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# Cold War Pulp: Gender And Fiction In The Age Of Liberation

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COLD WAR PULP: GENDER AND FICTION IN THE AGE OF LIBERATION

A Thesis  
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
in the Department of English  
The University of Mississippi

by

JAMES LEWIS HOOD, JR.

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## ABSTRACT

The early decades of the twentieth century saw incredible changes in both literacy and general publishing. Once literature had been the domain of the elite, but now it was the daily pleasure of common people. The changes in American culture in the middle of the century, combined with this revolution in publishing and literacy, combined to produce texts frequently referred to as pulp-fiction, works easily and cheaply produced for a mass-market. This market actively catered to diverse interests, perhaps most significantly the sexually alienated. Works of gay and feminist pulp fiction served to show alienated gay men and women, as well as independent women working to escape the confines of patriarchal society, that they were not alone and that their desires were not morally profane. Two such works that represent the ethos of this body of fiction are Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying* and Jay Greene's *Behind These Walls*.

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my colleagues at the University of Mississippi and to the members of my thesis committee. In particular, I thank Dr. Jaime Harker, who encouraged me in my interests and helped foster my love of pulp fiction.

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## INTRODUCTION

In my thesis I focus on two texts, *Behind These Walls* and *Fear of Flying*. Each is markedly different from the other: the first is a work of gay male pulp fiction and the other is a work typically described as a key consciousness raising novel of second wave feminism. Both texts, however, are similar in regards to how they relate to the world in which they were created. Sexual politics and power lie at the cornerstone of political discourse in the 1960s and 1970s (possibly the most profound period of ideological and political change in 20<sup>th</sup> century United States) and these works of fiction actively depict characters who serve as testaments to the cold realities of the legal and cultural hostility faced by the sexually peripheral.

I hope to define the literary representation of a specific historical conflict in the United States, insofar as it relates to and affects our understanding of the sexually peripheral. Sexually peripheral is a term I use to describe not only gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons, but also heterosexual women whose lifestyle choices run counter to those endorsed and mandated by socially conservative Americans. In doing so I have divided my historical analysis into three separate, yet intimately connected and sometimes overlapping sections: the origins of the political, social, and economic realities faced by the sexually peripheral in the 1960s and 1970s.

The political realities of exclusion, limitation, and misrepresentation faced by these sexual minorities is ostensibly the largest and most significant area of focus for historians of women's, gay, and transgender studies. The host of state anti-sodomy laws, the prohibition of same-sex marriage, the Comstock Act, and the Hayes Code, which specifically prohibited the production of "questionable" or subversive literary and graphic materials and media, are fairly

obvious examples of the legal codification of anti-gay sentiment. While such laws ostensibly prohibited the depiction or performance of specific forms of intercourse between heterosexual couples, these laws have historically been used as a way of restricting gay male sex and expressions of gay sexuality. In other cases federal committees and personnel, most notably Senator McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), used alleged homosexuality of an accused as evidence of communist or treasonous activities (Katz 91-100). This confluence of prohibitive laws and cultural codes served to drive representations of alternative lifestyles underground, or, perhaps worse, forced professional artists to censor themselves in order to avoid persecution.

Yet, the history of gay pulp fiction (and much other pulp fiction in general) is one of resistance to these proscriptive legal measures. Many artists and writers still sought avenues of expression for their perspectives on the world and on the nature of sexual desire. Works of pulp fiction allowed gay, lesbian, and other sexually peripheral writers a medium in which to reach sizable audiences. I identify both of my primary texts, *Fear of Flying* and *Behind These Walls*, as innately pulp works. When I use the term pulp fiction, I am not necessarily referring solely to cheap, masturbatory, texts. Pulp fiction has a fluid definition, but a specific place within capitalism. A work of pulp fiction reflects the feelings of the individual that produced it, yet also the fact of the individual's mind as a product of his or her culture. Pulp fiction is embodied fiction, affective, emotionally and physically stimulating. It excites, depresses, arouses, enrages, and, sometimes, confuses. It often rejects lengthy contemplation for action and re-action, rejects subtlety for the grandiose, and rejects modesty for the brazen truth. Traditional literary criticism valorizes fiction that is more related to structural, intellectual, or ideological complexity. This valorization of this specific kind of fiction can be tied to a set of societal ideals that resist



embodiment and celebrate the enlightened, rational mind. The texts upon which I work in this project are connected to immediate desires, specifically sexual desires, and fears. These texts could be described as masturbatory or sexual pleasure fiction. *Behind These Walls* is, admittedly, a work of written gay erotica, a form of soft-core pornography pre-dating the landmark 1969 case of *Stanley vs. Georgia*.<sup>1</sup> The characters of this text are not terribly complex or well developed, with the author largely relying on convention, deus ex machina, stereotypes and other narrative conventions to drive the story forward until it eventually leads to scenes of sexual intimacy. These characters exist to be consumed; their bodies are created with utility in mind, placed from their inception in the story in positions of intense sexual intimacy. In many ways, the only discourse possible within the text for such characters is a discourse mediated through sex, and the primary discourse that these characters can offer a reader is, similarly, as a sexual object to be imagined and desired.

The relationship between the two texts extends far beyond their status as works of pulp fiction. From a political standpoint, *Fear of Flying* and other consciousness raising texts of second wave feminism may not have been publishable without the precedent set by writers and publishers of gay pulp fiction in the 1950s and 1960s. The content of gay pulp fiction towed the line of mainstream America's tolerance, yet while threats of censorship and obscenity charges loomed large these authors and publishers ardently defended their lifestyles and desires through the art they produced and sold. These efforts to produce literature for and by gay writers and readers are one of the more subtle forms of gay activism in the post-war years. Feminist writers and activists of the second wave would come to adopt a similar activist strategy in the production

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<sup>1</sup> *Behind These Walls* is far from extreme in its depictions of gay male sexuality. The text is careful to speak in metaphor, constantly deferring what is literally occurring. The text is likely intentionally opaque in its depictions of this form of intimacy because of these obscenity laws in the United States. Granted, this is a subject about which I admittedly know less than I should and the extent to which works of gay soft-core pornography were or were not regulated by the government bears further investigation.

of (often politically and socially subversive) feminist consciousness raising literature.

Consciousness raising efforts of second wave feminism, Rhodes contends, was defined by “a radical feminist emphasis on written texts disseminated through an underground publication network” which “served as a loose, superficially stable organization for the movement” (Rhodes 26). Therefore, if we accept that *Fear of Flying* is both a pulp text and a consciousness raising novel, then it would also be appropriate to apply both labels to works of gay pulp fiction, as they are both pulp and works of queer consciousness raising.<sup>2</sup>

Given the significance of these types of texts to the political consciousness of gender and sexual rights activism, one must first necessarily understand the historical and political context in which these texts were produced. On one level the classical codification of prejudice in the American legal system allowed social reformers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to directly target specific pieces of legislation in the courtroom. Perhaps the most famous example of this is the NAACP victory in *Brown v. Board*. For straight women and gay men and women, however, the sensitivity of many issues and the highly personal nature of sex-centered legislation made (and still makes) political action a matter of tremendous personal cost. Many of the most direct attacks against the sexual periphery came in the form of physical violence and social ostracization. Individuals, particularly gay men and women, were forced to live a life defined by the stigma of homosexuality, a subject status that, as Foucault notes, emerges as a result of the intersection of specific kinds of medical, social, and political discourse. Eventually the phrase “the personal is political” would come to represent what many in America had long since known, namely that the private hardships so often suffered in silence are often tied to institutionalized political and social

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<sup>2</sup> The texts are both consciousness raising in the sense that both are innately didactic. Gay pulp fiction serves to demonstrate the collective existence of individuals who desire in ways contrary to those ordained by the majority.

inequality.<sup>3</sup> As Nancy MacLean notes, “Throughout the United States, the repression of radicalism created a forbidding climate for organizing for gender equality just as it did for the labor and civil rights movement. By the mid-1950s, calling for world peace and racial justice made a person vulnerable to suspicion, harassment, and unemployment. Indeed, the Red Scare halted much of U.S. women's progress by equating work for social justice and disarmament with Communist subversion” (7).

Most historical texts that discuss pro-gay advocacy in 20<sup>th</sup> century United States begin with the creation of Chicago's Society for Human Rights in 1924 and the Los Angeles based Mattachine Society in 1950 (Katz 407). The history of the struggle for equality for women, however, dates back to voting right's efforts of the 1910s and 1920s. As the century progresses, however, the fight for equality develops into more complex social efforts: female empowerment, the direct combating of sexual stigmas surrounding unmarried, sexually active women, and a greater emphasis on intersectionality and matters of race. These are defining elements of the so-called “second wave” of feminist American political activism. Many of these shifts emerge from a changing sociopolitical landscape at the end of the Second World War. Women who became accustomed to working for a living wage were reluctant to return to purely domestic lifestyles, finding greater personal satisfaction in institutions of higher learning and private business than they ever did in kitchens or bedrooms.

Changing economic realities and growing economic opportunities for once excluded genders proved a powerful force for personal and financial agency in the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, the United States has a rather conflicted history of ideological contradiction. Individualism emerges as an ostensibly natural consequence of capitalism. The “profit motive”

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<sup>3</sup> The phrase “the personal is political” originates in a 1969 essay by Carol Hanisch. While Hanisch herself never uses this phrase, specifically, the inherent criticism of a perceived dichotomy between medical treatment and political subjectivity became integral to the efforts of second wave feminism.

of capitalism serves to drive people to work towards their own self interest, rather than the interest of a communal whole. Indeed, no writer of pulp fiction produced a work for free (to my knowledge), and any noble desires of artistic and personal expression were tempered by the realities of poverty. At the same time, America's conservative religious and social elements are distinctly communal, often defending laws discriminating against sexual and racial minorities as a means of protecting traditional American values. Indeed, this complex interplay of individualist and communalist ethos manifests itself equally clearly in the Cold-War practices of many homosexual men and women. The formation of urban ghettos is perhaps the most obvious material example of the efforts of the sexually peripheral to create real spaces of sexual freedom and agency. Yet at the same time these ghettos serve as true material signifiers of the periphery to which the term sexually peripheral refers. Even the materially prosperous ghettos were, and still are, little better than gilded cages for the socially and sexually alienated.

The shifting material realities of late 19<sup>th</sup> century/early 20<sup>th</sup> century America represent a significant part of the cause of this process of ghettoization. Vicki Eacklor notes that “the interdependent family of the self-sufficient farm was gradually replaced by both the idea and reality of the male breadwinner. Families had always been patriarchal, but now the *economic* role of women and children was transformed from producers to dependents and consumers. As a (predominantly white, urban) middle class developed, women and children, without an economic role, had little if any legal agency as well” (22). The decentralization of the home to the family's economic survival accompanies this shift to urban environments. Male breadwinners find themselves in an office or factory, subject to the rules of other men. It is only in the home and in the family that the man has full hegemonic authority. This gendered ordering of space and power stratifies human behavior, Eacklor continues, by essentializing the behaviors of men and women

as suited for specific, predefined roles. Therefore, violations of that normative gendered order “contributed to sexologists' concepts of 'deviant' sexuality, since they tended to focus on those who violated the dictates of their sphere and the gender assigned that sphere. 'Feminine' men and 'masculine' women were a threat to the social/economic order, it seems, regardless of their sexual proclivities” (47). As cities became more widely accepted centers of domestic life in the United States, they also emerged as ghettos for gay men and women. A “vigorous underground culture emerged in cities such as New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia. As women as men sought partners, they created this urban, homosexual sub-culture” (Escoffier 52-53). Safety exists in numbers and the urban landscape afforded gay men and women a degree of control over the private details of their personal lives and room to sexually experiment.

Individuals in pursuit of partners were able to frequent established venues in which they could cruise freely and with a modicum of protection, a way of mitigating some of “the social and economic costs” of cruising (72). This being the case, what emerges in the cities of the United States in the 1950s and 1960s is a set of social practices (customs, traditions, and communal practices) set inside of larger, mainstream American culture. The enclave community as a cultural institution operates in semi-isolation to the rest of their respective cities, developing certain economies organized around luxury goods and entertainment services like bars, restaurants, and gymnasiums.

