Literary Modernism and the Production of the Twentieth Century Homosexual Novel

by

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Statement of Originality

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis has been acknowledged. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

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Abstract

This thesis takes as its subject the relationship between modernist forms of novel writing and notions of a homosexual sensibility. In other words, this project is interested in the material conditions and development of writing by and about homosexuals in the modernist period. It tracks the categorisation of homosexual identities that have run parallel to the onset of modernism and their incorporation into literary works. I discuss the restrictions placed on homosexual writers in publishing openly, considering the radical publishing ventures which laid the groundwork for homosexual liberation throughout the twentieth century. This thesis aims not only to present an account of the conditions in which gay writing was formulated but hopes to shed new light on the taxonomy of the homosexual novel. It locates sites of rupture towards the liberation of sexuality and extrapolates them to understand the extent to which both modernist and postmodern writers and publishing networks played in this liberation. Examining novels from the *fin de siècle* through to 1965, this thesis considers how several modernist and postmodern writers – among them, Oscar Wilde, Marcel Proust, D. H. Lawrence, Radclyffe Hall, Charles Henri Ford, Parker Tyler, Jean Genet, and William S. Burroughs – were instrumental in building the movement that would ultimately free the constraints placed on sexually explicit and homosexually erotic art. I argue that the liberation of the homosexual novel was a process enacted primarily between the publishing and artistic networks of three cities – London, Paris and New York – with the geography of the homosexual novel being crucial in the fight for its eventual acceptance. This project thus follows the movement of writers between these cities as the changing nature of obscenity laws required, with the chapters of this thesis mirroring the spacial movement of homosexual artistic production during the twentieth century.

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Contents

Introduction

"Il Faut être absolument moderne!"[1]
- *Arthur Rimbaud, A Season in Hell*

The taxonomy of the homosexual novel is the primary concern of this thesis. It tracks the categorisation of homosexual identities that have run parallel to the onset of modernism and their incorporation into literary works. It is interested in the changing categorisation of literature depicting same-sex desire from obscene to becoming a genre of writing legitimised by cultural authorities, transformed into what Loren Glass terms "a mainstream marketing category."[2] By the end of the 1960s, courts in both Britain and the United States moved to adopt obscenity laws which recognised the redeeming social value of sexually explicit works of literature, accepting the "artistic merit" defence of explicitly homosexual novels.[3] This change allowed for a more accessible publication of homosexual novels within Anglophone countries. As Drewey Wayne Gunn and Jamie Harker argue: "during the last half of the 1960s, American publishers brought out over seven hundred works of fiction written by mostly gay men about gay men and marketed predominantly to a gay readership."[4] However, gay writers' ability to openly publish novels in Britain and the United States dealing with their experiences of sex and desire was only made possible due to the radical publishing ventures that laid the groundwork for homosexual liberation beginning in the early twentieth century. This thesis aims not only to present an account of the conditions in which gay writing was formulated but hopes to shed new light on this taxonomy of

1 Arthur Rimbaud, *A Season in Hell and The Drunken Boat* (Connecticut: New Directions, 1961), 89.
2 Loren Glass, *Counterculture Colophon: Grove Press, The Evergreen Review, and the Incorporation of the Avant-Garde* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 126.
3 Adam Parks, *Modernism and the Theatre of Censorship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 4.
4 Drewey Wayne Gunn and Jamie Harker, *1960s Gay Pulp Fiction: The Misplaced Heritage* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013), 1.

the homosexual novel. It locates sites of rupture, which I identify as "turning points" towards the liberation of sexuality, and extrapolates them to understand the extent to which both modernist and postmodernist writers and publishing networks played in this liberation.

Michael Bronski argues that "the very concept of 'gay fiction' is most usefully understood as a post-Stonewall invention, one that serves a specific political function."[5] However, as this thesis aims to show, there is a long history of struggle against censorship that homosexual writers enacted in the century before liberation. Writers producing novels before the gay liberation efforts of the 1960s and 1970s were instrumental in building the movement that would ultimately free the constraints placed on sexually explicit art. The geographically and temporally disparate writers that make up the case studies in this thesis were chosen as they all negotiated the cultural boundaries of acceptability in their depictions of the legibility of sexual difference. The geography of the homosexual novel's development is crucial to its eventual acceptance, and the chapters of this thesis mirror the spatial movement of homosexual artistic production during the twentieth century. The significance of place was vital to homosexual publishing ventures. From the artistic suppression enacted by Britain to the sense of Paris as a locus of freedom, to the eventual crowning of New York as the new homosexual publishing hub, this sense of place was in constant shift. Serge Guilbaut writes that "after the Second World War, the art world witnessed the birth and development of an American avant-garde, which in the space of a few years succeeded in shifting the cultural centre of the West from Paris to New York."[6] Guilbaut writes specifically about abstract expressionism and the rise of New York as a cultural centre, attributing this to the

[5] Michael Bronski, *Pulp Friction: Uncovering the Golden Age of Gay Male Pulps* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2003), 6.

[6] Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 1.

"reconstruction of American culture on new foundations laid by changes in the world economy in general and the American economy in particular. It is the history of […] a reevaluation of cultural signs."[7] America's rise as a hegemonic power was not just economic but included an ever-rising cultural dominance. Although for the written arts the 1950s was a time of constraining censorship, in the following decades New York would become a cultural centre dominating radical publishing. New York's cultural shift is marked out in Chapter Six. This thesis employs a structure that revolves around the literary works of Oscar Wilde, Marcel Proust, D. H. Lawrence, Charles Henri Ford, Parker Tyler, Jean Genet, and William S. Burroughs, as between them can be drawn a cultural through-line of aesthetic reference culminating in the 1965 obscenity trial of Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* (1959). Frederick Whiting maintains that "the controversy surrounding [*Naked Lunch's*] publication was the last instance of complete literary censorship in the US – the end of the unspeakable per se."[8] In this regard, the publication of *Naked Lunch* ends the era of modernist censorship regarding sexually explicit literary material, allowing anglophone gay writing to become more unrestricted into the late 1960s.

The freedom of the Press in France towards the *fin de siècle* was instrumental in publishing homosexually charged novels – both in French and English. The publishing ventures of Paris are pivotal to the narrative of suppression and liberation that characterises the taxonomy of the homosexual novel in this thesis. Arthur Goldzweig argues that in France: "when a revolution broke out, such as those of 1789, 1830 or 1845, censorship would be momentarily gloriously extirpated, but invariably reinstated at least in part almost immediately as freedom of expression posed a

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7 Ibid, 8.

8 Frederick Whiting, "Monstrosity on Trial: The Case of Naked Lunch," *Twentieth Century Literature* 52, no. 2 (2006), 145.

menace to governmental power."[9] By 1870, the establishment of the French Third Republic removed French censorship almost in its entirety. Goldzweig suggests that "the relative stability of the Third Republic witnessed the downfall of censorship once its strength had been firmly established."[10] In contrast to the repressive culture of Britain and the United States, by 1881 this Republic had passed the *Law on the Freedom of the Press* declaring that "the law […] repealed all previous legislation on printing and bookselling and proclaimed the freedom of these two industries."[11] The law did establish penalties against material which caused "outrage to public morals."[12] Yet after 1857, when Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857) went on trial, and Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857) faced similar scrutiny, authorities rarely removed literary works from circulation. This law mainly pertained to defamation and writings that incited hatred. Alongside this, the new legislation protected printers and booksellers from being prosecuted due to the material they printed or sold. The law commits to "restricting to the greatest extent the liability of the printer in relation to the criminal works that come off his presses, and that of the bookseller in relation to the works he sells."[13] This freedom was not the case in Britain or the United States. As those working in industries that furnished the publication of works of literature, such as printers and booksellers, could not be held liable, it became easier for writers to produce culture-challenging works of literature. In the first decade of the twentieth century, French writers such as André Gide and Proust began to cultivate subversive relationships with dominant sexual hierarchies. They challenged the suppression of homosexuality within literature in an explicit way

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9 Arthur Goldzweig, "Literary Censorship in France: Historical Comparisons with Anglo-Saxon Traditions, 1275 - 1940," *Comparative Literature Studies* 17, no. 3 (1980), 301.

10 Ibid, 301.

11 My translation. Georges Barbier, *Code Expliqué de la Presse. Traité Général de la Police de la Presse Et Des Délits de Publication : Tome 1* (Paris: Hachette Livre, 2018), 48.

12 My translation. Ibid, 29.

13 My translation. Ibid, 48.

that English language writers could not do in Britain or the United States. English language writers such as James Joyce and Charles Henri Ford to name but two, moved to Paris to take advantage of this freedom, with the expatriate literary culture in Paris beginning at the turn of the century. English language publishers such as the Obelisk Press and Olympia Press came into existence to publish sexually transgressive English-language writers within this culture, and the literary cachet of their existing publication in France eventually allowed for their publication in the United States and Britain. Glass's analysis of the history of the American Grove Press associates French literary production with the end of official American censorship: "Olympia's combination of highbrow obscurantism and pulp pornography provided the groundwork for Grove's title list, as the relaxation of censorship in the United States that [Barney] Rosset almost single-handedly precipitated in turn enabled him to cannibalise most of Girodias's catalogue from the 1950s."[14] Rosset's memoir outlines the political ethos of the Press to which he had dedicated his life: "I believe that I should be thought of as the publisher who broke the cultural barrier raised like the Berlin Wall between the public and free expression in literature, film and drama."[15] Grove Press would come to publish four of the case studies in this thesis that broke this cultural barrier, bringing banned work by Lawrence, Ford, Tyler, Genet and Burroughs to an American audience.

The formation and liberation of the homosexual novel, then, is the primary focus of this thesis. Modernist novelists were greatly concerned with notions of sexuality, and the cultural production of the homosexual novel became intertwined with the make-it-new ethos of modernist innovation. The seed of what would come to be recognisable as a homosexual aesthetic germinated in the decadent period, with decadence invoked by the writers of this thesis to gesture towards the

14 Glass, *Counterculture Colophon*, 20.
15 Barney Rosset, *My Life in Publishing and How I Fought Censorship* (New York: OR Books, 2016), 11.

legibility of sexual difference. Peter Nicholls states that "much that proved controversial about the literary forms of modernism has its origins in the writing of the nineteenth century, and especially in the works of French poets such as Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, and Stéphane Mallarmé."[16] Decadent sensibilities were, as Nicholls puts it, interwoven into the shocking elements of modernism. Through the works of Proust, Lawrence and Genet, amongst others, this sensibility was ostensibly homosexual in reference. Jack Babuscio defines a "gay sensibility" as being "a creative energy reflecting a consciousness that is different from the mainstream […] in short, a perception of the world which is coloured, shaped, directed, and defined by the fact of one's gayness."[17] Bronski asserts that "because it has to remain hidden, gay sensibility has expressed itself by implying rather than stating, by indicating with appearance what it was not allowed to state with content."[18] The hidden yet increasingly visible dialectic of this sensibility is integral to the formation of the homosexual novel. It becomes interwoven with the formation of modernism through the aesthetic application of decadence. The cultural formation of decadence and modernism, therefore, is integral to the creation of homosexual writing and the narrative of struggle against Puritan authority that modernism in general, and homosexual writing in particular, enacted to become legitimised.

The decadent movement employs a mode of writing which emphasises the relationship between literary style and the broader cultural conditions of society at the time of its production. Jane Desmarais and David Weir argue that after Théophile Gautier, "decadence could be regarded

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[16] Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (Berkley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1995), 1.

[17] Jack Babuscio, "Camp and the Gay Sensibility," in *Camp Grounds: Style and Homosexuality*, ed. David Bergman (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 19.

[18] Michael Bronski, *Culture Clash: The Making of Gay Sensibility* (Cambridge: South End Press, 1984), 57.

as something innovative and necessary, a means of expressing the new and hitherto unknown feelings produced by the experience of historical decline."[19] Desmarais dates the "development" of the concept of decadence "between 1850 and 1890 […] principally through the work of the poet Charles Baudelaire and the novelist Joris-Karl Huysmans – as a critique of urban modernity."[20] Coupled with this critique of urbanity, Weir understands that decadence is "more than a style because of the sense of social malaise the style conveys."[21] Implicit in the style, therefore, is the notion that society has altered for the worse: "no longer healthy, it is now decadent."[22] French decadence travelled over the English channel to the aesthetes in London and was taken up by Wilde. Wilde utilised decadence to render a sense of cultural anxiety surrounding the fears of decay and finality that the *fin de siècle* represented, as each country's empires were feared to be hurtling towards the end in a process of regressive decline. Vincent Sherry theorises that "the worried screeds of degeneration and the triumphal legends of decadence were rewriting the promissory mythologies of progress, turning the narratives of 'the new' on a backwards track in degeneration and into an aftermath circumstance in decadence."[23] The degeneration of Dorian Gray's soul in Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), combined with his waning aristocratic lineage, can be read in light of this decadent "backwards track in degeneration." Sherry argues that theories of degeneration allowed for "a framework of analysis" in which those in society seen as breaching the moral laws were considered to be reverting to a "primitive" state.[24] As a result of the homosexuality imbued within Wilde's text and the effeminate posturing of the aristocratic class

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19 Jane Desmarais and David Weir, *Decadence and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 2.

20 Jane Desmarais, "Decadence and the Critique of Modernity," in *Decadence and Literature*, ed. Jane Desmarais and David Weir (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 98.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Vincent Sherry, *Modernism and the Reinvention of Decadence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 30.

24 Ibid.

it presents, notions of immorality and criminality were not only congenital but became legible to the trained eye, able to be read on the body. The press lampooning of the effeminate aesthetic of the decadent aesthete became linked in the cultural imagination to the homosexuality of Wilde, widening the legibility of sexual difference. Sally Ledger contends that Wilde's arrest "cement[ed] in the cultural imagination of the 1890s an association between 'The Yellow Book,' aestheticism and decadence and, after April 1895, homosexuality."[25] Accordingly, the trials of Wilde would become a culture-defining spectacle exemplifying the culture of immoral legibility of a sexually perverse, decadent sexual identity.

In the wake of the Wilde trials, ostensibly masculine, heterosexual modernist writers often denounced decadence in their ardour to distance themselves from the mood of the 1890s, and decadence became a cultural style utilised to signify same-sex desire into the modernist period. As Kirsten MacLeod argues:

> The importance of 1890s decadence to modernism has long been underestimated, overshadowed by a narrative that celebrates the 1910s and 1920s as *anni mirabiles* of the 'make it new' oriented movement […] decadence, however, was alive and well in the 1920s, much to the chagrin of writers like Pound and Lewis, for whom it represented a threat."[26]

As MacLeod states, there was a distancing from decadence in the work of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis. In July of 1914, Lewis and Pound penned a polemic manifesto to a new English artistic movement termed Vorticism, contained within the short-lived magazine *BLAST*. The manifesto outlined Vorticism's aims to revitalise English artistic practices, setting itself up in

[25] Sally Ledger, "Wilde Women and the Yellow Book: The Sexual Politics of Aestheticism and Decadence," *English Literature in Transition, 1880 – 1920* 50, no. 1 (2007), 5.

[26] Kirsten MacLeod, "The Queerness of Being 1890 in 1922: Carl Van Vechten and the New Decadence," in *Decadence in the Age of Modernism*, ed. Kate Hext and Alex Murray (Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 2019), 229.

opposition to vestiges of Victorian culture "blasted" in an artistic embrace of the vortex. The Vorticists "blast years 1837 to 1900," including a denigration of nearly every aspect of Victorian culture, involving England, the "effeminate lout within," the "Britannic aesthete," and the "dandy."[27] Ann L. Ardis points to the way that the first stage Anglo-American modernists – borrowing Lewis's 1937 phrase, the "men of 1914,"[28] – made a break not just with the realist mode of the nineteenth century but with the artistic space of the 1890s itself:

> Pound's characterisation of the 1890s as "soft and muzzy," *Blast's* association of Wilde with Futurism's sensational sentimentalism, and its contempt for both the gentleman and the outcast bohemian; W.B. Yeats' retrospective rejection of his own *fin de siècle* "womanish introspection," T. E Hulme's, Eliot's, Pound's gendered rhetoric of aesthetic evaluation, which contrasts the 'hard,' 'virile,' and 'strong' writers they appreciate with the effete, effeminate, and/or female writers who do not, for one reason or another, make the modernist grade.[29]

Made more conspicuous by his absence, the spectre of Wilde preoccupied the literary coterie of the new bourgeoning century. He represented a threatening lineage that engendered sexual anxiety within the inheritors of the avant-garde at a time when the definitions of homosexual and heterosexual identities were beginning to form. This anxiety accounts for the misunderstanding that renders decadence and modernism contradictory terms. Sherry argues that "in its struggle to enunciate and assert its self-consciousness, the sensibility of modernism sometimes denounces decadence as its opposite and putative enemy, but their connection comprises and meaningfully exceeds any ready, general formulation as the antagonism of parent and child, of generations in succession."[30] Sherry argues for the interconnectivity of decadence and modernism, viewing them not as opposing literary movements, with one supplanting the other, but as a continuum of literary

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[27] Wyndham Lewis, *Blast: Review of the Great English Vortex* (London: The Bodley Head, 1914), 19, 15, 11.
[28] Wyndham Lewis, *Blasting and Bombardiering* (London: Calder and Boyars Ltd., 1967), 5.
[29] Ann L. Ardis, *Modernism and Cultural Conflict, 1880 – 1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 47.
[30] Sherry, *Modernism and the Reinvention of Decadence, 98.*

response to modernisation. Decadence becomes a "sensibility" evoked within modernist conceptions of "the events of extreme modernity," particularly in their response to the horrors of war. Supporting Sherry and Ardis's arguments, Kate Hext and Alex Murray state: "the clear demarcation of decadence and modernism must be rewritten to understand that they are not diametrically opposed but mutually constitutive and thoroughly implicated in each other's aesthetic development and textual politics."[31] This sentiment is particularly evident in the works of Proust and Lawrence, to name two, who reintegrated decadence into their depictions of the changing nature of society. Writing during the war years, both writers utilise decadence to portray the decline of civilisation but also to evoke a queer sensuality in their depictions of homosexuality, cited from Wilde's dissident legacy.

The "mutually constructive nature" of decadence and modernism evokes a sexual dissidence most often associated with notions of the queer. Heather Love suggests that "what makes queer and modernism such a good fit is that the indeterminacy of queer seems to match the indeterminacy, expansiveness, and drift of the literary – particularly the experimental, oblique version most closely associated with modernist textual production."[32] The undefinable and expansive nature of the term queer, which Love links with modernist textual production, evokes David Halperin's explanation of the term itself. Halperin posits that the term queer "acquires its meaning from its oppositional relation to the norm," becoming a "positionality" in relation to dominant hetero-patriarchal power structures rather than a rigidly defined identity.[33] Modernism

[31] Kate Hext and Alex Murray, *Decadence in the Age of Modernism* (Maryland: John Hopkin's University Press, 2019), 2.
[32] Heather Love, 'Introduction: Modernism at Night,' *PMLA* 124, no. 3 (2009), 745.
[33] David Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 62.

is loosely demarcated by the "experimental" textual production which deviated from the traditional narrative realism of the Victorian triple-decker novel. This "oppositional relation to the norm," Love suggests, renders modernism the perfect "fit" for expressions of queer sexualities. However, Judith Butler notes the "performativity" of the term queer, which "has operated as one linguistic practice whose purpose has been the shaming of the subject it names," being attached predominantly to homosexual individuals, encompassing any sexual or gender deviance.[34] Butler's conception of the term specifies its contextual usage by and against homosexuals, and in this regard, the "queer" textual strategies of modernist production must also invoke the deviance of sexuality, and this can be viewed in the modernist presentation of interiority found in the work of Proust, Lawrence, Ford, Tyler and Genet, regardless of their temporal and geographical distance from one another.

Colleen Lamos describes modernism as a "departure from inherited literary norms," consisting of a collection of writers and artists who were intricately "bound up with the idea of subversive innovation, responding not only to the explosion of technologies and commodities but to radically novel gender and sexual arrangements."[35] The modernist interest in new gender arrangements occurred, as Benjamin Kahan argues, because the "advent of modernism and homosexuality occurred simultaneously."[36] Kahan notes that as modernism was beginning to form alongside cultural understandings of same-sex desire, a "bidirectional" exchange occurred where "modernist writing often takes sexology as its source material."[37] Kahan suggests in the other

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[34] Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 172.

[35] Colleen Lamos, *Deviant Modernisms: Sexual and Textual Errancy in T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, and Marcel Proust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 16.

[36] Benjamin Kahan, *The Book of Minor Perverts: Sexology Etiology, and the Emergence of Sexuality* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019), 19.

[37] Ibid.

direction of this exchange that "many of [sexology's] early practitioners were themselves poets and novelists," referring to John Addington Symonds, Havelock Ellis, and Edward Carpenter, among others.[38] Similarly, Celia Marshik and Allison Pease argue:

> Overt interest in sexuality is one of the defining features of the modernist period. From burgeoning medical and psychological interest in declaring sex and sexual desire as fundamental to human experience and identity, to tabloid and court scandals that exposed same-sex behaviours to a mass reading public, to obscenity trials […] sexuality moved to the foreground of concern.[39]

The explosion of scientific inquiry into the mechanisms of desire and the pathologising of the figure of the homosexual in the second half of the nineteenth century actively fed the creation of literary works into the twentieth century. Proust's characterisation of Monsieur de Charlus and Lawrence's character of Loerke embody this notion of pathology. However, this idea is also found in modernist writing which does not centre on homosexual characters. Lewis's lampooning of the Bloomsbury group in *Tarr* (1918) characterises homosexuality as "the dregs of Anglo-Saxon civilisation," describing the writings of "the Cambridge set" as "the poor froth blown off the decadent Nineties."[40] As Chapter Three discusses, Lawrence framed the homosexuality of Maynard Keynes, Duncan Grant and Francis Birrel, members of this Cambridge set, in the same pathological language of decay. Fredric Jameson criticises "the polemic hostility to feminism, the uglier misogynistic fantasies embodied in [Lewis's] narratives, the obsessive phobia against homosexuals, the most extreme restatements of grotesque traditional sexist myths and attitudes," he finds as integral to the sexual politics of Lewis's novels.[41] While writing specifically about Lewis, Jameson highlights the broader hostility of other modernists, name-checked by Ardis, who

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[38] Benjamin Kahan, "Queer Modernism," in *A Handbook of Modernism Studies*, ed. Jean-Michel Rabaté (New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons, 2013), 348.

[39] Celia Marshik and Allison Pease, *Modernism, Sex and Gender* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 52.

[40] Wyndham Lewis, *Tarr* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 17

[41] Fredric Jameson, *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1979), 4.

rejected the new gender arrangements arising from the formation of homosexual identity, specifically attributing its formation to the decadence of the 1890s. Therefore, even though modernism's "opposition" to tradition had the potential to liberate homosexuality within the bounds of literary expression, modernist writers also had to contend with the prevailing cultural mores that rejected sexual differences.

Within this cultural rupture of modernism, the novel's very form was under siege by "modern" writers who no longer found the nineteenth-century triple-decker realist novel sufficient for the changing times. Virginia Woolf declared "in or about December 1910, human character changed" to explain the changing nature of literature.[42] Woolf defined a shift from the nineteenth-century realist novel's dominant omniscient and totalising narration to an interest in depicting subjective realities and internal consciousness. Woolf's date of 1910 coincides with the First Post-Impressionist Exhibition of the works of Edouard Manet, Paul Cézanne and Paul Gauguin, running from November to January of the same year. The post-impressionist's move away from notions of realism and naturalism caused scandal and prompted ridicule among the public for its abstract and startling depiction of naked bodies. However, the innovative modes of expression inspired modernist writers such as Woolf. Desmond Manderson argues that "one of modernism's distinctive features was its rejection of the focus on plot and its pursuit instead of what one might call the eternal recurrence of play and form and the priority of voice over event."[43] This priority of voice over event informs the formal structuring of novels such as Woolf's *Jacob's Room* (1922), Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and Proust's *Swann's Way* (1913). The narration of these novels centre

[42] Virginia Woolf, "Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown," in *A Modernist Reader: Modernism in England, 1910-30*, ed. Peter Faulkner (London: Batsford, 1986), 113.

[43] Desmond Manderson, *Kangaroo Courts and the Rule of Law: The Legacy of Modernism* (Abingdon: Taylor and Francis Group, 2012), 16.

around the interiority of characters' impressions of the world around them, which marked a break with tradition. As the nineteenth-century realist voice could no longer adequately express the human condition in the early twentieth century, the modernists' experiments with narrative techniques produced new modes of expression. Terry Eagleton notes that:

> [The] reason why the idea of character as Balzac or Hawthorne knew it no longer seems feasible in modern times is because in an age of mass culture and commerce, human beings come to seem increasingly faceless and interchangeable […] figures in Virginia Woolf tend to blur into each other, as feelings and sensations pass like vibrations from one individual to the next."[44]

This representation of individual "feelings and sensations" vowed to be a "truer" depiction of life, which reflected reality through a single narrative point of view constrained by the narrator's knowledge, understanding and biases, thereby eliminating the omniscience of the traditional authorial voice. Eagleton argues that "in a world where it is becoming hard to deliver an agreed, coherent, overarching account of human affairs," the modernists "pressed the psychological complexity of literary figures to the point where character in its classical sense begins to disintegrate."[45] The pressing of psychological interiority through so-called stream-of-consciousness techniques and the subjectivity of perspective Eagleton demarcates as essential to the modernist novel are the same techniques which allowed for the beginnings of the homosexual novel. Through the mediation of Proust's narrator on the psychological condition of inversion, Lawrence's representation of repressed desire, Ford and Tyler's fragmented interplay of queer voices devoid of moral concern and beyond, modernist formal innovation was integral to the innovation of homosexual expression.

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44 Terry Eagleton, *How to Read Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 69.

45 Ibid, 66.

In tracking the influence decadence had on modernism and the formation of the homosexual novel, Chapter One begins with the three trials of Wilde in 1895. The public fallout of these trials solidified an evolution of homosexual identity evoked by a decadent aesthetic within the cultural imagination. Ed Cohen reasons that:

> If the public disclosure of Wilde's erotic preferences and practices created new possibilities for articulating the difference between acceptable and unacceptable male gender identities, it also provided men who experienced similar feelings and attractions with a new way of expressing – both to themselves and to each other – the reality if not the health or acceptability, of their experience.[46]

The Wilde trials act as a beginning point for the "expression" of homosexuality within literature as a modern reference point utilised to express the "reality" of the experience. Chapter One unravels the literary impact this moment had on readings of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and the dissemination of homosexual coding through newspaper reportage of the scandal, shaping the relationship that notions of decadence and homosexuality would have with the modernist literature that succeeded it and the identity formation of a new sexual category. George Chauncey outlines that "in the dominant turn of the century cultural systems governing the interpretation of homosexual behaviour […] one had a *gender* identity rather than a *sexual* identity or even a "sexuality"; one's sexual behaviour was thought to be necessarily determined by one's gender identity."[47] After Wilde's much-publicised sexual habits became public knowledge, deviations in masculine posture became an indication of homosexual desire. Images of the effete invert were the dominant way writers depicted homosexuals in novels, usually to further a pejoratively degenerative view of sexual difference. This "interpretation of homosexual behaviour" will be explored in Chapter Two's consideration of Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-1927).

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[46] Ed Cohen, *Talk on the Wild Side* (London: Routledge, 1992), 100.

[47] George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture and the Making of the Gay Male World 1890 – 1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 48.

Proust continued the decadent aesthetic imbued with Wildean taint into his portrait of same-sex desires.

Michel Foucault famously argues that the understanding of homosexuality as an identity rather than a sexual act is a late Victorian invention:

> The psychological, psychiatric, and medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterised – Westphal's famous article of 1870 on "contrary sexual sensations" can stand as its date of birth […] homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species.[48]

Foucault locates the creation of modern homosexual identity in the explosion of sexological inquiry that began in the second half of the nineteenth century, identifying a certain kind of sexual actor rather than a sexual act itself. Foucault outlines the creation of a homosexual identity, and Cohen argues that the "public disclosure" surrounding Wilde's erotic preferences created "new possibilities of articulation" and expression of this said identity. Chauncey then suggests that this identity became inextricable from the expression of gender, where homosexuals' same-sex desires were seen as a "manifestation of their fundamentally womanlike character."[49] We can observe the cultural shift towards the legibility of sexual difference, as conceptualised by these three theorists, reflected in the novels of certain early modernists, such as *A la recherche*. Proust subsumed modern sexological theory into narrative and thus opened space for consideration of the homosexual character. Within the character of M. de Charlus, Proust considers how the figure of the invert negotiated the dangers of perceptibility, uncovering the coded way homosexuals moved through the world and the camp codes utilised to signal one another. The concept of camp will be

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[48] Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality Volume One* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), 43.

[49] Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 48.

discussed in further chapters; however, Jack Babuscio defines the term as "describing those elements in a person, situation, or activity that express, or are created by, a gay sensibility […] a relationship between activities, individuals, situations, *and* gayness."[50] Once made aware of this sensibility, Proust's narrator outlines the subcultural signals of the homosexual underground. By being a heterosexual outsider, the narrator guides these effeminate signs of inversion through the stylistic language of decadence, viewed as symptomatic of cultural degeneration.

Chapter Three locates a site of rupture in the works of Lawrence, utilising his lifelong struggle against British censorship as a case study of the constraints placed on the homosexual novel in Britain and the United States. Discussing the implications of the suppression of *The Rainbow* (1915) for Lawrence's literary output, the chapter outlines the culture of censorship that hindered both the production of modernism and the production of sexually immoral works of literature. In contrast to Proust, who could legally write about homosexuality openly, the legal situation of Britain did not allow for such things to be printed. The Obscene Publications Act of 1857 criminalised the sale or exhibition of "obscene publications," setting a historical precedent in the case of *Regina v Hicklin* (1868), which cemented a legal definition of obscenity lasting beyond the modernist period.[51] The "test" of a publication's obscenity was declared: "whether the *tendency* of the matter charged as obscenity is to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences and into whose hands a publication of this sort may fall."[52] The definition became ambiguous, and a work could be declared obscene regardless of the publisher's

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50 Babuscio, "Camp and the Gay Sensibility," 20.

51 In the Hicklin case, the text in question was the anonymous *The Confession Unmasked; Showing the Depravity of the Roman Priesthood, the Iniquity of the Confessional, and the Questions put to Females in Confession* (1865) – a diatribe which disseminated the alleged immorality of the Roman Catholic Church.

52 J. E. Hall Williams, "Obscenity in Modern English Law," *Law and Contemporary Problems* 20, no. 4. (1955), 632.

intention, fostering a culture that let anti-vice campaigners flourish. Alongside changing the definition from "intention" to "tendency," the court declared that if a single passage in a novel read out-of-context was deemed obscene, then the entirety of the text was deemed an obscenity.[53] Due to these laws and Lawrence's history of being suppressed, Lawrence and his publishers self-censored *Women in Love* (1920-1), removing passages detailing overt references to same-sex desire. To keep the homosexual sentiment of his novel, Lawrence was thus forced to write in a language of reticence and evasion. However, this language of evasion helps to further Lawrence's depiction of homosexual identity formation. As Rupert Birkin and Gerald Crich are isolated from any form of subcultural homosexual community, and neither man presents the propensity to effemination that has become indicative of a same-sex desire, they lack the cultural language of camp to articulate what they view as their deviant desire. Lawrence thus ties notions of homosexuality to decadent language.

Chapter Four marks a shift in argument from these earlier three chapters as the idea of place becomes paramount. It discusses the publication of Anglo-American modernism in Paris, evidencing the haven Paris had become for the freedom of modernist intervention. The English-language Obelisk Press was set up in Paris and its publication of Charles Henri Ford and Parker Tyler's *The Young and Evil* (1933) presents yet another turn in the history of homosexual representation. The novel rejects the verisimilitude of Proust and Lawrence's modernism in favour of a subversive surrealist affirmation of homosexual relationships. André Breton's surrealist manifesto states, "I believe in the future resolution of these two states, dream and reality, which

[53] Ibid.

are seemingly so contradictory, into a kind of absolute reality, a *surreality."*[54] Ford and Tyler's project subverts the fierce heterosexuality of Bretonian surrealism, whose notorious homophobia caused tension with other surrealist artists of the time, such as Jean Cocteau. Breton defines the surrealist process of writing:

> SURREALISM, *n.* Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express – verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner – the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by the thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern […] surrealism is based on the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of previously neglected associations, in the omnipotence of dream.[55]

The fragmented and dreamlike *The Young and Evil* liberated homoeroticism from the concerns of their literary predecessors in depicting the queer nature of their character's worlds "exempt from moral concern," and its publication in Paris allowed for this. Natalya Lusty argues: "surrealist artists and writers repeatedly turned to Eros – the life drive and pursuit of pleasure – as a concept and principle with which to explore the depths of dream and desire."[56] Lusty suggests surrealist artists "marshalled Eros" to explore "taboo and transgression or to unveil the extent to which society repressed aspects of the human psyche and its libidinal drives."[57] In 1941, during a conversation with Ford, André Breton remarked: "we must learn to read with and look through the eyes of Eros."[58] The exploration of heterosexual eros underpinned many of the original surrealist members' works, including that of Georges Bataille. Writing of Bataille's pornographic novel *Histoire de l'œil* (Story of the Eye, 1928), John Hoyles believes that within it, "the pornographic

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54 André Breton, "First Manifesto of Surrealism" in *Art Theory: 1900-1900: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 87-88.
55 Ibid.
56 Natalya Lusty, "Surrealism and Eros," in *Surrealism*, ed. Natalya Lusty (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 112.
57 Ibid.
58 Charles Henri Ford, "Interview with André Breton," *View* 1. 7-8 (1941): 1.

merges with the surrealist."[59] Lusty also argues that "the principal focus of Bataille's novel is adolescent sexuality […] Locked into a world of fantasy and obsession," the reader is "immersed in the pornographic imagination of an adolescent young man."[60] This pornographic immersal shines a light on what Breton termed "previously neglected associations," exposing the link between sexuality, unconscious desire, the imaginative dream state and the repression of the human psyche. In this regard, surrealism has a historic commitment to the production of obscene art, and this obscenity is carried over through the queer subversion of Ford and Tyler's surrealist prose.

