: "in symbolic terms, the bear releases Lou into her full human identity by marking the limits of kinship, and finally, separating animal from the human" (38). Hair's impulse to mark an ontology of the human is precisely what Engel challenges, for instance, when Lou declares she is "none the wiser from the perusal of a book that purported to reconcile *Genesis* and *The Origin of Species*" (68). And yet, Coral Ann Howells claims in her article "Marian

Engel's Bear: Pastoral, Porn, and Myth" (1986) that Lou ultimately recognizes "herself as human, him as animal, and the natural order as inviolable" (111). Both scholars, in claiming a sanctified line between Lou and bear, point to the textual detail that bear prefers oral sex and refuses to penetrate the heroine. Thus, Hair and Howells imply not only that the interspecies intimacies explored by Engel are ultimately unnatural, but that hetero-penetrative sex is the marker of what is.

The boundary between species rests on the so-called "order" of hetero sex in these readings is telling. Alaimo offers a fresh counter-criticism to the humanist barriers erected by earlier critics. As she argues: "That it is the bear, not the human, who draws the 'ethical' line between them, who makes the 'moral' distinction confounds any conventional system of ethics and muddles the distinction between human and animal (the very distinction that 'natural law; supposedly upholds" (*Undomesticated Ground* 153). She goes on: "Rather than reading the scene in which the bear refuses to penetrate Lou as a long-awaited construction of a barrier between human and animal, nature and culture, one can instead read it is a parody of phallic centrality, deflating the "'great cock'" (153). Indeed, bear's preference for cunninglingus topples dominant representations of sex in nature where penetration is seen as the only legible sex act and is naturalized for its role in reproducing the species.

Where Engel has collapsed the border between species, Hair and Howells reconstitute it in their readings of the novel. Others, however, simply relegate bear to subtext. This is the case in early feminist scholarship on the novel, such as in Dorothy Jones's "Marian Engel's Bear: Gothic Romance in Canada" (1982) and in Margery Fee's

"Articulating the Female Subject: The Example of Marian Engel's *Bear*" (1988). In these readings, the authors wed the moments of interspecies sex to Lou's journey of self-discovery beyond patriarchy. Emptied of his own agency, bear is footnoted as the catalyst of Lou's empowerment story. While Jones and Fee offer important insights as to how female subjectivity must work with and against particular tensions around women's "nature," what remains troubling about the treatment of bear here is that he is seen as an alternative to men in Lou's story of re-birth. Thus, bear risks being casted as "not-man" which is particularly problematic given that Engel, alongside other feminists, writes against processes of negation particularly in literary treatments of women. While I agree with Fee's suggestion that the novel "mocks some Canadian literature concerns usually handled with an excess of high seriousness," there remains a question as to whether bestiality in contemporary literature is taken seriously by its scholars (20). The lens that I bring to bear on the interspecies intimacies of the novella is not a subtext to the story about Lou's identity quest, but rather its central challenge. Therefore, while the critics I have listed here offer useful context, the more recent insights on *Bear* made by feminist ecocritics such as Alamo and Sandilands begin to gesture toward the Engel's engagement with nonhuman queerness. Indeed, Sandilands states the queer challenge of *Bear* simply when she says: "This is not "identity-talk"" ("Wild Democracy" 142).

Marian Engel achieves and extends the groundwork laid both by Djuna Barnes in *Nightwood* and Edward Albee in *The Zoo Story,* the subjects of the first and second chapters in this study. *Bear* explores how sexual identity is produced both on the human/animal border and she intervenes in both its visual manifestations in anatomy and

pornography as well its discursive parameters in literary production. In doing so, Engel untethers sex from the heteropartriachal and speciesist structures that limit our capacity to conceive of biological life as ontologically queer. More pointedly, *Bear* illustrates that queer theory need not eschew biology; on the contrary, Engel excavates the promiscuity inherent to biological life.

Chapter 4

Bleeding Over Species Lines in the Queer of Color Fiction of Sherman Alexie and Monique Truong

All Humanisms… have been imperial. They speak of the human in the accents and the interests of a class, a sex, a race, a genome.

—Tony Davies, *Humanism*

In a 2012 interview with *The Guardian*, Toni Morrison recounts a thought experiment she performed at the age of seventeen after seeing news footage of white women trying to overturn a school bus of black children during desegregation. She recalls:

> I didn't know if I could turn over a bus full of little white kids. I didn't know if I could feel that…fury. And I tried very hard to. This is what I did. I said suppose…horses began to speak. And began to demand their rights. Now, I've ridden horses. They're very good workers. They're very good racehorses. Suppose they just…want more. Suppose they go to school! Suppose they want to sit next to me in the theatre. I began to feel this sense of –'I like you, but…' You're good, but…' Suppose they want to sleep with my children?!" She concludes: "I had to go *outside the species*!" (Brockes n. pag.)

This thought experiment says a lot about Morrison's writing and, I will argue, the landscape of the American racial imagination. The journey *outside the species* must come to an end in this polemic when the possibility of sex is introduced. Moreover, it is the imagining of one's symbolic children sleeping with the animal Other that represents the tipping point for Morrison. Her exercise brings us from a scenario of racism to one of speciesism; doing so, she reveals that what binds race, sexuality, and species together is a panic around the capacity of bodies to forge physical intimacies against regulative taboos that would see them as separate. Donna Haraway's pithy observation that "Species reeks of race and sex" makes this connection all the more apparent (*When Species Meet* 18). Both Morrison and Haraway indicate that the cultural frameworks for articulating species difference are racialized and sexualized at the same time that the limits of racial and sexual identification are buttressed by species distinctions.[62] While in this account, *species* marks the limits of imagination, identification, and even empathy, in Morrison's own fiction, the borders between humans and other animals threaten to collapse in intimate encounters.[63]

Although Morrison admittedly locates a barrier to her own empathetic response, she points us in the direction of its trespass – a trespass that contemporary authors of color more overtly interested in queer sexualities have recently crossed. For example, in the title story of American Indian (Spokane and Couer d'Alene) author Sherman Alexie's collection *The Toughest Indian in the World* (2000), the narrator recites advice that he received from his Spokane father: "Love you or hate you, white people will shoot you in the heart. Even after all these years, they'll still smell the scent of salmon on you, the

dead salmon, and that will make white people dangerous" (21). After having sex with a Lummi man whom he picks up hitchhiking, the narrator notices that he suddenly smells of salmon. As Lisa Tatonetti in her aptly titled article "Sex and Salmon" observes, queerness in Alexie's story emerges as a potential foundation to Native cultural identification (202). One could read the triangulation of the two men with salmon as symbol for this process. Monique Truong enacts a similar homo-animal triangle with pigeons in her novel, *The Book of Salt* (2003) which follows a gay Vietnamese cook working in Saigon and Paris during French colonial rule. However, I am less interested in treating the physical traces of other animals in these works as floating symbols, as this can foreclose important questions about the very real and material histories of embodied experience of which other animals are central. Rather, the questions motivating this chapter are: How is the human-animal border constructed and maintained through and on the body in the twenty-first century? How do the distinctions between the human and the nonhuman animal produce racialized and sexualized identities, and in what ways do the bodies ascribed to these identities betray them? And finally, how might intimacies between species reshape how we conceive of biological differences along the lines of race, sexuality, and species?—an inquiry that *The Toughest Indian in the World* and *The Book of Salt,* in particular, enable.

U.S. ethnic authors write under specific constraints when they depict intimacies between humans and other species. To do so risks appealing to white hegemonic narratives that bodies of color are intrinsically closer to animals. For characters whose lives already occupy overlapping lines of precarity—as both queer and of color—intimate

contact with nonhuman animals can augment reductive stereotypes that racialized bodies and sexual minorities are primitive. This is what the father in "The Toughest Indian" warns against: to be aligned with animals as a person of color is dangerous. Indeed, white violence against ethnic minorities since the late nineteenth-century has found justification in a social Darwinist vision of evolutionary biology of which compulsory heterosexual reproduction was fundamental. In placing American Indians on a continuum as pathologically closer to the environment and thus to animals, colonial aggression ranging from environmental destruction to child removal programs was treated as necessary to evolutionary 'progress.'[64] In the Northwest context of Alexie's story, twentieth-century U.S. acquisition of reservation lands for erecting dams precipitated the total disappearance of salmon populations, both a source of sustenance and a sacred symbol in Spokane art and daily life. Yet, in his response to the dehumanization of colonialism, Alexie refuses to elevate his characters above animals or keep them at a safe—a refusal also true for Monique Truong's *The Book of Salt*.

Although scholars have noted that Alexie's and Truong's portraitures of queer lives and practices refuse the compulsory heterosexuality of colonialism, I suggest that within the scope of their challenge lies a shared distrust in normative appeals to a fraternal "humanity" that has been historically denied to American Indians and Asian immigrants.[65] Both authors blur the biological stratification of species in ways that problematize the human, and the social institutions of race and sexuality which rely upon it, as an ontological given.

Working against a Eurocentric viewpoint that "human" and "animal" are transparent categories across cultures, I emphasize that species does not always mean the same thing in the fictions of U.S. ethnic authors.[66] Indeed, the meaning of the term shifts according to cultural and historical context as well as out of political necessity. Taking a comparative approach to *The Toughest Indian in the World* and *The Book of Salt* enables me to locate how interspecies intimacies are similarly structured in both works to challenge exclusionary humanism in the twenty-first century. Both books probe the limits of biological taxonomies in a moment when the human appears to be undergoing a radical retailoring yet remains closely mended to the politics of racism, colonialism, and heterosexism.

The type of intervention that Alexie and Truong make is significant given that, at the turn of the twenty-first century, the rise of the genomic revolution has generated all too familiar concerns about biological reductionism in the new forms of species-specific genomics. I will thus examine their works against this historical backdrop and in particular, the controversies over the DNA of the ancient skeleton known as the Kennewick Man (1996), the Human Genome Project's public platform of rejecting biological race (2000), and ongoing bioethical debates around the practices of targeting indigenous groups deemed reproductively isolated in global genographic programs.[67] Published in the wake of these events, *The Toughest Indian in the World* (2000) and *The Book of Salt* (2003) respond to biological essentialism and the racism within which it is constituted by highlighting the capacity of bodies, both human and nonhuman, to interact intimately beyond the biological categories to which they are ascribed.

Blood Borders/Blood Crossings

In the queer of color fiction of Alexie and Truong, blood emerges as both the conceptual framework and the material substance for which to trouble the borders between species. This is particularly germane, for, as I will explore in the next section, major events in genetic science at the turn of the century have been and continue to be yoked to blood laws. Both authors respond by enacting a literal bleeding across species lines.

Bleeding in *The Book of Salt* emerges as a response to the suffocation of colonial hierarchies that the protagonist named Bình experiences working in the kitchen of 27 Rue de Fleurus, the home of Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas and the preeminent literary salon of Paris during the 1920s and 30s. In a memorable scene, Bình is instructed to suffocate the pigeons he is preparing for his American employers, Stein and Toklas. "Trust me," Toklas tells him, "if you cut off their necks, you will lose all the blood" and leaves him with five more to strangle (Truong 67). He reports: "The pigeon squirms under my fingers, its blood pumping hard, pressing through." Taking inspiration from the two "Indo-Chinese" cooks accounted for in Stein's *Everybody Autobiography* (1937) and *The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook* (1954), Truong's novel follows Bình's stream-of-consciousness, moving between his present life in Paris and his exile from Saigon. Rejected by his father after having been exposed as having a same-sex affair with a French head chef, Bình describes himself as: "Becoming more like an animal with each displaced day, I scramble to seek shelter in the kitchens of those who will take me" (19).