While the access to entertainment and luxury goods in gay enclave communities is itself reflective of the politics of gay life in American cities, the national issue of effective medical care and accurate medical information (or rather lack thereof) is one of the defining political lobbying points of second wave feminism and women's rights in general. Margaret Sanger's arrest in 1916 highlights many of the long-standing problems in regards to the medical establishment's

understanding of and relationship to human sexuality. Women, the government prohibition of birth control clearly stated, did not have a say in what was best for their bodies. Indeed, the medical establishment of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a remarkably conservative political and material force, one which attempted to regulate female bodies according to social taboos and the pathologization of non-normative sex.<sup>4</sup> A testament to the growing political power of sexually active and self-sufficient women can be found in the fact that “By 1960,” the year the birth control pill becomes legally available in the United States, “three times as many married women were in the workforce as in 1940” (MacLean 12). Women able to support themselves found less material incentives for marriage and family building. Similarly, the medical and legal establishment operated to contain and codify homosexuality as a vicious disease, one which the more hypochondriacal feared could spread and one which the more politically paranoid feared was a symptom of communist espionage. Psychology similarly emerged as a medical practice that initially pathologized homosexuality as a mental disorder (one treated with violent medical practices such as electroshock therapy) only to later emerge as one of the more notable medical defenders of the normality of homosexuality (Katz 165).

For my own project, I have come to an understanding of queer criticism that is necessarily specific to my own discipline.<sup>5</sup> A critical literary study of peripheral sexualities will likely incorporate texts that a sociological or historically critic would not. For my purposes, I

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<sup>4</sup> Admittedly there is a marked difference between the policing of normative and non-normative bodies and the policing of normative and non-normative sexualities. The policing of sexual deviance have historically been the domain of social or religious institutions that sought to reinforce standards of community “decency” and morality. Yet, one cannot divorce the efforts of medical science to produce healthy, regulated bodies and the long-standing associations between deviant sexualities and moral and physical degeneracy. The efforts of medical authorities to pathologize deviant sexualities may be symptomatic of larger cultural sensibilities, but the nature of those institutions unarguably lended legitimation towards the persecution of those who came to be defined by said deviant sexualities.

<sup>5</sup> I admittedly use the term queer rather loosely to describe sexualities not bound by heteronormativity, heterosexuality, and hierarchical sexuality. This being the case, I use queer to describe both *Fear of Flying* and *Behind These Walls*, for both attempt to depict modes of sexuality unbound from specific predefined cultural constraints.

draw upon a tradition of philosophy and literature that examines and complicates practices of power, discourse, and carcerality. This being the case, Michel Foucault's theories surrounding these practices are essential to my analysis. I use these theories to trace the means by which individual characters in these texts are controlled and victimized by those who seek to maintain hegemonic and hierarchical power relations in both interpersonal relationships and broader institutions. A host of secondary and tertiary theories supplement and support Foucault's theories in my chapters. Among these theories are Louis Althusser's analysis of the reproduction of power relations and Deleuze and Guattari's anti-fascist philosophy of desire.

Prison and marriage, the institutions upon which my chosen texts are centered, work according to a formula and are intimately related to the larger world. Much like the construction of gay or female identity, these texts also highlight the constructedness (or, perhaps, non-naturalness) of the institutions they critique. According to Foucault, these institutions are microcosmic models that mirror the rest of society and its systems. More importantly, they are systems that are built upon certain kinds of discourse, particularly discourses that serve to reinforce the legitimacy of these systems, while simultaneously hiding the artificiality of these systems. In *The History of Sexuality* and *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault frames power in human affairs as hierarchical. It comes from the bottom up (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* 84-85). Power is atomic, structural, builds upon individual components, and forms machinic connections between individuals and institutions. Deleuze and Guattari build upon Foucault's analysis of systems in their philosophical manifesto, *Anti-Oedipus*. These authors, most significantly Foucault, are critical to my analysis of power, desire, and the body. Foucault's conceptualization of power was very much related to his own political sensibilities and understanding of the body as caged within the regulatory schema and institutionalism of society. "The soul is the prison of

the body,” he writes, a byproduct of a humanist philosophy that saw come to see the measured and regulated containment of the body as socially and morally beneficent in comparison with the bleak process of public torture and execution that had preceded it (Foucault 30). The soul and its ultimate fate (more specifically the possibility of redemption) come to outweigh the cruelties inherent in involuntary confinement. Containment allows the possibility for training and corrective behavior, something not afforded to the condemned regardless of the state of their souls.

I most frequently examine in my chapters how individuals enter into systems of power and regulation, how love and desire are made to work against themselves, and how institutions operate to either silence or provoke specific kinds of knowledge building and to produce specific kinds of controlled discourse. Foucault and a Foucauldian definition of power are, as I have already stated, central to my analysis. For Foucault power is distinct from a lay definition of power as a thing to be possessed by an individual or made to move some by the whims of others. Rather, power is atomic, insular, microcosmic, and infinitesimal in its individual parts. It is not a thing to be possessed, but an action and consequence of relationships. Power is innate and entangled in the systems that govern society and discourse. It does not matter who is the head of a prison, mental asylum, or country, but rather it matters *that* there is someone in such a position. Individuals do not wield power, but power is wielded through them. By examining the structures through which power operates and the means by which individuals use authority to control others, I hope to demonstrate how and why individuals react to their oppression, how they resist their oppression, and how they attempt to find happiness in spite of the forces that would control and restrict them.

To some extent, my interest in power is related to the specific institutions that regulate



and constrain the various subjects that I discuss in the two texts that I analyze in my thesis. In one we have the institution of the prison, in the other that of marriage. Erica Jong depicts a kind of marriage in *Fear of Flying* defined by hierarchical relations and gender expectations. Isadora Wing, the novel's protagonist, is a struggling author whose works have earned her little acclaim and which ultimately fail to impress even herself in their lack of ambition. She is married to a cold, highly professional psychiatrist who is more concerned for his career than keeping his marriage afloat. Indeed, Isadora's husband sees her as little more than a requisite piece of equipment, an expected addition to his public persona. Their vow of monogamy serves to do little more than ensure neither of them is truly happy and serves to restrict Isadora's access to new experiences and new creative material. Ultimately, Isadora comes to reject her status as a “kept woman” - the definition of a woman who defines success through her husband - and attempts to live out her fantasies, even if doing risks her marriage.

Much more literally, the theme of incarceration defines Jay Greene's *Behind These Walls*, a story of a young drifter who is sexually victimized and eventually imprisoned in a harshly run young men's' reformatory. The young protagonists of Greene's prison are both victims to sexual degradation and participants in relationships defined by homosexual desire. Ironically enough, the core thematic of Greene's text is the restriction and maintenance of gay sexuality in American society in the early 1960s. Individuals establish hierarchies of power based upon their place within the system, Greene's text shows us, whether they be guard and prisoner. The same is true of physical desire and internalized notions of power, as Greene's text deconstructs hierarchies of sexual power and relationships based upon subservience, domination, and clearly defined roles.

Although *Fear of Flying* may not be what would conventionally be called a “masturbatory” text, sexual fantasy plays a central role in the novel's narrative. Paradoxically, it

is also a very uncomfortable text, in terms both of physical suffering and the text's own exploration of neuroses, anxiety, and the pain of constant self-reflection. The reader's interaction with the story is through the affective, particularly in our ability to empathize with the protagonist. It does not have the same degree of targeted intention that *Behind These Walls* does, but it operates in the same way: the text shares the suffering and pleasure of the characters of the novel; it relates fictional physical experience to a real, physical person. The text also negotiates the difficulties of acting out fantasies of happiness and pleasure that rely on the particularities of other people. Fantasies of pleasure and intimacy involving other people, Jong shows us, are troubled by the complexity of the human condition and the expectations people bring with them into interpersonal relationships.

Foucault, and perhaps to a lesser extent Deleuze and Guattari, essentialize much their analysis of power and desire. Foucault is often criticized for failing to provide any kind of “out” to his system of carcerality and the disciplinary regimes of power. That being said, Foucault conceives of an alternative form of power, of horizontality in power relations. This is, admittedly, not a way outside of power relations, but one in which power relations operate different than how we typically conceive of them. Horizontality is a form of social relations that does not categorize individuals according to a hierarchical model of power relations between individuals. Rather, horizontality reacts to and works against the impulse to identify individuals according to this power strata. Horizontality is counter-institutional in nature. Horizontality is comparable to the Deleuzian body without organs, the surface of “an egg: it is crisscrossed with axes and thresholds, with latitudes and longitudes and geodesic lines, traversed by gradients marking the transitions and the becoming, the destinations of the subject developing along these particular vectors” that allows social relations to constantly form and break down and form new relations

(Deleuze and Guattari, 19). The egg is the core of the anti-fascist philosophy to which Foucault, Deleuze, Guattari, subscribed. The Deleuzian metaphor of the egg contrasts with the fascist metaphor of the fasces. The fasces is a fagot of sticks that are bound together to form the handle of an axe. The metaphor of the fasces is obvious in its relation to fascism: the freedom of the individual is sacrificed for the strength of the collective, a collective to be wielded like a weapon against outside threats, typically by one or a select few who wield total magisterial power. The egg contrasts as a surface, a horizontal construction upon which energies flow, which breaks down and reforms constantly in the production of new desires and new subject relations.

Although Foucault does not perceive a way outside of the carceral regime, later writers of the prison, such as Dylan Rodriguez, attempt to recover some kind of agency within the prison and within carceral society as a whole. Indeed, I attempt in my own writing to do the same, applying Foucault's notion of horizontality to a reading of the various peripheral sexualities and sexual bodies that proliferate the texts I examine. Horizontality, as I have stated, contrasts with hierarchical notions of power and discipline. Hierarchy places individuals in relative subject positions, always in relation to others with greater access to the mechanisms of power. Indeed, Foucault suggests that the very nature of modern sexuality, encompassed within specific models of acceptable sexuality, is hierarchically based. The family unit, the oedipal configuration of father, mother, child, is a hierarchical microcosm of individual life within society as a whole. Horizontality is a way of describing subject relations that resist hierarchical definition, or, possibly, any true definition. Horizontality is in the revolutionary spirit, in the mass of collective motion, and of similar energies surging towards an indefinite end. The Stonewall Inn riots, one of the most famous examples of resistance in the gay rights movement, is a perfect example of horizontality set in motion towards a political end. While the articulation of progressive ideals

attached to the incident came later, the original riots emerged from the immediate energy of collective response to police raid; the energy that was directed towards cruising and dancing (the Stonewall was famous for being the only sizable gay dance club in New York) was redirected into collective action against the police (Carter 85). The response by the bar's patrons was not organized by military dictum, hierarchy, leadership, or protocol. It was chaotic, messy, protective, urgent, and feral; it was a collective urge to protect something of incredible importance to them, a response over determined in its significance in a moment where gay men and women, long since abused, beaten, marginalized, and isolated, defied carceral action.

In my texts I attempt to locate horizontality in the bodies of the characters central to the works of fiction that I analyze. These texts, I ultimately argue, represent efforts by the authors to construct ways to resist or find agency within the carceral system and to form these horizontal conjunctions. The need for these characters to do so is located specifically in their response to the systems that attempt to label their bodies as monstrous, unnatural, pathological, or otherwise determined to be valid targets of carceral control and examination. All sexual bodies are monstrous, in some sense. Even the body that society identifies as having the greatest positive life value – the pregnant woman – is a pathologized body.<sup>6</sup> Ironically, the reproductive/female body, the intersexual body, and the homosexual body occupy the same status in western cultural imagination.<sup>7</sup> Contemporary critics of carcerality, such as Dylan Rodriguez, attempt to reconcile

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<sup>6</sup> Zillah Eisenstein's *The Female Body and the Law* does an excellent job of explicating this point. Maternity leave for women is couched in terms of sick leave. This is more than simple coincidence, as the pregnant body is a body that displays less overall labor value, as well as occupying a complex cultural and legal status. One possible explanation is that the physical impact of reproduction on the female body emphasizes the female body's distance from the platonic ideal of the masculine body: pregnancy is read as a kind of body-horror, a process of distention and distortion that emphasizes the physiological gulf between male and female bodies.

