Disabling Modernism: Disability and Anti-Eugenic Ethics in the Modernist Novel

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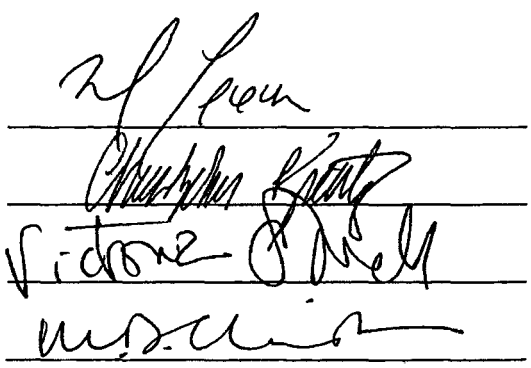

Abstract

Examining the works of James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway, Virginia Woolf, and Djuna Barnes, "Disabling Modernism: Disability and Anti-Eugenic Ethics in the Modernist Novel" argues that the modernist novel allows for significant displays of resistance to dominant eugenic ideologies of the early 20th century. This resistance largely occurs through the novels' portrayals of gender, desire, and reproduction in eugenically excluded bodies. Whether by suggesting an erotic attraction to non-standard bodies; reproducing subjects by means other than regularized, "wholesome," heterosexual relations; depicting queer modes of caretaking for eugenic bodies, which respect their fundamental difference; or insisting on the autonomy and value of disabled bodies as they are; these novels work to establish what I call an *ethics of particularity*: a sexual and ethical code that deems physical difference and contingency intrinsically valuable. These books suggest an ethical commitment not only to human variation and deviance, but to alterity; they demonstrate a fundamental belief in the radical otherness of others, which cannot be extinguished. This project's view of modernism presents an important counterpoint to critical perspectives that deem modernist novels intrinsically hostile to disabled bodies and fundamentally pro-eugenic in nature.

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Introduction to "Disabling Modernism: Disability and Anti-Eugenic Ethics in the High Modernist Novel"

Disability Critics and the Modernist Novel

In her influential work *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Disability in American Literature and Culture,* disability studies scholar Rosemarie Garland Thomson argues that the modernist novel reflects an ideology of disability despair (106). Thomson argues that, while the sentimentalist novel of the 19th century depicts disabled bodies as objects deserving of social sympathy, the modernist novel depicts these bodies in a "grotesque" mode, casting them as figures of deviance (105). Admittedly, for Garland Thomson, it is indeed problematic that 19th century novels such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* exploit representations of disability to evoke pity; but they nevertheless portray disabled figures as part of the social fabric, existing alongside the idea of the "normate."[1] By contrast, modernist novels, such as Ann Petry's 1946 novel *The Street,* tend to cast disabled figures "ominous quasi-monster[s]" (108). Although Garland Thomson is quick to say that the grotesque mode *can* provide a launching point for social protest—by exposing the kinds of oppression that plague the disabled subject—it is clear that she believes that the modernist novel, taken as a whole, renders disability in a negative light.

Indeed, Garland Thomson is not alone in her view that nothing especially positive happens with disability representation during the modernist period. For her, Lennard J.

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[1] Garland Thomson holds that disability defines itself against the concept of the normate; or perhaps more accurately, the normate defines itself as against the disabled person. The non-disabled normate is "the constructed identity of those who, by way of bodily configurations and cultural capital they assume, can step into a position of authority and wield the power it grants them" (8)

Davis, Ato Quayson, and most other literary scholars who have considered disability in the 20th century, it is during postmodernism, rather than modernism, that we glimpse the beginnings of a more empowering and *important* rhetoric of disability in literary representations of physical and cognitive difference. Indeed, Davis calls the postmodern subject position "intrinsically disabled," leading him to term the era in which we live "dismodernism," because only now are we finally able to concede, and even celebrate, the "nonstandard" and "partial" nature of bodies (*BOB* 30-32). Davis posits a post-modern subject reminiscent of Donna Haraway's cyborg, who is necessarily partial and incomplete (30). Above all, the repeating refrain of dismodernism insists that "[i]mpairment is the rule, and normalcy is the fantasy" (31). Postmodernism is an era of relative acceptance for non-normative bodies, and, crucially, this acceptance stems from an acknowledgment of the *inevitability* of our differences and contingencies. In a similar move, Quayson's use of disability as an intrinsically postmodern trope, whose consistent presence exerts explanatory power in a range of situations, and illuminates the condition of postmodernity, emphasizes its importance. Quayson situates disability as a critical lens for reading postcolonial literature of the latter 20th century, drawing on the explanatory power of disabled bodies that are silenced, and that do not belong, to represent the position of the subaltern . [2]

For these critics, the more empowering postmodern rhetoric of disability takes the form of an at least provisional kind of acceptance of difference—an affirmation of its inevitability—and occasionally, perhaps even a celebration of what Garland Thomson calls "extraordinary bodies." The inaugural question of my examination of canonical modernist

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[2] See Ato Quayson's "Looking Awry: Tropes of Disability in Postcolonial Writing." in *Relocating postcolonialism* Ed. David Theo Goldberg and Ato Quayson. New York: Blackwell, 2002.

novels, then, was: do these novels *really* represent disabled bodies as unequivocally grotesque, despairing failures? Or can these novels be read as themselves provisionally accepting, or even celebratory, of disability?

Drawing on the cultural history of eugenics, as well as disability theory, philosophies of ethics, and literary criticism, I conclude that, in fact, the modernist novel can be read as a genre that conveys a significant degree of acceptance of physical and cognitive difference. Although Davis clearly holds dismodernism as a *contemporary* ideal, I will argue that we can, indeed, recover glimmers of a dismodernist consciousness inside the high modernist moment, a keen awareness that impairment is the rule, and difference is what we all have in common *(BOB* 26). In this way, these books establish a kind of anti-eugenic ethics, an ethics that affirms and maintains the inevitability, and indeed value, of corporeal differences.

Modernism and Eugenics

It is impossible to deny that disabled bodies in any period of literature are often rendered in an unsympathetic or exploitative light. In Quayson's taxonomy of nine kinds of disability representation, only one form—which he calls "disability as normality"—shows disabled characters "completely normalized[,] exis[ting] within the full range of human emotions, contradictions, hopes, fears, and vague ideas, just like any other character" (*AN*, 51). Under all of Quayson's eight other rubrics of representation, disabled characters exist either as symbols of evil, tragedy, pessimism, or nihilism; or as othernesses against which normative characters are defined (52). The idea that disabled characters' differences are exploited to define parameters for normate characters, or to inaugurate and resolve plots, is also reflected in David Mitchell and Susan Snyder's theory of narrative prosthesis, which

states that "all narratives operate out of a desire to compensate for a limitation or rein in excessiveness" (*DSR* 20). Disability therefore becomes a narrative device, a symbol, exploited for what it can do, rather than depicted as it is.

Of course, it is important to acknowledge that negative and/or exploitative representations of disability in literature merely reflect the way that disability is viewed in larger culture throughout various historical periods. Although the nuances of this cultural treatment of disability vary across time and place, Catherine Kudlick sweepingly suggests that, in the West, social " hierarchy depends on the threat of disability always lurking as the ultimate living catastrophe" (3). That is, fear of disability is the cornerstone of all kinds of oppression. And indeed, although every era has been repressive and oppressive toward disabled people in one way or another, there is ample historical reason to consider the 1920s and 30s a period particularly violent toward non-normative bodies. The most striking evidence of this hostility is the programmatic implementation of eugenic policies by state and national governments in the U.S., Britain, and continental Europe.

While it is important to note that eugenics can be practiced by *incentivizing* reproduction for those considered genetically desirable ("positive eugenics"), the majority of eugenic social programs during the early to mid-twentieth century were aimed at *halting* the reproduction of genetically "unfit" individuals ("negative eugenics"). These negative eugenic programs targeted a wide range of groups: ethnic minorities, the poor, the mentally and physically disabled, the sexually deviant (including prostitutes, "loose" women, and non-gender-normative individuals). All of these groups, and more, were grouped together as "degenerates" (Lombroso 11). The fact that degeneracy was seen as a near-ubiquitous threat to collective society was one of the key forces that drove the eugenic movement.

Evidence of "degeneracy" spanned the range from physical abnormalities like deafness and blindness, to poverty, drug addiction, and prostitution (which, significantly, was defined by Italian anthropologist Cesare Lombroso as any kind of sex had by women outside of marriage) (11).

Significantly, although we now distinguish between genetically transmissible traits, such as congenital blindness, and acquired or "adventitious" conditions, such as prostitution (which is clearly *not* genetic), this distinction was far less concrete and meaningful during the early part of the 20th century, when Lamarckian genetics still held sway (Childs 5). A French contemporary of Charles Darwin, Jean-Baptiste Lamarck believed that traits acquired during one's lifetime, as a result of one's interaction with one's environment, could be transmitted to offspring. This type of inheritance, called "soft inheritance," was thought to be the main mechanism driving species to adapt, as they supposedly acquired adaptive changes and passed them on to offspring. Perhaps the most oft-cited example of Lamarckian genetics is the notion that the giraffe's neck is stretched during its life as it reaches for tall trees, and this longer neck is then passed to its offspring, resulting in longer and longer necks down the generations of giraffes. This theory of soft inheritance was ultimately discarded in favor of Darwin's theory of evolution, which posited a different type of relationship between bodies and their environments. For Darwin, the environment did not *create* traits, but rather exerted pressures on traits that occurred as random mutations, so that traits that happened to be more adaptive for their environment grew to be more common over time, because individuals possessing those adaptive traits reproduced more successfully than individuals who did not possess them. Although Darwin's ideas were already beginning to supplant

Lamarck's during the 1920s and 30s, literary historian Donald Childs remarks that Lamarckian genetics still heavily influenced eugenic thinking during this period (Childs 5).

This murky thinking about how traits are acquired, and how they are transmitted, led to a near-boundless fear of bodily deviance, different from the kinds of ableism we see today. Although there is no question that contemporary society still engages in eugenic behavior, and that that behavior is ableist—that is, it posits the "normate" body as superior—we situate those eugenic decisions within particular contexts (Davis, *BOB*, 20-21). Prenatal testing is probably the biggest area of eugenic behavior in contemporary Western life, but even the fact that such a mechanism exists—one that can isolate certain diseases and conditions as transmissible from parents to children—makes our fears about the inheritance of deviance look circumscribed compared to the kinds of fears modernists held about disability. For example, our current cultural fear of Down Syndrome, and the rise of a prenatal testing industry around this disease, targets only Trisomy 21 (Berube). Similarly, there are now prenatal tests for sickle cell anemia, as well as for Tay-Sachs Disease. This targeting of genetic anomalies, in some ways, allows other kinds of variation to escape being framed as an area of concern. So while the discovery of DNA has allowed us to police corporeal deviance on a cellular level, it has also paradoxically allowed us to relax about some of the kinds of deviance that we know *not* to be encoded there. Modernist eugenicists did not have this ability. Eugenics of that era did not only aim to halt or slow the reproduction of individuals whom we would now recognize as people possessing genetically transmissible traits (and whom we might also target with our own version of eugenics); modernist eugenics targeted individuals whom we would today recognize as *un*able to pass their traits on to their children. In the words of Karl Pearson, a famous eugenicist of the

time, the eugenically unfit were "diseased from birth *or* from excess" (*EN* 35-6, emphasis mine). Significantly, then, modernists did not really discriminate between these two ways of being disabled.

Modern eugenic fears of degeneracy therefore loomed large and non-specific. But despite their non-specificity, these fears were nevertheless steeped in a fundamentally racist, classist, and ableist paradigm—a fact evident from the way in which poor, disabled minorities were disproportionately targeted by eugenic programs seeking to halt the reproduction of the "unfit." And indeed, although those whom we would now recognize as disabled may not have been the only, or even the primary, targets of eugenic policy, the eugenic vision of what the body *should* be excluded a range of people whom we would now recognize as people with disabilities: the deaf, the mentally ill, the cognitively disabled, those with congenital anomalies, and many others (*EN* 38). In fact, Lennard Davis makes the provocative claim that, during the early 20th century, all manner of social deviance was gathered together under what we might now recognize as an umbrella of disability:

> Eugenics saw the possible improvement of the human race as being accomplished by diminishing problematic peoples and their problematic behaviors—these peoples were clearly delineated under the rubric of feeble-mindedness and degeneration as women, people of color, homosexuals, the working classes, and so on. All these were considered to be classes of disability, although we do not think of them as connected in this way today. (*EN* 14)

Davis has also written extensively about the development of the concept of the "normal" body and its particular relationship to disability in the 20th century. Tracing the beginnings of corporeal norming to the rise of statistics—specifically, to the work of nineteenth-century French mathematician Adolphe Quetelet—Davis observes that "[s]tatistics is bound up with eugenics" and notes the ways in which statistics seek to identify

and manage deviations from the norm, thereby creating the notion of a "standard" body, which did not exist before the rise of statistics (26). Statistics did indeed lead to a concept of a physically normal person, which Quetelet called "*l'homme moyen physique*" (26). Sir Francis Galton, the British statistician (and eugenicist) who infamously coined the term "eugenics"—and its two varieties, positive and negative— took Quetelet's notion of the standard body even further by *ranking* various deviations of the human body and considering how eliminating those deviations would impact the distribution curve and move the average. Significantly—and a point I will return to later—the elimination of deviance on either end of the curve creates a new distribution, but does not fundamentally eliminate the deviance. It only narrows the overall range of variation. The classification and ranking of deviance created "a new kind of ideal", which contains an "imperative" to be ideal (35): "The new ideal of ranked order is powered by the imperative of the norm, and then is supplemented by the notion of progress, human perfectibility and the elimination of deviance, to create a dominating, hegemonic vision of what the human body should be" (*EN* 35).

Despite having its roots in the 19th century, the idea that human deviance should be eliminated persisted well into the twentieth century in both America and Europe. And even though many now associate eugenics with Nazi extremism, it was in fact a staple of mainstream—not radical—culture during the 1920s and 30s. Many so-called progressive thinkers of the time subscribed to eugenic thinking, and eugenic philosophy shaped social and cultural policy on both sides of the Atlantic in innumerable ways. In 1927, the U.S. Supreme Court case *Buck vs. Bell* explicitly legalized forcible eugenic sterilization, a decision in whose opinion the progressive justice Oliver Wendell Holmes infamously declared: "Three generations of imbeciles are enough." The forcible sterilization of Carrie Buck set a

precedent of state-sanctioned sterilization, which in some states, including Buck's own state, Virginia, remained legal until the mid-1970s. [3] Although less widely practiced in Britain, compulsory sterilization enjoyed a reasonable degree of approval within the British scientific community (*EN* 38). And many other British health officials, who were uncomfortable with compulsory sterilization, vigorously campaigned for what they called "voluntary sterilization" during the 1920s and early 1930s.[4] Scientists were by no means the only prominent cultural figures to support eugenic programs. The list of modernist writers on both sides of the Atlantic who subscribed to eugenic philosophy is a long one, including D.H. Lawrence, George Bernard Shaw, and Rebecca West. In his book *Modernism and Eugenics*, Donald Childs excavates the "eugenical selves" of high modernist authors Virginia Woolf, T.S. Eliot, and W.B. Yeats (21), arguing that all three adapt the scientific language of eugenics—whether wittingly or not—to "extend the imperial sway of the scientific discourse of the body into...the realm of the imagination" (14).

Anti-Eugenic Ethics in the Modernist Novel

No doubt, then, it is largely as a result of the heavy influence of eugenic thinking on writers of the modernist period that literary critics—especially those bringing a disability studies perspective to their work—have not often viewed canonical novels of the 1920s and 30s as a potential site of *resistance* to eugenic ideologies. However, I argue that, in the four novels I take up, we see ample disagreement with, if not outright hostility toward, eugenic

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[3] Many historians have explicitly linked Buck vs. Bell to Nazi Germany's program of "Rassenhygiene" (racial hygiene). See Paul A. Lombardo's discussion in *Three Generations, No Imbeciles: Eugenics, the Supreme Court, and Buck v. Bell* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 2008).

[4] See a discussion of this issue in John Macnicol, "Eugenics and the Campaign for Voluntary Sterilization in Britain Between the Wars," *Social History of Medicine* 2:2 (1989): 147–69.

thinking. This resistance takes the form of an insistence on the fundamental value—and intransigence—of bodily difference. From illustrating erotic desire rooted in an appreciation of difference, to insisting on an inherent value of war-mutilated bodies, to showcasing relationships of ethical caretaking toward bodies that eugenics would seek to eradicate, to problematizing various kinds of "rehabilitation" and "cure" for deviant bodies, these novels show such bodies not only as objects *of* care, but crucially as subjects of care, who, while being cared for by others, remain aware that they deserve to be cared about *as they are.*

In using the precise formulation of care *about* bodies, I draw on Davis's three-part taxonomy of bodily care: taking care *of* bodies, caring *for* bodies, and caring *about* bodies (*BOB* 27). While "care of the body...involves the purchase of a vast number of products...", and is about attempting to "complete" the body through capitalistic consumption (27), care for the body involves physical and medical care, usually performed by non-disabled people, for disabled bodies (28). Finally, care *about* the body involves considering the oppression of disabled bodies and pays attention to human and civil rights with regard to those bodies (28). Davis problematizes care of, and even care for, the body, stating that, in a properly ethical view, "caring about the body subsumes and analyzes care of and for the body. The latter two produce oppressive subjection, while the former gives us an ethic of liberation" (29). In using the term "care about" bodies, I am appealing to that ethic of liberation that considers the disabled subject as one whose rights, experiences, and agency are paramount. Although caring for the body, in terms of both its most basic needs (food, shelter, clothing) and in more specialized, medical ways necessarily occurs in real life as well as in the novels I write about, the "care about" ethic—the ethic that considers those bodies as subjects, rather than merely objects of caretaking—is foregrounded, and in some

cases, we see exactly what happens when the body is *not* cared about. That the "care about" ethic is so emphasized in all of the books I take up ultimately leads me to conclude that the high modernist novel is a site that importantly contests eugenic understandings of what bodies should be and do.

In fact, in all of these novels, attempts to enforce conformity or eradicate bodily difference fail, leading to the establishment of relationships of care *about* what I call the "eugenic abject" body. I have chosen the term "eugenic abject" to encapsulate the broad range of bodies—Jewish, disabled, queer, poor—that were socially cast out and civically excluded during this period. "Abjected" *means* cast out, pushed away—but, of course, the term "abjection" also crucially suggests the process that, for Julia Kristeva, is at the heart of identity formation, and this connotation is important to my use of the term "abject."

Kristeva famously theorizes abjection as a "precondition of narcissism"—that is, a process on which the formation of identity rests (13). This abjection largely consists of the separation between "self" and "(m)other," and in the process of abjection, the newly formed subject transitions from the pre-verbal chora into the verbal symbolic order (14). This is the process by which the self individuates: by abjecting the non-self elements, the elements belonging to the mother, from the self. Kristeva, however, stresses that abjection is not, and cannot be, a discrete occurrence. She declares that "abjection is above all ambiguity" (9), since the abject remains something "from which [the subject] does not cease separating" (8). The process of separation from the abject is never complete, and so the subject remains perpetually haunted by the abjected elements (9), which do not respect the boundaries imposed by the process of abjection. The significance of this process of abjection, and the reason I choose to use the term "eugenic abject" in my analysis, then, is precisely *that*

abjection is never finally complete. The other is never fully othered in the process of abjection, which is why processes of abjection must be perpetually performed in an attempt to constitute the self.

Eugenics functioned as this kind of never-completed process, whose telos was to eradicate difference, thus shoring up the norm. But by its very nature, eugenics can never achieve its goals. The eugenic project is inherently impossible for a few reasons: first, the very statistical device that embodies the concept of the norm—the Bell curve, otherwise known as a "normal distribution"—itself relies on outliers of "abnormality" in order to create the norm it expresses. Second, a well-known mathematical phenomenon called "regression to the mean" provides that, even when outliers are initially eliminated, the remaining statistical group goes on to re-norm itself so that outliers (that is, kinds of deviance) are re-created. In short, the Bell curve model of the world is one that replicates itself wherever it is implemented, creating and re-creating deviance that shores up the norm. Therefore, the eugenic project's goal of creating a population of standard, normal bodies is impossible within the very statistical structure that first gives eugenics its "scientific" backing (*EN* 35). Attention to physical difference manifested in the eugenic view of human bodies is one capable of always making meaning of smaller and smaller kinds of difference, so that the standard of the "norm" can be continually revised and refined. Because eugenic ideals and norms are fluid in this way, there can be no real terminus to the eugenic project, no point at which its goals are finally attained. The eugenic mentality drives difference into proliferation and perpetuity, providing an endless meaning-making machine for physical difference. This is the cultural mindset around which I argue modernism pivots, one that is steeped in an awareness of the inevitability and proliferation of physical difference.

So even though the object of eugenics was to eliminate deviance, the novels I examine reveal these inevitable fissures in that process, demonstrating finally that the goal of eugenic abjection cannot be attained: deviance *cannot* be eradicted. The eugenic "abject" are abject not actually because they are "other," but because they *are* not, and *cannot* be, unequivocally other; the process of othering them can never fully occur. Whether because consumerist modes of taking care of the body fail to eliminate disability, or because racial othering remains powerless to cast out fully non-white bodies, or because war-torn bodies and minds are central to the fabric of post-World War I society, physical and cognitive deviance are never successfully eliminated in these novels.

When the body is shown to be an ineffective target for relentless attempts at eugenic "improvement," it becomes a site of caring about as the body *as it is*. The fundamental commonality at the heart of these novels' embrace of bodily difference, and their insistence on caring about non-normative bodies, is their respect of alterity. Borrowed from Emmanuel Levinas, "alterity" literally means otherness, or the state of being other than oneself. We might think of alterity as a state akin to Kristeva's abjection. However, the significance of the term alterity, and the reason I have chosen this term and *not* otherness, is that "alterity" can *include* a consideration of racial and physical otherness, but at its heart does not *require* any particular type of otherness, because the otherness implied by alterity is not actually avoidable in Levinas's view. Meffan and Worthington explain that alterity is not the same thing as racial or other kinds of "comparative Otherness": "Alterity does not ever equate with a singular embodied Other: the black, Third World, colonized Other so invoked in postcolonial discourse" (135). Alterity, then, is not a trait or property that attaches to *certain* bodies; it is a continual experience—indeed, one of the most integral experiences—of

embodiment: "Significantly, then, for Levinas alterity is to be understood as an experience rather than a realizable quality" (Meffan and Worthington 135).

Indeed, in Levinas's formulation, all bodies possess alterity; all bodies are *other* than the bodies which they are not: "The experience of alterity is, in Levinas's terms, nothing more than a subjective acknowledgement of the limits of the percipient's knowing, of his or her inability to contain all that is perceivable within the ambit of understanding" (Meffan and Worthington 135). Alterity is, then, a fundamental experience of human consciousness, by which one mind-body recognizes that another mind-body is not itself. All of these novels articulate ethical commitments that, at their core, respect alterity as an irreducible and valuable fact of human existence. Indeed, some of the novels even warn against trying to reduce alterity, providing object lessons about what happens when alterity is *not* respected. In so doing, these novels work to establish a sexual and ethical code that holds physical difference and contingency as intrinsically valuable, and insists that the particular contingencies of one body's embodiment differ from the circumstances of any other body's. That said, the experience of bodily difference as "what we all have in common" (Davis, *BOB*, 26) results in the formation of certain kinds of intersubjective bonds, and these novels are keen to explore this intersubjectivity: both its pleasures and dangers.

My dissertation begins with an examination of one such bond, the bond between Leopold Bloom and Gerty MacDowell in the "Nausicaa" episode of *Ulysses*. Entitled "Reading the Disabled Woman: Gerty MacDowell and the Stigmaphilic Space of 'Nausicaa," this chapter first unpacks critical writing about Gerty to suggest that scholars' readings of her have failed to take into account her gender position and her disability *simultaneously*, resulting, in either case, in a limited view of her character. I draw on an "interactionist" model of identity put forward by

Alexa Schriempf to consider the ways in which Gerty's gender identity and her disability interact to make her a sexually subversive character. Viewed in this light, it becomes easier to read Bloom's attraction to her as an attraction rooted in stigma: her stigma as a disabled woman. I argue that the relationship between Gerty and Bloom is based in a shared stigma, since he too is a sexual "deviant" (a masochist), and the stigma of his Jewishness is a focal point of the novel. Drawing on Erving Goffman's distinction between stigmaphobic and stigmaphilic spaces, this chapter argues that the erotic scene on Sandymount Strand occurs in a stigmaphilic space, in which Gerty and Bloom come together in an intersubjective recognition—and affirmation—of shared difference. They organize their physical and mental attraction for one another around physical and sexual non-standardness, affirming the inherent value in non-standard bodies. Moreover, what I call Gerty's labor of self-care—her meticulous attention to physical appearance, which most other critics have viewed as vain and frivolous—importantly reveals that taking care *of* the body through consumption is not capable of erasing Gerty's difference.

The second chapter, on Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, works to elaborate the communities of erotics and caretaking that spring up around non-normative bodies—particularly mutilated, queer, non-reproductive bodies. Entitled "Abjection as Identity, Mutilation as Ethics: Disability and Vampirism in *The Sun Also Rises*," this chapter draws first on the writing of Kaja Silverman to argue that Jake Barnes's injury destabilizes phallic masculinity and therefore the reproduction of subjects. In the absence of sexual reproduction, *The Sun Also Rises* must create an alternative system for propagating subjectivity (Davidson and Davidson 93-94). I will argue that the system it posits in place of sexual reproduction is a vampiric system, which troubles the entire basis of identity by fundamentally destabilizing categories of normative/non-normative, aberrant/non-aberrant on which models of social

identity typically depend. Developing Kristeva's formulation of abjection in conjunction with Betsy Nies' extensive writing on eugenic exclusion, I describe the kind of fear of contagion that we see in the book's treatment of the disabled Jake Barnes. White and wounded in a way that affirms the fallibility of the phallus, Jake represents cultural fears around the breakdown of both masculinity and whiteness, particularly in the aftermath of World War I. The treatment of other characters' marginalized identities—including Robert Cohn's Jewishness and Count Mippippoplous's and Belmonte's disabilities—call into question masculinity, whiteness, and the arena of war as a site for determining eugenic fitness. Significantly, however, Jake refuses the rehabilitative imperatives of post-war assimilation and opts to live in a way that affirms the ineradicability of his difference. I draw on the work of Robert McRuer to talk about how Jake's refusal amounts to an ethical stance the book takes about bodies as they are; in this case, "as they are" means mutilated, and I consider a framework of valuing bodies that affirms the ethical importance of mutilation.

In my third chapter, I write about Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood*, further developing the idea of ethical caretaking with regard to eugenic abject bodies. Entitled "The Acceptance of Depravity: Disability in Public, Queer Caretaking, and an Ethics of Alterity in *Nightwood*" I draw on legal and queer theorists to suggest that a queer caretaking relationship exists between Felix and his son Guido. This transgressive caretaking arrangement affirms the value of the eugenic abject body by showing Guido as worthy of care. Significantly, though, even as a minor dependent, Guido is also revealed as a subject in his own right. Therefore, the representation of their relationship begins to elaborate a view of caretaking that respects the cared-for subject's fundamental alterity. In contrast to Felix and Guido's alterity-respecting relationship, the relationship of Nora to Robin highlights the dangers implicit in an

intersubjectivity that does not respect the fundamental autonomy of each subject, but rather merges them together. Drawing on Sigmund Freud's notion of melancholic incorporation, I elaborate the differences between a bond that respects the other's otherness and one that attempts to subsume the other within the self. Finally, Matthew O'Connor's relationship with Nora provides still another counterpoint to melancholic incorporation by showcasing psychological caretaking that respects the radical and irreducible alterity of the other.

In my fourth and final chapter, entitled "Whose Trauma Is it Anyway?: Disability, Autonomy, and the Ethics of Narrativization in *Mrs. Dalloway*," I continue to explore the play between alterity and interdependence. Examining the critical tendency to view Septimus Smith as a kind of foil or alter ego for Clarissa Dalloway, this chapter draws on Mitchell and Snyder's theory of narrative prosthesis, alongside recent work on ethics by literary critics such as Molly Hite and Heather Love, to suggest that an overemphasis on interdependence actually poses as many dangers to disabled subjects as the objectifying gaze of the medical model does. The medical model strips the body of its social context, but the "interdependence" view risks subsuming the disabled body entirely *within* the mind-bodies of others. This chapter argues we need a model of looking at Septimus Warren Smith, and the traumatized subject in general, that fundamentally respects his apartness, while allowing him to be situated within a social context. Taking disabled subjects' alterity seriously means extricating Septimus from the function of Clarissa's "double" and examining our assumptions about how and why his trauma should, or must, be told. Furthermore, we must work toward an understanding of trauma that does not locate a "cure" within the same social context whose conditions enabled trauma to occur.

Coda: Radical Alterity and New Theories of Disability

Taken together, these chapters trace an arc within high modernism that, rather than shoring up the eugenic understanding that deviance is something to be eradicated, suggests the inevitability and inherent value of physical and cognitive difference. Further, these books suggest a commitment not only to variation, but to alterity—a fundamental belief in the radical otherness of others, which cannot be extinguished and must not be subsumed in the mind-bodies of others. This view of high modernism is significant, most obviously, because it dislodges critical interpretations of this literature that deem it hostile to disabled and deviant bodies and fundamentally pro-eugenic in nature.

Not only that, however, the emphasis on the importance of alterity illuminates something of a bind within disability studies itself. One of the founding assumptions of disability studies, the social model of disability places importance on the environment to construct the reality of one's lived experience. The social model importantly defines disability as a construct, a result not of one's bodily difference but of one's body's interaction with its environment:

> ...We define impairment as lacking all or part of a limb, or having a defective limb, organism or mechanism of the body and disability as the disadvantage or restrictive of activity caused by contemporary social organization which takes little or no account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activities. (Paul Hunt, qtd. in Oliver, 22)

The significance of the intervention of the social model is that it situates disability in a social context, rather than locating the problem with disability solely *in the body* of the disabled individual. But there are limitations to the usefulness of this model, and critics like Tom Shakespeare and Mark Jeffreys have returned to the body as a site of lived experience and

meaning. Shakespeare seeks to recuperate the role of impairment and the lived experience of bodily difference, lamenting that "[i]n properly rejecting the causal role of the body in explaining oppression, disabled radicals have followed their feminist precursors in denying difference entirely" (11). Jeffreys similiarly aims to focus on impairment as the "hard kernel of truth" at the center of the construction of disability (33). These theorists insist upon the importance of the disabled person's bodily difference, of the disabled body as it is. This is important because it makes difference an irreducible fact.

Although the social model is widely regarded—and with good reason—as an improvement over the medical model, one potential peril of it is a kind of totalizing subsumption of the mind-body of a disabled subject by his or her social context. If the social context can disable a body by putting up barriers to its social inclusion, it can presumably also eradicate disability by removing barriers. But this analysis misses the very important possibility that some differences are intransigent: alterity is radical and irreducible. I suggest that examining the play between radical alterity and intersubectivity/caretaking in these novels reveals the need for a new model of disability: one that respects the alterity of the body-mind of the disabled subject, while paying attention to his or her social environment. Neither one on its own is sufficient to explain the oppression of disabled bodies, nor is either aspect sufficient to eliminate that oppression.

Reading the Disabled Woman: Gerty MacDowell and the Stigmaphilic Space of "Nausicaa"

As readers of James Joyce's *Ulysses,* we first encounter Gerty MacDowell during "Wandering Rocks." Joyce's encyclopedic account of the activities of both major and minor characters on the afternoon of June 16, 1904 fleetingly presents a host of physical and cognitive differences. From the one-legged sailor patriotically singing on Eccles Street; to the blind stripling on his way to retrieve his tuning fork from the Ormond Bar; to the harried and eccentric figure of Cashel Boyle O'Connor Fitzmaurice Tisdall Farrell, who accidentally knocks the blind stripling down; to Gerty herself, carrying her father's "lino letters" and walking too slowly to catch a glimpse of the vice regal cavalcade (Joyce, *Ulysses* 10.1207), "Wandering Rocks" presents brief displays of difference matter-of-factly.

Three episodes later, in "Nausicaa," the state of physical difference with which *Ulysses* is heretofore peripatetically concerned finally becomes the object of more sustained engagement. Through Gerty's brief relationship with Leopold Bloom, we begin to see that physical difference occupies a crucial position within the novel, helping to illuminate a space in which models of identity and social relations that rely on normative bodies can begin to be challenged and revised. While I am not suggesting that Joyce himself intended a radical critique of able-ism, I believe that an examination of Gerty's character reveals her crucial role in shoring up the novel's implicit questioning of compulsory normativity. Far from being a conventional, sentimental heroine, Gerty MacDowell embodies a powerful resistance to eugenic ideologies of standardization that pervade the twentieth century, positing in their place an ethics of bodily particularity.

Modernism and Eugenic Ideology

To examine Gerty's relationship to ideologies of standardization, we must first understand the pervasiveness of eugenic ideology during the modernist period. Disability theorist Lennard J. Davis has written extensively about the development of the concept of the "normal" body, and its particular relationship to disability in the twentieth century. Davis traces the beginnings of corporeal norming to the rise of statistics—specifically, to the work of nineteenth-century French mathematician Adolphe Quetelet (*Enforcing Normality* 26). Observing that "[s]tatistics is bound up with eugenics," Davis notes the ways in which statistics seek to identify and manage deviations from the norm, thereby creating the notion of a "standard" body (26). Indeed, Sir Francis Galton, the British statistician who infamously coined the term "eugenics," took Quetelet's notion of the "normal distribution" one step further by ranking various deviations, which led to "[a] new ideal of ranked order [that] is powered by the imperative of the norm, and then is supplemented by the notion of progress, human perfectibility and *the elimination of deviance*, to create a dominating, hegemonic vision of what the human body should be" (*Enforcing Normality* 35, emphasis mine). In addition to being rooted in a fundamentally racist and classist fear of cultural "degeneracy,"[5] this hegemonic vision of the normal body excluded a range of people with disabilities: the deaf, the mentally ill, the cognitively disabled, alcoholics, and those with congenital anomalies, among many others (*Enforcing Normality* 38).

This eugenic ideology of bodily perfectibility persisted well into the twentieth century in both America and Europe and, despite its later association with Nazi extremism, was a

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[5] For a particularly cogent discussion of this issue, see Nies.

staple of mainstream culture during the 1920s. In 1927, the Supreme Court case *Buck vs. Bell* explicitly legalized forcible eugenic sterilization in the U.S., which, in some states, remained legal until the mid-1970s.[6] Although less widely practiced in Britain, compulsory sterilization enjoyed a reasonable degree of approval within the scientific community (*Enforcing Normality* 38). Many British health officials who were uncomfortable with compulsory sterilization vigorously campaigned for what they called "voluntary sterilization" during the 1920s and early 1930s.[7] Scientists were by no means the only prominent cultural figures to support eugenic programs. The list of modernist writers on both sides of the Atlantic who subscribed to eugenic philosophy is a long one, including T. S. Eliot, George Bernard Shaw, and Rebecca West (Childs 13). Tellingly, Joyce was among a handful of authors to speak out against eugenics in his writings, most notably using Stephen Dedalus in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* to launch a critique (13). Because Joyce was writing at a time when this ideology was so pervasive, and because he himself was skeptical of it, examining Gerty MacDowell's physical difference in relation to eugenic notions of standardization and perfectibility seems all the more important.

Claiming Gerty as a Disabled Woman

Most critics have regarded Gerty as a character contaminated by the trappings of an emergent mass culture and consumer-based society. When her disability is discussed, it is largely read as a symbol—or even a *result*—of the social "disease" from which she suffers. Although some recent "Nausicaa" critics have regarded Gerty as sexually subversive, they

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[6] Many historians have explicitly linked *Buck vs. Bell* to Nazi Germany's program of "Rassenhygiene" (racial hygiene). See Paul A. Lombardo's discussion in *Three Generations, No Imbeciles: Eugenics, the Supreme Court, and Buck v. Bell.*

[7] See a discussion of this issue in Macnicol.

have failed to reconcile her disability with, or include her disability in, this transgressiveness. Other scholars have acknowledged her disability only insofar as it establishes Gerty as a kind of second-rate disabled character who lacks the acute social awareness of the blind stripling. In short, Gerty is generally read as conventional, uninteresting, and flat, or as somehow subversive *in spite* of her disability. I will argue that the critical failure to read Gerty's presence as socially transformative stems largely from a failure to register her identity as that of a *disabled woman*, with all the particularities attendant upon that dual designation. The primary framework underlying this part of my analysis is Alexa Schriempf's "interactionist bridge" between feminism and disability.