Chapter Five continues this consideration of the surrealist turn in the taxonomy of the homosexual novel through a consideration of Genet's *Our Lady of the Flowers* (1942). Genet's first novel can be described as late modernist. Written and published during the Second World War, *Our Lady* was conceived during a time when notions of literary periods were in transition. In "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," (1983) Jameson dated the onset of postmodernism as occurring in "the late 1940s and early 1950s," and Genet's first novel is situated in this cultural turning point.[61] Tyrus Miller believes that "at first glance, late modernist writing appears a distinctly self-conscious manifestation of the ageing and decline of modernism."[62] This ageing and decline runs parallel to the concept of decadence, which, leaving the 1890s, had become a stylistic invocation of transition and decline. However, Miller continues: "such writing also strongly anticipates future developments, so that without forcing, it might easily fit into a narrative of

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[59] John Hoyles, "Bataille and Surrealist Pornography: Dance or Treadmill?" *Journal of European Studies* 25, no. 97 (1995), 57.

[60] Lusty, "Surrealism's Anti-Bildungsroman," 141.

[61] Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," in *Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Forster (London: Pluto Press, 1985), 113.

[62] Tyrus Miller, *Late Modernism: Politics, Fiction and the Arts Between the World Wars* (California: University of California Press, 1999), 7.

emergent postmodernism."[63] What Miller terms an "anticipation" of future developments manifests in Genet's work as a formalist rejection of the 'real,' incorporating techniques that undermine the modernist novel's verisimilitude. Matei Calinescu writes that "the prefix [post] seemed to do away with old restrictions and prejudices and to free the imagination for new, undefined, but extremely exciting experiences" in response to the "feeling that modernist literature was no longer relevant to a dramatically changed social and intellectual situation."[64] However, even though Calinescu characterises postmodernism as marking a rupture with modernist modes of writing, he also suggests that "postmodernism is mostly an extension and diversification of the pre-World War Two avant-garde, historically speaking, many of the postmodernist notes can easily be traced back to Dada, and, not infrequently, to surrealism."[65] In this regard, the subversion of surrealism enacted by Ford, Tyler and Genet bridges the gap between modernism and postmodernism.

Chapter Six discusses Genet's impact on the work of Burroughs, who saw the French writer as a figure to emulate. After excerpts published in the United States were deemed obscene, *Naked Lunch* (1959) was initially published in novel form by Olympia Press in Paris. Grove Press's subsequent American edition, published in 1962, was caught up in a legal trial which would, by 1965, liberate the homosexual novel from notions of government censorship. Grove Press was instrumental in this liberation. Glass's research shows that "Grove became a conduit through which the cultural capital of European late modernism flowed into the United States, ballasting the emergence of an indigenous American avant-garde and generating a veritable canon of

63 Ibid.
64 Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), 135.
65 Ibid, 143.

countercultural reading for the paperback generation."[66] Grove Press republished and then defended countless Paris-published novels. *Tropic of Cancer* (1934/61), *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928/1959), *Our Lady of the Flowers* (1942/1963) and *Naked Lunch.* The writers included in this thesis then become linked through more than just an interrogation of homosexual identity. Not only do they forge an aesthetic link of homosexual legibility through the work of the Obelisk Press, the Olympia Press and the American Grove Press, but the taxonomy of the homosexual novel also shares a fight against censorship in which the notoriety and prestige of each work were utilised to defend the next.

66 Glass, *Counterculture Colophon,* 16.

The Aesthete and the Threat of Decadence: Oscar Wilde in the Press

"Wilde: I then said to him, 'Lord Queensberry, do you seriously accuse your son and me of sodomy?' He said, 'I don't say that you are it, but you look it (laughter) –
Judge: I shall have the Court cleared if I hear the slightest disturbance again.
Wilde: – But you look it and you pose as it, which is just as bad.'"[67]

- *The First Trial of Oscar Wilde, 1895*

In the cultural imagination of the *fin de siècle* public, Wilde was the paradigmatic icon of the decadent movement. With the publication of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890/1), Wilde introduced the French decadent literary movement into Britain, a movement which, as the Introduction outlines, championed the purportedly perverse, and glorified deviant forms of masculinity. This decadent novel was denounced upon publication in prominent newspapers such as the *Gazette* and the *Scots Observer*, criticised in London's *Daily Chronicle* for its presumed homosexual references and "effeminate" style.[68] After Wilde was accused of "posing as a somdomite [sic]" by Lord Alfred Douglas's father – The Marquees of Queensberry – Wilde initiated a libel trial (April 3, 1895), where the decadent aesthetic of *Dorian Gray* was presented as evidence of his gross indecency. Queensberry's lawyer Edward Carson presented sodomitical references from Wilde's oeuvre to the jury to prove Queensberry's claim that Wilde "looked like" and "posed as" the figure of the sodomite.[69] Carson tells the jury: "I will suggest to you *Dorian Gray.* Is that book open to the interpretation of being a sodomitical book?"[70] The citation of *Dorian Gray* in Wilde's trial was pivotal in ensuring Wilde's conviction. The fictional work was read as

[67] Merlin Holland, *Irish Peacock & Scarlet Marquess: The Real Trial of Oscar Wilde* (London: Fourth Estate, 2003), 58.
[68] Unsigned review, *Daily Chronicle* (June 30, 1890), in *Oscar Wilde: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Karl Beckson (London: Routledge, 1970), 72.
[69] Holland, *Irish Peacock, 58.*
[70] Ibid, 81.

representing the same crime for which Wilde was later convicted. However, the reporters of the Wilde case could not cite the word Queensberry wrote on the calling card or the crimes of which Wilde stood accused, although the word sodomy was used within the courthouse. As Alec Craig outlines, this was because "accurate report of judicial proceedings" did not exempt newspaper reportage of court cases from accusations of obscenity and blasphemy.[71] In this regard, Wilde's crime was presented to the country through allusion and the language of decadence. And this language became vital in the dissemination of the new social type of the homosexual.

The Marquess of Queensberry's lack of differentiation between the accusation of sodomy and the idea of "posing" as a sodomite is crucial to understanding Wilde's impact on homosexual identity building and the trajectory of – in borrowing Carson's phrase – "sodomitical books."[72] In justifying his claims, the Marquess argued, "I don't say that you are it, but you look it […] which is just as bad."[73] This defence introduces two ideas. Firstly, in a Foucauldian sense, those who commit sodomy constitute a separate, perceptible category of men whom one could imitate and recognise. However, more so, that to "pose" in an effeminate way made you just as guilty of sodomy as a man who has committed the act. These ideas of "posing as" and the deviation in gender expectations arising from Wilde's persona bring forth notions of camp, defined by David Halperin as a cultural style "first elaborated by gay men as a collective, in-group practice."[74] Camp style is found as far back as the 1890s. Alexander Howard argues that the "burgeoning late Victorian interest in the relationship between the circuits of erotic desire and societal value" by the

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71 Alec Craig, *Suppressed Books: A History of the Conception of Literary Obscenity* (Cleveland, World Publishing Company, 1963), 37.
72 Ibid, 81.
73 Ibid, 58.
74 David Halperin, *How to be Gay* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2012), 135.

likes of Sigmund Freud, Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis, "speaks directly to the issue of camp."[75] Wilde can, therefore, be read in the cultural history of camp coding as the exposure of his sexual habits occurred within this cultural context. Moe Meyer has written on the history of "queer posing" through the concept of camp, which he defines "as the production of gay social visibility, i.e., the process for the social signification of gayness."[76] Moving through the *fin de siècle*, Meyer argues that camp "developed into the theatrical signifying system so identifiable in the performance of effeminacy."[77] While camp codes were a protective language unintelligible to the uninitiated, the pathologising of effeminate behaviour in men was creating a recognisable social type. This type was becoming increasingly visible, as Meyer suggests, "not on the basis of a person's private sexual expressions, but by his public behaviour, social conduct, and costume."[78] Consequently, the camp understanding of male homosexuality in the twentieth century has its origins in the aesthetics of decadence made pathological by the widespread dissemination of the Wilde trials. As camp was a coded language of reference to homosexuality that became legible for the uninitiated as the decades proceeded, the invocation of decadence can be read as a precursor to the politics of camp. Much like later camp, the aesthetics of decadence was tied to the politics of homosexual representation for those who were aware of the signs. After the fall of Wilde in 1895 these signs became widespread.

Kristen Mahoney argues that "the camp modernism of the 1910s, 1920s and 1940s compounds the decadent models from which it emerges, detailing minuscule worlds and tiny

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[75] Alexander Howard, "Solid Objects and Modern Tonics, Or, Who's Afraid of the Big Camp Woolf?" *Angelaki* 23, no. 1 (2018): 34.

[76] Moe Meyer, *An Archaeology of Posing: Essays on Camp, Drag and Sexuality* (Chicago: Macater Press, 2010), 1.

[77] Ibid, 9.

[78] Ibid, 61.

events in an excessive and ornate style."[79] Mahoney understands camp as a modernist integration of decadent styles, citing *Dorian Gray's* eleventh chapter as a reference point for such articulations by the likes of modernist Robert Firbank. For Mahoney, "the participants within the camp modernist tradition returned to the over-subtilising refinements of Victorian aestheticism's later stage […] allowing us to see how late Victorian aesthetics remained vital and present long after the century turned."[80] Wilde's camp aesthetic and the decadent sensibilities of *Dorian Gray* furnished the aesthetic of the homosexual novel as it developed into the twentieth century in what Alex Murray calls "an updating of decadent style for the new era."[81] Mahoney further argues that "part of what made camp modernism modern was its pronounced sexual dissidence," and this sexual dissidence carried over from the legacy of decadent texts such as Wilde's.[82] As a result, the style of literary decadence after that became indicative of a homosexual sensibility moving into the modernist period, where Wilde's early decadence became a continual reference point for the taxonomy of the homosexual novel. Further chapters will analyse the reintegration of decadent sensibilities within modernist texts. The main aim of this chapter is to outline decadent style and the relationship cultivated between decadence and homosexuality. This chapter analyses the impact the Wilde trials had in creating a ubiquitous homosexual aesthetic, tracking the development of decadence from an isolated literary movement to a camp precursor deployed in the novels of the later modernists this thesis discusses. Proust, Lawrence, Ford, Tyler, and Genet would all come to signify same-sex desire through implication of the form.

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79 Kristen Mahoney, "Camp Modernism and Decadence," in *Decadence: A Literary History*, ed. Alex Murray (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 342.

80 Ibid, 433-4.

81 Alex Murray, "Decadence Revisited: Evelyn Waugh and the Afterlife of the 1890s," *Modernism/Modernity* 22, no. 3 (2015): 597.

82 Mahoney, "Camp Modernism," 344.

The Style of Decadence in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Peter Nicholls argues that "*fin-de-siecle* art shares with the baroque a preoccupation with death and decay which manifests itself in a stylistic extravagance and morbid excess of the aesthetic."[83] This preoccupation with decay and stylistic extravagance can be read throughout *Dorian Gray*, beginning in the first lines of the novel: "the studio was filled with the rich odour of roses, and when the light summer wind stirred amidst the trees of the garden, there came through the door a heavy scent of the lilac, or the more delicate perfume of the pink-flowering thorn."[84] The "perfumed" smells of exotic flowers, the reader's first impression of the room, constitute a sensory overload with which the narrative becomes preoccupied. This preoccupation then immediately shifts to notions of pleasure and lethargy: "from the corner of the divan of Persian saddle-bags on which he was lying, smoking, as was his custom, innumerable cigarettes, Lord Henry Wotton could just catch the gleam of the honey-sweet and honey-coloured blossoms of a laburnum."[85] Lord Henry spends his time surrounded by the excesses of imported Oriental furnishings, his thoughts preoccupied with art and beauty. This leisure of the aesthete underpins a later pejorative comment made towards Lord Henry by his uncle: "what brings you out so early? I thought you dandies never got up till two, and were not visible till five."[86] With the descriptive language of the opening chapter, Wilde's novel depicts the aristocratic class's dandies as detached from the realities of work and the wider world, preoccupied with pleasure and the excess of artifice. While Lord Henry smokes on his saddle-bags, "the sullen murmur of the bees shouldering their way

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83 Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 52.
84 Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (New York: Dover Thrift Editions, 1993), 1.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid, 23.

through the long unmown grass, or circulating with monotonous insistence round the dusty gilt horns of the straggling woodbine, seemed to make the stillness more oppressive. The dim roar of London was like the bourdon note of a distant organ."[87] Peter Nicholls's idea of the "excess of the aesthetic" is illuminated through examination of this passage. The narrator details the beauty of the surroundings, both natural and artificial, through the various references to flowers, trees, bees and Japanese wall hangings, yet within their introduction is an undercurrent of decay. The "sullen murmur of the bees" combined with the "dusty guilt horns" of the "woodbine" enhances the stillness of the air. Life has become stagnant, evoking the decadence of ennui arising from a life given over to the pursuit of pleasure and sensual experience. The narrator then introduces another central figure to the narrative, yet makes this introduction through his artwork and reference to his eventual demise:

> In the centre of the room, clamped to an upright easel, stood the full-length portrait of a young man of extraordinary beauty, and in front of it, some little distance away, was sitting the artist himself, Basil Howard, whose sudden disappearance some years ago caused, at the time, such public excitement and gave rise to so many strange conjectures.[88]

Once again, beauty and art become the focus, with the "beauty" of Basil's painting framing his introduction. However, an offhand comment to his unexplained disappearance combined with the stagnation of life in Basil's art studio enhances the decadence of Wilde's presentation of aestheticism.

As a result of this commitment to the "purpose" of "the aesthetic," the style of decadence becomes an ornamentation of language, with an emphasis on what Sherry terms "the artifice" of the written word.[89] Within this artifice, sentences are constructed around aesthetic preoccupations.

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87 Ibid, 1.
88 Ibid.
89 Sherry, *Modernism and the Reinvention of Decadence*, 1.

Nicholls argues that "contemporary accounts of the style thus stress its likeness to jewelled ornamentation, brilliantly hard yet refined and atomistic."[90] Perhaps no theorist of the *fin de siècle* was more interested in and critical of decadence than Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche described the style of literary decadence in *The Case of Wagner* (1888):

> What is the hallmark of literary decadence? The fact that life does not reside in the totality any more. The word becomes sovereign and jumps out of the sentence, the sentence reaches out and blots out the meaning of the page, the page comes to life at the expense of the whole.[91]

For Nietzsche, decadence was a stylistic shortcoming where the emphasis on the aesthetic construction of a sentence weakened the "totality" of a novel. The whole work suffers when every other novelistic convention – plot and character – comes second to the description. The eleventh chapter of *Dorian Gray* is important as it represents the style of decadence so succinctly. The chapter epitomises this rejection of totality for the "sovereignty" of the sentence by condensing eighteen years of Dorian Gray's life into the sensuality of decadent excess, for: "he knew that the senses, no less than the soul, gave their spiritual mysteries to reveal."[92]

> At the outset of this chapter, the narrator outlines the decadent position:
>
> The worship of the senses has often, and with much justice, been decried, men feeling a natural instinct of terror about passions and sensations that seem stronger than themselves […] it appeared to Dorian Gray that the true nature of the senses had never been understood, and that they had remained savage and animal merely because the world had sought to starve them into submission and kill them by pain, instead of aiming at making them elements of a new spirituality, of which the fine instinct for beauty was to be the dominant characteristic.[93]

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90 Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms*, 57.
91 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner* (Gloucester: Dodo Press, 2008), 7.
92 Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, 95.
93 Ibid.

Wilde's narrator justifies the focus on sensual aestheticism as a "new spirituality," worshipping beauty and acknowledging the "strong" and ethereal nature of the human response to external stimulus, prioritising the pleasure derived from smells, tastes, and visually appealing stimuli. The remainder of the chapter details Dorian's "fine instinct for beauty," acting as a catalogue of Dorian's aesthetic pleasures in which he will, "deny the senses nothing:"

> And so [Dorian] would now study perfumes and the secrets of their manufacture, distilling heavy scented oils and burning odorous gums from the East. He saw that there was no mood of the minds that had not its counterpart in the sensuous life, and set himself to discover their true relations.[94]

Dorian's interests are highly luxurious and act as a freeing of the senses from the "submission" of the "world." Turning to the exotics of the East, Dorian believed that his "scented oils" were related to the "mood" of the mind, finding that the "sensuous" life of aesthetic pleasure was inextricably linked with the workings of the mind. Zhou Xiaoyi argues that "towards the turn of the century, Japan became an artistic symbol, and Japanese art became a 'cult' for *fin de siècle* artists."[95] Xiaoyi describes how the Orient, specifically Japan, "confirms Wilde's aesthetic longings" and thus became a reference point for the style of decadence.[96] As Xiaoyi writes:

> Wilde imagines a country in which everything is transformed into images: life becomes a fairy tale, objects are rendered unreal but sensual, and women are conceived as doll-like people. This artistic country represents something that he could not find in actual life but which could exemplify his artistic ideals. In other words, Wilde applies his "art for art's sake" principle to Japan.[97]

Utilising Japanese motifs, Wilde presents images of objects and nature as artifice, their symbolic beauty divorced from cultural meaning and everyday use. Wilde is interested in the Orient as art, a "sensual" image evoking decadent beauty. Edward Said writes that "the Orient has helped to

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94 Ibid, 97.

95 Zhou Xiaoyi, "Oscar Wilde's Orientalism and Late-Nineteenth Century European Consumer Culture," *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 28, no. 4 (1997): 49.

96 Ibid, 52.

97 Ibid, 53.

define Europe as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience."[98] According to Said, nineteenth century Orientalists constructed "images" of "everything Asiatic" as being "wonderfully synonymous with the exotic, the mysterious, the profound."[99] However, regarding Orientalist writings, Said remarks that "every one of them kept intact the separateness of the Orient, its eccentricity, its backwardness, its silent indifference, its feminine penetrability," perpetuating notions of "Oriental backwardness, degeneracy, [and] inequality with the West."[100] Wilde utilised this feminised, exotic view of the Orient to enhance the decadence of his dandy figures. By imparting them with the aesthetics of the East, Wilde imbues the aristocracy of his novel with the "backwardness" and "degeneracy" of the feminised Orient. The degenerative impact imports from the East were to have on Dorian and Western culture at large are epitomised in the impact of the novels' opium dens. Dorian Gray "sought to accumulate the most exquisite specimens that he could find […] elaborate yellow Chinese hangings; books bound in tawny satins or fair blue silks and wrought with *fleurs-de-lis,* birds and images […] Japanese *Foukousas,* with their green-tones golds and their marvellously plumages birds."[101] The excess of Dorian's decadent interest in objects from the East and his interest in the aesthetic of the *Foukousas* without the need for its cultural link to traditional tea ceremonies enhances the artifice of his surroundings. These objects become a representation of beauty and the banality of this aesthetic preoccupation leads to cultural stagnation.

Wilde's narrator moves through descriptions of Dorian's aesthetic preoccupations to depict the passing of eighteen years, ultimately fragmenting the narrative structure. This fragmentary

98 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1977), 3
99 Ibid, 51.
100 Ibid, 206.
101 Wilde, *Dorian Gray, 95.*

structure prefigures the fragmentation of form that will be taken up by the late-and-post-modernists Ford, Genet, and Burroughs, as will be discussed in Chapters Four, Five and Six. In this regard, Wilde's early decadent style becomes a continual reference point for the taxonomy of the homosexual novel. The narrator spans pages describing the ingredients and smells of Dorian's perfumes and the types and colours of his Jewel collection, as Nietzsche would argue, to the "expense of the whole" of the narrative flow. Dorian then moves past perfumes:

> At another time he devoted himself entirely to music, and in a long latticed room, with a vermillion-and-gold ceiling and walls of olive-green lacquer, he used to give curious concerts in which mad gipsies tore wild music from little zithers, or grave, yellow-shawled Tunisians plucked at the strange strings of monstrous lutes.[102]

The room's description hinges on the exotics of its furnishings, its "vermilion-and-gold ceiling" and "olive-green lacquer," creating a sensuous environment of excessive artifice. All this to fulfil Dorian's worship of the senses: the "barbaric music stirred him at times when Shubert's grace, and Chopin's beautiful sorrows […] fell unheeded on his ears.[103] Dorian looked to Africa and the East once European music no longer "stirred" the senses, sparing no expense in his decadent pursuit of pleasure. The narrator continues in this fashion, outlining how Dorian "took up the study of jewels," then turned "his attention to embroideries and tapestries," then to his "special passion" for "ecclesiastical vestments" and, in each case, describing in detail the aesthetic pleasure of the sensual passion.

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102 Ibid, 98.
103 Ibid.

The Sticky Nature of Scandal: Decadence and its Attachment to Homosexuality

This discussion of the style of decadence in Wilde's novel does not outwardly evoke homosexuality. However, it has been necessary to outline the aestheticism of this style to analyse the homosexual turn that would occur after the events of 1895. The association between decadence and homosexuality occurred for two interrelated reasons. The narrative allusions to homosexuality within Wilde's novel were written in the style of decadence, and the utilisation of *Dorian Gray* as evidence in Wilde's gross indecency trial worked to engender decadence with a homosexual aesthetic. *Dorian Gray* first appeared in the July 1890 issue of Philadelphia's Lippincott's *Monthly Magazine* after Wilde dined with the editor, Joseph Marshal Stoddart, and Arthur Conan Doyle in London.[104] As evidenced by differences between Wilde's typescript and this published version, Stoddard had already removed many references to homosexuality. Wilde's typescript initially referred to the art of male cruising: "where [Dorian] went to he hardly knew. He remembered wandering through dimly lit streets with gaunt black-shadowed archways […] A man with curious eyes had suddenly peered into his face, and then dogged him with stealthy footsteps, passing and repassing him many times."[105] According to Nicolas Frankel, Stoddard excised 500 words from Wilde's typescript to "tone down the novel's homosexual context, of which Wilde was not made aware until publication."[106] The removal of the cruising episode evidences one of these "500 word" changes, which Stoddard justified to J. B. Lippincott as being necessary for morality's sake: "in its present condition, there are a number of things which an innocent woman would make an

104 Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (London: Penguin, 1988), 295.
105 Oscar Wilde and Nicholas Frankel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray: An Annotated, Uncensored Edition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 140
106 Ibid, 11.

exception to. But I will go beyond this and make it acceptable to the most fastidious taste."[107] Notably, Basil's confession of love to Dorian was excised: "it is quite true that I have worshipped you with far more romance of feeling than a man usually gives to a friend. Somehow, I had never loved a woman […] I quite admit that I adored you madly, extravagantly, desperately."[108] This passage is explicitly homoerotic in its depiction of male relations: Basil's confession of "romantic" feelings that go beyond friendship, his desperate and mad "adoration" juxtaposed with his lack of interest toward women reads as a blatant confession of same-sex desire.

This homoeroticism of *Dorian Gray* becomes apparent from the opening scenes in which Basil Howard converses with Lord Henry Wotton regarding his resistance to exhibit his portrait of the "young Adonis" Dorian Gray.[109] Basil answers: "the reason I will not exhibit this picture is that I am afraid that I have shown in it the secret of my own soul […] if only you knew what Dorian Gray is to me."[110] Basil believes that the "secret of his soul" will become legible in the paint as he has "put into it some expression of all this curious artistic idolatry," that "every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter […] it is rather the painter who, on the coloured canvas, reveals himself."[111] Henry connects Basil's artistic idolatry to a lineage of homoeroticism:

> He remembered something like it in history. Was it not Plato, the artist in thought, who had first analysed it? Was it not Buonarotti who had carved it in the coloured marble of a sonnet sequence? But in our own century it was strange …. Yes; he would be to Dorian Gray what, without knowing it, the lad was to the painter.[112]

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107 J. M. Stoddart letter to Craige Lippincott (April 10, 1890), J. B. Lippincott Co. Records 1858-1958, Collection 3104. Box 61, Item 2, Pennsylvania Historical Society.

108 Wilde and Frankel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray: An Annotated, Uncensored Edition,* 172.

109 Ibid, 4.

110 Ibid.

111 Ibid.

112 Ibid, 27.

Lord Henry does not name Basil's secret. However, by connecting Basil's painting to a broader cultural legacy of artists with a known link to same-sex desire in earlier centuries, Henry turns Basil's love for Dorian into one that reflects these same-sex desires. References to Greek Antiquity and "Greek love" become code for homosexuality in *Dorian Gray* and Wilde – who attained a double-first in Classics – was aware of the stories of same-sex desire that permeated classical Greek myth and literature. Lord Henry's suggestion that his century has made this desire "strange" refers to sexological inquiries of the *fin de siècle* by Karl Heinrich Ulrichs and Richard von Krafft-Ebbing, amongst others. These inquiries were attempting to categorise sexual abnormalities through pathology. The Labouchere Amendment of 1885 was implemented only six years before the publication of Wilde's novel. As this amendment widened the scope of illegality regarding male sexual desire, criminalising any sexual contact between two men, public or private, it is clear Wilde wrote his novel in a climate where troubling discourse around homosexuality was increasing. Foucault writes that the "creation" of homosexuality occurred because of this increased writing about the phenomena arguing that the Victorian age has wrongly been characterised by the repressive hypothesis, where sex was theorised generally as taboo.[113] Foucault concludes instead that through an amalgamation of scientific, religious and legal attempts to control deviant desires, sex entered into public discourse in an explosive way: "these sites radiated discourses aimed at sex, intensifying people's awareness of it as a constant danger, and this in turn created a further incentive to talk about it."[114] Foucault references the "wide dispersion of devices that were invented for speaking about [sex]" and the "transpositions into discourse," which intensified writings around non-reproductive sexual identities such as homosexuality.[115] Wilde's writing

113 Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, 31.
114 Ibid.
115 Ibid, 34.

about the excesses of pleasure and the figure of the homosexual occurred within this framework, with Lord Henry's statement alluding to these nineteenth-century discourses turning a once noble Greek love into a degenerative illness.

All three primary characters of *Dorian Gray* represent the figure of the decadent aesthete, embodying the propensity towards homoeroticism, which, after Wilde's trials, would become inextricable from its aesthetic. Wilde makes this association through Basil's confession to Dorian of a shameful secret:

> From the moment I met you, your personality had the most extraordinary influence over me. I was dominated soul, brain, and power by you […] I had drawn you as Paris in dainty armour, and as Adonis with huntsman's cloak and polished boar-spear. Crowned with heavy lotus-blossoms you had sat on the prow of Adrian's barge, gazing across the turbid Nile.[116]

Wilde links Basil's idolatry of Dorian to ancient Greek and Roman iconography once again: he has painted him as the beautiful Paris of Homer's *Iliad* (circa 850 - 750 BC), as Adonis – the lover of Aphrodite as well as Apollo and Hercules – and refers to the Roman Emperor Hadrian, known for his love of Antinous, who drowned in the Nile during an imperial tour of Egypt.[117] Shame is a powerful emotion in the construction of identity. Eve Sedgwick argues that "shame makes identity."[118] As an emotion, shame is identity forming as "shame is a bad feeling attaching to what one is: one therefore is something, in experiencing shame."[119] Sally R. Munt supports Sedgwick's claims: "sites of shame are only brought into being *because* of the cultural, because of what

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116 Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, 83.

117 Joseph D. Reed, "The Sexuality of Adonis," *Classical Antiquity* 14, no. 2 (1995): 342; Alan K. Bowman, Peter Garnsey and Dominic Rathbone, *The Cambridge Ancient History: The High Empire, A.D. 70-192* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 144.

118 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Queer Performativity: Henry James's *The Art of the Novel," GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1, no. 1 (1993): 5.

119 Ibid, 12.

dominant ideas of health and physical wellbeing dictate, through the idealisation of norms."[120] Historically, groups that fall outside of these norms, such as those with same-sex desires, are culturally constituted into minoritising groups through shame. As Munt argues: "shame operates […] to single out particular groups and stigmatise them."[121] In this way, Basil's shame at the visibility of his desire can be viewed as constructing an identity as a homosexual artist, and Henry links this identity to earlier artists to theorise a lineage for this shameful identity. In the figure of Basil, Wilde presents to the world an artist who believes he has put too much of himself into his work, who has created art imbued with homosexual desires too legible to display to the public: "as I worked at it, every flake and film of colour seemed to me to reveal my secret. I grew afraid that others would know of my idolatry."[122] Basil's anxiety is symbolic of the broader cultural suppression of homosexual art due to cultural norms and the precarious line between expression and transgression, which could easily fall into obscenity.

The decedent movement is characterised more broadly by the glorification of sin with the aim of unmooring from Victorian notions of morality. Keeping Dorian company while sitting for his portrait, Henry suggests to Dorian decadent mantras of excess: "the only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it. Resist it, and your soul grows sick with longing for the things it has forbidden to itself, with desire for what its monstrous laws have made monstrous and unlawful."[123] Henry's preoccupations as an aesthete revolve around yielding to forbidden desires and shameful temptations, and he impresses this philosophy onto Dorian. Henry gives Dorian a copy of a yellow-

120 Sally R. Munt, *Queer Attachments: The Cultural Politics of Shame* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 2.
121 Ibid, 3.
122 Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, 84.
123 Ibid, 64.

backed French decadent novel declaring: "sin is the only colour element in modern life."[124] In the 1890 Lippincott's version of *Dorian Gray*, Wilde describes the style of that "yellow" book as one that "characterises the work of some of the finest artists of the French school of *decadents*," revising this line into the "school of *symbolists*" for the 1891 novel, distancing his work from accusations of decadent immorality.[125] However, the decadent philosophies of this novel have a transformative hold over Dorian. In reading it, "the sins of the world were passing in dumb show before him. Things that he had dimly dreamed of were suddenly made real to him. Things of which he had never dreamed were gradually revealed."[126] After the revelations of this yellow novel, Dorian accepts Henry's philosophical musings on morality: "yes: there was to be, as Lord Henry had prophesied, a new hedonism that was to recreate life, and to save it from that harsh, uncomely puritanism that is having in our own day, its curious revival."[127] Dorian begins to view Victorian society as oppressing the human spirit, which needed "saving" by creating a new moral order based on "hedonism." Dorian bases this new morality on the tenants of his yellow book: "for years Dorian could not free himself from the influence of this book," and the protagonist became a kind of prefigured type of himself.[128] Wilde admitted on trial that Joris-Karl Huysmans' novel *A'Rebours* (1884) "suggested" to him "the idea for" and "the plot of the book Lord Henry Wotton sent to Dorian Gray."[129] Wilde's reference to Huysmans is an example of French decadence's influence on the aesthetes in London. Although Wilde refused to comment on this reading, *Dorian Gray's* allusion to an existing controversial decadent text, which deals with same-sex desire and morality inversion, furthers the homoeroticism of the novel. Attorney to the defence, Edward

124 Ibid, 21.
125 Wilde and Nicholas, *The Uncensored Picture of Dorian Gray*, 64.
126 Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, 91.
127 Ibid, 95.
128 Ibid, 93.
129 Holland, *Irish Peacock and Scarlet Marquess*, 94-100.

Carson, gives a reading of *À Rebours* as being a "sodomitical" novel, proposing the argument that Dorian was "poisoned" by a "book that dealt with sodomitical incidents."[130] The examples Carson cited revolve around the conversations between Lord Henry and Basil referenced earlier and the textual changes that Wilde made between his versions. After the influence of this novel, Dorian's decadent liberation was complete: "there were moments when [Dorian] looked on evil simply as a mode through which he could realise his conception of the beautiful."[131] The impact of Henry's yellow book on Dorian Gray reinforced the Victorian belief that decadence in literature can be a corrupting influence on society. As a result, the connection between perversity, modernity and same-sex desire was solidified in the first iteration of decadence through the infamy of *Dorian Gray.*

Textual Constructions of Queer London: Furthering Modern Associations

Matt Houlbrook argues that "male sexual practices and identities do not just take place *in* the city; they are shaped and sustained by the physical, cultural forms of modern urban life just as they in turn shape that life."[132] In this regard, the geography of Dorian's London enhances associations with homosexuality that contemporary readers would have recognised by alluding to contemporary scandal. In the year before the publication of *Dorian Gray*, the Cleveland Street scandal solidified the view of homosexuality as a corrupting force on youth, with the degenerative aristocracy's mixing with working-class boys furthering the degradation of the British male and the structuring of British society. This connection created a perfect storm of associations, which solidified a

130 Ibid.
131 Ibid, 107.
132 Houlbrook, *Queer London*, 4.

legible, negative personality type for a burgeoning homosexual identity into the new century. Cleveland Street in London runs off the "dreary Euston Road," where Sybil Vane lives in a "shabby home."[133] The street was home to a male brothel that employed young men, some of whom worked for the General Post Office as telegraph boys. Several members of the aristocracy frequented the establishment and were implicated when the scandal was exposed.[134] As H. Montgomery Hyde points out, this case was the first to be prosecuted under the newly instituted Labouchere Amendment (1885), outlined in the Introduction, and as a result, was sensationalised country-wide in the daily press.[135] It was reported that Lord Arthur Somerset and Charles Hammond fled England with tarnished reputations before they could be prosecuted for their involvement. Morris Kaplan argues, "the press coverage of the West End Scandals [including the Cleveland Street Affair] also emphasised the heinous character of unspecified underlying sexual offences while linking hostility toward the aristocracy to suspicion of deviant desires and practices."[136] Coupled with this argument, Morris continues: "traditional moral condemnations of sodomy gained political force by combining with a powerful republican discourse that emphasised aristocratic corruption […] the radical press portrayed powerful clients exploiting working-class youths eager to improve their lot."[137]

Dorian begins the novel in the company of the upper class of the West End, attending soirees where the conversation revolves around philanthropy for the East End. Wilde situates Dorian's criminal activity primarily in the docklands of the East, an area of London that embodied

133 Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, 46, 51.
134 H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Cleveland Street Scandal* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1976) gives a robust account of the affair.
135 Ibid, 17.
136 Morris B. Kaplan, *Sodom on the Thames: Sex, Love, and Scandal in Wilde Times* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 179
137 Ibid, 187.

the cultural anxieties of the 1890s: "it was rumoured that [Dorian] had been seen brawling with foreign sailors in a low den in the distant parts of Whitechapel and that he consorted with thieves and coiners and knew the mysteries of their trade."[138] The sexual threat embedded in London's East End would have been well known to contemporary readers due to the Ripper murders of Whitechapel (1888-1891) occurring in the years preceding *Dorian Gray* and Whitechapel's association with molly-houses. Emily Eells argues: "as Dorian Gray's transgressive deeds are beyond the boundaries of verbal representation, Wilde relies on the painting to record them."[139] In the logic of this argument, references to 1890s conceptions of homosexuality are written through allusion to contemporary scandal, as they are "beyond the boundaries of verbal representation." Wilde's situating of Dorian's "immoral activities" in these areas imbues them with sexual connotations, which scandalises the London demimonde of the novel. However, as they are "beyond the bounds of representation," they are not shown to the reader outright. Basil remarks on the "stories that you have been seen creeping at dawn out of dreadful houses and slinking in disguise into the foulest dens in London […] they say that you corrupt every one with whom you become intimate, and that it is quite sufficient for you to enter a house, for shame of some kind to follow after."[140] The ruin of Dorian's male friends alludes to the Cleveland Street scandal:

> Why is your friendship so fatal to young men? There was that wretched boy in the Guards who committed suicide. You were his great friend. There was Sir Henry Ashton, who had to leave England with a tarnished name. You and him were inseparable […] what about the young Duke of Perth? What sort of life has he got now? What gentleman would associate with him?[141]

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138 Wilde, *Dorian Gray,* 103.