Toklas's demand that the pigeon's blood must be contained inside the body is complicated by the fact that Bình is a self-cutter and lets his own blood seep into that of the pigeon's and thus, into his employers' food. Hence *The Book of Salt* plays with colonial and racist fears of miscegenation, of blood mixing where it ought not to, a thread that echoes in Bình's love affair with Lattimore, a biracial American man who passes as white among Stein and her company. In reflecting upon Lattimore's rejection of his black Mother, Bình says: "You live a life in which you have severed the links between blood and the body, scraped away at what binds the two together…you should know, blood keeps the body alive" (151). Resisting a vision of blood that is racialized or classed as either pure or tainted, even by drops, Bình sees the queer potential of blood in its very materiality. His practice of self-cutting undermines containment efforts by threatening to contaminate the tidy lines of demarcation between him and his employers as well as between him and the animals they consume.

In bleeding over the boundaries that disembody colonial subject from object, human from animal, *The Book of Salt* deepens the framework established over twenty-five years ago by queer Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa. Published in the formative moments of queer theory, Anzaldúa's seminal work *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) introduces the concept of a borderland as "a vague and undetermined place" created by the "unnatural boundaries" used to demarcate bodies (25). Borderlands are not just geographic in Anzaldúa's writing, and if they are, they include the geographies of bodies themselves which are appropriated by the normalizing codes of nationality, race, sex, and species. Why do cultures condemn and discard those who

linger too closely to the prescribed borders, Anzaldúa asks? Because, she explains, the queer are a mirror that reflect the deep-seated fear that what lies on the other side of normal is the non-human (40). Much like Toni Morrison's thought experiment, Anzaldúa's poem, "horse" examines how racial hatred is produced at the human-animal border. She describes how "gringo" teenagers torture and kill a *caballo* in a Chicano community of a small Texas town, only to have the sheriff excuse their behavior (128-129). Yet, even amid such terror, Anzaldúa insists in the preface to *Borderlands/La Frontera* that it is the place of touch where the space dividing bodies "shrinks with intimacy" (19). The interspecies intimacies that I locate in *The Book of Salt* dissolve the physical barriers between bodies that have been hardened by colonialism throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Borderlands/La Frontera is rarely, if at all ever, read as a challenge to humanism, yet, a closer examination reveals that Anzaldúa sets the stage for understanding how racial and sexual hierarchies are produced and policed at the human-animal border. Especially because much of the scholarship surrounding anti-humanism and posthumanism tends to practice an unacknowledged colorblindness, it is important to turn to works that are consciously invested in the anti-racist politics that situate queer of color fiction.[68] Indeed, queer theory today—and especially queer of color criticism and literature—is indebted to feminists of color such as Anzaldúa who were the first to articulate a politics around seeing the borders of identity in terms of their capacity to be crossed and/or inhabited. Likewise, I suggest that in pursuing the border crossings that Anzaldúa names, *The Book of Salt* contests the "unnatural boundaries" that have been

imposed upon a natural world – a world in which bodies always and already possess the vital capacity to circumvent and exceed the ontological categories to which they are seemingly bound (25).

If, as Anzaldúa claims, borderlands are in a "constant state of transition," then what does this suggest for the ontological borders that have been erected around the "human" and the "animal"? Truong's novel responds to this question in its examination of blood as an intermediate for understanding how and under what conditions bodies betray the socio-biological borders of species identity. Indeed, one of the ways that Anzaldúa describes borderlands is "*una herida abierta* [an open wound] where one culture grates against the first and bleeds" (25). It is precisely the borderland of the kitchen, a space in 27 Rue de Fleurus where, "like an animal," Bình is segregated from his American employers and their patrons, from which the material conditions for open wounds and blood crossings are made possible. This extends equally to the pigeons for while their bodies are viewed in terms of their abject filth, and their slaughter removed from sight, they nonetheless cross their way back into the dining room and thus into the bodies of Stein and Toklas through the process of eating.

The intimacies that Bình has with pigeons more than just allude to colonial and racist hierarchies through which he too is positioned, but they also share these material conditions. Bình notes his similarity to the suffocated pigeons when he states that "Mesdames would prefer to believe that their cooks have no bodily needs, no secretions" (Truong 64). Once Toklas discovers that Bình has been bleeding into their food, she begins a daily routine of inspecting the hands of her "little Indochinese" for cracks,

leakages, and instructs him on how he must bandage himself so that his blood stays where it belongs (71). On the one hand, Toklas's kitchen rules reveal that the production of human subjectivity in modernity requires that the physical boundaries between bodies be relentlessly patrolled. Moreover, who counts as human and what counts as not, is reproduced in the relationship between colonizer and the colonized. The blood intimacies between Bình and the pigeons flow across this boundary, thus exposing the ontological porosity of bodies with which colonialist anxieties must always contend.

When we consider the materiality of blood, it is clear why it is so threatening to racist and colonialist discourses. Blood possesses the capacity to spill over the divisions marking bodies; once blood mixes, it cannot be unmixed; blood is a conduit that brings the outward inward, a medium for nonhuman forces such as oxygen, nutrients, and viruses; and it is a medium not exclusively human that can spill in bodies, between bodies, and across species. Indeed, blood is something shared in spite of species distinctions. Elizabeth Grosz observes that there is an instability at the very heart of bodies, "the fact that the body is what it is capable of doing, and what any body is capable of doing is well beyond the tolerance of any given culture" (*Space, Time, and Perversion* 214). In other words, taboos regulating blood lines—for instance, miscegenation—exist precisely because the body, in this case the body's blood, threatens to act in excess, along deviant trajectories, to develop intimacies across and in spite of taxonomies. However, the potential of these instabilities to bring forth a paradigm shift in how we conceive of human and animal bodies, as well as the boundaries that establish and separate racial groups, has been largely eclipsed in the era of the so-called genomic

revolution. As I will explore in the next section, major events in genetic science at the turn of the twenty-first century have been and continue to be bracketed by blood laws and bloodlines.

Surviving as a laborer at the crest of eugenics on the outset of World War II and when Vietnam was still a part of French Indochina, Bình reflects in significant detail on his fraught relationships to other animals as his race, his class, and his sexuality mark him as an animal Other. For example, he is very disagreeable to Stein and Toklas's dogs (a poodle named Basket and a chihuahua named Pepe), who are lavished with human-like clothing accessories and enjoy automobile rides while he is demoted to taking the train. And when he is on vacation with his "Madame and Madame" in the French countryside, sheep farmers noticing his "asiatique" features question him about whether he is circumcised. Bình thinks, "I could only assume that their curiosity about my male member is a by-product of their close association with animal husbandry. Castrating too many sheep can make a man clinical and somewhat abrupt about such things" (Truong 143). More than just exemplifying the biting wit that Truong provides her narrator, this moment shows that *The Book of Salt* takes seriously the material conditions joining livestock animals and colonial subjects under the discourse of humanism.

Troung is especially interested in how clinical attitudes reappear not only in animal husbandry, but in modern medicine and the historical moment of literary modernism that is the backdrop of her novel. For example, Bình makes this connection when he describes Gertrude Stein's callous interest in his struggle with French and English: "words provoke the scientific in her, remind her of her days in medical school,

dissecting something live and electric, removing vital organs from a living animal and watching the chaos that ensues" (30). Animal studies scholar, Cary Wolfe contends that the humanist discourse of species is largely sustained by the accepted and unchallenged killing of animals based *solely* on their species (*Animal Rites* 8). Wolfe explains as long as "species" is made available for some humans to mark other humans it can always be used as a means "to countenance violence against the social other of *whatever* species—or race, or gender, or class, or sexual difference" (8). Bình's description of the treatment he receives both from the French countrymen and Stein as clinical and scientific in their dehumanization of him is suggestive of the violent taxonomies which hierarchize humans over others in the humanist discourse of species.

Of all the animals to inhabit the pages of Truong's novel, none are more significant to Bình than pigeons. Pigeons occupy the border of both wild and urban; they either go unnoticed, blending into the landscape of a city, or are seen as vermin. Like Bình's experience of diaspora, pigeons are divided between ideas of homing and homelessness. Stein's prodding into the seeming simplicity of Bình's language skills is not only a reminder that "language" has often been used to elevate (some) humans over animals, but that it also evokes a tradition of pidgin language originally used by British traders to South China to describe the adopted trade language. *Pidgin* thus calls attention to the two-way brokenness between both Stein's and Bình's languages; yet, Stein retains her position as a literary genius whereas Bình is seen as contaminating the purity of words even while his own name is lost in their exchanges—"Thin Bình" is the pet name that she gives him, and his real name is unknown to the reader.[69]

Further cementing the connection between Bình and pigeons is a scene where he witnesses one die in a Paris park. The death produces memories for him of his maltreated mother, who was often isolated in her kitchen in Vietnam in a room which his abusive father had insisted must never be elevated from its dirt floor. Bình then sees a woman who, like him, is watching the pigeon struggle against death. Wondering where she is from, he concludes from her heels: "No Parisian woman would stand unadorned and close to the earth" (Truong 219). He then thinks back to the promise that his mother and he made: "We swore not to die on the dirt kitchen floor" (221). This pivotal scene toward the end of the novel, with Bình watching a pigeon "refuse to die a soft, concerted death, an act thought unwillful and ungrateful by those assembled," points to a shift in consciousness (221). Because to this point *The Book of Salt* shows the lengths to which Bình is repeatedly denied a full-fledged status as human, one might read the novel as troubling the "human" as an identity category worth attaining especially given Bình's criticism of Toklas's so-called "humane" slaughter of pigeons for consumption. Referring to Toklas's strangulation technique he says that:

> The wringing of feathered necks, the smothering of throats still filled with animal sounds, the examples are endless. Learning how to take away life while leaving the body whole and the flesh unbruised, that is how I began my apprenticeship… Miss Toklas agrees wholeheartedly that speed and decisiveness are required. She believes that it is possible to be humane even when one is behaving brutally. (67-69)

Here, *The Book of Salt* calls attention to the contradiction that to be "human" or "humane" is nonetheless to kill. One only becomes "human" through a disavowal of the animal within—a disavowal which justifies violence against others.

From the borderlands of the colonial kitchen and farmland, *The Book of Salt* asks us to consider how brutality against nonhuman animals serves as the baseline from which violence against racial and sexual Others is rationalized. This question is particularly apropos given the novel's historical context. In the American homeland of Stein and Toklas during the height of Stein's success, eugenics statutes such as *Buck v. Bell* (1927) legitimized the rising number of compulsory sterilization programs in states like California whose State Eugenics Board served as the model for Nazi eugenicists in Europe (Stern *Eugenic Nation* 108). In *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (2005), Alexandra Minna Stern shows how sterilization programs in California coincided with mass deportations of Mexican and Asian immigrants. Yet, she also points to widespread environmental conservation efforts which relied upon selective-breeding methods in which "specific species and organisms were elevated, chosen and revered over others" (85, 119). Indeed, the man who was responsible for popularizing state authorized sterilization, John R. Haynes, likened the policy to the sexual alteration of domestic animals while also claiming that: "The whole stream of human life is being constantly polluted by the admixture of tainted blood" ("Report on the Care of the Insane 62). Truong's novel fleshes out these historical attitudes and connections; as U.S. states and nations sought to purify their borders of invasive species and tainted bloodlines, migrant workers and sexual deviants like Bình

who were deemed feeble-minded and/or degenerate were at risk, much like the sheep in the French countryside, of being systemically asexualized. Thus *The Book of Salt* shows how very threatening sex—that radical form of intimacy from which multiple border crossings may come to be—is brutally regulated not only through coercion, but by altering the very biological capacities of bodies.

Cartographies of Blood in the Wake of the Genomic Revolution

When read together, *The Book of Salt*, which takes places in the 1930s and *The Toughest Indian in the World* (set in the present day) establish a historical through-line between blood taboos and eugenics as they unfolded in twentieth century, and twenty-first century concerns around the renewal of biological reductionism in genetic science.[70] In the United States, blood laws such as the "one-drop rule" used against biracial populations were always at odds with blood quantum laws which distinguish which American Indians have rights to their own lands and which do not. Similar blood identities have been put in place to police not only race, but sexuality as well. For example, since 1977, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's guidelines prevent men who have sex with other men from donating blood, even against recommendations to the contrary by major organizations like the American Red Cross and the American Medical Association. Traversing the troubled landscapes of race and sexuality, the politics of blood are as capricious as they are far-reaching.