<sup>7</sup> There is some leeway here that is worth mentioning. The platonic ideal of the body is a masculine body, as Thomas Laquer argues in *Making Sex*. The female body is an inverted and, therefore, monstrous or bastardized version of the original male body. Yet, others have questioned Laquer's conclusion, perhaps most notably and directly Helen King in *The One Sex on Trial*. More broadly for my own study of the body is a model of a bodily ideal that exists outside of physicality itself. As Foucault notes (and of which I have frequently mentioned), “the

Foucault's own formulations of power and imprisonment with a possibility for agency within a specific carceral regime. This being the case, I must necessarily acknowledge the limitations of a Foucauldian reading of carceral fiction and also acknowledge the need to engage with more contemporary scholars of carcerality.

Ultimately, my project brings to bear a number of complex theories and methodologies on a set of texts that have not received the critical attention they deserve, or in the way that they deserve. By analyzing the intersections of desire, power, and materiality within these texts, we see that bodies emerge at the forefront of the discourse between these concepts. Works of fiction may not be able to fully encapsulate the substantive experiences of an embodied humanity, but these texts are able to capture some facet of that experience. At the same time, these texts attempt to interrogate the mechanisms of power that repress and regulate the various aspects of that experience. While these works of fiction may not inspire revolution or are able to completely undermine or subvert the systems they criticize, they do trace inconsistencies, digging at the “cracks in the walls,” as it were.

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soul is the prison of the body.” The ideal that goes beyond that of bodily form and of an ideal sexuality is of a disembodied subject-hood – pure intellect, reason, and rationality, free from the maddening constraints of physicality. Certain authors, such as Marshall Berman, have defined the modern condition as Faustian in nature, this is to say obsessed with the acquisition of productive knowledge and of an intellectualism that rejects physicality as innately impure and distracting from the greater project of developing the rational mind.

## DESIRE AND ALIENATION IN JAY GREENE'S *BEHIND THESE WALLS*

As critic Brooks Peters notes, Jay Greene's perspective on gay life was that “Those of us who hide behind our fears lose out because we never live, are never taken to the heights of passion. And those who do venture out to explore, to seek their freedom, to prove themselves worthy, are set upon and devoured like Sebastian Venable in Tennessee Williams's *Suddenly Last Summer*” (Peters). Indeed, Greene's vision of life for those who experienced homoerotic desire was a rather bleak one, one in which gay love was fragile and easily torn apart by the powers that be. While this may be the case, there are greater complexities in Greene's vision of the world, as *Behind These Walls* is also a text that engages with the forces that served to marginalize, isolate, and destroy not just gay bodies, but all of us. As Jay Greene himself says, it is a story about the “prison in which we *all* live,” even if the material focus of the text is on the lives of fictional young gay men that proliferate his story (Greene “Author's Note”).

The central mode by which this power of “prison in which we *all* live” manifests itself in Greene's novella is the constructedness of sexuality and sexual identity. In Foucault's analysis, sexuality emerges as a product of discourse, of differentiation and specificity.<sup>8</sup> It also comes to represent and embody notions of hierarchy and dominance. It is knowledge-production, a way of knowing and organizing bodies based upon individual and collective action and experiences. Moreover, sexuality serves to organize power, to serve as a transfer point of power between individuals. Indeed, sexuality is far less about bodies and pleasures than it is about discourse and

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<sup>8</sup> I use discourse to refer not only to existing actual conversation regarding the nature of sexuality and sexual power, but also the subtle shifts of power and of negotiations that exist without the exchange of words. Discourse is, moreover, the relationship between a concept and the world in which that concept has meaning, as well as the significance attributed to actions and events.

signification, of constructed power relations and of the investment in sexuality of reproducing the forms and functions of existing power relations. Sex itself, in this sense, becomes a problematic and powerful agent of control in the lives of those who experience sexual desire, as the act of sex itself has come to be replete with manifold meaning and significance, possessing an agency that serve to organize and control bodies and knowledge. There is, Foucault claims, a means of counterattack to this “deployment of sexuality;” this point is not in sex-desire (as sex itself as a process is historically and culturally constructed, something differentiated from other practices), but in “bodies and pleasure” (157)<sup>9</sup>. The prison itself is a significant location for a story that is, essentially, about the carceral nature of human sexuality. As Mogul, Ritchie, and Whitlock write: “Despite rules banning sex and notwithstanding the reality of endemic physical and sexual violence, many incarcerated men and women engage in consensual, loving, sexual relationships and friendships as a form of resistance to the isolation and violent dehumanization of prisons, as a tool of survival within them, to affirm their humanity, or simply as an exercise of basic human desire” (Mogul, Ritchie, and Whitlock 95). In Jay Greene's world the act of sex as a mutual “exercise of basic human desire” appears to be the singularly most desirable and powerful mode of sexual connection. This is the endeavor to remove sex from this discourse, to evacuate it of power, is to reclaim the component parts of sex itself and to divest them from these power relations, and in doing so producing acts of pleasure between people that are at once productive, yet resist the reproduction of existing hierarchies of power and notions of normativity.<sup>10</sup> Jay Greene's *Behind*

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9 This quote comes from *The History of Sexuality, vol. 1*. All other usage of Foucault is from *Discipline and Punish*.

10 The concept that I hope to elaborate upon here is the notion of mutuality of desires: it is, effectively, two individuals wanting the same thing from each other, a true mutuality of desire and a true intersection of desiring bodies. Rather than sex as a transistor for flows of power, it is an act that exists for the sake of the act itself. It is not an act that has value for its significance, as some critics have suggested, in signifying active resistance to normative, patriarchal culture, but rather an act that attempts to be outside of discourse for those that partake in

*These Walls* offers a meditation on the possibility of such a relationship in which sex and desire operate in these ways within the confines of a world in which sex is ubiquitous and over-invested in discourse and oversignification.

All imprisoned characters in *Behind These Walls* come from backgrounds of extreme social and interpersonal alienation.<sup>11</sup> Such a sense of alienation profoundly impacts how these individuals perceive their own sexuality and the sexuality of those around them. These alienated characters experience desire, Greene suggests, more intensely than those who are actively part of society. This capacity the alienated seem to have for this intense desire for mutual pleasure is partially explained by the fact that these alienated individuals are only weakly tied to the rules, regulations, and expectations of the outside world. Where families and communities normally have tremendous power in influencing the development of a child's sexual identity, the communities that alienate the young men that populate Greene's novella seem to have little. Yet, such a phenomenon is also more fully explained by the world's hostility and indifference towards these alienated young men and the disdain these young men consequently feel towards a world that has actively dispossessed and alienated them. Greene suggests that one can end this personal sense of alienation through the discovery of mutual desire with other people.

While the Greene does provide individual, brief biographies for individual characters, the novella's opening serves as a prolonged introduction to a character without much in the way of

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it.

11 Alienation as I define it is both a profound disconnect between the individual and the positive or productive aspects of society and a profound disconnect between one's greatest desires and one's ability to fulfill them, be these desires restricted based upon internal constraints or external conditions and phenomena. This concept of alienation also inherently presupposes the existence of a restless, motive energy in alienated individuals, desires that cannot, for whatever reason, be released or subordinated through socially tolerated or accepted channels, either because of one's alienation or because of the nature of the desire itself. It is also a condition, as Morton Kaplan writes, in which "an individual perceives an absence of meaningful relationships between his status, his identifications, his social relationships, his style of life, and his work. As such situations often arise, alienation is a recurrent phenomenon" (Kaplan 118). Alienation does not necessarily mean a specific group of alienated people, but rather a group of people who happen to share a similar unfortunate circumstance or condition, regardless of the multitude of factors responsible for said alienation.



external identity. The novella's protagonist, Skip, after being abandoned by his father (his mother is mentioned once – she is long since dead), is forced to seek his fortunes in an unnamed city. The character is described as vaguely rural, rubelike in his innocence, from some ever unnamed part of the mid-West, and possessing only a “handsome face and an incredibly beautiful young body” to support himself (Greene 8). This combination of his attractive body and his disconnection from family, individual relationships, or capitalist labor is, in fact, the only reason anyone from the city in which he finds himself invests any time or interest in this young man: his desperation for food and shelter lends to the ease of his acquisition and the ease of his disposability.

Greene constructs the character of Skip on the basis of his lack of any form of real agency or immediate interpersonal connections, yet also on the basis of possessing a body that acts as a siren call for cruisers. He is seventeen, still young enough to become a ward of the state, yet the state fails to exist in relation to him until it violently asserts its control over him and his body during an arrest. The opening scenes of *Behind These Walls* serve as important foils to later scenes of sexual intimacy in the text. Skip arrives in an unnamed city in the opening pages of the novella, alone and unemployed, and desperate for food and shelter. An older married family man cruises Skip for sex, with Skip only having just rejected the advances of another man who offers Skip a place to stay in exchange for sex. This scenario in which the older man cruises Skip is one of incredible energy, as the highly vocal older man cruises Skip with all the enthusiasm of a child in a candy store. The older man rapidly shifts from talking about his family in one sentence to evaluating his potential partner's genitalia size in another, promising greater rewards for greater genital size, and enthusiastically performing oral sex on Skip in the front of his Buick. This buildup leads to a conceptual blending of bodies: “*It looked so strange*, he thought. Where he

was used to seeing himself, now there was only this face, those lips, and yet he knew he was still there, too. Even if he couldn't *see* it happening, he could feel it..." (Greene 17). While this particular liaison with the older man is the third and final instance of Skip's prostitution early in the story of *Behind These Walls*, it is by far the most significant of the three and receives more attention than almost any other erotic scene in the story. Skip's brief relationship with the older married man establishes multiple premises and thematics for the rest of the story and also serves as the scene in which Skip becomes aware of the pleasure that can be found in the bodies of other men. At the same time it demonstrates how these intense experiences of sexual pleasure are represented as productive energies, capable of radically altering bodily experiences and notions of self. Skip's perception is so radically altered that he perceives not an entering of one body part into another's, but of a dissolution of physical boundary. It is this personal experience of dissolution, the melting of bodies together that subverts the production of difference necessary for the function of heteronormative and hierarchical sexuality (Theweleit, Vol. 2. 313).<sup>12</sup>

The exchange between Skip and the older man also serves to demonstrate a conceptual divide between individual sexual action and sexuality itself. To offer oral sex to another is not an act of submission, but rather an act that has significance within the context of its deployment. Far from a stuttering neurotic, this older man is vigorous and enthusiastic, producing a one-sided discourse about and around the scenario. Indeed, much of the man's energetic chatter involves either the measuring and evaluation of Skip's body and his bragging of previous sexual

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12 Klaus Theweleit's analysis admittedly focuses on anal intercourse and the collective deployment of the hidden as counteraction to a society that has denigrated specific bodies, bodily territories, and modes of sexual desire. His analysis of homosexual desire as group desire is based in the collective redeployment of altered forms of signification. The anus, for example, ceases to be a "private" part of the body in the face of homosexuality and its mechanical function as aperture through which the body disposes of solid waste becomes subverted to its nature as erogenous zone. Regardless, Theweleit's argument is essentially that the process by which meaning is attached to an object can be collectively subverted. In my argument, the sex act itself is capable of resisting the production of certain kinds of meaning, being something far more than symbolic referent to the neverending struggle between the marginalized and the powers that be.

conquests. The older man even brags about his experience: “I've had some bad lip cuts from zippers in my time,” he tells Skip. Although this is a scene that operates outside of classical notions of sexual performance and hierarchy, it still operates within the confines of power and discourse. The older man makes use of Skip's body for his own gratification. Skip is more or less prosthesis in this engagement, the older man using Skip's body in order to produce a consequence or effect. The older man's sexuality is, ultimately, selfish and hierarchically organized according to his role as client in this engagement. Although he performs oral sex on Skip, bodily desire becomes conflated with egotism and pride, with the older man wanting more to demonstrate his skill and experience in manipulating the body to a specific end than to engage in a truly shared experience. For the older man, sex with Skip is of more symbolic than experiential value, a fact which ultimately objectifies Skip, making him simply another notch on a belt or bedpost for the older man.