Schriempf's model of reconciling feminist concerns with disability issues originates with Michelle Fine and Adrienne Asch's premise that "disabled women in general do not deal with the same oppressions that non-disabled women do" (qtd. in Schriempf 54). Noting that disabled women "have not been 'trapped' by many of the social expectations feminists have challenged"—such as forced marriage, subordinate paid work, and childbearing—Schriempf contends that we must not take the typical *feminist* concerns to be necessarily those most pressing in the lives of disabled women (54). An interactionist way of looking at identity, Schriempf argues, will help uncover the complex and inseparable intersections among disabled and female identities in a way that additive models of oppression have not and cannot.

The almost universal failure to read Gerty comprehensively arises from a failure to see her as not merely disabled, or merely female, but as a disabled woman—that is, as a site where critical concerns about gender and sexuality, as well as those about disabled embodiment, are intricately interwoven. A feminist reading of Gerty that dismisses her

disability effectively excludes disability from female identity, just as a disability studies reading of Gerty's character that does not take into account the particularities of gender excludes female identity from the realm of disability criticism.

In establishing Gerty's interactionist identity, I will explore the unique critical potential inherent in her disabled female presence. This potential is linked to the inter-subjective emotional and sexual pleasure she shares with Bloom and, more specifically, to their stigmatized identities. Underlying this piece of my analysis is Erving Goffman's stigma theory. Goffman coined the terms "stigmaphobe" and "stigmaphile" to characterize two possible orientations toward marks of social difference. In the stigmaphobic orientation, which describes the way the world of dominant culture operates most of the time, "conformity is ensured through fear of stigma" (Warner 43). In other words, "stigma" here is just that—a mark of shame, contamination, difference, all of which Goffman sums up as "spoiled identity." The stigmaphilic ethos, by contrast, enables the formation of what Goffman calls a "cult of the stigmatized" (31). In this space of possibility, the stigmatizing mark that makes a person different, and which would otherwise be a source of social rejection, actually becomes the basis for social affiliation. Michael Warner succinctly summarizes this orientation:

> The stigmaphile space is where we find a commonality with those who suffer stigma, and in this alternative realm learn to value the very things the rest of the world despises—not just because the world despises them, but because the world's pseudo-morality is a phobic and inauthentic way of life. (43)

What Warner calls the "stigmaphile space" becomes, then, not only a site where social relations on the basis of physical difference are possible, but also a space in which mainstream social relations *must* be deconstructed, examined, and revised so that a more authentic morality can be achieved.

By reading Gerty and Bloom's exchange of glances and pleasure in terms of its stigmaphilic content, we can begin to reclaim the critical space that the scene on Sandymount Strand helps to expose inside the world of *Ulysses*, one in which configurations of non-normative bodies offer possibilities for social relations not rooted in conformity. Moreover, even Gerty's activities as a consumer, which may seem at first glance to be merely stigmaphobic attempts at social conformity, furnish ironic proof of the very intransigence of Gerty's physical difference and, therefore, of the fundamental impossibility of bodily standardization. The persistence of Gerty's difference presents a powerful challenge to a eugenicist society preoccupied with the perfectibility of the body—a critique that is possible only because her identity as a disabled woman affords her critical distance from the all-consuming project of commodified, standardized femininity. The stigmaphilic space of Joyce's novel thus provides an opportunity for re-imagining social relations that do not require, or even tacitly affirm, normative bodies.

Critical Reception of Gerty: A Brief History

In dismissing Gerty as banal and vapid, several critics have emphasized her link to a sentimentalist predecessor, Gertrude Flint of Maria Cummins' 1854 novel *The Lamplighter*. Suzette Henke writes that Gerty has been "brainwashed by popular literature" (137) and suggests that her "embarrassing proximity to the heroines of popular romance may account for her surprising lack of popularity as a subject of critical attention" (132). Extending this dismissive attitude, Patrick McGee seeks to treat Gerty not as a character at all but "as style" (306), an approach that draws upon Joyce's own claim, in a letter to Frank Budgen, that "Nausicaa" captures a "namby-pamby marmalady drawersy (alto la!) style" (*Letters* 135).

More recent work has complicated these notions of Gerty's "namby-pamby" emptiness, suggesting, for example, she presents an ironic variation on the feminine virtues presented in *The Lamplighter*, and that her sexual agency during her masturbatory encounter with Bloom subverts the cultural norm of women as mere objects of men's scopophilic gaze (Devlin 383-96; Sicker 92-131). Indeed, most of the scholarly work that grants Gerty any critical agency and self-awareness stresses her relation to the interconnected issues of gender, sexuality, and embodiment (Jauchen 85). Despite a surging critical interest in the status of "the body" in literature, not all forms of embodiment have been adequately treated by Joyce criticism.

Specifically, the difficult nexus of female and disabled embodiment at which Gerty is positioned leads to limited readings of her identity. For example, Philip Sicker importantly contends that Gerty's sexual enjoyment during "Nausicaa" is gender-subversive, asserting that the pleasure Gerty takes during the masturbatory encounter with Bloom amounts to "transgressive behavior as a desiring subject" (118). Borrowing from Laura Mulvey's work on the scopophilic male gaze, Sicker argues that Gerty breaks the rule of female passivity and returns Bloom's gaze, in "a series of brief, intense glimpses" (118). Gerty ultimately behaves within this scene much as a male voyeur would, violating the gender norms that dictate women should merely be passive spectacles for men's erotic viewing (118). Further, Gerty's strategic manipulation of the erotic scene as she poses and reveals her body constitutes a show by which Gerty becomes the "mastering spectacle" (118).

This analysis ultimately sets Gerty's disability apart from her gender-subversiveness, reading her limp as a kind of limitation on her agency. Concluding that, despite her sexual

transgressiveness, "her behavior must operate within a punishing framework of patriarchal *confinement*" (118, emphasis mine), Sicker links her limp with the limitations on her sexual power. Using the same diction of confinement to describe Gerty's disability as he uses to characterize the limitations of her sexual agency, he states that Gerty is "[c]onfined to her rock" (109). Calling her "*limited* by gender and bodily injury to covert watching" (120, emphasis mine), and "physically *restricted* and embarrassed by her painful limp" (117, emphasis mine), Sicker attributes pain and confinement to her physical disability—even though we are never told it causes either one—suggesting in no uncertain terms that disability hinders her agency.

This reading misses two crucial points: First, Gerty's disabled limb, and her strategic revelation of her disability, are literally central to the sexual provocation of "Nausicaa." Second, her identity as an eroticized, disabled character does not represent a limitation on gender transgression, but an interconnected form of sexual subversiveness. I will address each of these points in turn.

Folding Disability into Sexual Subversiveness: Normate Drag in the Stigmaphile Space

Speaking of herself in an idealizing third-person narrative voice—a narratological disguise that mirrors her sartorial self-decoration—Gerty does consider the possibility that her limp might be a detriment to her sexual appeal; she should have secured a husband by now, and the fact that she has failed to do so can only be attributed to her disability:

> . . . for she felt that the years were slipping by for her, one by one, and but for that one shortcoming she knew she need fear no competition and that was an accident coming down Dalkey hill and she always tried to conceal it. But it must end, she felt. If she saw that magic lure in his eyes there would be no holding back for her. (*Ulysses* 13.649–53)

The use of a third-person narrator, and the wording of her limp as "*that* one shortcoming," call into question whether Gerty herself views her disability as a shortcoming, or whether the narrator merely parrots the judgments of society. While ostensibly hiding her limp, Gerty goes to great lengths to decorate it. Wearing shoes that are "the newest thing in footwear" (13.165), Gerty shows off her "wellturned ankle" with its "perfect proportion" (13.167). The narrator goes on to tell us that Gerty's "shapely limbs [are] encased in finespun hose with highspliced heels and wide garter tops" (13.170). These passages suggest that Gerty, whether consciously or unconsciously, seeks to draw attention to the parts of herself that, as she might put it, "Society with a big ess" shuns (13.666).

Gerty's legs are not, however, merely decorated as passive objects for erotic male viewing; she also uses them to propel Bloom's sexual arousal and her own orgasm. As Sicker observes, intermittently quoting the episode:

> Sitting on a rock with legs crossed, she swings her foot to the rhythms of the nearby church music; then, "tingling in every nerve," she more vigorously "swung her foot in and out in time" (13.514, .498). As she leans further and further backward, ostensibly to view the Roman candles overhead, she is "trembling in every limb" (.728) . . . After this momentary spasm Gerty, like [Havelock] Ellis's young woman, walks slowly away from her solitary seat and rejoins the social collective. (93)

Although Sicker aims mainly to underscore the relationship between Gerty's masturbation and Ellis's sexological accounts of young, self-pleasuring women, we should also note that this entire passage centers upon the sexual valence of Gerty's legs. She not only decorates and poses them as part of her lure for Bloom's gaze, but her legs also become the physical mechanism by which she stimulates *herself* to orgasm—suggesting that the term "short*coming*" works punningly to link physical disability and sexual pleasure.

These details about the sexualization of Gerty's legs and feet suggest a kind of self-conscious masquerade, as she shows off, and makes central to the sexual act, the very feature which she knows might render her unacceptable in the eyes of her target audience. Drawing on Joan Riviere's work, Tobin Siebers explains the concept of masquerade: "Riviere's 'woman,' however, puts on a socially stigmatized identity as her disguise . . . She displays her stigma to protect herself from her own anxiety and reprisals by men, but she does not pass" (5). Seen in this light, Gerty's choice quite literally to *display*, even accessorize, the very source of her stigma reveals a kind of stigmaphilic orientation: she embraces and makes central to her identity the very part of herself that would earn her pity or contempt in the world at large.

Thus, when Gerty flaunts her source of stigma for Bloom's viewing pleasure, she chooses her stigma as a source of affiliation. She causes Bloom (unknowingly at this point) to gaze upon and desire her for the very feature that, according to cultural mores, he *should* revile. This ongoing flaunting of her limb also makes the scene of revelation—in which Bloom first recognizes Gerty as "lame"—function as another kind of sexual climax. To analyze the scene of revelation properly, we must regard Gerty's decision to stand and walk—and to do so only after the orgasmic portion of the episode—as planned and intentional.

When she contemplates "that one shortcoming," we can see that Gerty appears interested in revealing her disability to Bloom, but wants to do so only on particular terms: " . . . she always tried to conceal it. But it must end, she felt. If she saw that magic lure in his eyes there would be no holding back for her" (*Ulysses* 13.653). The "magic lure" can be read as Bloom's sexual pleasure; and the cryptically uttered "it," which Gerty only says "must

end," is the concealment of her limp. That is, after Bloom experiences his orgasm, Gerty will reveal her limp. This revelation represents not only the climax of her sexual management of Bloom, but also suggests a newfound openness Gerty exhibits about her disability.

Hiding her disability in plain sight, then choosing to reveal it on her own terms, Gerty initiates a game of disability "hide and seek" that parallels the general erotic titillation of "Nausicaa" that Sicker describes:

> . . . Gerty's erotic performance . . . constitutes what Roland Barthes terms a sexual "staging of appearance and disappearance": *her displayed body remains partly covered in the process of unveiling, promoting in the same moment a sense of visual absence and of imagined presence, a hybrid pleasure born of regulated disclosure and strategic concealment.* Despite his fiction of voyeuristic authority, Bloom is fleetingly aware that Gerty, and women in general, deliberately shape his pleasure . . . Gerty shares both his pleasure and the knowledge of what has produced it. Understanding the male voyeur's mounting desire to fantasize the removal of visual barriers, *[Gerty] manipulates various veils—from her hat to her undergarments to the dim evening light—which become the keys to her own complex erotic enjoyment.* (95, emphasis mine)

Gerty's and Bloom's mutual pleasure stems from her careful management of the erotic scene. However, one "veil" that Gerty manipulates and Sicker overlooks is her disability. The parallel between Gerty's "regulated disclosure and strategic concealment" of her body in general, and of her disability in particular, is no accident. Gerty's disability, and her strategic deployment of it, works to constitute both her desire and Bloom's and to set the stage for much of the sexual pleasure—and subversiveness—written into this scene.

Indeed, much of Gerty's gratification arguably arises from her knowledge that Bloom takes pleasure in her body without knowing that it deviates from the norm. To put it bluntly, he desires a "cripple," but one he implicitly and unquestioningly reads as a "normate," temporarily reifying the code of bodily normativity that society makes compulsory (Garland

Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies* 8).[8] The dichotomy between the cripple Gerty *is* and the normate that Bloom *mistakes her for* also reveals itself compellingly in the comparison between Gerty and the physically normative "skirtdancers and highkickers" (*Ulysses* 13.704), whom she understands to be the object of male desire: ". . . and [Gerty] wasn't ashamed and [Bloom] wasn't either to look in that immodest way like that because he couldn't resist the sight of *the wondrous revealment half offered* like those skirtdancers behaving so immodest before gentlemen and he kept on looking, looking" (13.730–3, emphasis mine). Both Gerty and the skirtdancers strategically use their legs to entice men sexually, but Gerty's legs are decidedly not normative. The "wondrous revealment half offered" as Gerty allows Bloom a glimpse up her skirt presages the other "revealment" that occurs when Gerty stands to walk: the disclosure of her limp.

Gerty encourages, even enforces, Bloom's desire without revealing her disability until he has already masturbated to her "show" of kicking legs. In this way, she participates in a kind of normate drag show, "dressing up like" a normative woman, but soon enough revealing her deviation from that norm. Here, Judith Butler's notions about gender performativity can help to illuminate the nature of the binary between normate and cripple that Gerty simultaneously invokes and troubles during her sexual encounter with Bloom:

> As much as drag creates a unified picture of "woman . . . " it also reveals the distinctness of those aspects of gendered experience which are falsely naturalized as a unity through the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence. *In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contin*gence . . . (175)

Just as gender drag reveals the contingency of gender, so too Gerty's performance of able-bodiedness reveals the social construction of normativity. Here, Gerty only appears to

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[8] See Thomson, also, for a detailed discussion of the term "normate."

be a normate because of social presumptions about which bodies are desirable and which are not;[9] in other words, her sexual appeal, even her very presence inside this scene of erotic fantasy, automatically constructs her as a presumed normate. Gerty's "performance" therefore exposes and ultimately destabilizes the ideology of compulsory able-bodiedness that organizes Bloom's perceptions of her.

Schriempf describes what I would argue is a similar, albeit more contemporary, kind of normate drag when discussing the appearance of disabled model Ellen Stohl in a 1987 issue of *Playboy*:

> In the porn shots, her disability is rendered invisible. Her wheelchair, her primary means of mobility, is absent. She does not pose standing, but always sitting or lying down; there are no visible indications of her paraplegia. Yet, [the editors] include photographs of her in her everyday life, doing things that are not typically perceived as things that disabled people can participate in. A distinction is being made between her life as a sexual being and her life "on the streets"; in one, she has a clearly depicted sexuality, in the other; she has a clearly visible disability . . . (56)

Although Schriempf's analysis stresses the admittedly problematic visual segregation of Stohl's sexuality from her disability, she usefully exemplifies a complex staging of able-bodiedness alongside a simultaneous revelation of disability—a pairing that productively troubles the dehumanizing presumption that a paraplegic has no intelligible sexuality or erotic appeal (57). Stohl's appearance in *Playboy* not only reveals that a disabled woman *is* a sexual being; it also forces onto an audience steeped in ableist assumptions the fact of their desire for a paraplegic woman.

When Gerty rises from the rock and limps, she similarly reveals that Bloom has desired a cripple all along, collapsing—or at the very least problematizing—the presumed

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[9] See Wilkerson for a discussion of disability "erotophobia" and the exclusion of disabled bodies from the realm of desiring and desirable subjects.

binary between cripple and normate. This scene of revelation parallels the recognition that occurs when a presumably heterosexual man realizes the desire he has felt for a woman was really desire for a man. Indeed, this kind of misrecognition can lead to a version of what Eve Sedgwick has termed "homosexual panic," in which the heteronormative subject, filled with fear and rage at the threat of homosexual contact, can become murderous (19). Although we might expect Bloom to experience a kind of "disability panic" at the moment of Gerty's revelation, the text, in fact, suggests deep ambivalence on his part toward Gerty's disability—an ambivalence that does not foreclose, but instead amplifies, Bloom's erotic attraction to Gerty.

The scene in which Gerty reveals her disability occurs shortly after Bloom's orgasm and her own, a climax in her once stilted language becomes lyrical in the moment of sexual release, famously punctuated by exclamatory "O!":

> And then a rocket sprang and bang shot blind blank and O! then the Roman candle burst and it was like a sigh of O! and everyone cried O! O! in raptures and it gushed out of a stream of rain gold hair threads and they shed and ah! They were all greeny dewy stars falling with golden, O so lovely, O, soft, sweet, soft! (*Ulysses* 13.735–40)

"O" clearly serves to express pleasure in this passage, mimicking the orgasmic vocalization itself. The orgasmic status of "O!" in this passage makes Bloom's thought when Gerty stands to walk—a thought visually set off on its own line—significant: "Tight boots? No, she's lame! O!" (13.771). Although his next thought is one of pity—"Poor girl!"—his initial reaction contains the same exclamation of pleasure that Joyce uses throughout the orgasm scene on the previous page, suggesting that Gerty's disability in fact evokes some degree of immediate, almost automatic, sexual pleasure (13.772).

Admittedly, Bloom soon muses, "Glad I didn't know it when she was on show" (13.775), and many critics have read this sentiment as one of relief that knowledge of her disability did not detract from his sexual attraction. Garry Leonard even euphemistically implies that seeing Gerty's limp might have rendered Bloom momentarily "limp" himself: "had he known about it beforehand, he could not have 'consumed' her display" ("Women on the Market" 29). Jules Law similarly reads Bloom's "Glad I didn't know it" remark as indicative of "disgust" (232). Tellingly, however, on the very same page, both critics also note that Bloom's desire seems amplified after he learns of Gerty's disability. In replaying his voyeuristic experience, he finds that the awareness of Gerty's limp reignites his desire in a different way. Bloom now evaluates the sexual encounter as quite satisfying, even relative to other options, such as masturbating to Martha Clifford's letter: "I got the best of that. Damned glad that I didn't do it in the bathtub this morning over her silly I will punish you letter" (*Ulysses* 13.786–7). Even immediately following the revelation of Gerty's limp, Bloom observes: "Hot little devil all the same . . . *Curiosity like a nun or a negress or a girl with glasses*" (13.776–7, emphasis mine).

What I believe Bloom responds to so viscerally after realizing Gerty is "lame" is the eroticism of stigma. The conflation of "nun, negress, girl with glasses" succinctly reveals that Bloom feels aroused by the prospect of sexual contact with many women who, for a variety of reasons, and to a range of degrees, are declared sexually "off-limits" for him. As Schriempf explicitly puts the matter, society generally assumes that "disabled people are unable to have sex" (54). Along with this effacement of the disabled person's sexuality, then, comes an implicit invalidation of any sexual act involving that person—which would render Bloom's masturbatory pleasure with Gerty most certainly *verboten.*

We might be tempted to read Bloom's sexual desire for stigmatized women as a sort of objectifying fetish, in which a privileged, able-bodied man is aroused at the idea of sexually using a disempowered, disabled woman. The first problem with such a reading, however, is that, although Bloom is able-bodied, he is by no means normative. Aside from his desire for stigmatized women, Bloom is a sexual deviant himself. He has been repeatedly termed a masochist by Joyce critics, beginning with his correspondence with Martha Clifford, under pseudonym, Henry Flower, in which he begs to be sexually punished (Cotter 3). Further, as a Jew, Bloom remains ethnically stigmatized within Irish Christian society. Andre Cormier explicitly links Bloom's ethnic marginalization to the treatment of disabled characters within *Ulysses*:

> Characters with disabilities in *Ulysses* practically illustrate the colonial realities of Ireland, most notable the Irish victimization of even lower "class" than themselves. Marginal marginals like the blind stripling (and Bloom) fill out Joyce's text with a volume of "freaks" that make up a significant critique of Irish intolerance." (213)

Cormier here conceives of the blind stripling as a kind of alter ego to Bloom; both figures are marginalized characters who reveal the moral hypocrisy of a Dublin that hypocritically defines Irish identity through the exclusion of marginal individuals, even while vigorously protesting colonial marginalization through the Home Rule movement. Bloom's stigmatized status is nowhere more obvious than in "Cyclops," where his Irishness is called into question, his thoughts on God are ridiculed, and a biscuit tin is violently heaved at his car as he leaves the pub. The fact that Bloom clearly represents a non-normative presence within *Ulysses* lends a different valence to his sexual attraction to stigmatized women because, in large measure, the affiliative properties of stigma that bind nuns, negresses, and Gerty also extend to Leopold Bloom.

At the same time, however, Bloom's own stigma does not completely exclude the possibility of sexual exploitation on his part, and ultimately it is difficult to rule out claims that Bloom merely objectifies Gerty as a disabled woman. Indeed, a central problem of evaluating attempts on the part of sexually oppressed groups to enfranchise themselves it that often what looks, and perhaps even feels, like a form of free sexual expression is quite arguably only exploitation in another guise, a conundrum at the very heart of the pornography debates within feminism. Therefore, we might argue productively over whether the masturbation scene within "Nausicaa" represents a site of mutual pleasure and female empowerment, as Sicker suggests, or, whether, as Henke argues, Bloom's masturbation scene remains merely a phallocentric sexual encounter in which Gerty's sexual agency and pleasure are lost (145).

Certainly, Bloom's designation of Gerty as a "curiosity," on its face, does little to persuade us that he views stigmatized women with anything but an objectifying gaze. In the context of disability, the word "curiosity" evokes the freak show (Bogdan 6)—a venue that has not generally enjoyed a reputation for the empowerment of those with non-normative bodies. As Rachel Adams argues in her book about the history of freak shows in the United States, many have come to think of the freak show largely as an exploitive cultural practice that has, thankfully, been mostly eradicated during the late twentieth century (15). But Adams wants to problematize this unequivocal condemnation of the freak show by insisting on the agency exhibited by freaks, who sometimes achieved financial independence through their work.

Adams' reading complicates the freak show by showing how it blurs the boundary between *spectacle* and *carnival*—that is, between a passively gazed-upon "exhibit" and an

interactive agent. Drawing on the work of Susan Stewart, Adams sets up this dichotomy, then collapses it:

> The spectacle functions to avoid contamination: "Stand back ladies and gentlemen, what you are about to see will shock and amaze you." This is a convincing description of the sideshow's intended effect: the customer is expected dutifully to absorb the spieler's monologue while gazing at the prodigious body in awestruck wonder, then making a docile exit. However, historical evidence reveals how rarely this theory was realized in practice, for sideshows are hardly places of restraint or decorum, and things seldom go as planned: freaks talk back, the experts lose their authority, the audience refuses to take their seats [. . .] freaks and spectators break the rules by making physical or verbal contact across the velvet rope. (13)

In this passage, Adams suggests that freaks' and their audiences' refusal to adhere to certain norms about how to behave ultimately pave the way for freaks' agency during these transactions. So even though "[t]he price of admission buys permission to gaze at another's boy with the expectation that the look of curiosity will be met by the 'blank, unseeing stare'...spectators may be disconcerted to find their gazes returned..." (7).

Indeed, the erotic encounter between Gerty and Bloom in many respects reaches across a kind of velvet rope, as Gerty not only returns Bloom's gaze but also wonders about him, in much the same way that we imagine a freak show attendee might contemplate the non-normative persons on display:

> She could see at once by his dark eyes and his pale intellectual face that he was a foreigner . . . but she could not see whether he had an aquiline nose or a slightly rétroussé from where he was sitting. He was in deep mourning, she could see that, and the story of a haunting sorrow was written on his face. (*Ulysses* 13.415–21)

Here, Gerty carefully studies Bloom, attempting to author an account of him, much as carnival operators such as P. T. Barnum provided biographical brochures to the public about the freaks who peopled their exhibits (Bogdan 31). But while the brochures distributed by Barnum were notoriously fictionalized, Gerty's account of Bloom's life situation is more

or less correct: As an Irish Jew, he is a foreigner; as a father who lost his son, he is a man forever in mourning; as a husband who knows his wife is having an affair on that very day, he is haunted. As Henke notes, Gerty "intuits more about his mental state than even he will acknowledge" (139). Bloom's observations about Gerty, on the other hand, mostly miss the mark. Assuming that she will "[g]o home to nicey bread and milk and say night prayers with the kiddies" (*Ulysses* 13.854), Bloom fails to "intuit" Gerty's drunk, abusive father, or the fact that she fervently dislikes children. Gerty's imaginative inquiry into Bloom proves far more accurate, underscoring that, despite the style of sentimental of romance in "Nausicaa," Gerty nevertheless remains a shrewd reader of Bloom.

This reversal of gazer and gazed-upon is, therefore, no mere matter of looking; in many ways Gerty makes Bloom an object of her own curiosity and imagination, which prove to be investigative tools of astonishing power and accuracy. Indeed, by *having* curiosity, instead of merely *being* one, Gerty asserts her agency in a crucial way. As Barbara Benedict observes in writing about the phenomenon of curiosity during the early modern period: "Curiosity betrays the desire to move beyond one's assigned place, through information, art, fraud, transformation, or rebellion" (245). Benedict explains that curious women were often transformed "from the curious to the curios," thereby blunting the transgressive potential of female intellectual curiosity by turning women into objects of male investigation and collection (156–7). Gerty effectively performs the opposite of this maneuver during "Nausicaa," for she negotiates being the object of male desire while remaining an intellectually curious, insightful, desiring subject.

By violating the conventions that would require a disabled "spectacle" not to gaze back at her audience, as well as by making Bloom an object of her own curiosity, Gerty

reverses the terms of objectification in which she might otherwise have become ensnared. She blurs the boundary between spectacle and carnival, between object and agent, not just as a woman, but as a disabled woman; and we should note that she finds some degree of empowerment and pleasure in her non-normative status. Therefore, Gerty's gender transgression is clearly and inextricably interwoven with her transgression of the rules of crippled engagement with society.

Considering Gender Alongside Disability: Gerty's Labor of Self-Care

If Sicker's analysis of "Nausicaa" sets aside Gerty's disability while attending to gender subversiveness, Andre Cormier's work on the blind stripling largely overlooks gender nuances in its narrow focus on disabled identity. This oversight demonstrates the flipside of Schriempf's claim that the identity of *disabled woman* is not usually adequately considered in contemplating the situations of women—real or fictional—with disabilities. Although Cormier attends to the particularities of disability and stigma, he ignores gender as a relevant category of analysis, which results in a reading of Gerty as essentially stigmaphobic and conformist.

In his brief commentary on Gerty, Cormier suggests that her beautification practices merely work to "normalize" her appearance and reify what he terms "hegemonic ideals" (210). By implying that Gerty attempts to "pass" as able-bodied, Cormier suggests a desire on her part to conform to mainstream society. Cormier contrasts this stigmaphobic behavior with what he reads as the blind stripling's socially transformative work within the novel. Ultimately, for Cormier, the stripling's textual presence embodies incisive social critique:

> Joyce appears to be "[d]one" with Ireland's mistreatment of its marginal citizens, its Jews and its disabled. Modernists used time as a means to pressure those complacent liberals responsible for the Great War to awaken the cultural cataclysm . . . Joyce makes a unique clock out of the blind stripling. This gesture gives him a significant place in *Ulysses* not only as a disabled character capable of transcending colonial identity, but also as a ticking clock that pressures movement toward a continental identity for Ireland. (222)

In this view, the stripling—with the taptaptapping of his cane—asserts the indignity of the mistreatment of marginalized figures, thereby subtly critiquing compulsory normativity. Gerty compares most unfavorably: "the stripling does not normalize himself, yet he finds innovative ways of transforming normal activities; this method of transgression distinguishes him from, say, Gerty MacDowell . . . " (210). Cormier insists simultaneously that what the stripling does is transformative, but that it is also normal. Essentially, Cormier essentially posits masculine work as "normal" in his reading of the stripling, overlooking the feminine work that I will call Gerty's labor of self-care.

In choosing the phrase "labor of self-care" I mean not only to validate Gerty's concern with her appearance as a type of labor, but to place her behavior on Lennard Davis's spectrum of caring for and about the disabled body. Davis suggests that there are three main types of bodily care: taking care of the body, caring for the body, and caring about the body. While "care of the body...involves the purchase of a vast number of products...", and is about attempting to "complete" the body through capitalistic consumption (*Bending over Backwards* 27), care for the body involves physical and medical care, usually performed by non-disabled people, for disabled bodies (28). Finally, care *about* the body involves considering the oppression of disabled bodies and pays attention to human and civil rights with regard to those bodies (28). Davis problematizes care of, and even care for, the body, stating that, in a properly ethical view, "caring about the body

subsumes and analyzes care of and for the body. The latter two produce oppressive subjection, while the former gives us an ethic of liberation" (29). Gerty's consumerist behavior clearly falls in line most with what Davis calls taking care *of* the body; however, as I will show, the way in which Gerty's consumption *fails* to "complete" her actually suggests an ethic of, if not liberation, at least enlightenment, about bodily difference. At any rate, Gerty's labor of self-care is not a type of work that Cormier readily identifies, despite his focus on the blind stripling's labor.

Indeed, much of Cormier's argument about the blind stripling's social critique hinges on the character's role in the "Sirens" episode, where we learn that he works as a piano tuner:

> The stripling's profession confirms yet complicates Joyce's comprehension of how society traditionally perceives a person with a disability. As a piano tuner, the stripling is dedicated to making something useless, such as an out-of-tune piano, regain its worth; but the listener retains the power to decide what sounds "right." Similarly, society controls the abnormal through public definitions of normalcy. Nonetheless, the striplin[g] . . . reflects Joyce's hope that stagnant Ireland would move beyond liberalism and embrace modernity. (216)

Here, Cormier has a vested interest in demonstrating the social worth of the stripling's professional life, arguing that the ultimate worthiness of his work challenges the "traditiona[l]" perception of disabled persons as useless and unproductive. However, the stripling's ability to travel across Dublin tuning pianos is crucially linked with his mobility, a trait not typically associated with the disabled body, but with the normate:

> [The stripling] shares with the lame Gerty MacDowell of "Nausicaa" an obligatory aspiration to normalize as demanded by society. What separates the stripling from Gerty's unfortunate position, thus permitting his transcendence, is the way he sidesteps normalization (*with his unique mobility*), which goes beyond her desperate efforts to compensate for a limp. (223, emphasis mine)

The most striking point about Cormier's reading of the stripling is the way it fetishizes mobility. Although Cormier claims that "[his] thinking about Joyce's concern with disability grows out of an initial interest in how he introduces immobility into a text centrally concerned with an ostensibly able-bodied wanderer" (204), he focuses not on immobility, but on physical mobility, as the feature that activates social critique within the novel. This implied message leaves us to question how a relatively "immobile" character like Gerty could embody modernist social critique.

Unlike the stripling, who passes through several episodes, Gerty's presence is mostly a local phenomenon, peculiar to "Nausicaa." Although she debuts briefly in "Wandering Rocks" and resurfaces phantasmagorically in "Circe," she is "largely sealed off from the epidemic of disappearances and appearances that touches every major character in the novel" (Richards 755). Thomas Karr Richards further emphasizes Gerty's unique treatment in the novel: "A line of explicit *integrity* divides Gerty MacDowell from these myriad forms of Stephen and Bloom" (755, emphasis mine). The use of the word "integrity" here seems telling; a virtual *cordon sanitaire* is drawn between Gerty and the male protagonists. Acknowledging only in a footnote that "Gerty limps into Bloom's consciousness in 'Circe,'" Richards reveals the extent of his critical desire to quarantine Gerty (775). Richards' analysis also lucidly reveals that the mobility/immobility binary maps not only onto the designations normate and cripple, but evinces an equally important male/female dichotomy as well. Bloom and Stephen circulate widely throughout *Ulysses*, demonstrating that the stripling's mobility is not actually "unique," but in fact remains a characteristic common to many of the male figures in Joyce's novel. However, Gerty—and indeed, Molly Bloom, reprising the role of Homer's Penelope—remain relatively fixed in location.

While Molly's fixed location is obviously domestic, Gerty's appearance on Sandymount Strand seems a public one. Yet even outside the house, Gerty is placed inside an exaggeratedly domestic scene, among female caretakers of young children—significantly, young boys. The narrative voice makes repeated ironic comments on the stereotypically "masculine" nature of the boys, for example emphasizing their competitiveness and their tempers: "But if Master Tommy was headstrong Master Jacky was selfwilled too and, true to the maxim that every little Irishman's house is his castle, he fell upon his hated rival . . . " (*Ulysses* 13.45–47) . . . .Later, we are told, "The temper of him! O, he was a man already was little Tommy Caffrey . . . " (13.249–50). Comically emphasizing the servitude of women to men, Gerty portrays the infant as a patriarchal tyrant: "Of course his infant majesty was most obstreperous at such toilet formalities and he let everyone know it" (13.405–6). These passages underscore that Gerty and her female companions' presence on Sandymount Strand does not constitute an autonomous public appearance; they are entrapped by their domestic duties. Gerty's description suggests that these duties range from child caretaking to sexual subjugation because when Cissy Caffrey reappears in "Circe" it is as a "shilling whore"; the twin boys in her charge have transformed into two lusty soldiers (Shelton 91). The titular parallel between Gerty and Princess Nausicaa from the *Odyssey* further shores up the domestic setting of "Nausicaa." Homer's Nausicaa, after all, encounters Odysseus when she and her maids "come to the river to do the palace laundry" (Gifford 384). Both Gerty and the Princess Nausicaa, then, find erotic possibility in the midst of domestic drudgery, underscoring the fact that we are meant to read Gerty's position in "Nausicaa" as more domestic than public.

By contrast, the stripling's "mobility" is essentially code for his free circulation in the public sphere. That Cormier takes this public circulation as tantamount to a modern sensibility is not at all surprising. After all, the quintessential "modern" figure of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century urban life is, of course, the *flâneur*, whose hyper-mobile meanderings across the cosmopolitan landscape typify the subjective experience of literary modernity. Janet Wolff has famously asserted that "[the] heroes of modernity thus share the possibility and the prospect of lone travel, of voluntary up-rooting, and of anonymous arrival at a new place. They are, of course, all men" (43).[10] Pointing out that women's access to the public sphere was grossly limited, Wolff goes on to claim that women's public appearances in *fin de siècle* and modernist literature only arise "via their illegitimate or eccentric routes into this male arena" (44). Clearly, the way in which Gerty makes her way into the quasi-public realm in "Nausicaa" is via an illegitimate sexual liaison. The only other time we see Gerty publicly is in "Wandering Rocks," where she appears, at the behest of the patriarch, on an errand for her ailing father.

Therefore, when Cormier valorizes the stripling's "mobility," he risks naming a decidedly masculine privilege as *necessary* for socially meaningful change to occur. When we read the blind stripling as a kind of *flâneur*—which seems entirely appropriate given his solitary urban mobility, and the extent to which it informs his "modern" embodiment—we are immediately struck by the ways in which his *flânerie* differs from that of the typical flaneur. As David Serlin suggests, able-bodiedness, in particular sightedness, is a crucial

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[10] It is worth noting that, although the stripling possesses the *flâneur,'s* mobility, he lacks this figure's other defining feature: acute vision. Gerty, on the other hand, lacks the *flâneur,r's* physical and gendered freedom to perambulate (unless one reads her shopping as a form of *flânerie*), but she possesses the figure's talent for detailed observation and character-reading. Put together, these two disabled counterparts form a complete *flâneur.*

commonality among various scholars' conceptions of the *flâneur* (198). Indeed, the penetrating gaze of the sighted *flâneur*—so vividly rendered in the Charles Baudelaire poem, "A Une Passante"—is one of the figure's most obvious characteristics. Serlin asserts that the primary activities of the *flâneur* are sensorial: "listening, moving, gazing" (198). Although we have seen that moving is indeed central to the character of the stripling, his "gaze" must occur through means other than "ocularcentrism" (198). In writing about a famous picture of Helen Keller "window shopping," Serlin tackles the problem of what *flânerie* means in light of sensorial difference, concluding in part that a reliance on olfactory and tactile experience renders blind and deaf *flânerie* entirely possible (200).

A passage in "Sirens" reveals that the stripling, like Keller, experiences the urban environment through olfactory and tactile modes: "Tap. Tap. A stripling, blind, with a tapping cane cane taptaptapping by Daly's window where a mermaid hair all streaming (but he couldn't see) blew whiffs of a mermaid (blind couldn't), mermaid, coolest whiff of all" (*Ulysses* 11.1234-36). While the text parenthetically asserts the fact that he cannot *see* the "mermaid hair" in the tobacconist's window, it also insists on a nevertheless full experience of the commercial object—in this case, "[a] popular brand of finely cut tobacco" (Gifford, 296). The stripling's cane itself prosthetically embodies the transference of sight into tactile sense, substituting *feeling* the environment for seeing it. Tellingly, however, the cane announces itself within the text as a *sound*—"tap tap tap," revealing that, although sight may be an unnecessary sense within this episode, hearing is requisite.