139 Emily Eells, *Proust's Cup of Tea: Homoeroticism and Victorian Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 185.

140 Ibid, 111.

141 Ibid, 110.

Wilde hints at Dorian's unmentionable vice with reference to male brothels and the ruin of his male companions through breaching the sexual indecency laws of the time. The *Scots Observer* made this connection, suggesting *Dorian Gray* was "written for none but outlawed noblemen and perverted telegraph boys" and "dealt in matters only fitted for the criminal investigation department."[142] A reference to the Cleveland Street scandal of 1889 adds a perverse sexual connotation to Dorian's "dreadful houses" and the fleeing from England of aristocratic men after scandal. Marlon Holland argues that this "was as near to an accusation of homosexuality as the paper could allow," and the review was referenced in Lord Queensberry's defence.[143] In *Dorian Gray,* Wilde positions Dorian's misconduct within this existing culture of aristocratic corruption, relying on this "portrayal of exploitation" to illuminate the unrepresentable vice of the novel.

Wilde on Trial: The Reportage of a Wilde Case

The two revisions that *Dorian Gray* underwent before appearing in novel form in 1891 demonstrate the precarious boundary between transgression and obscenity. Reviews of the novel hinted to the legibility of erotic desire within its pages. This would be utilised as evidence of Wilde's homosexuality, proving the unfortunate necessity for artistic caution during the 1890s. An early review in the *St. James Gazette* refused to analyse the "vulgar" novel for the reader to not "offend the nostrils of decent persons," hinting at the need for suppression: "whether the Treasury

142 *The Scots Observer* review is reproduced in Morris Kaplan, "Literature in the Dock: The Trials of Oscar Wilde," *Journal of Law and Society* 31, no. 1 (2004): 5.
143 Holland, *Irish Peacock and Scarlet Marquess*, 311.

or the Vigilance Society will think it worthwhile to prosecute […] we do not know."[144] The Lippincott's version was reviewed again in London's *Daily Chronicle* ten days later:

> A tale spawned from the leprous literature of the French decadents – a poisonous book, the atmosphere of which is heavy with the mephitic odours of moral and spiritual putrefaction – a gloating study of the mental and physical corruption of a fresh, fair and golden youth, which might be fascinating but for its effeminate frivolity.[145]

This reviewer's descriptive choices characterise *Dorian Gray* and French literature in general with the "poisonous" air of contagious illness – its "leprous, moral and spiritual putrefaction" a product of "effeminate" corruption. These reviews forced Wilde to defend his work from moral attack. In a preface to the 1891 version of *Dorian Gray,* he declared: "there is no such thing as a moral or immoral book. Books are well-written or badly written. That is all."[146] Perhaps thinking of the *Daily Chronicle* and *St. James Gazette* reviewers, Wilde suggests that moral misunderstandings of the novel's tenets are the critic's fault. In this view, the writer cannot be found at fault: "those who find ugly meanings in beautiful things are corrupt without being charming."[147] In placing this justification at the outset of his novel, Wilde rather slyly suggests that any reader who takes offence at what they are about to read are themselves "corrupt," countering the critics who have already chastised *Dorian Gray*.

The decadence of the aesthetic movement was utilised both as evidence of Wilde's homosexuality and shorthand for alluding to sodomy in articles detailing the case. In order to evidence Lord Queensberry's claim Wilde "posed as a sodomite," Edward Carson entered into

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144 Unsigned review, *St. James Gazette* (June 20, 1890), in *Oscar Wilde: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Karl Beckson (London: Routledge, 1970), 72.
145 Unsigned review, *Daily Chronicle* (June 30, 1890), in *Oscar Wilde: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Karl Beckson (London: Routledge, 1970), 75.
146 Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, vii.
147 Ibid.

evidence several works of literature he claimed were sodomitical.[148] These included lengthy readings from *Dorian Gray*, letters penned by Wilde and stolen from Alfred Douglas, the contents of the magazine *The Chameleon* (1894) – of which Wilde was a contributor – Douglas' poems "In Praise of Shame" and "Two Loves" (1894) and John Francis Bloxam's "The Priest and the Acolyte" (1894).[149] As the discussion around Wilde's stolen letters indicates, Wilde was being blackmailed by several men regarding his homosexuality and the men who had allegedly committed offences with Wilde were coerced into testifying. Merlin Holland argues that these "boy witnesses" were given "a sum incommensurate with mere expenses," amounting "more to bribery than witness expenses" for their cooperation.[150] The defence presented Wilde to the jury as a wealthy aristocrat utilising his social position to corrupt working-class youths who, resulting from their inferior social statuses, were in Wilde's power. This view of class dynamics further solidified the stereotyping of homosexuality as a decadent perversion, which was becoming a corrupting force on youth.

The *St. James Gazette's* prediction of obscenity charges against *Dorian Gray* came true during Wilde's trial as the novel's homosexual themes and decadence were interrogated. Carson read aloud sections of *Dorian Gray*, indicating allusions to same-sex desire. Two of these passages were Henry's conversation with Basil regarding his feelings towards Dorian and the confrontation scene in which Basil mentions the ruined reputations of Dorian's friends, both quoted above. Regarding the latter, Carson questioned Wilde on the dock: "do you think that, taking in its natural meaning, would suggest that what they were talking about was a charge of sodomy?"[151] Carson

148 Holland, *Irish Peacock and Scarlet Marquess,* 81.
149 Ibid.
150 Ibid, xxxvii.
151 Ibid, 102.

drew attention to passages in which men declared their love for other men, reading aloud Basil's declaration of love found in the 1890 Lippincott's version and excised a year later: "it is quite true that I have worshipped you with far more romance of feeling than a man usually gives to a friend. Somehow, I had never loved a woman […] I quite admit that I adored you madly, extravagantly, desperately."[152] In doing so, Carson attempted to portray *Dorian Gray* as an admission of Wilde's immoral lifestyle, framing the desires and dialogue of the novel as a realist confession of his same-sex desires. Wilde, as an aesthete, rejected this conception of art while in the dock: "no, it is a work of fiction," and professed that the phrase "I adored you madly, extravagantly" was, in fact, "borrowed from Shakespeare's sonnets," highlighting their fictional nature.[153] These sonnets, of course, themselves deal with same-sex desire. Reiko Oya argues that "Wilde disengaged himself from the homoerotic emotion that the novel conveyed by co-signing it to Shakespeare's literary heritage."[154] However, throughout Wilde's oeuvre, he continually used Shakespeare as an allusion to homosexual desire. In the 1889 article "The Portrait of Mr. W. H," Wilde stages a conversation in which the character Erskine claims to have a portrait of the dedicatee to Shakespeare's sonnets. Erskine analyses the sonnets to evidence the homosexuality of Shakespeare, as he believes he was in love with a "boy player" from his company: "who was he whose physical beauty was such that it became the very-corner stone of Shakespeare's art; the very source of Shakespeare's inspiration; the very incarnation of Shakespeare's dreams?"[155] Alongside this, Shakespeare's name is utilised within *Dorian Gray* itself to allude to homosexuality:

> The love that [Basil] bore him – for it was really love – had nothing in it that was not noble and intellectual. It was not that mere physical admiration of beauty that is born of the senses

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152 Wilde and Frankel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* 140.
153 Ibid, 90.
154 Reiko Oya, "'Talk to Him': Wilde, his Friends, and Shakespeare's 'Sonnets'," *Critical Survey* 21, no. 3 (2009): 26.
155 Oscar Wilde, *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* (London: Collins, 2002), 1156.

> and that dies when the senses tire. It was such love as Michelangelo had known, and Montaigne, and Winckelmann, and Shakespeare himself.[156]

Wilde compares the homosexual love that underpins Basil's infatuation with Dorian to a "love as" Shakespeare himself had known. Wilde's confession to borrowing phrases from Shakespeare then reinforced rather than countered Carson's accusations that *Dorian Gray* contained homosexual desires. In Basil's declaration of love for Dorian, Wilde places Shakespeare's words in Basil's mouth. Wilde had previously argued that these words were declarations of love from one man to another. Carson's analysis of Wilde's "sodomitical" references placed in context of his wider oeuvre reinforced for the court, and the readers of the daily papers, the link between decadence, aestheticism and homosexuality.

The Power of the Pundit: Cultural Recognition of a New Social Type

Carson's conception of art as a true to life reflection of the artist's lifestyle is rejected within *Dorian Gray* itself, as the artist Basil Howard laments the domination of a Victorian idea of realism: "we live in an age when men treat art as if it were meant to be a form of autobiography. We have lost the abstract sense of beauty."[157] Despite this, Caron and Queensberry attempted to portray *Dorian Gray* as autobiographical in nature, evidencing Wilde's "sodomitical" posture. Queensbury's defending plea of justification accused Wilde of promoting homosexuality, stating that *Dorian Gray "*was designed and intended by the said Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde and was understood by the readers thereof to describe the relations intimacies and passions of certain persons of sodomitical and unnatural habits tastes and practices."[158] This tactic alludes to

156 Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, 87.
157 Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, 8.
158 Holland, *Irish Peacock and Scarlet Marquess*, 39.

the "tendency to deprave and corrupt" of the Hicklin Ruling (1869), which tightened obscenity laws, as outlined in the Introduction. Jeffrey Weeks argues that the trials "created a public image for the homosexual," becoming a valuable case study for the creation of identity in modern times.[159] However, David Schulz has argued that the identity which emerged was "the servant of those who damned him," a creation which "suited the institutions serving the hegemonic sexual discourse."[160] As a result of the stigma attached to this "damning" identity type, the spectacle of Wilde created in the press became troubling for the continuation of homosexual identity moving through the *fin de siècle.* This damaging spectacle was predicated on decadent aesthetics of corruption and decline, exacerbated by the press frenzy that surrounded the trials.

The resulting image of Wilde became the precursor to the camp stylings of later decades, based on the aesthetes of the 1890s and the effeminate stereotyping disseminated by the press. Houlbrook argues that in the decades after Wilde, "sexual offences could be defined as transgressions of acceptable masculine styles."[161] Of course, there were homosexual subcultures of the London demimonde before the 'outing' of Wilde. Nevertheless, none had entered the public sphere in such an explosive way, mediated by the press to alter the public consciousness towards gender deviance and sexual perversions. Dominic James highlights the codifying of homosexual signalling in this period:

> In that cultural climate of linguistic insufficiency, not to say of continuing legal and social danger, expressions of same-sex desire were often necessarily coded through combinations of suggestive gesture, wordplay, clothing and demeanour. Such were the arts of queer fashioning, and so well perfected had they come from decade to decade that they drove

159 Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain from the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (London: Quartet Books, 1977), 21.
160 David Schulz, "Redressing Oscar: Performance and the Trials of Oscar Wilde," *TDR* 40, no. 2 (1996): 2.
161 Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 23.

> Lord Queensberry to prosecute Wilde for assuming a pose such as could only be intended to indicate an incitement to the love that was still learning to speak its name.[162]

The outcome of Wilde's trial cemented a visual language of reference to homosexual men by attaching to them a social identity built on a Wildean stereotype of posed effeminacy. Houlbrook argues that "those practices coded as 'effeminacy' thus represent the process through which men drew upon the gender culture in which they were socialised to make their bodies publicly intelligible within it […] men manipulated their very physicality."[163] The "camping" of Wilde, therefore became a legible indication of same-sex desire. This public intelligibility was achieved through specific sartorial choices and the stylised movements of the body, where the transgressions of accepted gender standards become both a dangerous beacon of sexual deviation and a sign to other men with similar tastes. This is pivotal to the taxonomy of the homosexual novel as the identity forged by the public fall of Wilde formed the base for future writers such as Proust and Lawrence, amongst others, to either distance themselves from or emulate in their attempts to portray homosexuality into the modernist period.

Throughout the nineteenth century, male same-sex desire was a sensationalist topic furnishing the sale of newspapers and acted as a type of literary pillory. As Charles Upchurch notes, "mainstream newspapers ran hundreds of articles about sex between men in the years after 1820. The coverage was not primarily sensational court cases but rather the legal tribunals of ordinary men."[164] The uncovering of a Molly House dubbed the Vere Street Coterie, which ended in public hangings in 1810, the reporting of the aforementioned Cleveland Street scandal and the

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[162] Dominic James, *Oscar Wilde Prefigured: Queer Fashioning and British Caricature 1750-1900* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press: 2016), 22.

[163] Houlbrook, *Queer London*, 144.

[164] Charles Upchurch, *Before Wilde: Sex Between Men in Britain's Age of Reform* (California: University of California Press, 2009), 13.

arrest of Boulton and Park, two men dressed as women in 1870 who were tried for conspiracy to commit sodomy all created a media sensation as the details were reported to the public.[165] These instances prefigured the press frenzy surrounding Wilde's trials, which joined a lineage of institutionalised persecutions. Wilde's trial began on April 3, 1895, reported on the front page of *The Star:*

> Oscar Wilde Defends Himself at the Old Bailey – Charges Brought Against Him by Lord Queensberry – The Aesthete Gives Characteristically Cynical Evidence, Replete With Pointed Epigram And Startling Paradox, And Explains His Views On Morality And Art."[166]

The Morning Leader ran the headline: "Oscar In The Box: The Marquees In The Dock. Most Serious Charges Formulated Against Mr. Wilde."[167] Queensberry may have been the one on trial; however, Wilde and his reputation were on trial in the public imagination. Mediated through journalists' representation of the trials, Wilde became a defendant rather than the plaintiff. The *Westminster Gazette* reported on the first day that "all the seats that were not occupied by briefless barristers contained reporters. Like the lawyers, they took their places wherever they could find them."[168] As the only access the public had to the trial was through this mass of reporters, the continual references to aestheticism and decadence in conjunction with his offence became vital in understanding the dissemination of a homosexual identity. On April 6, London's *Echo* described the events of the trial:

> How completely have the tables been turned in the Queensberry case! The man who for two days parried the verbal attacks of council, who lolled indolently and smilingly in the witness box at the Old Bailey, who gave vent to his polished paradoxes with careless nonchalance, and who condescendingly expressed his utter contempt for all things

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165 The Vere Street Coterie is recounted in Rictor Norton, *Mother Clap's Molly House: Gay Subculture in England 1700 -1830* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1992); The arrest of Boulton and Park is recounted in Neil McKenna, *Fanny and Stella: The Young Men Who Shocked Victorian England* (London: Faber and Faber, 2014).

166 *The Star* (April 3, 1895).

167 *The Morning Leader* (April 4, 1895).

168 "The Wilde-Queensberry Libel Case," *Westminster Gazette* (1895), 5.

> mundane, is now in the hands of the police charged with one of the most heinous crimes that can be alleged against a man.[169]

The *Echo* evokes the image of the aesthete in describing Wilde's "polished paradoxes" and "contempt for all things mundane," his "lolling indolence" suggestive of his own portrayal of the dandy Lord Henry. The *Echo* does not print the word sodomy, instead alluding to homosexuality as the "most heinous crime" a man can commit. The *Bristol Mercury* reported on the trial, which "closes in nameless infamy the career of the apostle of aestheticism."[170] The article continues, decreeing the "sensual" nature of decadent aestheticism: "there is something unhealthy and unwholesome even in the greenery yallery phase of maudlin aestheticism. The later developments of the same school both in literature and drama have become undeniably sensual […] His downfall may be a public benefit in purifying the atmosphere of the stage and of the fashionable novel."[171] With the phrase "greenery yallery," the reporter criticises the affectation and pretence of decadence, the movement that is the "later development" of the same school of aestheticism. The reporter denounces the "sensuality" of this movement as both "unhealthy" and "unwholesome," hoping Wilde's downfall will put an end to what is described as an unhealthy form of novel writing.

Through conflating the image of the aesthete and notions of "unhealthy" decadent literature such as *Dorian Gray* with Wilde's acts of sodomy, Wilde and the decadent aesthetic became signifiers for those with the propensity to commit homosexual acts. Ed Cohen outlines this phenomenon:

> By mediating between the defence interpretation and the popular limits for sexual representation, the newspapers reiterated the defence's attempts to construct a new

169 No author, "Oscar Wilde Arrested at Chelsea," *Echo* (April 6, 1895), 2.
170 No author, *Bristol Mercury* (April 6, 1895), 5.
171 Ibid.

> category of sexual transgression that could be signified not by a reference to specific "unnameable" sexual acts but by the depiction of a specific type of sexual actor.[172]

Cohen surmises that through newspaper caricature and courtroom sketches, the man himself, as the public had come to recognise him, came to signify the act of sodomy. The lampooning of Wilde in satirical sketches occurred for the entirety of his career, which was forcibly ended by his imprisonment. The lack of masculinity attributed to his dandy persona and his aestheticism was continually highlighted and ridiculed. In 1882, the comic journal *Judy* published a cartoon in which Wilde's feminine nature was contrasted with images of four virile Victorian gentlemen:

> "The worst of you, Oscar," said one steady stolidly, jolly bank holiday, everyday young reporter, "the worst of you is, you won't cut your hair. Now if you did, you might look like this; or with whiskers, thus; or with a beard thusly […] but you won't, and that's what worries us so!"[173]

Next to the four images of robust Victorian gentlemen sporting these different styles of facial hair are two drawings of Wilde, to borrowing a phrase from the *Echo,* "lolling indolently." Wilde is sprawled out and smoking on a garden bed, much like Lord Henry, who is sprawled out and smoking on his "Persian saddle-bags" at the beginning of *Dorian Gray*. Looked on with dismay by a passing gentleman, he has a smooth face and long, feminine hair, contrasting with the bearded Victorians. Images of Wilde in this guise became ubiquitous as he was regularly lampooned in the popular British satirical magazine *Punch* alongside the daily press. He even made the cover of the most popular publication in the United States, *Harper's Weekly.* The caricature of Wilde which emerged became the dominant image of Wilde as an artist and a man. As in the cartoon published by *Judy*, newspapers commonly depicted Wilde wearing obnoxiously stylised clothing and

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172 Ed Cohen, *Talk on the Wilde Side* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 145.

173 No author, "The Worst of Wilde," *Judy, or the London Serio-comic Journal* (March 8, 1882) held in Oscar Wilde Eccles Collection 81758, *The British Library*, London.

portrayed in situations highlighting his lack of masculine virility, usually found in scenes contemplating flowers. This image was then furthered in depictions of his trial.

The association between homosexuality and decadent aestheticism, as disseminated in satirical sketches, was continued by the *National Observer:*

> The obscene imposter, whose prominence has been a social outrage ever since he transferred from Trinity Dublin to Oxford his vices, his follies, and his vanities, has been exposed, and that thoroughly at last. But to the exposure there must be legal and social sequels. There must be another trial at the Old Bailey […] and the decadents, of their hideous conceptions of the meaning of art, of their worse than Eleusinian mysteries, there must be an absolute end.[174]

The *Observer* links Wilde's crime with the literary school he had championed, calling for the "absolute end" of the decadent movement, whose sensuality had "outraged" society for far too long. This journalist links the "exposure" of Wilde's homosexuality to the "vices and follies" of the tenets of aestheticism, a movement which Wilde had been a part of since his days at Trinity. In doing so, *The Observer* conflates notions of sexual deviance with new modes of writing and a decadent sensibility. *The Observer* celebrates what they saw as the end of the decadent movement, revelling in the fall of Wilde himself, calling for harsher legal consequences for those who "outrage" the moral order. Publications such as *The Observer* viewed Wilde's deviant masculinity and his acts of "gross indecency" as pathological aspects of his conception of art, and the aesthetic of decadence became pathological itself. Similarly, *The London Evening News* conflated Wilde with his literary movement:

> One of the high priests of a school which attacks all the wholesome, manly, simple ideals of English life, and sets up false Gods of decadent culture and intellectual debauchery. The man himself was a perfect type of his class, a gross sensualist veneered with the affection of artistic feeling too delicate for the appreciation of common clay. To him and such as him we owe the spread of moral degeneration amongst young men with abilities sufficient to

174 *The National Observer* (April 6, 1895).

> make them a credit to their country. At the feet of Wilde they have learned to gain notoriety by blatant conceit, by despising the emotions of healthy humanity.[175]

The *News* reported Wilde's "intellectual debauchery" was spreading an unhealthy mode of masculinity to young men by attacking the "manly" ideals of England. Consequently, Wilde was perceived as corrupting the British Empire's future by enticing "young men with abilities sufficient to make them a credit to their country" into worshipping the "false Gods of decadent culture." Just as a decadent novel corrupted Dorian, British journalists perceived Wilde as having the same perverse impact on impressionable youth who came across his work.

Wilde viewed this media establishment as a machine enabling a backlash against transgressors of public decency: "it was a fatal day when the public discovered that the pen is mightier than the paving-stone, and can be made as offensive as the brickbat. They at once sought for the journalist, found him, developed him, and made him their industrious and well-paid servant."[176] Wilde constituted the media class as a new bourgeois authority, supplanting the waning aristocratic class and casting its dominion over society. Wilde viewed them as making public what ought to stay private in an extension of medieval notions of public shaming. As Jeffrey Meyers argues, *Dorian Gray* highlights the "impossibility of achieving homosexual pleasure without the inevitable accompaniment of fear, shame and self-hatred."[177] The social mechanism of shame, which earlier was argued as an "identity builder," is exacerbated by the daily news's propensity for sensationalism, where tales of sexual perversity frequently made the front page, capitalising on public disgrace. In this regard, through notions of shame, newspaper reports

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175 The article was reproduced in H. Montgomery Hyde's "Introduction," *Real Trial of Oscar Wilde* (New York, Merlin Holland, 2003), 12.

176 Oscar Wilde, *Soul of Man Under Socialism* (Lanham: Start Classics, 2014), 33.

177 Jeffrey Meyers, *Homosexuality and Literature: 1900 – 1930* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), 29.

disseminated homosexual identities to the reading public, who thus learned to identify homosexual signifiers through these cases. Wilde continues: "in centuries before ours the public nailed the ears of journalists to the pump. That was quite hideous. In this century journalists have nailed their own ears to the keyhole. That is much worse."[178] Ears to a keyhole is a prescient image of the sexology of the *fin de siècle.* Homosexual relations behind closed doors were being policed and publicised in the move towards the legibility of sexual desire, and novels such as *Dorian Gray* were beginning the move toward the creation of the homosexual novel.

In Conclusion: Life After Wilde and the Anxiety of Influence

After his public denouncement, Wilde's name became synonymous with homosexuality. In 1913, Forster wrote a novel centring on a protagonist's homosexual revelation, *Maurice.* Maurice articulates his condition to a doctor by evoking Wilde's name: "I'm an unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort."[179] The physician needs no further elaboration to understand his meaning. In 1932, an undercover police raid on a private drag club in London uncovered a meeting place for gay men. 'Lady' Austin Salmon, proprietor of the event, described the "drag" as "the Camp Dance Club, and they are my camp boys."[180] Detained by the police, Lady Austen defended the men by referencing Wilde: "before long, our cult will be allowed in this country, and we shall then vindicate our patron saint, the glorious Oscar Wilde."[181] Decades after his death, Wilde's name was still the central reference point for evoking transgressive homosexuality. Wilde foresaw this

178 Wilde, *Soul of Man Under Socialism,* 33.
179 E. M. Forster, *Maurice* (London: Penguin Classics, 2005), 138.
180 "Defendant: Salmon, Austin and (33) Others," February 7, 1933, CRIM 1/639, 13507707, The National Archives, Kew, 21.
181 Ibid.

in the years of his imprisonment. Wilde wrote a letter from prison addressing Douglas, lamenting this connection: "I had disgraced that name entirely. I had made it a low byword among low people. I had dragged it through the very mire. I had given it to brutes that they might make it brutal and to fools that might turn it into a synonym for folly."[182] Wilde recognised that his name had become a byword for the supposed perversity of the age, overflowing from the decadent sensibility of the time. His imprisonment proved to the British public that Max Nordau's predictions in *Entarung* (1892) of the immorality of contemporary art were well-founded. Nordau wrote that "the artist who complacently represents what is reprehensible, vicious, criminal, approves of it, perhaps glorifies it, differs not in kind, but only in degree, from the criminal who actually commits it."[183] Liz Constable, Dennis Denisoff and Matthew Potolsky argue that "Nordau's hostile tome collapsed understandings of literary and cultural decadence into biological degeneration, treating decadent literary strategies as simply the aesthetic manifestations of degenerate minds."[184] Consequently, decadent writing such as Wilde's was viewed as a corrupting influence.

The implications of Wilde's trial and the downfall of decadence's influence on literature had lasting implications for the writers who came after him. Sherry argues that after the 1890s, "literary attitudes of the mainstream modernism are contracting into a conservative and reactionary stance in relation to the alternative, emancipatory sexuality that Wilde represented."[185] As the Introduction outlined, the unmasking of Wilde led to a crisis of masculinity, not just in the literary world but within the very structuring of European society on a foundation of aristocratic Victorian

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182 Oscar Wilde, *De Profundis* (New York: Open Road Media Integrated Media, 2015), 4.
183 Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (London: William Heinemann, 1920), 326.
184 Liz Constable, Denis Denisoff and Matthew Potolsky, *Perennial Decay: On the Aesthetics and Politics of Decadence* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 3.
185 Sherry, *Modernism and the Reinvention of Decadence*, 24.

culture. Cultural anxiety around the implications of masculinity, as it pertained to national and class identity, put social roles into a state of flux. Joseph Bristow argues that in the wake of 1895, a "new man" emerged from the ashes who "was supposed to be physically and morally robust, becoming the complete antithesis to the introspective weakling confined to the ivory tower."[186] Society at large no longer tolerated the elitist, effeminate form of dandified masculinity, forcing a distancing from aestheticism and notions of the feminine. Modernist poet T. S. Eliot highlighted the influence of Wilde's trial on emerging conceptions of modernism in the 1923 article "A Preface to Modern Literature:"

> The effect of this trial upon English literary society was fatal. Here was a small group of English people, who had succeeded, in the midst of Victorian society, in acquiring a high degree of emancipation from the worst English vices; which was neither insular, nor puritanical, nor cautious; a public scandal disposed of its social leader forever; the broken group lost all influence upon English civilisation […] Wilde and his circle stood for something much more important than any of the individual members; they stood for the end of a type of culture.[187]

Eliot's conception of Wilde and the aesthetic movement as emancipating themselves from the "cautious" and "puritanical" constraints of *fin de siècle* culture positions decadent literature as the prototype of the modernist experiment. John Paul Riquelme argues that Wilde's "significance to modernism would be clearer if prominent first-stage modernists had been able to acknowledge more directly and candidly his effect on their thinking and writing."[188] However, Wilde's influence on modernism lies within this very silence as a reactionary response to the tenants of aestheticism and the presumed feminisation of the literary space. Wilde and the decadent movement influenced modernist philosophies precisely by offering a solid base from which to distance themselves.

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186 Joseph Bristow, *Effeminate England: Homoerotic Writings after 1885* (Oxfordshire: Taylor and Francis Group, 1995), 9.

187 T. S. Eliot, "A Preface to Modern Literature," *Vanity Fair* (November 1923), 44.

188 John Paul Riquelme, "T. S. Eliot's Ambivalences: Oscar Wilde as Masked Precursor," *The Hopkins Review* 5, no. 3 (2012): 353.

While this is undoubtedly true of mainstream British and Anglo-American modernists, such as Lewis and Pound, the breech that Wilde's dangerous legacy created allowed for the opening of dialogue about sexual deviation in France, notably throughout the work of Proust. Paris thus became a production point for the English-language dissemination of homosexual works of literature. As further chapters will show, decadence itself became a cultural style heavily intertwined with notions of camp, which modernist writers utilised to signify same-sex desire within their texts.

Narratives of Perversion in Marcel Proust's A la recherche du temps perdu.

All of the poetry of damnation has vanished. Vice has become an exact science.[189]

- *Marcel Proust to Paul Morand, 1921*

Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-1927)[190] includes one of the first comprehensive accounts of the homosexual character in both modernism and the novel form. Elisabeth Ladenson argues that Proust's novel "was the first major literary work in France to take on the issue of same-sex sexual desire in an apparently objective manner."[191] Of course, there have been homosexual characters depicted in literature before Proust. Balzac in his depiction of Vautrin. Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). André Gide's *L'Immoraliste* (1902). Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* (1912). However, in these preceding examples, homosexuality is not explicitly mentioned and same-sex desires are only implied. In contrast to this reticence, in Proust, we find the first complete attempt to analyse the homosexual experience within the consciousness of his narrator. Colleen Lamos argues that "Proust's novel represents on a grand scale the turn-of-the-century shift in sexual paradigms that, as Foucault has argued, transformed same-sex love into a pathological inversion, and sodomites into homosexuals."[192] Lamos suggests that while Proust contributes to the "modern impulse to tell what is supposed to be the truth about sexuality [he also] irretrievably

189 Marcel Proust and Paul Morand, *L'eau sous les ponts* (Paris: Grasset, 1954), 54. Morand's recollection of Proust's reaction to being presented with a précis on sexual inversion from Hirschfeld's Institute of Sexology in Berlin.

190 The individual publication dates in France are as follows: *Swann's Way* (1913), *In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower* (1919), *The Guermantes Way* (initially published in two volumes, 1920/1921), *Sodom and Gomorrah* (originally published in two volumes, 1921/1922), *The Prisoner* (which marks the first volume published posthumously, 1923), *The Fugitive* (1925), and *Finding Time Again* (1927).

191 Elisabeth Ladenson, "Sexuality," in *Marcel Proust in Context*, ed. Adam Watt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013),

192 Colleen Lamos, *Deviant Modernisms: Sexual and Textual Errancy in T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, and Marcel Proust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 174.

complicates and undermines that impulse."[193] In other words, Proust's novel project considers various contemporary theories of same-sex desire and, by mixing them, ironically draws attention to the inherent instability and performativity of the pathologisation of the identity category of the homosexual. *A la recherche* mediates several theories of homosexuality, considering inversion theory, social theories of homosexual contagion, homosexuality as hereditary, as being an inherited biblical sin, homosexuality as disease, as an aristocratic vice, and as Christopher Robinson remarks, utilises the "spread" of homosexuality throughout the novel "as a metaphor for decadence."[194] Proust's heterosexual narrator dialogues with both the scientific and social view of homosexuality with what Ladenson calls an "anthropological curiosity strictly devoid of any personal stakes," depicting homosexuals as being a symptom of the degenerative decadence of the lateness of the nineteenth century.[195] In doing so, Proust mobilises a critique of existing social structures and overturns once steadfast social orthodoxies forever. Despite reproducing the narratives of perverse desires, Proust's narrator is overwhelmingly sympathetic to the plight of homosexuals, as this chapter will come to show. In a 1914 letter to Gide, Proust remarks that "the enemies of homosexuality will be revolted by the scenes I paint."[196] The irony inherent to the juxtaposition of conflicting theories of negative homosexuality reinforces this sympathy because by putting them into practice, Proust proves this negative view inaccurate.

Framing the structuring of erotic desire within Proust's work as an analytical tool, this chapter seeks to evaluate questions raised by Proust's depiction of human consciousness. Namely,

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193 Ibid.

194 Christopher Robinson, *Scandal in the Ink: Male and Female Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century French Literature* (London: Cassell, 1995), 49.

195 Ladenson, 115.

196 Letter from Proust to André Gide (June 11, 1914) in Marcel Proust, André Gide, and Pierre Assouline, *Autour de la recherche: lettres* (Bordeaux: Complexe, 1988), 38-41. My translation.

the impact contemporary cultural discussions of same-sex desire were having on the narrative techniques of modernist novels, and, somewhat to subvert this inquiry, the impact modernism itself had on the creation of the homosexual novel. As Dorothy Richardson wrote upon hearing of Proust's intervention into the novel form: "news came from France of one Marcel Proust, said to be producing an unprecedentedly profound and opulent reconstruction of experience focused from within the mind of a single individual."[197] This "unprecedented" focus on the narrator's consciousness allows his thoughts to dominate the perspective of the text, integrating contemporary social theory into *A la recherche* as the character of Marcel attempts to understand the changing nature of the society he occupies.[198] One of these changes Marcel becomes interested in is the social visibility of homosexuality, with Proust's form thus furthering the taxonomy of the homosexual novel. *A la recherche* examines the burgeoning sexological theories that resulted in conceptions of a homosexual 'type' and a camp sensibility which rendered this type legible to those who could read the signs. This chapter aims to unravel the decadent paradigm and camp styling Proust utilised as queer-coded shorthand to respond to his rapidly changing world. Philip Core describes *A la recherche* as "a unique example of camp on an epic scale," and Proust himself "the archbishop of young camp Paris in the 1920s."[199] Similarly, Gregory Woods argues that in Proust's work, "camp stratagems may have been adopted in affirmation of the depths of homosexual identity," revealing themselves in "a continuous sequence of exchanges – behind, as it were, the narrator's back – between the author and those readers who are *in the know.*"[200] Writing

197 Dorothy Richardson, *Pilgrimage I* (London: Virago, 1979), 10.

198 Proustian scholars debate the correct way to refer to Proust's narrator, with many opting to use the term "the narrator" instead of a name. As Proust referred to the narrator/protagonist of *A la recherche* by the name "Marcel" in correspondence with Gaston Gallimard, I will also use Marcel. I will only ever refer to the author, Marcel Proust, as Proust.