Finally, and perhaps the most important lesson of Skip's experience as a male prostitute, is the fragility and overall instability of these taboo encounters with other men. Physical connections that form from these immediate and intense experiences are both easily broken and easily exploited by others. They also serve to distinguish differences in experience based upon role or individual desire in the participants. While the relationships that form between those who express a true mutuality of desire are capable of radical changes in the world around them, the instance between Skip and the older man is one in which normativity and hierarchies of power are reinforced in the act itself and codified in the law as soon as the law itself penetrates the scene: “A blinding light shot into the car, first into Skip's eyes, then down to play across the top of the man's head... 'All right, you two,' a deep, menacing voice that could belong to no one but a policeman called from outside the car, 'come out of there'” (Greene 18). Skip is sent to prison,

used as a scapegoat by someone with greater material means and influence to avoid prison. Yet, Skip's treatment does not eliminate the significance of the experience for Skip, as the physical pleasure he experienced from the older man did, on an individual level, reorganize his perception of his own body and serve to produce in him knowledge of the sexual energy endowed in the bodies of other men. The act itself produced pleasure and desire, but it ultimately ceased to produce a true mutuality of desire, rather instead producing a complex and confused arrangement in which Skip is left the victim of both another's lust and the state. Indeed, after the police arrive, Skip is immediately alienated from his sexual partner, discarded as a scapegoat for the crime of sexual indecency.

As a theme, the exploitation of the alienated is far from isolated in Skip's opening chapter. Indeed, the narrative of *Behind These Walls* is one more about the mechanisms by which the individual characters become defined as incarcerated bodies, alienated from the rest of the world and contained in a space so far removed from society that it hardly even exists. What connects such markedly different characters are the varying degrees of dispossession from any kind of significant support system in their lives and the various ways in which their dispossession and a relative lack of personal agency. For the prisoners of the reformatory, Skip, Leroy, Paul, Rick, and Charles, the reformatory is a dead-end, a dumping ground for the indigestible and discarded members of society. Rick – the son of a bitter, alcoholic stevedore whose children quickly learn that anywhere outside of the house is safer than inside - emerges as the scapegoat when product at his job goes missing.<sup>13</sup> Also similarly, Paul is a product of social

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13 The youngest of many siblings, Rick is forced out of the house and onto the streets while growing up. "Home," Greene writes, "was someplace to go when there was no place else left; a place you went back to with dread and got out of as soon as you'd eaten or rested enough to sustain yourself" (20-21). He is forced to quit school, in spite of his intelligence (and in some ways because of it – his father never wanted his sons to have the kind of education he had been denied). Rick found work at a paint and dye store. Rick typically stayed late to study so he could get a diploma and, one day, go to college. Product went missing; the other employees blamed him out of convenience and because of his self-imposed social isolation.

isolation and demanding, albeit distant, parents. After finding solace in the companionship of a boy of lower socio-economic standing, Paul and his companion are caught burglarizing the houses of wealthy socialites; admitting his guilt in a bid to end up in jail with his only friend, he only manages to find himself in the Seneca Valley Reformatory. The orphaned Charles Connel is arrested, prosecuted, and sent to the reformatory at the behest of his Uncle largely as a way to “rid himself of his shameful,” or, rather, extremely flamboyant and homosexually promiscuous, “nephew” (37).<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, the character with whom we have the least back-story is the sole black inmate, Leroy, who is arrested in the ghetto where he grew up for buying “grass” with money procured in exchange for sexual favors from a local gay Puerto-Rican man. Relocation into the reformatory territorializes these young men in the eyes of the law, forming them into inmates possessed by the state while maintaining their otherness from the rest of society.

In addition to these dispossessed and downtrodden characters, another character – also dispossessed and downtrodden – serves to organize the lives of the various inmates of the reformatory. More than just the setting for the majority of the action of the novella, the Seneca Valley Reformatory is itself a prominent character in *Behind These Walls*. It is a hybrid space, both educational institution and prison. Althusser and Foucault locate the school and prison, respectively, as the spaces which most embody the ideological imperatives of modern western society. The reformatory is both of these spaces, a fact which is critical for an understanding of

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14 Charles Connel is actually arrested and tried for theft – he had stolen money from his Uncle in order to pay men for sexual services. In some ways Charles' story is more tragic than that of any other inmate at the Seneca Valley Reformatory. A young, effeminate, and very lonely Charles befriends an older boy who worked as a ranch hand for his Uncle. The two of them start a sexual relationship that finally gives Charles the kind of intimacy he had desperately craved his entire life. His uncle learns of their affair and ends it by firing and effectively banishing the ranch hand. After this, Charles Connel sought to recreate that same sense of intimacy in his later partners, only finding himself exploited by those around him for his willingness to provide physical pleasure. Indeed, Charles Connel is the veritable Canio (of the play *Pagliacci*) of the story, a character, Greene writes, who believes that “Somebody thought it was a funny joke to make him more woman than man...but he would go one better. He would be more woman than woman, too” (37). Camp, for Charles Connel, emerges as the crying clown's make-up.

the institution, its own peculiar biography, and the subjects who occupy it. The reformatory was initially envisioned as “more like a vocational trade school than juvenile work house.” Yet, the realities of the state budget and the pressing need for the school to operate under more stringent codes of economic feasibility quickly eradicated the initial, lofty aims of the state legislature. Rather ironically, the first vision of the facility is abandoned by the state and turned into the prison that we see in the novella. Much like Skip itself, the Seneca Valley Reformatory is turned loose into the world by an uncaring parentage, forced to prostitute itself for its own survival, alienated from the goals of its initial construction into a storage unit for the unsubsumable and problematic. As Nicholas Hayes notes, “The reformatory still attempts to render the inmates 'useful and productive,' yet the new use and productivity expected from the boys is rooted in cultivating and exploiting delinquency rather than reforming and reintroducing the inmates to society” (Hayes 251). More significantly for the narrative of the story, however, is the fact that the delinquency that manifest within the reformatory is a laboring delinquency: roles, clearly defined relationships, and hierarchy are ubiquitous. The universality of hierarchical relations in the reformatory demonstrates that “the reproduction of labour power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order” (Althusser). It is not enough for hierarchy to be the official standard of the prison, but for it to be the standard order for the whole of the prison population. The general population internalizes a constant and desperate struggle for power and personal territory against itself, a means of defeating any possibility of collective action before it arises. New prisoners (such as with Skip and Leroy) are placed in cells with prisoners that have a history of violence with cell-mates as a way of reproducing notions of power based on physical violence and individual power. Rather than also being an educational training facility, as initially envisioned in

the reformatory, the reformatory seems to solely exist as a place both to store those rejected by society and to codify and regulate an understanding of the world in which domination and hierarchy are inescapable and unassailable qualities of existence. The reformatory may continue to alienate these young men from society, but it does so while continually producing them as subjects of the state and subjects within a specific social system defined by power difference and hegemonic masculinity.

Our first look into the prison of *Behind These Walls* comes as an introduction to the shared cell of Rick Mazzio and Paul O'Brien. This space, the reader discovers, is highly sexually charged. Moreover, while the older man from whom Skip receives oral sex is our first example of sexual narcissism and symbolic overdetermination of sexuality in the text, it is far from the last. Paul in his relationship with Rick is one defined by a level of willful subservience: "If you wanna do it to me, *do* it, for crissake. If not, get outta the way so I can finish it off myself" (Greene 24). Rick produces the terms of their relationship and the sex they have, while Paul reciprocates. This difference of desires evacuates the possibility for mutual pleasure, as one part of the pair surrenders power in order to receive affection, while the other merely uses sex as a way of gaining control over some aspect of his life. What occurs is not an exchange of pleasure so much as it is a reinvestment of these normative exchanges of power. Rick and Paul are both engaged in a complex sexual relationship, with each perceiving their relationship vastly differently. Rick is the product of a broken home, with a violent and abusive father, and equally violent and abusive brothers and sisters. A byproduct of a life of exploitation (his father forces him to leave school to work in order to help support their borderline destitute family) and broken dreams (he was a brilliant student, we are told, who desperately wished to finish school), Rick brings a violent, callous, and manipulative physicality to his relationship with Paul. Paul's

affection and attempts at emotional intimacy are spurned by the disaffected Rick and his request for reciprocation of oral sex are refuted with a “What the hell d'ya think I *am*?...A queer like you?” (Greene 27). Because of his troubled past, the reader is encouraged to sympathize with the lonely, exploited teen, the first figure for whom we are meant to sympathize either in spite of, or, more likely, because of his internalization of society's disciplinary regime.

As the novella progresses, we see a greater parallel between Rick's initial behavior and the behavior of the guard Mac, whose sexual dominance of other inmates, physical might, and symbolic empowerment by the law renders him as the character with the greatest power to materialize his desires. The modality of personal, narcissistically deployed personal power that drives Mac's behavior also serves as the model by which Rick tries to define his relationship with Paul and the other inmates. Indeed, Mac's sexuality seems to be formed in opposition to the ideal of mutual pleasure that Greene comes to romanticize. Rick even disciplines Paul's body in the same way prisons discipline convicts through productive occupation and labor. Paul's voice and pleas for reciprocity in their relationship are literally and physically muted by Rick through the act of oral sex; Rick attempts to turn Paul into a prosthetic, partaking in the “primary objective of carceral action: coercive individualization, by the termination of any relation that is not supervised by authority or arranged according to hierarchy” (Foucault 239). Within Rick we are led to believe that he has successfully internalized the dominant heteronormative model of gender and sexual identity. Paul is at first little more than part-object for Rick, a feminized series of holes with which to pleasure himself.

Greene's thematic of overly-selfish and overly-unselfish sexualities manifests in the characters of prison guard Mac and resident reformatory transvestite Charles Connel. Mac, a narcissist whose goals seem to be to engineer a constant expansion of individual power and



territory, contrasts with the romance of Skip and Leroy. He sculpts his body through exercise and training as a narcissistic fetish. Such physical and ego self expansion is a part of a process of the production of personal territory that he uses to construct himself as a sharply defined entity.

What begins with the establishing of personal power becomes “a lengthy process of 'self distancing,' 'self-control,' and 'self-scrutiny'...a 'subduing of affect,' an opposition of 'interior' and 'exterior,' of near and far” (Theweleit, vol.1 302). What develops from this is perspective, the guard at the center of the panopticon that engages in a process of self-determination in order to better establish distance between himself and his prisoners. What flows outwards from this self-determination is a consuming-desire. Mac's appetites do not rule him: he fosters them and grows them in order to better corporealize his own uniqueness, to gain added territory in which he may play as he wants. The ultimate means by which he expands his personal territory is, therefore, by robbing it from others. Sex only has value for him inasmuch as it allows him to exercise power over others and he is, ostensibly, a character incapable of feeling compassion for others, not to even mention the capacity for love. Ultimately, Mac produces alienation through sexual dominance, further robbing those he rapes of even the most basic forms of agency over their own bodies.

In many ways, Mac constitutes the egoistic half of Fromm's model of selfish desire in which selfishness is a condition in which one is incapable of loving either themselves or others. It is the opposite, yet functional equivalent of Fromm's concept of unselfishness, in which “Behind the facade of unselfishness a subtle but not less intense self-centeredness is hidden” (Fromm 62). The unselfish give themselves, but conditionally: they receive the approval of the powerful from whom they desire affection and willingly subject themselves to this one-sided sexuality as a means of achieving this. It is, ultimately, a relationship that exists outside of any

kind of mutuality precisely because one person surrenders their dignity and personal agency for the sake of superficial affection.<sup>15</sup> This systematic differentiation of desires between sexual participants and the means by which sexuality is invested with formations of hierarchy and difference comes to define sex in the first half of the novella. Indeed, where the body is highlighted for both its capacity for productive or transformative experiences through physical pleasure and its ability to be easily controlled or marked in some way by law and custom, sexuality, sexual desire, and sex itself seems inordinately polluted with significance and a multiplicity of meaning, that it would initially seem that the text is only interested in the presentation of lascivious, selfish sexualities while mocking the hope for any kind of true mutuality of pleasures. Yet, as the novella develops it reveals the possibility for true mutual pleasure as both an immediate condition between two people that arises between circumstance, as well as a condition to which other relationships may eventually arrive.