The racialization and sexualization of blood that *The Book of Salt* responds to is even more overt in Sherman Alexie's short story from *The Toughest Indian in the World* titled "The Sin Eaters," which follows a boy named Jonah who is taken to a U.S. military camp along with other Indians of reproductive age all identified as "full-blood." In this story, indigenous peoples are held captive by soldiers so that their "pure" blood can be harvested for medical purposes of national importance. Those occupying the borderlands of indigenous heredity, "the half-breeds, mixed-bloods, the people with just a trace of Indian blood, and the white people who have lived among the Indians for so long they had nearly become Indians" are discarded (Alexie 104). Treated on the one hand as a threat and on the other as a precious medical commodity, Truong's and Alexie's fictions reveal the extent to which blood has been written and re-written in contradictory ways. As in *The Book of Salt,* "The Sin Eaters" shows colonialist hierarchies as fixated on the containment of blood. "No blood!" is repeated throughout the story by the soldiers whose most important command is to ensure that no amount of blood spills, thus risking contamination. Alexie's story directly addresses the potential revitalization of eugenics discourse that Truong explores, but in the contemporary context of twenty-first century medicine, and in particular, genetic research.

"The Sin Eaters" communicates the anxiety around changes in what counts as a racial signifier in the wake of DNA research. Jonah notes that the U.S. soldiers in charge of containing his blood are of varying colors themselves, "four white faces, two black faces, and a face that looked like mine" (82). He and his friends look to their white peer, Sam, hoping that "his pale skin contained some kind of magic," but to no avail. Jonah

recalls: “We thought the white soldiers would notice Sam’s white skin and call him brother.” Alexie shows the difficulty of racial passing in the era of DNA, although the theme of “contamination” through contact with other bodies, both animal and human, emerges as a site of potential resistance throughout *The Toughest Indian in the World*. Bleeding in “The Sin Eaters” raises important questions also for the rise of global genomics programs wherein blood, along with other bodily and tissue samples traditionally conceived of as internal and private, becomes a medium for genetic discoveries that feed into socially constructed categories and public scripts about race and sexuality.[71] However, because DNA is not visible to the naked eye, communities of geneticists who are tied to the agendas of nations and private biotech and pharmaceutical companies have the most power to interpret its cultural significance.[72]

In her interviews with genetics and genomics scientists in *Race Decoded: The Genomic Fight for Social Justice* (2012), Catherine Bliss shows that researchers by and large understand their work as inherently social and political and therefore seek to establish ethically sound guidelines to their practices. This runs counter to the perception within the hard sciences that value-based methodologies are an impediment to the scientific process and the objectivity that they enjoy (Bliss, *Race Decoded* 10). Nonetheless, Bliss contends that genomics scientists negotiate these tensions by participating in *biosocializing*; “drawing on their own experiences, memories, and racial values,” they think “through matters of race with their loved ones and themselves in mind creating research agendas to promulgate specific values about race and science” (11). While genomics scientists see themselves as establishing a new future, they show a

commitment to correcting past abuses particularly in regards to race (10). However, this is complicated in the twenty-first century climate of post-racism that "The Sin Eaters" sets out to invalidate. As Jonah's story shows, the growing significance of DNA in the formulation of racial identity takes place against a political backdrop of colorblindness that has done more harm than good in addressing racial injustice.

Evidence of biosocializing emerges in the narrative that the Human Genome Project (the HGP hereafter) in particular has created around itself. For example, since its very first round of funding in 1987, the program has relied heavily on the language of mapping, charting and blueprinting. Karla Holloway in *Private Bodies, Public Texts: Race, Gender, and a Cultural Bioethics* (2011) suggests that by framing their public roles through the rhetoric of cartography, global genomics programs such as the HGP see themselves as able to represent, using the structure of a map, the landscapes among bodies (67). As historical products, maps create borders that structure and relegate how we understand our locations and orientations in relation to others in the world (68). Given the framework of HGP exemplified by its title, this extends also to how we observe differences between species— in particular, the borders between humans and other animals. Moreover, working against their better intentions, the rhetoric of cartography embedded in the HGP's narrative evokes the longstanding image of the science industry as a frontier, which inadvertently calls attention to its shared history with imperialist expansion.[73]

The alliance between the scientific frontier and settler colonialism was dredged up in 1996, along with the remains of a prehistoric human known as the Kennewick Man.

Discovered along the banks of the Columbia River in Kennewick, Washington, the nearly 9,000 year old skeleton was placed in the custody of the Umatilla people under The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). Soon thereafter, eight scientists sued for the rights to the skeleton for research purposes. A federal court authorized a DNA analysis which ultimately won the researchers the remains. Holloway's analysis of this case highlights the potential for using DNA tests to connect genetic identity to land claims, a major concern for indigenous rights groups (92). Put another way, while advances in genetic mapping structure how we understand ourselves in relation to others in the world, insofar as Native American communities are concerned, they have the potential to alter the physical maps of blood lines and land that tribes have relied upon to safeguard (though not always) their rights.

For indigenous studies scholar Scott Richard Lyons, deriving Native American citizenship from "the right to blood" is inherently problematic (*X-Marks* 179). In *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent,* Lyons repudiates blood quantum arguing that it is a direct product of the U.S. government's citizenship criteria outlined in the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 (179). In his suggestion that blood quantum is the child of colonialism and scientific racism, Lyons contends that it is "one of the most colonized ideas around" (180-181). "The Sin Eaters" excercises this concern by exploring how blood identities which were codified under colonialism have been preserved in the law and therefore sustain racial injustice in twenty-first century science and medicine and vice versa.[74]

Like Lyons, Alexie's story "One Good Man," also found in his collection *The Toughest Indian in the World*, expressly troubles blood as the foundation to contemporary indigenous identity. Repeating the question "*What is an Indian?*" eleven times, the narrator provides more socially and politically grounded answers such as: "A child who can stroll unannounced through the front door of seventeen different houses" and "a son who brings his father to school as show-and-tell" (Alexie 224, 227). In a telling confrontation with a professor at the University of Washington over the alleged purity of his own blood heritage, the narrator implores that what makes the scholar contemptible is that "he thought he was entitled to tell other Indians what it meant to be Indian" (229). The protagonist immediately recalls his mother's dirty joke, said "in jest" with tears of laughter rolling down her face: "If I'm going after a penis only because it's Indian…then it better be a one-hundred-percent-guaranteed, American Indian, aboriginal, First Nations, indigenous penis" (226). Giving new meaning to the term *bloodlust,* Alexie shows how the body's blood has been ideologically annexed as a marker of identity to be socially regulated in ways that are both racialized and sexualized. Even more striking is the final memory that the narrator evokes in this altercation. Here, he thinks of the tourists who flocked to Neah Bay as soon as the Makah Indians resumed their tradition of hunting whales. Alexie writes: "The tourists came because they wanted to see the blood. Everybody, white and Indian alike wanted to see the blood" (229). As in *The Book of Salt* and the other stories in Alexie's collection, "One Good Man" confronts the colonialist desire for pure blood by calling attention to the human-animal border upon which bloodlust as spectacle is normalized.

Although "One Good Man" shows how members of indigenous communities in the U.S. police one another's authenticity along the lines of blood, stories such as "The Sin Eaters" emphasize that the power to define racial membership has historically rested in the hands of those most likely to profit from it. As genome interpretation has grown as a "thriving site of capital production" and bioinformation continues to be the grounds for lucrative patents, the biotechnology industry emerges as the one of twenty-first century's major brokers in determining the future of blood identity across both race and species lines (Bliss 11).

"Postracism" without Posthumanism

The HGP welcomed its self-styled image as an interpreter of hereditary information although it would not be until 2000 (the publication year of *The Toughest Indian in the World*) that it would officially attempt to mitigate anxiety about its elite power to determine race. It announced the completion of the first map of a human genome on June 26, 2000, in an event sponsored at the White House. In his press release, chief scientist Craig Venter anticipated the potential criticism that the accomplishment could engender genetic reductionism and scientific racism, explicitly rejecting race as a biologically valid construct in his statement specifying that "race has no genetic or scientific basis" ("Remarks on the Human Genome"). Critics of Venter's claim within the scientific community contended that he was motivated by "political correctness" which helped to explain for them the alleged contradiction between the choice to respect "racial

diversity" in the sequencing, but reject its biological basis (McCann-Mortimer, Augostinos, LeCouter, "'Race' and the Human Genome Project" 411). The HGP's concerns about the social implications of genomic discovery overlap with the anxieties played out in "The Sin Eaters." Alexie's story explores the fear that genetic science could be used as a tool of exploitative violence against racial minorities. Venter addresses this type of fear toward the end of his speech when he welcomes policies preventing genetic discrimination:

> In each society we must work toward higher science literacy and the wise use of our common heritage. I know from personal discussions with the President over the past several years and his comments here this morning, that genetic discrimination has been one of his major concerns about the genomic revolution. While those who will base social decisions on genetic reductionism will ultimately be defeated by science, new laws to protect us from genetic discrimination are critical in order to maximize the medical benefits from genomic discoveries. ("Remarks on the Human")

In his overt attempts to be scientifically "post-race," using the language of "our common heritage," Venter and others behind the project identified that the social and political climate of the 2000s would eagerly welcome new scientific models for upholding racial essentialism. Even with the HGP's claim to have resolved once and for all that there is no biological reality to racial categories, in its aftermath, numerous studies have claimed to have discovered genetic links to behavioral and personality characteristics.[75] Indeed, Bliss's research shows that the so-called death of race in biology and medicine purported

by the HGP was eclipsed in the years that followed due to an explosion of studies and popular media hunting for biological foundations to race. Bliss names the decade at the turn of the millennium "one of the most race-obsessed ever," explaining: "Since the mapping of the human genome, racial research has reemerged and proliferated to occupy scientific concerns to an extent unseen since early twentieth-century eugenics" (2). Published amid this explosion of racial research, *The Book of Salt*, which takes place during the height of the eugenics movement in the 1930s, exercises the same concerns as *The Toughest Indian in the World*, although the latter more closely grapples with this climate.

Responding to the genomic revolution, Alexie's story "The Sin Eaters" gives representation to the concern that the so-called death of biological race is especially hollow as long as white people remain the most likely to benefit from gains in genetic science. Readers familiar with an earlier version of the story presented in Alexie's poem "The Farm," published in *The Raven Chronicles* (1997), will know that the stolen blood is for the purposes of treating cancer in white people. The first line reads: "All of us, the Indians, know exactly where we were when scientists announced they had found the cure for cancer" ("The Farm"). In the poem, which begins through the voice of Jonah, readers discover that scientists from the Center for Disease Control have discovered that the bone marrow of Indians, "synthesized with a few trace elements, form a powerful antiviral agent named Steptoe 123." When taken orally, the bone marrow of American Indians kills cancer cells. As in "The Sin Eaters," reservations across the country are invaded by soldiers and their inhabitants are taken to a military camp where they are forced to

reproduce with one another. In "The Farm," Charlie the Cook explains how his head is tattooed with a B for Breeder, "because I was young and pure-blood." He continues:

> They keep the Breeder men and women together. We are rotated often, never allowed to develop relationships. We are not allowed to talk….We eat breakfast only after we procreate. I'm supposed to have sex with five Indian women a day. I have fathered dozens of children since this all started. Half of my children became Breeders and stayed at the Farm, while the other half became Feeders and were sent to the kitchen. The Feeders have it much worse than the Breeders.