199 Philip Core, *Camp: The Lie That Tells the Truth* (London: Plexus, 1984), 153.

200 Gregory Woods, "High Culture and High Camp," in *Camp Grounds: Style and Homosexuality*, ed. David Bergman (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 125.

in the period after Wilde's conviction, *A la recherche* reflects the shift towards the cultural legibility of sexual difference that occurred throughout the *fin de siècle* by utilising this camp sensibility. Once this mode of representation had become established to convey notions of sexuality viewed by heteronormative culture as beyond the pale, Proust evoked homosexuality through the ubiquity of aristocratic degeneration, furthering the notion of Wilde's waning aristocracy, with this identity formation guided through the language of decadence. Throughout *A la recherche,* the narrator refers to homosexuality as a "vice," a "malady," a "sickness," a "crime," an "anti-social love," a characteristic of "a separate race," and likens it to an "inherited" disorder such as "blindness."[201] These pejorative descriptions further the dominant discourses of homosexuality which Marcel's philosophical unpacking will ultimately dispel. As Katrina Gosek argues, "in Proust's bourgeois universe, camp finds fertile ground to show reality not to be already what it seems."[202] Proust's ironic camp sensibility plays with identity categories and by doing so, shows the "reality" of homosexual identity as it was being known "not to be already what it seems." As all these comparisons are negative and link homosexuality with degenerative disease, by rendering them unstable, Proust rejects their findings.

As this thesis tracks more broadly, modernism was formed alongside the creation of sexology, producing a dialectical relationship as writers such as Proust imbued the ever-changing medicalised theories of same-sex desire and their accompanying legal realities into their novels. *A la recherche* is an early novel of sexological inquiry as Marcel as narrator explores different theories of homosexuality. These theories range from inversion theory and degeneration theory to

201 Marcel Proust, *Sodom and Gomorrah* (London: Penguin, 2003), 17; 20; 69; 24; 18.

202 Katrina Gosek, "KKKKULTURE: Kitsch and Camp in 'A la recherche du temps perdu,'" *Studies in the Novel* 32, no. 3 (2000), 342.

the idea of inherited biblical sin. Marcel argues that "the two angels who were posted at the gates of Sodom [were] very ill chose by the Lord God, who ought to have entrusted the task only to a Sodomist."[203] This comment speaks to Proust's broader novel project as it reinforces ideas of camp codes; it takes a homosexual to recognise another, and the non-Sodomist angels could not read the signs. As a result of their blindness, Marcel suggests that "all the shameful Sodomists were allowed to flee," resulting in the "descendants of the Sodomists, so numerous [to] have established themselves over the whole earth."[204] Marcel's theory posits that these descendants "have inherited the lie that enabled their ancestors to leave the accursed city."[205] In secret, they "form in every country a colony at once Oriental, cultivated, musical and slanderous, which has charming virtues and unbearable defects."[206] This is but one of Marcel's theories, which attributes homosexuality to inherited sin, drawing an ancestral line to the destruction of Sodom because of the inhabitant's vice. However, Marcel believes that through the masking of homosexual signifiers, homosexuals have learned to hide their nature and have established worldwide subcultural enclaves. Chauncey argues that "by the time of World War I, there existed in Paris and in Berlin a highly developed gay commercial subculture," and once made aware of it, Proust's narrator begins to recognise its codes.[207] Marcel continues his attempt to understand the cultural response to this illicit and profoundly misunderstood desire throughout *Sodom and Gomorrah*. As argued in Chapter One, this was a desire that through the taint of scandal, had become the foundation of a new kind of public homosexual identity. Benjamin Kahan argues: "we should understand modernist literary works as vernacular sexology that dispute, amend, shape, contribute to and work through more

203 Proust, *Sodom and Gomorrah,* 35.
204 Ibid.
205 Ibid.
206 Ibid,
207 Chauncey, *Gay New York,* 144.

institutionalised modes of sexology."[208] Kahan's sentiment applies as a practical framework through which to view Proust's work, as a significant article Proust prepared on "pederasty" for the *Mercure de France* titled "La race des tantes" became subsumed into the narrator's consciousness to "work through" rapidly evolving theories of homosexuality. In 1908 Proust wrote to Louis d'Albufera a list of his current works, stating he was writing "un roman parisien […] un essai sur la Pédérastie (pas facile à publier) [a Parisian novel […] an essay on pederasty (not easy to publish)."[209] Proust acknowledged the difficulty inherent to publishing anything regarding homosexuality and a few days later wrote to Robert Dreyfus asking if he thought the "article would be as inoffensive … in the *Mercure* or in another Review," floating his idea of turning it into "more of a short story."[210] By August of the following year, Proust wrote to the editor of the *Mercure de France* that he was "finishing a book which […] is a genuine novel, and an extremely indecent one in places. One of the principal characters is a homosexual. And this I count on you to keep strictly secret."[211] Clearly, Proust had begun to conflate his various literary projects into one. This article eventually became the opening chapter of *Sodom and Gomorrah.* In this way, Proust formalistically blurred the lines between fiction, philosophy, and scientific thought. This blurring of fiction and scientific thought through the conflation of decadent aesthetics with discourses of homosexuality highlights how early considerations of the homosexual novel were preoccupied with depictions of a pathological type. This pathological type is exemplified through the narrator's microscopic examination of Charlus, whose sexual activity becomes increasingly perverse and sadomasochistic as *A la recherche* progresses, progressing in line with his physical decline.

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208 Kahan, *The Book of Minor Perverts*, 20.

209 Marcel Proust, *Correspondance: Volume 8*, ed. Philip Kolb (Paris: Plon, 1980), 112.

210 Ibid, 123. My translation.

211 Marcel Proust, *Select Letters Volume 2*: 1904 – 1909, ed. Philip Kolb (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 442.

According to the narrator, sexual masochism "constituted a new stage in the sickness of M. de Charlus, which, for as long as I had been aware of it, judging by the different phases I had observed, had pursued its evolution with increasing rapidity."[212] This "sickness" the narrator refers to is Charlus's homosexuality, presented as an illness with several stages of decay.

The Spectre of Wilde Looming Large Over Modernism

Various publishers rejected *Swann's Way* due to Proust's commitment to continuing the aesthetics of decadence. Gide rejected *Swan's Way* for publication with *La Nouvelle Revue français* as he mistook Proust for an outdated aesthete of the 1890s tradition: "I thought you – shall I confess it? – were from the 'Verdurin Way,' a snob, a dilettante socialite – the worst possible thing for our review."[213] The Verdurin way here is Proust's satirical representation of this "snobbish" salon culture he had frequented. Philip Kolb remarks that "in the early years of the new century, we note [Proust's] increasing involvement with friends in a social class above his own, with feelings that range from warm friendship to the equivalent, in the case of Bertrand de Fénelon, of passionate love," to "irritation, resentment and rebellion."[214] Within this milieu, Proust met the likes of Robert de Montesquiou, whom he characterised as "differ[ing] from the run-of-the-mill decadents" and whom he intended to "write" about in "a few newspaper or magazine articles."[215] Similarly, in a letter to Reynaldo Hahn, Proust writes of a dinner he had at "the Daudets" in which he expounded that "the aristocracy certainly have their faults but show a true superiority when thanks to their

212 Marcel Proust, *Finding Time Again* (London: Penguin, 2003), 147.
213 Marcel Proust, André Gide and Pierre Assouline, *Autor De La Recherche: Lettres* (Bruxelles: Complexe, 1988), 9-11. My translation.
214 Philip Kolb, *Marcel Proust: Select Letters 1880 – 1903* (London: Collins, 1983), 5.
215 Marcel Proust letter to Robert de Montesquiou (October 1893), Ibid, 59.

mastery of good manners and easy charm they are able to affect the most exquisite affability for five minutes," recounting the topics of conversation occurring throughout these salon visits.[216] Proust's letter to Hahn and his liking of Montesquiou reflects the fascination with decadent aestheticism and the "superiority" of the aesthetic sensibilities of the aristocratic class with which his novel contends. Proust's fascination with real-life decadent figures seeps into his novel. Proust indirectly refers to the notoriety of Wilde to illuminate the inversion of Charlus, utilising scandal to display homosexuality as a symptom of this decadent aristocratic culture. In *Sodom and Gomorrah*'s opening analysis of homosexuality, the narrator suggests:

> Their [homosexuals] only honour is precarious, their only liberty provisional until the crime be discovered; their only position unstable, as for the poet who was yesterday being *fêted* in every drawing room and applauded in every theatre in London, only to be driven on the morrow from every lodging-house, unable to find a pillow on which to lay his head.[217]

After an appraisal of the persecution of homosexuality, the narrator explains same-sex desire with the language of criminality, alluding to the public discovery and social persecution of Wilde's crime. Omitting Wilde's name from an earlier manuscript, mentioning "London theatres" for a contemporary audience creates an unambiguous parallel. Wilde was often referred to as a poet as seen in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*'s review of his 1882 lecture tour: "the poet Oscar Wilde lectured yesterday at Association Hall on 'Decorative Art' […] he appeared, as usual, in velvet and ruffles."[218] Proust's poet, in the context of homosexual persecution, is a clear allusion to Wilde, whom he characterised as an "unfortunate man" in a sympathetic letter to Gide.[219] Writing to Robert Dreyfus in 1908, Proust parenthetically wrote, "(like Oscar Wilde saying that the death of

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216 Marcel Proust's letter to Reynaldo Hahn (Nov 15, 1895), Ibid, 105.
217 Ibid, 19.
218 "Mr Wilde's Lecture: Philosophy of Decorative Art," *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (May 11, 1882), in Oscar Wilde Eccles Collection, *The British Library* ASS MS 81758.
219 Proust, *Autour De La Recherche: Lettres, 25*. My translation.

Lucien de Rubempré in Balzac was the greatest sorrow he had had, and discovering a little later, through his trial, that there are more real sorrows)."[220] This sentiment is transposed into Proust's novel when Marcel enquires about Charlus's favourite Balzac novel:

> *Illusions Perdues*, It's wonderful […] And the death of Lucien! I forgot who the man of taste was who, when he was asked what event in his life had most distressed him, replied: 'the death of Lucien de Rubempré in *Splendeurs et Misères*."[221]

Proust had scored Wilde's name out in his original manuscript, which suggests, as Emily Eells argues, "Proust might have refused to associate openly with a man whose widely publicised homosexuality would have revealed his own."[222] In this regard, the refusal to openly name Wilde within the text while maintaining a reliance on his aesthetic preoccupations turns Wilde into, as Eells argues, a "liminal figure [Proust] could not eliminate."[223] By the late 1910s, Proust was still utilising Wilde as the ultimate example of homosexual persecution, pointing to a continual interest in the fallout from decadent excess. However, rather than mere reproduction, Proust utilised decadent forms to reflect the crisis of modernity, conflating it with homosexuality as an extended metaphor for the waning of the modern age. That is, the fear that modernity was turning backwards on itself in a process of degenerative regression.

The Decadent Paradigm of the Homosexual

Anna Schaffner argues that for "writers of the new decadence, there was, in addition to an aesthetic politics, a sexual politics behind the mobilisation of 1890s decadence, notably as a means for

220 Proust and Curtis, *Letters of Marcel Proust,* 155.
221 Proust, *Sodom and Gomorrah,* 444.
222 Emily Eells, "Proust and Wilde: 'Une Curiosité complexe'," *Marcel Proust Aujourd'hui* 7 (2009): 105.
223 Ibid.

writing about queerness."[224] As Chapter One argues, modernist writers associated the 1890s with effeminacy, and reference to decadent style was becoming a framework through which to conjure homosexuality implicitly. This allowed Proust the space to articulate his theories of sexual perversion as an aesthetic. Through the association of decadence with same-sex desire, the aesthetics of sexual perversion formulated new codes of visibility for those in the know, namely through conceptions of camp. Chauncey argues that at the *fin de siècle* homosexual men "created a distinctive culture that enabled them to resist, on an everyday basis, their social marginalisation: tactics for communicating with one another in hostile settings, ways of affirming, transmitting, and celebrating their communal ties."[225] In this regard, Chauncey affirms that "camp was at once a cultural style and a cultural strategy, for it helped gay men make sense of, respond to, and undermine the social categories of gender and sexuality that served to marginalise them."[226] As Chapter One has argued for the conflation of effeminacy with camp signalling, Charlus's camp sensibility rendered his sexual perversion legible for those who knew how to read the signs. The narrative trajectory of Charlus dramatizes the turning point in the visibility of sexual desire within the cultural consciousness. Marcel spends most of *Sodom and Gomorrah* mixing with the Verdurin clan in the seaside town of Balbec alongside Charlus. It is within this social environment where the visibility of Charlus's sexual tastes becomes legible. In recounting how M. de Charlus spoke, "with endless pursing's of the lips and wiggling's of his torso," the narrator expounds, "it is strange that a certain category of secret actions should have as their external consequence a manner of speaking or of gesticulating which betrays them."[227] In this passage, the narrator links Charlus's

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224 Anna Katharina Schaffner, *Modernism and Perversion: Sexual Deviancy in Sexology and Literature, 1850 – 1930* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 230.
225 Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 272.
226 Ibid, 290.
227 Proust, *Sodom and Gomorrah*, 362.

"secret" homosexuality with the physicality of his mannerisms, questioning the mechanisms which make it possible to infer a person's sexual preference from the deviation from conventional masculine posture. Charlus "pouts" and "wiggles" when talking in a way that the narrator associates with women, suggesting this behaviour stands out "because we are not accustomed to seeing men put on so many airs and graces."[228] The narrator then directly associates Charlus's mannerisms with his homosexuality:

> On hearing M. de Charlus say in that high-pitched voice, and with that smile and those movements of the arm, 'No, I preferred its neighbour, the *fraisette,'* you could have said: 'Aha, he likes the strong sex,' with the same certainty as that which enables a judge to condemn a criminal who has not confessed.[229]

Specific movements of the body and inflexions of speech which deviated from the expected masculine mode at the beginning of the twentieth century were becoming camp cultural signifiers that indicated same-sex attraction.

Into the twentieth century, this cultural style was becoming legible for the uninitiated. Chauncey argues that in the early twentieth century, there was a "flamboyance in dress and speech associated with fairies" and that "men were identified as fairies on the basis of such minimal and 'stereotypical' deviations from the conventions of masculine demeanour."[230] The term fairy is slang for an effeminate homosexual man, and the legibility of this cultural style of feminine pose was something which Proust himself feared. In a letter to Paul Souday, an angered Proust accuses Souday of questioning his masculinity: "at the moment when I am about to publish *Sodome et Gomorrhe,* and when, because if I talk about Sodom no one will have the courage to defend me, you blaze the trail in advance for all the mischief-makers by calling me 'feminine.' From feminine

228 Ibid.
229 Ibid 362.
230 Chauncey, *Gay New York,* 17, 54.

to effeminate is a mere step. My seconds in duels can tell you whether I behave with the weakness of an effeminate man."[231] Proust's fear of the accusation of effeminacy proves Chauncey's claims of homosexual identification true, and he compensates with the masculine bravado of violent threat. This letter shows that Proust understood that if not performed carefully, camp's ability to both protect and hide could easily expose a homosexual through overt effeminate pose. Proust highlights this danger through the public actions of Charlus. The narrator writes that Charlus's vice "would have been recognised by three out of four society people who bowed to him."[232] Moreover, the narrator notes that the Verdurin clan "still risked, when he was out of earshot, an unkind joke […] if the Barron's starting to make eyes at the ticket collector, it'll take us forever to get there, the train'll start going arsy-versy."[233] In this regard, the narrator makes it clear that those around Charlus could recognise the camp signalling of his actions and infer meaning from the looks he shared with the men he had an interest in. This is what Chauncey called gay men's "tactics for communicating with one another in hostile settings."[234] The group would refer to Charlus in the camp tradition, using feminised language: if he and Morel were late, "we shan't wait for the young ladies any longer."[235] The narrator's examination of Charlus's negotiations with public space comes to a crescendo through a metaphor which underpins Sedgwick's concept of the "spectacle of the closet."[236] The narrator outlines the cruel jokes made at Charlus's expense, summarising: "thus M. de Charlus lived deluded, like the fish which believes that the water in which he is swimming extends beyond the glass of his tank, which offers his reflection, whereas

231 Proust to Souday (Nov 6, 1920), Marcel Proust, *Letters of Marcel Proust,* ed. Mina Curtis (London: Chatto and Windus, 1950), 290.
232 Ibid, 262.
233 Ibid, 435.
234 Chauncey, *Gay New York,* 272.
235 Ibid, 437.
236 Eve Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (California: University of California Press, 2008), 223.

he does not see, beside him, in the shadows, the amused passer-by who is following his antics."[237] Charlus cannot perceive how the Verdurin clan views him. As a group, they are fascinated by his vice. He does not realise that he, like the fish, is swimming in a tank to amuse those he cannot see. Writing on Charlus, Sedgwick argues that "the entire magnetism of every element of instability in the twentieth-century epistemology of the closet radiates toward and from if it cannot ever be said to belong to, the Baron."[238] He represents how *fin de siècle* 'inverts' navigated the precarious position of hiding a vice that paradoxically disgusted and enthralled the society that had deemed it an unnatural perversion. In doing so, Charlus embodies the culture of camp coding. However, despite this, Charlus was lauded in the best salons throughout France for his intelligence and wit, exalted like Wilde in the 1880s in "artistic circles where he was looked on as the very embodiment of inversion," only cast aside after the public disgrace of scandal.[239] Lucien Muhlfeld wrote for *Le Journal* in 1900: "Paris is not a puritanical city and Paris celebrated this man who practices Greek love […] after his stint of 'hard labour' Paris took no notice of the man it had taken up, the same hosts who invited you to dinner with the promise that Oscar Wilde would be there were ashamed to buy him a drink at a café five years later."[240] The public perception of Charlus mirrors the public perception of Wilde. In *The Prisoner,* Madam Verdurin exposes Charlus's homosexuality to the broader society as he threatens her Wednesday salon, causing a public scandal which ruins Charlus's reputation in parallel with the fall of Wilde. However, in earlier volumes, she was more than accepting of Charlus's habits. When staying in Madam Verdurin's house, she would allow Charlus and his lover connecting rooms, declaring the *double entendre*: "if you feel like making

237 Ibid, 442.
238 Ibid, 224.
239 Ibid, 408.
240 Lucien Muhlfeld, "Oscar Wilde," *Le Journal* (Dec 21, 1900), 1.

music, don't hesitate, the walls are like those of a fortress, you've no one on your floor, and my husband sleeps like the dead."[241]

The degeneration of Charlus reaches a crescendo after his public disgrace, as Marcel expounds: "no exile at the South Pole or at the top of Mont Blanc can detach us more from other people than a lengthy stay inside an inner vice."[242] Observing Charlus in social exile, Marcel describes that visible on the "surface of the Baron's face" was "exactly what he most wanted to hide:"

> A squalid life reflected in moral decay, such decay, whatever its cause, is easy to read in a face, for it takes material shape and spreads there, particularly in the cheeks and around the eyes, as unmistakably as the ochre tints of liver disease or the repulsive red patches of a skin complaint […] there now floated on the surface, visible as oil, the vice once so carefully hidden away by M. de Charlus. It now overflowed in his speech.[243]

Vice spreads like disease over the visage of those descendants of Sodom afflicted with the unfortunate sickness. Marcel explains that no attempt to suppress a vice can halt inevitable physical decay. His homosexuality is evidence of "moral decay," and this decay has physical symptoms akin to the symptoms of organ failure. Proust keeps with prominent degeneration theory and notions of evolutionary physiognomy, portraying Charlus at the end of his exile and late stage of sickness. After social ex-communication, Charlus's degeneration reaches new levels of transformation:

> For a moment I wondered who was greeting me: it was M. de Charlus. One might say that in his case the development of his illness or the evolution of his vice had reached that extreme point at which the earliest character of the individual, his ancestral qualities, had been entirely eclipsed by the transit across them of the generic weakness or illness that comes with them […] he himself was so perfectly disguised by what he had become and

241 Proust, *Sodom,* 437.
242 Marcel Proust, *The Prisoner and The Fugitive* (London: Penguin, 2003), 193.
243 Ibid, 189.

> which did not belong to himself alone but to many other inverts, that at first I had taken him to be just another one of them.[244]

In this regard, Sedgwick's concept of the spectacle of the closet is seen as Charlus's inversion obfuscates his entire person to the point where Marcel only sees the homosexual signifiers slowly spreading through his body like an all-consuming rash. His "illness" had reached "*that* extreme point," suggesting every invert will eventually regress to the creature that Charlus had become: a creature indistinguishable from any other afflicted with the condition.

The narrator's conception of the pathological power of same-sex attraction is continued through the trajectory of the narrator's best friend, Robert de Saint-Loup. Saint-Loup is the nephew of Charlus, and his homosexual metamorphosis continues the breaking down of a decadent aristocratic class as the narrator conceptualises his desire as hereditary. The narrator introduces Saint-Loup as a "remarkable beauty," making "the prettiest of women of the *Faubourg Saint-Germain* vie for his attentions," described as standing out in a crowd as "a pale precious vein of luminous opal stands out among crude earth."[245] Acting as a second in a duel, "his virility and passionate liking for women were well known," despite the fact that "some thought there was something effeminate about him."[246] Saint-Loup embodies the masculine soldier: youthful, beautiful, patriotic. Jason Crouthamel writes, "the image of the steel-nerved ordinary front soldier became ubiquitous in popular media, and it was a cornerstone of post-war myths of the rugged "New Man" who emerged out of the horrors of war."[247] Saint-Loup is this soldier personified. Crouthamel goes on to argue that "effeminate behaviour and homosexual men were denounced as

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244 Ibid, 71.
245 Ibid.
246 Ibid, 309.
247 Jason Crouthamel, *An Intimate History of the Front: Masculinity, Sexuality and German Soldiers in the First World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 2.

threats to this militarised ideal of masculinity."[248] The declining image of Saint-Loup's masculinity is thus seen as a threat to the strength of social hegemony, symptomatic of the spread of decadence during World War One in France and across Western Europe. Marcel recalls his first meetings with Saint-Loup:

> When he sent up his card the following day, I thought it must be at least a challenge to a duel, but his talk was of literature […] throughout that first visit of his, not only did he show a keen preference for intellectual things, but he shows a liking for me that was quite out of keeping with the handshake of the previous day.[249]

Saint-Loup's interest in discussing "Nietzsche, Proudhon and modernistic literature" initially struck Marcel as antithetical to his outward demeanour, but this interest is in keeping with Proust's conflation of the figure of the intellectual and the homosexual, which made Charlus so attractive to the Verdurin clan: "in the first period, they had found M. de Charlus to be intelligent in spite of his vice. Now it was, without their realising it, because of that vice that they found him more intelligent than the others."[250] This is a connection built on an existing cultural construction forged by the decadent 1890s, an association between decadence, homosexuality and writing which other aggressively heteronormative first-generation modernists such as Eliot, Pound, and Lewis were self-consciously distancing themselves from in their form. Saint-Loup represents this reactionary stance during a dining scene in *The Guermantes Way* by physically attacking a homosexual man:

> The man had been loitering about with intent and, seeing Saint-Loup as the handsome soldier he was, had propositioned him. My friend could not get over the effrontery of this 'clique' who no longer even waited for the shades of night before they ventured out, and he spoke of the proposition that had been made with the same indignation that can be found in newspaper reports of armed assault and robbery.[251]

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248 Ibid.
249 Marcel Proust, *In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower* (London: Penguin, 2003), 311
250 Proust, *Sodom*, 445.
251 Proust, *The Guermantes Way*, 180.

This moment distances Saint-Loup from any taint of Wildean effeminacy. However, it is later revealed that Saint-Loup was engaged in a love affair with the same Morel who caused his uncle's scandal, who had become by *The Prisoner, "*necessary to Saint-Loup in the same way as shadow is necessary to a beam of sunlight."[252] This knowledge changed Marcel's perception of Saint-Loup, who recalled: "he had a way of not looking at the lift boy when he was talking to him in a way that much recalled M. Charlus's manner of speaking to certain men."[253] As a result, Marcel believed that Saint-Loup had "inherited" the same "type of love affairs from M. de Charlus."[254] This notion of degenerative inheritance is emblematic of Proustian conceptions of same-sex desire and the decadent excess of the waning aristocracy from which it flows. As seen in the Introduction and Chapter One, the decadence of an idle class was believed to induce perversions such as homosexuality, viewed as a stagnation which hindered the continuation of the empire. In decadent fashion, the once virile Saint-Loup succumbs to a perverse notion of sexuality.

In *The Prisoner,* the narrator aims to clarify the focus on the degeneracy of the aristocracy:

> It may be thought that the aristocracy, in this book, is disproportionately taxed with degeneracy compared to the other social classes. If that were so, it would not be surprising. As time passes, old families develop peculiarities – a red, hooked nose, a deformed chin – which are admired as specific signs of 'blood.' But among these persisting and ever-intensifying traits there are some which are not visible: tendencies and tastes.[255]

Marcel's thoughts are illuminating for twofold reasons. Firstly, it is an admission of a decadent regression associated with the aristocracy, which conflates homosexuality as an inherited malady with the ending of an aristocratic lineage. However, its very omission makes homosexuality a purely upper-class social disease, one that the working class does not exhibit unless corrupted by

252 Proust, *Finding Time Again,* 11.
253 Proust, *The Prisoner,* 651.
254 Proust, *Finding Time Again,* 10.
255 Proust, *The Prisoner,* 38.

the aristocracy. In *A la recherche*, working-class homosexuality is presented as situational – Morel extorts money from Charlus and Saint-Loup, and the men in Jupien's brothel are compensated for their pleasure-giving. They speak of their work matter-of-factly, devoid of eroticism: "I was beating him all last night till my hands were covered in blood. – is it you that's beating him tonight? – no not me. It's Maurice. But it'll be me on Sunday."[256] Chauncey argues that:

> Numerous accounts of turn-of-the-century homosexual prostitution confirm that it commonly involved men paying fairies for sex, while still considering themselves to be the "men" in the encounter […] so long as they maintained a masculine demeanour and played only the 'masculine,' or insertive, role […] neither they, the fairies, nor the working-class public considered *them* to be queer."[257]

In this regard, the workers of the brothel house and the various "bellboys" Charlus courts are not viewed to be degenerate in the decadent understanding of aristocratic homosexuality. Instead, the men are viewed as accessories to perversion, and as in the case of Wilde and the Cleveland Street Affair, they are corrupted by the social class they serve. As the aristocracy passes on their degenerative habits through mixing with the working class, men like Morel use these connections to raise their positions, indicating a breakdown of class barriers which passes through all decadent societies. Marcel notes this aristocratic decline in Saint-Loup:

> I was struck by how much he was changing. He was looking more and more like his mother: the haughty, elegant manner he had inherited from her […] this whole regression to the birdlike elegance of the Guermantes, with pointed beak and sharpened eyes, was now being employed by his new vice and the more he used it, the more of a queen, as Balzac would say, he looked. He was beginning to speak in sentences which he believed sounded seventeenth century, and in that was merely imitating the style of the Guermantes. But at the same time some indefinable inflexion was causing them to develop into the manners of M. de Charlus.[258]

As Saint-Loup ages, the narrator suggests the pathology of his condition created visible symptoms of perversion which the passer-by could infer. Just as Charlus regressed to an unrecognisable state

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256 Proust, *Finding Time*, 120.
257 Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 66.
258 Proust, *Finding Time Again*, 9.

of inversion, Saint-Loup was beginning to inherit the same physical characteristics of the "race" of his uncle. However, before Saint-Loup deteriorates further, he is killed in combat. Saint-Loup's death was a crushing blow mirroring the death of Marcel's love interest, Albertine, as both characters died suddenly in tragic circumstances, symptomatic of what Marcel saw as their tragic circumstances in life:

> Saint-Loup's secret perhaps caused me more sadness now than that of Albertine, whose life had become so alien to me. But I could not get over the fact that her life, like Saint-Loups had been so short […] Robert had often said sadly to me, long before the war: 'Oh, don't let's talk about my life, I've been condemned in advance.' Was he alluding to the vice which he was aware and whose seriousness he perhaps exaggerated?[259]

With the benefit of hindsight, Marcel sees the effect Saint-Loup's vice had on his psyche. However, on a grander scale, the notion of being "condemned in advance" is a prescient examination of the cultural environment which condemned homosexuality as immoral regardless of its origins. It is this condemnation which leads Marcel to declare: "personally I found that it made no difference from a moral point of view whether one took one's pleasure with a man or a woman, and only too natural and human to take it wherever one could find it," an impassioned defence of a maligned desire viewed by society as unnatural and perverse.[260]

Gide recalled questioning whether Proust would "ever present Eros in a young and beautiful guise" during an evening where they "scarcely talked of anything but homosexuality," criticising Proust's characterisations and suggesting that he "seems to have wanted to stigmatise homosexuality."[261] Despite Proust's protests, Gide correctly surmised that *A la recherche* was promulgating a particular type of homosexual, namely the effete invert, which was becoming

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259 Ibid, 158.
260 Proust, *The Fugitive*, 650.
261 Gide and O'Brien, *The Journals of André Gide*, 267.

stigmatised within European society at large. In the same conversation, Proust confessed to an "indecision which made him, in order to fill out the heterosexual part of his book, transpose" to Albertine and their little band in Balbec "all the attractive, affectionate, and charming elements contained in his homosexual recollections," leaving nothing "but the grotesque and the abject" for the homosexual portrayals within his novel.[262] As Proust's narrator himself is not a part of what Chauncey describes as being "a highly developed gay commercial subculture" in Paris, he does not only look to the camp coding of homosexual signifying but puts stock in the medicalised theories of homosexuality, described in the accompanying language of "abject" decadence.[263] Jeffery Meyers claims that "homosexuals became an important literary figure, for writers were attracted to the stigmata of the feared, hated and persecuted outsider who defied moral law, subverted the concept of the family, symbolised the destructive element in passion and threatened the virility of the ordinary man."[264] As seen through the characters of Charlus and Saint-Loup, the spectre of homosexuality defies moral law precisely by functioning as an emblem of disease, as a pathological representation of cultural decline. As homosexuality became indicative of social perversion in the cultural imagination, the decadent tradition of subversion, as outlined in Chapter One, becomes apparent. Proust's work centres on the crumbling of so-called unchallengeable social orthodoxies, celebrating notions of the perverse which facilitate these changes. In this regard, the utilisation of decadence is instrumental in his social critique of their breakdown.

During *Finding Time Again,* Marcel enters a male brothel, becoming a voyeur in a scene of sadomasochistic pleasure between Charlus and a slew of young working-class men. Frequented

262 Ibid.
263 Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 144.
264 Jeffery Meyers, *Homosexuality and Literature: 1890 – 1930* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 18.

by an aristocratic clientele, Marcel describes that "some vice or other, as well as the greatest of all vices, the lack of willpower […] brought them all together here, admittedly in isolated rooms, but, as I was told, every night."[265] The narrator notes that these men "belonged to the upper class of society" and that "while their names were known to society hostesses, these had gradually lost sight of their faces, and never any longer had an opportunity to receive them as visitors."[266] Marcel describes the effect homosexuality was having on the social milieu at large, breaking down the salon culture the social world was built on as these large swaths of men no longer attended events in which their presence was expected, instead spending the evening with "young bellboys and working-class men, etc., who provided their pleasure."[267] The class intermingling which homosexuality was facilitating enabled the structural breakdown of social organisation as the aristocracy began fraternising with the working class in these brothels. Christopher Robinson argues that Proust presents homosexuality as "creating structures within society which, by cutting across normal social boundaries, undermine society, and therefore make it a phenomenon which society must inevitably oppose."[268] This social mixing is precisely that: an undermining of the social boundaries which upheld French society and culture at the turn of the century. Saint-Loup tells Marcel of "the number of working-class men whom [Charlus] takes a liking to, whom he takes under his wing, though he may well get no thanks for it in the end."[269] Unaware of their sexual relationships, Saint-Loup inadvertently highlights the social transformations that arise from them: "a footman who attends him in a hotel somewhere and whom he'll set up in Paris; a peasant lad whom he gets apprenticed to a trade."[270] Just as Wilde's relationships with working-class men

265 Proust, *Finding Time Again,* 144.
266 Ibid.
267 Ibid.
268 Robinson, *Scandal in the Ink,* 48.
269 Proust, *In the Shadow,* 331.
270 Ibid.

were critiqued during his trial – partly for his parading of these men in aristocratic venues – so too were Charlus's.[271] Charlus artificially raises the station of his sexual partners by providing them with an income and using his social connections to get them into jobs that their birth and status would not have provided them. As a result, the class intermingling that homosexuality facilitated began fracturing the stratified ecosystem of class and birth status that the aristocracy required to survive.

World War One: From Decay to Redemption

In leaving Jupien's brothel a German air raid began, forcing Marcel to retreat to home. While walking, he reflects:

> My thoughts had turned to another subject. I was thinking about Jupien's house now perhaps reduced to ashes, for a bomb had fallen very near me just after I had left it, the house on which M. de Charlus might prophetically have written 'Sodoma' as had, with no less prescience or perhaps as the volcano was starting to erupt and the catastrophe had begun, the unknown inhabitant of Pompeii. But what did sirens or *Gothas* matter to men who had come looking for social pleasure?[272]

Proust invokes metaphors of sin by linking the presumed destruction of Jupien's brothel with the destruction of Pompeii and the fate of Sodom, a city destroyed by God due to the vices of its inhabitants. The implication of this comparison is the natural endpoint of a society turned decadent and a representation of the cultural anxieties concerning the moral degeneration of French society in a period of increased cultural instability. The danger of the war that brings about the destruction of the brothel, which the narrator symbolically labels "Sodom," reads as an allegory of biblical

[271] Wilde bought Alphonse Conway – a young working-class man – a new suit and straw hat to take him to an event in Brighton. Wilde often brought young working-class men to dine alongside him publicly in the aristocratic venue, the Café Royal.