While Rick may have internalized and in turn applies through physical power and coercion the same notions of hierarchy and conditions of individual value that has caused him such suffering, there are ways in which the complexity of the cell as shared space reveals its ability to force individuals beyond binary hierarchies of the powerful/powerless, and of delinquent/normal sexuality. One of the key aspects of discipline, Foucault writes, is that in order to engage in a true process of control it must “master all the forces that are formed from the very constitution of an organized multiplicity; it must neutralize the effects of counter-power that spring from them and which form a resistance to the power that wishes to dominate it: agitations, revolts, spontaneous organizations, coalitions – anything that may establish horizontal

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15 This is not to say that the text identifies transvestitism as a hall-mark of the weak or objectified, but rather that Connell's use of performativity is far more pragmatic than expressive. By appearing to be a woman, the text suggests, Connell is more easily able to convince male sexual partners that may be initially hesitant about sex with another man. His identity is constructed in such a way to allow him to exercise a constant kind of submissive sexuality in relation to those around him.

conjunctions” (Foucault 219). One of the key means of achieving this end within the prison is through both observation – an essential part of any disciplinary system – and also isolation. Indeed, “the isolation of the convicts guarantees that it is possible to exercise over them, with maximum intensity, a power that will not be overthrown by any other influence; solitude is the primary condition of total submission” (Foucault 237). Greene locates the possibility of a sex that operates outside of the prison's economy of sexual tyranny through the forced interaction of bodies in confined spaces. The strategy of using social conditions of hierarchy and power difference in controlling relations between inmates is one which eventually fails, even as it is working.<sup>16</sup> Rick, specifically, tries to perceive Paul as part-object, an extension of the room he inhabits and an extension of his (Rick's) personal power. Paul produces his own subjugation in his relationship with Rick. He is desperate for Rick's affection, even going so far as to approach a level of obsequiousness only reflected in the reformatory's resident drag-queen, Charles Connel. Both reflect differentiated modes of narcissistic sexuality, with Rick desperate for the powerful Paul's approval, and Paul desperate for something over which he has control and power. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the very nature of desiring production effectively becomes sculpted according to sociocultural forces. This being the case, Rick's sexual objectification of Paul, and Paul's willful subjugation to Rick, operates as part of a set of social constructs which define masculinity and individual power according to both sexual potency and the ability to produce knowledge of others. Desiring production under the carceral regime becomes knowledge-production; it can easily be read as the fetishization of the production of knowledge itself (Deleuze and Guattari, 38, 382). The knowledge produced about Paul within Rick's mind is one

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16 In many ways, Greene's prison does not work in the exact same way that Foucault's operates. Indeed, if we are to read Foucault as a useful critic of the prison, one has to understand that Foucault's universalization of the prison does not necessitate an essentialization of all its means of control. Indeed, *Discipline and Punish* in many ways seems more a catalog of technologies of control and discipline than an effort at depicting an “essential” prison.

of Paul as an object disconnected from any kind of self-driven agency. Rick tries to believe that Paul is disposable and that the desiring assemblage he creates with Paul is reproducible with any other inmate. The reality of the relationship is, of course, much more complex than that, as later events show that the sexual strategies employed by each served as a way of managing their individual feelings of alienation and vulnerability. Rick and Paul both guard their love jealously, in doing so producing new networks of desire which form socially impermissible sets of horizontal conjunctions within the reformatory.

The initial exchange between Skip and Leroy on Skip's first night in the reformatory and its significance to the story cannot be understated. Indeed, this event may be the most significant point of the plot in its critical interrogation of the carceral and the possibility of experiences outside of it. Leroy possesses clear and internalized notions of racial, gender, and physical hierarchy. It is his desire to be the “man” of the cell, to be the dominant force that sets its body against others, to out-masculine his cell-mate and, through intimidation and violence, dominate the space by driving others out of it. The means by which he seeks to accomplish this is by performing the role of the victimizer and torturer, rendering Skip the victim and object of physical pain and domination. Yet, the physical confrontation between the two boys shatters this binary, bringing into question notions of mutuality in physical experience and bodily pleasure. The exchange of physical pain disrupts the internalized hierarchy of these two boys for a brief moment, allowing physical pleasure to exist as not a consequence of intentional violence, but as an alternative to it. The event which comes at the climax of this specific scene is Mac's intrusion and our introduction to his preferred method of control, one of sexual violence and torture. Mac's intrusion serves to reorient power in this scene. On one level it is rather unfortunate that Greene utilizes the age-old trope of “rape equals redemption” as instant key to character recovery in

order to reinscribe Leroy's subject position from that of victimizer to victim. Yet, on another level the rape itself as a form of torture is rather critical for the construction of gay identity in the novella. The various boys in the prison are Mac's objects of desire. Yet, the sexual intercourse he seeks with these young men is a form of desiring production rather distinct from any previous sexual encounter in the novella. It is desiring production that has become torturing production and, eventually, murdering production.

These conjunctions, these romantic alliances that spring forth from alienated individuals competing over power and space, Hayes argues, “represent forms of opposition to the staff's methods of control since they provide relationships in which the inmates can act of their own volition” (Hayes 256). Yet, on a much more significant level the act itself goes beyond the representative. Sex is not panacea in Leroy's and Skip's cell; it does not cure or remove the pain of Leroy's rape, but it does manifest as a uniquely mutual kind of pleasure seeking in both boys' bodies that actively produces changes in their lives, while rejecting the reproduction of power difference. Indeed, the very thought of some kind of mutuality seems to emerge in both minds at once: “And then, as though both boys had the same thought simultaneously and both been frightened to their core of the meaning of it, they broke apart and fell at each other once more in earnest” (81). The response to this mutuality of desire is to immediately engage in a violent confrontation over the newly shared space of the cell, a way of expelling bodily energy that does not contest the law of power difference in the prison. Indeed, the nature of the conflict itself as Leroy frames it - a racial one between a “white mother-” and “black bastard” - belies the actuality of the conflict as a result of sexual tension (Greene 79). The conflict, however, ceases after it becomes apparent that the desire they feel is mutual and they seek the same kind of pleasure, pleasure divorced from the contest of domination and the continued production of

alienation and subordination.

While the system itself may not condone or directly codify or regulate rape in any legalistic way, the act itself is still part of the technology of control employed by those set in place to manage the system. This act of torture, therefore, is both part of the carceral apparatus, yet at once not. The communal bathroom in which Leroy learned of the sexual liaison between Mac and Connel is the same location in which Mac rapes Leroy. The rape takes place in a ritual space, a space that revisits the “crime” in the same way that public torture and execution of the early-modern west revisits the crime of murder on the body of the offender. The body itself becomes a space, its domain and externality ever shrinking in the face of the growing power and space of the torturer. Leroy's rape is a sign of both the autonomy of the carceral space of the prison, as well as a sign of the ritualistic significance of the act itself. The rape is both modern/not-modern, as well as private/not-private. It is an act bound up in its own hybridity. The screams of pain from the bathroom are clearly and intentionally heard by everyone in the cell-block. The act is a sign of deterrence, a warning to the populace. Just as the torture and execution of the regicide serves as warning against the violation of the sanctity of the king's body, Leroy's rape is both a warning against the violation of the sanctity of the guard-king's privacy, which exists as an extension of his body, and a way of applying this law “not so much to a real body capable of feeling pain as to a juridical subject, the possessor, among other rights, to the right to exist” (Foucault 13). Yet, the rape fails to produce the kind of knowledge that Mac had intended. Rather, the rape obliterates the discourse between Skip and Leroy, serving in many ways to reset their relationship and on a basis of new-found understanding.

Leroy's rape drastically reorients the conditions of the relationship between himself and Skip. Where the sexual tension between Leroy and Skip still exists, it exists in the shadow of

Leroy's immediately recent rape from Mac. Skip contextualizes Leroy's rape by the knowledge of his own use and abuse: "*I needed his money. And he was using me right back, only it turned out he was using me more than I was using him,*" as he tells Leroy about his being cruised by the older man at the beginning of the novella. Leroy rejects the story for what it is, a showing of mutuality, "So?" the boy shrugged. "You breaking my heart, man. One faggot cheats another. So what?" (Greene 97). Skip, however, continues to try and convince Leroy of their mutual suffering, of their having been used and discarded by others as a shared aspect of their lives. They both, Skip argues, are defined by their alienation from the world and their abuse by those with the means to abuse. The scene in which Skip actively tries to convince Leroy of their sameness is also one punctuated by Leroy's instance that he "ain't no faggot" (98). Indeed, this becomes something of a mantra for Leroy, never really proclaiming what he is, only constantly affirming that he "ain't no faggot." To be a "faggot," however, is a description less of sexuality, but of power. To be a faggot is to be a product of discourse, something produced by the talk of others, a condition built upon powerlessness.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, Leroy is seemingly the one prisoner most aware that "A male prisoner's rank in the hierarchical world of prisons is measured by traits stereotypically associated with masculinity, including physical strength and physique, ability to commit acts of violence and self-defense, and the nature of the offense that led to incarceration" (Mogul 99). Skip eventually, however, pleads a case for love, saying that "I need you Leroy...Maybe it's because I never had anybody to need before. Maybe it's because I know you need somebody to need you. Maybe it's even because I want to help you forget about what they just did to you – and help myself forget about what people did to me" (Greene 99). The scene is

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17 The example of a "faggot" provided by Leroy is Charles Connel, who constructs his identity as a reaction to his alienation and the reputation his attempts at eliminating that alienation got him. Growing up, everyone called Charles Connel a "faggot" either to face (or more commonly behind his back) so he decided to become a stereotypical, near-parody of what those around him thought a "faggot" should be.

one which lacks certainty. There are many maybes, few concrete plans or declarations. Indeed, the scene serves more to deplete meaning and memory than to produce any tangible new condition. Yet, that, I argue, is essential to the way in which Greene conceives of “good” sex: it is sex that ultimately exists on the basis of its own meaninglessness, of destroying the discourse that led to their sharing the same cell. Ultimately, language is evacuated from the scene in order to produce an instance of bodies sharing pleasure, free from discourse and the signification of difference and hierarchy.

According to Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain*, “It is only the prisoner's steadily shrinking ground that wins for the torturer his swelling sense of territory” (36). The conqueror seeks to expand his powers and energies outward, planting his flag in virgin soil (deterritorialization) while simultaneously terrified of losing himself to the expanse before him. Through torture, the torturer gains absolute control over the world of those subjected to his rule, reducing it to the manageability of moldable and expendable flesh and solidifying his own identity as immutable and impenetrable. In *Behind These Walls*, however, the byproduct of such torture bears a productive effect in the love-story between Skip and Leroy. Leroy's territory is lost through the torture act of rape. Yet, in sacrificing his personal territory in physical love with Skip, Leroy engages in a production of something much more powerful and productive than that of personal territory. The machinic production of desire through Skip is facilitated by a productive and willing sacrifice of personal territory and by an exposing of personal vulnerability. This action leads to a relationship between Leroy and Skip based on a shared status of victimhood, from which other horizontal conjunctions, specifically their romantic relationship, spring, and which serve to eliminate the condition of their total alienation from other people.

The act reverberates throughout the cell-block, its impact transforming the boys who hear



of it. Ironically (or perhaps appropriately), Mac's rape of Leroy has the opposite of its desired effect. It produces more knowledge than what it had intended. The rape at once serves to show the inmates the power of the guard, but also brings about an interaction between Skip and Paul that spreads the knowledge of Mac's sexual liaison with Connel/Petunia. Skip, distraught over the rape of Leroy, is comforted by Paul, who listens to Skip's account of the event and learns of the learns of Mac's and Petunia's sexual intercourse in the bathroom the previous day. In addition, this lone act of kindness in the face of Mac's act of sexual violence serves to explode the confines of Paul's and Rick's own relationship. Rick, jealous of Paul's kindness towards Skip and fearful of Paul having moved on to a different partner states of Leroy's rape that "He had it coming to him...Maybe by the time Mac's through with him he'll know his place a little better" (Greene 89). Rick attempts to engage Paul in sex as a way of reclaiming their relationship on his hierarchical terms. Paul refuses and Rick, mimicking Mac's rape of Leroy, attempts to rape Paul; "You're gonna get something from me tonight that'll make you remember who's number one around here," proclaims Rick. Yet, Rick's own act of sexual violence, much like Mac's, produces far more and various knowledge than intended. Rather than disciplining Paul, the act becomes one of desperate intimacy for both boys. Rick's question of "You feel that...you know who that is?" becomes overdetermined (Greene 91). What is produced is not knowledge of dominant/subordinate relations but of an intimate sexual economy which, much like eventual relationship between Skip and Leroy, is based upon victimization and loneliness. Who or what Rick is becomes a question of the nature of shared experience and of a mutual possessiveness that goes beyond subject/object hierarchy. The nature of knowledge during the attempted rape becomes inverted in the climax. What Rick perceives as rape (something for which he feels incredible guilt), Paul better understands as an act of implicitly consented, if violent, love-

making. The act of anal-penetration fails to produce the intended silence. In the mutuality of pleasure, Paul's voice is freed. His desire becomes expressible, where before, in the act of oral-sex, it was silenced in his service to Rick's body.