Indeed, Joyce lists the Color of "Sirens" as "None"—suggesting once more that sight is not at all needed in this space. We are even reminded early on, by one of the

barmaids, that looking can kill (77). Eschewing sight, Joyce names the "Art" of the chapter as music, and the "Organ" as ear. The sense of "Sirens," therefore, is hearing; perhaps uncoincidentally, then, the deaf waiter Pat's role, unlike that of the stripling, *does* seem constricted in this episode. We are told repeatedly that Pat is "the waiter who waits"; he becomes circularly defined and constrained to his role as a waiter and a deaf man: "Pat is a waiter hard of his hearing. Pat is a waiter who waits while you wait. Hee hee hee heee. He waits while you wait. Hee hee. A waiter is he. Hee hee hee hee hee. He waits while you wait. While you wait if you wait he will wait while you wait" (.915-18). The singsong cadence of this passage, along with the visual and auditory blending of the third person pronoun "he" with laughter, reveals a shallowness in Pat's characterization, as well as a tendency on the part of the narrator to ridicule him. The stripling, on the other hand, is no mere piano tuner or blind man; he seems to be a full urban subject, not only deftly mobile and observant but musically inclined, as a barmaid reveals: "I never heard such an exquisite player...The real classical, you know" (.278-80). The stripling clearly embodies what Cormier calls "the undiscovered qualities to affect [sic] Dublin's transformation" (216): he is mobile, he is modern, he is artistic, he is attuned to his urban environs.

While recuperating the blind stripling's complex "work" as that of a modern subject, Cormier insists on the conventionality of Gerty's preoccupation with grooming practices. Cormier is not alone in this characterization; there is a long history within Joyce scholarship of trivializing Gerty's self-care habits. Many critics gloss her obsessive beautification rituals as an unfortunate result of her disability, suggesting that Gerty "compensates for bodily deformity by heightened pride in physical attractiveness" (Henke 134). Here, Henke provides an elaborate psychological portrait of a disabled woman, suggesting Gerty is

desperate to compensate for her disability in order to gain back self-esteem. While Henke sees Gerty's limp as a marring defect on her otherwise pristine romantic image, Barbara Leckie claims that we are meant to read Gerty's limp as a symptom of her association with 19th century romantic "sensation" fiction, like *The Lamplighter* (80). In any case, Gerty's absorption within the world of appearances is almost universally read as superficial; she is considered merely a "field for advertisements" (Richards 768) and a "preconditioned receptacle of false needs" (773). Cormier too dismisses Gerty's self-care as frivolous and insignificant, claiming that her "efforts to normalize her external appearance fall in accordance with hegemonic ideals" (210). This dismissal of the seriousness of Gerty's labor of self-care can be explained by lack of simultaneous attunement to disability and gender concerns.

Cormier shows his bias toward disability issues at the expense of gender considerations most clearly when he writes about the 1917 Paul Strand photograph, *Blind Woman.* Quoting Nicholas Mirzoeff, Cormier claims that "Strand's photograph of the blind woman functions as an abstract, moral discourse on perception. The weapon of blindness belonged not to the blind woman but to the photographer" (211). Cormier likens this "politicized" use of blindness to Joyce's casting of the stripling, focusing on the way in which the figures' shared disability is marshaled toward a critical end (211). However, this reading completely overlooks the gender implications of photographically depicting, for the viewer's gaze, a woman who *cannot* gaze back—and whose own disability becomes the intellectual property of the photographer. Clearly, this claim that the Blind Woman's body is effectively not her own does a kind of violence to her agency, a violence made all the more significant by the long history of a gendered agent/object dichotomy that art critic John

Berger sums up: "men *act* and women *appear*" (47). In other words, Cormier's failure to recognize Strand's photograph not just as a poignant instance of modernist disability representation, but also as an example of female objectification, reveals his disinterest in the gendered nature of disability.

By contrast, disability studies scholar David Serlin analyzes the Strand photograph in a way that subtly captures the complex intersections between disabled and female identities. Discussing the political implications of *Blind Woman* and insisting on the extreme social isolation of the blind during the early twentieth century, Serlin writes:

> Indeed, if there is a common thread within disability history in the 19th and early 20th centuries, it is not that people with physical and cognitive impairments went traipsing down the Champs-Elysees but instead that they were deliberately segregated from their fellow citizens, occupying domestic or rehabilitative or institutional spaces where they might be cared for (if they were cared for at all), and routinely excluded and often prohibited from public spaces. (146)

Here, Serlin reveals the oppression of blind people in strikingly similar terms to those in which I have characterized the political situation of women: both groups were largely relegated to the domestic sphere, thereby excluded from the picture of modern, public citizenship. Although Strand's *Blind Woman* no doubt circulated widely as an image, as a person, this figure was twice barred from the public sphere.

That said, a reading of Gerty's beautification practices as frivolous is understandable. We learn early on, for example, that her "chief care" in the world is "undies" (*Ulysses* 13.171). She also, apparently, spent the better part of Tuesday afternoon coordinating her underwear with the chenille of her hat brim (13.158–9). She takes considerable pride in achieving "that haunting expression to the eyes" through the use of Madame Vera Verity's "eyebrowleine" (13.111–13). That Gerty grants her feminine

appearance superlative importance is not in question; however, as Garry Leonard astutely notes, this emphasis on appearance does not necessarily indicate frivolity because such fanatical concern over her appearance would likely have been economically necessary in Dublin's bleak marriage market:

> Gerty's extraordinary attention to dressing in the style dictated by fashion magazines is not, as has often been suggested, an indication of simple-mindedness....*In the social and economic climate of 1904 Dublin, Gerty's appearance is her career*; if her obsessive attention to every detail of this appearance seems pathetic, we need to understand this pathos in the wider context of the ruthless sexual marketplace that sprang into being as advertisements...helped disseminate a rigid standard of 'femininity' for securing financial security...and social respectability as someone's wife. ("Women on the Market" 29, emphasis mine)

Although Leonard's insight in the early 1990s—that Gerty's appearance is her career—might well have altered the course of "Nausicaa" criticism, a decade later, Allison Pease still reads Gerty's cosmetic concerns as an emblem of her "inevitable interpellation by the commercialism of popular culture" (107). This reading, however, overlooks the fact that Gerty's fastidious beautification practices are central to her work as an upwardly mobile lower-middle class woman of reproductive age in turn–of-the-century Dublin. The material social conditions of 1904, which underlie Leonard's reading, are outlined in an essay by Florence Walzl:

> ...for over a century following 1841, Ireland had the lowest marriage and birth rates in the civilized world. As a natural concomitant, it also had the highest rate of unmarried men and women in the world. During Joyce's youth and young manhood, the marriage rate underwent its greatest decline. From 1881 to 1891, it was at its all-time low of 4 percent per 1,000 population. Even by 1908...it had not yet risen to 5 percent (34).

Don Gifford further elaborates Irish marriage rates as they stood at the turn of the century:

> In 1901 more than 80 percent of men between twenty-five and thirty years of age and more than 60 percent between thirty and thirty-five were unmarried; of the women of marriageable age (fifteen years of age and older), 52.7 percent were unmarried, 37.7 percent were married, and 9.6 percent were widowed. The percentage of unmarried increased from 47.7 percent in 1881 to 50.8 percent in 1891, and to 52.7 percent in 1901. (6)

Given the dire prospects for Irish women in the summer of 1904, Gerty has every reason to consider what she can do to secure a mate because the possibilities for unmarried women are frighteningly scant. Michael O. Jauchen comments on the paucity of Gerty's options, noting that "Gerty's socio-economic background and working-class upbringing strongly suggest a status as a potential prostitute" (89). Jauchen further suggests that Gerty's disability "is precisely the type of difference that forced young women into prostitution in turn-of-the-century Dublin" (90). Given these economic exigencies—made all the more urgent by her disability—we cannot be surprised at Gerty's attention to even the smallest detail of her appearance: the eyebrowleine, the blue "undies," the fashionable shoes all become tools of her vocation rather than avocational accoutrements. To put the matter plainly, beautification is as much a professional undertaking for Gerty as piano tuning is for the blind stripling—a fact that only becomes apparent when we consider her gender alongside her disabled status.

While asserting that Gerty's concern over her appearance is legitimate, even Leonard argues that such a complete absorption into the world of commodities means that she cannot participate in any form of meaningful social critique. Claiming that Gerty effectively substitutes consumption for critical thought, he implies that her presence finally only shores up the status quo ("The Virgin Mary and the Urge in Gerty" 14). However, several passages

in "Nausicaa" reveal Gerty's inclination toward critical thought. When we first encounter her, seated on her rock, we are told that she is "lost in thought, gazing far away into the distance . . . " (*Ulysses* 13.80). While we don't know the subject of her contemplation, this solitary thoughtfulness is ironically juxtaposed with her friend Cissy Caffrey's "motherwit"—her consistent motherly attunement with her toddler brothers (13.75). By contrast, Gerty itches to escape the "squalling baby" and "the little brats of twins" (13.404), and when she contemplates her ideal marriage, we see that children are conspicuously absent: " . . . every morning they would both have brekky, simple but perfectly served, *for their own two selves* . . . " (13.241–2, emphasis mine). Gerty entertains other thoughts that challenge traditional Irish conceptions of marriage: "if there was one thing of all things that Gerty knew it was that the man who lifts his hand to a woman save in the way of kindness, deserves to be branded as the lowest of the low" (13.300–2). She pronounces this harsh judgment on domestic violence, despite the fact that such acts would have been a regular occurrence in her time and place; in fact, Joyce himself witnessed such episodes regularly as a child (Shelton 90). More startlingly, Gerty also considers that "there ought to be women priests" (*Ulysses* 13.710). All of these thoughts run against the grain of her milieu; specifically, they reveal a sustained critical engagement with status quo notions of gender. Therefore, we can plainly see that Gerty's career as a consumer does not prevent her from enacting thoughtful social critique of gender normativity.

Further, Gerty's presence embodies an implicit but nonetheless powerful critique of able-bodied normativity. Although Leonard claims that commodity logic implies that "all the flaws and lacks of physical appearance . . . can be corrected given products enough and time" ("The Virgin Mary and the Urge in Gerty" 14), Gerty's body offers an opposing

viewpoint. To be sure, a vast array of products marketed for women's physical health and appearance did exist in turn-of-the-century Dublin. For example, in the June 16, 1904, edition of the *Irish Times*, Gerty could have seen advertisements for Beecham's pills, intended to treat premenstrual symptoms; Carter's Liver Pills, which help cure biliousness and indigestion; and Mother Siegel's Syrup, which cryptically promises "relief from any troubling symptom" (Henke 135). While these products promise to correct various "defects" in bodily appearance and functioning, we see in Gerty's limp a resounding, unequivocal refutation of the axiom that "any troubling symptom" can be cured by consumption. After all, none of these products promises to address what Gerty calls "that one shortcoming." Gerty's limp is the crucial sticking point at which the ideology of bodily perfectibility—so central to the eugenic project—exposes its ultimate impossibility. By revealing the baselessness of bodily perfectibility, Gerty, as an embodied presence, not only strikes a blow for the disabled but for women more generally because bodily perfectibility ultimately proves to be a "toxic construct to both people with and without recognized disabilities" (Kornasky 4).

Therefore, both through her critical thoughts about gender, and through her body's intractable physical difference, Gerty offers a compelling critique of compulsory normativity. Her ability to shed light on the limitations of consumerism, even while actively participating in it, ultimately stems from her unique position as a disabled woman. Like the non-disabled Irish woman of her time, Gerty engages in the "career" of self-beautification, in the hopes of securing a mate—a preoccupation that leads Henke, justifiably, to conclude that Gerty is "male-identified" (135). But unlike her able-bodied counterparts, Gerty maintains some distance from the project of normative femininity, illustrating that disabled women do not become wholly ensnared in the trap of patriarchy (Schriempf 67). We see Gerty's

fundamental apartness quite clearly in her interactions with normate companions Edy Boardman and Cissy Caffrey:

> Miss puny little Edy's countenance fell to no slight extent and Gerty could see by her looking as black as thunder that she was simply in a towering rage though she hid it, the little kinnatt, because that shaft had struck home for her petty jealousy and *they both knew that she was something aloof, apart, in another sphere, that she was not of them and never would be and here was somebody else too that knew it and saw it so they could put that in their pipe and smoke it.* (*Ulysses* 13.598–605, emphasis mine)

Despite Jauchen's claim that "lurking behind the optimistic façade . . . is the hard fact that . . . [Gerty's] lameness relegates her to the position of social pariah" (90), what we see here is not the attitude of a social pariah in obstinate denial, but rather the critical mind of a disabled woman deeply suspicious of normativity. Although Gerty clearly envies Cissy's athleticism, she also distrusts and mocks her friend's able-bodied display. Her harsh criticisms of her companions stem not only from the fact that they unthinkingly conform to society's expectations about female caretaking, but also that they are deeply wed to their identities as normates: " . . . and [Cissy] was a forward piece whenever she thought she had a good opportunity to show off and just because she was a good runner she ran like that so that [Bloom] could see all the end of her petticoat running and her skinny shanks up as far as possible" (*Ulysses* .481–4). Here, Cissy enlists her able-bodiedness in an attempt to attract sexual attention; but as we have seen, it is the swinging motion of Gerty's disabled legs that arouses Bloom. This outcome is foreshadowed early on in "Nausicaa" when we are told that "Edy Boardman prided herself that she was very petite *but she never had a foot like Gerty MacDowell* . . . and never would ash, oak, or elm" (13.165–6, emphasis mine).

Throughout the chapter, in fact, movement is mostly associated with the possibility of erotic failure: "It would have served [Cissy] just right if she had tripped over something

accidentally on purpose with her high crooked French heels on her to make her look tall and got a fine tumble. Tableau! That would have been a very charming expose for a gentleman like that to witness" (.485-89). By not moving, Gerty succeeds in establishing a superior kind of "tableau," one that preserves the illusion of femininity which proves so self-consciously alluring for Bloom: "See her as is spoil all. Must have the stage setting, the rouge, costume, position, music" (.855-56). Gerty in effect grants Bloom his "stage setting," an aesthetic achievement possible mainly because she is immobile.

Not only is able-bodiedness (in the form of running) characterized as an interruption to the erotic scene, it is also repeatedly linked with domestic encumbrance: "Cissy came up along the strand with the two twins and their ball with her hat anyhow on her to one side after her run and she did look a streel tugging the two kids along with the flimsy blouse . . . like a rag on her back and a bit of her petticoat hanging like a caricature" (13.505–509). While Cissy comically struggles to manage her physical appearance and care for her charges at the same time, Gerty coolly remains on her rock, "settle[s]" her hair, and adjusts her hat brim" (.509). Later, Edy and Cissy both run toward the fireworks, once again juggling the young boys: "And they all ran down the strand to see over the houses and the church, helterskelter, Edy with the pushcar with baby Boardman in it and Cissy holding Tommy and Jacky by the hand so they wouldn't fall running" (13.683–5). This image of two young women beleaguered by children emblematizes the near-complete patriarchal entrapment of the normate woman. Gerty's choice to remain physically "confined" to her rock—a choice *en*abled by her disability—ironically affords her relative freedom from the chains of domesticity: "But Gerty was adamant. *She had no intention of being at their beck and call.* If they could run like rossies she could sit so she said she could see from where she was" (13.687–9,

emphasis mine). Here, Gerty interprets Cissy's request that she move as a demand for self-enslavement. Not only does Gerty refuse to take orders from her able-bodied friends, she also eschews the conventional role of caretaker. Further insisting that her position in the group remains equal or even superior to the rest—"she could see from where she was"—she makes no effort to change her bodily configuration.

This assertion—that "she could see from where she was"—is similar to the first line of Mrs. Dalloway—"Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself." Both statements reveal not only self-assuredness, but also an embrace of autonomous action that violates social expectation. Clarissa Dalloway's insistence on going out to choose the flowers for her own party upsets social conventions that would hold her servants responsible for such a task. Similarly, Gerty's declaration that she will not join her friends violates the expectation that she strive to 'fit in' and embrace the charge of caretaking. Mrs. Dalloway's decision upsets social hierarchy by casting her in a seemingly menial role; however, by occupying this 'debased' position, she is able to enjoy the "lark" of a June morning outside of her home, rather than remaining confined to the domestic sphere. Gerty's adoption of immobility—which might seem, at first glance, disempowering—ironically elevates her to the status of a (comparatively) autonomous woman and allows her sexual encounter with Bloom. Indeed, although Cissy plays at a kind of sexual flirtation with Bloom early in the episode by revealing her "skinny shanks" (13.698)—an exhibitionism that foreshadows Gerty's later "performance"—she is ultimately too distracted by her caretaking duties to sustain an engagement with the man she mockingly, but suggestively, refers to as "my uncle Peter" (Shelton 93). And despite Cissy's provocative claim, after threatening to spank her brother, that she would "[g]ive it to [Bloom] too on the same place as quick as I'd look at

him" (*Ulysses* 13.269), it is Gerty who perseveres in her sexual "disciplining" of Bloom, managing his sexual experience up to the point of their mutual satisfaction.

In Gerty we find not a conformist, stigmaphobic character but a profound study in self-fashioning. First, in her self-conscious attempt to make herself into a kind of "tableau" for Bloom, Gerty reveals fastidious attention to her appearance in a way that is not only economically shrewd but aesthetically aware. In shirking domestic obligations, Gerty aspires to autonomy beyond what is available to other women of her class, and through this comparative autonomy she achieves erotic pleasure. These instances of self-determination reveal the paradoxical status of the identity of disabled woman, a status that in some respects amplifies female oppression, yet simultaneously works to extricate its subject from the bonds of patriarchal confinement. Through her position as a disabled woman, Gerty begins to achieve a kind of transgressive agency, most obvious in her sexual pleasure and connection with Bloom.

The End of "Nausicaa": An Ethics of Bodily Particularity

Gerty's self-determination does not make Bloom merely an object of her control; on the contrary, their sexual encounter establishes a sense of mutualism, evident in Bloom's observation after their sexual encounter: "Still it was a kind of language between us" (13.944). Nevertheless, reading the final exchange of gazes between Bloom and Gerty as one in which she reveals shame about her disability, Sicker claims that Gerty's "inter-subjective hopes" collapse under the weight of her awareness that Bloom will not accept her physical difference (126). Much about Gerty and Bloom's parting, however, seems to counter the notion that Gerty is ashamed. As she rises to walk down the strand, the narrator muses:

> She drew herself up to her full height. Their souls met in a last lingering glance and the eyes that that reached her heart, *full of a strange shining*, hung enraptured on her sweet flowerlike face. She half smiled at him wanly, a sweet forgiving smile, a smile that verged on tears, and then they parted. (*Ulysses* 13.762–5, emphasis mine)

Here, we are told she "drew herself up to her full height," suggesting a refusal to hide or conceal her body, a kind of pride. She does not try to leave inconspicuously; on the contrary, she draws attention to herself, removing a handkerchief from her pocket and waving it toward Bloom (13.758–9). And although Sicker reads Gerty's "smile that verged on tears" as evidence of deep shame over her disability, her tears may instead signal relief at its impending revelation. Significantly, we are told Bloom's eyes are "full of a strange shining," suggesting the presence of tears. This shared physical response to the end of their sexual encounter reveals connectedness. Grammatical ambiguity further heightens the inter-subjectivity at play here because both Bloom's eyes and Gerty's heart can be read as "shining." Indeed, Bloom's thoughts corroborate the tenderness implied elsewhere. He laments, "Didn't look back when she was going down the strand. Wouldn't give that satisfaction" (13.905–6), and he finally muses: "We'll never meet again. But it was lovely. Goodbye, dear. Thanks. Made me feel so young" (13.1272–3).

Bloom's thoughts about Gerty not only point to mutual emotional response, but also suggest that the pair's bond is rooted in shared stigma. Before finally admitting to himself that he and Gerty will not meet again, Bloom considers coming back to the Strand to find her: "Wait for her somewhere for ever. Must come back. Murderers do. Will I?" (13.1254–5). Referencing the notion that murderers always return to the scene of their crimes, Bloom here compares himself to a murderer, suggesting both the illicitness of his sexual contact with Gerty and the overtones of criminality inherent in any form of deviance (*Enforcing*

Normality 32). In his specific case, however, the sexual deviance is multi-faceted: he is a married man engaging in a public extra-marital sexual encounter; that woman openly desires him; that woman is also disabled, making their mutual desire even more scandalous.

As Bloom's thoughts spiral out from the encounter with Gerty to reflect on his relationship with Molly, his memories emphasize physical difference. He recalls a conversation between himself and Molly about why she loves him: "Why me? Because you were so foreign from the others" (*Ulysses* 13.1209–10). The recollection of this short exchange poignantly foregrounds the role that physical particularity plays within *Ulysses*. Just as Bloom desires stigmatized women, Gerty and Molly share an appreciation for his difference. The text also suggests that Molly experiences desire for other physically particular men, including a one-armed man whom Bloom spots when he and Molly are out together on Cuffe street (13.915). Here, as in Bloom's encounter with Gerty, he initially reads the sexually attractive body before him as normative; it is Molly who "twig[s] at once he had a false arm" (13.915). However, once Bloom knows about the disability, he continues to take for granted that Molly might desire the "goodlooking" man (13.195).

Taken together, these passages begin to articulate an *erotics of particularity*, a distinct sexual appreciation for non-normative bodies. Garland Thomson has argued that "an intellectual tolerance . . . [that] espouses the partial, the provisional, the particular" lies at the heart of disabled experience ("Integrating Disability" 28). I argue that, within the context of modernism, this ethics of particularity works to challenge eugenic ideologies of bodily perfectibility and standardization so prevalent during the early 20th century. Although much has been written about the ways in which Gerty and Bloom express sexual desire for normative ideals—in the case of Gerty, matinee idols; in the case of Bloom, "those lovely

seaside girls"[11]—neither party's erotic life remains circumscribed by such ideals. Through their encounter, Gerty and Bloom not only transcend compulsory normativity by desiring a non-standard other, but to a large degree they organize their desire around that very non-standardness.

Here, we should recall Michael Warner's formulation of the "stigmaphile space," in which he says that the stigmatized "learn to value the very things the rest of the world despises—not just because the world despises them, but because the world's pseudo-morality is a phobic and inauthentic way of life" (43). In other words, Gerty's and Bloom's complex sexual responses to physical difference not only reveal alternative sexual values but also enact a critique of the very kind of "pseudo-morality" that allows Ireland unthinkingly to exclude from its national identity those whom Cormier calls "marginal marginals."

At the end of "Nausicaa," Bloom files away the memory of Gerty MacDowell alongside a reflection on his own marginalized status as a Jew and a masochist: "Long day I've had. Martha, the bath, funeral, house of Keyes, museum with those goddesses, Dedalus's song. Then that bawler in Barney Kiernan's" (*Ulysses* 13.1214–15). The text uses Gerty to gather up Bloom's own less visible deviations from the norm and vividly illustrate them, exemplifying Garland Thomson's claim that "the cultural function of the disabled figure is to act as a synecdoche for all forms that culture deems non-normative" (*Extraordinary Bodies* 4). The articulation of Bloom's own identity as a stigmatized figure occurs most poignantly in his writing on the beach at the end of "Nausicaa": I.AM.A." Although Thomas Karr Richards has compared Bloom's inability to name himself a

[11] See Garry Leonard's article "Women on the Market" for a detailed discussion of both characters' desire for cultural ideals.

"cuckold" with Gerty's concealment of her disability (773), I argue that, in fact, this moment cogently consolidates their stigmatized identities—in the open, no less.

Bloom intends the writing on the beach—which reads "I AM A"—as a message for Gerty, even while he doubts that the message would last: "Useless. Washed away. Tide comes here" (*Ulysses* 13.1259–61). Reminiscent of his claim that there was "a kind of language" between him and Gerty, the writing in the sand affirms their mutual bond. After remembering the tide pools he saw near Gerty's foot, Bloom imaginatively places his face there: "Bend, see my face there, dark mirror, breathe on it, stirs. All these rocks with lines and scars and letters" (13.1260–1). Here, we can read the "dark mirror" not only as the tide pool in which Bloom's face is reflected, but also as Gerty's disability, which—perhaps itself imaged in the pool in Bloom's imagination—metaphorically reflects Bloom's own marginal status. Further, the conflation of "lines and scars and letters" suggests that the "language" between Gerty and Bloom is really made out of wounds—stigma. Bloom's decision to erase the message reveals pessimism about his belief that an enduring connection can exist between himself and Gerty: "Let it go" (13.1265). However, in its very effacement of connection, the passage reveals a link with Gerty. Just before Bloom becomes aware of her disability, he notes that she walks slowly—perhaps, he reasons, because of "tight boots." And here, the text points out his own "slow boot": "Mr Bloom effaced the letters with his slow boot" (13.1266).

This passage illustrates that the source of Gerty's stigma is also the source of her link with Bloom, a socially marginalized "foreigner" and pervert. The sexual nature of their mutual bond reinforces Gayle Rubin's claim that, "Sex is a vector of oppression. . . . A rich, white male pervert will generally be less affected than a poor, black, female pervert. But even

the most privileged are not immune to sexual oppression" (qtd. in Wilkerson 38). As a poor disabled woman, Gerty is precariously perched on the outermost fringes of society. Her sexual pleasure defies not only gender norms, but norms about how disabled persons are supposed to express sexuality. Bloom, as a middle-class Jew and a sexual deviant, clearly stands as an example of the comparatively "rich white male pervert" from Rubin's formulation. Yet their bond reveals the mutuality of shared stigma, carving out a critical space within *Ulysses* where critiques of compulsory normativity can, and must, be lodged in the face of ideologies of bodily perfectibility.

Abjection as Identity, Mutilation as Ethics: Disability and Vampirism in *The Sun Also Rises*

Literary critics have often seen Jake Barnes's sexual impairment as emblematic of the psychological and cultural damage wrought by World War I. Mark Spilka dramatically concludes that Ernest Hemingway's protagonist is not only "desexed by war," but also "cut off from love," and that he suffers from not only physical but emotional impotence (33). Finally declaring Jake and his contemporaries "unmanned" (36), Spilka laments the "parade of sexual cripples" that makes up Book I of the novel (33). This critic is not alone in reading Jake's disability as a fundamentally desexing phenomenon; indeed, Sandra Gilbert writes of modernist male characters more generally:

> [F]rom Lawrence's paralyzed Clifford Chatterley to Hemingway's sadly emasculated Jake Barnes to Eliot's mysteriously sterile Fisher King, [they] suffer specifically from sexual wounds, as if, having traveled literally or figuratively through No Man's Land, all have become not just No Men, nobodies, but *not* men, *un*men (423).

Reading disability as a nihilistic force that effaces both selfhood and sexuality, critics participate in an unabashedly ableist critical discourse that, at its core, denies disabled people's sexuality. At the same time, however, these remarks ironically suggest the potentially positive destabilizing effect that disability can wield on gender identity. If disability has the capacity to "*un*man men," the question remains what modern men, in their newfound unmannedness, become.

I argue that Jake Barnes, far from representing sexlessness, actually tropes new modes of masculine identity, which eschew what Kaja Silverman calls "phallic masculinity."

Phallic masculinity depends upon the equation of penis and phallus. This mistaken conflation of discrete, anatomical part (penis) and "invisible, unseizable, unnameable"[1] symbol (phallus) leads to a fundamental misjudgment of men as infallible. Such a fiction of male infallibility, according to Silverman, is never more dominant than during wartime. The end of the war brings the mutilated soldier home, "a living proof of the incommensurability of penis and phallus" (63). This temporary exposure of the myth of phallic masculinity has the power to reconstitute male subjectivity, and the mechanism of its reproduction, in radical ways.

The "radically reconstituted male subjectivity" (Fantina 21) at stake for Jake Barnes emerges out of the failure of phallic masculinity, and the resulting unreliability of sexual reproduction. Jake's disability divorces him from conventional modes of reproduction and allows him to assume a socially critical subjectivity in place of a subjectivity fully subsumed within the regimes of reproductive biopower.[2] In the absence of sexual reproduction, *The Sun Also Rises* must create an alternative system for propagating subjectivity (Davidson and Davidson 93-94). I will argue that the system it posits in place of sexual reproduction troubles the entire basis of identity by fundamentally destabilizing categories of abject/non-abject, normative/non-normative on which models of social identity typically depend. In *The Sun Also Rises*, identity inevitably, entropically tends toward the aberrant.

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[1] Serge LeClaire, qtd. in Silverman, p. 43.

[2] Michel Foucault describes biopower as a mechanism for regulating populations through the control and registration of birth and death (see *The History of Sexuality, vol. 1* for a discussion of biopower). Because of Jake Barnes's injury, his sexuality cannot be used toward reproductive ends; therefore, he is able to circumvent full subsumption within a modern regime of biopower. His disability, much like that of Gerty MacDowell in *Ulysses*, enables him to extricate himself from *some* gender normative and repronormative restrictions.

In summoning the abject, *The Sun Also Rises* subtly conjures the image of the vampire. Properties of vampirism attach themselves to many of the novel's characters—even those who might otherwise be mistaken for eugenic heroes, like Pedro Romero. The fact that vampire 'identity' reproduces itself where we least anticipate it recalls Judith Roof's observation that "the vampire figures an invasive conversion ...that threatens reproduction in both the human and the artistic sense" (145-6). I will argue that the reproductive mode of the vampire— like that of the eugenic abject—fundamentally destabilizes cultural processes because it organizes a system of identities not around the normative, but the non-normative. *The Sun Also Rises* implicitly posits the degenerate and ubiquitous figure of the vampire as an alternative to the myth of corporeal wholeness, reproductive success, and eugenic progress perpetuated by phallic masculinity. By troping the uncontrollability and unpredictability of reproduction, the vampire exposes the impossibility of the eugenic project, which relies on predictable economies of desire.

Moreover, the vampire can be positively reclaimed, not only as an important emblem of social outsiderness within Hemingway's novel, but as a deeply anti-eugenic, pro-disablement figure around which a politics of shared abjection may take root. By hyperbolizing the fear of disease and difference, the vampire stands as the pre-eminent figure of the abject. Because the vampire remains an outsider, who paradoxically *cannot* be fully cast out, this figure brings a productive uncertainty to questions of bodies, identities, and social belonging. Ultimately, many of the novel's characters blur the line between normativity and aberration, between eugenic hero and eugenic abject. Jake's ambiguous status results largely from his appearance on the one hand as a white, able-bodied,

conquering hero, and on the other as a mutilated ex-soldier who refuses the coercive rehabilitative program of normate society.

Critical Overview: The (Mis)diagnosis of Jake Barnes

The exact nature of Jake's injury has been the subject of much critical investigation. Most of what we know concerning the impairment Hemingway intended for Jake comes from a single interview conducted by George Plimpton in 1958. Published in the *Paris Review*, this interview reveals that Hemingway conceived of Jake as "capable of all normal feelings as a *man* but incapable of consummating them" (Plimpton 18). The only other source for information about the injury Hemingway had in mind for his protagonist can be found in a letter to Thomas Bledsoe, in which the author indicates that the biographical model for Jake was a young man whose "penis had been lost and his testicles and spermatic cord remained intact" (Young 745). Hemingway further insists: "The important distinction is that his wound was physical and not psychological and that he was not emasculated" (Plimpton 18). Here, Hemingway eschews the penis as the locus of masculinity, a move reminiscent of Silverman's concept of "phallic divestiture."

Further, Hemingway's conceptualization of Jake's injury implicitly elevates the sexual importance of the testicles. The author's snappish response to Plimpton's observation that Jake "has been emasculated precisely as a steer" reveals this bias: "Who ever said that Jake was 'emasculated precisely as a steer?' Actually he had been wounded in quite a different way *and his testicles were intact and were not damaged*" (qtd. in Rudat, 2, emphasis mine). Hemingway's response suggests that the status of Jake's testicles ultimately determines his status as a man.

Hemingway's conception of Jake's injury is astonishingly specific, but we, as readers, are never privy to it. Rather, we must rely on extra-textual material, like the Plimpton interview, to gain insight into the precise nature of Jake's intended impairment. As J.F. Buckley and others have noted, taking Hemingway's statement about Jake Barnes as a textual fact represents a troublesome interpretive leap (85). The choice we face as critics, then, becomes: ought we read Jake as possessing the disability Hemingway extra-textually *claims* he has, or ought we read the text in front of us, which never divulges the particulars of Jake's injury?

As it turns out, reading Jake's injury solely as the novel presents it remains, in some ways, no less problematic than accepting Hemingway's authorial word for his character's impairment. In a queer reading of the novel, Axel Nissen concludes that Jake's ostensible injury is, finally, nothing more than a convenient cover allowing him to avoid sexual relations with women (56). In the same vein, Buckley argues that Jake really *does* have the penis Hemingway claims he does *not* have, citing Jake's encounter with Georgette the *poule* as evidence: "It is difficult to ignore the distinct probability that, as a sex worker, Georgette is apt to purposely feel for his penis as a prelude to sex....If he were without a penis it seems highly unlikely that a prostitute would be unable to tell" (75). Buckley does not elaborate on *why* a prostitute would customarily feel the need to ascertain whether her client possesses typical genitals—do prospective johns often lack penises?—nor in fact why his *not* having a penis would bother her. One might imagine that many prostitutes would feel perfectly comfortable servicing a man who had no penis—might indeed prefer it—as long as they were being paid. At any rate, relying on the text's presentation of Jake's injury does little to clarify his status as a disabled character; in fact, critics' interpretations tend to obscure, rather

than illuminate, the physical fact of his impairment, usually construing it a symbol of something else. Above all, we might wonder what, if any, sense it makes to talk about the ontological fact of a fictional character's disability; although we can examine the textual representation of embodiment as figured by Jake Barnes, he is still a fictional character, and has no *actual* embodied status.

However, the fact that some critics can even tenably argue that Jake's character possesses no impairment begins to suggest the challenge this novel poses to designations of normative and non-normative. The *invisibility* of Jake's disability immediately introduces a morass of uncertainty around him: Is he or isn't he disabled? Is he or isn't he queer? Can he or can't he have sexual relations?[3] These uncertainties (d)evolve into a kind of "suspicion of fraud" around his condition (Samuels 241). The myriad suspicions harbored about Jake are perhaps best captured by Bill Gorton, who purports to diagnose him during their fishing trip in Spain:

> You know what's the trouble with you? You're an expatriate. One of the worst type. Haven't you heard that?.....You've lost touch with the soil. You get precious. Fake European standards have ruined you. You drink yourself to death. You become obsessed by sex....One group claims women support you. Another group claims you're impotent. (115)

Bill's opening rhetorical flourish—"You know what's the trouble with you?"—implies that there is some definitive answer, and we become eager at the possibility of gaining "real"

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[3] The critical obsession with whether or not Jake Barnes has, or can have, sex—which I will demonstrate further later on in this chapter—recalls paraplegic John Hockenberry's anecdote about an "Oprah" show that featured disabled men married to non-disabled women. Oprah asks one of the men's wives whether he can "do it," and Hockenberry observes: "Now we know what the show was really about. It wasn't just Oprah; the whole crowd seemed to care only about this" (*Moving Violations*, 92).

insight into Jake's character. But as Bill's speech meanders, we realize that he is simply listing possible interpretations, which do not answer our questions. Further, Jake's vague response—"No...I just had an accident"—does nothing to narrow Bill's interpretations down, either.

This uncertainty around Jake's impairment also surfaces in his ambiguous discussions about his physical condition with Brett Ashley. Often, we cannot even decipher whether Jake and Brett are discussing his impairment or not, much less what they might be saying about it. For example, Brett tries to console Jake on their lack of sexual intimacy, cryptically insisting: "It isn't all that you know" (34). *It* isn't all *what*? David Tomkins reads this frustrating statement to mean that "[Brett's] unwillingness to become romantically involved with him...involves more than....his missing penis" (750); that is, there are other compelling reasons for her not to become intimate with him. Tomkins's reading shores up the reality of Jake's missing member and reinforces the idea that his disability always eventually emerges, thwarting his attempts to have sexual relationships (75).

However, we can also read Brett's statement as meaning "sex isn't all it's cracked up to be"—effectively, it doesn't really matter to *her* whether Jake can have penetrative sex or not. Indeed, as Lorie Watkins Fulton has persuasively argued, Brett's relationship with Jake is stronger and more intimate *because* of their lack of conventional heterosexual relations (76). Jake's response— "No, but it always gets to be,"—could mean that sex "gets to be" fulfilling over time, as partners learn each other's preferences and bodies. In short, Brett could be complaining "sex isn't so important; it isn't even good" and Jake could be saying, "but it can become pleasurable; come on and we'll have fun"—a meaning that recasts the conversation

in the familiar genre of sexual coaxing. In short, it is exasperatingly impossible to determine whether the characters are focused on the "looming absence" of Jake's penis at all (Tomkins 750).