[272] Proust, *Finding Time Again*, 144.

renewal. Just as the God of the Pentateuch destroyed the city of Sodom, Jupien's representative Sodom, with its equally immoral activity, is destroyed by the Germans. The narrator comments on this immorality:

> They had long ceased to pay any heed to the moral or immoral implications of the life they led, because it was the life that everybody around them led. Thus, when we study certain periods of ancient history, we are amazed to find men or women, good in themselves, taking part without scruple in mass assassinations, human sacrifices, which probably seemed entirely natural to them."[273]

In this regard, the narrator suggests that the proliferation of vice within subcultural homosexual communities led to the normalisation of sex acts between men as "everybody around them" led the same immoral life. Moreover, by linking this normalisation with past human practices viewed contemporaneously as barbaric and immoral, which themselves were once normalised, the narrator continues the association of homosexuality with immorality. However, as outlined in Chapter One, decadent artists of the 1890s inverted language surrounding perversions, praising transgressive modes of sexuality and vestiges of this tradition find their way into Proust's portrait of cultural instability. Schaffner, in her study of modernism and perversion, terms homosexuals in modernist literature "figures of redemption."[274] By cutting across normal social boundaries, the existence of these perversions allow for the possibility of an altogether different social order. This redemption is demonstrable as Marcel connects the morally revolutionary acts occurring in Jupien's house to notions of cultural transition:

> The Pompeiian pictures in Jupien's house, moreover, were well suited, in so far as they recalled the final period of the French Revolution, to the age, rather similar to the Directory, which was about to begin. Already, in anticipation of peace under the concealment of darkness so as not to infringe the police regulations too openly, new dances were being evolved and danced frantically all night long.[275]

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273 Ibid, 145.
274 Schaffner, *Modernism and Perversion*, 255.
275 Proust, *Finding Time Again*, 145.

The social changes resulting from wartime disruptions are full of promise; the darkness and chaos created by the air raids generated spaces for same-sex desire to flourish despite the physical destruction of Paris that resulted. The inhabitants of Jupien's house represent the age that "was about to begin," as the War is characterised as another period of Revolution altering French society, similar to the Directory of 1795. The adoption of the Constitution of 1795 introduced the Directory, a governing committee which marked the end of the reign of terror and attempted to stabilise France. The Directory attempted to prevent royalists and anti-revolutionaries from retaking power and was overthrown when the Napoleonic coup of 1799 forcefully ended the revolution. The analogy highlights how Proust believed the War could produce a similar function for the decadence of a new century, reshaping and stabilising the social opprobrium that relegated homosexuality to "the concealment of darkness."

The brothel patrons welcomed the air raids as "for these few hours the police would be concerned with nothing beyond such trivial matters as the lives of the city's inhabitants, and would pose no threat to their reputations."[276] The reference to the policing of homosexual activity uncovers the constraints of homosexual life in Paris. Same-sex desires could not exist in the open; they were relegated to the secrecy of darkness. The narrator continues:

> Some of these Pompeiians on whom the sky was already raining fire descended into the passages of the Métro, dark as catacombs. They knew that they would not be the only ones there. And darkness, enveloping everything, like a new element, had the effect, irresistibly tempting to some, of suppressing the first stage of pleasure and allowing us immediate access to a realm of caresses which normally we reach only after some time.[277]

The removal of the threat of policing creates the possibility that mechanisms of desire would be able to flourish once unrestricted. The sky "was already raining fire" on homosexuals in the form

[276] Ibid, 142.
[277] Ibid.

of scrutiny and punishment of their sexual activity, and the bombing of the city removes this constant vigilance. Although this descent into the "catacombs" is written as a rejection of "moral freedom" and a metaphor for the path of "temptation" leading to the grave, Proust depicts the temporary chaos of the air raids as liberty from persecution. The narrator describes how the sirens "no more disturbed Jupien's visitors" as "the threat of physical danger freed them from the fear by which they had been morbidly persecuted for so long. For it is wrong to think that the scale of fear corresponds to the scale of the danger that inspires it."[278] In this regard, the fear of police raids uncovering their homosexuality and the accompanying scandal and social exile that would follow was more intense than the threat of imminent death. The proximity to death paradoxically becomes a liberation from fear itself. The radical social shift *A la recherche* depicts becomes overt during the last salon party of *Finding Time Again.* Marcel comes to the realisation that the fêted aristocrats of his youth are no longer the crème of Parisian society:

> The fact is that the society of those days, like the faces which are now altered, and the blond hair replaced with white, no longer had any existence outside the memory of a few individuals, whose number was diminishing every day […] the old assured me that everything about society had changed, that people were being received who would never have been received in their day.[279]

As time progresses in *A la recherche*, social positions Marcel once believed unalterable break down. By the end, Madame Swan moves up in society, the Jewish character Bloch, after Alfred Dreyfus's exoneration is admitted into a society that was closed to him in the previous years, and the stronghold of the Guermantes family no longer holds its sway. The breaking down of these orthodoxies points toward the possibility of the collapse of the institutional homophobia that permeates Proust's representation of both his homosexual characters and their experiences navigating French cultural forces.

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278 Ibid.
279 Ibid, 267.

Poised Both *Within* and *Without*: The Erotics of Modernist Narrative Form

It is clear from his correspondence that Proust was anxious about revealing his sexuality. Gide recalls this reticence: "I am taking [Proust] *Corydon* (1911), of which he promises not to speak to anyone; and when I say a word or two about my Memoirs: 'you can say anything,' he exclaims; 'but on condition that you never say: I.'"[280] However, despite Gide believing that "far from denying or hiding his homosexuality, [Proust] exhibits it, and I could almost say boasts of it," Proust went to great lengths to publicly refute accusations.[281] So great was his anxiety, in 1887 Proust fought a duel with the critic Jean Lorrain, who had implied there was a homosexual relationship between Proust and Lucien Daudet in his review of Proust's *Les Plaisirs et les jours* (1896).[282] Edmund White argues that Proust's response to Lorrain was an attempt at overt masculine posture:

> It was this hyper-virile image that Proust was eager to cultivate as a way of offsetting his spreading reputation as a homosexual. To be *labelled* a homosexual in print (as opposed to living a homosexual life in private discretely among friends) was social anathema, even in Paris.[283]

Homosexual men coveting a "virile image" was not out of the ordinary in the years directly following Wilde's imprisonment. As masculine posture masked homosexual tendencies due to the conflation of effeminacy and deviant sexual behaviour, camp codes arose as a mode of protection. Those who understood camp movements could recognise homosexuality, and an overt masculine

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280 André Gide and Justin O'Brien, *The Journals of André Gide Vol II 1914 – 1927* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), 265. The journal entry is from May 14, 1921.

281 Letter's detailing this "exhibition of homosexuality" are found in Marcel Proust and Philip Kolb, *Select Letters 1880 - 1903* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 105, 107, 127, 262.

282 Lorrain suggested that Alphonse Daudet would provide a preface for Proust's subsequent work as he could not refuse anything to his son Lucien. Here in lies the implication of the unusual relationship between Proust and Lucien, which would force such a respected writer to introduce a work as "shallow" and "inane" as Proust's. "Pall-Mall Semaine," *Le Journal* (3 Feb, 1897) in *Marcel Proust*, ed. Leighton Hodson (London: Routledge, 1997), 47.

283 Edmund White, *Marcel Proust* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1999), 70.

posture could render it invisible in a hostile world. In an unpublished story – "A Captain's Reminiscence" (1895-6) – Proust portrays the struggle of homosexual identity formation from a first-person perspective, a perspective which disappears in the published volumes of *A la recherche*. The reorientation of perspective in *A la recherche* is proof of Proust following his own advice to Gide to "never say I." "Reminiscence" depicts an unnamed sexual attraction felt by a Captain for his "old regimental orderly."[284] The Captain reflects on a memory of meeting the orderly on the street in which he became aware of his attraction: "he exercised over me an entirely mysterious seduction, and I tried to pay attention to my words and gestures, attempting to please him and to say things that were somehow admirable."[285] This "mysterious seduction" was a feeling that the Captain did not understand, and his attempts to please the orderly began to unsettle him: "passionately desirous (why?) for him to look at me, I inserted my monocle and pretended to look everywhere other than in his direction. Time was growing late, I had to leave. I could no longer prolong the conversation with my orderly."[286] The first-person reflective form of Proust's narration allows the Captain to reflect on and question the desires he cannot comprehend. The question "Why?" interrupts the Captain's thoughts of desire as he reflects on this meeting and his contradictory behaviour. He desires the orderly's attention and gaze while simultaneously averting his own, shrinking from the attraction that makes him question his relationship with the orderly. The Captain's thoughts continued to return to this meeting: "I dined sadly, and remained in real anguish for two days; in my dreams that face suddenly appeared, sending shivers through me. Naturally I never saw him again and I never will see him again."[287] The Captain's inability to act on his desire for the orderly leads to "anguish" and leaves him in solitude.

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284 Proust, *The Mysterious Correspondent* (London: One World Publications, 2021), 73.
285 Ibid, 75.
286 Ibid.
287 Ibid, 76.

Proust's fear of exposure influenced the form of *A la recherche,* splitting the narrative voice between Marcel, who is narrating and the character Marcel, who acts out the experiences being described by involuntary memory. The first-person voice is temporally split from the narrated figure and becomes, in some instances, omniscient. As the "omniscient" narrator has lived through the experiences of his narrated self, his recollections become infused with commentary, and as a result, Marcel illuminates his own spiritual experiences. This technique allows the narrator to elucidate his theories of homosexuality, which are resolutely embedded in nineteenth-century analyses of the concept, building on the medicalised discourse which was beginning to shape the very notion of sexual identity. The opening of *Sodom and Gomorrah* references this epiphany:

> As we all know, well before going that day to pay the call on the Duc and Duchesse that I have just recounted, I had been watching out for their return and had, in the course of my vigil, made a discovery, involving M. de Charlus in particular, but so significant in itself that up until now, when I am able to give it position and dimensions it requires, I have put off reporting it […].[288]

The narrator has already introduced Charlus to the reader. However, he is only now mentioning such pivotal information about him. This narrative choice highlights an ambiguity between the *narrator* and the *narrated* as Proust uses the same first-person pronoun for the narrator and the character without clarification. The narration then moves from an objective recounting of Marcel's movements to the thoughts occupying his mind – the degeneration of self-fertilising plants – before being interrupted by the narrator's voice once more: "my reflections had been following an incline that I shall describe in due course."[289] The form of Proust's narration presents an outer experience of epiphany by the narrator, and then delves into Marcel's conscious understanding of what he has become witness to, allowing Proust to analyse homosexuality within the consciousness of the

[288] Marcel Proust, *Sodom and Gomorrah,* 5.
[289] Ibid, 7.

Marcel who has experienced the revelation. As a result of this narratorial split, Marcel's view of homosexuality is that of an outsider, one who interprets inversion for the reader through the omniscience of narration while holding a moral distance from the topic himself. He spends the first half of *A la recherche* pining after Gilbert, and the second half depicts his relationship with Albertine. He seems painfully unaware of homosexuality's existence until it is revealed to him in *Sodom and Gomorrah,* and at no point does the narrator relate his theories of homosexuality to himself. Nevertheless, the novel is informed by Proust's own homosexuality. Gregory Woods argues that "the source of most of the *Recherche's* camp ironies is an apparent distance between the mind 'behind' the book and the mind of the narrator: the gap between Marcel and Proust."[290] The gap between Proust himself, a practising homosexual, and the negative theories of his narrator enhances the ironic understanding Marcel has of homosexuality. The narrator professes only to an awareness of homosexuality once happening upon Charlus and Jupien yet can immediately embark on a lengthy summation of existing scientific and social theories of same-sex desire. This is possible as Colleen Lamos argues that Marcel is poised "both inside and outside the secret universe of Jews and queers, resolutely and snobbishly French yet sharing the hidden, shameful otherness of those whom he disdains."[291] This structuring allows Proust to distance his narrator from homosexuality while still allowing the introduction of the theme as a central issue. This distancing comes precisely as Marcel embodies the voyeur, an isolated non-participant in the events he witnesses. Scenes of same-sex desire are followed by a didactic deconstruction of the nature of sexuality, with Marcel always removed from these scenes.

290 Woods, "High Culture and High Camp," 125.

291 Colleen Lamos, *Deviant Modernisms: Sexual and Textual Errancy in T. S. Eliot, James Joyce and Marcel Proust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 10.

The first scene of voyeurism occurs when the narrator recalls overhearing a sexual encounter between M. de Charlus and a tailor, Jupien. Positioned himself in an adjoining room, the narrator watches them through a "transom" window for "half an hour or so:"

> For to judge by what I heard in the early stages from Jupien's, which was simply inarticulate sounds, I assume few words were uttered. It is true that these sounds were so violent that, had they not consistently been taken up an octave higher by a parallel moaning, I might have thought that one person was slitting another's throat close beside me […] I later concluded that if there is one thing as noisy as suffering it is pleasure, especially when there is added to it – failing the fear of having children, which could not be the case here, in spite of the far from convincing example in the *Golden Legend* – an immediate concern with cleanliness.[292]

In this passage, the narrator does not present the scene in full view; instead, he mediates the sexual act through Marcel's impression of the events. He uses metaphor to make the reader understand what is occurring beyond the wall. He initially describes the noise as being akin to "slitting another's throat," however, by immediately concluding that "pleasure" is equally as "noisy as suffering," the reader understands that the scene between Charlus and Jupien was not violent. The reference to *The Golden Legend* combined with the lack of "fear of having children" makes clear to the reader the sexual act taking place. Within this legend, it is said that the emperor Nero was made pregnant, giving birth to a frog, and this cultural reference reveals the sexual nature of the scene, which itself could not result in children. Unlike the explicit depictions of sex acts found in Genet and Burroughs, as Chapters Five and Six will discuss, in Proust, every instance of homosexuality is mediated through Marcel's heterosexual perspective. As a modernist writer, Proust still had to mediate the explicitness of his depictions with the sensibilities of his readers' tastes, ensuring not to cross cultural limits of acceptability. Even while practised behind closed doors, homosexuality becomes a publicly debated topic as Marcel turns these scenes into spectacle and discourse. Nevertheless, this is precisely how Proust unravels his work's moral questions.

[292] Proust, *Sodom*, 13.

Once Charlus and Jupien leave, Marcel's thoughts turn to a didactic mediation of the nature of sexuality when the narrator distils his sexological theories into extended metaphor, such as the biblical story of Sodom and the well-known image of the bumblebee, the digression into which often spans multiple pages.

An Array of Sexological Inquiry

The narrator offers his first theory of homosexuality:

> I understood now why, a moment ago when I had seen him coming out from Mme de Villeparisis's, I had been able to think that M. de Charlus had the look of a woman: he was one! He belonged to that race of beings, less contradictory than they appear to be, whose ideal is virile, precisely because their temperament is feminine, and who are in life like other men in appearance only. [293]

Before this moment, Charlus had been described as a masculine patriarch of a noble house, the presumed paramour of Madam Swan. However, once Marcel becomes aware of Charlus's homosexual relations, he transforms into a woman in Marcel's eyes. This reappraisal of Charlus leads to a narratorial digression in which Marcel's thoughts are interrupted by several theories of homosexuality:

> Some [inverts] if you come on them in the morning, still in bed, display an admirable woman's head, so general is the expression and symbolic of the sex as a whole, the hair declares it; its inflexion is so feminine, when loosened it falls so naturally on the cheek in tresses, that you marvel that the young woman, barely awake as yet in the unconscious of this man's body in which she is imprisoned […].[294]

Marcel's understanding suggests that certain sexual attractions are essential to the sexes from which they are cited, upholding the narrative of homosexuality-as-inversion cited from Ulrichs, which in this period was held to explain the homosexual condition. The masculinity of homosexual

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293 Proust, *Sodom and Gomorrah*, 19, 18.
294 Ibid, 24.

men is thus characterised as a masquerade. The invert plays the role of a man to deceive society as he attempts to hide his true womanhood, dramatizing the instability of sexual categorisation that Sedgwick understands was beginning to fracture early twentieth-century Western culture. Continuing this train of thought, Marcel suggests:

> The young man whom we have just tried to depict was so obviously a woman, that the women who looked longingly at him were doomed to the same disappointment as those who, in Shakespeare's comedies, are taken in by a young girl in disguise who passes herself off as an adolescent boy.[295]

Evoking historical literary tropes of disguised gender, Proust conjures the ambiguity of desire of *Twelfth Night* (1601-2) and the intertwinement of sexology and literary tradition. In so doing, Proust points to a broader crisis of sexual categorisation that inversion represents and, as a result, the intense threat that homosexuality was beginning to pose to the binary structuring of the heterosexual status quo. Foucault writes that homosexuality endangered the heterosexual status quo as it represented an endpoint of the theory of "degenerescence."[296] Sexual perversion threatened the concept of the natural family and the healthy procreative nature of sex itself by being both a product of degeneracy yet also exacerbating the process: "a heredity that was burdened with various maladies ended by producing a sexual pervert […] sexual perversion resulted in the depletion of one's line of descent – rickets in children, the sterility of future generations. The series composed of perversion-heredity-degenerescence formed the solid nucleus of the new technologies of sex."[297] Foucault explicitly refers to "homosexuals" as being one of these "sexual perversions." Throughout the nineteenth century, anxiety surrounding the declining population of France caused fears surrounding non-procreative sexual activities. Robert A. Nye argues that "among a host of fearsome 'modern' pathologies, population decline was the one that

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295 Ibid, 25.
296 Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 118.
297 Ibid.

appeared to pose the greatest direct threat to the survival of France."[298] Nye argues that this fear was exacerbated "following the bloodletting of World War I […] deepening fears of national decline."[299] The fear of stagnating population gave rise to the "new technologies of sex" Foucault describes as "psychiatry, jurisprudence, legal medicine, agencies of social control," that "all functioned for a long time on the basis of 'degenerescence' and the hereditary-perversion system."[300] Under these frameworks, the perversion of homosexuality was seen as threatening to the continued dominance of empire. Proust's novel depicts this fear ironically, through the sexual degeneration of the Guermantes family.

This irony becomes apparent through the fallacy of contradiction. Ty Blakeney argues that "Proust's text seems intentionally constructed as a kind of anachronistic amalgamation of an array of competing and contradictory models of same-sex sexuality."[301] Whether or not Proust's integration of this "array" of models for theorising same-sex desire is "anachronistic" is debatable, as throughout the *fin de siècle*, various epistemologies of sexuality overlapped, and scientific consensus on the subject was never reached. Although the sexological theories by the likes of Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis were first formulated in the 1880s and '90s, they only attained widespread dissemination into the following century, holding sway over cultural understandings of sexuality in the time Proust was formulating his novel. Regardless, Blakeney's assertion of Proust's compilation of sexological theory holds. *Sodom and Gomorrah* begins with an epigraph indicating the "first appearance of the men-woman, descendants of those inhabitants of Sodom

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298 Robert A. Nye, "Michel Foucault's Sexuality and the History of Homosexuality in France," in *Homosexuality in Modern France*, ed. Jeffrey Merrick and Bryant T. Ragan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 231.

299 Ibid.

300 Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 119.

301 Ty Blakeney, "'The Moment is Poorly Chosen': Proust, Same-Sex Sexuality and Nationalism," *Paragraph: A Journal of Modern Critical Theory* (2022): 50.

who were spared by the fire from heaven."[302] From the outset of the novel, homosexual identity is framed by a biblical narrative of excessive vice. However, the phrase "men-women" connects the scripture to contemporary considerations of pathological inversion theory. Through this language of "men-women," Proust draws on Ulrichs's 1868 theorisation of homosexuality as a spiritual hermaphroditism (*Zwischenstufen*). Proust had also read translations of Havelock Ellis' *Sexual Inversion* (1900) and Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886), texts circulating Europe in 1906 as explanations to the Eulenberg scandal in which five civil trials took place referencing accusations of homosexuality within Kaiser Wilhelm II's cabinet.[303]

Proust outlined his intention of using Charlus as the paradigmatic case study of inversion theory to Gide:

> I tried to paint the homosexual in love with virility because without knowing it, he is a woman. I don't claim that he is the only homosexual but he's a very interesting one, and I don't think he's ever been described. Like all homosexuals for that matter, he is different from the rest of men […][304]

Although Gide appeared to tolerate the character of Charlus, upon publication, he moved to critique Proust's conflation of inversion and homosexuality:

> I have read Proust's latest pages with, at first, a shock of indignation. Knowing what he thinks, what he is, it is hard for me to see in them anything but a pretence, a desire to protect himself, a camouflage of the cleverest sort, for it can be to no one's advantage to denounce him. Even more: that offence to truth will probably please everybody: heterosexuals whose prejudices it justifies and whose repugnance it flatters; and the others, who will take advantage of the alibi and their lack of resemblance to those he portrays. In short, considering the public's cowardice, I do not know any writing that is more capable than Proust's *Sodom and Gomorrah* of confirming the error of public opinion.[305]

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302 Proust, *Sodom and Gomorrah*, 3.

303 Proust's knowledge of sexology is discussed in J. E Rivers, *Proust and the Art of Love: The Aesthetics of Sexuality in the Life, Times and Art of Marcel Proust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 158.

304 Marcel Proust, *Autour De La Recherche: Lettres* (Bordeaux: Complexe, 1988), 38. My translation.

305 Gide's Journal entry (Dec 2, 1921), André Gide and Justin O'Brien, *The Journals of André Gide Volume II 1914 – 1927* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), 276.

Gide accuses Proust of promulgating an unflattering and inaccurate portrayal of homosexuality, which "justifies" heterosexual "prejudice" to the detriment of public opinion. Proust's narrator describes inverts as "stemming not from an ideal of beauty that they have chosen but an incurable malady," acquiring "the physical and moral characteristics of a race, sometimes beautiful, often ghastly," which differentiates them from "real men."[306] As the beginning of this chapter has outlined, homosexuals are described as degenerating due to the decadence of this malady. In this regard, Gide's accusations are well-founded. In "confirming" further the image of the effete aesthete as the recognisable public face of the sexually perverse, Gide views Charlus as a "protection" against denouncement of the homosexual theme, as Proust's depiction is resolutely negative. However, Gide overlooks the subtleties of Proust's irony and the overall sentiment of defence, which works by rendering pejorative arguments against homosexuality as nonsensical through contradiction.

The Perceptibility of Camp Stylings

The narrator's thoughts continually return to notions of the legibility of sexual difference and how inversion can become perceptible: "Ulysses himself did not at first recognise Athena. But the gods are immediately perceptible to the gods, as like equally soon is to like, and as M. de Charlus had been to Jupien."[307] Throughout Homer's *Iliad* and *The Odyssey* (circa 850 - 750 BC), Gods disguise themselves as humans yet can be recognised by one another. In this regard, the narrator attempts to explain the protective usage of camp, in which homosexual men could signal to one another and disguise their intentions from the uninitiated. The narrator describes the meeting of

306 Proust, *Sodom*, 20.
307 Ibid, 17.

Charlus and Jupien, only understanding their codes after he has witnessed their sexual acts. The Charlus-Jupien scene interrupts Marcel's watching of a bee pollinating a flower, his internal thoughts drawing "a parallel between certain botanical laws and what is sometimes wrongly called homosexuality."[308] The narrator then describes Jupien's courting ritual:

> Jupien meanwhile, at once shedding the humble, kindly expression I had always seen him wear, had – in perfect symmetry with the Barron – drawn back his head, set his torso at an advantageous angle, placed his fist on his hip with a grotesque impertinence and made his behind stick out, striking poses with the coquettishness that the orchid might have had for the providential advent of the bumblebee.[309]

In the presence of Charlus, Jupien "sheds" the usual demeanour with which he shields his identity, adopting a feminine "coquettish" flirtation, inviting male attention as the orchard invites the bee. Howard argues that "recognisable only to those in the know, clandestine signs, theatrical role-play, and verbalised innuendo functioned in a very specific capacity as an efficient and necessary means of indirect communication amongst queer peers moving through otherwise hostile public spaces."[310] These "clandestine signs," collectively described as the sensibilities of camp, name the strange behaviour that Proust's narrator notices yet does not understand. It is only after the revelation of Charlus's sexuality that the narrator joins the group "in the know" and can decode the camp practices he witnesses. The narrator's introduction to the language of this world occurs when Marcel positions himself to overhear the sexual encounter between Charlus and Jupien: "from the very beginning of this scene, a revolution had been affected in M. de Charlus in my newly opened eyes […] up until now, because I had not understood, I had not seen."[311] The narrator

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308 *Proust, Sodom,* 11, 34.
309 Ibid, 8.
310 Alexander Howard, "Solid Objects and Modern Tonics, Or, Who's Afraid of the Big Camp Woolf?" *Angelaki* 23, no. 1 (2018), 34.
311 Proust, *Sodom,* 17.

describes this change in worldview with an extended metaphor pivoting on the revelation of pregnancy:

> Up until now, I had found myself in the same position when confronted by M. de Charlus as an absent-minded man who, faced by a pregnant woman whose bulging waste line he has not noticed, persists, while she smilingly repeats to him, 'yes, I am a little tired at present', in asking her tactlessly: 'What's the trouble then?' But should someone say to him 'She is expecting', he suddenly notices the belly and thereafter sees nothing else. It is reason that opens our eyes; an error dispelled lends us an extra sense.[312]

As a result of his lack of knowledge of homosexual culture, the narrator did not notice what he later regarded as painfully obvious. Proust's narrator has been keeping information from the reader in his recollections of memory to create the same shift in worldview that he underwent. Charlus had appeared in two volumes before *Sodom and Gomorrah*. However, according to the narrator, it has taken stumbling across his "vice" to understand Charlus's nature—a nature which the narrator views through an essentialist paradigm of inversion.

In *The Guermantes Way*, Charlus walks arm-in-arm with Marcel and proposes a mentorship where he would need to see Marcel "every day" before "violently" withdrawing his arm due to a disgusted look from a passer-by.[313] This look appeared to Marcel as "the same look intended for a creature of another race."[314] Afterwards, Marcel enrages Charlus by misunderstanding the invitation given to his house, his true intentions illuminated only after the revelation of his sexual nature. This illumination explains the Turkish Ambassador's earlier warning that Charlus was "a man to whom one could safely entrust one's daughter, but not one's son."[315] Marcel describes certain "inverts" who "take pleasure in reminding you that Socrates was

312 Ibid.
313 Marcel Proust, *The Guermantes Way* (London: Penguin, 2003), 288.
314 Ibid.
315 Ibid, 272.

one of them […] without reflecting that no one was abnormal when homosexuality was the norm, no one anti-Christian before Christ, that opprobrium alone makes the crime."[316] Joined with Marcel's conception of homosexuality as a natural biological impulse, this thought suggests that in earlier historical epochs, as Foucault famously argues, the nineteenth-century creation of homosexual identity as a perverse abnormality was not the dominant social model. In this sense, Marcel's comment reveals that the contemporary view of homosexuality was rooted in social prejudice. Homosexuality is seen to be immoral only because society deems it so, and the discourse about homosexuality comes before the sexual act, turning what Marcel has shown as a natural phenomenon into one imbued with shame and disgust. Chapter One outlines the notion that shame is identity-building and culturally formed, and Proust's understanding of the position of homosexuals as marginal arises from this cultural process. By taking this segment of *La Race maudite* as an anachronistic sentiment of gay liberation, anachronistic as gay liberation was not achieved until the late 1960s at the earliest, Sedgwick argues: "every analytic or ethical category applied throughout *A la recherche* to the homosexuality of M. de Charlus," – his homosexuality being a sickness, a vice, a crime – "can easily be shown to be subverted or directly contradicted elsewhere."[317] These contradictions arise as Marcel attempts to conflate nearly all known theories of same-sex desire in order to understand the scenes he witnesses. Marcel finally goes further in challenging the dominant denouncement of homosexuality as a chosen 'crime' by referring to it as "*une disposition innée,"* one which cannot be helped.[318]

316 Proust, *Sodom,* 20.
317 Sedgewick, *Epistemology,* 230.
318 Proust, *Sodom,* 19.

Conclusion

Just as the decadents signalled their responsiveness to a new period in literary history through transgressive modes of representation, Proust's *A la recherche* heralded an era of radical modes of expression which pushed moral boundaries. Centring homosexuality as a crucial concern, Proust's narrator mediates between several theories of homosexuality, combining a mythic lineage of inherited sin with modern conceptions of inversion theory to be, as Proust wrote in a letter to his brother, neither "pro nor anti" but simply "objective."[319] Proust thought it prudent to prewarn his publisher Gaston Gallimard of his intentions to introduce this unsavoury homosexual theme, which he feared would prevent the appearance of subsequent volumes:

> Without any immoral intention, I need to tell you, that it is the most audacious truth of painting. On the one hand, this freedom of painting may shock you. On the other hand, if it does not shock you, it may shock the readers, the press (and also anger the "Charlus's" who will find themselves painted without grace), attracting me blows that your publishing house may prefer to leave to another.[320]

Proust was aware of the scandal his material could produce, and his commitment to portraying the verisimilitude of the homosexual condition as it was being conceived – not as an immoral shock tactic but as a case study of the culture of the *fin de siècle* – had lasting implications on the narrative techniques of *A la recherche*.[321]

Proust's depiction of inversion was multifaceted. For Louis de Robert, it gave him the "appearance of a defence lawyer," yet this conclusion clashes firmly with the unsympathetic

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319 Marcel Proust, *Marcel Proust: quatre lettres à son frère,* (Paris: La Nouvelle Revue français, 1970), 748.

320 Marcel Proust et al., *Correspondance 1912-1922: Marcel Proust et Gaston Gallimard* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1989), 35. My translation.

321 Ibid, 39. My translation.

depictions of homosexuality as a "perverted sensibility" presented within Proust's prose.[322] Typifying the early modernist depiction of same-sex desire more broadly, this dichotomy highlights the precarious position Proust was caught in between homosexual condemnation and affirmation.[323] Proust struggled not only against the Puritan tastes of the general public and the lawmakers – two factors he was continually wary of – but also against the very science and language that he was using to describe an experience that was barely beginning to be understood. However, what comes across clearly is the possibility of change, the understanding that the constructed nature of stratified social structuring and the morality that upholds these social spheres continually shift and become reshaped in response to the current crisis.

322 Proust and Curtis, *Letters*, 250.

323 Virginia Woolf, "Phases of Fiction," in *Granite and Rainbow* (Boston: Mariner Books Classics: 1975), 123.

The Culture of British Censorship and the Production of Modernism

No more adhering to society. I am out of the camp, like a brigand. And every book will be a raid on them.[324]

- *D. H. Lawrence to J. M. Murry and Katherine Mansfield, 1916.*

As a writer, Lawrence was deeply concerned with discussing many kinds of sexuality. Despite the laws devised to inhibit discussions of sex and sexuality by the British censorship machine, Lawrence's novels show a commitment to the depiction of sensual human experience. Lawrence is well known for the scandals surrounding the depiction of heterosexual sensuality, most notably in the suppression of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928). However, Lawrence had a complicated relationship with notions of homosexual desire. I acknowledge that at first glance Lawrence, with his outwardly heterosexual reputation, may seem at odds with the rest of this thesis. Lawrence often wrote of the repression of homosexuality through pejorative rather than redemptive stylings of decadence and was seemingly uninterested in notions of camp. However, Lawrence's struggle against official modes of British censorship is a perfect case study of the culture which hindered homosexual writers' efforts to publish novels about their experience of a maligned desire. The banning of Lawrence's novels and the self-censorship he enacted to publish within Britain is a pertinent example of the hostile culture of suppression which made Paris the literary centre of the homosexual world in the 1930s and 1940s. The freedom of Paris will be the focus of Chapter Four. The cultural conditions of the flourishing community of expatriate writers only formed in reaction to the negative experiences writers such as Lawrence faced in Anglophone countries.

[324] Letter to J. M. Murry and Katherine Mansfield: D. H. Lawrence and Aldous Huxley, *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence* (Surrey: William Heinemann, 1956), 340.

This chapter focuses on the censorship of Lawrence's novel *The Rainbow* (1915) and the effect this event had on the homoeroticism of his later novel *Women in Love* (1920). *Women in Love* went through several revisions, omitting an entire chapter which states outright the homosexual desires of the characters Rupert Birkin and Gerald Crich. Lawrence finished writing *Women in Love* in 1916, yet it was not published until 1920. However, what is most critical here is that these revisions ensured it did indeed see publication. The novel was not suppressed because Lawrence shaped it according to the publishers' fears to avoid obscenity charges. Being Lawrence's most explicitly homoerotic text, *Women in Love* represents an aspect of the struggle in the ongoing taxonomy of the homosexual novel. This chapter is critical in presenting the broader struggle writers were up against in publishing novels which acknowledged homosexuality overtly.

Censorship and its Literary Impacts

The production of modernism was shaped by the constraints of censorship, enacted by the British and American states, yet also by writers themselves. Marshik terms this shaping "the censorship dialectic" to describe "the ongoing negotiations between a writer and resistant audiences."[325] For Marshik, these negotiations were a response to the "climate of fear and suspicion" in publishing circles and an attempt to "control the reception" of material with the potential to be considered obscene.[326] Between the *fin de siècle* and the 1950s, modernist works by the likes of Joyce, Lawrence and Miller were often deemed offensive by a British readership for their sexual candour, and provoked the ire of anti-vice campaigners. In the British censor's aim to target the trade in pornographic material, experimental high-brow literature depicting overt sexuality was often

325 Celia Marshik, *British Modernism and Censorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 30.
326 Ibid.

suppressed, with publishers fined or jailed, blurring lines of argument around literary merit and literary indecency. This was the case with *Ulysses* (1922), *The Rainbow* (1915), and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928). This culture of British censorship was not merely a state imposition. Instead, unofficial modes of censorship were enacted through an interlinked network of reviewers, printers, editors, postal workers, vice-crusaders, and the public.

It was not just the sexual openness of Joyce and Lawrence's works that incited prosecution. Christopher Hillard writes that "formal experimentation, too, provoked disquiet."[327] According to Hillard, "the authorities who had to judge whether to allow an artwork to circulate freely sometimes confused novelty of form with moral heterodoxy or assumed that the one followed the other."[328] The censors viewed experimentation with form as equally obscene in its challenge to conventional novelistic traditions, with the "incomprehensibility" of modernist writing "seen as part of the broader pathology of post-war Britain."[329] Hillard cites *Ulysses* as the definitive example of this pathology, with its "incomprehensibility" merging with its "manifest obscenity" within the legal decision to censor the novel.[330] Archibald Bodkin, responsible for recommending the ban on *Ulysses* in Britain, said of Molly's Soliloquy: "I can discover no story, there is no introduction which might give key to its purpose, and the pages above mentioned, written as they are as if composed by a more or less illiterate vulgar woman, form an entirely detached part of this production."[331] Bodkin's usage of the term "vulgarity" is representative of the general reception of modernist works. The formal innovations of modernists have in common a move to represent

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327 Christopher Hillard, *A Matter of Obscenity*: *The Politics of Censorship in Modern England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 38.

328 Ibid.

329 Ibid, 34.

330 Ibid.

331 Reproduced in Casado Carmelo, "Sifting through Censorship: The British Home Office 'Ulysses' Files (1922-1936)," *James Joyce Quarterly* 37, no. ¾ (2000): 483.