Mac himself attempts to force this model upon Leroy, the most overtly rebellious and, in some ways, least-disciplined subject of the reformatory. Mac establishes Leroy's rape as a starting point for a larger project of discipline and control which stretches far beyond the walls of the Seneca Country Reformatory. Indeed, Mac's ultimate plan is to ensure that Leroy, who is eighteen years old and on ill terms with the reformatory's warden, is transferred to the state penitentiary. "I know your kind, boy," says Mac as he taunts Leroy, "You can't help but get into another scramble" (Greene 122). Leroy indeed cannot, literally, do anything to affect his delinquent status, Mac suggests, because of his rebelliousness. This is the key to Mac's obsession with Leroy, a figure who, drastically unlike Connel, refuses to reciprocate affection and submit to power. Indeed, Leroy offers Mac an eternal contest, a fetishized resistance to authority that the novella's primary figure of authority feeds upon. His blackness and his rebelliousness are the tools by which Mac intends to construct the conditions for Leroy's transfer. The transfer's ultimate purpose is to relocate Leroy into an even more structured and authoritarian space, one in which Mac has "friends" with whom he wishes to share Leroy. Mac's strategy for ensuring this transfer is to rape Skip in the same way he raped Leroy, by removing him from their shared cell after a moment of physical intimacy. The attack against Leroy by Mac is one of torture by proxy. Leroy is faced with Skip losing his own territory to Mac and Leroy doing nothing, an act of betrayal by Leroy for not defending Skip, or of defending Skip, leading to Leroy's transfer to the state penitentiary. Either way, Mac's aim is to both destroy the mutual pleasure formed by Leroy and Skip's relationship and in doing so producing a more permanent desiring machine of his own

with Leroy. What we see at the end is the product of the fragility of the relationship between Leroy and Skip and the intense, narcissistic, cruel desires materialized in Mac.

Skip and Leroy's forming of a horizontal, rather than hierarchical relationship is significant in its relationship to power in that its relationship to control is extraordinarily ambivalent. It both produces pleasure for Skip and Leroy, while also serving to produce the greatest threat to both of them that there possibly could be. Indeed, in many ways the love between these two men is not something that the carceral state truly tries to deny - even though in the text that is, consequently, what is going to happen if Mac has his way and Leroy is sent to a state prison – but rather that is, in many ways, something the carceral state desires more than anything else. The production of loved ones is the production of the greatest possible tool of control over any one individual for any kind of coercive force or authority. Greene's understanding of this serves to destroy most of the romantic possibilities for the two lovers, while also critiquing resistance and, as Hayes suggests, its utopian sentimentality.

Yet, Mac's plan both succeeds and fails based upon his inability to perceive this mutuality of desire between Leroy and Skip. Leroy's and Skip's mutual desire subverts Mac's expectations of Leroy's reaction to Skip's attempted rape, as they are in a relationship that ostensibly operates outside of power difference. Leroy comes to Skip's rescue, as Mac had expected, yet Leroy's choice of violently attacking and temporarily incapacitates Mac supersedes his expectations. Leroy has, effectively, consigned himself to death rather than face Mac's plan of re-locating and reterritorializing him within the prison system. Although Leroy decides that if he is to be removed from Skip and to be re-alienated, that he would rather it be on his own terms than on Mac's, he is killed by a deranged Connel as he tries to flee the prison. The nature of Skip and Leroy's sexuality and Mac's inability to comprehend Skip and Leroy's relationship produces the

conditions of both the deaths of Leroy and Mac and the continued changes in Rick's and Paul's relationship that we see in the final sentences of the novella.

The final act sees the death of both Leroy and Mac; Leroy murders Mac for the rape, and Petunia/Connel kills Leroy in retribution, only to go insane in the end. Yet, any reading of the text that locates the romance between Leroy and Skip as an act of resistance to the powers that be fails to accept that formations of desire as resistance merely serve to recodify the act itself in another form of discourse. Indeed, the most productive material consequence to the relationship between Skip and Leroy is the death of Mac, whose reign of terror ends, thereby allowing for the possibility of a breakdown in the violent, sexual hierarchy that defined the reformatory. Indeed, we see at the end Paul and Rick, still alive, coming together, themselves traumatized by the violence that has taken place in their cell-block, to mourn the loss of both Skip and Leroy. What forms in the end between Paul and Rick is a relationship and a kind of mutual desire that mirrors that of Leroy and Skip, two people, lost and victimized, alienated from each other and from the world, finding a moment of happiness with each other. Whether or not Paul's and Rick's relationship is as fragile or easily destroyed as Leroy's and Skip's remains to be seen, but the ending reaffirms the capacity for individuals to change, to move beyond sex as signifier, and by working together to produce an end to their individual aloneness.

## DESIRE AND FANTASY IN ERICA JONG'S *FEAR OF FLYING*

At the time of its 1973 release *Fear of Flying* was widely acknowledged as controversially risqué for its unabashed presentations of the material female body, and indeed for its unabashed depictions of all bodies. Such depictions are a significant element of the novel's poor reception in certain circles. One reviewer at the time of the novel's release wrote that they felt *Fear of Flying* was a “dull and dirty book” (*Best Sellers* 425). Another such reviewer noted that it was “difficult to review in a gentlemanly manner,” but, apparently finding the strength to do so, concluded that “everyone and everything Miss Wing describes with enthusiasm is disagreeable, and whatever she sneers at is generally pleasant” (*The Times Literary Supplement* 813). Such “disagreeable” depictions are, the reviewer suggests, one's such as the nude male and female body: what they look like, feel like, smell like, etc. Indeed, in spite of this (and many other) reviewer's obvious disdain, his criticisms nonetheless beg the question as to why, specifically, Erica Jong was so invested in depictions of material bodies. I believe that these unabashed presentations of the body are directly tied to the novel's attempts to mediate the flow of desire that exists between fantasies of fulfillment and the difficult realities of human relations. The main character and narrator of the novel, Isadora Wing, embodies both culturally inscribed fears regarding the limits of bodily self-control and sexual desire and the desire felt by many for a way outside of these limitations. *Fear of Flying* was only one of the many consciousness raising (CR) novels of second wave feminism – texts which were defined by a “utopian project of total social transformation” and often by explorations of alternatives to traditional thinking about happiness, desire, sexual relations, and propriety (Hogeland 12). Within this historical

context, I hope to suggest that rather than undertaking a utopian fantasy of full personal and social transformation, *Fear of Flying* undertakes a fuller renegotiation between the protagonist and the world in which she lives, a kind of bildungsroman based on the formation of compromise between desired fantasies and achievable realities.

The novel's nature as consciousness raising attempts to promote a specific female conceptualization of the body, cultural prescriptions and all. Isadora's anxieties about her own body, its image, and how others perceive it exemplify a feminist project that directly confronts patriarchal attempts at circumscribing female experience within a private sphere of experience, one in which female bodies are regulated by masculine desires and anxieties about those bodies. This being the case, Jong's project is ultimately exhibitionistic in its unregulated, uncensored, and distinctly unflattering representations of the human physical form and the mobilization of the body to achieve individual pleasure. If such a project can be understood in any one sense, it is perhaps best understood as establishing a counter-narrative to what Susan Bordo describes as the "determinist fantasy" of the female body. Such a fantasy, Bordo describes, is a fantasy of constant physical change, yet also change within a limited and static framework of representation. "Fantasies of rearranging, transforming, and correcting, an ideology of limitless improvements and change," an order based upon top-down arrangements and hierarchical power, marks the determinist fantasy of patriarchal society (Bordo 245). These improvements directly coincide with the marginalizing of non-normative experience and of the slow destruction of variation amongst culturally acceptable physical body models. Jong's work serves to recuperate a way of conceiving bodies as loci of desire, rather than loci of individual power. Indeed, bodies in Jong's texts frequently serve to deconstruct notions of physical power and personal agency. For Isadora, the body is too open to the world, too easily influenced by the desires depicted in the

media and consumer culture around her, yet also too limited in the options such depictions provides for the managing of fantasies and desires. The fantasies and desires in this world of “improvements” are ones that reduce the significance and ubiquity of bodies in the world, not only through limiting representations of individual bodies, but also of representing individual bodies in terms of how they differentiate from pre-existing models or ideals (Bordo 278).

Much of the opening chapters of *Fear of Flying* serve to place Isadora's initial fantasy of the zipless fuck within an ironic context that deconstructs the fantasy itself. Isadora describes this idealized sexual encounter as “a platonic ideal. Zipless because when you came together zippers fell away like rose petals, underwear blew off in one breath like dandelion fluff. Tongues intertwined and turned liquid. Your whole soul flowed out through your tongue and into the mouth of your lover” (Jong 17). Isadora's description continues that another necessary aspect of this ideal encounter is brevity, for to spend too much time with a person would inevitably lead to over-analysis of her partner, with his becoming little more than “an insect on a pin, a newspaper clipping laminated in plastic” (Jong 18). The example of this scenario that Isadora shares with the audience originates from her memory of an Italian film in which a “tall languid-looking soldier, unshaven, but with a beautiful mop of hair, a cleft chin, and somewhat devilish, lazy eyes,” seemingly forces himself upon a widow in a “tight black dress which reveals her voluptuous figure” (Jong 19). Initially the soldier massages between the legs of the crying widow, engaging in full sex only when the train - all too symbolically - enters a long, dark tunnel.

This scene could easily be described in terms of hegemonic masculinity and sexual aggression – the encounter can easily be read as an act of public rape, a sexual aggressor taking advantage of a woman in mourning. Yet, the scene's significance within the novel itself is best

understood in the context in which it is given to the audience. Isadora is on an airplane, flying to Vienna with her husband, literally surrounded by psychoanalysts, many of whom have, at one time or another, psychoanalyzed her. While her fantasy of the zipless fuck is innately malleable – a train can easily be replaced by an airplane and a nameless soldier can easily be replaced by a captain, male flight attendant, or any other fellow passenger – the reality of her surroundings serve to highlight the problematics of the fantasy itself. The eroticism of the fantasy suggests the possibility of the existence of wordless passion, but the immediate presence of dozens of psychoanalysts drowns the fantasy in discourse. Passion and sexual desire as wordless has no meaning to an airplane full of psychiatrists, individuals whose occupations revolve around the production of discourses of “truth” and of the extraction of the truth from patients (Foucault 60). Almost simultaneous to informing the reader of Isadora's fantasy Jong also informs us of the cultural conditions which resist that fantasy's materialization. The culture of which she is a part has, as Foucault might say, talked desire to death, and produced as delinquent or pathological those who attempt to make such desires real. “I knew my itches were un-American,” laments Isadora, “– and that made things *still* worse. It is heresy in America to embrace any way of life except as half of a couple. Solitude is un-American. It may be condoned in a man – especially if he is a 'glamorous bachelor' who 'dates starlets' during a brief interval between marriages. But a woman is always presumed to be alone as a result of abandonment, not choice” (Jong 17). Significantly, what seems to define the fantasy for Isadora is its representation of female sexuality outside of the context of an established or defined relationship. What is unusual about the fantasy of the train is not the public exposure of sexuality (since, after all, marriage serves to signify sexuality within specific confines), but rather the woman's desire for an autonomous sexuality that is not defined by one's partner's sexuality.