In strikingly similar ways to Monique Truong's *The Book of Salt,* Alexie highlights the farm and the kitchen as especially brutal sites of violence. Moreover, the themes of feeding and breeding so central to the story evoke the twentieth- and twenty-first century realities of industrial farming, and, whether intentional or not, call attention to ongoing forms of violence endured by livestock animals. Whereas *The Book of Salt* suggests the connections between forced sterilization programs and the castration of livestock in the early twentieth century, Alexie's stories serve as a reminder of the conditions surrounding factory-farming practices that have become the status quo of our current moment. Here, beings are made to live on a mass scale for the sole purpose of dying. Additionally, that such operations rely upon on methods of forced breeding—more specifically, reproduction mediated through human technologies—unsettles the so-called naturalness of heterosexual relations in the animal world that have been used to pathologize non-normative sexual practices among humans.

Alexie's critique of the natural order of heterosexuality develops in the story when Jonah is forced to have sex with a fellow Indian woman whom the doctors are trying to impregnate. This scene of compulsory heterosexual reproduction is juxtaposed in the collection with the portrayal of men in the other stories, who, like the narrator of "The Toughest Indian in the World" and the two lead characters, Seymour and "Salmon Boy" in "South by Southwest," have intimate encounters with other men and refuse Western constructions of gay or straight.[76] Bodies in these stories interact in ways that exceed the imposition of sexual acts and identities thrust upon them. This queer excess works in tandem with the motif of eating the Other, both human and nonhuman animal, that reverberates (as it does also in *The Book of Salt*) throughout *The Toughest Indian in the World*, for in the act of eating, it becomes unclear where the bodies that consume depart from the bodies of the consumed. Herein lies the paradox that Alexie and Truong spotlight: that no matter how much those in power try to violently to impose social and biological markers between bodies (of race, of sex, and of species) such borders are ontologically porous.

The inherent porosity of bodies is troubling not only for science, but for the groups of people who are the objects of study in genomics and genographic research. Postcolonial critics and indigenous rights groups have used the terms *genetic colonialism, genetic imperialism, biocolonialism,* and especially befitting with the theme of eating explored by Alexie, *vampire project* to denounce studies such as Stanford University's Human Genome Diversity Project (the HDGP hereafter) (Dodson, Williamson "Indigenous Peoples" 205). The HDGP in particular targets indigenous peoples who are

seen as having had limited contact with other groups and who are thought of by researchers as not having "mixed their genes with others" (205-206). Though no longer a scientifically viable concept, *racial purity* has nonetheless been revitalized in the language of *ancestry* and *genetic populations* (Holloway 76-77). One major concern has been the failure of research groups to secure adequate informed consent from indigenous peoples in collecting their blood and tissue samples.[77]

Apprehensions over the practices of the HDGP, as well as The National Genographic Project, are far-reaching and extend beyond (though not without intersecting with) the confines of this inquiry.[78] Of particular interest, however, is how the genomic industry's investment in the gene pools of indigenous peoples has been laced with the rhetoric of racial preservation from its very nascent stages—an issue that Alexie directly addresses in the plot of "The Sin Eaters" and "The Farm." To give a real world example, a 1991 article from *Science* magazine was entitled "A Genetic Survey of Vanishing Peoples" (Dodson, Williamson 208). Similarly, organizations such as The World Council of Indigenous Peoples have cited attitudes toward indigenous peoples as "human fossils, from whom samples had to be collected before they died out"—essentially treating indigenous populations as an endangered species (205). The rhetorical overlap between twentieth-century eugenics and twenty-first-century genomics are apparent in these examples. As discussed earlier, the sterilization of people of color, sexual deviants, and the "feebleminded" in the U.S. paralleled the weeding out of undesirable organisms and species that were seen as contaminating the land. At one point considered "bad blood," certain indigenous groups in the twenty-first century have now

been reframed as the very objects of preservation. Despite this shift from threat to scientific commodity, both cases reflect the overarching desire to keep the borders of biological life fully honed.

Overall, the focus on particular indigenous peoples by genomics programs is, in part, due to the perception that they are isolated from other gene pools. Bliss's research uncovers that the HGDP preferred what they called "Old World" genetic populations, as opposed to "New World" groups like African Americans who are deemed "genetically uncertain, marked by recent admixture of continue gene flow, and not isolated enough to mark distinct, consistent ancestry" (47). As opposed to the presumed impurity of African American gene pools, indigenous peoples are treated as uncharacteristically pure, and thus their genomic sequencing is seen as holding the key to understanding "our" human history as a species. Yet, herein lies a central problem: natural history accounts of the "human species," not unlike other histories of mankind, have always been dominated by hegemonic vantage points and recuperated for the purposes of justifying colonial, racial, and sexual oppression. Defined according to the visible traits and morphologies of the body in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, *species* was used to assert the "distinctness of races" in anti-abolitionist science (McWhorter "Enemy of the Species" 79). With the ideological upheaval of Darwinism, heterosexual formations became central to the preservation of species distinctions, as species became redefined according to their reproductive isolation from, and inability to reproduce with, other bodies.

As I have explored, the targeting of certain indigenous peoples as "reproductively isolated" devolves quickly into the treatment of them as another species. The

commitments of the HGDP imply that indigenous peoples who reproduce outside of their racial groups and queer indigenous people who are nonreproductive threaten the future of their populations and thus the bioinformation of interest to genomics. *The Toughest Indian in the World's* representation of Indian characters who sleep outside of their tribes (and sometimes with white people) is resistant to the HGDP's rhetoric of preserving indigenous populations from genetic contamination. Moreover, "The Toughest Indian in the World," "South by Southwest," and "Indian Country" all feature same-sex desire which likewise challenges the focus on heterosexual reproduction upon which population science relies.

Advances in bioscience and genomics have the potential to radically reshape how we construct the human as a social and biological category (McCann-Mortimer 409). Yet, the rhetorical and epistemological commitments of programs like the HGP are to both a specified vision of the human and a universalizing notion of the human family. The cultural narrative that the HGP, in particular, has created around itself is that it is "a sign of the arrival of geopolitical unity, and evidence of the essential fraternity of humanity" (Bliss 1). Thus, HGP relies on commonalities across species as a rhetorical strategy for debunking the credibility and significance of racial difference. For example, in his remarks for the June 26, 2000 Human Genome Announcement, Venter made a point to say: "You may be surprised to learn that your protein sequences are greater than 90% identical to the proteins of other mammals" in order to show that "we [humans] are not so different from one another" ("Remarks at the Human"). But it is precisely this appeal to the universalization of the human that makes the scientific claims against biological race

socially untenable because, as the epigraph of this article underscores, humanism is bound to its own exclusivity, given the extent to which category, *human,* has been historically made available to some bodies at the expense of others. Rather than focusing on ontological sameness, Donna Haraway in her book *When Species Meet* (2008) emphasizes vital difference in her approach to human genomes:

> I love the fact that human genomes can be found in only 10 percent of all the cells that occupy the mundane space I call my body; the other 90% of the cells are filled with the genomes of bacteria, fungi, protists, and such, some of which play in a symphony necessary to be being alive at all, and some of which are hitching a ride and doing the rest of me, of us, no harm. I am vastly outnumbered by my tiny companions; better put, I become an adult human being in company with these tiny messmates. To be one is always to *become with* many. (3-4)

Here, Haraway's approach to the "us" in her framing of human genomes is far less conclusive. As opposed to Venter's vision of human unity (always performed as exclusion of other animals, both human and nonhuman), Haraway uncovers that the human body itself is a borderland of interspecies contact.

Alexie's *The Toughest Indian in the World* and Truong's *The Book of Salt* illustrate the importance of interspecies embodiment when thinking through race, sexuality, violence, and intimacy. Although they explore how brutality at the human-animal border predicates racialized and sexualized violence, they also expose the permeability of species distinctions. For example, in her response to the scene from "The Toughest Indian in the World" where the narrator's sexual encounter alters his flesh,

Tatonetti observes: "And while the sex itself leaves him carrying the salmon's scent, the entire experience leaves him as the salmon embodied… here we see an indigenous man who is suddenly able to see beyond limited definitions of his imaginings of himself because of sexual experience" (29). In my own thinking, this moment exemplifies a significant impetus of Alexie's engagement with queerness, shared also by Truong: that intimacy has the potential to dissolve the socio-biological borders of embodiment that have been ostensibly ossified by colonialist hierarchies. The effects are not simply imaginative nor are they solely psychical; rather both authors illuminate the radical porosity of species embodiment at the very site of queer intimacy.

Alexie and Truong provide critical insight for queer thinkers: that in order to disentangle the socially constructed web of biological race and sexual orientation, cultural narratives must be willing to part with the centrality of the human in significant ways, no longer taking it for granted as ontologically determined. This is what makes *The Book of Salt's* and *The Toughest Indian in the World's* inclusion of physical intimacies between humans and other species into their fictions so meaningful. As literary interventions, they do not shy away from the complex maneuvering that comes with challenging racial and sexual hierarchies through representing queer of color intimacies beyond and between species boundaries. For Alexie and Truong, the politics of blood lines is especially enmeshed in species taxonomies, but blood possesses in its very materiality, the potential to spill over and *bleed across* species lines. Elizabeth Grosz contends that the queerness of bodies rests in their very indeterminacy:

> Life can only be life only because the universe, at least as far as the living are concerned, is where it is never fully at home, where it can never remain stable, never definitively know itself or its universe, control itself, its world, or its future, where it must undergo change over generations, where species must transform themselves even though they do not control, understand or foresee how. (*Time Travels* 39)

The Toughest Indian in the World and *The Book of Salt* probe the possibilities generated by the queer instability of biological life. Forced to flee Saigon due to his affair with a Frenchman, Bình's role as a disaporic figure in the estate of two lesbian expatriates illuminates that individuals are never "fully at home," and his defiant act of bleeding reveals that bodies are never fully contained despite biological taxonomies that presume them separate. Like Bình, the characters in Alexie's collection are also transformed by their interactions with those marked as different—human lovers of varying colors and animals of other species.

Both works of literature expose that the desire to stratify species life against its ontological fluidity is the basis of biopolitical control over racial identity and sexual intimacy. Such was the impetus guiding eugenics in the first half of the twentieth century, and is the impetus guiding genomics at the turn of the twenty-first. Alexie, in "The Toughest Indian in the World" illuminates this tension with the father's wish for Indians who refuse "to admit the existence of the sky, let alone the possibility that the salmon might be stars" (22). The narrator states: "He wanted to change their minds about salmon; he wanted to break open their hearts and see the future in their blood." Yet, Alexie shows

that the future does not guarantee the "human." As such, his narrator advises that one must know how to "cover [the] heart in a crowd of white people" for "if you had broken open my heart you could have looked inside and see the thin white skeletons of one thousand salmon" (21, 34). In displacing the centrality of the human in interspecies intimacies, *The Book of Salt* and *The Toughest Indian in the World* excavate the queer indeterminacy of biological life. They do so in defiance of a twenty-first-century culture of genomics that promises security from the prediction of fixed patterns.