However problematic the task of definitively deciphering Jake's impairment, the predicament that Hemingway seemingly *designed* for his protagonist was the possession of a wealth of sexual desire, and copious feelings of arousal—but without any way to satiate himself. It is this predicament that leads Tomkins to conclude that Jake experiences a kind of "infinite desire," and that it is the impossibility of its fulfillment that makes him so alluring to Brett (753). Interestingly, Jake's arousal without satisfaction mirrors the sexual frustration that some critics have argued Brett experiences with men:

> Brett's problem is that she can't get no satisfaction...Rudat argues reasonably that the change that comes over Brett in Chapter 18, after she has slept with Pedro Romero, is due to the fact that for the first time she has been able to have an orgasm....By the end of the novel, Brett has still not been able to find emotional and sexual fulfillment in the one and the same man. With Romero she can have great sex, with Mike or Jake, companionship only. (Nissen 44)

Nissen's claim that Brett has never experienced an orgasm before sleeping with Romero places the onus for female sexual pleasure squarely on the phallus. Since critics apparently assume that Brett remains incapable of achieving orgasm without the presence of a penis, she is dangerously dependent on 'properly' equipped men to give her one. This phallocentric model of female sexual pleasure perhaps explains why many critics finds Jake's penis to be such a "looming absence" in the novel.

On the subject of Jake Barnes's sexual performance, critics are further divided between those who assume him to be wholly incapable of sexual activity, and those who

acknowledge various degrees of sexual possibility. Debra Moddelmog distinguishes between the sexual feelings that Jake has and the physical capabilities that he lacks to consummate them (164). Tomkins similarly assumes Jake's "inability to fulfill the sexual demands of the novel's heroine" and declares Brett's desire for him "futil[e]" (752). Significantly, however, a few scholars *have* acknowledged that Jake may partake in sexual activity—and even that he has sexual relations during the course of the novel. Ira Elliott suggests that sexual fantasy, including masturbation, might occur during one of Jake's insomniac episodes (72). Rudat goes so far to suggest that Jake participates in sexual acts during the course of *The Sun Also Rises*, most notably citing an instance of implied oral sex between Jake and Brett (2). Fantina too notes that ellipses in the text seem to indicate temporal spaces in which sex acts between the two might have taken place (102).

This fairly widespread acknowledgment that some kind of sex is possible for Jake counters Dana Fore's claim that "critics have barely considered the idea that Jake could achieve sexual satisfaction in nontraditional ways" (80). Fore explicitly discusses the alternative routes to sexual satisfaction available to disabled men. Indeed, paraplegic and quadriplegic men employ a wide range of strategies in the bedroom and are often able to achieve orgasm despite having, in many cases, decreased sensation in the genital region, and/or an inability to maintain an erection (Shakespeare 44). When they are unable to have conventional sex, these men often develop a powerful ability to be aroused, and achieve climax, by stimulation in alternate regions. This capability is one that undermines the phallocentric "fucking ideology" that holds that the lack of an erect penis equates with sexual uselessness (Shakespeare 97).

From a physiological standpoint, then, material sexual possibility exists between Jake and Brett. Fore bleakly concludes that the "tragedy" of the novel inheres not in the fact that Jake has been rendered sexually useless—he hasn't—but in the fact that both Jake and Brett fail to acknowledge or act on this potential. Reading Jake as a victim of overpowering ableism, Fore contends that he internalizes conceptions about disabled people that prohibit their sexual expression, and therefore fails to achieve sexual satisfaction (86). However, Jake's behavior does not reflect complete denial of his sexuality. In fact, he repeatedly suggests that sexual consummation between him and Brett is possible. When the two are on their first taxi ride, she remarks on how his touch turns her "all to jelly," and he asks, "Isn't there anything we can do about it?" (26). Later in the same ride, he remarks "And there's not a damn thing we could do"—the repetition of which suggests that he suspects there probably *is* something the two could do, and he wants her consider it (Buckley 78). And lest we think it is Brett who shuts down the avenue toward consummation, her response—"I don't know"—also leaves the possibility of sexual relations open (26). In the end, it is unclear why the couple is unable to be together, but we might surmise that the lack of clear communication between them leads each one to think that the *other* has ruled out the possibility of sex.

Hemingway and the Failure of Reproduction

Whether Jake "has" a penis or not, and whatever he and Brett might "do about" their desire, Hemingway crucially stresses the intactness of Jake's *testicles* as proof of his masculinity. This emphasis on the testicles as the source of masculine energy recalls the work, during this same period, of Austrian endocrinologist Eugen Steinach, who believed

that male sexual desire and mental energy could be heightened through vasoligation—effectively, vasectomy. Steinach believed that by redirecting a man's sperm back into the testicles, rather than allowing it to be "wasted" in ejaculation, a surgeon could help to recuperate the source of his patient's sexual and mental energy, leading to youthfulness, health, and longevity (Thorne 1). Therefore, the Steinach Method, as it came to be known, paradoxically sought to enhance masculinity by severing the connection between sexuality and reproductive ability. Hemingway's claim that Jake's wounding does not remove the source of his manhood similarly divorces masculinity from phallic reproduction. This separation opens up a space of possibility for a sexual subjectivity that does not depend on reproductive ability.

In addition to putting forth a protagonist incapable of reproduction, Hemingway uses secondary characters to cast doubt on the project of biological reproduction. Early on, Robert Cohn's wife Frances laments their impending separation because "I'm fond of him, too. And I'd like to have children. I always thought we'd have children" (47). The reader is momentarily drawn in by her sadness at what might have been, but just then, she remarks, "I never liked children much but I don't want to think I'll never have them. I always thought I'd have them and then like them" (47). The absurdity of this notion—that she doesn't like children, but wants to have them anyway, so that she may one day like them—quickly undercuts the sentimentalization of motherhood. We see that her desire to have children is more about not wanting to rule the option out—perhaps due to social expectations that she should reproduce—than it is about actually wanting to have children. This bathetic move suggests that reproduction is a largely empty enterprise that is only sustained by women's mindless attraction to the *idea* of it.

Indeed, Frances Cohn's reflexive endorsement of motherhood, and Brett Ashley's more explicit refusal of it, bookend the novel. After Brett sends Pedro Romero away and summons Jake to come to her, she tells him: "I'm thirty-four, you know. I'm not going to be one of these bitches that ruins children" (243). Admittedly, in early drafts of the novel, Brett has a young son who lives away from her (Fulton 65). However, in the published version of the novel, Hemingway's clear implication is that Brett is nearing the end of her reproductive years and will not bear children at all. Further, she explains this choice to abstain from reproduction in terms of not wanting to "ruin children," implying that the enterprises of reproducing and mothering are potentially disastrous.

Strikingly, there are no visible children in the whole of *The Sun Also Rises.* Moreover, Hemingway's whole corpus is conspicuously, even eerily, devoid of children. His works often depict the failure or futility of reproductive attempts. His short story "Hills Like White Elephants" famously invokes the specter of abortion (Plimpton 25). Here, the male character urges his lover Jig to have an abortion, complaining that the pregnancy is "the only thing that bothers us...the only thing that's made us unhappy" (qtd. in Flora, 48). That is, he believes that if Jig only has the abortion, everything can go back to the way it was before—a notion that Jig ironically rejects when she insists "everything will be fine" (Flora 49).

Similarly, *A Farewell to Arms* presents the baby with which Catherine Barkley is pregnant as an obstacle to her and Frederic Henry's continued romance. When she informs Frederic of the pregnancy, she implies that she tried using abortifacients early on: "I did everything. I took everything but it didn't make any difference" (*FTA*, 128). Even well into the pregnancy, Catherine seems to hope she loses the baby, telling Frederic on their way to

Switzerland that if the oar she is rowing with hits her in the stomach, "life might be much simpler" (*249*). And finally, just before she goes into labor, she asks Frederic, "She won't come between us, will she? The little brat." He answers, "No. We won't let her" (*273*).

Far from depicting the baby as simply a nuisance, *A Farewell to Arms* presents the reproductive endeavor as wholly problematic, even sinister. From the very beginning, the novel analogizes reproduction with death. In a simile that Scott Donaldson calls "grotesque in its incongruity" (132), the opening of the book tells us that soldiers with cartridges bulging under their shirts "marched as though they were six months gone with child" (*FTA* 3). The novel tragically ends with Catherine's death after childbirth, from hemorrhage; the couple's baby boy is stillborn. Further, the fact that the baby is strangled by the very organ intended to nurture him during gestation—the umbilical cord—suggests most poignantly the dangers inherent in reproduction, as well as the failure of the maternal relationship. The mother's body was supposed to nurture the child until his birth; instead, its processes went awry and killed him. The child's life is initially wished out of existence, then crushed out by the mother's body, leaving little room for us to view sexual reproduction as a successful mode for creating human subjects, or securing social relations.

But if, in Hemingway, sexual reproduction has failed as a mode for reproducing subjectivity, what is left? Although Cathy N. Davidson and Arnold E. Davidson argue that the patriarchal *aficion* system replaces heterosexuality as the mode of reproducing subjectivity in *The Sun Also Rises*, I contend that it is *abjection* and ambiguity that are most wholly responsible for creating identity—however partially and contingently— within this novel. Our inability to finally verify the status of Jake's genitals parallels the difficulty of definitively

pegging anyone in the text as "normal" or "abnormal." As we will soon see, even Pedro Romero, the character generally taken to be the "code hero" of the text, rapidly disintegrates into aberration upon closer examination. Count Mippipopolous is another holographic figure, who from some perspectives appears abject (disabled and/or queer), and from others, heroic and emulable. In developing my case for how abjection works to produce and inflect identity, I take as my emblem of abjection the figure of the vampire, who implicitly circulates throughout *The Sun Also Rises.*

The Specter of the Vampire: Reading Vampirically

Although there are some compelling historical reasons why we might wish to trace the circulation of the vampire in modernist literature,[4] I am not expressly concerned with that in this chapter. I choose to deploy the cultural icon of the vampire here to illuminate social relations in *The Sun Also Rises* in a new way. I am interested in reading *The Sun Also Rises* vampirically—that is, through the lens of vampirism—to uncover what the novel suggests about the non-reproductive propagation of subjectivity. By advancing vampiric abjection as the model for social identity, Hemingway's novel fundamentally destabilizes reproduction and normativity and insists on an ethics rooted in the queer/mutilated/diseased/abjected body.

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[4] The 1920s saw an enormous surge in vampire literature produced in the United States, even while the popularity of such literature waned in England and on the Continent (Masters 210). During the same year that Hemingway published *The Sun Also Rises*, H.P. Lovecraft published *The Tomb* in *Weird Tales*, a fantasy magazine that specialized in carrying "the most grotesque tales of vampirism" (210). The fact that vampire literature was prominent in the American cultural milieu at the time when Hemingway composed *The Sun Also Rises* motivates us to examine how he might have used tropes of vampirism in his own work.

We can think of this sort of alternative reproduction of subjectivity as similar to the constellations of queer kinship that Tim Dean describes in his book *Unlimited Intimacy: A Cultural History of Barebacking.* Dean contends that the sub-cultural phenomenon of bug chasing—that is, men knowingly seeking sex with men who have, or might have, HIV—is tantamount to a kinship practice: "Viral transmission facilitates fantasies of connection, kinship, and generation…" (87). Using reproductive language to describe their desire for infection, bug chasers re-work conventions of reproduction to talk about identity and kinship:

> Breeding the virus in other men's bodies creates simultaneously lateral and vertical kin relations: the man whom one infects with HIV becomes his sibling in the "bug brotherhood" at the same time that one becomes his parent or "Daddy," having fathered his virus. (85)

"Bug-chasers"—those who desire to sero-convert—and "gift givers"—those who give the virus to consenting others—share in a kind of vampiric identity, both because they create an identity around an abjected, stigmatized state (having HIV) and because they frame the state as a kind of kinship. Each transmission of the virus, like each transmission of vampirism, both produces new community members—who cannot be produced any other way—and reaffirms the community's shared identity.

In addition to showing how vampiric identity works to reproduce and bind subjects in *The Sun Also Rises*, I hope to reveal the vampire as a useful figure for enhancing our understanding of disability, abjection, and sociality more generally. From a disability studies standpoint, there is ample reason to give attention to the vampire, who might well be a useful—if until now overlooked— emblem of disability, capable of guiding a project aimed at reframing disabled identity. Vampires can be thought of as "unconventional,

marginalized, and abjected" (Zlosnik and Horner 82). Just as the vampire has the capaciousness to represent a wide range of identities, so too has disability been called "the postmodern subject position" because of its malleability in encompassing a range of marginalized identities (Davis *BOB* 14). Moreover, just as Horner and Zosnik claim that the Gothic "challenges boundaries [and] questions the validity of normality" (81), Robert McRuer suggests that "crip" identity has the power to restructure thinking about marginalized identities, and radically subvert compulsory able-bodiedness (35-36).

Parallels also exist in the ways in which vampire and disabled identities reproduce themselves. Nina Auerbach observes that the United States' 20th century conception of Dracula creates a "new order of fear: fear not only of otherness, but eventually, and more subtly, of kinship" (113). This formulation recalls Lennard Davis's claim that disability incites anxiety in the non-disabled largely because it is the one marginalized identity into which any of us may fall at any time—and indeed, the one which we are all destined to join if we simply live long enough (36). It is this fact of corporeal existence that leads Davis to conclude that we should call non-disabled people "temporarily able-bodied," or TAB (36). Vampirism mimics disability in its ability to 'seize' anyone at any time, and in the panicked, if sometimes sub-conscious, awareness of that reality which members of the out-group possess. The social group 'vampire' reproduces in a way that is neither predictable nor containable, just as the social group 'disabled' does. Both the vampire and the "crip" exist simultaneously as an inextricable—and sometimes undetectable—part of culture, *and* as an abjected, prohibited other.

Aesthetically, the vampire tale functions according to the same sort of 'rules' that govern what David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder have called narrative prosthesis. The narrative structure of the vampire tale is one of "a secret that has to be found out" (Dyer 78): "The vampire tale frequently consists of two parts, the first leading up to the discovery of a vampire's hidden nature, the second concerned with his/her destruction" (78). This formula recalls Mitchell and Snyder's model of narrative prosthesis, in which the existence of disability inaugurates a narrative plot, and the correction or elimination of it (the "cure or kill" logic[5]) resolves it. Disability has thus been used "as a crutch upon which literary narratives lean for their representational power, disruptive potentiality, and analytical insight" (Mitchell 49).

Similarities between disabled and vampire *experiences* are more explicitly drawn by disabled British comedian, Lisa Egan. She traces parallels between the needs she has difficulty accommodating in her environment, and what she calls "vampiral impairments" ("Vampire like me"). Just as those with food intolerances have difficulty eating out, so too does a vampire who must have a garlic-free, all-blood diet.[6] Just as a mobility-impaired person must seek out an accessible office, and find an accessible way to get there, so too must a vampire avoid fatal sunlight on his way to work: "Trying to get from A to B without encountering a single ray must be as tricky as trying to use The Tube if you're a wheelie"

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[5] See Paul K. Longmore, "Conspicuous Contribution and American Cultural Dilemmas: Telethon Rituals of Cleansing and Renewal," in The Body and Physical Difference: Discourses of Disability, ed. David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1997), 134–58.

[6] This difficulty is well-captured on the HBO Series *True Blood*, where Bill Compton has difficulty being served anything potable to vampires at Sam Merlotte's bar.

("Vampire"). And finally, Egan broaches the subject of navigating tricky social situations as a vampire or an invisibly disabled person:

> How and when should you "come out" about your vampirism to your mates? A dilemma regularly faced by those of us with invisible impairments. I imagine that explaining Auditory Processing Disorder to my mates when I can't understand a word they're saying in a noisy bar, would be far easier than having to explain why I'd just gone all fangy because someone with a tasty-looking jugular had just walked past. ("Vampire")

Here, Egan strategically chooses the vampire as a figure for disabled people to relate to: "Seeing as how disabled people are largely absent from film/TV/books, I've decided that I'm going to look to vampires for characters I can identify with. It makes sense to me." ("Vampire"). Her comment reinforces the overall invisibility of disabled characters in mass media, but it also suggests that, wherever the emblem of the vampire circulates, the cultural work of dismantling normativity might be happening.

Along these lines, I contend that marginalized identities within Hemingway's novel—including disabled identity—tend to become associated with vampiric traits, including: sleeping at inappropriate times; fascination with blood, body fluids, and mutilation; and a paradoxical status as both "too alive" and simultaneously "dead." This last characteristic is the one that most clearly marks the vampiric identity as something like the eugenic abject.

Eugenic Abjection: Jews and "New New Women" as Vampires

In her groundbreaking work on eugenic ideology in American modernist literature, Betsy Nies argues that various social factors, including WWI and the rise of immigration, led to a sense that "infiltrators, in the form of newcomers, had arrived to disrupt not only class

hierarchies but also national ways of living and believing" (20). The Great War paradoxically provided the government an opportunity to "promot[e] the concept of the all-powerful white male soldier" at the same time that it exposed the vulnerability of those same ostensibly superior bodies (Nies 13). Indeed, mutilated men came home, both in America and Britain, in staggering numbers. Once the white male body had been exposed as vulnerable, the image of the "Nordic conqueror" arose as a eugenic creation, to sustain the illusion of "white male impenetrability" (20). In Silverman's taxonomy, the eugenic image of the Nordic conqueror works to reunite phallus with penis, and to make whole again the fiction of phallic masculinity.

The eugenic ideology of white supremacy found its way into United States government policy in 1924 in the form of the Immigration Act, also known as the Johnson-Reed Act. This Federal law sought to restrict the percentage of immigrants of any one nation to 2% of the existing U.S. population originating from that nation, based on the 1890 census. Madison Grant, author of *The Passing of the Great Race* and "racial hygiene" advocate, was a major proponent of the passage of the bill. Due to its provisions, the Law was skewed in favor of allowing Western European immigration but disallowing immigration from Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. Indeed, the quotas enacted made for an immigrant population that was 86.5% Western European, severely restricting the entrance of Italians and Jews, and even more aggressively inhibiting the admittance of Africans (*Statistical Abstract of the United States*). This policy essentially sought to cordon off white American society from its abjected racial Other.

Of course, any attempt to strictly segregate races is thwarted from within, since, in psychoanalytic terms, the "fear of merging" with what has been abjected is always close at hand (Nies 9). Julia Kristeva famously theorizes abjection as a "precondition of narcissism"—that is, a process on which the formation of identity rests (13). This abjection largely consists of the separation between "self" and "(m)other," and in the process of abjection, the newly formed subject transitions from the pre-verbal chora into the verbal symbolic order (14). Kristeva, however, stresses that abjection is not, and cannot be, a discrete occurrence. She declares that "abjection is above all ambiguity" (9), since the abject remains something "from which [the subject] does not cease separating" (8). The process of separation from the abject is never complete, and the subject remains perpetually threatened and haunted by the abjected elements (9), which does not respect the boundaries imposed by the process of abjection. The abject is by definition "[w]hat does not respect borders, positions, rules" (Kristeva 4). Among those substances figured as abject are body fluids: "blood, sweat, feces, urine, or vomit" (Nies 9).

The vampire clearly belongs among the abject, on several counts. First, Kristeva observes that "[t]he corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection...[i]t is death infecting life" (4). If corpses embody the abject by injecting death into life, then vampires doubly trouble the border between life and death; they *are* dead but continue to act, and appear, alive (4). Vampires also carry death *with* them, capable at any time of turning those around them, and further "infecting" life with death. Moreover, the vampire's dependence upon the body fluids of another hyperbolizes the dissolution of boundaries that the abject perpetually threatens to (re)enact. We might, therefore, take the

vampire to be the pre-eminent symbol of abjection, the figure on which projected fears of contagion or "spilling" are most legible.[7]

The trope of vampirism works to convey the abjection of marginalized characters within Hemingway's novel, while at the same time demonstrating the impossibility of *definitively* discerning who is, and who is not, Other. We have already seen why abject and non-abject cannot be fully separated in the psychoanalytic model. In racial terms, the impossibility of identifying the eugenic abject once and for all largely stems from the fact that, wherever one tries to draw definitive racial boundaries, the possibility of interracial mating threatens their erasure. The anxiety over the inability to separate the "Nordic conqueror" from the eugenic abject is concretely realized in the form of Robert Cohn, whose "insertion into the narrative's opening after, in the unpublished version, an extended section on the 'Nordic' Brett Ashley, speaks to larger concerns about the danger these newcomers posed to what Madison Grant called 'our women'" (Nies 54).

We learn within the first few pages of the novel that, although Cohn is a Jew, he has managed to enter the upper echelons of white society, perhaps owing in part to the fact that he has had "his nose permanently flattened" in a boxing match (*SAR* 4). As Nies observes, "Cohn's erased physical difference sets the mood of the text. He no longer has what marks Jews as different from the closed, contained classical body of Nordic society" (Nies 54). Ultimately, Cohn's ability to pass in white society casts doubt, from the very beginning of the novel, on the project of deciphering who is abject and who is not. And although Cohn

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[7] Indeed, along these lines, Ellis Hanson argues that the vampire tradition feeds into the homophobic imagery of AIDS hysteria ad the irrational fear of people with AIDS (cited in Dyer, 86).

cannot be clearly identified as one or the other, hints of vampirism attach themselves to his character.

Subtle, often humorous, accusations of vampirism get lodged against him. On the first night of the fiesta, while his companions continue to drink and make merry, Cohn remains in the back of the restaurant, "...sleeping quietly on some wine-casks. It was almost too dark to see his face. They had covered him with a coat and another coat was folded under his head. Around his neck and on his chest was a big wreath of twisted garlic" (*SAR* 158). When Cohn reappears two hours later, still wearing the garlic, Mike exhorts him "Eat those garlics, Robert....I say. Do eat those garlics" (159). Cohn has been adorned with garlic, presumably by his friends, and Mike's request that he eat it represents a "test" of Cohn's humanity; if Cohn is a vampire, he will not be able to tolerate garlic, since vampires are sensitive to it. These insinuations make Bill Gorton's assertions that Cohn was not sleeping, but rather"[y]ou were only dead," all the more meaningful (159).

The insinuation that Cohn is a vampire obviously possesses anti-Semitic overtones. In Europe, the period during and immediately following WWI saw the overt accusation of vampirism lodged against Jews (Pendlebury and Levene 224). And as Judith Halberstam observes, "anti-Semitism and the myth of the vampire share a kind of Gothic economy in their ability to condense many monstrous traits into one body (Halberstam 249). Calling the character of Dracula "otherness itself," she makes a powerful argument for the conceptual affinities between vampirism and Jewishness. Further demonstrating this connection, Doris Helbig links Cohn's curious habit of sleeping when his companions are awake with his social exclusion from the rest of the group (96). Mike Campbell draws attention to this separation

when Cohn finally emerges wreathed in garlic, and remarks, "What a lot we've drunk." Campbell's response—"You mean what a lot *we've* drunk. You were asleep"—emphasizes the barrier that prevents Cohn's belonging with the rest of the group (*SAR* 159). Cohn's social exclusion through divergent sleep habits links itself rather obviously with the predicament of the vampire, who tends to experience interpersonal difficulties in part because of his nocturnal schedule.[8]

Despite these indirect accusations of vampirism, however, the narrative is silent on whether Cohn "passes" the test of his humanity; he does not directly respond to Mike's request to "eat those garlics," but tacitly refuses it by turning the conversation *away* from his own eating habits, and to the topic of where they all might go for their next meal (*SAR* 159). The group then spends the rest of their evening together. In short, the vampiric Cohn awakens, rejoins the "living," and becomes—as much as he ever had been, at any rate—a part of the social fabric. A paradox inheres in the fact that Cohn is Othered through the garlic test, but he is not finally cast out. We are told that Cohn "hangs about so," whether he is wanted or not, a tendency best illustrated by his sticking close by Brett, even once her fiancé comes into town (141). And although Nies contends that Romero's heroic killing of Bocanegra symbolically "expunge[s] the unclean Cohn" from the text, (Nies 63), Cohn is not cast out quite so unequivocally.

Indeed, on the evening before Bocanegra's death, Cohn confronts Jake regarding Brett's whereabouts. Upon realizing that she has gone off to bed with Romero, Cohn calls

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[8] For a poignant example of this, see Season 1 of *True Blood*, where Sookie Stackhouse often laments that she and her vampire lover, Bill Compton, cannot sleep in the same bed. And when she becomes endangered during the day, he must choose between helping her, thus risking his own well-being due to sunlight exposure, and leaving her to fend for herself.

Jake a "damned pimp," and Jake takes a swing at him, missing (*SAR* 190). Incidentally, Jake's initial "miss" parallels Romero's own first pass at Bocanegra the next day, about which we are simply told, "The first time he missed" (220). But while Romero gets a second try, for Jake there is no second attempt to defeat Cohn. When Cohn hits back, he knocks Jake into a sitting position, and when Jake tries to stand, Cohn punches him twice more, knocking him out. On the same night, Cohn also injures Romero, knocking him down "about fifteen times" (202). Ultimately, on *this* night, the display of strength and physical grace belongs to Cohn, who—like Romero the next afternoon—succeeds in defeating his opponent on the second attempt. The remarks from Jake's friends suggest the power in Cohn's swing: "I say, you were [out] cold," Mike comments (190). And Edna marvels: "It was quite a thing to watch.....He must be a boxer" (190). Cohn's sheer physical prowess here links him with the eugenic conqueror—with Romero himself, who the next day, with "no tricks and no mystifications," simply slays Bocanegra (219-220). Although the text first casts *Jake* in the Romero role—he misses Cohn on his first attempt, and we half-expect him to pound Cohn into the ground on his next try—it revises the story, settling on an unlikely "conqueror" in the form of Cohn himself. This parallel between Cohn and Romero unsettles the easy counterpoint we might want to draw between a eugenic undesirable and a Nordic conquering hero.

Further, the mind-altering effects that the knock-out causes extend the influence of Cohn's actions beyond the discrete moment in which he punches Jake. Jake describes his walk back to his hotel:

> Walking across the square to the hotel everything looked new and changed. I had never seen the trees before. I had never seen the flagpoles before, nor the front of

> the theatre. It was all different. I felt as I felt once coming home from an out-of-town football game. I was carrying a suitcase with my football things in it, and I walked up the street from the station in the town I had lived in all my life and it was all new. They were raking the lawns and burning leaves in the road, and I stopped for a long time and watched. It was all strange. Then I went on, and my feet seemed to be a come from a long way off, and I could hear my feet walking a great distance away. I had been kicked in the head early in the game. It was like that crossing the square. It was like that going up the stairs in the hotel. Going up the stairs took a long time, and I had the feeling that I was carrying my suitcase. (193)

Even after the initial injury to Jake, Cohn continues to make an impact. His *mental* influence on Jake extends both into Jake's future (his walk to the hotel) and his past (his recollection of returning home, after a football game, with his suitcase). Cohn's continued, palpable presence in the novel, in the form of Jake's changed consciousness, disputes Nies's claim that Romero neatly vanquishes him through a "ritual ethic cleansing" (62). Cohn's influence, and the way he aligns himself with the identity of the eugenic conqueror before disappearing from the text, suggests well the way in which the socially marginalized figure haunts Hemingway's text, troubling the boundary between belonging and unbelonging.

The first hints of vampirism in the text, however, do not attach to Cohn, but rather to Brett Ashley, when she arrives at the *bal musette* in the company of another group of marginalized figures—in this case, homosexual men:

> Two taxis were coming down the steep street. They both stopped in front of the Bal. A crowd of young men, some in jerseys and some in their shirt sleeves, got out. I could see their hands and newly washed, wavy hair in the light from the door. The policeman standing by the door looked at me and smiled. They came in. As they went in under the light I saw white hands, wavy hair, white faces, grimacing, gesturing, talking. With them was Brett. She looked very lovely and was very much with them. (20)

Ira Elliott was the first critic to read this passage as suggestive of vampirism, declaring in a footnote that "[t]he pallor of the young men evokes the familiar vampiric construction of the gay man and the lesbian, figures of the night who prey on innocents and by sucking their blood 'convert' them to a 'perverted' way of life" (Elliott 77). Indeed, Richard Dyer writes extensively of a link between homosexuality and vampirism, noting, among other commonalities, the fact that both queer people and vampires must endure "the suspense of a life lived in the closet" (Dyer 79). In addition to troping gay men as vampires, this passage also curiously insists on Brett's 'belonging' among them: "With them was Brett...[she] was very much with them"; then further down the page: "And with them was Brett." This passage has been read as an allusion to Brett's own gender-subversiveness; that is, Brett belongs with the gay men because she herself is queer (Moddelmog 158).

However, the repetition and reformulation of this assertion also possess an undeniably hypnotic quality. This mesmerizing effect reinforces the vampire trope by subtly suggesting that Brett—and perhaps Jake himself—has fallen under the men's supernatural influence, a phenomenon known in vampire lore as "glamouring" (O.E.D. "Glamour"). Despite being under a kind of vampiric spell here, or perhaps *because* she has fallen under one, Brett is not immune from becoming vampiric. Portrayed by various critics as "psychologically castrating" (Rudat 3), "an exclusively destructive force" (Edmund Wilson, qtd. in Fulton, p.62), and a nymphomaniac (Moddelmog 158), Brett traditionally gets read as a vampiric succubus who drains Jake of what little might be left of his masculinity. She becomes even more blatantly linked with vampirism when she murmurs in the bullfight scenes. While entranced by Romero's bullfighting, she marvels, "Funny, how one doesn't mind the blood" (211). Throughout these violent scenes, Brett finds blood and gore

fascinating and alluring—a titillation that culminates when Romero offers her the ear of the slain Bocanegra, wrapped in Jake's handkerchief, seemingly as a love memento (199).

But what shared trait allows Cohn, a Jew, and Brett, a Nordic woman, both to be 'tainted' by hints of vampirism? Nies argues that both represent the same kind of threat to linear, eugenic reproduction of whiteness. As we have seen in the case of Cohn, his own race threatens to overtake the Nordic, perhaps imperceptibly, as it assimilates into the upper echelons of Gentile society. Brett's status as a "Newest New Woman" makes her mating choices eugenically dubious (Nies 46). Brett's adventurous expatriate lifestyle, along with her choice of revealing clothing and short hair, identify her with the new breed of autonomous 1920s woman (Nies 46). After all, Brett has already divorced a respectable baronet and fled the States without reproducing. Her subsequent relationships with other Nordics, such as Mike Campbell, are punctuated by sexual liaisons with a Jew and a Spaniard. Brett is clearly no less problematic for the eugenic program of reproducing whiteness than Cohn himself. Both represent a certain kind of eugenic threat, and both become associated with vampiric traits.

Club Abjection: Disabled People as Vampires

In addition to troping eugenic abjection generally, vampirism attaches itself to a few characters who are explicitly disabled. For example, the bullfighter Belmonte, who is "sick with a fistula" (*SAR* 214), functions very much like a vampire in that he ought to be dead but appears, against all odds, very much alive:

> Fifteen years ago they said if you wanted to see Belmonte you should go quickly, while he was still alive. Since then he has killed more than a thousand bulls. When

> he retired the legend grew up about how his bullfighting had been, and when he came out of retirement the public were disappointed because no real man could work as close to the bulls as Belmonte was supposed to have done, not, of course, even Belmonte. (214)

As Fore explains, "The matador is described as a paradox, as someone who has managed to live on past his real 'life' (79). Although she reads this paradox pessimistically, arguing that Belmonte displays a "supercripism" in which he is "[d]riven to perform" for the sake of appearing normal, the fact is that he in no way ever achieves the "normality-at-any price" to which Fore claims he aspires (79). Even though the public "wanted three times more from Belmonte...as Belmonte had ever been able to give," we are aware that the public's inevitable disappointment stems largely from their own unreasonable expectation. Belmonte remains larger than life, and at the same time, death-in-life: "Sometimes he turned to smile that toothed, long-jawed, lipless smile when he was called something particularly insulting, and always the pain that any movement produced grew stronger and stronger, until finally his yellow face was parchment color..." (214). The fading of his face from yellow to ivory evokes the image of a skull, as does the emphasis on teeth and a fleshless mouth. Belmonte paradoxically remains too alive, and simultaneously dead.

Count Mippipopolous also toes the line between hyper-living and dead and is customarily read as disabled—though the question of what his exact impairment might be remains contested. Both William Kerrigan and Leon F. Seltzer read the Count as impotent, largely because of the use of the word "funny" in reference to him, a term repeatedly used to describe Jake's impairment. (Rudat 5). But as Buckley points out, there is "scant evidence" of sexual impairment based on what we know of the Count's war wounds (Buckley 86).

Perhaps critics have simply read the Count's chest wound as a signifier of sexual incapacity, mainly owing to the general cultural denial of disabled people's sexuality (Shakespeare 3). Moreover, reading the Count as sexually disabled makes him into an appealingly convenient foil to Jake. Indeed, some critics have read the Count as a moral model for Jake to emulate, or as a near-code hero, comparable to Pedro Romero (Fleming 141-45). But ultimately, there is simply no compelling textual reason to see the Count as *sexually* impaired. All we really know of his physical condition is that he has scars from what he reports are war injuries, and that he walks with a "stick" and does not dance (*SAR* 57).

Whatever his exact impairment, the Count, like Belmonte, remains somehow excessively alive and paradoxically dead. In his longest appearance in the novel, we learn that he has "been in seven wars and four revolutions," an improbable if not impossible biography for almost anyone (60). He further claims that he received his battle scars in Abyssinia, when he was twenty-one years old (60). The first Italo-Ethiopian War took place from 1895 and 1896, and if we believe he received his battle scars then, this timeline places the Count's birth year at approximately 1874 or 1875, making him around fifty years old at the time he meets Brett Ashley. It is not clear how a man of only fifty could have participated in four revolutions and seven wars, and while we might reasonably interpret this merely as an instance of sarcasm, other clues reinforce the idea that the Count has in fact led a deceptively long life. His statement that "it is because I have lived very much that now I can enjoy everything so well" encapsulates a life philosophy that seems predicated on having amassed an enormous amount of experience (60). Moreover, the Count has an "ostentatious" taste for old brandy, specifically asking the waiter for the oldest one available, and claims to own a "houseful" of antiquities as well (62). All of these passages suggest a

man who is mysteriously older than his years—or who has done more in his fifty years than should be humanly possible. As Brett incredulously puts the matter to Jake: "Knows hell's own amount about people. Don't know where he got it all" (32).

Even though the Count has lived an absurdly full life, however, Brett repeatedly—and counter-intuitively—accuses him of being dead: "You haven't any values. You're dead, that's all" (67). The Count rebukes her: "No, my dear. You're not right. I'm not dead at all" (68). Brett's declaration reminds us of Bill Gorton's recurrent accusation that Cohn has been "dead" rather than sleeping—a state that represents the ultimate kind of divestiture from social relations. Indeed, Fore reads this exchange between Brett and Count Mippipopolous as a "glib" dismissal of the Count's humanity, arguing that Brett's statement "shows how close her thinking is to the eugenic/Social Darwinist stereotypes of the period" (79). Granted, there is a certain degree of apparent contempt in Brett's statement that the Count is dead. But we must take her seeming condemnation of him with a grain of salt, since she repeatedly insists to Jake that the Count "is one of us" (32). The implication, then, is that all *three* of them are somehow "dead."

It is reasonable to assume that Brett intends to identify all three of them as people who have been irrevocably wounded by the Great War and its aftermath. Perhaps, then, the "death" they have died is one borne of trauma. Brett has indeed suffered mightily on account of the War, and left her abusive husband due to his own post-war psychological condition: "When he came home [from the war] he wouldn't sleep in the bed. Always made Brett sleep on the floor. Finally, when he got really bad, he used to tell her he'd kill her" (*SAR* 203). Brett instinctively recognizes the Count's belonging with them as an injured

person and leaves no room for doubt: "He's one of us, though. Oh, quite. No doubt. *One can always tell*" (32, emphasis mine). Significantly, the way in which Brett seems to immediately and intuitively grasp the Count's status as "one of us" parallels Jake's description of the recognition of *afición:*

> When they saw that I had *afición,* and there was no password, no set questions that could bring it out, rather it was a sort of oral spiritual examination with the questions always a little on the defensive and never apparent, there was this same embarrassed putting the hand on the shoulder or a "Buen hombre." But nearly always there was actual touching. (132)

If the verification of *afición* occurs by homosocial touching the body, the verification of abjection largely occurs by looking. Brett 'proves' that the Count is "one of us" by showing Jake his flesh wounds (60), a scene Fore disgustedly reads as "Brett's own private freak show" (Fore 78).

This scene, however, may also be read as a parallel for the Biblical persuasion of Thomas. While the other disciples readily believe that Christ has been brought back from the dead, Thomas requires proof: "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe" (John 20:25). Although Jake's interaction with the Count is not quite so tactile, it is narrated in terms of touching: "Below the line where his ribs stopped were *two raised white welts.* 'See on the back where they come out.' Above the small of the back were the same two scars, raised *thick as a finger*" (*SAR* 60, emphasis mine). Here, we get the sense that Jake has touched the Count, whether he actually has or not, because of the precision with which he narrates the texture and size of the other man's wounds. Moreover, the comparison of the Count's scar to a finger further reinforces the tactile sensory mode.