"base" human drives, functions, and desires through the turn towards psychoanalytical thought. Joyce's use of free indirect discourse and techniques of internal monologue throughout Ulysses continually represents these bodily desires. Joyce's novel attempts a mimesis of the actual functioning of human thought and experience, presenting Leopold Bloom defecating in "Calypso" and his sexual arousal while masturbating in "Nausicaa." This scene in "Nausicaa" was responsible for *Ulysses*' ban in the United States and the cessation of its serialisation in *The Little Review.* Regarding novels such as *Ulysses*, Rachel Potter argues that "literary shifts towards more direct representations of the human body from the 1870s through to the early decades of the twentieth century coincided with the rise in legal prosecutions of literary obscenity."[332] As modernist writers such as Joyce became more concerned with "direct representations of the human body," censors increasingly viewed these representations as indecent. The modernist impulse to transgress was increasingly viewed as an act of obscenity, and Joyce's *Ulysses* is most often cited as the prime example of censorship in the twentieth century. However, with the circulating libraries' suppression of Lawrence's *The Prussian Officer* (1914), the prosecution of *The Rainbow*, the forced revisions made to *Women in Love*, and the banning of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the censorship of Lawrence was just as pervasive. This censorship had lasting implications on the depiction of same-sex desire in the novel form.

When discussing obscenity, the names of Joyce and Lawrence are often combined. Lawrence remarked on this phenomenon: "in Europe, they usually mention us together – James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence – and I feel I ought to know in what company I creep to immortality."[333]

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[332] Rachel Potter, *Obscene Modernism: Literary Censorship and Experiment 1900 – 1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3.

[333] D. H. Lawrence, *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence: Vol IV*, ed. Warren Roberts, James T. Boulton and Elizabeth Mansfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 275.

Earl Ingersoll remarks that "one might expect Lawrence, who suffered not only the censorship but the public burning of *The Rainbow* to feel a kinship with Joyce."[334] However, Lawrence's opinion of *Ulysses* was ironically closer to the censors. Compton Mackenzie recalls that upon reading the serialisation of *Ulysses* in 1920, Lawrence remarked: "this *Ulysses* muck is more disgusting than Casanova. I must show that it can be done without muck."[335] Similarly, Lawrence also disliked its formal experimentation: "*Ulysses* wearied me […] sometimes good, though: but too mental."[336] Lawrence criticised the narrative focus on the minutia of everyday life characteristic of "Mr Joyce, or of Miss Richardson or M. Proust's" representation of consciousness, finding the "self-conscious absorption" of a character's absolute inner thoughts and emotions too focused on the "mental."[337] Joyce and Lawrence shared a literary agent yet did not share any admiration for one another. Joyce believed that "that man really writes very badly."[338] Despite Lawrence's dislike of the vulgarity of *Ulysses*, his work would come to symbolise the dual pillars of literary suppression at the beginning of the twentieth century.

James Douglas's review of *The Rainbow* doubts "whether decadence could further go," accusing Lawrence of a "perverted ingenuity of style" used "to express the unspeakable and to hint at the unutterable."[339] For Douglas, the characters in *The Rainbow "*are maladies of the mind, growths upon the brain, diseases more horrible than the good honest diseases known to the

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334 Earl Ingersoll, "D. H. Lawrence and James Joyce: The Odd Couple of Literary Modernism," *The D. H. Lawrence Review* 38, no. 2 (2013): 2.

335 Compton Makenzie, *My Life and Times: Octave V 1915-1923* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1966), 167.

336 Lawrence, *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence: Vol IV*, 345.

337 D. H. Lawrence, "Surgery for a Novel or a Bomb," in *Selected Literary Criticism* ed. Anthony Beal (New York: Viking, 1956), 114.

338 Letter to Nino Frank (1929) in Richard Ellmann, *Select Letters of James Joyce* (New York: Viking, 1957), 615.

339 James Douglas, *Star* (Oct 22, 1915) in *D. H. Lawrence: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Ronald P. Draper (London: Routledge, 1997), 4.

pathologist."[340] Douglas's review links the sexual transgressions portrayed in *The Rainbow* with decadence and degeneration, a tactic utilised by conservative reviewers to condemn works of art deemed too transgressive for moral comfort. In combining the word decadence with "the unspeakable" and "disease," Douglas's review implicitly conjures the spectre of homosexuality, alluding to the language used during the 1895 Wilde trials. Coupled with this, John Galsworthy wrote of *The Rainbow*: *"*I think it's aesthetically detestable. Its perfervid futuristic style revolts me […] as to the sexual aspect. The writer forgets – as no great artist does – that by dwelling on the sexual side of life so lovingly he falsifies all the values of his work."[341] Woolf designated Lawrence one of the Georgian writers rebelling against the Edwardians, and Lawrence self-consciously professed, "I don't want to write like Galsworthy, nor Ibsen, nor Strindberg, nor any of them," in response to Galsworthy's disapproval.[342] Lawrence declared: "we have to hate our immediate predecessors, to get free from their authority," identifying himself after 1913 as a "modern" writer.[343] In this regard, Lawrence self-consciously saw himself as a "modern" writer rebelling against traditional conventions of the novel, most notably through his depiction of the realities of sexual desire and the unconscious. However, contemporary reviewers accused Lawrence of promoting "the unspeakable" in a continuation of perverse notions of decadence. This response to Lawrence is typical of the broader response to the homosexual novel, where any representation of desires viewed by the public at large as being beyond the pale is denounced as an excess of decadent vice. This denouncement hindered writing about sexuality in general and

340 Ibid.
341 John Galsworthy, "Galsworthy, letter to J. B. Pinker Autumn 1915," in *D. H. Lawrence: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1997), ed. Ronald P. Draper, 108.
342 Lawrence to Edward Garnett, Boulton, *Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, 509.
343 Ibid.

homosexuality specifically, as can be seen in the public outcry against Lawrence's novel *The Rainbow*.

The Reticence of Desire: Coded Allusions and Complex Feelings

The scandal of *The Rainbow* made it increasingly difficult for Lawrence to publish. The content of Lawrence's next novel, *Women in Love* (1922), was shaped by the anxieties of publishers who were particularly weary of his frank references to homosexuality. Lawrence's publisher, Methuen, cancelled their publishing contract for Lawrence's following three novels after reading an early draft of *Women in Love* in 1916.[344] The following year, Constable and Co. rejected the novel as they "wondered whether Mr. Lawrence really meant the first part of the book to be published as it stands […] the destructive philosophy as it is expressed in this book would we think be particularly unwelcome at the present time."[345] Martin Secker summed up the professional response to Lawrence's work after *The Rainbow,* writing, "I feel instinctively that anything to do with D. H. is rather dangerous."[346] Homoerotic discourse permeates Lawrence's *oeuvre*, no more pronounced than in *Women in Love*, and can be seen in his correspondence as a recurring concern. Birkin and Gerald's relationship bears similarity to Lawrence's feelings for John Middleton Murry, as depicted in Murry's reflections on his relationship with Lawrence. Murry connects his relationship with Lawrence to that depicted in the text: "just as a few of the incidents in Gudrun's life were taken without sea change from Katherine's [Mansfield], so were a few of the episodes between

344 D. H. Lawrence, *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of D. H. Lawrence: Women in Love,* ed. David Farmer, John Worthen and Lindeth Vasey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), xiii.
345 Ibid, xxxiv.
346 Ibid, xliii.

Rupert [Birkin] and Gerald taken from conversations between Lawrence and me."[347] Murray cites the "additional" relationship Birkin requires from Gerald as one of these transposed conversations in which Lawrence believed his relationship with Frieda "needed to be completed by a new relation between himself and me, which I evaded."[348] Murry states: "what [Lawrence] really wanted of me he never put into words but what he imagined he wanted is stated clearly enough in the novel," adding that "*Women in Love* gives the real clue to much that was at the time quite baffling to me."[349] Similarly, Lawrence wrote to Henry Savage of Richard Middleton's same-sex desires, a conversation which again becomes directly subsumed into Birkin's dialogue:

> [Man] can always get satisfaction from a man, but it is the hardest thing in life to get one's soul and body satisfied from a woman, so that one is free from oneself. And one is kept by all tradition and instinct from loving men, or a man – for it means just extinction of all the purposive influences.[350]

Lawrence's preoccupation with the yearnings of the soul and his admission that homosexuality is hindered only by "tradition" further continue his understanding of same-sex desire as repression due to social conditioning. In connection with ideas of repression, Tim Dean argues: "with the longstanding prohibitions on sodomy and then, beginning in the nineteenth century, on homosexuality more specifically, came a rich literary tradition of coded depictions that culminated in what might be called the literature of the closet."[351] The coded depictions of homosexuality found within Lawrence's writing link his body of work to this lineage of the closet, that is, works of literature such as *Dorian Gray*, which represent homosexuality through coded allusion. Lawrence's short story *The Prussian Officer* (1913) deals with the violent manifestation of the

347 John Middleton Murry, *Between Two Worlds: An Autobiography,* (London: J. Cape, 1936), 412.
348 Ibid, 413.
349 Ibid, 412.
350 D. H. Lawrence and Harry Moore, *The Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence* (London: Viking, 1962), 251.
351 Tim Dean, "The Erotics of Transgression" in *The Cambridge Companion to Gay and Lesbian Writing*, ed. Hugh Ed Stevens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 67.

repressed sexual desire an officer has for his orderly. *The Rainbow* depicts Ursula's brief relationship with the schoolmistress Winifred. *Women in Love* depicts the relationship between Gerald and Birkin, which is characterised by homoerotic tension. In pre-emptive anticipation of literary suppression, writers dealing with notions of same-sex desire, such as Lawrence, sublimated these desires to the level of metaphor or outright omitted them entirely from publication.

This sublimation device can be seen in *The Prussian Officer,* which outlines the repressed sexual attraction a "Prussian aristocrat" holds for an orderly under his command, the same theme as Proust's short story "A Captain's Reminiscence" discussed in Chapter Two. Due to this repression, the officer begins a sadistic subjection of the young man whom he forces to be continually in his presence. Initially ambivalent to the orderly, "gradually the officer had become aware of his servant's young, vigorous, unconscious presence about him. He could not get away from the sense of the youth's person, while he was in attendance. It was like a warm flame upon the older man's tense, rigid body."[352] The officer's awakening to the effect the "well-built youth" produced on him quickly becomes sexual, and Lawrence outlines how his repressed desire manifests as anger, with violence the sexual release.[353] The officer would "notice the movement of his strong young shoulders under the blue cloth," and "the influence of the young soldier's being had penetrated through the officer's stiffened discipline, and perturbed the man in him."[354] Lawrence focuses on the orderly's movement and physical attributes, which arouse the officer. The officer becomes angered by his attraction to the orderly as he is forced to question his masculinity. However, Lawrence clarifies that the officer "was not going to allow such a thing as

352 D. H. Lawrence, *The Prussian Officer and Other Stories* (London: Penguin, 1995), 4.
353 Ibid, 3.
354 Ibid, 4.

the stirring of his innate self. He was a man of passionate temper who had always kept himself suppressed."[355] The officer had always kept his "passionate temper suppressed," and in awakening sexual desire, Lawrence hides his protagonist's "passionate" desire behind the language of "passionate" anger. The officer orchestrates to take up as much of the orderly's time as possible as "he could not rest when the soldier was away, and when he was present, he glared at him with tormented eyes […] [he] tried hard not to admit the passion that had got hold of him."[356] In his inability to make this passion physical, the officer's desire turns to violence: "at last he slung the end of a belt in the servant's face. When he saw the youth start back, the pain-tears in his eyes and the blood on his mouth, he had felt at once a thrill of deep pleasure and shame."[357] With the physical release of emotion comes "pleasure" and "shame," as the officer physically dominates his servant. Lawrence's metaphor is a straightforward substitute for the officer's sexual desire, outlined in his reaction to the orderly's physical body. This was the only way that Lawrence could write about a subject as taboo as same-sex desire and repression within the culture of British censorship.

Lawrence's attitudes towards homosexuality were complex. Lawrence aimed for freedom of expression as it pertained to concepts deemed obscene and was continually punished for it. Nevertheless, his unease around the idea of same-sex erotic desires mirrored the conservatism of wider British society. Lawrence put this uneasy response in a letter to David Garnett in 1915 after a traumatic trip to Cambridge amongst the Bloomsbury set. Lawrence spent a weekend with Bertrand Russel, precipitating "one of the crises in [his] life," a crisis that sent Lawrence "mad

355 Ibid.
356 Ibid, 7.
357 Ibid, 9.

with misery and hostility and rage."[358] The crisis Lawrence cites was the discovery of Maynard Keynes' homosexuality. As a result, Lawrence implored Garnett to cut ties with the group:

> It is foolish of you to say that it doesn't matter either way – the men loving men. It doesn't matter in the public way. But it matters so much, David, to the man himself – at any rate to us northern nations – that is like a blow of triumphant decay, when I meet [Francis] Birrel and others. I simply can't bear it. It is so wrong, it is unbearable. It makes a form of inward corruption which truly makes me scarce able to live. Why is there this horrible sense of frowstiness [sic], so repulsive, as if it came from deep inward dirt – a sort of sewer – deep in men like K[eynes] and B[irrel] and D[uncan] G[rant].[359]

Lawrence's letter continues to liken Keynes, Birrel and Grant to "repulsive carrion" and "unclean beetles."[360] The moral crisis Lawrence describes occurred during the years he was producing *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love* and his essay "The Crown," where descriptive phrases used in this letter such as "inward corruption," "decay" and "sewer" make their way into these texts, illuminating Lawrence's philosophy. Lawrence attributed Birrel's same-sex desires to the "decay" of "northern nations," a primary driver of the decline of civilisation. These desires "make a form of inward corruption," characteristic of the "flux of corruption" of *Women in Love's* Loerke and Birkin, a form of corruption which Lawrence directly attributes to homosexuality in "The Crown." Rather than projecting homosexuality onto Lawrence, which would be neither productive nor definitively provable, we can find in his violent response in Cambridge, combined with his relationship with John Middleton Murry and his continual usage of repressed homosexuality as a literary theme, gestures toward self-censorship of personal feelings. *The Prussian Officer* was a precursor to the homoerotic energy of Lawrence's later novel *Women in Love*, whose publication history is my leading case study of the boundaries of acceptability after the Wilde trials of 1895.

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358 D. H. Lawrence, George J. Zytaruk and James T. Boulton, *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence: Volume II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 320.

359 Ibid.

360 Ibid.

Decadence in *Women in Love*

When writing *Women in Love,* Lawrence was influenced by the works of F. T Marinetti, whose characterisation of the perversity of the age mirrored his own. In 1914, Lawrence was reading the Futurist Manifesto: "I have been interested in the Futurists […] I read Marinetti's and Paolo Buzzi's manifestations and essays and Soffici's essays on cubism and Futurism […] I like it because it is the applying to emotions of the purging of the old forms and sentimentalities."[361] In his response to the War and British society's increasing prudery, Lawrence identified with Marinetti's notion of cultural stagnation. The *Manifesto del Futurismo* (1909) declared, "we are on the extreme promontory of the centuries! What is the use of looking behind at the moment when we must open the mysterious shutters of the impossible?"[362] Futurism's radical ideals were a reaction to the stagnation of the *fin-de-siècle* and presented as the solution to the ills of modernity's decadence. Futurism calls for eradicating the past and embracing industry to revitalise a deadening European culture: "Italy has been too long the great second-hand market. We want to get rid of the innumerable museums which cover it with innumerable cemeteries."[363] In this regard, Futurism represents an aesthetic commitment to destruction and revitalisation."[364] The Futurists were dedicated to promulgating aggressive forms of masculine virility, established in stark opposition to feminism and what was characterised as decadent effeminacy. As Lorenzo Benadusi has made explicit, Marinetti utilised the terms "paederast" and "homosexuality" as pejorative descriptors for

361 Letter from Lawrence to A. W. McLeod (Jun 2, 1914) in Lawrence and Huxley, *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, 196.
362 Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi and Laura Wittman, *Futurism An Anthology* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 52.
363 Ibid.
364 Lawrence, *Women in Love*, 75.

effeminate men, viewing homosexuality as abhorrent only when expressed through effeminacy.[365] Marinetti and the Futurists were not against homosexuality completely, as Tavolato argued in his diatribe against traditional morality, "Against Sexual Morality," and Marinetti condemned the denunciation of Wilde as "lugubrious and ridiculous" in the "Futurist Speech to the English."[366] However, as Benadusi writes of the Futurists: "homosexuality was to be disdained only when associated with the decadent and extreme romanticism of a repressive society that suffocated the primary instincts of men."[367] Ultimately, the weakening of the "robust, Italian male" that decadent, effeminate homosexuality represented was antithetical to the aims of a Futurism dedicated to masculine virility as vehicles of strengthening the new nation-state. Given this context, Lawrence's interest in Futurism is tied to notions of the avant-garde and the decadent excess of his bohemian characters.

Lawrence outlines the Futurist position in the Switzerland episode when Gudrun befriends the German sculptor Loerke. Scott Sanders argues that "Loerke, with his love of machinery and his deification of industry, could be taken as a satirical portrait of the Futurist."[368] Loerke's bohemian aesthetic creed follows a Futurist understanding of modernity, and Birkin's group of decadent artistic friends have decorated their Soho flat with futurist works: "there were one or two new pictures in the room, in the Futurist manner."[369] Schaffner describes Lawrence as "one of the most ardent pathologisers of modernity," and *Women in Love* thus responds to the pathological decadence of modernity.[370] Lawrence wrote of *The Rainbow* and its sequel, *Women in Love*, to

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365 Lorenzo Benadusi, Suzanne Dingee and Jennifer Pudney, *The Enemy of the New Man: Homosexuality in Fascist Italy* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), 24-7.
366 Rainey, Poggi, and Wittman, *Futurism An Anthology*, 72.
367 Ibid, 26.
368 Scott Sanders, *D. H. Lawrence: The World of the Major Novels* (London: Vision Press, 1973), 101.
369 Lawrence, *Women in Love*, 75.
370 Schaffner, *Modernism and Perversion*, 50.

Lady Cynthia Asquith: "I don't know myself what [the message is] except that the older world is done for, toppling on top of us and that it's no use the men looking to the women for salvation […] there must be a new world."[371] To Catherine Carswell, Lawrence professed: "the book frightens me it is so end-of-the-world, but it is, it must be, the beginning of the new world too."[372] Lawrence's correspondence shows a continued obsession with the destruction of the world, stressing that his novel responds to this feeling of decay by creating a "new world" which would leave the morality of the Victorian past behind. Lawrence connects this destruction of England to notions of decadence. Writing to Lady Cynthia again about his ambitions to move to America, suggesting that she should do the same, Lawrence writes that "there is no future here only decomposition […] you have your children probably you will have to rescue them from their decadence, this collapsing life."[373]

The decadence of England is presented in the artistic work of Loerke. The sculptor creates a "great granite frieze for a great granite factory."[374] Loerke describes the factory frieze he built as a carnival of perverse modernity:

> It was a representation of a fair with peasants and artisans in an orgy of enjoyment, drunk and absurd in their modern dress, whirling ridiculously in roundabouts, gaping at shows, kissing and staggering and rolling in knots, swinging in swing-boats, and firing down shooting galleries, a frenzy of chaotic motion.[375]

Described as "ridiculously" whirling without end, the "frenzy of chaotic" motion depicts scenes of carnivalesque sexual freedom. Despite the constant motion of the sculpture, Schaffner describes

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371 Lawrence to Cynthia Asquith (Feb 7, 1916), Lawrence and Huxley, *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, 294.
372 Lawrence to Catherine Carswell (Nov 7, 1916), Lawrence and Huxley, *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, 376.
373 Lawrence to Lady Cynthia Asquith (Nov 11, 1915), Lawrence and Huxley, *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, 273.
374 Lawrence, *Women in Love*, 409.
375 Ibid, 410.

it as "an apocalyptic vision of modern paralysis: soulless bodies whirl around mechanically in futile circular motions and empty sexual embraces" in a "celebration of sexual perversion."[376] The decadent motif of excessive pleasure symbolises the degenerative stagnation Lawrence believed was leading to the "decomposition" of England. The roundabout is in continual motion, but moving in a circular pattern remains paradoxically still. This is a rendering of the stagnation of culture, which Lawrence believed was true of the modern world. In describing the artistic impulse behind the sculpture, Loerke tells Gudrun: "there is nothing but work. Nothing but this, serving a machine, or enjoying the motion of a machine – motion that's all […] the machine works he instead of he the machine. He enjoys the mechanical motion in his own body."[377] This focus on the "whirling" motion of the machinery of the roundabout as a deification of industry and mechanisation is futurist in subject. The *Manifesto del Futurismo* states that "literature has up to now magnified pensive immobility […] we declare that the splendour of the world has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed […] a roaring motor car which seems to run on machine-gun fire, is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace."[378] Loerke's focus on the "mechanical motion" of the frieze designed for the façade of an industrial building looks to the future of industry, where machinery works man, much like the speed of a "roaring motor car" working on the human body. The futurist manner of the sculpture's motion combined with its depiction of excessive pleasure and stagnation thus explore the fear of the impact of decadence on modernity.

376 Schaffner, *Modernism and Sexual Perversion,* 187.
377 Lawrence, *Women in Love*, 411.
378 Marinetti and Rainey, *Futurism: An Anthology,* 52.

Lawrence characterised the Great War as an ultimate example of decadence in its destructive power: "how cruel is it that the world should have come to an end, this world, our world, whilst we still live in it."[379] This degeneration is rendered in a metaphor where England becomes an ageing house:

> When I drive across this country, with autumn falling and rusting to pieces, I am so sad, for my country, for this great wave of civilisation, 2000 years, which is now collapsing […] this house – it is England – my God, it breaks my soul – these shafted windows, the elm-trees, the blue distance – the past, the great past, crumbling down, breaking down, not under the force of the coming birds, but under the weight of many exhausted lovely yellow leaves that drift over the lawn, and over the pond, like the soldiers, passing away, into winter and the darkness of winter […] it had been 2000 years, the spring and summer of our era what, then will the winter be?[380]

Lawrence likens England to a house weighed down by generations of falling leaves, similar to Marinetti's conception of Italy stagnating under "innumerable" museums. England is collapsing under the weight of its layered past, the decadence of waning culture hindering progress, "rusting" the period of civilisation "to pieces." The Great War, a high example of this decadence, ushered in a new era of destruction. "The spring and summer" of England was ended, and the transition to winter was unclear: "I feel as if the whole thing were coming to an end – the whole of England, of the Christian era: as if ours was the age only of Decline and Fall."[381]

Lawrence's idea of the decline of English civilisation is epitomised by his conception of the flux of dissolution, described in his essay "The Crown." This framework underpins the philosophy of *Women in Love* and its response to decadent modernity. Lawrence published the first three chapters of "The Crown" in 1915 in the short-run little-magazine he started with John

379 Lawrence to Lady Ottoline (1915), Lawrence and Huxley, *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, 273.
380 Lawrence to Lady Cynthia (November 1915), Ibid, 271.
381 Lawrence to Edward March (undated), Ibid, 272.

Middleton Murray, *The Signature.*[382] Peter Brooker outlines how the little magazine is inextricable from the production of modernism and argues that "a manifesto is one way for a movement to shift from youthful grumblings to adulthood; starting a magazine in which to publish one's manifesto enables those mature reflections to reach, hopefully, a wider audience."[383] Lawrence and Murray's magazine was to "contain the stuff I believe most deeply – the philosophy," aiming to "rally together just a few passionate, vital, constructive people."[384] It is constructive to view the philosophy of "The Crown" as Lawrence's creative manifesto, an exploration of the philosophical framework that underpins his writing:

> Our every activity is the activity of disintegration, of corruption, of dissolution, whether it be our scientific research, our social activity – our art, or our anti-social activity, sensuality, sensationalism, crime, war. Everything alike contributes to the flux of death, to corruption.[385]

Lawrence likens this flux to a "river of corruption" where the activities of modern society symbolise a regression back to the "source" of creation. This "disintegration" for Lawrence includes notions of "sensuality" and sexual activity, conceptualised as a corrupting symptom of a perverse age. In contrast to the Futurists, who glorify war, Lawrence viewed the destruction of war as degenerative. Lawrence addressed his rejection of this glorification: "I agree with [the Futurists] about the weary sickness of pedantry and tradition and inertness, but I don't agree with them as to the cure and escape."[386] Lawrence continues: "from top to bottom, in the whole nation, we are engaged, fundamentally engaged in the process of reduction and dissolution. Our reward is

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382 *The Signature* was established in 1915 between Lawrence, Murray and Katherine Mansfield and folded after only three instalments.

383 Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines: Volume I, Britain and Ireland 1880-1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 2.

384 Lawrence and Boulton, *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*: *Vol II*, 291, 329.

385 D. H. Lawrence, *Phoenix II: Uncollected, Unpublished and Other Prose Works* (New York: Viking Press, 1968), 392.

386 Lawrence to A. W. McLeod (Jun 2, 1914) in Lawrence and Huxley, *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, 196.

sensational gratification in the flesh […] this is the reward in the pleasure of cheap sensuality."[387] The reward of "cheap sensuality" is the dissolution and corruption of a once great social order seen to be a continual process enacted through the "activity" of the nation. Michael Herbert uncovered an earlier version of "The Crown," unpublished due to the folding of *The Signature,* which argued that "homosexuality becomes an inevitable part of the activity of reduction, of the flux of dissolution," as homosexual men "have a basic desire to get back to a state which has long been surpassed."[388] The flux of dissolution is integral to Birkin's view of the world, and the integration of homosexuality as an "inevitable" part of this theory continues the link between homosexuality and decadent cultural waning. Lawrence promulgates this theory throughout *Women in Love's* philosophy of destruction. This concept has been directly injected into *Women in Love* through Birkin's dialogue and links Lawrence's preoccupation with social degeneration and Futurism with homosexuality, presented as an inevitable symptom of a decadent society.

In "Gudrun in the Pompadour," Gudrun overhears Birkin's bohemian acquaintances ridiculing a letter in which Birkin professes his philosophy of "dissolution," taken from "The Crown."[389] Birkin writes: "there is a phase in every race when the desire for destruction overcomes every other desire […] it is a desire for the reduction-process in oneself, a reducing back to the origin, a return along the Flux of Corruption, to the original rudimentary conditions of being."[390] Birkin's repressed same-sex desires seen in the context of Lawrence's essay can be understood as the desire to "reduce back to the origin." Birkin's letter suggests that "sex" is used as this "great

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387 Ibid, 393.

388 D. H. Lawrence and Michael Herbert, *Reflections on the Death of the Porcupine and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 472.

389 This scene was taken from the life of Katherine Mansfield. When Mansfield overheard a group of writers ridiculing Lawrence's poetry book in a café, she snatched it from their hands and left, much like Gudrun does in the novel.

390 Lawrence, *Women in Love,* 400.

reducing agent," an agent Birkin hopes one day will come to an end.[391] Birkin links Loerke with this flux of corruption through his involvement with a "fair, good-looking [male] youth," clarifying that the men "had travelled and lived together in the last degree of intimacy."[392] Birkin and Gerald discuss Loerke's relationship:

> [Birkin:] 'He is the perfectly subjected being, existing almost like a criminal […]
> They seem to creep down some ghastly tunnel of darkness, and will never be satisfied until they come to the end.'
> 'And what *is* the end?'
> 'I've not got there yet, so I don't know. Ask Loerke, he's pretty near. He is a good many stages further than either you or I can go.'
> 'Yes, but stages further in what?'
> 'Stages further in social hatred […] he lives like a rat, in the river of corruption, just where it falls over into the bottomless pit. He's further on than we are."[393]

Loerke, in his degeneracy, lives within the "river of corruption," his perverse desires "subjugating" him to "social hatred." Lawrence ties Birkin's philosophy of regression with homosexuality, using same-sex desire as the ultimate example of the corruption of society. As David Trotter remarks, Loerke "is Lawrence's best shot at a degenerate. Extravagantly Jewish and homosexual, he fulfils to an almost parodic degree the requirements of stereotype. He is an evolutionary test case, a parasite, a creature developed at once beyond and below humanity, into pure destructiveness."[394] Lawrence's conception of Loerke as a "parasite" is explicitly antisemitic and furthers the pervasive idea of Jewish people as figures of decadence and a source of social and cultural decline. In describing that Loerke was "further on than we are," Birkin admits that both Gerald and he were on the same path to corruption, exploring the sewer that is same-sex attraction. As a result, it becomes clear that Lawrence included homosexuality as a symptom of the broader pathology of modernity, tied up in the process of regression and dissolution. However, before Lawrence wrote

391 Ibid.
392 Ibid, 438.
393 Lawrence, *Women in Love*, 445.
394 David Trotter, *The English Novel in History: 1895 – 1920* (London: Routledge, 2003), 126.

Women in Love its sister novel, *The Rainbow*, was tried for obscenity due to similar themes of decadence and homosexuality. It bears stepping back to consider this event before returning to *Women in Love.* The suppression of *The Rainbow* gave Lawrence a reputation with both publishers and the public that influenced everything he was to publish afterwards. As well as making it difficult for publishers to accept his future manuscripts, this suppression forced the revision of his writings against the fear of obscenity charges. In this regard, understanding the events surrounding *The Rainbow* is crucial to unpacking the production of *Women in Love.*

The Beginning of Such Dissolution: Suppression of *The Rainbow* and the Making of *Women in Love*

The Rainbow was a provocative novel for Lawrence to write as it deals explicitly with the pleasures of sex, the discontents of marriage, lesbianism, miscarriage, and offers a critique of the cult of the soldier in wartime Britain. Marvin Mudrick argues that *The Rainbow* was a revolutionary novel in its depiction of sexuality: "it based itself on the assumption that sex is a serious, normal, central preoccupation with mankind," and not a topic used to shock or disgust.[395] Within its opening chapter, Lawrence writes of Tom Brangwen's first sexual experience with a "prostitute woman in a common public house."[396] This experience altered his understanding of relations between the sexes as Tom is subsequently "tormented with sex desire, his imagination reverted always to lustful scenes."[397] Lawrence does not shy away from discussions of sexuality, a dangerous stance to take in the censorious culture of British publishing. Lawrence prophetically surmised this danger,

395 Marvin Mudrick, "The Originality of *The Rainbow*," in *D. H. Lawrence*, ed. Mark Spilka (New Jersey: Pretice-Hall, Inc., 1963), 33.
396 D. H. Lawrence, *The Rainbow* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1995), 13.
397 Ibid, 14.

telling his agent J. B. Pinker, "I'm afraid there are parts of it Methuen won't want to publish."[398] Lawrence thus conceded to at least two rounds of revision before the publishers were happy to do so.[399]

Methuen requested revisions relating to sexual aspects of the novel, including portions of the chapter "Shame." Lawrence responded: "I have cut out, as I said I would, all the *phrases* objected to. The passages and paragraphs marked I cannot alter. There is nothing offensive in them, beyond the very substance they contain, and that is no more offensive than that of all the rest of the novel."[400] Lawrence was unhappy about revising *The Rainbow*. These revisions did not constitute an act of self-censorship as enacted by Wilde and Proust. Instead, they were forced changes made in order to negate prosecution. Lawrence would only begin to self-censor with the publication of *Women in Love* concerning the male same-sex desire that permeates its pages. Kinkead-Weekes writes that the letters in which Pinker outlines these objectionable phrases "have not come to light;" however, "the thirteen expurgations made without Lawrence's consent in the first American edition are the most likely passages that Lawrence might have refused to cut."[401] The majority of expurgations were sexual, such as sex scenes between Ursula and Skrebensky."[402] Many other cuts were made to the chapter "Shame," cited in the British obscenity trial.

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398 Lawrence to J. B. Pinker (Apr 23, 1915), Lawrence, Zytaruk and Boulton, *Letters of D. H. Lawrence Vol II*, 327.

399 The evidence of Methuen's many requests for revision was the base for their defence: "Novel to be Destroyed," *The Daily Mirror* (November 1915), 14; "Novel Condemned. Magistrate orders seized copies to be destroyed. Zola Outdone," *Reynolds's Newspaper* (November 1915), 4.

400 Lawrence, Zytaruk, and Boulton, *Letters of D. H. Lawrence Vol II*, 370.

401 Kinkead-Weeks, *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of D. H. Lawrence: The Rainbow*, xliv.

402 This early version of The Rainbow is republished in Warren Roberts and Paul Poplawski, *A Bibliography of D. H. Lawrence* (Cambridge, University of Cambridge, 2001), 33.

"Shame" depicts Ursula's infatuation with the schoolmistress Winifred Inger and the two women's short-lived romantic relationship. Lawrence writes: "suddenly, Ursula found a queer awareness existed between herself and her class-mistress."[403] This "queer awareness" consumed Ursula's mind where she "dreamed of the schoolmistress, made infinite dreams of things she could give her, of how she might make the elder woman adore her […] she wanted to touch the other, to touch her, to feel her."[404] Lawrence's use of the term queer characterises Ursula's feelings for Winifred as being irregular and strange. By the publication of *The Rainbow* (1915), the term queer was commonly applied to homosexuality, and Lawrence's language continues the association between same-sex desire and notions of the strange.[405] Ursula's strange dreams become a reality when Winifred initiates physical contact during swimming lessons, and the two women subsequently go night swimming together. Winifred kisses and then carries a naked Ursula into the water: "Ursula lay still in her mistress's arms, her forehead against the beloved maddening breast […] Ursula twined her body about her mistress."[406] In following, Lawrence sublimates the women's sexual desire for one another into a metaphor where their pleasure in the rain becomes a substitute for their sexual pleasure: "after a while the rain came down on their flushed, hot limbs, startling, delicious. A sudden, ice-cold shower burst in a great weight upon them. They stood up to it with pleasure. Ursula received the stream of it upon her breasts and her limbs."[407] The juxtaposition of the "pleasure" of the rain with the emphasis on their naked bodies, described in sensual language, becomes an allusion to female same-sex desire, which was unprintable in 1915. Despite Lawrence's revisions, the novel was savaged in the press for its frank sexuality. The

403 Lawrence, *The Rainbow*, 282.
404 Ibid, 283.
405 The *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* notes that by 1914 "queer adjective 1. Homosexual. Derogatory from the outside" was becoming common: Eric Partridge, *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (London: Routledge, 1982), 524.
406 Ibid, 286.
407 Lawrence, *The Rainbow*, 286.

importance of these negative reviews cannot be understated. Potter's research on obscene texts indicates that "magistrates acted in response to complaints made to them 'upon oath' that members of the public believed that there were obscene books, papers, writings, or other representations."[408] Negative reviews highlighting the indecency of a novelist's work from "members of the public" became grounds for inciting a trial.