Conclusion

Cosmic/Poetic: Matter and Meaning in the Twenty-first Century

> There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved.
>
> —Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*

> When you do any craft well and consciously…you explore the whole structure of the universe.
>
> —Mary Rose O'Reilly, *The Barn at the End of the World*

As the works in my archive show, scientific and literary activity are just as entangled as the bodies they study. Nevertheless, all too often we think of the sciences as operating exclusively within the realm of fact whereas the humanities are annexed to questions of representation and concern.[79] The history that I trace in this dissertation attempts to paint a more complex picture. By examining how authors respond to scientific theories and grapple with species as Darwin envisioned them: mutable, ontologically porous, and "bound together by a web of complex relations," I have attempted to show how the materiality of biological life deeply influences literary craft

(Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* 75). Likewise, my discussions of scientific movements from sexology to the genomic revolution emphasize that the findings and conclusions of science are routinely informed by the cultural and political imagination as well as social justice concerns.[80]

Although my focus on how authors engage species life as a method of contesting what historians of science refer to as "the eclipse of Darwinism," more generally, I see my project as intervening in what Diana Coole and Samantha Frost have recently identified as "the eclipse of materialism" in their introduction to the 2010 collection *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (3). Belonging to the emergent body of scholarship termed the *new materialism*, Coole and Frost join other interdisciplinary scholars who seek to show how questions of what is in the world (ontology) and what we know about it (epistemology) are co-constitutive. According to new materialist Karen Barad, author of *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (2007), matter and meaning are "inextricably fused together" and therefore should be studied in this way (3).[81] Although the parameters of my individual chapters do not allow for an in-depth discussion of the new materialism, this conclusion briefly traces its central questions and assumptions. In doing so, I propose that the genealogy of literature that I establish in this dissertation serves as a valuable resource for interdisciplinary scholarship on materiality.

Until now, I have left unstated that one of the central stakes of my project is to contribute to what is becoming widely known as the "material turn." According to those who identify with the new materialism, although poststructuralist critiques have done important work alerting us to how power structures representations of reality, the

popularity of social constructivism has "problematized any straightforward overture toward matter or material experience as naively representational or naturalistic" (Coole, Frost 3). On the one hand, my project, which shows how critics have left unexamined the entanglements of nature and biological life portrayed by literary authors like Djuna Barnes, Edward Albee, Marian Engel, Sherman Alexie, and Monique Truong, advances this argument. On the other hand, the fact that my archive spans over seven decades of literary activity beginning with late modernism and moving through the contemporary period to the present day contests the implication that the humanities has, as a monolith, abandoned materiality. On the contrary, my project points to authors who overtly incorporate materiality not only into the content of their literary production, but in their formal techniques as well. Furthermore, if one of the explicit goals of the new materialism is to attend to the non-separability of the material and the semiotic, then it makes little sense to retain separate categories for art and criticism. Instead, my study shows how scientific observation, literary form, and social critique occur simultaneously in works produced over the past eighty years.

There is also a more insidious assumption embedded in the new materialism that Sara Ahmed observes in her incisive 2008 essay, "Some Preliminary Remarks on the Founding Gestures of the 'New Materialism.'" For Ahmed, who questions the "new" tacked onto materialism, the field's emergence in the late 2000s reflects a tendency to create a straw man out of second-wave feminism in particular. As she observes from the rhetoric of the field's key contributors (many of whom are feminist) there is troubling pattern of portraying feminism as exhibiting a relentless *biophobia.* The implication,

Ahmed explains, is that feminism infected the humanities with a reluctance to engage seriously with scientific inquiry.[82] Tracing how the new materialists fashion a caricature of feminism as hostile toward biological data, mired to a fierce antibiologism, and prone to knee jerk constructivism, Ahmed suggests that the authors of such claims have not read closely the feminists whom they throw under the bus. Indeed, Anne Koedt's essay "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm" (1969) is a prime example of early feminist interest in biological anatomy that I explicitly explore in my discussion of Marian Engel's *Bear* in Chapter 3. Additionally, Donna Haraway, whose life's work informs the entirety of this project, arguably paved the "material turn" as early as the 1980s during the crest of feminist literary activity. For example, in her essay "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective" (1988), she warns that if we limit our engagement with science only to a critique of its biases and misuses (which she claims proves "too easy anyhow") we end up "with one more excuse for not learning any post-Newtonian physics and one more reason to drop the old feminist self-help practices of repairing our own cars. They're just texts anyway, so let the boys have them back" (578). Given that the dearth of women in the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) remains an enduring problem and that knowledge in the contemporary university system is becoming increasingly specified in ways that risk widening the gap between the sciences and the humanities, Haraway's critique is just as an important now more than ever.

Adding to Ahmed's observation, I point to Haraway (along with figures like Evelyn Fox Keller and Sandra Harding) as just a few examples of feminism anticipating

early on the need for "a better account of the world" (579). Haraway makes this move explicit when she states that:

> So I think my problem, and "our" problem, is how to have simultaneously an account of radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects, a critical practice for recognizing our own "semiotic technologies" for making meanings, *and* a no-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a "real" world… (579)

This early work belies the false assumption circulating new materialisms that feminists have uniformly eschewed ontological questions. Additionally, it shows why Ahmed's concern ought to be taken seriously in order to avoid an uncritical binarism between the "new" and the "old" that fails to account for how feminist science studies has helped to shape vibrant interest in materiality today. Ahmed's 2008 essay provided a much needed moment of clarity and reflection for the field that helped foreground feminist science studies in materialist thought. Similarly, this dissertation argues that queer examinations of sex, biology, and nature have much to gain from the contributions of feminist scientists. Put another way, I offer a counter-genealogy to queer studies that foregrounds feminist engagements with biology, anatomy, evolution, and species life.

Like Haraway, Coole and Frost argue that because our everyday lives are "surrounded and immersed in matter," moreover that "we ourselves are composed of matter" that we must acknowledge its primacy in our work ("Introduction to the New Materialisms" 1). This approach emphasizes that some of the biggest challenges facing the twenty-first century (environmental, demographic, geopolitical, and economic)

require an in-depth interrogation of how matter is shaped under diverse pressures, forces, and restraints (3). More specifically they state:

> Our existence depends from one moment to the next on myriad micro-organisms and diverse higher species, on our own hazily understood bodily and cellular reactions and on the pitiless cosmic motions, on the material artifacts and the natural stuff that populate our environment, as well as on the socioeconomic structures that produce and reproduce our everyday lives. (1)

To this point, I have observed in my body chapters how North American authors writing in the form of the novel, drama, novella, and short story have expressed interest in the web of entanglements by which bodies, sex, race, and species both come into existence and enter representation. I take this short conclusion as an opportunity to add to my archive the work of contemporary American poet Aracelis Girmay whom I see as particularly invested in holding together the sciences and the humanities, matter and meaning, the cosmic and the poetic.[83]

In her recent collection of elegiac poems, *Kingdom Animalia* (2011), Girmay presents substances as diverse as dirt, teeth, planets, a strand of hair, and an amperstamp as animate and interactive. Like Marian Engel who insists that the bear of her story is a not a symbol, Girmay also work against the temptation to fracture the representation from the referent and the referent from the reader. For example, the only fable of the collection, "On the Shape of a Sentence," retells the story of Eve beginning with: "The snake. Not the symbol of the snake but the snake itself" (101). "On the Shape of a Sentence" insists that just as stories are filled with objects, so too, are bodies filled with

stories. Girmay's focus on the materiality of memory and poetry brings into focus the sensory experience of an "S" which is never simply semiotic and always materially embodied. She writes:

> Evolution in words, in the progression of the line as it travels through a sentence
>
> Left to right. Up to down. Right to left & so on. Does it matter where it started & which way it moves? Or does it only matter that it started once? & that, yes, it moves. Evolves. Shapeshifts. & changes. What does the shapeshifting of the line tell us about the girl in question?
>
> S: she was blooming, wild line once. Spinning. Happening. Actual (103-4)

In her realist poetics, Girmay places language within, not a part from, a realm of evolutionary becomings which she shows are never bound to a singular provenance. Moreover, the story of Eve provides the perfect backdrop for this material-linguistic intervention. As Girmay asks: "What does the shapeshifting of a line tell us" about our origin stories?

Evolution plays a central role in *Kingdom Animalia* which cites Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) twice. Playing with Darwin's "grandeur" view of life, Girmay's poems evoke the "endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved" (*On the Origin of Species* 478).[84] From the conclusion of *On the Origin of Species,* this quotation appears adjacent to Darwin's "entangled bank" that I explore in Chapter 1 where he describes "elaborately constructed forms, so different from each other, and dependent on each other in so complex a manner" (478). From the vantage

point of *Kingdom Animalia*, Darwin's observations of biological life appear poetic precisely because Girmay's work reminds the reader that a poem is made of materials, what she calls a "piecehood" that is "a manipulation of resources" (Acevedo "How do you go about finding the heart?" n. pag.) Piecing together the substance of Darwin's prose, Girmay unsettles the boundaries between nineteenth-century science and twenty-first-century poetry.[85] Furthermore, in fusing the earthly with the poetic and the semiotic with the material, Girmay's work serves as a fertile site for understanding how matter and meaning constitute one another.

The poem, "Science" is an especially fitting follow-up to my discussion in the fourth chapter on multiethnic writing in the emergence of the genomic revolution. Writing from an Afro-Latina perspective, Girmay's work enriches the argument expressed by Sherman Alexie and Monique Truong that the desire of species-specific genomics to pinpoint biological origins are futile when biological life is endlessly changing and mutating. "Science" reads:

> We were trying to refind the eye & brain
> we had when we were pelicans,
> but the wind came down, it had ten hands,
> it had more mouths & took & took us far to sea.
> The wind was not a fixing wind, not a fixing wind.
> Who painted the door or fed the goats when we were sleeping.
> It took us apart with its blue hands, this piece, this piece—
> & delivered us to our simultaneous homes.

One home is there! One home is there! It said,

You have been this small before. Though you can't really

Remember it, you were not always, always tall,

Small, small thing, plural thing— (49)

Much like the pigeons in Monique Truong's *The Book of Salt* which attest to the duality of both homing and homelessness that characterizes diaspora, the pelicans in "Science" dissolve into pieces delivered to homes that are both separate and "simultaneous" (49).

Girmay describes her own ancestry as African-American (Georgian), Puerto-Rican, and Eritrean. In an interview with the Poetry and Literature Center at the Library of Congress, she explains how her first name is derived from the Latin—aracelis—which means "alter of the sky" and that her last name is Tigrinya. She also reflects upon the Basilica Maria de Aracoeli in Rome and describes how the Italians brutally colonized Eritrea (Acevedo n.pag.). For Girmay, names function as material traces of bodies and worlds colliding. We see this in both "Starlight Multiplication" where she states: "your body and your name here" and then in "Ode to the Little "r"" where she describes the r of Hispanic names as a "little propeller" flying in and out of mouths and bodies (*Animalia* 44). Additionally, lingering on its different phonetic registers when spoken in Spanish and Tigrinya, she observes: "My name is a kind of river that switches directions quickly" (Acevedo n. pag.). We see this like dynamic at play in "Science" with the materiality of "wind." The poem reads: "The wind was not a fixing wind, not a fixing wind" (*Animalia* 49). Thus, in "Science," the very matter of the universe—in this case the movement of gasses across its surface— renders singular origins impossible to discern. Like Darwin,

Girmay chooses to privilege bodies and matter as a "plural thing" (49). Indeed, the section where "Science" appears is named "a book of graves & birds" further evoking Darwin's entangled bank of worms and birds (48).