But while the scene in which Thomas touches Christ's wounded body creates *believing*, the scene in which Jake sees and imagines touching the Count's body creates *belonging*. Afterward, Jake and the Count even agree on their "values," Jake responding "Yes. Absolutely" to the Count's observation, "it is because I have lived very much that now I can enjoy everything so well. Don't you find it like that?" (*SAR* 60). Of course, "lived very much" here codes not merely the Count's vast life experience, but also his woundedness. Here, we see the beginning of a suggestion that disability perhaps *en*ables a new system of values: "'I know,' said the count. 'That is the secret. You must get to know the values'" (60). The "secret" here amounts to a kind of shared values; one might call it *Club Abjection*, on par with what Davidson and Davidson call "Club Afición" (93).

Arguing that Club Afición "confers status," Davidson and Davidson lay out the homosocial network to which Jake seems to belong: "a perfect closed system: One either is in or one is not, it takes one to know one, and if you have to ask how you clearly do not belong" (93).

Indeed, despite their claim that membership in Club Afición "confers status" (93), to Jake, *aficiónado* is as much a secret identity as Count Mippipopolous's disability:

> [Montoya] always smiled as though bull-fighting were a very special secret between the two of us; a rather shocking but really very deep secret that we knew about. He always smiled as though there were something lewd about it to outsiders, but that it was something that we understood. It would not do to expose it to people who would not understand. (*SAR* 131)

Jake's assertion that "[i]t would not do to expose it to people who would not understand" seems to double as an observation about his sexual impairment, something about which he is guarded, and something that is not a source of status, but of abjection.

But if the *afición* system is closed, the abjection system is decidedly, terrifyingly, open. As we have seen, it bridges gender, racial, and other kinds of divisions, again recalling the kind of transcendent identity that Dean argues is achieved by gay barebackers: "Through bug chasing and gift giving, gay cultural membership becomes irrevocable in a way that neither national nor religious cultural membership is" (83). Although abjection, like *afición,* is a secret shared among its members, the former—and not the latter—threatens to overtake anyone at any time. While Davidson and Davidson persuasively argue that *afición* excludes women, Jews, and many other kinds of 'Others,' the potential to fall into abjected identity excludes no one. Abjection is therefore a proliferative maker of social identity, trumping both heteronormativity (in the form of sexual reproduction) and homosociality (in the form of *afición*). In this way, abjection parallels disability, which forces onto normate society the recognition of temporary able-bodiedness, or the sense of what Susan Sontag calls "dual citizenship": "Everyone who is born holds dual citizenship, in the kingdom of the well and in the kingdom of the sick. Although we all prefer to use only the good passport, sooner or later each of us is obliged, at least for a spell, to identify ourselves as citizens of that other place" (3). Jake, Belmonte, and the Count all seem to be examples of men who have crossed over into Sontag's other 'kingdom' and serve as living reminders of how porous the boundary between able-bodiedness and disability really is.

The examples of the Count and Belmonte, in particular, recall Nina Auerbach's observation that vampires' chief transgression lies not in being dead, but in being, on the contrary "more alive than they should be" (6). It is this formulation of the vampire, in particular, that I argue links most productively with conceptions of disabled identity. Disabled people can be, and often are, seen as more *embodied* than they should be. After all, the normative body denies its status as a body and figures itself as a null (Mitchell and Snyder 64), thereby laying claim to a kind of fully enfranchised subjectivity. The disabled body, alternatively, announces itself as a body at the same time that it threatens to disappear as a recognized unit of citizenship—because, in general, the more explicitly embodied a subject, the less to attain civic enfranchisement.

As we have seen, however, vampiric characters are not *unequivocally* identified with the mode of the disenfranchised eugenic abject. Just as Cohn appears on the one hand racially Other, on the other he 'passes' as a Nordic conqueror. Or, as Mike Campbell puts the dichotomy: "The funny thing is he's nice, too. I like him. But he's just so awful" (101). Notably, Romero himself—widely recognized as the novel's hero—becomes linked with the vampiric trait of eternal life when he declares, "I know it...I'm never going to die" (186). Vampires, of course, rarely die—because they are already dead. Romero appears resigned to the fate of existing beyond the bounds of mortal, human life—which is, indeed, one of the key motifs in the narrative of the vampire, who often must grudgingly come to terms with existing *in excess* of those around him.

The Vampire and the Code Hero

Although Romero is linked with blood and mutilation through the bullfighting scenes, and although he seems to resign himself to a supernatural lifespan, he clearly cannot be read as the same sort of abjected figure as Cohn, the lovelorn Jewish "steer." Compared to Jake's band of expatriate "disaffiliates" (Spilka 37), Romero appears a paragon of morality, the "code hero" of the text. Philip Young coined this term more than four decades ago, claiming that the Hemingway code hero "offers up and exemplifies certain principles of honor, courage, and endurance which in a life of tension and pain make a man a man" (*Reconsideration* 63). The code hero emerges as a counterpoint to the troubled Hemingway protagonist because he "presents a solution to the problems" of that protagonist (63). Young hypothesizes that the "code" operates often among sportsmen, since managing oneself within the 'rules of the game' exemplifies "sticking to his bargain if it kills him" (65).

The "problems" to which Romero presents a solution are largely those brought about by war itself. Jake, though sent to war as a "Nordic conqueror," returns not only mutilated, but with his manhood called into question, and all possibility of reproducing his white heritage squelched. War does not yield the desired result of Nordic victory, nor does it uphold phallic masculinity. What society needs is a new vehicle for heroism, and for reproduction. The sport of the bullring, then, seems to present an alternative forum in which masculinity can play out according to new rules, and new masculine subjects can be made. As Thomas Strychacz has persuasively argued, this competitive venue constitutes the ultimate proving ground of masculinity within the novel, where "men are made or unmanned" (Strychacz 245).

Romero is seemingly "made" in the bullring, enacting a new form of masculine morality there, his able-bodied and artful maneuvers in the "terrain of the bull" providing a counterpoint to the less daring work of the disabled Belmonte: "...Belmonte imposed conditions and insisted that his bulls should not be too large, nor too dangerously armed..." (214). Interestingly, although he serves as Romero's nemesis, Belmonte views *himself* as a kind of dispeller of the false masculinity that came before him:

> [Belmonte] had come out of retirement to compete with Marcial, knowing it was a competition gained in advance. He had expected to compete with Marcial and the other stars of the decadence of bull-fighting, and he knew that the sincerity of his own bull-fighting would be so set off by the false aesthetics of the bull-fighters of the decadent period that he would only have to be in the ring. His return from retirement had been spoiled by Romero. (215)

This passage reveals a succession of various paradigms of masculinity. We might imagine that just as Romero supplants Belmonte, and Belmonte replaces Marcial, so too did Marcial supplant someone, and Romero also will one day be replaced. But for now, Romero emerges as a kind of eugenic conqueror, fit to embody the values of his age, finally able to supplant the *literally* crippled bearers of past ideology, since he is able to do "always, smoothly, calmly, and beautifully, what...Belmonte[,]could only bring himself to do now sometimes" (215).

Indeed, Nies argues that Hemingway uses Romero to supplant the myth of the inconquerable "Nordic" warrior with a new model of Mediterranean white supremacy (62), claiming that in its worship of Romero, the text "is ironically evocative of the eugenic worship of classical Nordic male" (60). In her interpretation, Romero represents a eugenic hero—the very opposite of Cohn or Brett, who both pose a threat to the reliable

reproduction of white male subjectivity. Romero is considered physically beautiful, by men and women alike (*SAR* 163). His accomplishments in the bullring receive popular acclaim (199). Romero seems to possess a kind of singular masculinity, since, as Jake tells us, his identity and achievement within the bullring exist independently of women (216).

We should note, however, that despite his ostensible masculine hero status, Romero endures a significant degree of sexual infantilization. He has rarely been romantically involved women, since "[h]e never cared about anything but bull-fighting"—a fact which Brett confides to Jake after her affair with the bullfighter has ended (245). Jake reinforces Romero's sexually infantile state when he asks Brett, "Why didn't you keep him?"—as if Romero were an object or a pet (241). Further, Jake and the bar owner, Montoya, collude to keep Romero from even knowing about an invitation to a dinner thrown by the American Ambassador (172). Although ostensibly protecting Romero from "foreigners," who might take advantage of him, the hastily arrived at decision to keep Romero from Americans seems to stem specifically from a belief, voiced by Jake, that he is too vulnerable to sexual temptation: "There's one American woman down there now who collects bull fighters" (172). Romero seems cognizant of his own sexual infantilization. We are told that he smokes cigars in as "part of his system of authority" (185). Although Jake explains this need for authority as a need to "look older" (185), the fact that Romero attempts to compensate for his lack of authority with a phallus belies any possible reading of Romero as "an icon of essential masculinity" (Davidson and Davidson 97). Just as Cohn cannot be read as an unequivocally abject character, Romero does not emerge an unambiguous hero.

Even the bullring itself is not an unproblematic locus for masculine morality. Although it arises as a more civilized alternative to the failed "sport" of war, it does not completely circumvent the problems associated with national violence. Admittedly, the bullring provides a more controlled environment for the display of male violence and mastery; however, it nevertheless results in unpredictably dire consequences. The most obvious of these consequences in *The Sun Also Rises* is the death of Vincent Girones, a man gored by Bocanegra during the running of the bulls. Girones leaves behind a widow and children. The man's death evokes a range of reactions, one being disgust at the sport of bullfighting. Jake's waiter responds this way to the news of Girones's goring: "'Badly cogido,' he said. 'All for sport. All for pleasure'.... 'Badly cogido through the back...A big horn wound. All for fun. Just for fun'" (197). The waiter's reaction brings up the distinct possibility that bull-fighting may be even *more* horrendous than war, because it is merely recreational. Another reaction Girones's death provokes is obliviousness, indifference. After the news that Girones is "muerto" travels through the town, Bill Gorton still manages not to know about it. Chapter 27 ends with Jake informing Gorton, "A man was killed outside in the runway." Gorton responds, "Was there?" (204). If the waiter's response makes us second-guess the morality of the bullfight based on its frivolity, Gorton's ignorance suggests the desensitization that can result from an atmosphere always steeped in blood and violence.

Dead Bodies: Mutilation and Ethics

Dana Fore fascinatingly observes that Bill Gorton "makes connections between dead bodies and ethics" (81). Because Gorton shows keen interest in the taxidermically prepared bodies of animals, insisting that Jake ought to buy one, Fore concludes that Gorton pushes Jake to recognize his own 'mutilation' as a valid fact of the world. This attunement to the ethical implications of mutilation would seem to be at odds with his obliviousness to Girones's death. But in fact, one of the clearest messages of *The Sun Also Rises* is that, in death, one achieves the ultimate fixity of "value(s)." Gorton hints at this fixity when he urges Jake to buy one of the stuffed dogs they see in a shop window: "Mean everything in the world to you after you bought it" (*SAR* 72). This emphasis on the inestimable value of the dead dogs—they're worth "everything in the world"—parallels Gorton's insistence that Jake can somehow (ex)change his *own* values by buying one: "Simple exchange of values. You give them money. They give you a stuffed dog" (72). Although value here clearly refers to a monetary measure, the "simple exchange" Gorton promotes is more than financial, as he offers Jake a warning: "Road to hell paved with unbought stuffed dogs" (73).

Value—moral and otherwise—also inheres in the fish Jake catches and kills at the river with Gorton. A certain kind of sacredness accrues to the trout only through death:

> I took the trout ashore, washed them in the cold, smoothly heavy water above the dam, and then picked some ferns and packed them all in the bag, three trout on a layer of ferns, then another layer of ferns then three more trout, and then covered them with ferns. They looked nice in the ferns, and now the bag was bulky, and I put it in the shade of the tree. (*SAR* 121).

The description of the preparation of the fish reassures us that their death was purposeful. Grouped in trinities and religiously "buried" in foliage, they are treated with care and respect, even as they are mutilated. Significantly, this passage in many ways anticipates the severing of Bocanegra's ear.

Although obviously brutal, the mutilation of Bocanegra is also just as clearly a kind of ritual. It serves the dual symbolic function of memorializing Vincent Girones, providing a meaning and value to his life; and providing Brett a concrete, if morally complex, token of Romero's love. We can see this dual purpose quite clearly in Hemingway's description of the sequence of events surrounding Bocanegra's ear:

> The bull who killed Vincent Girones was named Bocanegra, was Number 118 of the bull-breeding establishment of Sanchez Taberno, and was killed by Pedro Romero as the third bull of that same afternoon. His ear was cut by popular acclamation and given to Pedro Romero, who, in turn, gave it to Brett, who wrapped it in a handkerchief belonging to myself, and left both ear and handkerchief, along with a number of Muranti cigarette-stubs, shoved far back in the drawer of the bed-table that stood beside her bed in the Hotel Montoya, Pamplona. (*SAR* 199).

The popular acclamation surrounding the bull's mutilation undoubtedly stems from the goring of Girones. By taking a piece of the offending bull, a kind of public memorialization of Girones can occur—one that, depending on one's perspective, either redoubles the brutality of the man's death, or metes out some form of cosmic justice. Tomkins contends that memorialization plays an enormously important role in *The Sun Also Rises*:

> Hemingway construes loss as a thing possessing intrinsic value....Hemingway shifts the emphasis to absence—to sites of loss (such as his narrator Jake Barnes's genital wound) that constitute material spaces within the context of Hemingway's narrative. Hemingway seizes on such instances of loss in material terms by emphasizing a variety of material objects—both inanimate and corporeal—that commemorate immaterial events. In doing so, *Hemingway shows that it is the absent or lost "thing" that*

> *matters, maintains the greatest value,* and defines rather than undermines every generation. (746)

Read in this context, the bull's missing ear registers as a symbol around which mourning and outrage over Girones' death may crystallize—and around which his death and life may have meaning, since it is all too easy to read Girones' death as "significant [only] in its utter meaninglessness" (Davidson and Davidson 99). All the same, however, the mutilation of Bocanegra perpetuates a kind of savagery, one that is perhaps not lost on Romero.

Significantly, Romero does not cut the bull's ear himself. Rather, it is his brother who "cut[s] the notched black ear from the dead bull and trot[s] over with it to Romero" (220). Once it is severed, however, Romero decides immediately to give it to Brett. Once again, this act can either be read as an instance of barbarism, or as an attempt to realize another layer of *value* out of death. In giving Brett the severed ear, Romero attempts to sublimate the violent moment of Bocanegra's death into an expression of his and Brett's mutual passion. His desire to symbolically divorce the severed ear from the savage act that yielded it, and his simultaneous recognition that such a separation is impossible, can be seen in his joking admonition: "Don't get bloody" (221). As we have seen, it is virtually impossible to avoid getting bloody in this novel.

Davidson and Davidson read Brett's subsequent treatment of the ear as further evidence of meaningless brutality: "Brett simply forgets the bull's ear—the trophy, the final empty sign of all this valor....So much for the code. So much for the code hero" (Davidson and Davidson 99). However, as I have explained, Bocanegra's ear is far from "empty." It memorializes not only the value of Bocanegra, but has accrued the value of the life of

Girones himself, along with the meaning of Romero and Brett's love affair. I argue that Brett leaves it behind not because it is valueless, but because it is in fact, *too* valuable—painfully significant, in fact. The fact that it is wrapped in Jake's handkerchief supports this reading. Bocanegra's death demonstrates the value and meaning that can accrue in the midst of mutilation.

Therefore, when Brett calls Count Mippipopolous dead, and claims that he has no values, her statement may be interpreted as a paradoxical insistence on his, and on her own, value. The paradoxical ethic of the text, then, appears to run something like this: *To be valuable, you must be dead; to be a meaningful subject, you must be mutilated.* This ethic foregrounds the role of abjection in the creation of subjectivity. But if the text values mutilation, it also refuses, finally, to cover that mutilation up. Jake's own statement of ethics finally amounts to a flat-out refusal of any program that would seek make his alterity as a disabled, returning soldier disappear.

The Ethics of Refusing Rehabilitation

Jake's triumph as a disabled character comes in his ultimate refusal of the rehabilitative regime that is thrust upon him. In this way, Jake continues to hold fast to his difference as the site of his identity. Robert McRuer theorizes stigma as a maker and marker of identity for disabled artists: "Stigmatized in and by a culture that will not or cannot accommodate their presence, crip performers...have proudly and collectively shaped stigmaphilic alternatives in, through, and around that abjection" (36). Arguing that crips inhabit "refuse spaces" in which they are refused access to basic rights, dignity, and services—in effect, treated like human *refuse*—McRuer stakes a claim for turning refuse into

refus*al* (126). By refusing what he calls the social program of rehabilitation, and instead embracing disability, the "crip" violates rehabilitative logic by making disability a "confrontational position," instead of working to make it disappear (Stiker qtd. in McRuer 113). In this spirit, Jake Barnes turns his impairment into a site of cultural work by refusing the program of post-war behavior that sought to reshape disabled ex-soldiers into status quo workers.

Jake opts out of tangible physical production and focuses on a discursive mode of being: writing, talking, being. Nominally working as journalist, he tells us early on that, in the newspaper business, "it is such an important part of the ethics that you should never seem to be working" (11). Indeed, Bill Gorton makes Jake's idleness a point of focus during their fishing expedition: "You spend all your time talking, not working.... You don't work" (115). Jake's vocation—which paradoxically disguises itself as an absence of work—flies in the face of injured soldiers' rehabilitative programs, which typically sought to place ex-soldiers into strenuous physical jobs and train them in how to perform their jobs as disabled men (Reznick 186). Rehabilitation saw as one of it primary goals the recovery of physical ability in a body that had lost some of its previous capabilities: "'Curative work' was not only intended to teach the disabled how to become productive workers, but also *to become men*" (Bourke 74, emphasis mine). Or, as Timothy Reznick puts the matter: vocational work rehabilitation was responsible for "reconstituting [soldiers] in three respects: as healthy individuals, able-bodied male breadwinners, and productive citizens" (186). The (re)attainment of physical skills worked to prove, both to the ex-soldier himself and to society, that the veteran was socially valuable.

One major mode by which curative work was thought to act on the patient was not physical, but psychological. Reznick quotes Robert Jones, the founder of a rehabilitative hospital in London known as Shepherd's Bush:

> [The soldier-patient] may be given a job to do with his hands. In the interest which the work inspires he forgets to nurse his foot, which almost unconsciously and often very rapidly becomes again mobile. A knee joint which could not bear the continued strain of working a treadle will, perhaps, improve in function quickly, which the patient, forgetful of his injury, is working with a saw. (qtd. in Reznick, 194)

In effect, the soldier-patients in Jones's example are being distracted out of their impairments, magically healed through forgetfulness. By contrast, Jake's injury announces itself as, above all, not forgettable. He often lies awake at night, meditating on his condition, which he calls "[t]he old grievance" (31). He even explicitly ridicules the advice of forgetting one's impairment: "The Catholic Church had an awfully good way of handling all that. Good advice, anyway. Not to think about it. Oh, it was swell advice. Try and take it sometime. Try and take it" (31). With the repetition of "[t]ry and take it," Jake highlights the yawning gap in points-of-view between a (presumably) able-bodied advisor, who admonishes a disabled person to 'forget' his way to a healed body, and a disabled advisee, who lives daily with the intractable fact of impairment. "Fake it till you make it" is essentially the advice of those who endorse rehabilitation; and Jake's critique of that principle suggests his non-compliance with a social program that wants disabled soldiers, in essence, to imitate some previous version of themselves.

Indeed, Henri-Jacques Stiker defines the ideology of rehabilitation, which emerged after WWI, as one that sought to restore "true function" and to return disabled soldiers to their "assumed prior, normal state" (122). The feasibility of this project, however, collapses

in the face of several facts, the first being that injured soldiers clearly manifest disabilities even while performing rehabilitative work. This tension is perhaps best illustrated in a photograph which shows an English soldier, with amputated arms, participating in a rehabilitative program at Heritage School in Chailey. This program requires him to perform factory work—specifically, painting industrial signage—and in order to complete the painting, he must use his feet to hold the paintbrush (Bourke 74). In short, he ironically reveals through performing this very "curative" work that he has not and cannot, in fact, be cured. Perhaps even more striking here is the fact that the *adult* soldier works alongside similarly disabled young boys, a sign behind them all reading "MEN MADE HERE." As Bourke notes, "crippled soldiers had to be 'made' into men again, often being reduced to the level of children and expected gradually to redevelop into adults" (74).

If, as Stiker contends, that the ultimate goal of rehabilitation lies in "making alterity disappear," the rehabilitation of the British servicemen featured in Joanna Bourke's book has failed. The Chailey photograph, along with others of so-called "limbless men," reveal that these men are strikingly physically non-normative. Rehabilitation does "complete the act...of making identical" or "assimilate [disabled veterans] down and dissolve them in the greater and single social whole" (Stiker 128). Jake's situation, however, is visibly—or perhaps more accurately, *invisibly*—different from those on whom Bourke largely focuses. While appearing able-bodied, he harbors an impairment that clearly cannot be rehabilitated through vocational work, highlighting another layer of difficulty in the rehabilitative project; how can we rehabilitate what we cannot ascertain to be damaged in the first place? In some way, Jake can be seen as the obverse of the typical wounded soldier, in that the invisibility of his condition both allows him to *visibly* assimilate into normative society, even as it confounds

the vocational system that would reintegrate him. Further, although Bourke argues that "the body of the soldier is intended to be wounded" (31), it is clear that Jake's impairment is, as he puts it, a "funny" way to be wounded (*SAR* 30). That is, soldiers' bodies are not "intended" to be wounded in the way Jake's has been injured, and so rehabilitative programs are not designed to manage his type of impairment.

Jake's participation in the discursive realm not only importantly refuses physical rehabilitation, but also reclaims a site for reflection on disabled experience. Tomkins argues that, often in his own speech, Jake attempts to take possession of his disability, and to own it, by showing Brett that the looseness of her own approach to it is unsustainable:

> Jake's response to Brett reveals his refusal to tolerate her attempts to cast his sexual condition in abstract, offhand terms; it also underscores the fact that, in general, Jake insists on setting the parameters of connotative language as it relates to his war wound and attendant impotency... (Tomkins 750).

Despite Jake's vexed relationship to his own body, it is clear that language becomes a site for working through the meaning of his impairment, both for himself and for others. Discursiveness as a form of meaning is nowhere more obvious than in Jake's conversation with Bill Gorton during their fishing trip. This exchange reveals both Gorton's willingness to engage Jake, and Jake's own eagerness for Gorton to address his condition: "He had been going splendidly, but he stopped. I was afraid he thought he had hurt me with that crack about being impotent. I tried to start him again" (115). Jake's and Gorton's exchange on this trip mimics the format of psychoanalysis, as Gorton attempts to offer Jake a "safe space"' in which to reflect verbally on his existence (Fore 82).

Language, however, has its limitations, and the novel's discourse on Jake's interior life as a disabled person ultimately gives way to his frustration about learning to live in the world around him: "I did not care what it was all about. All I wanted was to know how to live in it. Maybe if you found out how to live in it you learned from that what it was all about" (148). The idea that he must learn "how to live in it" gives voice to an important aspect of disabled experience, particularly for those who, like Jake, have invisible impairments. As Ellen Samuels puts this challenge: "I would suggest that the nonvisible nature of [invisible] disabilities means that...the primary meaning of coming out includes the term *to* and connotes the daily challenge of negotiating assumptions about bodily appearance and function" (239). Both Jake's statement and Samuels's observation reflect that, for many persons with disabilities, grappling with the external world (living "in it") is a far greater challenge than privately coming to terms with one's disability. This focus on the difficulty of finding accommodation and acceptance in the external world also undermines the logic of rehabilitation by suggesting that what needs to be rehabilitated is not, after all, Jake, but the world around him.

Conclusion

In arguing that *The Sun Also Rises* organizes a system of identities and moral values around the abjected, disabled state, I am hardly contending that Hemingway himself possessed a particularly progressive orientation toward disability issues. Although in some of his writing he bitterly satirizes eugenic fears (Nies 48), in the Plimpton interview, he make a statement that reveals the extent to which disability discrimination is exempted from his conception of misguided eugenic ideals. When Plimpton asks Hemingway whether a writer

must be equipped with a sense of justice ad injustice, Hemingway answers: "A writer without a sense of justice and of injustice would be better off editing the yearbook of a school for exceptional children than writing novels" (Plimpton 30). Although Hemingway here wishes to affirm the importance of an authorial conscience, he does so by ironically suggesting that ethics have no place in the consideration of, or work with, persons with disabilities.

Hemingway's own disability consciousness (or lack thereof) notwithstanding, *The Sun Also Rises* posits an alternative moral code, which initially arises out of the failure of phallic masculinity. Jake Barnes's genital impairment necessarily disrupts normative sex and reproduction, creating a space for the reproduction of subjectivity by other means. Ultimately, abjection proves to be the single-most generative maker of social meaning within the novel, giving identity and social coherence to a range of characters within the novel. Subtle hints of vampirism attach themselves to characters, organizing them around a central trope, and suggesting the unpredictable, "unauthorized" reproduction of abjection. Like disability, vampirism threatens to subsume any and all under its banner, and through this threat, fundamentally destabilizes designations of normal and abnormal, eugenically abject and eugenically fit.

Jake stands as a paradigmatic example of one whose eugenic fitness dissolves into eugenic abjection. Appearing on the one hand as a Nordic conqueror, and on the other as a mutilated soldier incapable of propagating his whiteness, Jake thwarts the project of eugenic progress at every turn and even refuses the rehabilitative regime that would seek to (re)instate him as a man. Just as Jake reveals how eugenic fitness can easily slip into

unfitness, Robert Cohn exemplifies the threat of eugenic abject who "passes" for eugenic ideal. Through the development of these characters, along with Pedro Romero, the novel presents the boundary between eugenic conqueror and eugenic abject as dangerously fluid.

Ultimately, *The Sun Also Rises* suggests that the most generative means of reproducing subjects arises out of abjection. Not only that, moral values themselves accrue through the processes of mutilation and death, revealing that when Brett Ashley calls Count Mippipopolous "dead," she is, in a sense, confirming his moral meaningfulness. Indeed, the novel ultimately connects mutilation, subjectivity, and ethics in a way that is anti-eugenic, both because it insists on the value inherent in impairment and because it suggests that eugenic wholeness is, finally, no less a fiction than the phallus itself. As one critic has written, "Hemingway's work severely *dis*ables the myth of the autonomous male individual" (Strychacz 260, emphasis mine). In the end, disability used as a critical tool can expose the mythical nature of phallic masculinity, normative reproduction, eugenic progress, and whole bodies—creating a space for a more authentic ethics of the body to emerge.

"The Acceptance of Depravity": Disability in Public, Queer Caretaking, and an Ethics of Alterity in *Nightwood*

Literary critics have addressed a multiplicity of marginalized identities in Djuna Barnes's 1936 novel *Nightwood.* Some of these identities include: queer, transgender, lesbian, black, and Jewish, among others. But one minority identity that has been almost entirely excluded from this critical examination is disability. Indeed, cognitive and physical differences—in the form of what Garland Thomson would call "extraordinary bodies"—abound within Djuna Barnes's novel and, I argue, play a central role in organizing its social relationships, and its ethical orientation. I hope to show that, even as *Nightwood* expresses anxiety about physically and cognitively different bodies, it nevertheless approaches disability as a life circumstance that has the ability to activate an authentic morality that is, perhaps, not otherwise available to modern subjects.

In calling the sort of ethics that get activated within this text "authentic morality," I am self-consciously drawing, once again, on Michael Warner's formulation of the stigmaphile space. Warner writes: "the stigmaphile space is where we find a commonality with those who suffer stigma, and in this alternative realm learn to value the very things the rest of the world despises—not just because the world despises them, but because the world's pseudo-morality is a phobic and inauthentic way of life" (43). In lieu of pseudo-morality, he implies, stigmaphilic spaces afford the possibility for *authentic* morality. And it is precisely this sort of space of ethical possibility that I am arguing exists within Barnes's novel.

I will argue that the authentic morality of *Nightwood* is achieved largely through the act of caretaking; specifically, through a mode of queer caretaking that resists normative values, not

only about disabled and non-disabled bodies, but also about gender and sex. Queer caretaking is evident in the character of Felix Volkbein, and his relationship to his disabled son Guido. Although Felix Volkbein begins the novel as a mainly assimilationist, pro-eugenic character, he is moved to an anti-eugenic position both through his exposure to the open community space of the circus, and through the birth of his son, and the non-normative caretaking role he assumes for him. Ultimately Felix comes to accept depravity, abjection, and alterity, which constitute the core ethical commitments of the novel. Felix's transformation reveals the kind of ethical position that can be achieved when abjected and marginalized people come together in an open space of mutual recognition. The counter-example to this open space of mutual recognition is the oppressive, domesticating sphere of repronormativity, which is most evident in the relationship model that Nora Flood envisions for her and her lover, Robin Vote. Robin's resistance to relationship merging, and to reproductive models of relationship, reinforce the queer ethics that we encounter in Felix's relationship with Guido.

Jewishness and Eugenic Abjection

Because Felix is a Jew who is blind in one eye, his status amounts to one of "perpetual disqualification" (Plumb 155). He is also, in the terms in which I've been framing my larger argument, an example of the eugenic abject; that is, he possesses the very sort of body that eugenic ideology, and the policies that emerged out of it, sought to eradicate. The Jewish body—indeed, even the mere presence of dark hair and eyes—was considered inferior during the 1920s and 1930s, and pseudo-science was infamously enlisted to support this polemic. In 1920, for example, studies published in the *Journal of Heredity* sought to

"correlate nose shape...and hair and eye color of Nordic families with worldly achievement and power" (Nies 89). As Lennard Davis has suggested, the eugenic targeting of racially marginalized groups worked to define tacitly all of the eugenic abject as disabled:

> Eugenics saw the possible improvement of the human race as being accomplished by diminishing problematic peoples and their problematic behaviors—these peoples were clearly delineated under the rubric of feeble-mindedness and degeneration as women, people of color, homosexuals, the working classes, and so on. All these were considered to be classes of disability, although we do not think of them as connected in this way today (14).

Although marginalized for both his ethnicity and his physical difference, Felix initially strives to be accepted, even if he has to feign an acceptable identity to do so: "Felix call[s] himself Baron Volkbein, as his father had done before him" (10). By assuming this false title, he masquerades as a member of the Austrian elite. He even goes so far as hang portraits of beautiful "Florentine" figures in his home and claim them as his ancestors; because they bear an "accidental likeness" to him, he can use them as "an alibi for [his] blood" (10). Felix remains obsessed with making up for the perceived deficiencies of his bloodline, dwelling on "artistocracy, nobility, royalty"—all of the traits he does not possess (11). As he "hunt[s] down his own disqualification" (12), policing his own corporeal deviance, he seeks to mate with a woman who he feels can compensate for his genetic deficiency. He believes he has found her when he meets Robin Vote.

Felix thinks of Robin as a "carrier of the past" (*N* 41) and believes that, with her, he can produce "a son who would feel as he felt about 'the great past'" (42). Although we are told little about Robin's concrete physicality—she is mainly described in metaphorical terms (Stockton 119)—Felix does notice that her eyes are "a shocking blue," suggesting a more Nordic bloodline than his own (*N* 41). Felix's desire to reproduce with Robin can therefore

be read as a *eugenic* desire; he fantasizes that together they might be able to produce an heir who embodies the Nordic aristocracy that Felix and his father were never able to inhabit entirely. At first glance, then, Felix appears fully assimilationist, wishing to produce children who fit seamlessly into eugenically disciplined culture. But at the same time that he idealizes Robin's eugenic potential, he also—through the indirect discourse of the third person narrator—uses the language of degeneration to characterize her. Calling Robin "an *infected* carrier of the past," and a "beast turning human," the narrator problematizes any reductive reading that would suggest Robin is really morally superior to Felix (*N* 41). On the contrary, Barnes's language reveals the possibility that Robin may be simultaneously eugenically *desirable* and morally *degenerate*. This notion introduces the obverse idea as well: that eugenic abjection might link with morality, an idea I will follow up later in this chapter.

The Circus Freak and the Jew

In keeping with this initial glimmer of anti-eugenicism, Felix has a fascination with the circus, and his desire to be a part of that marginalized sub-culture remains at odds with his assimilationist aspirations. Joseph Allen Boone characterizes the circus of *Nightwood* as "a demimonde of the 'inappropriate,'" suggesting the way in which the circus concentrates many marginalized bodies in one space (244). As readers, we cannot miss this fact after being introduced to Nikka—the black, genderqueer, tattooed circus artist about whom Matthew O'Connor tells Felix. Despite his bearfighting act in *Cirque de Paris*, Nikka plainly functions primarily as a circus freak. Since he is staged as "a paradigmatic Decadent text" and a "spectacular commodity fetish," Robin Blyn argues that Nikka embodies a "What is

it?" discourse, inviting us to participate in figuring out where he belongs in the human order (512).

This incitement to engage in taxonomic classification was part and parcel of the freak show of the early 20th century, as Garland Thomson and others have suggested: "Freak shows framed and choreographed bodily differences that we now call 'race,' 'ethnicity,' and 'disability' in a ritual that enacted the social process of making cultural otherness from the raw materials of human physical variation" (Garland Thomson 60). In the language she employs, Garland Thomson implies that freak show audience members really acted as lay social scientists: "freak shows may have been one of the last sites where the ordinary citizen could *exercise the authority to interpret the natural world*" (60, emphasis mine). That is, the freak show was a site where citizens came to determine who should remain part of the collective social fabric, and who should be eugenically excluded.

In addition to characterizing Nikka as a freak, many critics have also highlighted the hyper-textuality of his body. According to Matthew's description, Nikka is literally covered with tattooed words and images, the most famous of these being the word "Desdemona," which we are told is tattooed on his penis. With its allusive meaning, "Desdemona" underscores Nikka's inter-textual resonance with Shakespeare's Othello; with its length, the word suggests that Nikka's penis must be quite large, a suggestion that playfully references the stereotype of the "phallic negro" (Marcus 152). The placement of this tattoo also suggests a kind of relationship to the ritual of circumcision. Drawing on Kristeva, Jane Marcus writes: "in order to be pure and symbolic...the patriarchal body may have only one mark, the circumcision, which cut duplicates in the symbolic order the natural cut of the umbilical cord which separates mother and son" (Marcus 49). If, as Michel Thevoz argues

(Taylor 125), the circumcision is the mark that interpellates the son into Judeo-Christian patriarchy by symbolically declaring the renunciation of maternal incest, then the tattoo on Nikka's penis might signify a son who has *failed* to properly separate from his mother. The tattoo effectively signifies the 'mark' that *isn't* there. Because it underscores that Nikka has not been properly civilized by circumcision,

his tattoo marks him as "the repressed savage" (Marcus 14).

In addition to noting Nikka's relationship to taboo and ritual, we can read Matthew's long, homoerotic *ekphrasis* of Nikka as a kind of parable about the function of narrative—specifically, historical narrative. Before Matthew begins to describe Nikka, he makes the following speech about humans' relationship to history:

> We may all be nature's noblemen...but think of the stories that do not amount to much! That is, that are forgotten in spite of all man remembers (unless he remembers himself) merely because they befell him without distinction of office or title—that's what we call legend and it's the best a poor man may do with his fate; the other...we call history, the best the high and mighty can do with theirs. Legend is unexpurgated, but history, because of its actors, is deflowered...(*N* 18).

This speech prepares us to view the story of Nikka's tattooed body specifically in relation to history—or, in the parlance of the above formulation, legend. As I will show, Nikka's body indeed records a piece of English history that "does not amount to much," but in doing so, it provides a significant counterpoint to canonical historical accounts. The descriptions of scenes painted on his body highlight his role as record:

> On each bosom an arrow-speared heart, each with different initials but with equal drops of blood; and running into the arm-pit, all down one side, the word said by Prince Arthur Tudor, son of King Henry the Seventh, when on his bridal night he called for a goblet of water (or was it water?). His Chamberlain, wondering at the cause of such drought, remarked on it and was answered in one word so wholly epigrammatic and in no way befitting the great and noble British Empire that he was brought up with a start, and that is all we will ever know of it...(20).

While the specific incident described here appears to be apocryphal, young Prince Arthur's marriage—to Catherine of Aragon—was not only real, but carried great consequences for the British Empire. Arthur's death six months after this marriage led Henry VII to betroth the widowed Catherine to his son Henry VIII. The failure of this marriage to produce a male heir famously led Henry VIII to seek an annulment from Catherine of Aragon and marry Anne Boleyn, who also produced no male heirs, but did give birth to the future Queen Elizabeth I. Still, the part of this history that Nikka's body records is, most pointedly, *not* the oft-circulated story of the Tudor dynasty. Instead, his body encodes the private embarrassment of a minor Tudor, and a short-lived marriage between teenagers who failed to reproduce and add to the Tudor lineage. Nikka's body thus bears witness to a history comprised of dynastic "dead-ends," codifying a narrative that appears on his body in imagistic shorthand.