“For the true, ultimate zipless A-1 fuck, it was necessary that you never get to know the man very well,” proclaims Isadora (Jong 18). Such a statement, of course, further emphasizes the relationship between the fantasy and the conditions of Isadora's life. Isadora is trapped in a loveless marriage, a fact which seems to give the significance of the scene and the details given all the more significant, particularly in light of the fact that the woman on the train is a recent widow, someone made permanently free of her husband through his death. While the fantasy itself is devoid of dialog, it is not devoid of meaning and signification. What Isadora attempts to depict as an act of intense physical desire between two individuals may be better described as a fantasy of the possibilities of desire outside of the confines of marriage. Indeed, marriage is in many ways depicted as anathema to the definition of the zipless fuck, and moreover the marriage between Bennett and Isadora is one that has become couched within mutual disdain, annoyance, and constant overanalysis: “Wise up Bennett, old boy...you'd probably marry someone even more phallic, castrating, and narcissistic than I am,” Isadora claims (Jong 13). Such an experience of physical pleasure as she describes in her fantasy of the zipless fuck cannot exist within the confines of her marriage, largely for the limitations that Isadora and Bennett seemingly place on one another. For example, Bennett's response to Isadora's implied request for oral sex is met with the question, “Why don't you buy yourself a little dog and train him,” suggesting Bennett's own sexual neuroses at the possibility of being rendered sexually subordinate (or, to follow the dog theme to its natural conclusion, obedient) to his wife while simultaneously devaluing Isadora's sexual desires as a superficial cry for dumb affection (35). Given the nature of the relationship between Adrian and Isadora, it is no wonder that Isadora's fantasies suggest that to be a part of a couple is not to grow as a person, but to be limited, to be a component part of something else and fundamentally incomplete.

This notion of the zipless fuck as a fantasy of liberation is, however, just as readily contradicted by the construction of the fantasy itself. While the primary conflict and topic of the text is Isadora's affair with another man, what ultimately develops from the fantasy of the zipless fuck is her efforts to try and find happiness within her own marriage. We can see the seeds of this in the setting of the zipless fantasy and in its nature as a constructed, diegetic space. It is diegetic in that the fictional train scene was ostensibly constructed as a specific scene. Isadora's fantasy is also innately carceral, or prison-like, in the setting of this imagined film scene. It takes place in the restricted, public, and paradoxically private confines of the train car. According to Wolfgang Schivelbusch, the train itself is a carceral space, a space that is highly regulated, both in reality and in our imaginations. "The conductor," Schivelbusch writes, "was the civilian equivalent of the prison guard who controlled the cells from his central tower" (Schivelbusch 196). Indeed, given the nature of the scene itself, a train seems a hardly "free" space at all, as the confines of the compartment and the proximity of other individuals serves to limit any one given person's physical mobility. The depiction of the train entering the tunnel, while on one level symbolic, also serves to obfuscate the difficulty inherent in producing sexual pleasure between two bodies when the bodies in question are confined by their immediate conditions and surroundings. The moment of pleasure that seems to be the defining aspect of the fantasy itself is deconstructed by the very nature of the fantasy itself. The fantasy of the zipless fuck, it would seem, offers far fewer promises than Isadora initially perceives, merely trading the confines of one relationship for the confines of another.

In light of the problematics of her marriage, Isadora attempts to find the zipless fuck in her actual life, of mobilizing her fantasy to as close a material approximation of a consequence-free relationship, devoid of her usual neuroses and relationship anxieties. She attempts to make

the psychoanalyst Adrian Goodlove into her ideal: “Sweet Jesus, I thought, here he was. The real z.f. The zipless fuck par excellence” (38). That Isadora would immediately latch onto Adrian is rather obvious if one considers the various parameters of the fantasy of zipless fuck. Part of the fantasy of the zipless fuck on the Italian railroad involves the identification of the participants. The man in that fantasy is a soldier, presumably a soldier on leave. To be a soldier is to be a part of a “workplace that was homosocial and apart from 'civilized' heterosocial society” (Taillon 40).<sup>18</sup> Standard rules of decorum as a part of “polite society” do not operate in the same way in fantasy notions of such occupations. Adrian's language, the consistent use of words like “cunt,” implying a degree of superficial, racist sexual interest, “it's actually more Chinese *girls*, I fancy – but Jewish girls from New York who like a good fight strike me as dead sexy,” as a lack of shame towards bodily processes, “he farted loudly to punctuate” a comment about his parents, and Isadora energetically responding with “You're a real primitive...a natural man” all suggests a certain degree of sexual fascination with the idea of an unrefined, anti-intellectual, labor-class crudity (39, 40; Jong's emphasis). Indeed, Adrian is, superficially at least, a potential partner that is able to satisfy some modicum of the fantasy that Isadora envisions. The reliance on superficial crudity to attract Isadora is telling within the context of the problems faced by Isadora in navigating Adrian's sexuality. Indeed, the superficiality of Adrian is exactly what deconstructs Isadora's fantasies involving him, as he is far from “natural” in the terms Isadora wants. His sexuality and complete being, we see, is in fact completely superficial; his sexuality is indicative of the kind of crudity so commonly worn by men in an effort to hide femininity and sexual ambiguity (Plummer 182).

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18 Paul Taillon in his essay “To Make Men out of Crude Material” writes specifically of American railroad culture as a model for the masculine homosocial in labor intensive occupations in the United States in the early twentieth century. Regardless of the difference, his analysis of certain modes of masculine labor is applicable to Isadora's fantasies.

The brilliant irony of this affair is that Adrian is almost completely sexually impotent, at least towards Isadora (or, perhaps, all women). The reason for this is perhaps biological, but much more likely is the suggestion that Adrian is, in fact, a closeted homosexual. Indeed, the most useful element of this failed zipless fuck is that Isadora is forced to encounter the signification of the fantasy itself. As a fantasy, the zipless fuck exists within a potential conceptual vacuum – a fantasy heterotopia. To mobilize such fantasy in reality is to deny the reality of action and consequence, of over determination and signification. Isadora is forced to deal with Adrian's impotence and the reality of the failed nature of her fantasy and the inherent problematics of a fantasy defined by its refutation of more complex forms of relationships and of its rejection of the dialogic in sex. The closest Isadora gets to her ideal zipless fuck actually comes as a result of a pseudo-ménage à trois as Bennett invades Adrian and Isadora's shared hotel room. Bennett, Isadora recalls

...fucked me violently right there on the cot adjoining Adrian's. In the midst of this bizarre performance, Adrian awoke and watched, his eyes gleaming like a boxing fan's at a particularly sadistic fight. When Bennett had come and was lying on top of me out of breath, Adrian leaned over and began stroking his back. Bennett made no protestation. Entwined and sweating, the three of us finally fell asleep....

...The whole episode was wordless – as if the three of us were in a pantomime together and each had rehearsed his part for so many years that it was second nature. We were merely going through the motions of something we had done in fantasy many times...In the morning we disowned each other. Nothing had happened. It was a dream. (Jong 197)

This scene serves as an intriguing evolution of Isadora's fantasy. Indeed, the superficial elements of the encounter suggest the elements of the zipless fuck: silence, violent sexuality, performativity, the absence of any kind of acknowledgment of the event. Much like the sexual liaison between the soldier and widow in Isadora's original fantasy image there is an act of a taboo sexuality, one which the participants never verbally acknowledge or to which they give

their consent. Yet, the event is also filled with the extreme knowledge and overdetermined significance. Much like Mulvey's films, there is an extreme visual and observational element to this event, yet one in which the participants and observers are hyper-conscious of one another. The possible revelation of this scene is that Isadora's relationship with Adrian is an impossible pursuit because he is actually a closeted homosexual, someone who is more interested in the kind of fantasy Isadora entertains for herself – the recipient of violent, penetrative sex – rather than the role he plays, the ultra-masculine performer of such carnivorous male sexuality. The tragedy of this scene is that it performs the function of the zipless fuck all too well. Any progress to be made on an interpersonal level with either Adrian or Bennett is subsumed by the segregation of this fantasy heterotopia from the rest of their respective worlds.

In his essay on *Fear of Flying*, Aubry asserts that the Italian train fantasy of the zipless fuck is “makes this scene the closest thing to a feminist fantasy in the entire text” through the sexual independence of the female participant (Aubry 424). Yet, this later liaison between Adrian, Bennett, and Isadora indicates something of an evolution to the fantasy of the Italian film, a collision between the fantastic and the actual, physical act itself. Indeed, this scene itself is a marked evolution on the initial Italian train fantasy, specifically in the ways that the characters act in spite of their conscious awareness that, unlike in the initial fantasy, they must necessarily confront the event and process it in some way. For Isadora, specifically, this fantasy is the closest we see in the text to her actually achieving a fantasy as she conceives of it. Even within the confines of her marriage she gets her zipless fuck, a seemingly no-strings-attached, highly visceral, potentially uncomfortable, but still satisfying sexual encounter. It even exists within the confines of her marriage – Bennett does exactly what Isadora had wanted; desire is not subordinated to the ambiguities of language and interpersonal power, as so much of their

relationship seems to be. But what is most significant for this event is that the event, while significant, does *not* get talked about the next day: “confronted with a real event in their own lives they [Adrian and Bennett] couldn't even discuss it” (Jong 199). The reality of the fantasy is, as the fantasy seems to evolve from this event, one in which the fantasy exists not only in the doing, but in the later telling. Isadora's fantasy comes to encompass her vision of herself as a writer, as someone for whom the fantasy, while fun for what it is, is most important for what it does. In much the same way the Italian film inspired her own fantasy, so too do her fantasies, in an ideal world, influence the creation of someone else's.

This event represents a significant shift in Isadora's conceptualization of her ideal fantasy. Where before she seems to lament the constant belaboring of desire and sexuality within the construct of psychoanalytic discourse, this scene demonstrates the failure of desire through silence. Perhaps the most significant reason for this is that Isadora's initial fantasy of the zipless fuck can only operate within the confines of film (or more broadly, fiction) and the technical aspects of the medium in which it is deployed. Film and fiction has historically made extensive use of stock characters or characters that follow along specific character types. Such a mode of film-making is based on the idea that a character's value to a story is based upon that character's ability to function according to certain conditions. Film has historically relied on stock characters for entertainment and narrative efficiency. African-American actors and actresses in America's early cinema, for example, were almost universally cast in roles that mimicked existing stereotypes of African-Americans, largely for comedic effect and quickly written out of a given script as soon as their use is fulfilled (Bogle 4). Isadora's fantasy is one in which the male character enters as lothario, rake, seducer of women, and effectively dissolves after his usefulness is fulfilled. Yet the characters of Jong's novel refuse to dissolve. The men with whom

she seeks sexual satisfaction refuse to enter and exit her life at her convenience. Their bodies persist, problematically, even as she tries to rid herself of them. Rather than their night proceeding like the tryst between the widow on the train and the Italian soldier, Isadora's and Adrian's night is interrupted by a very alive Bennett, a character not so easily "killed off" and forgotten.

Such physical protestation and the eventual rejection of discourse between the two men as to the nature of the evening leaves Isadora annoyed at the events of the evening, eventually describing them as "Siamese twins joined at a crucial but invisible spot on the side of the neck." Yet, more important is the fact that Isadora has now, at the very end of the chapter, cast herself as character type in relation to both of these men. She describes herself as "Pandora and her evil box," the box, of course, implying her body (or, more specifically, her vagina) (Jong 199). The initial, passive, and yet powerfully mysterious woman on the train in the initial fantasy has been replaced by that of a chaotic and active female sexuality. The events of the night between Isadora, Bennett, and Adrian do not only serve to alter the significance of the male characters in the fantasy, but of the central female character. Instead of the female body as pure locus of sexual desire, waiting to consume and be consumed pleasure as script dictates, the female body in the end of this scene is recast as an expulsive source of chaos and change through its sexuality. The significance of this change is one which expands upon Isadora's personal agency. She has, at last, achieved some form of change in her life, but only through action. The fact that she is dissatisfied with the nature of the change is essential to the further production of new fantasies, fantasies embedded in the physicality of her writing instead of merely in the immateriality of her thought. Isadora as Pandora seems to reflect Helene Cixous's sentiment that "I, too, overflow; my desires have invented new desires, my body knows unheard-of songs. Time and again I, too,

have felt so full of luminous torrents that I could burst burst with forms much more beautiful than those which are put up in frames and sold for a stinking fortune” (Cixous 876). Cixous's call for women to produce and to create through the body is answered by Isadora and affirmed in later instances where the body is both exposed and full of productive energy.