A central claim that I have made in this dissertation is that the boundaries dividing bodies (along the lines of sex, race, and species) collapse precisely where they meet and touch. Girmay's poem, "Elegy" illustrates this claim in the following excerpt:

> All above us is the touching
>
> Of strangers & parrots,
>
> Some of them human,
>
> Some them not human.
>
> Listen to me. I am telling you
>
> A true thing. This is the only kingdom.
>
> The kingdom of the touching;
>
> The touches of the disappearing, things. (17)

Like in "Science," the touching of bodies, "some of them human, some of them not human" describes again the entanglements of biological life we see in *On the Origin of Species*. In doing so, it also highlights the posthumanism inherent to Darwin's evolutionary thinking. Although posthumanism generates many definitions, Cary Wolfe's formulation that it: "Forces us to rethink our taken-for-granted modes of human experience, including the normal perceptual modes and affective states of *Homo sapiens* itself, by recontextualizing them in terms of the entire sensorium of other living begins"

resonates with Girmay's lines of poetry (*What is Posthumanism?* xvv).[86] For example, earlier in "Elegy," the poem reads:

> Perhaps one day you touch the young branch
> of something beautiful. & it grows & grows
> Despite your birthdays & the death certificate,
> & it one day shades the heads of something beautiful
> or makes itself useful to the nest (17)

Exploring how bodies exceed themselves through touch, wherein a young branch can grow and grow "despite your birthdays & the death certificate," Girmay's collection dissolves the dichotomies of subject/object, human/nonhuman, and life/death that the new materialism likewise seeks to destabilize (17). For example, Mel Chen's book *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (2012) interrogates how illness and toxicity are two salient examples that straddle binary configurations of living and dying. Similarly, in the poem, "Dear Minnie, Dear Ms.," Girmay describes placing loved ones in a "box earth, coffin" and ends with: "we'll know your shape, whatever species in you answers when we put our faces to the dirt" (22). The elegiac poetry of *Kingdom Animalia* performs the new materialist acknowledgement that to be made of matter is to be ontologically porous, plural, contingent, and mutable. Thus, the materialist observation that *Kingdom Animalia* makes that neither death nor life are finite helps to answer the very question from which Girmay's poem, "Elegy" begins: "*What to do with this knowledge that our living is not guaranteed?"* (22).

I choose to linger on this question in these final pages as it is one that is both deeply spiritual yet also profoundly grounded in the real. As I have explored in this project, the indeterminacy, contingency, and porosity of species life—and thus of the human species itself—that Darwin named in 1859 continues to endure as a source of deep uneasiness. Writing from a spiritual perspective, American Buddhist nun Pema Chödrön is especially interested in how attachment to fixed identity and resistance to our own ontological impermanence further suffering and injustice. She writes: "Our attempts to find lasting pleasure, lasting security, are at odds with the fact that we're part of a dynamic system in which everything and everyone is in process" (*Living Beautifully with Uncertainty and Change* 3). Darwin, too, recognized this contradiction remarking that "Nevertheless so profound is our ignorance, and so high our presumption, that we marvel when we hear of the extinction of an organic being; and as we do not see the cause, we invoke cataclysms to desolate the world, or invent laws on the duration of the forms of life!" (*On the Origin* 75). Working against the tendency to preserve fixed and static states of existence, including that of our own, Chödrön asks: "How can we relax and have a genuine, passionate relationship with the fundamental uncertainty, the groundlessness of being human?" (4).

Like these thinkers, renowned science educator Neil deGrasse Tyson whose work is intended to reach a broad audience emphasizes what he calls a "cosmic perspective" that pushes against the boundaries of self and the ego.[87] More specifically, Tyson claims that recognizing, for instance, that the atoms of our bodies are traceable to what stars do has the potential to break down the natural/cultural, human/nonhuman dichotomies

structuring our assumptions about life and our place within it. A cosmic perspective enables a deeper appreciation for our connections to each other, to the earth, and to the universe. As Tyson contends, this fosters an understanding that: "We are one with the rest of nature, fitting neither above, nor below, but within" ("Cosmic Perspective" n.pag.).

Tyson's approach to science literacy opens up an opportunity for mainstream culture to engage questions of matter, loosened from the inaccessible annals of scientific journals, from a place that recognizes and celebrates its inherent entanglements. And yet it also matters that Tyson, whom NPR problematically termed "a scientific anamoly" because as a black astrophysicist, he is "as elusive a phenomenon as the Higgs bosom," is now the most recognizable voice in science education ("The Most Powerful Nerd in the Universe is also a Scientific Anomaly" n. pag.). In 2010, while speaking on a panel at the New York Academy of Sciences Center for Inquiry Conference, he volunteered to respond to an audience member's interest in whether there is a genetic component to the lack of women in the sciences. In his reply, Tyson details to an almost entirely white audience his personal experiences with racism in a white male dominated culture. Though he mentions at this conference being racially profiled in department stores, Tyson has spoken elsewhere about having been stopped at least seven times by campus police trying to enter the physics building at the University of Texas where he once studied (Cahalan "Star Power" n.pag.). Using these experiences to reflect on the struggles that women face, he states quite simply: "My experience tells me that these forces are *real* and I had to survive them to get where I am today. So before we start talking about genetic differences, you got to come up with a system where there is equal opportunity"

[emphasis added] ("CFI Panel Discussion" n.pag.). Tyson's remarks reveal that a cosmic perspective can also attend to questions of social justice. More specifically, it asks us to consider the ways in which bodies are materially positioned, situated, and constituted in the world socially while also recognizing that the social is never devoid of the material.

When read together, the work of Darwin, Girmay, Chödrön, and Tyson written from the diverse arenas of natural history, poetry, Buddhism, and astrophysics reveal the importance of interdisciplinary thinking. As their writings illustrate, the physical and the spiritual, fact and concern, and matter and meaning are experienced concurrently in our lives and therefore such should not be fragmented by our scholarly frameworks. Nor, I add, should it belong exclusively to the terrain of a field referring to itself as the "new" materialisms given that materiality is as old as the universe. The literature that I have covered in this dissertation achieves this affect. Moreover, it is precisely because reconfiguring the divisions between the human and the nonhuman, life and death, matter and meaning, and the sciences and the humanities, has the potential to foster empathy across seemingly vast differences and sustain tolerance for change in the face of enduring uncertainty in the twenty-first century that we ought to approach materiality from multiple points of engagement. Indeed, such a move would more closely align our approach and methodology to the "web of complex relations" structuring our world (Darwin 75).

Notes

Notes to Introduction

[1] My italics.

[2] To offer comparable examples, in 2003, then Senator Rick Santorum equated "man on man" sexual relationships with "man on dog" in an interview with the Associated Press; See "Excerpt from Santorum Interview," *USA Today. AP*. 23, Apr. 2003 [should this be: (April 2003): 23?. Similarly, former presidential nominee Mike Huckabee stated in 2008 that: "I think the radical view is to say that we're going to change the definition of marriage so that it can mean two men, two women, a man and three women, a man and a child, a man and animal"; See Steven Waldman and Dan Gilgof, Interview with Mike Huckabee, "Mike Huckabee: 'The Lord Truly Gave Me Wisdom,'" *Beliefnet.com* Web. 2008.

[3] My italics.

[4] To be clear, when I speak of species throughout my chapters, I do so to signify *both* the containment of biological life and its ontological resistance to capture. As I will discuss in more detail, I utilize Foucault's term, "the species body" to designate the former, namely, the categorization of biological life as it is rendered a political technique.

[5] Schiebbinger examines how Linnaeus used the classic image of Diana of Ephesians as fecund with breasts dripping in milk as the frontispiece of his *Fauna Svecica* (1746).

[6] See Peter Bowler's seminal publications, *Evolution: The History of an Idea* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1983); *The Eclipse of Darwinism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1983); and *The Non-Darwinian Revolution: Reinterpreting a Historical Myth* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1988).

[7] First used in Spencer's *Principles of Biology* (1864).

[8] The period of the 1940's brought major thinkers in biology, population genetics, botany, ecology together in agreement about a number of evolutionary ideas that had been contentious. This is now commonly referred to as the modern "evolutionary synthesis" and is detailed the ninth chapter of Peter Bowler's seminal work, *Evolution: The History of an Idea* (1983).

[9] Elizabeth Grosz is a notable exception especially in her recent works, *The Nick of Time: Poitics, Evolution, and the Untimely* (2004), *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power* (2005), and *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflects on Life, Politics and Art* (2011).

[10] Quoted from a letter to Ferdinand Lasselle dated 16 January 1861; *MECW* 41. http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1861/letters/61_01_16.htm Web.

[11] Both Bagemihl's and Roughgarden's works helped establish the "Against Nature?" exhibit at the Natural History Museum at the University of Norway which ran from 2006-2007. The publication of these studies along with the exhibit coincide with the popular argument used among gay rights advocates that homosexuality is natural. I take issue with the framework surrounding this argument first, because it is structured by cultural conservative arguments that homosexuality is a lifestyle choice and, secondly, because it

imbues natural and unnatural with values of goodness and badness. Thirdly, this framework leaves little room for people whose experiences and sexual preferences do not fall squarely within the rhetoric of "natural" defined by these studies and its popular usage. And lastly, because, as Susan McHugh observes: "Looking to animal relations to gauge what is natural involves a studied avoidance of the basis of these observations in intimacies established along species lines, whether among domesticates, in laboratories, or across shared months and years living together in the field" ("Queer (and) Animal Theories" 154). McHugh's review of recent publications on nonhuman non-heteronormativity is an excellent guide to their central themes, polemics, and grounding assumptions.

[12] Donna Haraway's recent work on companion species in *When Species Meet* (2008) revises Mary Louise Pratt's term "contact zone" which describes "the social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other" (Pratt "Arts of the Contact Zone 34) to include cross-species entanglements, known in ecology as "ecotones" where assemblages of biological species meet and integrate (Haraway *When Species Meet* 217). Drawing on her experiences in the lab as a graduate student in biology and a trainer in the sport of canine agility, Haraway describes at length how contact zones "change the subject—all the subjects—in surprising ways" (219).

Notes to Chapter 1

[13] From a letter from Barnes to author/agent/friend, Emily Coleman dated 17 May. 1935; Quoted in Cheryl J. Plumb's "Introduction" to *Nightwood: The Original Version and Related Drafts* (1995), p xv.

[14] While the publisher's concern that readers would be bothered by girl and a dog behaving "*that* way" in a church, the charge of obscenity is not so easily discernible in the scene. Indeed, one could read the exchange between Robin and the dog from a multitude of perspectives: as play, as fighting, and/or as erotic, but it seems the basis for the critique is the mere idea of a woman on all fours with an animal, particularly in an institution, the church, which defines itself through the rejection of base sensations and behaviors.

[15] Following Bowler's groundbreaking work, this period is now what scholars of science widely recognize as "the eclipse of Darwinism" or "the non-Darwinian revolution." Moreover, individuals who eagerly disseminated evolutionary ideas that were either incongruent with or a reinterpretation of Darwin's writings are referred to by the various terms: evolutionists, Darwinists, or more commonly, social Darwinists.

[16] This is not to suggest that Charles Darwin the man was exempt from the deeply held racial and sexual beliefs that circulated nineteenth-century imperialist culture and science. Nor am I suggesting that Darwin's writings did not reflect these beliefs. Rather, I follow Bowler, Grosz, and others in locating how the indeterminacy of species identity that is so central to evolutionary biology was and is far more radical than either he, his

culture, or our present moment have truly addressed. Therefore, what interests me are the ways in which Darwinian theory has been captured and repackaged to conform to the ongoing belief in human exclusivity and the hierarchies among humans that it been historically used to justify.

[17] Providing several examples of this, Alexandra Minna Stern shows in her book *Eugenic Nation* (2005) how new racial taxonomies solidified at the turn of the twentieth century stemming from degeneracy theory, a branch of Darwinist and sexologist thought, coincided with Jim Crow segregation, the rise of Sinophobia, anti-American discrimination, and American colonial ventures in Latin America and the Pacific (13).

[18] Monogenesis, unlike polygenesis also contradicted biblical accounts on race and species.

[19] This dehumanization is exemplified by state sanctioned eugenics in United States. For example, the famous Buck v Bell case (1927) permitted compulsory sterilization of those deemed intellectually disabled, a moment that precipitated Nazi Germany's racial science as one of Hitler's first acts upon taking power was to pass the Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases (1933).

[20] In *Evolution and "The Sex Problem": American Narratives during the Eclipse of Darwinism* (2004), Bert Bender explores authors who incorporated evolutionary theory into their fiction were responding as much to Darwin as to anti-Darwinian conceptions (3). Though Bender does not mention Djuna Barnes, she would serve as a striking addition and perhaps even an anomaly to the realist and modernist authors in his study.

[21] Bland and Doan point to Foucault's repressive hypothesis and feminist and gay scholarship to account for this shift (3).