As Jane Marcus notes, "we may assume that [one] word [written on Nikka's side], *merde*, is the Doctor's favorite and the author's too, since the text is as full of references to bird-droppings as is Paris itself" (152). That Nikka's body literally records a "shitty" segment of the narrative of British imperial power is not only humorous; it implicitly lodges a subtle critique of colonial power. Marcus notes that certain designs on Nikka's body specifically reference colonial slavery: "The Rothschild rose from Hamburg may suggest money made in the slave trade. The 'caravel' suggests a slave ship, and the elegant wrists imply the ladies who benefited from slavery" (152). Calling Nikka's performance "an immanent critique of Western colonial discourses," Robin Blyn draws our attention to the circus freak's body as a site that records oppressive historical forces at the same time that it works to redefine the terms that "enfreaked" marginalized bodies (152).

Despite documenting and critiquing colonialist oppression—or perhaps *because* it performs this role—Nikka's body can also easily be marginalized as criminal. Citing the work of Cesare Lombroso, Marcus explains the close association between tattoos and criminality and describes Nikka's tattoos as a "Levitical taboo" (150). Leviticus 19:27-28 indeed forbids tattooing: "Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the LORD." The fact that Nikka's body violates a Levitical law is especially significant given Felix's own vexed relationship to Jewish identity. Nikka is, in some ways, the embodiment of Felix's own abandonment of his Jewishness in pursuit of social acceptance. However, Nikka also illustrates that flouting, or (as Marcus calls it) "laughing at," Leviticus by no means guarantees that one will become socially acceptable.

Nikka's corporeal deviance combines elements of racial and religious taboo, sexual and gender transgression, and socio-historical critique—all of which, in neo-Decadent fashion, get subsumed under the banner of aesthetic expression. Nikka emblematizes Felix's own divergence from normativity by literalizing his disavowal of Jewish identity. However, Nikka reframes what others would call his "barbarity," declaring his embodiment an aesthetic statement: "he said that he loved beauty and would have it about him" (*N* 17). For Nikka, his body is, above all, a work of artistic beauty. Indeed, Marcus takes Nikka's image as emblematic of the aesthetics of *Nightwood*, declaring:

> Modernism, then, if we take *Nightwood* as its most representative text, is a tattoo on the backside of a black homosexual circus performer. The non-Aryan, nonheterosexual body is a book in which the modern failure to understand or assimilate the difference of race, class, and gender is inscribed. Sexuality, liminality, and color are textualities written on the body in thousands of pinpricks, little dots which make a language of bloody ellipses, a dot-dot-dot or code of absences as presence. (156)

The idea that Nikka's body represents a near-intentional failure to assimilate various aspects of identity underscores the idea of the circus as a space where the heterogeneity and unevenness of queer, extraordinary bodies are tolerated.

Frau Mann and the Aesthetics of the Surface

We might find equally queer and extraordinary the body of Frau Mann (literally "Mrs. Man"), the androgynous trapeze artist, who is as "unsexed as a doll" (16). And indeed, it is seeing Frau Mann suited up to perform her act that precipitates Matthew's speech about Nikka: "having...noticed her and her attire for the first time, which, *bringing suddenly to his mind something forgotten but comparable*, sent him into a burst of laughter..." (19, emphasis mine). Like Nikka's body, Frau Mann's is a self-conscious, aestheticized object:

> 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, faded with the reek of her three-a-day control, red tights, laced boots—one somehow felt they ran through her as the design runs through holiday candies. And the bulge in the groin where she took the bar, one foot caught in the flex of the calf, was as solid, specialized, and as polished as oak. (16)

Here, we see that Frau Mann's costume, in effect, *becomes* her body—an easy equation of exterior and interior that I want to take up later in considering the aesthetics and ethics that govern the world of *Nightwood.*

For now, notice that Frau Mann's "groin" functions as the principal instrument of her act; despite the comparison of its swell to the swell of the artful calves she uses to grip the trapeze bar, it is her groin and not her calf that Barnes describes as "solid, *specialized,* and polished" (emphasis mine). The statement that her crotch is "specialized" implies that it is not only part of her act, but a kind of tool in her technical arsenal. The "bulge," however, is ambiguous; both female and male genitals produce outlines under tight clothing, and we are

prevented from understanding which kind of "bulge" Frau Mann's costume reveals. Looking even more closely, we can see that this passage concentrates masculine and feminine imagery together in a self-contradictory way that further obscures Frau Mann's gender. The "bulge in the groin" is "where she took the bar"—a grammatical construction that evokes the receptive role in heterosexual intercourse. However, when we envision the bar becoming part of the groin, her groin instantly turns phallic. The image implies that Frau Mann is both *having* and *being* the phallus. [1] Her prodigious physical prowess—the specialty of trapeze work—is inextricably linked with a kind of irresolvable gender ambiguity.

The space of the circus seems to collect "extraordinary" bodies, not only in terms of who is physically present within its walls, but also in terms of what kinds of bodies get narrated there. For example, upon meeting Felix for the first time at the circus, Matthew immediately likens him to a disabled French woman whom he once knew:

> "There's something missing and whole about the Baron Felix—damned from the waist up, which reminds me of Mademoiselle Basquette, who was damned from the waist down, a girl without legs, built like a medieval abuse. She used to wheel herself through the Pyrenees on a board." (29)

In calling Felix "damned from the waist up," Matthew here draws explicit attention to Felix's bodily configuration and impairment—particularly his lack of sight in one eye—while at the same time, (contradictorily perhaps) acknowledging his wholeness. The fact that he is being compared with Mademoiselle Basquette, who we learn was sexually assaulted by a sailor, also suggests a feminization of Felix:

> "So he snatched her up, board and all, and took her away and had his will; when he got good and tired of her, just for gallantry, he put her down on her board about five miles out of tow, so she had to roll herself back up again, weeping something fearful to see, because one is accustomed to see tears falling down to the feet." (30)

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[1] In Lacanian terms, men "have" the phallus, but women "are" the phallus. For a discussion of this concept, see *Écrits: The Complete First Edition in English.* New York: Norton, 1995.

The description of the sexual assault of Mademoiselle Basquette—and its aftermath—not only work to convey her trauma and victimization, but also the social illegibility of her pain, since, due to the embodied specificity of her disability, her manner of expressing it does not conform to the typical corporeal form of weeping. The statement, "Ah, truly, a pin board may come up to the chin of a woman and still she will find reason to weep, " suggests that we might not *expect* someone who transports herself on a pin board to have the same "reason" to weep as those who walk on two legs (30). Matthew O'Connor's story about Mademoiselle Basquette works to situate Felix as vulnerable—perhaps even socially illegible—but also, importantly and uncontestedly whole.

Just as Matthew identifies Felix with the extraordinary body of Mademoiselle Basquette, Felix longs to belong with the circus performers. We are told that "Felix had insinuated himself into the pageantry of the circus" because it "linked his emotions to the higher and more unattainable pageantry of kings and queens" (13). Felix is drawn to circus performers who, like him, "seiz[e] on titles for a purpose" (14). But unlike Felix, the circus performers do not take on false titles in order to pass as something they are not:

> They took titles merely to dazzle the boys about town, to make their public life (and it was all they had) mysterious and perplexing, knowing full well that skill was never so amazing as when it seems inappropriate. Felix clung to his title to dazzle his own estrangement. It brought them together. (14)

The assertion that, for the circus performers, public life is "all they have" is revealing. Although Felix puts on a public façade of nobility to mask his private knowledge of his own eugenic disqualification, the circus performers' performance covers up nothing private, for there is nothing private to cover up. Admittedly, an openness where no privacy is possible

does lead to a kind of social vulnerability—but it also performs an implicit critique of the increasing privatization of the public arena.

Laura Winkiel elaborates this critique of privatization by explaining the importance of public culture in Barnes's novel. Winkiel claims that the fully public culture of the circus is significant because it counteracts the atomization of modern urban life:

> Barnes contrasts the mysterious and perplexing public life of the circus performers to the alienating effects of spectacle...a contrast that critiques the transformation of public culture from local, heterogeneous sites of entertainment to the capitalized, homogenized culture industry. (8)

Here, Winkiel is drawing on French Marxist theorist Guy Debord's formulation of the spectacle in order to talk about what kind of space *Nightwood*'s circus is *not*. The Debordian spectacle, far from being merely a type of entertainment, constitutes "a social relation among people..." (Debord). The social relation of the spectacle is one "reduced to technology," whose "human component is mechanized and endlessly reproducible" (Winkiel 16). In Winkiel's view, the circus is a human-centered, heterogeneous community, whereas the spectacle is an impersonal, technological event.

To make this dichotomy explicit, Winkiel contrasts the fictional circus of *Nightwood* with the real-life spectacle of the Hippodrome, citing Barnes's own disapproval of the latter. This famous venue, which opened in New York City in 1905, was operated by Arthur Voetglin (Winkiel 12). In a 1915 article entitled "Interviewing Arthur Voetglin Is Something Like Having a Nightmare," Barnes decries the sanitized format of the spectacle, or "spec," which she believes the Hippodrome epitomizes. According to Barnes, the technology of the spectacle obscures the particularity of the laboring bodies who make the show possible. Moreover, the spec audience is sanitized by the expectation that its role is

merely to view the show, not to participate in it, and certainly not to mingle with one another. Employees at a different New York entertainment house of the same period carried cards notifying the audience that they were to take in the show without making noise: "Please don't talk during the acts, as it annoys those about you, and prevents a perfect hearing of the entertainment" (qtd. in Winkiel 11). The social norms governing the emergent form of the "spec" stressed restraint above social contact; "a perfect hearing" became privileged above relating. Managers even endeavored to plan seating arrangements so that they could "avoid seating persons of questionable repute next to those of high social standing" (qtd. in Winkiel 11). Objectionable qualities included drunkenness, shabby dress, and body odor: "Embodied particularities were to be hidden and discouraged: clothes that displayed working or poor bodies, and ethnic 'garlicky' bodies" (12).

One forum that provided an antidote to the homogeneous, carefully disciplined, and restrained behavior required by the spectacle was, as I suggested when writing about *Ulysses*, the freak show. Unlike spectacle audiences, freak show audiences did not fix performers as static objects. This sort of fixity would require seeing the performers as part of an uncontested spectacle: a passive, gazed-upon exhibit. But as Rachel Adams has suggested, freak shows were not an exhibit standardized for mass consumption; rather, they amounted to an interactive endeavor that required collaboration between performers and the audience to determine meaning. The social practices of distributing literature on freak show performers (Bogdan 31), and encouraging interaction between them and their audiences, underscore that freak shows were a site of discursive meaning-making, in which audiences worked to situate *themselves* in relation to freaks (Adams 9). The collaborative, recursive process of "reading" freaks in the context of wider society suggests the kind of space the circus of *Nightwood* offers.

The circus presents not only a space in which heterogeneity and physical particularity are valuable for their discursive richness, but also a site that is self-consciously involved in constituting community.

The Circus: an Ethic of Openness

The openness of the circus is not only an aesthetic property of the kind of *consumer* experience it wants to be; publicness is part of the circus's fundamental ethical disposition: "In contrast to the mass culture spectacle, which presented an unchallenging, pleasant, uniform show, the circus broadened the social horizon to include the most outrageous specimens of humanity" (Winkiel 10). The ethical hallmarks of the circus are therefore inclusion and openness. As a kind of vaudeville—*voix de ville,* voice of the town—the circus fundamentally opposes privacy and, perhaps its most problematic corollary, exclusivity. Feminist and queer social theorists have commented extensively on the problem of privacy. With privatization, of course, comes the problem of differential *access* to it—as Michael Warner, Lauren Berlant, and others have discussed.[2] But the concept of privacy also carries with it an incitement to be discreet, framed as a kind of moral imperative. George Chauncey describes how this moral imperative led to an expansion of the "vice squad," and campaigns against gay culture, in New York during the 1920s and 30s:

> The efforts of the police to control gay men's use of public space, then, were part of a much broader effort by the state to (quite literally) police the boundaries between public and private space, and, in particular, to impose a bourgeois definition of such distinctions on working-class communities. Gay men's strategies for using urban space came under attack...because they were part of a more general challenge to

[2] I argue that the quintessentially public and open space of the circus resists the kinds of troubling trends toward normalization and privatization that Warner and Berlant note during the 1980s and 90s (and, interestingly, which Winkiel notes as a trend of the 1930s as well). See Berlant's *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City* and Warner's *The Trouble With Normal.*

> dominant cultural conceptions of those boundaries [between public and private] and of the social practices appropriate to each sphere. (204)

According to Chauncey, the question of discretion is not merely one of taste or decorum, but in fact a question of class and sexual politics: refusal to adhere to strict boundaries between public and private asserts an anti-bourgeois, queer ethic.

Against the bourgeois incitement to be discreet, Walter Benjamin poses a concise logic of open living that I argue encapsulates the public ethic of *Nightwood*'s circus:

> To live in a glass house is a revolutionary virtue par excellence. It is also an intoxication, a moral exhibitionism, that we badly need. Discretion concerning one's own existence, once an aristocratic virtue, has become more and more an affair of petty-bourgeois parvenus. (Rainey 1089)

We can read Benjamin's phrase, "moral exhibitionism," in at least two ways: as the display *of* morals, or—the one I think is more radically at play here—*as a tendency toward self-exhibition that itself has ethical value.* As we have seen, the space of the circus effectively prohibits discretion, allowing no show of "petty bourgeois" privacy, but instead takes the putative public appearance of a subject to be synonymous with his inner life. This ethical value also reinforces an aesthetic principle on which *Nightwood* heavily relies:

> Barnes's novel is the antithesis of the modernist interior monologue that attempts to render some subterranean, unchanging bottom nature or core personality. O'Connor's monologues shatter stable identities, merging scatological and theological rhetoric, vernacular and dynastic culture, ornate metaphors and performative denunciations. (Davidson 13)

Here, Michael Davidson argues that *Nightwood*'s governing aesthetic is one that eschews conceptions of core identities, or interiorities, in favor of more surface elements. Indeed, revisiting the description of Frau Mann's costume will suggest much about how surfaces function in the novel: "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" (16, emphasis mine). Frau Mann's covering *becomes* her, suggesting that there is no deep, interior space in which the "true" subject dwells; her depth is equated with her surface. As Kathryn Bond Stockton notes, "Frau Mann becomes the vehicle to her tenor, metaphor turning strangely material..."(107). Even more suggestively, this equation of surface and depth seems to elide her gender, thereby allowing her to avoid assuming a normative feminine role: "The needle that had made one the property of the child made the other the property of no man" (16).

In writing about *Nightwood's* "moral exhibitionism," Diane Chisolm compares the novel to Andre Breton's *Nadja,* claiming that Breton's description of *Nadja* as "a book with a banging door" could be applied to *Nightwood* as well (180). But although Chisolm goes on to describe the reader's relationship to *Nightwood* as voyeuristic, I would argue that the "banging door" works to undo voyeurism almost entirely. If, As Chisolm contends, the voyeur is one who "enter[s] various *chambres à coucher*, tuning into...intimate negotiations," then *Nightwood* effectively rules out the position of the voyeur by placing the bed in the middle of the living room, where its occupants must certainly hear the banging door and be alerted to the fact that they are being watched.

Indeed, the ethical power of the surface, and of openness, lies in the fact that it makes 'meaning' accessible at all times, to anyone; there is nothing beyond the surface. Dana Seitler describes this principle as it applies to the circus of *Nightwood*: "...circus members also seem aware that their performance is, in a sense, real, that there is no other reality" (551). Although Seitler contends that this equation of "performance" and "reality" is "echoed in the portraits of Felix's grandparents, which are really 'reproductions of two intrepid and

ancient actors,'" I would argue that Felix's acquisition of these false portraits indicates a quite different mentality. The fact that he seeks an "alibi" for his Jewishness suggests that he subscribes to what Davidson might call a "modernist interiority"; at the start of *Nightwood*, Felix believes in the existence of hidden depths and essential cores of identity. His own essential identity, in which he puts so much stock, is his "impermissible blood": his Jewishness. He believes this core identity must be covered up by elaborately scripted performances, acted out in social relationships.

That Felix is so inexorably drawn to the circus makes sense if we consider the scene of the circus as a kind of wish fulfillment for him. In this space of discursively-produced identity, a site where what is performed—right in the open, and on the surface—is all there is, Felix has no need to invent a past, or to acquire artifacts that will help him build an "alibi for his blood." In the space of the circus, he can simply be what he appears to be, and appear to be what he is: damned from the waist up, but whole.

Nightwood's commitment to the power of surface meaning is further evident in Nora Flood's first statement of the novel, uttered when she overhears Felix and Matthew's conversation: "Are you both really saying what you mean, or are you just talking?" (21). In effect, I want to suggest that *Nightwood* believes so intensely in the power and significance of the putative, that it asserts that "just talking" produces all the content necessary for human meaning and connection. There is no underlying meaning that is *not* spoken; there exists no deep, psychic, interior space in which the "true self" dwells.

Felix and Guido: Queering the Family

As a space, the circus therefore values above all openness and physical particularity. In keeping with those values, it also accumulates openly deviant bodies as laborers. In addition to boasting physically particular performers like Nikka and Frau Mann, the circus community of *Nightwood* also showcases the critical presence of Matthew O'Connor, arguably the novel's most outspoken anti-eugenicist. An undeniably queer character whom we might anachronistically call "transgendered," Matthew is the first person to predict how Felix's pursuit of noble blood will end: "The last muscle of aristocracy is madness—remember that...the last child born to aristocracy is sometimes an idiot, out of respect—we go up—but we come down" (44). Indeed, Guido—Felix's offspring with Robin, the presumed heir of aristocratic values—is cognitively disabled. As a baby, he "slept too much in a quivering palsy of nerves," "made few voluntary movements," and "whimpered" (52). Later in the book, we learn that Guido is "mentally deficient and emotionally excessive" (114). He is visually impaired (like his father) and cannot run (115). But despite Guido's obvious disabilities, and Robin's early abandonment of him, Felix raises his son himself—a practice that was uncommon for bourgeois single fathers to engage in during the early part of the 20th century. This practice of caretaking, and Felix's experience of family life, becomes central to his transformation during the novel.

In analyzing Matthew O'Connor, as well as the lovers who are central to *Nightwood*—Nora Flood and Robin Vote—Michael Davidson considers the ways in which Barnes uses the desires and gender relations of these characters to "queer" the family:

> Barnes strikes at the heart of how...categories are normalized within the family by queering the family unit, presenting us with a trans-gender obstetrician who wants to become pregnant, a lesbian mother who is more a child than her own child, and a

> heterosexual Jewish male who wants his mentally retarded son to be the next Czar. If these scenarios sound like variations on Freud's case studies of sexual delusion, they also constitute the family values ethos of Barnes's Rabelaisian fiction and pose a different (and more sympathetic) assessment of those "hooded hoards" and neurasthenic women that populate modernist texts. (24)

I argue that this account of how Barnes queers the family is decidedly incomplete. Davidson focuses much attention on Matthew O'Connor's genderqueer maternal desire, but does not address the way in which Felix's parental orientation toward Guido is itself queer. Felix makes what is not only an unconventional life choice in raising his son himself; he largely stands in as a mother figure, primarily responsible for making decisions on his son's behalf and taking physical care of him.

This arrangement of male mothering recalls legal theorist Laura Kessler's formulation of "transgressive caregiving":

> Although family caregiving may simply seem to support patriarchy, closer examination reveals that it can also be a deeply and complexly subversive practice. Specifically, when practiced by individuals whom the state has historically denied the privilege of family privacy, caregiving work may constitute a positive political practice of resistance to oppression. (349)

Kessler counts men among those whom the law has historically discounted as figures who can legitimately be relied upon to provide care to children and other family members. We already know that Felix himself was not raised conventionally, since after his birth, his mother Hedvig "named him Felix, thrust him from her, and died" (3). He and Guido therefore both share the circumstance of having been abandoned at birth by their mothers, albeit for very different reasons. However, although Felix is raised by an aunt—an arrangement that would have been considered typical for the time period—he chooses to buck this caretaking model and keep paternal custody of Guido. *Nightwood* makes very little

of this decision, and in fact never refers to it as a decision at all. It is quite easy for a reader to come away from this novel never remarking on Felix's rather unconventional role; and in fact, most critics have wholly overlooked it.

But while Felix assumes a non-normative parental role, Matthew O'Connor actually embodies a form of archetypal maternity, declaring that: "no matter what I may be doing, in my heart is the wish for children and knitting. God, I never asked better than to boil some good man's potatoes and toss up a child for him every nine months by the calendar" (98). Despite being nominally "queer," Matthew desires things that are highly normative for women to want—things that are, in fact, socially naturalized as biologically feminine: reproduction and domesticity. In this way, he embodies what feminist legal theorists have called "repronormativity," or the idea that biological reproduction is an integral, perhaps foundational, part of womanhood, and a central component in theorizing the legal rights of women as a group (Franke 30). So even as the mismatch between Matthew's biological sex (male) and his gender identity (feminine) appear to transgress normative gender roles, his repronormative identification with the maternal shores up normative femininity. He makes this normativity even clearer in a passage that conflates feminine identity, sexual desire for "masculine" men, and the desire to become pregnant:

> In the old days I was possibly a girl in Marseilles thumping the dock with a sailor, and perhaps it's that memory that haunts me. The wise men say that the remembrance of things past is all that we have for a future, and am I to blame if I've turned up this time as I shouldn't have been, when it was a high soprano I wanted, and deep corn curls to my bum, with a womb as big as the king's kettle, and a bosom as high as the bowsprit of a fishing schooner? (*N* 97)

By tying the physical attributes of femininity ("high soprano," "deep corn curls," and "bosom") to reproductive capacity ("womb as big as the king's kettle"), Matthew makes

clear that the act of sexual reproduction is intrinsic to his conception of femininity. He also presents the convergence of physical attributes, reproductive capacity, and sexual desire as natural and effortless.

Felix, on the other hand, assumes a typically maternal *role* by being Guido's primary caretaker, but never encourages us to think of him as somehow "naturally" or biologically feminine; nor does Barnes paint him as an effortless parent. For example, Felix wrestles mightily with the question of what Guido's place might be within aristocratic society. After months of "sen[ding] letters to declining houses"—and not being received even into these second and third-tier families for visits—Felix concludes that, despite his own wish for Guido to fit into mainstream society, "[Guido] would obviously never be able to cope with it" (114-5). Felix clearly struggles to fully accept that Guido's place in society does not square with his own wishes for his son. But he eventually admits to himself that Guido was "born to holy decay" and realizes that he is perhaps best suited for the monastic life of the priesthood (114). To honor his realization of Guido's place in society, "[t]he Baron bought his boy a Virgin in metal, *hanging from a red ribbon*, and placed it about his neck, and in doing so, the slight neck, bent to take the ribbon, recalled to him Robin's, as she stood back to him in the antique shop on the Seine" (115, emphasis mine).

Felix's "ceremony" here importantly recalls ritualized customs designed to protect individuals against "the evil eye," or *malocchio.* Concepts of the evil eye—a force that brings harm, and against which one must protect oneself through the use of some kind of talisman—are cross-cultural. In Kabbalah Judaism, children are considered particularly susceptible to the influence of the evil eye, and parents protect their offspring from harm by placing *red ribbons* (or strings) on their bodies or nearby—for example, hanging them from a

child's crib or bedpost. Felix's ritual with Guido therefore draws heavily on Jewish tradition, even while it ostensibly places Guido within the protection of the Catholic figure of Mary. This multi-layered ritual highlights Felix's ongoing struggle as a Jew who has attempted to abandon, but not succeeded at abandoning, his roots. This struggle again reveals a de-naturalization of Felix's identity as a parent to his son.

The comparison of Guido's neck to Robin's is also significant, because it links Felix's acceptance of Guido to the moment in the novel when he begins to understand that Robin is not the eugenic ideal he thought she was. The scene to which Felix refers, in which he sees Robin's "bent neck," occurs on their honeymoon, when he takes her on a tour of Europe to "show her all the historic buildings" (*N* 47). But their honeymoon trip does not end well; in fact, this trip marks the moment when Felix first begins to understand that Robin will not ultimately give him the connection he desires to a eugenically clean past (47). In the antique shop, he watches her, "dressed in a heavy brocaded gown which time had stained in places, in others split, yet which was so voluminous that there were yards enough to refashion" (46). Even while dressed in a gown that seems to bear the record of the past, that past is not pure—it is stained and split. Not only that, Felix notices that enough of the dress remains that it can still, at any point, be "refashioned." Dressed in this fluid garb, which is self-evidently malleable and subject to change at the wearer's whim, Robin "seem[s] to be listening to the echo of some foray in the blood that had no known setting..." (48). The fact that Robin is compelled by a "foray" in the blood, of which Felix cannot determine the "setting," reveals that Robin is not, in fact, eugenically disciplined, but rather impure.

Felix's conviction that Robin is ill suited to bear a eugenically pure heir is solidified on the eve of Guido's birth. Felix returns home to find a very pregnant Robin asleep in a

chair, clutching a book. The book is De Sade's memoir, and the line she has underlined reads, in translation: "And he visited during his captivity the thousand favors that only a great love is capable of giving." At this moment, Diane Chisolm argues, "[w]hile [Robin] may be drugged in a Sadean dream, the Baron suffers the termination of his eugenic illusions" (181); indeed, "suddenly into his mind came the question, what is wrong?" (*N* 47). Chisolm contends that:

> De Sade darkens the Baron's genealogical phantasy of aristocratic restoration...the moral exhibitionism of this image alerts us not merely to the repressed sexual restlessness of the new-woman-cum-nouvelle-noblesse but more particularly to the survival of the *ancien régime*, whose sense of propriety lives on...in the virulent *ressentiment* of the bourgeoise. (182)

At this moment, Felix begins to accept that his eugenic fantasy is unrealizable. With his eugenic fantasy goes also his fantasy of aristocratic belonging. First, Robin forfeits her assumed title: "After Robin gives birth to the Baron's feeble-minded son, she is delivered of her role as Baroness" (Chisolm 182). But if Robin is relieved to abandon her domestic commitments in favor of a peripatetic life of drinking and sex, Felix finds the disruption of his fantasy truly jarring.

We learn that "in accepting his son the Baron saw that he must accept the demolition of his own life" (*N* 115). Barnes's use of the word "Baron" here is telling, since it is, in fact, the "Baron" part of Felix's life that Guido's existence demolishes, since Guido manifests proof of Felix's own marginal status—as both a "eugenic abject" and as male primary caretaker. In signifying Felix's own eugenic abjectness, Guido works to "demolish" his father's public façade. But despite the disruptive nature of Guido's existence, the "demolition" turns out to be a libratory event; Felix is "startled out of himself" into a place of radical caretaking for another (115).

Anyone who has been a parent can probably relate to this idea that, as Johnson and Johnson commercials so saccharinely put it, "Having a baby changes everything." But there is more behind Felix's transformation here than merely becoming a parent. Namely, in becoming the caretaker of a disabled child, Felix can no longer maintain his former pretensions. Felix wished to have a son who could "right" his bloodline and justify his place in aristocratic society. In effect, Guido's birth does exactly the opposite, exposing Felix for the eugenic abject he was all along. If we re-visit Matthew O'Connor's prediction about Guido, we might notice something curious in his formulation: "the last child born to aristocracy is sometimes an idiot, *out of respect*—we go up—but we come down" (44, emphasis mine). The phrase "out of respect" suggests that Guido's disability, and Felix's journey "downward," away from nobility, are positive events that honor the human past—which is, above all, what Felix seems to idealize.

Indeed, Felix seems to frame Guido's existence as a pivotal circumstance in his own life, telling Matthew:

> The unendurable is the beginning of the curve of joy. I have become entangled in the shadow of a vast apprehension which is my son; he is the central point toward which life and death are spinning, the meeting of which my final design will be composed (125).

Felix's speech here reveals that Guido is the focal point of his life; that, in effect, Guido's existence provides him with meaning, or, as he puts it, "design." He also stresses Guido's particular human value: "For instance Guido; how many will realize his value?" (125). In lamenting how Guido is likely to be denigrated by the outside world, Felix articulates decidedly anti-eugenic philosophy about bodies. Here, we witness a calculus of human value

that does not depend on normative bodies, as eugenics does, but on something else entirely. But what is that something else?

Pravitas and the Ethics of Alterity

I argue that the most concise statement of the paradoxical ethics of *Nightwood* occurs in a speech by Matthew O'Connor:

> In the acceptance of depravity the sense of the past is most fully captured... Corruption is the Age of Time. It is the body and the blood of ecstasy, religion and love...we do not "climb" to heights, we are eaten away to them, and then conformity, neatness, ceases to entertain us. Man is born as he dies, rebuking cleanliness..." (125-6)

Here, Matthew states that "the acceptance of depravity" is what ultimately pays tribute to the past. Although depravity generally has a very negative connotation and can even mean "evil," etymologically, it is derived from the Latin word *pravitas*, "crooked." This crookedness can refer, interestingly enough, to bodily "deformity," as well as sexual "perversion." Matthew's reclamation of crookedness certainly makes sense when we consider his own vexed relationship to the "straight" world. Moreover, the value he places on *literal* depravity, *pravitas*, works to extricate bodily deviance from the meanings of depravity that suggest moral degradation. Matthew's formulation also places value on "corruption" and impurity—particularly poignant when we consider that the eugenic body was prized precisely *for* its purity. Rather than attempting to achieve a eugenically "clean" identity, Matthew implies, Felix would do well to "rebuke cleanliness" altogether. Matthew's statement suggests that crookedness and impurity—and the acceptance of those traits—are inherently *valuable*, a radically anti-eugenic claim.

In accepting his son, nurturing him, and caring for him, I argue that Felix participates in a radical act of self-acceptance as well. For the first time, we see him turn almost fully away from his previous eugenic obsessions, and toward a stance of valuing and *caring for* the eugenic abject body. We see this caretaking most concretely in the scene in which Felix, while in a tavern in the presence of noblemen, turns away from them and toward Guido: "'Come,' he said, taking the child's fingers in his own. 'You are cold.' He poured a few drops of oil and began rubbing Guido's hands" (131).

In saying that, for Felix, accepting Guido means accepting himself, I do not mean to imply that Felix and Guido somehow merge into one subjectivity, or that their corporeal boundaries dissolve; indeed, Guido's fingers are still his, and Felix's are "his own." Like AnnKatrin Jonsson, I think that, insofar as *Nightwood* can be said to have an ethical stance, it is one that insists on this kind of alterity, on radical otherness, on "a desire to escape from the plenitude of the subject that creates, contains, and controls the world and the other" (190). In other words, one must accept the other as truly and inevitably *other* in order to give up the notion of oneself as a totalizing subject. I believe this "escape from the subject" is what Felix describes when he says that Guido's birth meant that he was "startled out of himself" (115).

T.S. Eliot's famous introduction to Barnes's novel effaces alterity by admonishing us not to read the novel as a "sideshow of freaks" (xxii). Instead, he implies, we should read this book as a story about ourselves. Eliot insists that Barnes's novel ultimately lays claim to a kind of universality, revealing that, regardless of our physical and mental conditions, we are all "eaten by the same worm" (xxi). But I am arguing that the ethics of *Nightwood* lie precisely in the opposite direction. Instead of valuing underlying human sameness, Barnes

encourages the recognition of otherness, places value on physical and cognitive difference, and on the caretaking stance that subjects who recognize each other's otherness can achieve. In effect, we are all eaten by radically different worms, but there still exists the possibility of an ethical stance in caring for the radical other.

Nora and Robin: Melancholic Incorporation

Perhaps the best evidence for *Nightwood*'s moral imperative of taking alterity seriously is the object lesson the novel provides regarding attempts to merge two subjectivities into one. Principally, Barnes frames the misery of Robin Vote's relationship with Nora Flood in terms of Nora's failed attempt to be one and the same person with her lover. Through her extensive psychoanalytic-style dialogue with Matthew, we come to see Nora as the desperately possessive lover who cannot stop reading Robin as somehow actually *herself.* The culmination of Nora's desperation over Robin's rejection occurs in the "Go Down, Matthew" chapter, in which she laments: "She is myself. What am I to do?" (136). The question Nora poses to Matthew—"have you ever loved someone and it became yourself?"—suggests that in the process of loving Robin, she has incorporated her into her own identity, in an act of melancholic incorporation.

Judith Butler adapts Freud's theory of melancholia to apply it to the formation of gender identity, suggesting that gender identity is a "melancholic structure" (87). In so doing, Butler also suggests the way that the incorporation of a lost love object into the self can occur: "As an antimetaphorical activity, incorporation *literalizes* the loss *on* or *in* the body and so appears as the facticity of the body...The loss of the pleasurable object is resolved through the incorporation of that very pleasure with the result that pleasure is both

determined and prohibited..." (87). We can certainly see the literalization, indeed corporealization, of Nora's loss of Robin in the way that the narrator describes their relationship:

> In the years that they lived together, the departures of Robin became a slowly increasing rhythm....Robin's absence, as the night drew on, became a physical removal, insupportable and irreparable. As an amputated hand cannot be disowned because it is experiencing a futurity, of which the victim is its forebear, so Robin was an amputation that Nora could not renounce. (65)

By likening Robin to an amputated hand that cannot be renounced, the narrator draws our attention to Nora's utter feeling of co-dependency with Robin, but also underscores that this feeling of being literally bound together is illusory: the amputated hand really *is not* part of the amputee, just as Robin really is not part of Nora.

But Nora insists on this melancholic incorporation, theorizing Robin as part and parcel of her *self.* In fact, Nora frames the "sameness" of herself and Robin as a more general feature of love between women: "A man is another person—a woman is yourself, caught as you turn in panic; on her mouth you kiss your own. If she is taken you cry that you have been robbed of yourself" (152). This inability to see the otherness of her lover recalls Tim Dean's observation that homoerotic relations are easily misunderstood as a totalizing collapse of otherness. In the absence of gender dimorphism, he implies, there is a too-easy tendency for us to read the other as identical with the self: "Much critical discourse on sexual ethics misconstrues the encounter with otherness in terms of sexual difference, as if one could establish authentic contact with otherness only by engaging the opposite sex" (181). But Dean crucially goes on to suggest that the dismissal of alterity is an all too frequent consequence of *all* kinds of sexual relations:

> Whether straight or gay, vanilla or queer, *sex may function as a means of avoiding the encounter with otherness altogether or, alternately, of domesticating its threat to the ego's integrity.* But, as we often rightly intuit, erotic intimacy can serve as a means for encountering something wonderfully strange to the self—something that neither the self nor the other properly possesses but that emerges in the contact between them....That is to say, erotic encounters represent not just an instance of but also, perhaps more significantly, a metaphor for contact with otherness. (181, emphasis mine)

In interpreting Robin as part of her self, or even as *synonymous with* her self, Nora clearly elide or "domesticates" Robin's alterity; the perfect merging with Robin that Nora seeks ironically upholds the primacy of Nora's own self. Drawing on Therese de Lauretis, Susana Martins explains: "Nora's assumption of her own narcissism leads to the now-familiar 'notions of women's maternal nostalgia, pre-Oedipal capture, and over-identification with the image' that de Lauretis notes are "themselves imaginary" (121). Psychoanalytically speaking, Robin represents for Nora some pre-verbal, pre-symbolic *chora*, the state of being perfectly merged with the mother:

> For...drives, whether life drives or death drives, serve to correlate that "not yet" ego with an "object" in order to establish both of them. Such a process, while dichotomous (inside/outside, ego/not ego) and repetitive, has nevertheless something *centripetal* about it: it aims to settle the ego as center of a solar system of objects. If, by dint of coming back towards the center, the drive's motion should eventually become *centrifugal,* hence fasten on the Other and come into being as a sign so as to produce meaning—that is, literally speaking, exorbitant. (Kristeva 14, italics mine)

In her mind, Nora's bond with Robin is "centripetal"—it is directed ever more inward, to a perfect identification of self and other. But this identification with Robin does not suggest she *is* Robin's mother. In fact, what is most striking about this kind of "perfect" merging is that it completely precludes fixed roles as mother and child. The mother cannot be mother, and the child cannot be child, until the chora is shattered through the emergence of the sign. Nora remains determined that this shattering should never occur.

Nora's attachment to Robin thus expresses itself as fundamentally *unsortable* confounding of child, mother, and the act of maternity itself. This conflation leads Nora to formulate their relationship in various, contradictory ways. At one point, Matthew O'Connor tells Nora: "You who should have had a thousand children and Robin, who should have been all of them..." (107). But in another declaration, the narrator provocatively suggests that Robin is both Nora's predecessor and her antecedent: "In Nora's heart lay the fossil of Robin, intaglio of her identity, and about it for its maintenance ran Nora's blood. Thus the body of Robin could never be unloved, corrupt or put away. Robin was now beyond timely changes, except in the blood that animated her" (61-2). Robin was *prior* to Nora—she is already fossilized, dead, an ancestor. But the image of Robin existing inside of Nora and being nourished on her blood suggests that Robin is also *fetal.* Here we see a recursive process of metaphorization by which Robin and Nora are repeatedly subsumed within one another.