The Sphere newspaper published an incendiary review of *The Rainbow* a few weeks before the British authorities called for its suppression. The reviewer wrote that Lawrence's novel is "marked by what I can only call disease" and despite its "artistic impulses," argued that these impulses were produced "from a mind that has decadent tendencies."[409] Suggesting Lawrence had "decadent tendencies" was particularly incendiary as decadence by this time had come to be associated with homosexuality. As outlined in Chapter One, accusations of decadence were integral to the press dissemination of Wilde's crime, with "decadent tendencies" becoming publishable shorthand for sodomy. The use of the term decadence combined with the suggestion that *The Rainbow* is "marked" by "disease" pathologises the modernity Lawrence is depicting, conflating decadent homosexuality with notions of perverse contagion. *The Sphere's* choice of language cited this legacy of literary pillory and, by doing so, almost guaranteed that the authorities would examine Lawrence's work. Lawrence himself professed to Martin Secker, "the magistrates proceeded on reviews," noting "the scene to which exception was *particularly* taken was the one where Anna dances naked."[410] As Potter argues, "there were a whole raft of less institutionalised kinds of censorship, by printers, postmen, customs officials, circulating libraries and publishers,

408 Potter, *Obscene Modernism*, 18.
409 "A Literary Letter," *The Sphere* (Oct 23, 1915).
410 Lawrence to Martin Secker (Jan 16, 1920), Lawrence and Huxley, *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, 496.

which worked to control the dissemination of modernist texts."[411] The reviewer was another one of these "less institutionalised kinds of censorship" as their moral critiques of works of literature caused public outrage and drew the government's attention. *The Rainbow* was prosecuted due to negative reviews, and as argued earlier, *Ulysses* was similarly brought to the attention of British authorities due to negative reviews from readers.

After the experience of *The Rainbow's* suppression, publishers became wary of issuing Lawrence's future work.[412] Lawrence laments: "I have begun the second half of *The Rainbow*. But already it is beyond all hope of ever being published, because of the things it says."[413] Lawrence reiterated this sentiment to Ernest Collings: "I have done a novel which nobody will print, after *The Rainbow* experience."[414] It is clear Lawrence had no hope for *Women in Love's* publication. Catherine Carswell believed the novel "must have lain on the table at one time or another of every leading publisher in London."[415] Lawrence outlines that publishers' almost universal reply was, "we should like very much to publish, but we feel we cannot risk a prosecution."[416] The fall-out from the suppression of *The Rainbow* hindered the production of Lawrence's future work. After exhausting all publishing avenues, he had two options: revise and censor the objectional material or refuse to submit *Women in Love* for publication.

411 Rachel Potter, *Modernist Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022), 119.
412 Lawrence's correspondence between 1915 and 1920 shows an intense disillusionment with England, which he characterises as "lost."
413 Lawrence, Zytaruk and Boulton, *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence: Vol II*, 602.
414 Ibid, 400.
415 Catherine Carswell, *The Savage Pilgrimage* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1932), 80.
416 D. H. Lawrence, "Foreword," in *The Cambridge Edition: Women in Love*, ed. David Farmer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 485.

The Revision of *Women in Love*

Lawrence drafted two chapters of *Women in Love* which did not make it to publication: "Prologue" and "The Wedding." "Prologue" is the missing key to the novel and accounts for Lawrence's initial fear that *Women in Love* "will not find a publisher in England at all."[417] It details Birkin's failed relationship with Hermione Roddice, which without the revelations of "Prologue," functions as an unexplained tension haunting his relationship with Ursula. However, "Prologue" also describes the unhappiness that Birkin struggles with as stemming from his repressed homosexuality, precisely "the hot, flushing, roused attraction which a man is supposed to feel for the other sex," but for which Birkin felt for Gerald Crich.[418] Lawrence's abandoned first chapter explicitly explains the repressed sexuality lurking beneath the surface of the two men's interactions. However, by omitting this chapter from publication, the relationship between the two men in the published novel becomes ambiguous; it becomes necessary for one to read between the lines.

Lawrence writes of Birkin's struggle against desire: "why did not the face of a woman move him in the same manner, with the same sense of handsome desirability, as the face of a man? Why was a man's beauty, the *beauté mâle*, so vivid and intoxicating a thing to him whilst female beauty was something quite unsubstantial?"[419] Birkin views his homoerotic desires as innate yet contradicting the natural order; he is not supposed to feel this way and continually questions why he does. Birkin projects these desires onto men he passes in the street in his "passionate desire to have near him" a "policeman who suddenly looked up at him" or "a soldier who sat next to him in a railway

[417] Letter from Lawrence to Cynthia Asquith (Jan 8, 1917), Lawrence, Zytaruk and Boulton, *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence: Vol II*, 391.
[418] Lawrence, *The Cambridge Edition: Women in Love*, 502.
[419] Ibid.

carriage."[420] He desires "to exchange intimacy, to unburden himself of love" with these men and months later would vividly recall "the soldier who had sat pressed up close to him" in a train carriage, his "large, dumb, coarsely-beautiful hands" resting on "strong knees."[421] Birkin's desires are initially placated by the "transcendent intimacy which had roused [him and Gerald] beyond the everyday life" through an unspoken bond they shared.[422] However, as with Proust, through acts of self-censorship, this bond is not outright stated throughout the rest of *Women in Love*; it is merely implied. Every meeting between the two men in the published chapters of the novel is characterised by "a strange silence between them, and a strange tension of hostility. They always kept a gap, a distance between them, they wanted always to be free each of the other. Yet there was a curious heart-straining towards each other."[423] Here, Lawrence implies a deep emotional connection between the men yet is reticent about its sexual nature. However, this "heart-straining" is continually juxtaposed with Birkin's infatuation with Gerald's physicality. Birkin's internal narration focuses on Gerald's body. In "In the Train," Birkin "looked at Gerald, and saw how his blue eyes were lit up with a little flame of curious desire. He saw too, how good-looking he was. Gerald was attractive, his blood seemed fluid and electric."[424] In "Breadalby," Birkin "was looking at the white legs of Gerald, as the latter sat on the side of the bed in his shirt. They were white-skinned, full, muscular legs, handsome and decided. Yet they moved Birkin with a sort of pathos, tenderness."[425] In "Water Party," Birkin "was acutely aware of Gerald's hand on his shoulder […] Birkin wondered why his own heart beat so heavily."[426] Birkin continually considers his physical and emotional response to Gerald's body. By the end of *Women in Love*, he concludes that "he had

420 Ibid, 503.
421 Ibid.
422 Ibid.
423 Lawrence, *Women in Love*, 100.
424 Ibid, 59.
425 Ibid, 98.
426 Ibid, 195.

been loving Gerald all along" and desires an "eternal union with a man too: another kind of love."[427] Coupled with the unspoken emotional connection between the two men, this mode of narration implies the homoerotic theme stated outright in the expunged preface. This mode of narration is also interconnected with theories of repression and the unconscious.

Sigmond Freud's theory of the unconscious mind became prominent in the decades before the publication of *Women in Love.* Freud argues that "there are other things that one would not care to admit to oneself: things that one likes to conceal from oneself and which for that reason one breaks off short and drives out of one's thoughts if, in spite of everything, they turn up."[428] Freud's theory outlines that people "drive" uncomfortable thoughts from their conscious minds, and in turn, these repressed thoughts become unconscious in a process of willed forgetting. In doing so, Freud believed, "a very remarkable psychological problem begins to appear in this situation – of a thought of his own being kept from his own self."[429] The unconscious is Freud's answer to this "remarkable psychological problem." He theorises that the creation of the unconscious arises due to repression: "we obtain our concept of the unconscious from the theory of repression. The repressed is the prototype of the unconscious […] we restrict the term *unconscious* to the dynamically unconscious repressed."[430] A person does not allow themselves shameful thoughts, which become buried in inaccessible parts of their psyche, becoming either sublimated into other behaviours or, in Freud's opinion, expressing themselves in dreams. Lawrence depicts Birkin's same-sex desires through this idea of repressed shame. The "Preface"

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427 Ibid, 212, 500.

428 Sigmund Freud, *The Question of Lay Analysis*, translated by James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1950), 19.

429 Ibid.

430 Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, ed. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1962), 5.

states that "there remained always, for Birkin and for Gerald, the absolute recognition that had passed between them […] they knew they loved each other, that each would die for the other. Yet all this knowledge was kept submerged in the soul of the two men."[431] Within *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (1921), Lawrence rebukes the new formation of psychoanalytical "cures," viewing psychoanalysts as attempting to supersede science: "psychoanalysts have crept in among us as healers and physicians; growing bolder, they have asserted their authority as scientists […] the medicine men of our decadent society."[432] Lawrence rejected the pathologising of repressed desires and believed the Freudian attempt to rationalise these thoughts was a symptom of "decadent society." Despite this rejection, Lawrence did agree with Freud's general concepts. Lawrence believed "Freud […] was seeking for the unknown sources of the mysterious stream of consciousness."[433] In this aim, Lawrence believed Freud found it: "imagine the unspeakable horror of the *repressions* Freud brought home to us. Gagged, bound, maniacal repressions, sexual complexes – we tried to repudiate them. But no, they were there, demonstratable."[434] Lawrence then poses the question: "is a repression a repressed passional impulse, or is it an idea which we suppress and refuse to put into practice – nay, which we even refuse to own at all, a disowned, outlawed idea, which exists rebelliously outside the pale?"[435] Lawrence believes the unconscious is a phenomenon that, by its very nature, is "unanalysable, undefinable, inconceivable. It cannot be conceived, it can only be experienced […] soul would be a better word. By the unconscious we do mean the soul."[436] Therefore, the socially unacceptable love between Birkin and Gerald "submerged in the soul of the two men" can thus be described in the language of Lawrence's

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431 Lawrence, *The Cambridge Edition: Women in Love*, 490.

432 D. H. Lawrence and Bruce Steel, *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). 10-11.

433 Ibid, 13.

434 Ibid, 16.

435 Ibid, 28.

436 Ibid, 42.

theories as an idea repressed into their unconscious as homosexuality exists "rebelliously outside the pale" of social acceptability. As Howard Booth argues: "Birkin is depicted struggling to control and fashion his sexuality, but the narrator has greater reserves of insight and understanding."[437] This form of narration is similar to that of Proust, as argued in Chapter Two. Proust's character Marcel is ostensibly heterosexual, yet the novel is informed by Proust's own "greater reserves of insight and understanding" of homosexuality. Proust imparts these insights to his narrator from *Sodom and Gomorrah* (1921) onwards, illuminating events that occurred in previous volumes. However, throughout the successive revisions of *Women in Love*, this narratorial insight into Birkin's sexual desire is made indistinct through omission.

The first interaction between Birkin and Gerald in the published edition of *Women in Love* occurs in "Shortlands." From the outset, their relationship is characterised by an unspoken, mutual desire for one another: "there was a pause of strange enmity between the two men, that was very near to love. It was always the same between them."[438] Although "the heart of each burned from the other. They burned with each other, inwardly," the narrator specifies that "they intended to keep their relationship a casual free and easy friendship, they were not going to be so unmanly and unnatural as to allow any heart-burning between them."[439] Their desire for one another is repressed due to a lack of understanding: "they had not the faintest belief in deep relationship between men and men, and their disbelief prevented any development of their powerful but suppressed friendliness."[440] The narrator of *Women in Love* describes that "a man cannot create desire in

437 Howard J. Booth, "D. H. Lawrence and Male Homosexual Desire," *The Review of English Studies New Series* 53, no. 209 (2002): 98.
438 Lawrence, *Women in Love*, 33.
439 Ibid.
440 Ibid.

himself, nor cease at will from desiring. Desire, in any shape or form, is primal, whereas the will is secondary, derived. The will can destroy but it cannot create."[441] Birkin cannot sublimate his desire for Gerald into desire for Hermione, and this failure is a source of constant conflict:

> Birkin wanted to cast out these desires, he wanted not to know them. Yet man can no more slay a living desire in him, than he can prevent his body from feeling heat and cold. He can put himself into bondage, to prevent the fulfilment of the desire, that is all. But the desire is there, as the travelling of the blood itself is there, until it is fulfilled or until the body is dead.[442]

Homoerotic desire is constituted as a natural bodily function here, a process as ordinary and biological as temperature control or the circulatory system. No matter Birkin's attempts to "cast out desire," his body will continue the natural process of desire-fulfilment as his homosexuality is only being "refused to put into practice" because of the social opprobrium that surrounds it. Birkin is aware of his body's desire as Lawrence describes his struggle against it. However, Lawrence ends his "Preface" by outlining how Birkin represses these desires from his conscious mind to feel them in his body's physical arousal in the presence of certain men. For Birkin, "this was the one and only secret he kept to himself, this secret of his passionate and sudden, spasmodic affinity for men he saw. He kept this secret even from himself."[443] Without the explanation of Birkin's acknowledgement and subsequent suppression of sexual desire for Gerald outlined in "Preface," the relationship between the two men found in the published edition of *Women in Love* masks a desire too dangerous for a writer to depict outright in the censorious culture of Britain.

Alongside Tim Dean's concept of "coded depictions" of homosexuality, Jeffery Meyers describes the homosexual novel as "a raid on inarticulate feelings" which forces authors "to find a

441 Lawrence, *The Cambridge Edition: Women in Love*, 500.
442 Ibid, 504.
443 Ibid, 505.

language of reticence and evasion, obliqueness and indirection, to convey their theme."[444] Despite Lawrence's mixed reactions to homosexuality, as a result of his relationship with John Middleton Murry and through the depiction of same-sex desire found within *Women in Love*, the novel can be included in Meyer's concept of the homosexual novel. After the omission of Lawrence's explanation of homosexual desire and repression at the beginning of *Women in Love*, the novel joins Tim Dean's concept of the lineage of the "closet." The writing becomes reticent and evasive, and scenes which otherwise would be read explicitly as homosexual, such as in "Gladiatorial," become ambiguous. This ambiguity suited the aims of the publishers, who feared the Grundyism of prosecution and submitted to the bowdlerisation of English culture.

Despite finding publishers willing to bring *Women in Love* to the public in England and the United States, these offers were conditional upon scrutiny of the text. The New York edition of *Women in Love* was published privately with little editorial revision a year before it was available in Britain. The British edition developed from this American typeset yet produced a much-altered novel, becoming the edition available in Britain for "the next 60 years."[445] Secker felt "instinctively that anything to do with Lawrence is rather dangerous, but I am prepared to take risks," yet forced Lawrence to make textual changes in his depiction of sexuality. During a conversation between Birkin and Gerald about the "additional perfect relationship between man and man" in "Marriage and Love," the British edition omitted Birkin's explanation of his feelings. The expunged passage reads:

> [Gerald:] "Surely there can never be anything as strong between man and man as sex love is between man and woman. Nature doesn't provide the basis."
> "Well, of course, I think she does. And I don't think we shall ever be happy till we establish ourselves on this basis. You've got to get rid of the *exclusiveness* of married love. And

444 Jeffery Meyers, *Homosexuality and Literature: 1890 – 1930* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), 1-2.
445 Farmer and Lawrence, *The Cambridge Edition: Women in Love,* L.

> you've got to admit the unadmitted love of man for man. It makes for a greater freedom for everybody.[446]

Birkin's relationship with Ursula and Gerald's relationship with Gudrun are destructive. Throughout *Women in Love*, Lawrence depicts an underlying pursuit of the "freedom" of "the unadmitted love of man for man." This pursuit is described moments before Birkin proposes his idea of *Blutbrüderschaft*: "suddenly [Birkin] saw himself confronted with another problem – the problem of love and eternal conjunction between two men. Of course, this was necessary – it had been a necessity inside himself all his life – to love a man purely and fully."[447] Birkin attempts to fulfil this "necessity" by pursuing a spiritual relationship with Gerald. Lawrence writes of Gerald's spiritual crisis and its antidote:

> He would have to go in some direction, shortly, to find relief. Only Birkin kept the fear definitely off him, saved him his quick sufficiency in life, by the off mobility and changeableness which seemed to contain the quintessence of faith. But then Gerald must always come away from Birkin, as from a church service […] the devil of it was, it was so hard to keep up his interest in women nowadays. He didn't care about them anymore.[448]

Just as Birkin felt the "eternal conjunction" between himself and Gerald was "necessary" to his life, Gerald finds his relationship with Birkin necessary to find spiritual "relief." Lawrence likens the time Gerald spends with Birkin to attending church; the other man's presence is akin to a religious experience for Gerald. His spiritual need for Birkin supersedes everything as he realises that he cannot get the same fulfilment from his relationships with women. Lawrence himself was religious: "primarily I am a passionately religious man, and my novels must be written from the depth of my religious experience."[449] In this regard, the metaphor comparing spending time with

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446 Ibid, 352.
447 Lawrence, *Women in Love*, 212.
448 Ibid, 241.
449 Lawrence to Edward Garnett (Apr 22, 1914), Lawrence and Huxley, *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, 190.

Gerald to the salvation attained from a religious service is not mere poetic device. Instead, it expresses Lawrence's own "depth" of experience.

In contrast, Gudrun and Gerald's relationship is described as a "contest," a battle for domination over one another.[450] In "Snowed Up," when Ursula and Birkin leave for Italy, there is a brief period of calm: "but very soon, [Gerald] began to ignore her female tactics, he dropped his respect for her whims and her privacies, he began to exert his own will blindly, without submitting to her. Already a vital conflict had set in."[451] Gerald outlines the conflict to Birkin: "do you know what it is to suffer when you are with a woman?"[452] Birkin's reply conjures the underlying aim of *Women in Love* in offering a different way of life: "I've loved you, as well as Gudrun, don't forget.'"[453] Birkin's "additional" relationship between men is his antidote to the spiritual malaise that has arisen from the decadence of modern culture. As Matt Houlbrook argues, during the 1920s, "the hegemonic image of the 'West End poof' meant that those [homosexuals] who conformed to the dominant sartorial and cultural demands of masculinity remained hidden from the public gaze."[454] The repression of Birkin and Gerald's "unmanly" feelings and desires suggests that the conflation of effeminacy and homosexuality resulted in their isolation. Both men lacked the cultural vernacular of camp, as outlined in previous chapters, to articulate their desire for one another in the camp language and codes that were beginning to form. In "Man to Man," Birkin suggests to Gerald that "we ought to swear to love each other, you and I, implicitly, and perfectly, finally, without any possibility of going back on it," in the form of "Brüdenschaft."[455] Gerald

450 Ibid, 458.
451 Ibid.
452 Ibid.
453 Ibid.
454 Houlbrook, *Queer London*, 46.
455 Lawrence, *Women in Love*, 213.

responds by "look[ing] down at him, attracted, so deeply bondage in fascinating attraction, that he was mistrustful, resenting the bondage, hating the attraction."[456] Gerald's attraction to Birkin throughout the text is always hedged against unease. The narrator describes his attraction and then clarifies Gerald's "bitter chagrin," his "mistrust," and his "denial" of these feelings directly after.[457] This hedging works as an attempt in language to depict the repression of Gerald's thought process and his unwillingness to submit to his bodily desires. After the wrestling match in "Gladiatorial," Gerald asks: "is this the *Brüdenschaft* you wanted," associating their actions with Birkin's pledge of love, thus making this pledge physical.[458] The narrator outlines that "the wrestling had some deep meaning to them – an unfinished meaning," with Birkin suggesting that "we are mentally, spiritually intimate, therefore we should be more or less physically intimate too – it is more whole […] I don't know why one should have to justify oneself."[459] The physical union of Gerald and Birkin completes the spiritual unity for which Birkin had been striving.

David Ellis argues that "how best to describe sexual intercourse is, of course, a peculiarly difficult problem for Lawrence, especially in the publishing conditions of his day."[460] The language surrounding his intimate scenes becomes ambiguous in its attempt to shield sexual action. Ellis's argument for the difficulty of describing intercourse is not specific to depictions of homosexuality. As this discussion of *The Rainbow* and *Ulysses* has shown, depictions of sexual intercourse in any capacity were heavily prosecuted by the censors. However, there was an added layer of criminality when depicting sexual intercourse between men due to the Labouchere

456 Ibid.
457 Ibid, 212, 213.
458 Ibid, 282.
459 Ibid.
460 David Ellis, *Love and Sex in D. H. Lawrence* (South Carolina: Clemson University Press, 2016), 75

Amendment of 1885, outlined in Chapter One. When Gerald "fastens" the door, asks not to be "troubled" for the rest of the night and wrestles with Birkin completely naked, the language Lawrence uses raises the suggestion of a physical sexual act while remaining evasively protected by the façade of the wrestling.[461] This coded scene of sexual intercourse can be understood in Jeffrey Meyer's conception of "the language of indirectness" to display homosexuality metaphorically. The closeness of Japanese wrestling provides the language to allow Birkin and Gerald a closeness that carries a double meaning. Lawrence's narration describes the physicality of "two men entwined and wrest[ling] with each other:"

> [Birkin] seemed to penetrate into Gerald's more solid, more diffuse bulk, to interfuse his body through the body of the other, as if to bring it subtly into subjection […] It was as if Birkin's whole physical intelligence interpenetrated into Gerald's body as if his fine, sublimated energy entered into the flesh of the fuller man, like some potency, casting a fine net, a prison, through the muscles into the very depths of Gerald's physical being […] Now and again came a sharp gasp of breath, or a sound like a sigh, then the rapid thudding of movement on the thickly carpeted floor, then the strange sound of flesh escaping under flesh. […] there was no head to be seen, only the swift, tight limbs, the solid white backs, the physical junction of two bodies clinched into oneness.[462]

Lawrence infuses his language with sensuality, and the repeated reference to "penetration" and two bodies "becoming one" is the same as descriptions of intimate scenes between Gudrun and Gerald. The homoeroticism of the naked wrestling between two men whose attraction toward each other is continually highlighted by Lawrence's narrator is confirmed when a confession of love immediately follows it. As Birkin lays astride Gerald's body "panting," Gerald admits: "I don't believe I've ever felt as much *love* for a woman, as I have for you," and his hand closes "warm and sudden over Birkin's."[463] The wrestling scene can be read as a metaphor for the physical enactment of the men's sexual desires written explicitly in the language of sex. The ambiguity

461 Lawrence, *Women in Love*, 278.
462 Ibid. 281.
463 Ibid.

arises in masking this physical enactment as wrestling, codifying a scene of desire and thus avoiding charges of obscenity.

Conclusion

In 1922, "every copy of *Women in Love* was seized" in the United States, and Thomas Seltzer was charged with "violating section 1141 of the Penal Code", which dealt with the publication of obscene literature. [464] Seltzer successfully defended *Women in Love* in court, requiring a second printing of the novel to keep up with demand.[465] In Britain, the magazine *John Bull* called for the novel's prosecution: "it was the sort of book which in the hands of a boy in his teens might pave the way to unspeakable moral disaster […] if *The Rainbow* was an indecent book this later production is an obscene abomination. The police must act."[466] *Bull's* call to action alluded to the corrupting force of homoerotic literature. Despite negative reviews, due to the textual changes of Secker, no charges of obscenity were filed. Lawrence railed against the hypocrisy of cultural censorship in the article "Pornography and Obscenity" (1929) that appeared in the Parisian modernist little magazine *This Quarter*.[467] Lawrence argues that no one can be sure what constitutes obscenity because the concept is irrational and subjective: "when the police raided my picture show they did not in the least know what to take. So they took every picture where the smallest bit of the sex organs showed. Quite regardless of subject or meaning."[468] The police decided that anything remotely "sexual" was an offence to the public. However, Lawrence argues

464 "Seize 772 Books in Vice Crusade Raid," *New York Times* (Jul 12, 1922).
465 "Critics Find No Evil In 3 Impugned Books," *New York Times* (Aug 1, 1922).
466 Charles, W Pilley, "On Women in Love," *John Bull* (Sept 17, 1921).
467 Edward Titus launched the magazine, and a month later, Titus published a Paris-printed version of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.
468 The police raided the Warren Gallery in London in June 1929 and seized 13 paintings by D. H. Lawrence, viewed to be obscene. The paintings were spared from being burned on the grounds they never be exhibited in Britain again. D. H, Lawrence, "Pornography and Censorship," 49.

that "half the great poems, pictures, music, stories of the whole world are great by virtue of the beauty of their sex appeal."[469] Lawrence cites Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847) as an example. He outlines that literature that deals with sexual material is not obscene simply by association and that sex and desire are natural parts of what it is to be human.[470] Lawrence writes:

> The greatest of all lies in the modern world is the lie of purity and the dirty little secret. The grey ones left over from the nineteenth century are the embodiment of this lie. They dominate in society, in the press in literature, everywhere. And, naturally they lead the vast mob of the general public with them. Which means of course, perpetual censorship of anything that would militate against the lie of purity and the dirty little secret.[471]

Lawrence understands the obscenity law as being carried over from the Victorian era, from the "grey ones left over from the nineteenth century." He associates the censorship of sexuality with repression and control.

In *Women in Love,* Gerald comes across wood carvings from West Africa that make him ask disapprovingly, "aren't they rather obscene?"[472] One of these carvings depicts a woman in childbirth, which is "rather wonderful, conveying the suggestion of the extreme of physical sensation, beyond the limits of mental consciousness."[473] Gerald's question puzzles The Russian, whose response encapsulates the values of the decadent movement: "I don't know […] I have never defined the obscene. I think they are very good."[474] For the bohemian artists, notions of obscenity are irrelevant. Much like the ethos promulgated by Wilde, a work of art is either good or bad. When Gerald asks Birkin, "why is it art," Birkin's response mirrors that of Lawrence's in "Pornography and Obscenity."[475] Birkin responds: "it conveys a complete truth […] it contains the

469 Ibid.
470 Ibid.
471 Ibid.
472 Lawrence, *Women in Love,* 88.
473 Ibid.
474 Ibid.
475 Ibid.

whole truth of that state, whatever you feel about it."[476] Gerald is disgusted at the depiction of the pains of labour and views the statue as obscene. Birkin, however, values the "truth of the art." Childbirth is both a painful and natural process of human development, and the carving is simply a reflection of this truth. For Birkin, it cannot be obscene to recognise and make art about the human experience. Moreover, for Lawrence, it cannot be obscene to represent human desire.

As Chapter Four will show, some modernist writers such as Joyce and eventually Lawrence himself moved their work to continental Europe, where publishing standards infringed less on their freedom of expression. Others, like Forster, self-suppressed their work. Although the homosexuality of *Women in Love* remains, it is less explicit than Lawrence intended it to be. *Women in Love* represents the constraints and resilience of the homosexual novel in history. Ursula, in the dying lines of *Women in Love*, denounces Birkin's love for Gerald as "a theory, a perversity," an "impossibility," and Lawrence gives the last line to a rejection of this notion, writing simply, "I don't believe that."[477] Regardless of whether Lawrence affirmed or denounced homosexual desire, *Women in Love* is, if nothing else, a case study of the limits of representing a desire too dangerous to name in print.

476 Ibid.
477 Lawrence, *Women in Love*, 500.

The Obelisk Press and the Refuge of Paris

It is no accident that propels people like us to Paris.[478]

- *Henry Miller, Tropic of Cancer*

Wilde spent the last months of his life exiled in Paris. In 1909, his body was interred in Père Lachaise Cemetery. Upon his tomb sits a winged sphinx sculpted by Jacob Epstein, accompanied by an epitaph from *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* (1898):

> And alien tears will fill for him
> Pity's long-broken urn,
> For his mourners will be outcast men,
> And outcasts always mourn.[479]

The stanza declares Wilde's only "mourners" to be his fellow social outcasts after the scandal of his trial. Despite living his last months in poverty, Wilde had escaped the persecution of Britain. Joyce described the reception Wilde received after his time in prison:

> On hearing of his condemnation, the mob that was gathered in front of the courthouse began to dance a pavane in the muddy street […] when he came out of prison […] he was driven, like a hare hunted by dogs, from hotel to hotel. Hotelier after hotelier drove him from the door, refused food and shelter.[480]

The ending of Wilde's life, with his forced exile from Britain into France because of his conviction for gross indecency, bears similarities to the movements of modernist writers who were to publish work viewed as obscene in Britain. Transgressive British and American artists would find refuge from censorship and the freedom of publishing what they wanted in Paris. Didier Eribon argues:

> The mythology of the big city – and migration to it – coexisted for a long time with a more general mythology of travel and exile, not the city in this case, but to a foreign country, another continent […] an 'elsewhere' that offered the possibility of realising your hopes

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478 Henry Miller, *Tropic of Cancer* (New York: Grove Press,1961), 29.

479 Oscar Wilde, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* (London: Castle Press, 1948), 51.

480 James Joyce, "Oscar Wilde: The Poet of Salomé," in *The Critical Writings of James Joyce*, ed. Mason Ellsworth (New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), 149.

> and dreams – and one that seemed impossible for so many reasons, unthinkable even, in your land of origin.[481]

Through the *fin de siècle* and into the first half of the twentieth century, Paris represented this mythological "elsewhere," offering the possibility of a legal homosexual existence. This possibility becomes apparent through the trajectory of Wilde's life. Paris made it possible for homosexual and non-homosexual writers alike to publish material that would be impossible "in [their] land of origin."

Chapter Three considered Lawrence's struggle against British censorship and the self-censorship that allowed for the publication of *Women in Love* in Britain. Still, writers who would not alter their work were often forced by circumstance to look abroad for publication. Many writers who rejected conventional Victorian morality, such as Joyce, Radclyffe Hall, and eventually Lawrence, bypassed the British publishing institution, moving to European presses that would look at their work more favourably. Paris became a city that cultivated a reputation that is now inseparable from the history of modernist literary production. In the novels considered earlier, homosexuality was evoked through the spectre of decadence. However, as argued in Chapter One through the work of Mahoney, camp modernism emerged from the decadent model, integrating the decadent style of exaggeration and excess into a more explicitly homosexual candour.[482] Through modernist camp, writers such as Ford and Tyler moved beyond decadence's allusive evocation of queer sexualities into the explicit language of homosexuality. While Proust presented the character of Charlus as the embodiment of camp, Ford and Tyler structured a novel around the concept, narrating from the perspective of those embedded in the subculture.

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481 Didier Eribon, *Insult and the Making of the Gay Self* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 20.

482 Kristen Mahoney, "Camp Modernism and Decadence," in *Decadence: A Literary History*, ed. Alex Murray (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 342.

This chapter marks a structural shift in the overall thesis. Instead of focusing on a single writer, it takes Paris as its subject, highlighting the city as a locus of literary freedom. It is primarily concerned with the English language book trade that arose in Paris due to the censorious culture of American and British nation-states and the reason for its existence. In order to show how Paris functioned as a space where writings about sexuality flourished, it will examine the relationship several writers – including Hall and Miller – had with publishing networks such as the Obelisk and Olympia Press. This discussion will be underpinned by a consideration of Ford and Tyler's *The Young and Evil* (1933), which functions as a turning point in the taxonomy of the homosexual novel. Although *The Young and Evil* was written in the United States by two American writers and set in the queer enclaves of Greenwich Village, it is steeped in the influence of French surrealism and found its publication in Paris.

Paris in the 1920s: A Decade of Radical Publishing

Potter argues that "prohibited by the U.S. and U.K. nation-states, modernist texts were often produced and circulated abroad, mostly in Paris, so that modernist publishers created their own semi-legal and private distribution networks in order to foil the customs officials."[483] Shakespeare and Company, Plain Editions, Contact Publishing Company, Three Mountains Press (which morphed into The Hours Press), and the Obelisk Press are just a few English-language publishing houses operating out of Paris. As a British Foreign Office memorandum from 1903 states:

> There are probably more English than French books in the windows of the shops in the *Rue de Rivoli, Rue Castiglione* and *Palais Royal* […] for the foreign tourist, for whose benefit the majority of the shops in the street named evidently exist […] many of them, no doubt,

[483] Potter, *Obscene Modernism*, 4.

> become purchasers of these productions either out of mere curiosity or for the purpose of indignantly showing them as an example of the wares that the immoral Parisian tradesman sells to the guileless and pure-minded foreign tourist.[484]

Paris had become a haven for the production of "obscene" English language books, as confirmed by the report from the Foreign Office and the sheer amount of English literature on offer, showing evidence of how lucrative the market could be. The story of this Paris-based trade in English language books begins with the re-publication of *Dorian Gray.* After Wilde's imprisonment, his publisher, Ward, Lock and Co., removed the novel from publication in Britain, where the circulation of existing novels became scarce. Charles Carrington, a man well known to the authorities as a pornographer whose trade was to "forward to England from Paris […] indecent books," attained the copyright for *Dorian Gray* and began circulating a Paris-printed edition in 1901 under a clandestine imprint.[485] Colette Colligan's research shows that when Sylvia Beach opened her book store Shakespeare and Company in 1919, the Charles Carrington version of *Dorian Gray* was stocked, as the original publishers no longer produced the novel.[486] Beach would turn Shakespeare and Company into a one-book publishing venture to rescue *Ulysses* from the yoke of British and American censorship, publishing Joyce's banned novel in Paris. However, more critical for the taxonomy of the homosexual novel was Manchester-born publisher Jack Kahan's 1931 *Obelisk Press*, which published both supressed novels and new works that writers knew could not be published elsewhere. Beach would often pass on manuscripts to Kahane as she had no interest in publishing beyond *Ulysses*, and the Obelisk Press became a site of transgressive literary production. According to Neil Pearson, Kahane aimed to "exploit the difference between

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484 Foreign Office, "Indecent Publications," F.O. 83/2101, *The National Archives* (Kew).

485 "The Works in France," *National Vigilance Association Records*, NRA 20625 Fawcett L Coll (London: London School of Economics, The Woman's Library, March 1902), 24.

486 Colette Colligan, *A Publisher's Paradise: Expatriate Literary Culture in Paris, 1890 – 1960* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014), 2.

what the British and the French thought was acceptable to print."[487] The Obelisk Press became the Paris publisher of Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) and Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*, two novels deemed obscene in the English-speaking world.