[22] Jane Marcus overtly makes this claim in her discussion of *Nightwood* in *Hearts of Darkness: White Women Write Race* (86) as does Andrea L. Harris in her essay, "The Third Sex: Figures of Inversion in Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* (233).

[23] This is from a revised letter to T.S. Eliot that Coleman may have sent to him a different form dated 31 Oct. 1935 and re-dated 1 Nov. 1935; Quoted in Cheryl J. Plumb's "Introduction" to *Nightwood: The Original Version and Related Drafts* (1995), p xxi.

[24] See Daniela Caseilli. *Improper Modernism: Djuna Barnes's Bewildering Corpus.* Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2009; Susan Hubert, "The Word Separated from the Thing: *Nightwood*'s Political Aesthetic," *Midwest Quarterly* 46.1 (2004): 39-50; Deborah L. Parsons, *Djuna Barnes* (place of pub: Northcote House Publishers Ltd., 2003) and "Djuna Barnes: 'Melancholic Modernism,'" *The Cambridge Companion to the Modernist Novel* (full publishing info, 2007): 175.

[25] Allen claims here that *Nightwood's* relative obscurity compared to Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* is due to Barnes's lack of a straightforward, linear plot, something that she suspects in *Following Djuna* (1996) will be augmented by work in queer literary studies (13).

[26] Siobhan B. Somerville explains that sexology's focus on the visible characteristics of the body is a carry-over from comparative anatomy, which had been the chief methodology of racial science in the nineteenth-century (*Queering the Color Line* 25).

More specifically, Somerville shows that this gave sexologists "a ready-made set of procedures and assumptions with which to scan the body for visually discrete markers of difference" (25).

[27] As I mentioned, the recent explosion of scholarship on Barnes and *Nightwood* in particular has produced significant overlap among scholars in their discussions of the novel's queer engagements with gender, sexual identity, sexology, modernism, and its visual aesthetic. On the one hand, this chapter aims to present this breadth of scholarship on Djuna Barnes's modernist novel as a starting point for making sense of less discussed works of literature in the contemporary period. On the other hand, I also seek to contribute to these discussions by focusing more specifically on *Nightwood*'s intervention into the eclipse of Darwinism and her queering of the species body.

[28] Italics mine.

[29] The fascination of the visual experience of and alongside the animacies of city life is captured in European cinema at the time of *Nightwood* with such films as Walter Ruttman's *Berlin: Symphony of the Big City* (1927).

[30] It is significant that Barnes revises the flâneur as a flâneuse for Baudelaire's discussion of women which comprises a whole section of "The Painter of Modern Life" is reductive at best. Furthermore, his dismissive treatment of "the fairer sex" reverberates throughout twentieth century sexology. This moment of revision contributes to *Nightwood*'s reputation as a feminist text.

[31] As Jane Bennett observes, the word enchant which means to transfix in one's gaze is also linked to the French verb, *chanter*, meaning to sing (*Enchantment* 6).

[32] Letter to Emily Coleman, 20 Apr. 1934; Quoted in Cheryl J. Plumb's "Introduction" to *Nightwood: The Original Version and Related Drafts* (1995), pp. x-xi.

[33] Coleman's emphasis. This is from a draft of a letter to T.S. Eliot that Coleman may have sent to him in a different form; Quoted in Cheryl J. Plumb's "Introduction" to *Nightwood: The Original Version and Related Drafts* (1995), p. xxi.

[34] Lundblad focuses primarily on Freud's theories of sexuality and locates a Darwinian-Freudian framework in particular.

[35] Bonnie Kime Scott begins her essay "Barnes Being: Beast Familiar": Representations on the Margins of Modernism" (1993) with this quotation from Barnes's correspondence with Emily Coleman, cited as: "Letter from Barnes to Emily Holmes Coleman." 5 May 1935, University of Delaware Library, Newark, DE. Additionally, Dana Seitler cites Scott's finding in her article, "Down on All Fours: Atavistic Perversions and the Science of Desire from Frank Norris to Djuna Barnes" (2001) as does Carrie Rohman in her book, *Stalking the Subject* (2009).

[36] Translation mine

[37] Italics mine.

[38] Letter to Emily Coleman, 11 Jul. 1935; Quoted in Cheryl J. Plumb's "Introduction" to *Nightwood: The Original Version and Related Drafts* (1995), p. xv.

[39] I draw here from Sara Ahmed's insightful examination of the spatial significance of orientation in *Queer Phenomenology*(2006), which emphasizes the import of what is near in shaping bodies and worlds: "What is reachable is determined by orientations we have already taken" (55). Likewise, what becomes visible is shaped by previous modes of seeing.

[40] Cary Wolfe provides an excellent reading of this passage in *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (2003), 2-3.

[41] Coleman's emphasis. This is from a draft of a letter to T.S. Eliot that Coleman may have sent to him in a different form; quoted in Cheryl J. Plumb's "Introduction" to *Nightwood: The Original Version and Related Drafts* (1995), xxi.

[42] One could also consider the link made by the American media in recent decades between the so-called undisciplined pit bull terrier with black urban poverty which has spurred breed specific legislation in many parts of the country. What I find most interesting about this example is how the pit bull terrier as a breed is so frequently mis-identified and over-identified at the same time. The physical characteristics associated with pit bulls, such as a wide head and jaw, incite panic and overdetermine the breed, causing some people to believe that any dog who remotely has these features might potentially have some "pit." [the preceding sentence needs work; not clear—does my revision work?] And yet this becomes laughable for anyone who knows anyone who has paid to have genetic testing done on their dog, for the results often yield answers that owners never predict. However, the panic around pit bull genes in recent decades so

closely resembles the regulation of one-drop rules that were used against bi-racial populations in the United States that we see how the classification of biological life of both humans and animals are intricately connected.

[43] Alexandra Minna Sterns discusses this in her book *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (2005), 103. In Chapter 4, I discuss in more depth on the connections she makes between the desexualization of animals and people of color at this time.

[44] Susan McHugh in *Animal Stories* (2009) suggests that sexual alteration narrows the parameters of human-animal companionship, and I would have to agree. To be clear, this is not to say that there aren't very strong ethical arguments for spaying and neutering companion animals particularly as they concern the health of animals. For full disclosure, both of my "rescue" dogs are spayed, yet I recognize the extent to which that ethical, and also economic, decision is nonetheless wedded both to a medical discourse around what constitutes health as well as the very obvious investment in population control, one of the key characteristics of biopolitical violence. That I am legally required to register my dogs and receive a discount in exchange for the promise that they are desexualized reminds me of the documentation of people, of their sex, and their marital status. Again, this raises the apparent contradiction with breeders, who in their participation in the marketing and selling of the very idea of "pure" breeds, gain social and legal permission on behalf of their companion species to reproduce.

[45] Coleman's emphasis. This is from a draft of a letter to T.S. Eliot that Coleman may have sent to him in a different form; quoted in Cheryl J. Plumb's "Introduction" to *Nightwood: The Original Version and Related Drafts* (1995), xxi.

Notes to Chapter 2

[46] In addition to *The Zoo Story* (1958) and *The Goat* (2002), Albee's Pulitzer-prize winning drama, *A Delicate Balance* (1966), and his two act play *Seascape* (1975) both prominently feature interspecies exchanges. In the former, an aging man kills his beloved cat for having ceased to like him, and, in the latter, a retired married couple encounter a lizard-like couple on the beach and discuss issues of sexual categorization and evolutionary progress. As I will explain in more detail, these examples show how Albee's examination of sexuality is intertwined with his interest in the dividing lines between species, a theme that remains constant in his body of work.

[47] For example in 2003, then Senator Rick Santorum equated "man on man" sexual relationships with "man on dog" in an interview with the Associated Press; see "Excerpt from Santorum Interview," *USA Today. AP*. 23, Apr. 2003. Similarly, former presidential nominee Mike Huckabee stated in 2008 that: "I think the radical view is to say that we're going to change the definition of marriage so that it can mean two men, two women, a man and three women, a man and a child, a man and animal"; See Waldman, Steven and Dan Gilgof, Interview with Mike Huckabee, "Mike Huckabee: 'The Lord Truly Gave Me Wisdom,'" *Beliefnet.com*. Web. 2008.

[48] In an interview about *The Goat,* Albee is quoted as saying: "I think there's one thing I'm doing with this play: testing the tolerance of the audience. Testing the limits of tolerance" (Tallmer "The Playwright or Who is Edward Albee?" n. pag.).

[49] The first *Time* article in 1948 titled, "How to Stop Gin Rummy" posited Kinsey as a successor to Darwin, and the second feature in 1953, "Dr. Kinsey of Bloomington," included his face on the cover of the magazine paired with flora, birds, and a bee.

[50] The theatricality of Jack Hanna, famed American zookeeper and celebrity icon, illustrates the contemporary relevance of Chaudhuri's argument. I live in Columbus, Ohio which is home to the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, an institution that gained worldwide fame due to the fame and notoriety of its director and spokesperson, Hanna. Events such as NHL games and light shows known as "Wildlights" take place on the zoo grounds and have been used to gain publicity for fundraising efforts for so-called animal conservation. Thus, the intersections between zoo keeping and theatre are plentiful, and the same can be said of Hanna's frequent appearances, along with zoo animals, on daytime and nighttime television as well as in the commercials for one of its major sponsors, the fast food franchise, Wendy's.

[51] In particular, this argument was made by Peter Bowler in his groundbreaking book, *The Eclipse of Darwinism* (1983) and reappears in *Evolution: The History of an Idea* (1983) and *The Non-Darwinian Revolution: Reinterpreting a Historical Myth* (1988).

[52] Much like these examples, the Central Park Zoo alluded to in Albee's Story also began as a menagerie of exotic animals. Officially made public in 1864, it was second in the U.S. only to the Philadelphia Zoo founded in 1859.

[53] Interestingly, female Western lowland gorillas have been widely observed as engaging in sexual behavior during times when they are unable to conceive. For me, this calls into question the argument that the biological utility of sexual behavior is centrally reproduction. Nonetheless, primatologists have re-centered reproduction in their explanations of this observed behavior by suggesting that non-contraceptive sex is the result of female competition (Stoinski, et.al "Sexual Behavior in the Female Western Lowland Gorillas: Evidence for Sexual Competition").

[54] For example, in Kinsey's lecture, "Biologic Basis of Society" which opened his marriage course and subsequently his research project, shows how very intertwined the discourses of zoology and sexology were in the mid twentieth century. It was here that Kinsey would make his case for a more thorough and rigorous study of reproductive behavior among humans akin to ones he had already performed with insects. Perhaps due to the constraints of the course, endorsed by Indiana University for the purposes of promoting marriage, but also owing to the fact that sexual reproduction at the time was seen as the basis and end-goal of all biological life, Kinsey argued that marriage had a biological function for protecting and raising offspring and even placing it on a continuum of human development: "individuals can reach their finest development as a result of marriage" ("The Marriage Course," Drucker 244).

[55] Although the contents of Kinsey's interviews remain confidential, we know from his first and second volumes that the case histories collected involve two actors (strangers), one of whom speaks more than the other and the task of the latter is to make meaning out of speech and embodied experience. Therefore, just as *The Zoo Story* draws from the sexological interview, from a literary lens, the sexological interview could be read as a one-act play.

[56] Sedgwick makes special note that: "I hope no one will ever agonize over the question of whether a particular sentence is or isn't [periformative]" (75). I take her resistance to provide a fixed definition for periformative utterance as an invitation to seek out possible connections with Albee's dialogue without reducing either Sedgwick's description or Albee's drama to formulas.

[57] Albee's stage notes indicate that the actor playing Jerry must make use of much bodily movement into his reading of this monologue: "*The following long speech, it seems to me, should be done with a great deal of action*" (*The Zoo Story* 29). This further illustrates my earlier point that language and embodiment are especially symbiotic in the medium of drama.