Kathryn Bond Stockton argues that however we figure the particularities of the mother-child roles of the novel, this kind of relationship "dooms these lovers...to separate temporalities, dooms them to a time that it seems cannot arrive: when mother and child will inhabit the same generation or be accorded permission to wed" (105). Conceiving the figure of the dog (which, we will see, functions crucially at the end of the novel) as one that disrupts this generational separation, Stockton writes, "[the dog] interrupts the Oedipal metaphor that keeps Robin and Nora stranded in their temporalities of mother and child" (105). But it is not only the temporal separation of what Stockton calls "vertical relations" (generational relationships that proceed forward in time) that dooms the couple. More

specifically, Nora's attempt to codify their romance in the symbolic form of a child acts as a perpetual disruption to the non-normative, queer ethics of *Nightwood.*

Tellingly, one site of resistance to Nora's dream of melancholic incorporation is Matthew O'Connor's counsel. In the chapter, "Watchman, What of the Night?," Nora visits Matthew, seeking comfort from him about Robin's recent abandonment of her. Matthew frames his advice to Nora in terms of a long discourse on the nature of nighttime. Nighttime is, of course, a symbol of Robin herself—the "somnambule"—who roves the city during the night. Nora claims not to have truly understood night, a claim that implies her lack of understanding for her partner: "I've never known it before—I thought I did, but it was not knowing at all...I never thought of the night as a life at all—I've never lived it—why did she?" (88-9). In these passages, Nora expresses confusion and frustration about Robin's need to separate from her during her nightly excursions; she mourns Robin's separation: in effect, her refusal to be incorporated. Matthew advises Nora to think of night and day (that is, Robin and herself) as very much separate entities: "The night and the day are two travels, and the French—gut-greedy and fist-tight though they often are—alone leave testimony of the two in the dawn; we tear up the one for the sake of the other; not so the French" (89).

Although Matthew cautions that night and day are "two travels," he also offers some way of reconciling them: one need not be torn up for the sake of the other. The French, he claims, are able to achieve this reconciliation: "And why is that; because they think of the two as one continually and keep it before their mind as the monks who repeat. 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me!'" (89). Here, Matthew suggests that night and day may be thought of "as one," a formulation that apparently contradicts the notion that Robin and Nora remain separate beings. However, the plaintive appeal to Christ, in the form of

"Son of God," suggests the holy trinity, an image that invokes entities that are separate but may also be thought of "as one." Finally, Nora exasperatedly exclaims that what Matthew is saying means "I'll never understand her—I'll always be miserable—just like this" (92).

Matthew seems to concede that, indeed, Robin's separation from Nora might be incomprehensible: "For the lover, it is the night into which his beloved goes...that destroys his heart; he wakes her suddenly, only to look the hyena in the fact that is her smile, as she leaves that company" (94). Here, the lover awakens his beloved presumably to comfort himself at their separation; however, the beloved's response—her hyena smile—is of little comfort. Ultimately, this image insists on sleep as a state that separates the sleeper from the rest of the world, and that separation reinforces the boundary between Robin and Nora, suggesting that there are elements of Robin's experience that Nora simply cannot access. This boundary to understanding another, in turn, underscores the "surfaces" ethic of *Nightwood:* instead of plumbing Robin's mind for some hidden depth (some "unknown garrison"), Matthew suggests, Nora would be well-advised to stop searching for that type of understanding (94). Instead, "the darkness is the close in which your lover roosts her heart" (95), and Robin will remain beyond Nora's grasp.

Matthew's message here seems to be that lovers are not meant to merge fully with one another; they are not even intended to *understand* one another. This skepticism about a subject's ability to decode or interpret another's meaning is embodied in many ways by *Nightwood* itself, and particularly by Matthew's speeches. Riddles that seem to beg us to solve them, Matthew's utterances nonetheless remain in some sense unsortable, irresolvable phrases with many semantic possibilities but no definitive meaning. The form of his counsel

to Nora therefore underscores what appears to be its content: one person's perfect merging with, or even understanding of, another is impossible.

Queer Ethics and Resisting Domestication

Although, as we have seen, Nora seeks a perfect merging with Robin, Robin resists this engulfment. She has no desire to be subsumed in the body *or* mind of her lover, and Nora recognizes this resistance: "A shadow was falling on her—mine—and it was driving her out of her wits" (165). Robin's nocturnal perambulations, and the resulting affair she has with Jenny Petherbridge, reinforce her bid for independence.

Indeed, Robin appears, from the very beginning of the novel, resistant to the fetters of domestic life. Guido's birth unmoors her: "she kept crying like a child who has walked into the commencement of a horror" (52). Afterward, she feels "as if she had done something irreparable" (52). There is even some suggestion that she could be a danger to her baby:

'One night, Felix, having come in unheard, found her standing in the centre of the floor holding the child high in her hand as if she were about to dash it down, but she brought it down gently" (52). Finally, Robin initiates her escape: she "took to wandering again....Robin was almost never home; [Felix] did not know how to inquire after her" (53). She finally declares, of her son, "I didn't want him!" and announces "I'll get out," after which she leaves the home, and Felix never sees her again (53).

For Robin, marriage and motherhood make for a horrible, engulfing circumstance from which she feels she must escape. Yet, notably, escaping the heteronormative marriage, and entering into a lesbian relationship, does not ameliorate Robin's feeling of entrapment.

The inception of the two women's relationship is described in entirely conventional, domestic terms:

> In the passage of their lives together every object in the garden, every item in the house, every word they spoke, attested to their mutual love, the combining of their humours. There were circus chairs, wooden horses bought from a ring of an old merry-go-round, venetian chandeliers from the Flea Fair, stage-drops from Munich, cherubim from Vienna, ecclesiastical hangings from Rome, a spinet from England, and a miscellaneous collection of music boxes from many countries; such was the museum of their encounter, as Felix's hearsay house had been testimony of the age when his father had lived with his mother. (61)

The comparison of Nora and Robin's home with Felix's "hearsay house" underscores the parallel between Robin's experience of each relationship. Although the two women cannot bear their own child, an emblem of motherhood stands guard outside their home: "Looking from the long windows one saw a fountain figure, a tall granite woman bending forward with lifted head; one hand was held over the pelvic round as if to warn a child who goes incautiously" (61).

Further, Nora uses the doll that Robin gives her to symbolize the child that the two cannot have. She sees the figure of the doll as the foremost symbol of her and Robin's love, telling Matthew: "We give death to a child when we give it a doll—it's the effigy and the shroud; when a woman gives it to a woman, it is the life they cannot have, it is their child, sacred and profane..." (151). Nora holds the doll as the ultimate symbol of an impossible union, the stand-in for the child that two women can never produce out of their erotic encounters. Given what we have seen of Nora's tendency to frame herself and Robin as one entity, it should come as no surprise that Nora wishes to fuse them together into one body—that of the "child." Indeed, Tim Dean argues that "[t]he fantasy of bearing someone's child, or indeed, of becoming someone's child is not gender specific or a function

of sexual orientation" (87). For Nora, the desire to produce a child with Robin is so powerful that she uses the figure of the doll to emblematize it.

Interestingly, Nora's desire here parallels Felix's almost exactly. Both seem to frame their relationship with Robin in terms of its reproductive potential (or lack thereof). But whereas Felix initially sees Robin as a eugenic corrective to his Jewishness, Nora remains anxious over Robin's inability to fit into her reproductive paradigm. The dream sequence in which Nora sees Robin in her grandmother's home reveals Nora's deep-seated desire to incorporate her lover into a reproductive, familial model. Amid "portraits of her great-uncle, Llewellyn, who died in the Civil War" (67), Nora essentially invites Robin into her family heritage:

> From round abut her in anguish Nora heard her own voice saying, "Come up, this is Grandmother's room," yet knowing it was impossible because the room was taboo. The louder she cried out the farther away went the floor below, as if Robin and she, in their extremity, were a pair of opera glasses turned to the wrong end, diminishing in their painful love; a speed that ran away with the two ends of the building, stretching her apart. (68)

Nora stands at the top of the building, inviting Robin to "come up," yet Robin is unable to enter the family sanctuary, unable—or perhaps unwilling—to meet Nora in this space of reproductive possibility. The room is "taboo," off-limits for Robin; yet Nora cannot keep from inviting her in.

Indeed, Robin persistently resists incorporation into any kind of repronormative, domestic life. Perhaps the most obvious rejection of engulfment by domesticity occurs in her destruction of the doll that has come to represent her relationship with Nora: "She picked up the doll and hurled it to the floor and put her foot on it, crushing her heel into it; and then, as I came crying behind her, she kicked it, its china head all in dust, its skirt

shivering and stiff, whirling over and over across the floor" (157). In this gesture, we ought to read not only the rejection of the relationship, but a rejection of the symbolism of reproduction that Nora has attributed to the doll. Robin's act of violence toward the doll also eerily parallels the time when Felix witnessed her holding the infant Guido high in the air, and believed she was going to "dash [him] down." Instead of participating in Nora's repronormative fantasy, Robin insists on "dashing it down."

In this behavior, Robin recalls the ethic that Lee Edelman argues for in his book *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive.* Edelman claims that the specter of "the Child" looms in social relations, so much so that almost anything can be done—or refused—in the name of this mythic figure. Edelman voices the opposite viewpoint, refusing to value that kind of hypothetical futurity in considering questions of ethics. In a statement reminiscent of Robin's destruction of her and Nora's "child," Edelman argues for a queer ethics that rejects the Child entirely:

> Fuck the social order and the Child in whose name we're collectively terrorized; fuck Annie; fuck the waif from *Les Mis*; fuck the poor, innocent kid on the Net; fuck Laws both with capital *l*s and with small; fuck the whole network of Symbolic relations and the future that serves as its prop. (29)

For Edelman, "*queerness* names the side of those *not* 'fighting for the children,' the side outside the consensus by which all politics confirms the absolute value of reproductive futurism" (3). We can then read Robin's refusal of Nora's relationship model as a kind of queer rejection of repronormativity. Dana Seitler figures this rejection as follows:

> Robin refuses to be tied down to a home, let alone a sexuality. If she produces a sense of loss and betrayal in her lovers as she leaves them all behind, it is at the service of disrupting comfortable and naturalized assumptions of couplehood, romantic permanence, or narratives of heterosexual life on which the social order is founded. (25)

Nothing makes Robin's refusal of "the social order" clearer than the end of the novel, in which we see that Nora's merging with Robin *must* fail, and that Robin's presence in the novel invokes, above all, a commitment to an ethics of depravity and alterity.

The End of *Nightwood*: Anti-Domestication

In what is probably the most widely written about scene in *Nightwood*, Robin Vote enters a decaying chapel on Nora's property, finds Nora there, and falls to the ground to writhe and bark alongside Nora's dog. This strange, final scene fulfills Matthew O'Connor's cryptic prophecy that: "Nora will leave that girl some day; but though those two are buried at opposite ends of the earth, one dog will find them both" (N 113). Seitler aptly cites this example of Robin "becoming animal" as an instance of "atavism," claiming that it serves as one of "a series of spaces in which the characters of *Nightwood* gather and meet in nocturnal, degenerate, and wretched festivity" (30). Indeed, the "devolution" of Robin works as an emblem of degeneration that powerfully opposes the eugenic ideology of human progress. More than that, Robin's performance as a dog literalizes her refusal to be, quite literally, domesticated by Nora's fantasies of merging and reproduction.

When Nora's dog leads her to the decaying chapel, she runs in, "plung[ing] into the jamb of the chapel door," to find the following scene:

> On a contrived altar, before a Madonna, two candles were burning. Their light fell across the floor and the dusty benches. 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....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. (N 179)

As Seitler notes, the repetition of "down" in this passage underscores the novel's embrace of degeneration. And if we recall Matthew O'Connor's formulation that "we go up—but we come down" (44), we can see Robin's devolution here as part of the larger logic of the novel. Just as Guido's birth precipitates Felix's movement away from eugenic desire, Robin's frolicking with the dog represents her queer refusal of Nora's repronormative domestication. Since Robin's hybrid, part-dog identity in this scene is "born of a sexual union that will not reproduce itself, but which begins over again every time, gaining that much more ground," it is a subjectivity that remains always outside of reproductive relations (Deleuze and Guittari, 241).

The way in which Robin refuses to be domesticated—and in fact embodies domestication's exact antithesis—underscores the novel's insistence on alterity and atavism. Although Robin has already refused both the physical maternal role (offered by Felix and Guido), and the symbolic maternal role (offered by Nora), in this final scene, Robin moves even farther outside the scene of human repronormativity. As someone who is "becoming-animal," Robin finally announces her absolute alterity in the form of refusing even to be fully human. By becoming a human-dog hybrid, and suggestively romping with a dog, Robin moves to a position that embraces, even celebrates, the "degenerate" body.

Compared with Robin's complete non-compliance with human expectations, Felix's role as a male "mother" to his son may appear markedly more conventional. But what Robin's atavism and Felix's caretaking have in common—other than being thoroughly queer—is that both behaviors celebrate eugenic abjectness, and allow non-normative bodies to thrive. Robin allows this thriving by refusing to domesticate Nora, or be domesticated;

Felix allows this thriving by raising his disabled son and allowing his eugenic pretenses to be demolished. Together, Felix and Robin establish the kinds of ethical positions that can be achieved in a space where "depravity" is recognized and accepted.

The ethics that *Nightwood* reveals therefore emphasize openness over privacy, *pravitas* over purity, queer caretaking over repronormativity, alterity over sameness, and atavism over domestication. All of these ethics work to disrupt the narrative of eugenic progress, which the novel takes as its ostensible starting point. Although Felix begins the novel as an anti-eugenic character, concerned with assimilating and passing as a non-Jewish member of the Austrian elite, the public space of the circus poses an aesthetic and ethical alternative that he eventually embraces. In this queer, disabled space that values *pravitas*, Felix first encounters an acceptance of difference, and he goes on to act as a facilitator of bodily difference by caring for his disabled son. Although his life, in some ways, grows *more* domestic (as his public façade is "demolished" and his identity as caretaker becomes his primary role), both characters share in a rejection of normative values and a celebration of the eugenic abject body.

Whose Trauma Is it Anyway?: Disability, Autonomy, and The Ethics of Narrativization in *Mrs. Dalloway*

In writing about *Mrs. Dalloway*, critics have typically done some combination of three things with Great War veteran Septimus Warren Smith. They have tended to identify him with Virginia Woolf herself, identify him with Clarissa Dalloway, and/or diagnose him with a specific psychiatric condition as a way of explaining his unusual thoughts and behaviors. These conditions range from schizophrenia and "paraphrenia," to manic depression, to shell shock (or its most recent clinical instantiation, post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD). Indeed, it proves difficult to talk about Septimus without labeling him with some kind of diagnosis. But because I am committed to performing literary criticism that does not rely on pat medicalizations of disability, I have chosen the term "delayed trauma" to refer to the mental state that Septimus displays for most of the novel. This term is descriptive enough without being definitively diagnostic (read: medicalized). Even though I will not apply the label "shell-shocked" to Septimus, I will consider diagnostic writings from the 1910s and 1920s on shell shock, and contemporary writing about psychiatry during that period because, had Septimus been an actual person, the diagnosis of deferred shell shock would have likely been applied to him.

In fact, the label *is* implicitly applied to Septimus by Dr. William Bradshaw after Septimus's suicide: "They were talking about this Bill. Some case, Sir William was mentioning, lowering his voice. It had its bearing upon what he was saying about the *deferred effects of shell shock.* There must be some provision in the Bill" (*Mrs. D* 179, emphasis mine). This passage may allow us to reasonably conclude that Septimus would have been regarded

as a shell-shocked soldier. By avoiding that label, however, I hope to prevent subsuming Septimus within a psychoanalytic or medical diagnosis that entirely determines his meaning, significance, and relationships with other characters.

In the vein of my previous arguments about *Nightwood*, I also want to suggest that Septimus needs to be regarded as an autonomous figure: not only someone *not* subsumed in medical diagnoses, but one similarly *not* inextricably incorporated within the mind-bodies of others. One way in which we, as critics and readers, risk merging Septimus's subjectivity into others' is by identifying him with Clarissa or Woolf herself. Another risk to Septimus is the demand that he narrativize his trauma for the 'good' of his community. Indeed, the emphasis on narrativization-as-cure has been a hallmark of *Mrs. Dalloway* criticism. Drawing on affect theory and Heather Love's work on literary ethics, I will begin suggesting some ways that we can engage in literary interpretation of Septimus and his condition that respects his alterity and independence. Throughout this chapter, I will also consider some of the implications of alterity and autonomy for the field of disability studies—a field that has recently emphasized physical contingency and the interdependence of bodies, concepts that exist in tension with notions of autonomy.

Septimus as Woolf, Septimus as Clarissa

There has been an inexorable though somewhat understandable pull toward conflating Septimus with Woolf herself. Critics often comment on the similar features of their psychological profiles, or the use that they feel Woolf's own mental condition must have served in helping her to create an authentically 'mad' character. In "A Freudian Look at Mrs. Dalloway," Beverly Ann Schlack notes "the authenticity of [Woolf's] experiential

knowledge of insanity" (49) while Thomas Caramagno observes that family doctor George Savage diagnosed Woolf with neurasthenia, sometimes considered a form of hysteria, and one of many names given to shell shock (11). This tendency to believe Septimus is at least partially modeled on the author herself does, after all, make some sense; it seems that Woolf drew on her own experience to construct Septimus's mental world. For example, some of the details of Septimus's hallucinations—such as birds singing to him in Greek—appear to have been drawn from particular hallucinations that Woolf experienced during certain periods of acute distress (Knox-Shaw 99).

The critical tendency to view Septimus as a foil for Woolf is mirrored by the tendency to read him as a double of Clarissa Dalloway. Woolf herself encourages this tendency in writing about Septimus's origin in her introduction to the 1928 Random House edition of the novel: "...[I]n the first version, Septimus, who is later intended to be [Mrs. Dalloway's] double, has no existence;...Mrs. Dalloway was originally to kill herself, or perhaps merely to die at the end of the party" (*The Mrs. Dalloway Reader* 11). As Karen Levenback suggests, the significance of this remark lies not so much in what it literally says, but in the foundation it lays in the minds of readers (Levenback 78). Despite Woolf's protests that "it is difficult—perhaps impossible—for an author to say anything about his own work," she states that she nevertheless seeks to bring forth "a few scraps" for us to consider about *Mrs. Dalloway* (Introduction 10-11). In fact, she really only offers this one, very large, scrap: Septimus should be read as the double of Clarissa, who would have otherwise died herself. From the beginning, then, Woolf wants to posit Septimus as a sacrificial character; she evidently wants to have that understanding firmly fixed in our minds before we even begin reading the novel.

Indeed, the way in which Woolf writes about Septimus in her 1928 introduction calls to mind David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder's theory of how disabled bodies function in narratives. They explain their theory of how "narrative prosthesis" operates in a text:

> ...first, a deviance or marked difference is exposed to the reader; second, a narrative consolidates the need for its own existence by calling for an explanation of the deviation's origins and formative consequences; third, the deviance is brought from the periphery of concerns to the center of the story to come; and fourth, the remainder of the story rehabilitates or fixes the deviance in some manner. (53)

Mitchell and Snyder's theory means that the literary representation of disability remains somewhat of a double-edged sword. On the one hand, narrative prosthesis grants physical and cognitive deviance/impairment a great deal of importance because disability is *symbolically* and *mechanically* central to the functioning of plot. On the other hand, in becoming structurally crucial to the functioning of narrative, the disabled body loses material, experiential specificity; the disability becomes symbolified, so that the real social consequences of impairment are erased. Woolf herself lends credence to this view of Septimus's function when, in a character sketch of him, she writes: "not so much a character as an idea" (qtd. in Transue, 100). Rosemarie Garland Thomson's point that disabled figures—real and fictional—function as a means for containing and disciplining social deviance also underscores the notion that generic function trumps material specificity in disabled figures:

> ...[T]he disabled figure operates as the vividly embodied, stigmatized other whose social role is to symbolically free the privileged, idealized figure of the...self from the vagaries and vulnerabilities of embodiment....As the norm becomes neutral in an environment created to accommodate it, disability becomes intense, extravagant, and problematic. Disability is the unorthodox made flesh, refusing to be normalized, neutralized, or homogenized. (7, 24).

In other words, the disabled subject acts as a container for the problems and anxieties of other subjects. And we can see that, according to Woolf's stated intentions, Septimus is meant to do exactly that: she invented him so that he could embody and contain aspects of the narrative that she did not wish to thrust onto her protagonist, perhaps because they were too existentially despairing to place onto the novel's central character. Septimus therefore serves as a sacrificial lamb for Clarissa and a narrative instrument for Woolf. This circumstance makes the fact that he thinks of himself as a "scapegoat, the eternal sufferer" *(Mrs. D* 25)—who must eventually be sentenced to death for the greater good—seem, on one level, not so much delusional as meta-narratorial, as if he is somehow aware of the function that Woolf has assigned him within the story.

We should note that, just as the "double" model for understanding Septimus's identity risks diminishing the material specificity of his character, it also does a kind of violence to Clarissa's character. Put simply, both of them lose something when, instead of regarding them as discrete subjects, we view them instead as essentially one character split into two. There are many dangers in reading Septimus as identical with Woolf or Clarissa Dalloway; one, which I've already hinted at, is that by concentrating on Septimus as a symbol or instrument, we overlook the specificity of his experience of disability. Another risk is that by scapegoating Clarissa's and Woolf's pain onto Septimus, we are complicit in disavowing the suffering of Clarissa and Woolf. Several critics have written about the fact that Clarissa and Woolf, as women, have both lost important female relatives: Clarissa has lost her sister, and Woolf lost her mother. Clarissa is also coming to terms with her own mortality and her own illness. Septimus grieves a different set of tragedies: the loss of his officer, friend, and possible love object Evans, and his thwarted attempts to re-assimilate into civilian life.

Importantly, then, eliding Septimus and Woolf and Clarissa Dalloway into, more or less, one subjectivity diminishes the specificity of various kinds of trauma.

Why can't Septimus be Septimus, Clarissa be Clarissa, and Woolf be Woolf? Of course, to see all of these figures as completely autonomous from each other arguably loses much of the point of literary interpretation, a process that is largely about drawing connections and seeing parallels, patterns, and themes. So is there any ethical way of drawing these figures together? How do we see them as related to one another in interpretively productive ways without seeing them as identical in ways that are destructive of the particulars of each?

In this chapter, I will argue that *Mrs. Dalloway* in fact acts, in part, as a cautionary tale about the blurring of subjectivities, the merging of minds and bodies. The most obvious cautionary tale against merging lies in Clarissa's embattled relationship with Peter Walsh. Although the fact that "[t]hey went in and out of each other's minds without effort" (51) might, on its face, seem to be a positive feature of their relationship, Clarissa concludes that this penetration into her private self is "intolerable" (7). In fact, critics note that one reason Clarissa has chosen Richard over Peter is that Richard is "less demanding" (Lee 693). Her decision to marry Richard preserves more of her privacy and autonomy, which, while seemingly at odds with her interest in socializing, she clearly values: "For in marriage a little license, a little independence there must be between people living together day in and day out in the same house; which Richard gave her, and she him" (7). This independence contrasts with Clarissa's relationship with Peter, in which "everything had to be shared, everything had to be gone into" (7).

The novel also suggests at one point that Peter's brand of intimacy can be subtly, if not overtly, violent. When he spots a young, beautiful woman in Trafalgar Square, he imagines that he hears "his name, not Peter, but his private name which he called himself in his own thoughts...You" (52). The fact that he imagines he hears this woman calling a private name, one we are not even told, reveals that he has in some sense appropriated her into the deepest recesses of his mind. In a scene reminiscent of Baudelaire's "À Une Passante," Peter internalizes the unknown woman as a part of his own mind—an internalization that he later acknowledges: "his fun...was half made up, as he knew very well; invented, this escapade with the girl; made up, as one makes up the better part of life...making oneself up; making her up...." (53). The notion that the girl is someone Peter could "make up," of course, suggests that she is only real to the extent that he determines: a dangerous view of other subjects, indeed. Further, the description of his pursuit of the unknown woman resembles a game of chase, and the narrator describes it move by move: "She moved; she crossed; he followed her...He pursued; she changed" (52). In Baudelaire's poem, he loses the woman in a crowd, lamenting: "Car j'ignore où tu fuis, tu ne sais où je vais,/ Ô toi que j'eusse aimée, ô toi qui le savais!" This aggressive pursuit which ends in eventual loss of the object of desire parallels the way in which Peter emotionally pursues Clarissa, demanding a degree of intimacy that she finds "intolerable."

Perhaps most intolerable is his incursion into her relationship with Sally, most evident in the moment he interrupts their first—and presumably only—kiss: "It was like running one's face against a granite wall in the darkness! It was shocking; it was horrible!" (35). Just prior to this intrusion, Clarissa characterizes the interaction with Sally this way: "...she felt she had been given a present, wrapped up, and told just to keep it, not to look at

it—a diamond, something infinitely precious, wrapped up..." (35). Clearly, Clarissa regards this time with Sally as a valuable and private moment, and Peter's intrusion—"Star-gazing?"—leads her to say to herself, "Oh this horror!" (35).

Significantly, these violations of Clarissa's autonomy are not only sexual in nature, but specifically and strictly serve to enforce heteronormative coupling. Peter's intrusion into Clarissa and Sally's kiss means that he inserts himself into desire between two women. Similarly, scapegoating Clarissa's and Woolf's pain onto Septimus does much to elide his relationship with Evans; the particularities of male homoerotic attraction and intimacy become more and more difficult to discern if we read Septimus's mental condition as merely a mirror of Woolf's own breakdown. This fact begins to suggest a potential alliance between merging subjectivities and hetero/repronormativity—a combination we also witnessed in *Nightwood.*

Autonomy, Interdependence, and Disability Studies

It is worth exploring the fact that the novel's skepticism of merging and a certain kind of intimacy—and its comparative emphasis on autonomy— interestingly resonates with, and apparently contradicts, disability theory's recent emphasis on the interdependence of subjectivities and bodies. Following feminist dependency theorists like Eva Kittay and Barbara Hillyer Davis[1], disability theorists have recently turned to notions of dependency and interdependence as a way to theorize the ethics of identity, subjectivity, and caretaking.

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[1] See Eva Kittay's *Love's Labor* for a discussion of interdependence theory. Kittay mainly addresses how this theory plays out for women as caretakers of children and aging parents. Barbara Hillyer Davis explicitly addresses interdependence and dependence as they relate to gender disability, beginning with her seminal 1984 article "Women, Disability, and Feminism: Notes Toward a New Theory."

For example, Lennard J. Davis argues that disability is a "dismodernist" subject position that exposes the fiction of bodily autonomy: "[The] dismodernist mode...[does not hypostatize] the normal (that is, dominant) subject, but aims to create a new category based on *the partial, incomplete subject whose realization is not autonomy and independence but dependency and interdependence*" (*BOB* 30, emphasis mine).

David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder similarly believe that we must acknowledge the interdependence of bodies, and move away from a model of disabled subjectivity—or subjectivity in general—that emphasizes autonomy (xii). Disability theorists must all, at some level, grapple with the problem disability poses for autonomy. Indeed, two of the most important facets of embodiment that disability highlights are contingency and impermanence: "...the category of disability is permeable—anyone can become disabled, and, in fact, most people will develop impairments with age" (Davis, *BOB* 36). The recognition that all bodies are essentially vulnerable to vicissitudes that may disable them means that, from the outset, disability studies acknowledges a kind of mutable and malleable subject position. Further, not only does *who* is disabled change across time (unlike in other kinds of identities, such as race and gender, which remain more or less fixed), but the very notion of what it means to be an autonomous subject is malleable under a disability schema. Disability places subjects into a position in which they potentially rely on others for their care. This characteristic makes disability a disruptive category for autonomous identity on many levels.

The recognition of the body as mutable, fallible, and requiring eventual care by other people means that the autonomy on which notions of the modern, liberal subject rest become problematic in the face of disability. The liberal subject has been, of course, roundly

criticized and destabilized from a number of perspectives other than disability studies, including feminist, post-modernist, and post-colonialist perspectives (Hayles 4). The most famous characterization of the liberal subject—and the notion of liberal subject that is subsequently criticized—is probably that of C.B. Macpherson, who deems the sum of its characteristics "possessive individualism": "Its possessive quality is found in its conception of the individual as essentially the proprietor of his own person or capacities, *owing nothing to society for them*...The human essence is *freedom from the wills of others,* and freedom is a function of possession" (qtd. in Hayles 3, italics in original). Rather than reinforce the classically liberal ideal of the autonomous subject with his set of rights and self-determinations, disability calls on us to think of subjects as mutually dependent: on one another, on assistive devices such as prostheses, and on social caretaking, among other entities, practices, and social infrastructures. However, as Mitchell and Snyder argue, and as the name of the "independent living" movement suggests, there has historically been a strong emphasis on *independence* in disability activism (Mitchell and Snyder, xii). How, then, do we square a "dismodernist" emphasis on interdependence with the drive for autonomy that has persisted in the form of disability activism, and in the classical liberal conception of subject-citizens?

Although my claim that an interdependence framework is problematic might seem out of step with current thinking in disability studies, there is an undeniable consensus among both disability scholars and activists that the medicalization of disability is a problem. In fact, the current, dominant view of disability within disability studies—the "social

model"—was generated largely as a response, and an antidote, to the medical model.[2] But in fact, the medical diagnostic position and what I will call the "merging subjectivities" position represent two poles of potential antipathy toward disabled bodies. Although the medical gaze objectifies and, in so doing, strips the body of its social context, the merging view risks rendering social context equally indiscernible by immersing the disabled body entirely *within* it. That is, by over-emphasizing the social environment, we risk subsuming disabled persons entirely within their context. I argue that we need a model of looking at Septimus Smith, and the disabled subject in general, that fundamentally takes up the alterity—the otherness—of that subject, but still allows that subject to situate him or herself within his or her social context. I turn briefly to affect theory to begin to suggest ways that we might consider the mutual influence between and among subjects—and particularly the relationship between subjects and their communities—while still maintaining them as discrete entities. And then, finally, I suggest scenes within the novel that begin to illuminate this kind of alterity-respecting view of disability and cognitive difference. Drawing on the work of Heather Love, I argue that Septimus and his wife Rezia come to a point of ethical engagement with his disability that respects his fundamental alterity but works to situate him within his social fabric.

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[2] For a robust statement of the social model, as defined against the medical model, see Tom Shakespeare, "The social model of disability: an outdated ideology?" *Research in Social Science and Disability' vol.* 2 (2002) 9-28. I have described in more detail elsewhere in my dissertation what distinguishes these models, but in short, the medical model locates disability within an individual's mind/body, whereas the social model draws our attention to environmental barriers that make the individual's cognitive or physical difference a problem in his or her environment.

Septimus and the Diagnostic Gaze

Although both poles—medicalization and merging— are a problem, the medical/diagnostic gaze has historically represented a graver danger for critics reading Septimus. Indeed, despite Schlack's protest in 1974 that *Mrs. Dalloway* has not been 'properly' read in Freudian terms, much of the late 20th century critical writing on the novel is psychiatric or psychoanalytic in nature. Suzette Henke's essay on Septimus, in which she essentially diagnoses him as schizophrenic, explicitly compares passages from the novel describing Septimus to the diagnostic criteria for paraphrenia and schizophrenia.[3] Mark Spilka reads the novel psychoanalytically as well, viewing it in terms of Clarissa's failed mourning (which, he argues, mirrors Woolf's). In a sweeping interpretation that makes Clarissa almost identical with Woolf, Spilka holds that Clarissa's failure to mourn the death of her sister parallels Woolf's difficulty grieving the death of her mother.[4] While Caramagno, writing in the late 1980s, wants to draw our attention away from psychodynamic explanations of Woolf's mental illness to an organic, biological basis for manic depression, his reading still largely assumes that our lens for analyzing Woolf's writing should be one of *diagnosis.* [5] Even more recently, Jean Thomson has written a purportedly "Jungian case study" about Septimus, revealing that the desire to diagnose and to apply the

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[3] See Henke's article, "Mrs. Dalloway: The Communion of Saints." New Feminist Essays on Virginia Woolf. Ed. Jane Marcus. Lincoln: Nebraska UP, 1981. 125-47.

[4] See Mark Spilka, "On Mrs. Dalloway's Absent Grief: A Psycho-Literary Speculation" Contemporary Literature 20.3 (1979) 316-338.

[5] Critics' desire to "diagnose" both Woolf and her characters is not anomalous; as we already saw, a similar diagnostic impulse drives criticism of Jake Barnes's character.

medical/psychoanalytic model to Septimus is still very much present in literary criticism of *Mrs. Dalloway.*[6]

This kind of diagnostic gaze is clearly one whose authority disability studies has worked hard to destabilize. For one thing, a diagnostic approach is more concerned with Septimus's symptoms than with the material social conditions within which his thoughts and behaviors are situated. Put in disability studies terms, the drive to diagnose Septimus relies on a medical model, not a social model, of disability; it "restricts disability to a static impairment entombed within an individual" (Mitchell and Snyder 19). A social model, by contrast, would probably hold that his disability stems from his interaction with his environment. Although Septimus might have a mental impairment, what turns this impairment into a disability is the lack of accommodation in his environment. As Davis plainly states: "Disability is the social process that turns an impairment into a negative by creating barriers to access" (12). And critics have begun to acknowledge the social process in which Septimus is involved, analyzing the material conditions that Septimus would have faced as a soldier experiencing delayed trauma in the aftermath of World War I.

Indeed, scholars have come a long way in reading Septimus Warren Smith within the context of his society, and not in a way that locates his pathology only with his body and/or mind. The first good example of this is Alex Zwerdling's 1977 essay entitled "*Mrs. Dalloway* and the Social System." Zwerdling makes what is, for the time, a fairly radical suggestion: that we should read the Septimus and Clarissa plot line not merely as one about "insanity and sanity side by side" as Woolf suggests in her diary (52), but as a harsh social critique. Although many critics regard the "insanity and sanity side by side" comment (a

[6] See "Virginia Woolf and the Case of Septimus Smith," The San Francisco Jung Institute Library Journal 23:3 (2004) 55-71.

statement that reinforces a medicalized reading of the characters) as emblematic of Woolf's main message in the novel, Zwerdling chooses another line from her writing about her intentions for the novel: "I want to criticize the social system, and to show it at work, at its most intense"' (*A Writer's Diary*, qtd. in Zwerdling 69). For Zwerdling, the part of the social system being criticized is the "governing class," which has "remained unruffled by viewing all social problems as involving distinct categories of people different from themselves" (74). But even though Zwerdling means largely to criticize the function of the class system, his guiding principle—that "Woolf is deeply engaged by the question of how the individual is shaped (or *deformed*) by his social environment"—can be read as an encapsulation of the social model of disability (74, emphasis mine). The idea that individuals are shaped, even "deformed," by their social environments reveals a commitment to the social construction of identities and bodies, and a belief that individuals and their bodies do not 'mean' in a vacuum.

More recent critics have also taken the social model of disability in hand, perhaps unwittingly, in examining *Mrs. Dalloway*. In writing about ethical ambiguities in the narratorial voice, Molly Hite ultimately questions whether Septimus's illness lies within him at all: "Does something ail him, or does the illness lie in the postwar world into which he has been thrown?" (265). Her question could be rephrased: Is Septimus sick, or is his society sick? She then goes on to inquire: "Does his apparent illness function more as a failing or a capacity? Should he be healed or heeded?" (265). Notably, this last question implies that Septimus must be either healed *or* heeded—that both cannot occur simultaneously—and that, whatever happens will be done to him, and not by him, assumptions that I think need to be interrogated. Nevertheless, Hite's stance usefully destabilizes the notion that the site of

"wrongness" is within Septimus, instead displacing the "wrongness" into his environment and drawing our attention to the fact that Septimus's trauma does not exist in a vacuum. Karen DeMeester is also critical of writing about Septimus that merely attempts to diagnose him:

> Critics who have previous diagnosed Septimus as schizophrenic and applied a conventional psychoanalytic interpretation to his character have failed to recognize that Septimus suffers not from a psychological pathology but from a psychological injury, one inflicted by his culture through war and made septic by that same culture's postwar treatment of veterans. (653)

In saying that culture makes Septimus's wounds "septic," DeMeester implicitly affirms the social model, emphasizing that it is his environment—and not Septimus himself—that is finally, tragically flawed.