Following the night with Adrian and Bennett, Isadora leaves with Adrian to explore Europe and attempt to discover, however that might be, a true fantasy of sex and desire. This trek, however, is also couched within Isadora's remembrance of her youth in an upper-middle class New York home, a part of a family of failed and bitter artists. This middle-section of the novel serves to trace the origins of many of Isadora's anxieties about being a woman and an artist, a product of a family that practiced a reserved prudishness towards sex while superficially endorsing the ideals of “free love.” The origins of her quest for her zipless fuck are, Isadora suggests, partially the fault of D. H. Lawrence, whose *Lady Chatterley* served as Isadora's introduction to sexual knowledge and also served as a model by which to measure her own capacity, or lack thereof, for ecstatic sexuality. “At fourteen all I could see were the disadvantages of being a woman,” laments Isadora. “I longed to have orgasms like Lady Chatterley's. Why didn't the moon turn pale and tidal waves sweep over the surface of the earth?” For a young Isadora, the constructedness of female desire is too much to comprehend, as she is forced to hunt for pleasure that is meaningful and good not because of the feeling itself, but because it triggers the production of some external phenomenon (217). What Isadora comes to fear most in this imagined quasi-impotency is that her sexuality and her capacity for desire and pleasure are non-productive, that she is creatively and physically barren and unable to be a “true” artist, and only truly suited to domestic slavery. Ultimately, these dueling images – one of a



barren, failed, lonely artist, and the other that of a Pandora like demigod of creative energy – compete in the production of further of Isadora's fantasies.

One of the most significant ways in which these dueling images manifest themselves in Isadora is through Isadora's rampant production of desire and her frustration in being unable to ever fully sate her appetites. Perhaps the most embodied desire Isadora expresses is in her desire to have a child. “Suddenly I wanted a child with my whole heart. Adrian's child. Bennett's child. My child. Anyone's child. I wanted to be pregnant. I wanted to be *big with child*” (348).

Pregnancy is a significant desire largely for the fact that it is the biological phenomenon that most directly represents productive desire. It is a literal symbol of non-virginity, of having been desired physically by another. More importantly for Isadora, it is a symbol of her non-aloneness. For Isadora, pregnancy and childbirth also signifies a means to produce an end to her aloneness, the ultimate incarnation of “turning to an analyst, to a lover, to a husband, a parent” for solace and understanding (348). Pregnancy is a bodily form that makes a stark declaration as to the fecundity of one's body and an exposure of “the inner body...indeed its entire inner economy” to the rest of the world (Laqueur 121).<sup>19</sup> Pregnancy for Isadora attests to the fact that one has the essential qualities of one worth desiring, of having a lover and of having had meaningful connections with that lover. Indeed, this discussion of children and childbirth perhaps needs be understood within the context of the failure of Isadora's past relationships, relationships that proved more destructive than productive and relationships which never lasted long enough to have children come of them. Isadora perceives her lack of children as a signifier of her inability

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19 Laqueur discusses models of body and their significance in the early-modern period, particularly emphasizing Bakhtin's discussion of “grotesque bodies,” which he identifies as reproductive bodies, largely open to the world, with their interiors exposed for the full view of the public. As a model of signification, one can argue that the pregnant body is one which is still labeled or categorized as grotesque or pathological in some way. For further explication on the topic, please see Zillah Eistenstein's *The Female Body and the Law*.

to truly be loved by another and of her body's hunger for new sensation, but it's inability to fully realize the expectations of Isadora's desires.

After relating her family history and her own fears about herself as a person and artist, Isadora has a dream that serves as another powerful, complimentary example of the evolution of the fantasy of the zipless fuck. Isadora experiences a series of dreams related to her anxiety over her difficulty in discovering the ideal partner, firstly her having to “walk a narrow plank between two skyscrapers to save someone's life,” whose life is never certain, but it is certain that failure to save this person's life would ultimately lead to the ruin of her own. Followed by this is a series of dreams in which she is back in college, Jong writing of the dream that Isadora “walked up a long flight of steps ...teetered on very high heels and worried about tripping over [her] gown” (398). She is handed her diploma and told that she is allowed three husbands simultaneously, but that those who are awarding her the diploma hope she will decline the allowance in favor of picking one. Isadora gives an impassioned defense of her right to all three, after which, Jong writes of Isadora, “I was picking my way down the steep steps, half crouching and terrified of falling. I looked into the sea of faces and suddenly realized that I had forgotten to take my scroll. In a panic I knew that I had forfeited everything: graduation, my fellowship grant, my harem of three husbands” (398). In the final dream sequence, the most important for my purposes, Isadora is back at graduation, making her way to the lectern, encountering the French novelist Colette, who acknowledges that Isadora's first novel was, at the very least, a beginning, albeit a “shaky” one. After this, Colette undoes her blouse and, Isadora says, “I understood that making love to her in public was the real graduation, and at that moment it seemed like the most natural thing in the world. Very aroused, I moved toward her. Then the dream faded” (Jong 225-226). The first two dream sequences involve a lack of solid mobility on Isadora's part. Awkwardly walking a plank

between two skyscrapers, afraid of falling, becomes walking in high heels, afraid of tripping over her gown, to receive her diploma. In each dream, Isadora's lacks control over both her body and her surroundings. She is all too conscious of the physical danger of falling in the first, and all too conscious of the embarrassment of falling in the second. Her physical instability in each reflects the unhappiness her pursuit of a culturally prescribed and acceptable male partner, or set of male partners, has brought her. Ultimately, it is in the model of Colette that she finds satisfaction and, ultimately, this final dream sequences is the only one which brings about any kind of narrative or individual progress in regards to Isadora's constant concern with her sexual and romantic happiness. It is this final dream sequence that most shows a reorganization of priority and desire for Isadora. While the dream fades before Isadora can engage in sex with Colette, the discursive potential of this scene has already been realized: within the framework of this final dream Isadora realizes that stability is an illusion and that a teleological endpoint for relationships and for one's desires is equally intangible. Even the dream ends on a cliffhanger, never quite realize the sexual act itself, but moving inexorably towards it. Isadora finds that personal satisfaction is found in expression, rather than the silence of her once ideal film, both in her creative works and in her free expression of desire and pleasure.

This scene figures as an evolution from previously expressed anxieties concerning the sterility of female entrance into the active, public world. Indeed, having lost both Adrian and Bennett, Isadora laments her affair, not for any kind of moral violation of trust between partners, but for the tragic impotence she believes her pursuit of the zipless fuck has cost her partners, as Isadora says that "I knew what I had done wrong with Adrian and why he had left me. I had broken the basic rule. I had pursued him. Years of having fantasies about men and never acting on them – and then for the first time in my life, I live out a fantasy. I pursue a man I madly

desire, and what happens? He goes limp as a waterlogged noodle and refuses me” (Jong 377). Her dream reconfigures the impotence of female sexual desire into a procreative power of self-representation in her dream, one which locates the female homosocial and female expression as the natural, generative seed of culture. The public nature of the event is similarly significant in the way that it mobilizes a fluid fantasy of desire, as Isadora engages in the same kind of voyeuristic fantasy modeled upon the initial example of the zipless fuck. The “naturalness” of the scene is embodied both in its homo-ness and in the public nature of the encounter. The zipless fuck as initially outlined by Isadora is significant partially because of its basis in mediated voyeurism: it is an encounter of which Isadora is aware precisely because of its filmic – and intentionally public – nature. In terms of scopic power, Isadora is both an exhibitionist and voyeur in this final dream sequence. There is a consciousness of being observed, but also an implied awareness of observing. The naturalness of the scene encompasses the social relations, the being watched and the conscious awareness of being watched, that define that brief, potential moment of homoerotic pleasure. Jong recovers a feminist fantasy by defying the normalized institutions of sexual relations in favor of a more fluid – the second dream melts into and becomes the final, third dream with Colette - fantasy of pleasure, even if the fluidity of that fantasy allows (or perhaps necessitates) it to be public.

If the masculine ideal of the woman is one of less-ness, or limiting the occupation, especially public, of the female body and its discursive abilities, then we can also understand a counter-narrative to this ideal as one which understands masculine fear of the female body in the female body's ability to violate these set cultural boundaries. Indeed, the public female body could be understood in this sense to be a contaminating agent for patriarchy, one which explicitly highlights a fundamental lack of control over the natural female body itself. Approaching the end

of her novel, Jong conceives of an intense menstrual experience for Isadora. So intense is it that the floor of Isadora's hotel room, Jong writes, "was beginning to look like the aftermath of a car wreck" (Jong 402). So intense is her bleeding that Isadora, someone who had always welcomed her period for its proof of her being not pregnant, for the first time regards her bleeding as part of the overall hassle of female body management, complete in her memory alongside training bras and the various gleanings of half-understood facts of sex gleaned from late-night television. Yet, even so the period for Jong takes on special significance within the body of the culture in which it occurs. Patriarchal conceptualizations of female menstruation range from understanding periods as "unabashedly...failed production" to viewing periods as signs of the contaminating influence of female bodies on the public spaces, much like patriarchal conceptualizations of the entirety of the female body (Martin 92-94). Yet, while Isadora regards her body's corporeality with marked disdain, she perceives her period as something of a mark of freedom, of the potential for independence from a purely reproductive act of femininity. In some sense, this reconceptualization of the period, perhaps the most intense symbol figure possible for the reality of female sexuality and materiality, demonstrates a clear evolution from Isadora's once gilded conceptualization of the zipless fuck. The heterotopic fantasy has been overcome by this crisis, a state in which Isadora must successfully mediate her own bodily needs and desires with her own surroundings, compromising and improvising (even making herself a makeshift diaper). Jong humorously recounts Isadora's attempts at disposing of her Kotex tab in a French commode, an act which only serves to clog the train, both literally and figuratively, of western society. Isadora's period comes to mark the end of this transformative period in her life. She comments that "Leaving Bennett was my first really independent action, and even there it had been partly because of Adrian and the wild sexual obsession I had felt for him" (390). The zipless fuck, a

model of a potentially unachievable ideal – all sex carries with it some burden of consequence, even if left unspoken – has served a useful purpose in a journey of self-discovery.

The novel ends with Isadora finally acting out a fantasy. More so than even with Bennett, Isadora was never able to truly find comfort or pleasure with her own body. Yet, here in the end of the novel we finally see Isadora relax and take pleasure in being alone, even if she is only alone so long as it takes Bennett to return to his hotel room. The ending demonstrates a fantasy that may be less about sexual temptation of another so much as it is the notion of self-acceptance, particularly bodily self acceptance and comfort with oneself. The novel's end is fundamentally uncertain in many ways: “Perhaps I had only come to take a bath. Perhaps I would leave before Bennett returned. Or perhaps we'd go home and work together and work things out. Or perhaps we'd go home and separate. It was not clear how it would end” (424). We, as an audience, are never privileged to see what fate lies for Adrian's and Isadora's relationship. Yet, to emphasize the plot in this instance would be to ignore Isadora's final warning to the reader: “Life has no plot...At least it has no plot while you're living” (424). The plot is immaterial to the ending, but what is material is Isadora. Naked, exposed, and still self-evaluating, Isadora looks over her body and decides that it is “A nice body” for the first time and only time in the novel.

Fantasies are, for Isadora Wing, a critical element in her developing a more complex relationship to both her own body and her own desires. A number of critics have read Isadora's returning to Bennett's hotel room and waiting for him in the bath as a mark of defeat, of Isadora having sacrificed her independence to return to the relative security of patriarchy. Such a reading, however, ignores the nature of the narrative as a story of the development of an individual's solidarity in the face of the unknown. Desire is, has been, and likely always will be an element to human sexuality. Essentializing it as a lesser form of sexual experience and as a succumbing to

cultural and hegemonic narratives fails to recognize the capacity such fantasies have for subversion of those systems. As Benjamin says, the actor masters the “apparatus,” demonstrating the capacity for individuals to act as free agents in relation to norms and systems of power that go far beyond their capacity to affect on an individual basis. Indeed, the actor grows to different rolls to expand their power over the apparatus (31). Isadora's fantasies evolve from a longing for a brief, consequence free bout of physical intensity to a fantasy of true, lasting satisfaction. True, Isadora may never get what she wants – we have no guarantee returning to Bennett will provide her the happiness for which she is looking, but the importance of the action lies in the acting. To pursue one's fantasies is not a sign of insanity, but rather the only sane thing one can do.

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