Notes to Chapter 3

[59] Examples include Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1969), the bestseller *Our Bodies, Ourselves* first published by the Boston Women's Heath Book Collective in 1971, and

Michel Foucault's groundbreaking genealogy of biopower his 1976 volume of *The History of Sexuality*.

[60] Engel died in 1985 at the age of 51 just before queer theory established itself in the early 1990's.

[61] In 1975-1976, during *Bear*'s publication, Harlequin became involved in what is popularly known as the Romance Wars after the company was unwilling to include more American authors and landscapes preferring British writers and themes. The company broke with Simon and Schuster which established a rival company called Silouette. Harlequin sales fell until the company reversed its rejection of North American settings and sensibilities and appeased a higher demand for sex. This history of popular romance at the time of Engel's writing sheds light on *Bear*'s role as a work that plays on contemporary arguments about sex and nation in the genre. (Regis, *A Natural History of the Romance Novel*, 156-159).

Notes to Chapter 4

[62] Ladelle McWhorter details the history of species in its popular, scientific, and philosophical uses. Prior to Darwin, species was understood according to morphology, but became reconceived in the twentieth century through reproductive relations and thus the passing on of genetic traits; see McWhorter, "Enemy of the Species" in *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire,* eds. Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erikson (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2010), 73-101.

[63] See Toni Morrison, *Beloved*. (New York: Vintage, 2004), 14. In the early pages of *Beloved* (1987), the young men of Sweet Home have sex with cows in the absence of a woman. On the one hand, this scene calls attention to how slaves were dehumanized precisely through forced material and imagined proximities to nonhuman animals. However, Charles Nero criticizes Morrison's decision to supplant the woman character, Sethe, with a calf as homophobic arguing that it closes off the possibility of intimacy between the Sweet Home men, and thus is a disservice to the history of black homosexual intimacy and desire; see Nero, "Toward a Black Gay Aesthetic: Signifying in Contemporary Black Gay Literature," in *Brother to Brother: New Writings by Black Gay Men,* ed. Essex Hemphill (Boston: Alyson Publications, Inc., 1991), 223. The argument that Morrison elides homosexual desire in this scene is persuasive; yet, the choice to depict bestiality over homosexuality certainly comes with its own set of risks especially taking into account the extent to which black bodies under slavery were marked as nonhuman. Knowing what we know now about Morrison's thinking that traveling outside the boundary of species threatens to call attention to how racial and sexual borders are erected in the first place, we are better equipped to understand the significance of contact between humans and animals in her writing and the works of other U.S. ethnic authors.

[64] In 1878 amid the rise of social Darwinisms in the U.S., the federal government developed an extensive network of boarding schools "designed to inculcate Indian children with the virtues and values of Western civilization and to eliminate the traces of Indian cultures." Boarding schools intent on civilizing Indian children continued

throughout the twentieth-century, but the states increasingly began resourcing to adoption services. Between 1969 and 1974, twenty-five to thirty-five percent of all Indian children were separated from their families and placed in non-Indian homes or other institutions; see Troy R Johnson, "The State and the American Indian: Who Gets the Indian Child?" *Wicaso Sa Review* 14.1 (1999): 205-208.

[65] David Eng begins to gesture toward this argument in his reading of Truong's novel when he states: "*The Book of Salt* facilitates an understanding of how it comes to accrue its own ontological status, its own ontological consistency, separate from the liberal-humanist terms of relation that frame but cannot fully determine it"; see David L. Eng, "The End(s) of Race," *PMLA* 123.5 (2008): 1488. Yet, unlike the fiction of Truong (and Alexie), Eng's analysis remains wedded to an ontology of the human when he suggests that the queer desires of the protagonist "illuminate an alternative human life-world" (1486).

[66] Western literary vocabularies for human-animal relationships are, for the most part, limited and largely owing to colonial discourses around which the traditions of animal husbandry, pet keeping, zoo keeping, and even bestiality as a categorical act, developed. These institutions center the human body as the actant and the animal as inert. Alexie and Truong, however, re-open the imagination beyond reductive treatments of the animal in ways that do not categorize along species lines, but rather, position bodies, both human and animal, in the betweenness of species distinctions.

[67] The Human Genome Diversity Project and the National Genographic Project have faced the harshest criticism about their practices of categorizing indigenous peoples and taking DNA samples without adequate informed consent; see Michael Dodson and Robert Williamson, "Indigenous Peoples and the Morality of the Human Genome Project," *Journal of Medical Ethics* 25.:2 (1999): 204-208.

[68] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of becoming-animal developed in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) has been an especially popular point of departure for anti-humanist and posthumanist scholarship. Becoming-animal does not mean that a body transmogrifies into something more culturally recognizable as animal; rather, it is the embodiment of a non-identity developed through various affective forces and temporal states. Although sexual difference receives much attention in their work, racial difference is largely abandoned. Some scholars have sought to remedy this absence by broadening the scope of Deleuze and Guattari's work; see Arun Saldanha and Jason Adams, eds., *Deleuze and Race* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2013). In my own thinking, becoming-animal helps to describe how bodies materialize and take shape in affective relations in spite of the borders of sexual and racial identity that Anzaldúa names. However, the commitment to cognitive decolonization that *Borderlands* enacts makes it a more suitable framework for the interventions I locate in *The Book of Salt* and *The Toughest Indian in the World.*

[69] In David Eng's analysis of Troung's novel in *The Feeling of Kinship* (2010), he contends that "the politics of naming and misnaming works to stabilize—indeed, to

justify—the historical order of things"; see David L. Eng, *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy* (Durham: Duke UP, 2010), 63. For Eng, not knowing the narrator's real name destabilizes this process. However, I would extend this analysis to suggest that *The Book of Salt* is equally invested in how the politics of naming operates along the human-animal border in science, medicine, and in literary modernism.

[70] The popularity of Rebecca Skloot's 2010 award-winning book, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* reflects growing interest in bioethical questions that emerge from the annals of genetic research; see Rebecca Skloot, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. (New York: Broadway Books, 2010). Following the family of African-American women whose cervical cells were taken without their knowledge in 1951 at Johns Hopkins Hospital and have since been proliferated in major breakthroughs in medical science, Skloot's research explores how ethical questions around privacy and property in contemporary medicine are enmeshed in the history and politics of race and poverty. Adding to the concerns regarding the Lacks family's privacy, in 2013, the genome of the HeLa cells was sequenced and published without their knowledge. This eventually gave way to a first of its kind Data Use Agreement; see "NIH, Lacks family reach understanding to share genomic data of HeLa cells," Press release, *National Institues of Health*, (August 7, 2013): http://www.nih.gov/news/health/aug2013/nih-07.htm. This fascinating story which begins in the 1950's is made more complete with the broader context that connects eugenics in the earlier part of the twentieth century with genomics

research of our present-day and the historically bound implications for people of color. Truong's and Alexie's fictions which respond to similar issues as Skloot's non-fiction provide us with an entry into that history.

[71] For more, see Karla Holloway, *Private Bodies, Public Texts: Race, Gender, and a Cultural Biopolitics* (Durham: Duke UP, 2011).

[72] Gerald Vizenor's novel *The Heirs of Columbus* (1991) responds to the emerging power of genetics by claiming the genes of Christopher Columbus are part Mayan; see Gerald Vizenor, *The Heirs of Columbus* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 1991).

[73] Making this connection all the more apparent is Gerald Vizenor's *Heirs of Columbus* (above, n. 46) published in 1991 to mark the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival in America.

[74] It should be noted that discussions within indigenous communities over the role of blood in determinations of kinship are by no means resolved and ongoing blood quantum rules continue to be vexed by inside and outside pressures. See Chadwick Allen's *Blood Narrative: Indigenous Identity in American Indian and Maori Literary Activists Texts* (Durham: Duke UP, 2002).

[75] In *The Global Genome: Biotechnology, Politics, and Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT P, 2005), Eugene Thacker traces how genetic information translates into processes of social normalization: genetic reductionism (biological determinism), "genetic homogenization" (through the pathologization of perceived mutations), and "fragmented statistical averaging…corresponding to hegemonic notions of normativity and health" (97).

[76] Whereas the men in "The Toughest Indian in the World," have sex without identifying as gay, the romance between Seymour and Salmon Boy from "South by Southwest" rewrites dominant scripts about men and intimacy by denying the reader the prescribed sexual behaviors that have been used to determine sexual identity. For example, when Seymour seeks out a person to join him on his cross-country quest for love, "Salmon Boy" responds by telling him, "I am not a homosexual…but I do believe in love." See Alexie, *The Toughest Indian in the World.* (above, n. 6), 59. This rejection of the label "homosexual" is paralleled by the fact though the men do occasionally kiss they do not have sex as it is conventionally understood. In both cases, Alexie dispels and resists the idea that specific acts of intimacy directly signify sexual identity.

[77] Much of the debate over informed consent in publications such as *Third World Network* targets the failure to mention how a person's DNA can be used as a commodity for potential profit to private companies.

[78] The Indigenous Peoples Council On Biocolonialism, an activist non-profit organization, has identified several comprehensive issues of concern which, include the patenting of genetic material, inadequate informed consent, and the use of biotechnology to negate, in particular, Native American accounts and narratives of their origins. See *Indigenous People's Council on Biocolonialism.* accessed Apr. 11, 2013, http://www.ipcb.org.

Notes to Conclusion

[79] There are many reasons for this including but not limited to the compartmentalization of disciplines in the modern university structure, the asymmetrical values placed on these fields within a capitalist system, the crisis of scientific illiteracy in the U.S., and most relevant to this dissertation, the ways in which many cultural critics (though as I discuss not all) have hung the stakes of their scholarship on a limited critique of scientific discourse.

[80] In my discussion of the Human Genome Project in Chapter 4, I make use of Catherine Bliss's term *biosocializing* which describes how genomic scientists draw "on their own experiences, memories, and racial values," and think "through matters of race with their loved ones and themselves in mind creating research agendas to promulgate specific values about race and science" (*Race Decoded: The Genomic Fight for Social Justice* 11).

[81] In order to accomplish this, Barad's book offers an interdisciplinary meditation on agency as it is taken up in political theory, gender studies, and ethics while also contributing an original discovery in theoretical physics.

[82] Ahmed unearths the misnomer of anti-biologism that figures such as Karen Barad, Myra Hird, Elizabeth Grosz, Vicky Kirby, Susan Squire, and Elizabeth Wilson attribute to second-wave feminism. More specifically, she suggests that by establishing their work as a departure from second-wave feminism, these authors unintentionally reveal that they have not read very closely the works from which they supposedly depart. On the one

hand, this criticism is not entirely uniform; for example. Elizabeth Grosz dedicates significant space to the work of feminist Luce Irigaray in her 2005 work *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power.* On the other hand, I take Ahmed's observation as an invitation for reflection and therefore choose to identify this project as engaging both recent scholarship as well those such as Donna Haraway continue to establish the very groundwork for the reinvigorated interest in materiality.

[83] I want to thank Anne Jansen for introducing me to this collection.

[84] The quote, which is the epigraph of this conclusion, also appears at the beginning of Girmay's collection.

[85] This is especially delightful given that fan of Darwin and father of materialism, Karl Marx nonetheless derided his prose by characterizing it as "crude English style" (Foster *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature* 197).

[86] Moreover, it is because refusing to take *Homo sapiens* as a category for granted also demands a *greater* specificity for how we account for bodies, new materialisms, again drawing from the seminal work of Donna Haraway has incorporated posthumanist thought into its intervention (Wolfe xvv).

[87] Tyson's documentary television series *Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey* launched on March 9, 2014 while I was finalizing this project. A follow-up to the beloved series from the 1980's presented by Carl Sagan, the contemporary version is hosted by renowned science educator Neil deGrasse Tyson and covers a wide array of topics such as the theoretical origins of the universe, evolution, microbiology, and optics.

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