We can easily see how English culture's treatment of veterans would have rubbed salt in the proverbial wounds of a soldier suffering from delayed trauma. Indeed, around the time that Woolf was inventing Septimus, the British Parliament was at odds over whether six hundred veterans who were housed in mental institutions were eligible for the pensions typically issued to the war wounded soldier (Knox-Shaw 99). These soldiers, many of whom were ultimately denied the benefits in question, came to be known colloquially as "pauper lunatics." The decision over whether they should receive government monies came down to whether or not "there was...proof that their insanity had to do with the war" (101). This question hinged on two main determinations: how soon after the soldier's war service the symptoms began to occur, and whether the soldier had any kind of organic mental disposition that doctors felt would have led him to "derangement" notwithstanding his participation in the military (101). On either score, Septimus would have had a difficult time earning the right to a pension (100-101).

First, the onset of his symptoms occurs about four years after the Armistice; clearly, this time frame would make it difficult for him to claim that his mental breakdown was necessarily a result of combat (Knox-Shaw 100). Second, there is ample evidence that he might have been deemed congenitally vulnerable to war neurosis. The question of who is vulnerable to neurosis—and shell shock—is, perhaps unsurprisingly, largely a eugenic one. In effect, "the government...[was] using the 'existence of a hereditary trait' to distinguish the 'pauper lunatics' from the other ex-servicemen deemed to have bona fide shell shock" (Knox-Shaw 101). Indeed, Sir William Bradshaw references this notion when he reveals that the kind of "unsocial impulses" exhibited by traumatized soldiers like Septimus are "bred more than anything by the lack of good blood" (99). Woolf herself seems to anticipate this point of view in regard to Septimus; in her character sketch of him, which does not appear into the novel itself, she writes emphatically that Septimus is "not degenerate" (qtd. in Transue, 100). Despite her protests to the contrary, however, there are multiple clues that might have led readers of the time to regard Septimus as at least marginally eugenically abject. Dr. Bradshaw himself suggests this, of course, by referencing breeding and "blood."

I argue that the affliction bred into Septimus is largely a lack of "proper" masculinity. Shell shock, at least as it was constructed during this period, is arguably first and foremost an instance of gender non-normativity. Fundamentally considered by physicians during this period to be a type of "neurasthenia," shell shock aligns itself with the prototypically 'feminine' affliction of hysteria (Gijswijt-Hofstra 24). And as Elaine Showalter, Eric Leed, and more recently, Tiffany Josephs, have all argued, the mental breakdown of soldiers during and after the Great War—the largest element of which is shell shock—exposes a crisis of

gender identity.[7] Although Peter Leese takes some issue with this characterization, suggesting that Showalter in particular overstates her case, he usefully elaborates this general perspective on the gender implications of soldiers' mental and physical injuries: "male hysteria suggested feminine behaviour; psychological damage and the taint of cowardice implied effeminate or homosexual tendencies; social emasculation and impotence were widespread" (183).

At base, then, a male soldier's susceptibility to shell shock may be regarded as a kind of misgendering; were Septimus properly 'masculine,' he would presumably not suffer from this type of trauma. Indeed, Septimus's feminine traits are clear well in advance of his military service: his employer, Mr. Brewer, considers him "weakly" and "advise[s] football" to masculinize him (83-4). Septimus's military service itself is depicted as an extension of this attempt to masculinize him: "There in the trenches the change which Mr. Brewer desired when he advised football was produced instantly; he developed manliness" (84). Of course, Septimus's masculine stoicism in the trenches is also implied to be part of his problem: "...when Evans was killed, just before the Armistice, in Italy, Septimus, far from showing any emotion or recognizing that here was the end of a friendship, congratulated himself upon feeling very little and very reasonably" (84). His inability to feel leads him to propose to Rezia in a fit of "panic": panic over the fact that "he could not feel" (85).

These scenes reveal Septimus's liminal gendering; on the one hand, war masculinizes him and renders him more stoic. On the other hand, he remains somewhat 'overly' sensitive. All in all, Septimus toes the line between genders, as well as between classes:

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[7] See Showalter's book *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980.* Virago, 1987. See Leed's book *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I.* See Joseph's article "Non-Combatant's Shell-Shock": Trauma and Gender in F. Scott Fitzgerald's "Tender Is the Night"*NWSA Journal* 15.3 (2003). pp. 64-81

> To look at, he might have been a clerk, but of the better sort; for he wore brown boots; his hands were educated; so, too, his profile--his angular, big-nosed, intelligent, sensitive profile, but not his lips altogether, for they were loose; and his eyes (as eyes tend to be), eyes merely; hazel, large; *so that he was, on the whole a border case, neither one thing nor the other*...(82, emphasis mine)

The notion that Septimus is "a border case" reveals more than simply ambiguous gendering. After all, war neurosis itself was often conceptualized as a case of 'borderline' psychosis (Rickels xvii). Freud conceives of a "borderline" state as one that straddles neurosis and psychosis, and, in early to mid-early 20th century formulations, shell shock often figures in this grey area. In addition to being psychoanalytically 'borderline,' shell shock is also an example of a borderline disorder in the way that it straddles conceptions of the physical and the cognitive. Recently, Tracy Loughram has excavated this tension in the construction of shell shock during the early 20th century. She concludes that contemporary writing on shell shock misses the somatic element of the disorder almost entirely:

> The implication is that throughout the war, and before, neurasthenia both manifested and was understood primarily as a psychological disorder. The somatic aspect of the disorder which was dominant if not exclusively emphasized in most pre-war constructions is ignored. (Loughram 34)

Indeed, clinicians were somewhat divided on the subject of whether shell shock was primarily a mechanical or a psychological disturbance. Although Sandor Ferenczi concedes that "a mechanical injury" may play a role in shell shock, he nonetheless concludes that the disorder stems mainly from a "psycho-genesis" (Ferenczi and Abraham 10). The description of Septimus as "a borderline case" therefore works to shore up his identity as a traumatized veteran: one who is on the borderline between masculine and feminine, between psychotic and neurotic, and between psychologically and physically impacted by the war.

As I have already suggested, shell shock, despite being caused by war trauma, was also thought simultaneously to be the result of a hereditary predisposition:

> The fact that heredity was conceived as the most important factor in the aetiologies of both [hysteria and neurasthenia] also acted to neutralize the perceived importance of exciting causes, and thereby to locate the cause of the disorder in the individual rather than the social environment. Although it was stated that a specific, external stimulus was always necessary for the actual development of hysteria or neurasthenia, the emphasis on heredity as a predisposing cause meant that once this development had occurred, the disorder was usually seen as a pre-existing potential of the individual which had been latent until the right circumstances for its expression arose. (Loughram 37-8)

In some sense, then, Septimus is constructed as always already vulnerable to the delayed trauma he experiences. Aside from being cast as somewhat gender non-normative, he is also suggested to be mildly racially inferior by the standards of the time. As Donald Childs notes, Septimus's "loose lips" connote degeneracy (57); indeed, loose lips were detailed as one feature of the "biological criminal," a concept popularized by Cesare Lombroso. In addition to possessing criminal features, Septimus is portrayed as somewhat non-Aryan. Both his "big nose" and "hazel eyes" suggest what Betsy Nies has called "non-Nordic" lineage (13). After all, were he properly Aryan, his nose would not be "big" and his eyes would be blue. In the terms in which I have been describing characters that do not fit with the eugenic ideal, then, Septimus might be regarded as an example of the eugenic abject.

Septimus's possible eugenic abjection dovetails with, and reinforces, his susceptibility to delayed trauma. He is traumatized not only—and perhaps not even mainly—because of the horrors of war, but because he is generally susceptible to trauma, due to his genetic constitution. One of the effects of this attribution is clearly to locate the responsibility for war trauma outside of war itself—to insist, in other words, that war itself is not the problem; congenitally weak individuals are. And if society collectively is not responsible for a soldier's

trauma, then how can society be responsible for treating it? Still, there was some sense in British post-war society, however qualified, of responsibility for traumatized veterans.

But other than not possessing this susceptibility to begin with, what are the solutions to his kind of trauma? What, in other words, are the possible treatments for delayed trauma like Septimus's once it has set in? Arguably, the most obvious avenue for therapeutic value that the novel puts forth is communication. I will show how the novel both puts forth, and problematizes, a notion that trauma can be dealt with through communication, and begin to suggest that the problems of narrativization that *Mrs. Dalloway* raises ultimately reinforce notions of alterity and autonomy for the disabled subject.

Narrativization, the Individual, and the Community

Critics commonly read Septimus's emphasis on "communication" as an acknowledgement of the important role of narratives in dealing with trauma. Indeed, at points in the novel, he does express a profound belief in communication: "Communication is health; communication is happiness" (*Mrs. D* 91). And Clarissa reinforces the theme of communication at the end of the novel, when she reads Septimus's suicide as "an attempt to communicate" (180). But we ought not conclude from these passages that the novel straightforwardly upholds communication as the bedrock of emotional health. After all, in addition to believing that communication is healthy, Septimus also thinks that birds are speaking to him in Greek and that "the world threaten[s] to burst into flames" (15). In effect, our critical predicament in reading Septimus is we cannot take him at his rhetorical word. As Catherine Prendergast suggests, 'To be disabled mentally is to be disabled rhetorically....If people think you're crazy, they don't listen to you" (57).

But even as critics dismiss some of Septimus's thoughts, they take others at face value, to an astonishing extent. And, to complicate matters even further, different critics take conflicting views about *which* of Septimus's thoughts should be taken seriously. For example, Schlack holds that Septimus's distrust of his doctors stems from paranoia, and that Woolf's "hostile condemnation of the doctors is the major artistic flaw of the novel" (54-5), while So-Hee Lee views Septimus's resistance to the medical profession, culminating in his suicide, as evidence of reason and self-determination (692). At best, the distinction between Septimus's rational thoughts/behaviors and his irrational thoughts/behaviors seems difficult to draw. In reading Septimus, critics almost invariably become arbiters of which of the character's thoughts have reliable semantic content and which do not. The problem, of course, is that there is no definitive answer about which of Septimus's thoughts are paranoid delusions (if any) and which are insightful observations (if any). The critical predicament the novel presents us with can be stated this way: is Septimus's notion that "communication is health" reliable, or is it just another delusion?

Despite critics' tendency to take Septimus at his word about the importance of communication, the novel does much to complicate this simple prescription of communication. At points, the text blatantly satirizes the idea of communication. When he makes the statement that "[c]ommunication is health," he "mutter[s]" it, and then immediately following his statement, Woolf writes: "'What are you saying, Septimus?' Rezia asked, wild with terror, for he was talking to himself" (91). The irony here—that Septimus should be *talking to himself* about the importance of communication, and the Rezia cannot understand him—is rarely acknowledged; instead, critics seem to take Septimus at his literal word. The reason for their assumption is probably that communication is almost always

assumed—by professionals and laypeople alike—to be the main mechanism for dealing with trauma, so that talking with others seems like the 'cure' for what ails Septimus.

The idea that narrativization cures trauma is, at base, largely a Freudian one, since Sigmund Freud famously advocates the "talking cure." According to Freud, traumatic events are accompanied by a "repetition compulsion"—a desire to repeat the traumatic event in an effort to "master" it (Freud 12). The most famous example of this repetition compulsion is the "fort"/"da" (gone/here) game that Freud notices a young child playing. Freud theorizes that by moving his favorite toy away from himself, then drawing it back, the child can experiment with the absence of a beloved object in a way that ultimately allows him to "let his mother go away without any fuss" (13). But although the trauma of the mother's absence to a young child can be easily mastered through game-playing, Freud claims that more serious traumas—and the repetition of them—may persist into adulthood. For these, the repetition compulsion can be channeled through "transference"; talking with the psychoanalyst can come to substitute for the compulsion to repeat (44). This process satisfies the patient's dual instincts: the pleasure drive and the death drive.

But although Freud and his colleague Joseph Breuer popularized the "talking cure" in 1893 in writing about "Anna O.," they may not be the principal psychiatrists to whom the narrativization cure can be ascribed. Although Freud typically concerns himself with "repressed wishes and instincts," Pierre Janet, working at the same time Freud was writing *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, developed a theory of trauma that relies instead on the formation of memories. In Janet's model, traumatic events "resist integration" into the rest of the traumatized person's memories; "frightening experiences...caus[e] the memory of these experiences to be stored differently and not be available for retrieval under ordinary

conditions" (van der Kolk and van der Hart 160). For Janet, the cure for traumatic repetition is to be able to assimilate one's memories of the traumatic event into one's ordinary memories, and "tell [the] tale" of what happened (163). Otherwise, memories of a traumatic event persist as "intrusive" thoughts, not really assimilated memories at all:

> It is only for convenience that we speak of it as a 'traumatic memory.' The subject is often incapable of making the necessary narrative which we call memory regarding the event; and yet he remains confronted by a difficult situation in which he has not been able to play a satisfactory part, one to which his adaptation had been imperfect, so that he continues to make efforts at adaptation. (Janet, qtd. in van der Kolk and van der Hart 160)

For Janet, coping with trauma does not mean, as it does for Freud, coming to terms with repressed infantile urges; rather, the cure is making a coherent narrative out of one's memories. It is also important to acknowledge Ernest Jones and Sandor Ferenczi, authors of *Psycho-Analysis and the War Neuroses*—the most influential book of the period on shell shock—draw heavily on Freud to argue that, to successfully treat combat neurosis, the clinician must force patients to live through memories of their traumas repeatedly in order to bring about an "abreaction" of the trauma's effects (Knox-Shaw 103).

Literary critic Karen DeMeester assumes an essentially narrative model of trauma—and recovery from trauma—when she writes that modernist literature in general, and Woolf's novel in particular, "defines the post-traumatic condition" (652) but does not "create forward movement toward recovery" (651)—because it depicts the confusion of interior pain but does not outwardly narrate and resolve that pain. Following Henke, DeMeester argues that Septimus's "idiomatic use of language" is one of his chief symptoms of mental illness (655). But unlike Henke, who calls Septimus "autistic" and "schizophrenic," DeMeester believes that Septimus's "private language" is indicative of trauma (655). Narrative fragmentation, the collapse of chronology, and the idiosyncratic

language are, in fact, all symptomatic of trauma, she argues (667). Janet's own work supports this notion by emphasizing the importance of coherent narrative and arguing that one of the problems with traumatic memory is that it does not correspond to ordinary conventions about how time passes; instead, trauma "takes too long" in the mind of the traumatized person (van der Kolk and van der Hart 163)).

DeMeester further contends that all of these characteristics of trauma are present as stylistic attributes of *Mrs. Dalloway*; in fact, all are hallmarks of modernist novels generally (DeMeester 667). DeMeester posits narrativization as a kind of "cure," explaining that the "narratives" of the 1930s finally did more to make sense of, and resolve, the post-traumatic confusion in which World War I resulted (667).[8] For her, because Septimus never successfully narrativizes his trauma, the story *Mrs. Dalloway* tells is primarily about the failure of his recovery from trauma. DeMeester's teleological view of narrativization assumes, first of all, that Septimus requires a 'cure' for his condition. Second, it assumes that this cure can be achieved by "presenting the war story in a form of 'This was my life...This is what happened...This is what I became'" (667-8). But even in emphasizing the importance of narrative, DeMeester notes that there are dangers to presenting one's trauma story to the community: the trauma might be dismissed, or even co-opted: "If the dominant culture manages to appropriate the trauma and can codify it in its own terms, the status quo will remain unchanged" (661).

Even apart from the question of Septimus's trauma narrative, *Mrs. Dalloway* gives several indications that the appropriation of Septimus's mind by his society—and in

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[8] I would take issue with DeMeester's claim that the literature of the 1930s somehow narrates trauma with a coherence that the 1920s novel does not. Take, for example, Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*, or William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, which show the same features of narrative fragmentation, idiosyncratic language, and temporal confusion present in *Mrs. Dalloway*.

particular, the medical community that seeks to treat him—is a real danger. The critique of cultural appropriation, or "conversion" as the novel deems it, is a motif of *Mrs. Dalloway* and takes various forms. Most notably, the narrator satirizes Sir William Bradshaw's obsession with "divine proportion," arguing:

> Proportion has a sister, less smiling, more formidable, a Goddess now engaged—in the heat and sands of India, the mud and swamp of Africa, the purlieus of London, wherever in short the climate or the devil tempts men to fall from the true belief which is their own—is even now engaged in dashing down shrines, smashing idols, and setting up in the place her own stern countenance. Conversion is her name and she feasts on the wills of the weakly, loving to impress, to impose, adoring her own features stamped on the face of the populace. (97-8)

This passage specifically links the medical work of Dr. Bradshaw to the British colonial project, implying that both "temp[t] men to fall from the true belief which is *their own*" (emphasis mine).

The question of what is Septimus's "own" and what about him belongs to others is a pressing one, and Bradshaw argues that the decision to end his life is not one that Septimus is licensed to make, because "No one lives for himself alone" (96). Dr. Bradshaw presents the right for medical professionals to intervene and institutionalize Septimus largely as a matter of legality: "Sir William explained to her the state of the case. He had threatened to kill himself. There was no alternative. It was a question of law" (94). Here, Dr. Bradshaw makes a claim about the interest of the state in protecting Septimus from himself. But Septimus argues against the idea that the state has, or should have, a right to determine the course of his life and death.

Despite the fact that Septimus can *legally* be forced into an institution, Septimus questions the ethics at play in this legal arrangement, asking "must? must? Why must?" (143). In the end, he articulates an argument against forced institutionalization that amounts to a

claim of bodily and cognitive autonomy: his life is his own; he can choose to live it, or to end it, and no one else should have a say in that matter. He contests Bradshaw's view that "Nobody lives for himself alone" (96) with "In short, this living or not living is an affair of our own?" (99). He also refutes what he takes to be the basis of the argument that one's life is not one's own—the existence of God: "And perhaps, after all, there is no God?" (96). This denial of a deity is most significant because it suggests that one's life finally is one's own, and does not belong to a higher power. This passage strikingly stakes a claim for a kind of classically liberal subjectivity, or what MacPherson might call "possessive individualism"; Septimus claims a right to his own body, to do with what he wishes, up to and including a right to destroy it.

Dr. Bradshaw and Septimus are, in effect, arguing over whether Septimus has a right to decide on his own treatment, his own life and death. Not only does the state stand as an intrusive authority over his body, so too does the medical system, and the two meld together into a near-seamless ideological apparatus that threatens to revoke all of Septimus's agency—in effect, to subsume him: his volition, his will, his autonomy. Septimus laments the intrusiveness of the medical system that seeks to control and cure him: "Once you fall, Septimus repeated to himself, human nature is on you. Holmes and Bradshaw are on you. They scour the desert. They fly screaming into the wilderness. The rack and the thumbscrew are applied. Human nature is remorseless." (95). The idea that he is being not so much treated as tormented by doctors, who mean to assert their will over him, is underscored by this series of questions: "But if he confessed? If he communicated? Would they let him off then, his torturers?" (96). Here, Septimus glosses communication as the act that will make

the unwelcome intrusion of doctors cease; communication is not therapeutic in and of itself, but it will make the pain of treatment stop.

Tellingly, prompted by news of Septimus's suicide, Clarissa also observes the horror of the doctors' kind of intrusion. Calling Dr. Bradshaw's modus operandi "forcing your soul," she claims: "Life is made intolerable; they make life intolerable, men like that" (180). Clarissa views her own approach to life as diametrically opposed to "forcing your soul." Instead of trying to appropriate or persuade, Clarissa herself assiduously avoids "conversion": "Had she ever tried to convert any one herself? Did she not wish everybody merely to be themselves?" (123). This characterization of the doctors' intrusion parallels Clarissa's disdain over Peter's intrusion into her mind, and underscores the novel's skepticism of merging subjectivities. Both Septimus's and Clarissa's thoughts about the medical establishment pit this system squarely against individual volition and autonomy.

Crucially, the involvement of the medical system in Septimus's case is putatively justified by the very conception of war neurosis, which neatly forecloses the patient's agency in dealing with his own trauma by asserting that neurotic symptoms themselves are the result of the mind's attempts to heal itself: "the symptoms of the illness are best understood as stages in a remedial process instituted by the psyche itself....psychoanalysts insisted that the symptoms were to be seen as 'spontaneous attempts of cure on the part of the patient'" (Knox-Shaw 103). This view suggests that the mind's "spontaneous attempts" to heal itself are not only primitive and ineffective, but also dangerous, because they only make the patient worse. The patient must be actively prevented from trying to heal himself, because not only is this attempt likely to fail, it is likely to exacerbate his condition. Saying that the patient requires professional help, then, not only means that the patient must be healed from

the outside-in, but that he must be protected from his attempts to heal himself, which only bring about further symptoms of trauma. Peter Knox-Shaw discusses why the requirement of medical involvement—of the kind Septimus is subjected to— feels so harsh: "What makes the violence of his intervention so sheer is the sense, pervasive to the novel, that the psyche is, in its own right, a nimble self-responsive thing, endowed with a will to heal itself" (Knox-Shaw 102). Indeed, the mind's "will to heal itself" is constructed as a danger, something to be prevented.

This kind of prevention is nowhere more obvious than in the rationale of the "rest cure," popularized by S. Weir Mitchell. Thought to restore the proper balance of fat and blood, the rest cure was largely prescribed for neurasthenic women (Smith 313). Notably, the rest cure is not only the treatment that Dr. Bradshaw recommends for Septimus, but also the regimen that Woolf herself underwent at various times in her life. One of those times was after the death of her father, and, as Susan Bennett Smith reports, Woolf herself was largely pleased with the relief from symptoms afforded to her by this treatment (312). However, Smith suggests that this type of rest cure was not always well-regarded, not even by Woolf herself. Further, she suggests that gender expectations governed how Woolf's grief was received. Although, after her mother's death, Woolf's father Leslie Stephen broke down, "he did not suffer a 'breakdown': There is a fine but definite line between 'broke down' and 'breakdown,' between what can be described in terms of social conventions and what cannot" (Smith 311). Following Elaine Showalter, Smith suggests that the "social conventions" governing displays of grief are really conventions about gender. Given that, Septimus fails utterly to conform with gender expectations, and the fact that he is prescribed the rest cure only further underscores his feminization within the world of the novel.

We can see, then, that the involvement of others in Septimus's care and treatment is not without violence and coercion. There seems to be an inherent conflict between his desire for self-determination and authority over his own life, and the mandate from the juridico-medical establishment that he "recover," as defined not by Septimus but by the establishment that seeks to manage him. In what way can Septimus's recovery then meaningfully depend on this same community?

DeMeester asserts that "the principal way Septimus could give meaning and purpose to his war experiences is by communication—sharing his experiences and knowledge with others for their edification and the salvation of future generations" (660). Van der Kolk and van der Hart also affirm the importance of narration as a "social act," stating that "traumatic memory has no social component; it is not addressed to anybody, the patient does not respond to anybody; it is a solitary activity" (163). By placing personal traumatic experiences into the context of narrative, and making them social rather than solitary, van der Kolk and van der Hart claim, trauma victims begin to diminish their suffering. According to this logic, then, Septimus should turn his trauma into a narrative, both to help others and to help himself. However, we have already discussed the risk of Septimus's will being appropriated by the medical community. At the same time, DeMeester acknowledges that any story Septimus could tell risks not being understood by his wider social milieu:

> Because war veterans' testimonies threaten the community's social equilibrium and order by challenging its fundamental cultural and ideological assumptions, the community may avoid and deny the truth of the veterans' testimonies. The testimonies may create a sense of instability and confusion in the community, and consequently cause it to suffer the same feelings of disorientation the veteran himself suffers. (660)

This passage underscores once again Garland-Thomson's observation that the disabled figure functions as a container for social deviance—or, in DeMeester's parlance, disequilibrium. In DeMeester's view, the soldier suffering from trauma cures it only through sharing his "feelings of disorientation" with the community at large. Conversely, if he keeps his trauma to himself, he remains sick, but the community is spared from dealing with the unpleasantness of trauma. This view essentially pits the individual's health against the health of the community, suggesting that Septimus's remaining in disequilibrium enables the equilibrium of the community, whereas, were he to achieve equilibrium, this would place the community in a state of instability. Just as Septimus functions as a narrative prosthetic crutch for Woolf's novel, he also functions as a container for London's negative post-war feelings: a 'receptacle' into which the community can deposit its own trauma, and move on.

There are a few problems with this zero-sum view of equilibrium and disequilibrium, however. One major flaw in this way of thinking is that it treats the well-being of Septimus and the well-being of his community as separate phenomena. Septimus and his community only depend on each other insofar as the pain of one is the salvation of another; once again, he is cast as a sacrificial lamb for the well-being of others. There is no sense in DeMeester's analysis that the disequilibrium of a member within the community might harm the community as a whole, or that a healthy community depends on the existence of individual health (however we might define health). Indeed, Patricia Clough writes about this kind of view of the individual body's relationship to its environment, claiming that the assumption of "the body as an organism, a closed system, seeking homeostasis and equilibrium" is a fundamental tenet of both Freudian analysis and theories of trauma (Clough 11). What Clough calls "the affective turn"—a reliance on theories of affect and the body to theorize

the social realm—brings a different kind of framework to questions of how individuals access sociality and take on social meanings.

At base, we need a way here of regarding the individual that considers him within his social context, but neither as a closed, completely separate system, nor as a completely immersed being with no individual significance unto himself. One way of getting at this nexus between individual and community, particularly in the case of disabled figures, is available in Toni Morrison's idea of the pariah figure:

> The black community is a pariah community. Black people are pariahs. The civilization of black people that lives apart from but in juxtaposition to other civilizations is a pariah relationship....But a community contains pariahs within it that are very useful for the conscience of that community. (qtd. in Garland Thomson, 115)

The pariah figure is a part of the social landscape while at the same time remaining somewhat outside of it. Moreover, Garland Thomson writes that the disabled pariah's body "is a hyperlegible text from which her [or his] community reads its own preoccupations, fears, and hopes" (121). In this way, we might see Septimus as a barometer of social health—he is not only affected by the post-war policies that inscribe his body, but his body serves as a poignant reminder of the failure of those policies.

We might usefully think of Septimus as a canary in a coal mine. Of course, the coal mine is not all that matters; the canary matters, too. And the canary matters not only for itself, but for the fact that is a barometer of its environment. If we value Septimus's health, we also value the health of the community. But if the health of Septimus and of his community are intrinsically interdependent, the question, of course, becomes: what is the path to health for both? One facile answer appears very early in the book and is one with which the novel remains continuously engaged: communication. But as I have already

suggested, the novel complicates that view of communication almost as soon as it presents it. Next, I want to begin suggesting an alternative path to health, one that nearly eschews communication altogether.

Traumatic Recovery and the Limits of Language

In fact, insofar as the novel suggests that Septimus can meaningfully recover from his delayed trauma, it seems to invest heavily in a model of recovery that minimizes discussion of his trauma altogether. The only moment in the novel in which he seems completely at ease, and connects with another person in a way that brings mutual happiness, is the domestic scene in which he and Rezia work on Mrs. Peters's hat. First, he makes a joke about the size of the hat: "He said it was an organ grinder's monkey's hat" (139). This joke pleases Rezia, and then he begins to decorate the hat: "He began putting odd colours together—for though he had no fingers, could not even do up a parcel, he had a wonderful eye, and often he was right, sometimes absurd, of course, but sometimes wonderfully right" (140). Here, Rezia acknowledges that although Septimus's mind is sometimes "absurd," it is also sometimes "wonderfully right." This importantly suggests that she may be beginning to see the value of his cognitions, the particular and peculiar functioning of his mind. Further, the phrase "for though he had no fingers" is jarring here; what is literally meant, of course, is that Septimus lacks dexterity. But the phrasing makes concrete and visual the fact of an impairment, offering a physical, literal container for Septimus's less visible cognitive non-normativity.

Septimus practically brims with pride at his creation: "It was wonderful. Never had he done anything which made him feel so proud. It was so real, it was so substantial, Mrs.

Peters' hat" (141). This judgment of his accomplishment is particularly salient when compared with how he answers Dr. Bradshaw's question about whether he served with "great distinction in the War" (93): "The European War—that little shindy of schoolboys with gunpowder? Had he served with distinction? He really forgot. In the War itself he had failed" (93-4). In contrast to Septimus's war experience, his hat-making feels like an achievement of which he can be proud. Significantly, Rezia seems to experience this event as equally transformative, since it is at this moment that she decides that she will fight the medical establishment in its attempt to forcibly institutionalize Septimus: "They could not separate them against their wills, she said" (144). Not only does Rezia decide to resist Dr. Holmes's seizure of Septimus, she comes to embrace, to some extent, Septimus's mental state—just as it is. Septimus asks Rezia to locate the scraps of paper on which he has written his thoughts:

> She brought him his papers, the things he had written, things she had written for him. She tumbled them out on the sofa. They looked at them together. Diagrams, designs, little men and women brandishing sticks for arms, with wings—were they?—on their backs...Burn them! he cried. ...But Rezia laid her hands on them. Some were very beautiful, she thought. She would tie them up (for she had no envelope) with a piece of silk. (144)

Septimus presumably cries "Burn them!" in part because he wishes to destroy any physical evidence of his mental breakdown. But Rezia's choice to take the artifacts of Septimus's mental state and tie them up with a piece of silk suggests a parallel between his mind and Mrs. Peters' hat. In fact, the silk used to tie up Septimus's parcel of thoughts may well be a leftover scrap from the couple's hat-making date. In this scene, Rezia essentially makes the artifacts of Septimus's mental state—his "attempt[s] to communicate," through language and drawing—into an aesthetic object, one on par with Mrs. Peters's hat. This

aestheticization of Septimus's thoughts acts as an implicit statement of their value; if Rezia thought they had no value, she might be more inclined to agree to his initial request that they be burned. Instead, however, she believes that some are "very beautiful" and decides to, in some sense, archive them.

This scene of aesthetic arrangement strikingly recalls the fishing and bullfighting scenes from *The Sun Also Rises*, passages which I argue reveal an ethics of mutilation. This type of ethics involves regarding and respecting the dismembered and mutilated body as it is, rather than focusing on making bodies whole, or 'curing' and 'rehabilitating' them. Similarly, the aestheticization of Septimus's 'delusions,' in which Rezia participates here, reveals an ascription of worth and value not only to his cognitions, but to his *way of cognition.* His thoughts are not discardable, and they do not necessarily need to be cured or fixed; rather, Rezia endeavors to preserve them as they are. This desire to preserve thoughts and bodies as they are, however, does not necessarily imply a valorization or glorification of them, and this is an important point to note. Valorizing Septimus's thoughts would mean imputing them with particular meaning and significance, and Rezia quite clearly does not do that.

Rezia largely avoids ascribing Septimus's thoughts with particular meaning because she deals with them *as an object*, rather than as a message to be deciphered or critically interpreted. Our first indication that this is the manner of her engagement lies in the fact that we are told she chooses the ribbon because she "ha[s] no envelope." The scene in which she is situated, then, is one that eschews the verbal, the graphical, almost entirely. Then: "Shuffling the edges straight, she did up the papers, and tied the parcel almost without looking, sitting beside him, he though, as if all her petals were about her" (144). The way she "tie[s] the parcel" with ease, without even looking, contrasts the point made about

Septimus earlier: that he lacks dexterity and "could not even do up a parcel" (140). Septimus also perceives the contrast between the concreteness of the hat-making task and the amorphous foreboding of his verbal thoughts:

> Why seek truths and deliver messages when Rezia sat sticking pins into the front of her dress, and Mrs. Peters was in Hull? Miracles, revelations, agonies, loneliness, falling through the sea, down, down into the flames, all were burnt out, for he had a sense, as he watched Rezia trimming the straw hat for Mrs. Peters, of a coverlet of flowers. (139)

Here, not only does Septimus seem to contrast the concreteness of the hat with the abstractness of his thoughts, but he also stresses the ontological definiteness of the hat: its hatness, and nothing more. The hat is more a *Ding an sich* than an object to be analyzed, and for this reason, it reveals that the path to health may not lie in verbal communication at all. Septimus here questions the value and use of "truths" and "messages," instead focusing on Rezia's pins and the straw hat the two of them make. Significantly, the path to health, both interpersonally (for the couple) and intrapersonally (for Septimus), seems to lie in the pair's shared focus on a physical task. It is the hat-making date that renews Septimus's faith in the potential goodness of life, as well as affirms Rezia's love for, and protectiveness of, Septimus. Her protectiveness is underscored by what she ultimately does with the parcel of papers: " 'There!' she said. The papers were tied up. No one should get at them. She would put them away" (*Mrs. D* 145). Not only does she treat Septimus's thoughts as an aesthetic object, but she also shares Septimus's recognition that they might be misunderstood by others, and possibly used against him. In putting them away, she protects Septimus while at the same time preserving his cognitions.

The significance of the hat-making date, and Rezia's subsequent attempts to value and protect Septimus's thoughts from intrusion, do two things: they call into question the

'superior' therapeutic value of 'communication,' and insist on an economy of intersubjectivity and caretaking of a traumatized individual that is not bound up with a mandate that this individual narrate his story to be evaluated by others. To the extent that Rezia values Septimus's thoughts, she does not do so because they communicate any particular message or narrative; her regard for his cognitions is not predicated on a condition that she must understand them. This regard for Septimus's thoughts as an object suggests that he and his thoughts enjoy some autonomy from anyone else—from any other person's understanding or approval. To the extent that Rezia values Septimus's thoughts here, she values them as a *Ding an sich*, not as statements with which to be empathized, or things to be interpreted. In fact, she is not actually engaged in interpretation at all, only a kind of acceptance.

This engagement with Septimus's thoughts recalls Heather Love's formulation of "flat reading"—"a descriptive rather than interpretive" way of reading that is grounded in "documentation and description rather than empathy and witness" (375). Love argues that this kind of literary interpretation, by removing the risk of colonizing characters through empathic engagement, achieves a more ethical way of reading marginalized characters. Calling this kind of reading "close but not deep," Love insists on a descriptive or documentary engagement with literature that does not "truck with imponderables like human experience or human nature" (377). Indeed, the dichotomy that Septimus draws between the concreteness of Mrs. Peters's straw hat and the amorphousness of "[m]iracles, revelations, agonies, loneliness" seems similarly to eschew "truck[ing] with imponderables," in favor of engaging closely, but not deeply, with the world of objects.

Close But Not Deep: Reading Disability Ethically

Of course, if communicating in language might not matter in *Mrs. Dalloway*, what is the point of the novel, made of words, that *is Mrs. Dalloway*? It does seem clear that the novel, while being made of words, and perhaps being itself "an attempt to communicate," remains skeptical of the value of "deliver[ing] messages." In her work, Love challenges us to think of ways to engage literature that do not rely on deep interpretations of hidden messages, but only implicitly does she engage the question of how fundamentally "close but not deep" destabilizes the act of literary interpretation. Thinking further through this shift in how or what we might consider the purpose of literary interpretation is beyond the scope of this chapter; however, I do think the "close but not deep" ethic of reading offers a way of respecting the alterity of disabled figures by regarding, but not so much interpreting, their difference.

After all, one of Mitchell and Snyder's, as well as Garland Thomson's, most salient points about disabled figures is that they become symbolified, regarded more for what they represent than what they experientially are. Close but not deep reading seems to offer an alternative way of examining disability, which might allow critics to regard it without the dangerous freight of hyper-symbolism. This type of reading also allows us to maintain some distance from the object we are reading—not to identify with it wholly, or to presume complete understanding. In this way, close but not deep offers a means of examining Septimus, and other disabled characters, that fundamentally respects his apartness, while allowing him to be situated within a social context.

Indeed, *Mrs. Dalloway* presents a rather concrete articulation of this kind of alterity-respecting, yet socially contextual, view in the form of Clarissa's vision of the world:

> Did it matter then, she asked herself, walking toward Bond Street did it matter that she must inevitably cease completely; all this must go on without her; did she resent it; or did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely? but that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there, ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces as it was; part of the people she knew best, who lifted her on their braches as she had seen trees lift the mist, but it spread ever so far, *her* life, *herself.* (9, emphasis mine).

This passage allows for connection among subjects—"part of the people she knew best"—while still regarding Clarissa's life as her own. Here, there is connection without merging; regard for self alongside regard for others; a balance between social context and individual subjectivity. This formulation represents what I take to be the ethical position we ought to aspire to when reading any characters, but specifically characters such as Septimus, whom we risk subsuming in others' minds and bodies.

Taking disabled subjects' alterity seriously means extricating Septimus from the function of Clarissa's "double" and examining our assumptions about how and why his trauma should, or must, be told. It asks us to question the ethics of insisting on narrativization so that his story can be 'understood' by others, and leads us to seek an alternative way of regarding him that does not require that kind of interpretation. The quest for new ways to engage his character, in turn, moves us toward a kind of reading that examines closely but not deeply, that engages with surfaces over depths. I argued that a similar type of ethics was at play in *Nightwood*'s engagement with surfaces over depths: one that does not, as Love would hold, "truck with imponderables," or insist on a kind of access to interiority. On the whole, reading Septimus with respect for his autonomy and alterity might require a new type of reading altogether, and this reading might exist in tension with currents in the field of disability studies. Although disability studies currently emphasizes

interdependence above alterity and autonomy, both strains can and must be reconciled so that we may move toward a more ethical—and accurate—view of the nature of embodiment, contingency, alterity, subjectivity, and relationship.

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