Kahane also published American-born writers Ford and Tyler's novel *The Young and Evil*. Due to the explicit homosexuality of the novel, *The Young and Evil* will become the primary example in this chapter of the radical nature of Obelisk's publishing and Paris-based English language publishing in general. The novel's surrealist depiction of the homosexual milieu of New York City marks a break with the pathological verisimilitude of the homosexual novels published before the 1930s as it ignores the moralistic questions posed by same-sex desire. In this regard, the turning point in the taxonomy of the homosexual novel, which allowed homosexuals to speak in their own voice, is deeply entrenched in French avant-garde movements. As will be shown in the following chapters, the homosexual subversion of surrealism becomes pivotal in the liberation of same-sex desire within literature.

The radical novels published in France by Obelisk and subsequently by Olympia Press would be republished in the United States by Grove Press. The literary merit and success of the French versions assisted in ending the censorship of literature in the English-speaking world as their prestige was used as a legal defence. The battles of Grove Press will be discussed in Chapter Five. However, these battles are essential to foreground here, as they show that English publishing in Paris was pivotal for the continued existence of homosexual novels. As Kahane provided a space

[487] Neil Pearson, *Obelisk: A History of Jack Kahane and the Obelisk Press* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 66.

for homosexual novels to be published, The Obelisk Press and Paris as a publisher's haven became essential landmarks in the production of homosexual modernism.

Kahan's press was not set up in a cultural vacuum. Its success was precipitated by the existing expatriate literary culture flourishing in Paris throughout the 1910s and the 1920s. During the 1920s, Paris became an epicentre of modernist production as a flourishing expatriate community of British and American artists flocked to the boulevards and cafés of the left bank. Modernist writers facing censorship in Britain or the United States could move to Paris and distribute their work through publishing channels due to the existence of an expatriate literary community. Gertrude and Leo Stein arrived in Paris in 1903. Alongside Alice Toklas, they ran a Saturday night salon populated by painters and writers. Of modernity, Gertrude Stein wrote: "England was consciously refusing the twentieth century knowing full well that they had gloriously created the nineteenth century […] Paris was where the twentieth century was."[488] Stein recognised cultural energies focused on the city that did not curtail artistic expression through a censorious culture like Britain or the United States. She decided to move there: "so Paris was the place that suited those of us that were to create the twentieth century art and literature."[489] Gertrude and Leo were not the only Americans crossing the Atlantic to pursue these "twentieth century" expressions of art. In 1909 Natalie Barney began the salon that was frequented by Djuna Barnes, Mina Loy, Hall and Pound, among others. Barney would find both herself and her Sapphic coterie depicted in *The Well*, the openness of the artistic space in Paris presented in stark contrast to the repression of protagonist Stephen's beloved England. Zelda and F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Ernest Hemingway lived and worked in Paris throughout the decade, falling in with Stein and Toklas's

488 Gertrude Stein, *Paris France* (London: Peter Owen, 2003), 24, 11.
489 Ibid, 12.

salon. Joyce, who arrived in 1920, would utilise the freedom of Paris to publish *Ulysses* in 1922. As Adam Parkes argues: "the publication history of *Ulysses* is inseparable from the novel's censorship, for it appeared and evolved in the context of censorship."[490] An obscenity trial interrupted the serialisation of *Ulysses*, and Joyce's time in Paris led to its eventual complete publication in novel form. These writers were not all fleeing censorship, although their presence in Paris enabled English-language publications to flourish.

As Potter outlines: "the effect of these private and public publishing ventures," like Shakespeare and Company, "was to locate the production of obscene English-language writing abroad. They thus had the effect of making the policing of British fiction an issue of border control."[491] This production of obscene English-language literature in France frustrated the Home Office as it took control out of the hands of British authorities, who could do nothing except police the borders. Therefore, the Post Office was granted powers to open the mail of those suspected of transporting obscene texts. Christopher Hillard describes how "the home office was underwhelmed by the cooperation it received from the French authorities in suppressing Paris-based publishers of English language articles for import into Britain."[492] French authorities did not cooperate with the British censorship efforts as the publication of texts such as *Ulysses* did not breach French law and was, therefore, none of their business.

Lawrence approached Shakespeare and Company asking Beach to publish a cheap print run of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* which had previously only been published in an expensive, limited

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490 Adam Parkes, *Modernism and the Theatre of Censorship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 65.

491 Rachel Potter, "Censorship and Sovereignty," in *Prudes on the Prowl: Fiction and Obscenity in England, 1850 to the Present Day*, ed. David Bradshaw and Rachel Potter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 143.

492 Hillard, *A Matter of Obscenity*, 54.

edition by Florence-based publisher Messrs. Beach rejected this offer: "I didn't admire this work, which I found the least interesting of its author's productions, but it was very hard to refuse Lawrence's appeal to come to its rescue."[493] Beach recognised Lawrence's position as "desperate" due to piracy yet had no interest in expanding her publishing venture: "it was difficult to tell [Lawrence] that I didn't want to get a name as a publisher of erotica."[494] Lawrence was not the only writer to approach Beach, who complained that "hardly a day passed without another visitor bringing his manuscript," and most of these manuscripts were erotically charged.[495] Beach referred many of these aspirational writers to Kahane, "who was always looking for 'hot books'."[496] Kahane was envious of Beach's "discovery of such an 'obscene' book, as he termed it, as *Ulysses*, and never relinquished the hope of persuading [Beach] one day to let the Obelisk Press take it over."[497] Beach facilitated many instances of publication for the Obelisk Press, famously introducing Kahane to Joyce. This introduction resulted in the publication of Joyce's *Haveth Childers Everywhere* and *Pomes Penyeach* in 1932, forming a lineage between the two publishing ventures.

The Obelisk Press and the Continuation of Radical Publishing

Kahane's press had vastly different motives to Beach's one-book venture. Firmly entrenched in second-generation modernism, the Obelisk Press was occupied with differing modes of writing. However, as Neil Pearson attests, Kahane "reaffirmed for 1930s' Paris the role it had established

493 Sylvia Beach, *Shakespeare and Company* (New York: Harcourt, 1959), 92.
494 Ibid,
495 Ibid, 94.
496 Ibid, 91.
497 Ibid, 133.

for itself during the twenties, that of proud defender of 'difficult' literature in the face of prudish and litigious government."[498] This sentiment is outlined in Kahane's own described intentions for the Obelisk Press:

> I would start a publishing business that would exist for the convenience of those English writers, English and American, who had something to say they could not conveniently say in their own countries […] if any book that had reached publication (like *Sleeveless Errand)* met with disaster, my publishing house would automatically publish it in France.[499]

Kahane's aim to publish novels already banned in Britain or the United States represents a commitment to liberating radical literature, creating a space to express the un-expressible. Kahane describes how he was "determined to found a publishing house which should be a natural sanctuary."[500] However, Kahane also hoped to capitalise on the celebrity of these notorious texts. Kahane sent an advertisement to London newspapers declaring that "in the event of other books of literary merit being banned in England, I am prepared to publish them in Paris within a month."[501] Kahane put out a direct call for censored material to make up his author's list, and the idea for The Obelisk Press was born as a response to the censorship of Nora Jones's *Sleeveless Errand* (1929).[502]

Obelisk would publish Sleeveless Errand in Paris in the same year, and after a Paris-based printing by Pegasus Press, Kahane secured the rights to *The Well* in 1933.[503] Kahane said he "grasped at [*The Well*] with joy, although there was no profit in it."[504] He did not believe "that in

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498 Pearson, *Obelisk: A History*, 3.
499 Jack Kahane, *Memoire of a Booklegger* (Montreal: The Obolus Press, 2010), 227.
500 Ibid.
501 Ibid, 224.
502 Ibid.
503 Moulds of the novel were secretly transported to Paris for publication, and the novel was shipped back to Britain as recounted in Edward de Grazia, *Girls Lean Back Everywhere: The Law of Obscenity and the Assault on Genius* (London: Constable, 1992), 177.
504 Kahane, *Memoire of a Booklegger*, 205.

a literary sense [it] deserved anything like its reputation," instead viewing the novel as "a courageous if long-winded defence of a subject the literary discussion of which is still taboo in England."[505] Kahane wrote this memoir in 1939, and it shows he was astutely aware of the culture of homophobia inherent in Britain's obscenity laws and the bravery of writers who dared touch on the subject. The Obelisk Press version attempted to capitalise on the scandal of Hall's novel as the cover read, "this edition cannot be bought in England or the U. S. A."[506] With the birth of Obelisk, Kahane would subsequently publish both erotica and subversive modernist texts, including those that depicted homoerotic attraction. Marshik and Pease argue that "during the first half of the twentieth century, representing sex was understood [by modernists] not just as liberatory and healthy, but importantly, modern."[507] Similarly, Potter argues that "not only did individual modernist works move away from the Romantic aesthetic of the sublime and embrace its opposite – waste, mess, fragmentation, the sexualised body, flesh and obscenity – they also, produced sensual and kinetic effects that alter understandings of art."[508] In this regard, modernist textual production is intimately bound with notions of sexual subversion and breaking the taboo of what was permissible in print. The focus on the "sexualised body" and the "sensual" understandings of art are integral to the formal innovation of novels such as *Ulysses* and the works of Lawrence, aspects of modernist writing which demarcated it from previous tradition. Kahane's publishing venture suggests that notions of erotica were inextricable from modernist production – that they went hand in hand. This is true of modernist writing that depicted homosexual desire, as depictions of this kind of sexuality were deemed obscene regardless of their sexual candour.

505 Ibid.
506 Ibid, 134.
507 Marshik and Pease, *Modernism, Sex and Gender*, 56.
508 Potter, *Obscene Modernism*, 10.

The Well of Loneliness: Reception, Rejection, Revitalisation

The reception of *The Well* in Britain is characteristic of the kinds of novels Kahane's press would republish in Paris. It is fruitful to consider this reception as a case study of the culture Kahane's press existed to counter before moving forward. Hall wrote to her publisher, warning him of her upcoming novel: "I have put my pen at the service of some of the most persecuted and misunderstood people in the world […] so far as I know nothing of the kind has ever been attempted before in fiction."[509] Hall writes this as *The Well* depicts the life of a "female invert," Stephen, and through the depiction of English discrimination, calls for toleration and acceptance of women with same-sex desires in Britain. Stephen is a writer by occupation and is forced to leave Britain for the more tolerant atmosphere of Paris, yet she continually pines for her home in the British countryside. Stephen returns to England to aid in the war effort as her one-time governess, Puddle, suggests: "the war may give your sort of woman her chance, I think you may find that they'll need you."[510] Here, Puddle refers to the presumed masculine nature of the female invert, a figure rejected by British society due to an unconventional gendered and sexual nature. Once in Britain, Stephen describes the changing response to the "less orthodox sisters" of the "purely feminine women," relating this acceptance to the need for women to fill traditionally masculine roles on the home front:

> For as though gaining courage from the terror that is war, many a one who was even as Stephen, had crept out of her hole and come into the daylight, come into the daylight and faced her country, "well, here I am, will you take me or leave me?" And England had taken her, asking no questions – she was strong and efficient, she could fill a man's place.[511]

509 Diana Souhami, *The Trials of Radclyffe Hall* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 181.
510 Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 2014), 245.
511 Ibid, 249, 248.

These masculine women came to the aid of Britain and, for a time, found acceptance from their traditionally feminine peers, aiding not only in the running of industry but in the everyday needs of the women left behind. In this regard – through helping to "start up [a] motor" or by "glancing through accounts" of household expenses, women like Stephen fulfilled the roles of absent husbands.[512] Once taken into society, Stephen realises that this acceptance was not so easy to take away. With it came the seed of resistance for both women's liberation and the liberation of the figure of the invert:

> A battalion was formed in those terrible years that would never again be completely disbanded. War and death had given them a right to life, and life tasted sweet, very sweet to their palates […] never again would such women submit to being driven back to their holes and corners. They had found themselves – thus the whirligig of war brings in its abrupt revenges.[513]

The Well was so unnerving as it depicted the crisis of the Great War as reshaping the gendered dynamics of British society, where the temporary integration of masculine – or, in other words, sexually inverted – women into society became a possibility in the years after. Stephen secures an ambulance driving role in France and here develops a relationship with a younger woman, Mary, with whom she moves to Paris after the War. It is this section of *The Well* which implies that the changing social dynamics brought on by the war perverted the sexuality of British women. In this homosocial environment where women had taken over the traditional roles of men, Mary became enamoured by Stephen, and they embarked on a sexual relationship. As quoted earlier, Kahane admired the "courage" of Hall's defence of homosexuality, "grasping at it with joy."[514] The transgressive nature of Stephen's sexuality, which found itself at odds with the traditional gender dynamic of her time while horrifying Britain, was a perfect novel for the Obelisk Press. The content

512 Ibid, 249.
513 Ibid.
514 Kahane, *Memoire of a Booklegger*, 205.

of Hall's novel, then, outlines the commitment to transgressive subversion specifically related to homosexual literature that Kahane's press advocated.

Reacting to the publication of *The Well*, James Douglas, editor of the *Sunday Express*, evoked the spectre of the Wilde trials of 1895 by describing the novel as "a seductive and insidious piece of special pleading designed to display perverted decadence as a martyrdom inflicted upon these outcasts by a cruel society."[515] Douglas continues:

> Let me warn our novelists and our men of letters that literature as well as morality is in peril. Fiction of this type is an injury to good literature. It makes the profession of literature fall into disrepute. Literature has not yet recovered from the harm done to it by the Oscar Wilde scandal. It should keep its house in order.[516]

Douglas conflates same-sex desire with decadence through the citing of Wilde. By 1928 this link has been firmly entrenched within the public imagination and Douglas uses this comparison to denounce literature that depicts homosexuality. Douglas sees that Wilde's fall has tarnished the very institution of literary production, and he considers Hall's novel to have the dangerous potential to corrupt the morality of England through its "seductive" decadence. Around forty writers, including Vita Sackville-West, Woolf, Forster, George Bernard Shaw and Rudyard Kipling were rallied to Hall's defence. They were expecting to testify on the novel's behalf despite their individual opinions of the novel's merits. However, writers were disallowed from testifying as they were not considered experts in obscenity, and literary merit was seen as irrelevant to the topic. The Chief Magistrate remarked: "I don't think people are entitled to express an opinion upon a matter which is the decision of this court."[517] Woolf writes in her diary of attending the trial:

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515 James Douglas, "A Book That Must Be Suppressed," *Sunday Express.* The National Archives, Kew, DPP 1/88 (August 19, 1920).

516 Ibid.

517 Souhami, *The Trials of Radclyffe Hall*, 216.

> What is obscenity? What is literature? What is the difference between the subject and the treatment? In what cases is evidence allowable? This last, to my relief, was decided against us; we could not be called as experts in obscenity, only in art.[518]

Whether there is a "difference between the subject and the treatment" of subjects deemed obscene is a question that lies at the heart of every literary obscenity trial. This was a pivotal concern in the Wilde trials, the first of which became a quasi-trial against *Dorian Gray*, the trial for *The Rainbow*, and the trial for *Ulysses.* Woolf described *The Well* as a "meritorious dull book" on August 31 and again on November 10 as a "pale tepid vapid book which lay damp and slab all around the court."[519] Woolf found no literary merit in Hall's novel, which she did not believe was formally innovative in the same vein as the Bloomsbury Group. However, the group at large saw it as their duty to defend the right of any artist to write novels on any topic. Vita Sackville-West wrote to Woolf, responding to the refusal of Leonard Woolf, E. M. Forster, and others to declare *The Well* "a work of artistic merit – even genius" in their letter of protest to the obscenity charges.[520] Sackville-West wrote:

> I feel very violently about *The Well of Loneliness.* Not on account of what you call my proclivities; not because I think it is a good book; but really on principle… Because, you see, even if the W. of L. had been a good book, - even if it had been a great book, a real masterpiece, - the result would have been the same. And that is intolerable.[521]

Sackville-West saw the injustice in banning *The Well* through the broader culture of censorship that Britain had cultivated and thought it should be defended on the sheer principle of the freedom of speech alone. Woolf would soon come to this conclusion herself, co-writing an open letter with Forster titled "The New Censorship" (1928) for the *Nation and Athenaeum,* stating a similar

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518 Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf* (New York: Harcourt, 1980), 207.
519 Ibid, 193, 207.
520 Virginia Woolf and Nigel Nicolson, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf: Volume Three* (London: Hogarth Press, 1975), 520.
521 Vita Sackville-West, et al., *The Letters of Vita Sackville-West to Virginia Woolf* (London: Virago, Press, 1997), 296.

viewpoint: "writers produce literature, and they cannot produce great literature until they have free minds. The free mind has access to all knowledge and speculation of its age, and nothing cramps it like a taboo."[522]

Despite the outrage caused in Britain by the publication of *The Well*, the novel was well received in France. The novel was immediately reprinted in Paris by Pegasus Press, and according to Edward de Grazia, "orders for *The Well* poured in from around the world."[523] De Grazia highlights how *The Well* furthered the trade of censored books from Paris: "about all that a man or woman needed to do to get a copy of *The Well* was to cross the channel […] in countless suitcases, coat pockets, and handbags [*The Well*] was smuggled back into the author's homeland."[524] By the end of 1928, "7500 copies of the Paris edition of the 'suppressed' novel had been sold."[525] Una Troubridge remarked in a letter to Havelock Ellis that by 1929: "over ten thousand copies of *The Well* have been sold on the continent and they cannot get binding done quick enough to supply demand."[526] By 1932, the novel had been translated into French as *Les Puits de solitude* by the esteemed publishing house Gallimard, publisher of Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu,* becoming a best seller. As Ruth Vanita argues, "ironically, the trial of *The Well of Loneliness* enacted the persecution the novel documented, thus confirming its central thesis."[527] While being a best seller on the continent, issued in the French language by one of the most reputable publishing houses in the country, copies of *The Well* that made their way into Britain were intercepted by

522 Virginia Woolf and Andrew McNeillie, *The Essays of Virginia Woolf* (London: Hogarth Press, 1986), 39.
523 Edward de Grazia, *Girls Lean Back Everywhere,* 177.
524 Ibid, 195.
525 Ibid.
526 Una Troubridge letter to Havelock Ellis, 70539, Havelock Ellis Papers: The British Library Manuscript Collection, London (March 1929), 180-83.
527 Ruth Vanita, "The Homoerotics of Travel: People, Ideas, Genres," in *The Cambridge Companion to Gay and Lesbian Writing,* ed. Hugh Stevens, 105.

police and burned. After the folding of Pegasus Press, Jack Kahane continued publication of *The Well* in Paris.

Obelisk's Publication of Henry Miller

In addition to coming to the aid of writers who found their novels banned in their own countries, Kahane would begin publishing new works of literature that would most definitely become entangled with the law if published elsewhere. The most famous Obelisk title was Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* (1934). Miller moved from Brooklyn to Paris in 1930 to pursue becoming a published writer, which had continually evaded him. He took manuscripts that he had been working on for years and eventually got the attention of the literary agent William Bradley. After reading the manuscript that would become *Tropic of Cancer*, Bradley was frank with Miller: "only one man in the whole world" would risk publishing his novel.[528] And that man was Jack Kahane. This risk was due to the explicitness of Miller's depictions of sex and his utilisation of proscribed language: "O Tania, where now is that warm cunt of yours, those fat, heavy garters, those soft, bulging thighs? There is a bone in my prick six inches long. I will ream out every wrinkle in your cunt. I will send you home to your Sylvester with an ache in your belly and your womb turned inside out."[529] Miller's writing was provocative, his usage of the words "cunt" and "prick" rendering his work unpublishable in the English-speaking world. However, Miller's narrator outlines that his novel is not an ordinary novel: "this is not a book, in the ordinary sense of the word. No, this is a prolonged insult, a gob of spit in the face of Art, a kick in the pants to God, Man, Destiny, Time,

528 Hugh D. Ford, *Published in Paris* (New York: Collier Books, 1988), 363.
529 Miller, *Tropic of Cancer*, 5.

Love, Beauty … what you will."[530] In this regard, Miller's obscenity becomes an active choice which reorients the dominant conception of "art." Miller was critical of the repressive, puritanical codes of the dominant social culture of the United States. Much like Joyce and Lawrence before him, he rejected the conventions which dictated what was permissible in literature. Karl Shapiro argues that "his aim was not to write about the erotic but to write the whole truth about the life he knew. This goal demanded the full vocabulary and iconography of sex."[531] Writing the "whole truth" about human experience was pivotal to Miller's commitment to autobiographical fiction, and the candid nature of his prose excited Jack Kahane. Kahane's reaction to reading *Tropic of Cancer* outlines the literary merit he saw both through and because of the obscenity of Miller's prose:

> I had read the most terrible, the most sordid, the most magnificent manuscript that had ever fallen into my hands; nothing I had yet received was comparable to it for the splendour of its writing, the fathomless depth of its despair, the savour of its portraiture, the boisterousness of its humour.[532]

However, despite his excitement at discovering the genius who had the potential to do for The Obelisk Press what Joyce did for Shakespeare and Company, Kahan feared intervention from the British Authorities. As Neil Pearson argues, "in the first three years of the Obelisk Press, Kahane had taken few risks. Nearly all the books he'd published had cleverly taken advantage of the gap between British and French perceptions of respectability […], but *Tropic of Cancer* was different."[533] These books – *Sleeveless Errand* and *The Well* – had already been banned in Britain. The publication of an entirely new novel as obscene as *Tropic of Cancer* had the potential for the British authorities to pressure the French government into prosecuting the Obelisk Press.

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530 Ibid, 2.
531 Karl Shapiro, "The Greatest Living Author," in Henry Miller, *Tropic of Cancer* (New York: Grove Press, 1961), xxii.
532 Kahane, *Memoires*, 260.
533 Pearson, *Obelisk*, 439.

Publication of the novel was thus postponed until 1934. Once it was published, *Tropic of Cancer* was banned in the United States and Britain, and Miller himself was refused entry into England, where he was held in custody and deported to France.[534] *Tropic of Cancer* is critical to this thesis as its acceptance by the Obelisk Press marks a move on Kahane's part to publishing writing by unknown authors who could not find a home for their work in anglophone countries. Despite being published a year after *The Young and Evil*, Kahane had accepted the manuscript two years prior. The notoriety and prestige that *Tropic of Cancer* would accrue in the following decades would be utilised to help end the obscenity laws in the United States, helping to free homosexual novels for publication within anglophone countries. Chapter Six discusses the position that Grove Press's publication of Miller's novel would have in the liberation of obscene literature in general. However, more specifically, it details how the precedent set by *Tropic of Cancer's* censorship battle aided the liberation of Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* (1959) from the yoke of censorship. This battle against American censorship began with the publication of another novel in Paris, forming a continuum of literary transgression and rebellion which tied expatriate writing with the eventual liberation of homosexual literature.

However, it would take more than two decades for this to become a reality. The banning of *The Well* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in 1928 and 1929 loomed over the publishing ventures of the 1930s. As established, in Britain, literary merit was not an acceptable defence against obscenity, and this would remain so until the late 1950s. There would be no official change until the reforms of the 1959 Obscene Publications Act, which instilled the notion of "public good," which contributed to the defence of literature which is "in the interest of science, literature, art or

534 Shapiro, "The Greatest Living Author," x.

learning, or other objects of general concern."[535] As a result of this change, the courts were required to consider a work of literature as a whole. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was published in Britain in 1960 under this reformed act. The United States officially adopted the British "Hicklin Test," discussed in the Introduction, after *Rosen v. United States* in 1896. As a result, U.S. obscenity laws at a federal level were all but identical to those in Britain. However, in 1933, in *United States v. One Book Called Ulysses,* Judge Woolsey ignored the Hicklin rule, deciding that Joyce's work was not pornographic.[536] The precedent set by the *Ulysses* decision rendered the precedent of earlier court decisions obsolete. Novels were, after that, considered in their entirety. However, censorship in the United States remained just as pervasive as ever. In 1933, the same year as the *Ulysses* decision, American Customs Officials returned all shipped copies of *The Young and Evil,* which had been shipped from France.[537] As Chapter Six will argue, literature would not be fully liberated from notions of obscenity in the United States until 1965.

The Surreal Turn of *The Young and Evil*

Ford and Tyler's novel was firmly rejected by every publishing house they submitted it to in the United States, including Liveright and Cape and Gollancz. Horace Liveright's rejection blames the censorious publishing conditions of the day: "I read with infinite pleasure your brilliant novel, but I could not think of publishing it as a book – life is too short and the jails unsatisfactory."[538] Publishers anticipated the legal battle that would ensue upon the publication of *The Young and*

535 E. C. S Wade, "Obscene Publications Act, 1959," *Cambridge Law Journal* 17, no. 2 (1959): 179-182.
536 Sandi Towers-Romero, *Media and Entertainment Law* (New York: Cengage Learning, 2009), 35.
537 Pearson, *Obelisk,* 138.
538 Quoted in Steve Watson, "Introduction," Charles Henri Ford and Parker Tyler, *The Young and Evil* (New York: Masquerade Books, Inc., 1996), xviii

Evil. However, Ford found a patron in Gertrude Stein, who helped facilitate its publication with Kahane's press. Ford described himself as Stein's "last protégé, so to speak."[539] Through their patronage of writers and artists, the Stein family became critical to the success of both literary modernism and the visual avant-garde movements of Cubism and Impressionism. Gertrude and her brothers bought paintings by Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse, amongst others, and in doing so, Diana Souhami remarks that "unwittingly, Gertrude and Leo created a private museum of modern art."[540] This collection precipitated their Saturday night salon at the now-famous 27 *Rue de Fleurus*, which soon became populated by Gertrude's mentees. Alongside visual artists, Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald moved within this community, and Gertrude facilitated connections between writers and publishers. Her influence on the editing and direction of the modernist novel was thus immense in shaping modern culture. Like Stein, Ford moved to Paris because "nothing inspiring was happening in New York. Everything was Paris, so I picked up on Paris when that was the avant-garde."[541] The biggest draw of Paris, for Ford, was the avant-garde movements he viewed as "happening."[542] The movement he was inspired by the most was surrealism: "there was Cocteau, there was the surrealists. All that was prewar […] everything was happening in Paris."[543] Ford wanted to escape what he viewed as the cultural void of New York for the surrealist circles of Europe. Ford finished writing *The Young and Evil* while living with Djuna Barnes in Paris and soon became embedded in Stein's salon. Stein's admiration for the work and the existing English-language literary community set up at the turn of the century secured the novel's publication. Stein gave Ford's manuscript to her agent, William Bradley, who referred the

539 Bruce Wolmer and Charles Henri Ford, "Charles Henri Ford," *BOMB*, no. 18 (1987).
540 Dianna Souhami, *No Modernism Without Lesbians* (London: Head of Zeus, 2020), 496.
541 Wolmer and Ford, "Charles Henri Ford," 54.
542 Ibid.
543 Ibid.

novel to Jack Kahane.[544] Stein's name was also used in marketing the novel, with her seal of approval stamped on the novel's dust jacket: "*The Young and Evil* creates this generation as *This Side of Paradise* [1920] by [F. Scott] Fitzgerald created his generation. It is a good thing, whatever this generation is, to be the first to create it in a book."[545] More than just authenticating the novel for avant-garde circles, Stein's quote highlights the newness of the world found between its pages. The subcultural homosexual community had never been explored as candidly. In this regard, the novel ushered in a new generation of modernism, which presented homosexuality clearly, allowing homosexual characters to speak for themselves.

Steve Watson observes the characteristic that distinguishes Ford and Tyler's novel from the depiction of homosexuality that proceeds it, as seen in the previous chapters' discussions of Wilde, Proust, and Lawrence:

> While not the first American novel to present homosexual characters on its pages, it is the first American novel to take its characters' sexuality for granted. Imagine then, being confronted with a book whose characters take a lover as casually as they take a smoke.[546]

The "casual" nature of the sexual encounters in the novel underpins the broader depiction of a homosexual community, which breaks free from the moralistic inversion model. Where texts by Proust and Lawrence investigate homoerotic desire within the bounds of heterosexual opprobrium, repression and pathology, Ford and Tyler's characters are wholly disinterested in moral questions. This disinterest is encapsulated by a scene from "The Fight." Louis, Gabriel and Karel are in bed together:

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544 Neil Pearson, *Obelisk*, 384.

545 Charles Henri Ford and Parker Tyler, *The Young and Evil* (New York: Masquerade Books, Inc., 1996), cover page.

546 Watson, Steve, "Introduction," viii.

> Louis looked at Gabriel and caught at Karel's hand, putting it onto his chest under the sweater […] he kissed Louis. Louis urged him.
> Karel was enjoying the progress. It must be so now. It could be his way. So he was not completely responsive. He sat up I want a cigarette if you have one. Sure said Louis and produced one from a creased package. What about something to eat? Gabriel asked.[547]

The relationship between Louis and Karel is developing. Louis moves Karel's hand under his shirt and the pair embrace. In this passage, homosexual desire is recognised and then acted upon before the three characters begin smoking and discussing breakfast. Throughout *The Young and Evil*, characters discuss their love affairs and are depicted as being sexually intimate with one another. However, there is no longer any discussion of the degenerative aura of homosexuality that pervaded the novels of Wilde, Proust and Lawrence. Their love is viewed as natural, as Julian thought, looking at Gabriel: "a man cannot want a woman and a woman cannot want a man he thought not really. He thought so looking at Gabriel."[548] Joseph Allen Boone writes that "*The Young and Evil* uses the city setting to give fictional representation to an autonomous, insular universe in which homosexuality is the norm rather than the exception."[549] As Chapter One argued, geographical specificity and the usage of urban space was pivotal in Wilde's allusion to homosexuality and other forms of sexuality considered deviant. The mentioning of specific London streets and the utilisation of the sexual ambiguity of the East End enhanced the sexual nature of Dorian's sinful activity. Ford and Tyler continued the association between homosexual activity and urban enclaves through their own references to areas of New York known to be inhabited by homosexual communities. In doing so, Ford and Tyler depict the ever-changing relationships between a cast of "fairies" and "queers" as they visit each other's apartments, drink together in speakeasies, and attend community drag balls. All this occurs in Greenwich Village

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547 Ford and Tyler, *The Young and Evil*, 51.
548 Ibid, 124.
549 Joseph Allen Boone, *Libidinal Currents*: *Sexuality and the Shaping of Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1998), 251.

and Harlem, distinct gay neighbourhoods that Chauncey argues constituted "an immense gay world of overlapping social networks in the city's streets."[550] This is not to imply that *The Young and Evil* ignores homosexual persecution, as the police raid of the drag ball in "I Don't Want to be a Doll" and Karel and Gabriel's arrest during a disastrous cruising experience in "Cruise" attests. Moreover, by concentrating on the homosexual world and utilising the language of camp, as outlined in Chapters One and Two, Ford and Tyler reposition the marginal experience of a subculture into becoming the dominant culture of the novel's urban space. The novel formally disavows the notions of verisimilitude that underpin Proust and Lawrence's modernism through a surrealist fragmented narrative style. By doing so, the queerness of the narrative becomes inextricable from its narrative form.

The move toward the fragmentation of surrealist stylings that typified Ford and Tyler's novel would come to characterise both late and postmodernist homosexual novels. Ford and Tyler's project subverts the fierce heterosexuality of Bretonian surrealism in order to break from the verisimilitude of experience, liberating homosexual desire by focusing on "psychic automatism in its pure state."[551] As outlined in the Introduction, surrealist literature purported to express "the actual functioning of thought […] exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern," by attempting to merge the conscious and unconscious mind.[552] By producing surrealist imagery from the mind of their homosexual characters, Ford and Tyler reorient the heterosexually focused movement into a specifically homosexual desire. The ending of "I Don't Want to be a Doll" attempts to merge the

550 Chauncey, *Gay New York,* 2.
551 Breton, "First Manifesto of Surrealism," 87-88.
552 Ibid.

"conscious and unconscious mind" through depicting the fractured overlay of voices Julien heard at the ball alongside the surreality of his uninterrupted consciousness:

> I have the will to doll which is a special way of dolling up and then it may be the beginning of ego I think I would be practically nothing without my poetry unless a DOLL my homosexuality is just a habit to which I'm somehow bound which is little more than a habit in that it's not love or romance but a dim hard fetich I worship in my waking dreams it's more a symbol of power than a symbol of pleasure not a symbol inducing pleasure but exemplifying it not a specific symbol no I am not a fairy doll.
> On Third Street he used his key for the door. There was Karel in bed with one hand behind his neck.[553]

Through a passage of unpunctuated prose which apes the cadence of "psychic automatism," Julian's thoughts become the narrative as he ruminates on his sexuality. He views his same-sex desires with religious fervour, making his homosexual desire akin to the "worship" of an idol, his displaced desire for men acknowledged and accepted. Julien does not believe homosexuality "induces" pleasure, but rather, that pleasure is inherent to the very act of being. Julian transforms his homosexuality into an idol, and this idol comes to "exemplify" the pleasure he gets from his homosexuality. Removing notions of shame was a radical act, and this differentiates Ford and Tyler's novel from the homosexual novels of Wilde, Proust and Lawrence. Lack of shame is shown through casual references to love and sex between men:

> Karel was filled with a sense of power because of the willingness, even eagerness, of Louis to make their relationship not a one-way affair sexually […]
>
> [Julien] kissed Danny who had very white teeth and arms that closed around him. Danny wouldn't undress and he didn't want to have that done either but Julian was illicit and their lips were together so when it happened Julian's ears grew into wings.
>
> The audacity, the cussedness Karel thought as one had tried to hit him before that one sailor had his fly open the white showing […] Karl heard the policeman say fast thissailorsaidhefuckedhiminthemouthbuttheresnocomplaintsoitsdisorderlyconductforall.[554]

553 Ford and Tyler, *Young and Evil*, 170.
554 Ibid, 71, 141, 184.

Throughout *The Young and Evil*, there is a continual unambiguous reference to homosexual relations where the reader is made pertinently aware of their sexual nature. Karel's "eagerness" in his "sexual affair" with Louis and Julien and Danny's "lips being together" as they embraced reflects this overt depiction of same-sex desire.

As Chapter Two shows, Proust's narrator holds moral distance from homosexuality by interpreting the condition for the reader, his novel becoming a didactic deconstruction of the *nature* of sexuality through the many subjects that he comes across. Proust depicts homosexuality through the language of decadence to consider the effect burgeoning notions of sexology were having on society. However, homosexual figures in *A la recherche* never truly speak for themselves: "[Charlus] refused to see that nineteen hundred years later, all everyday homosexuality had disappeared, and all that survives and multiplies is the involuntary kind, the nervous disease, the kind that one hides from others and disguises from oneself."[555] Every instance of homosexuality, every theory on the matter, is mediated to the reader through the heterosexuality of the narrator. Overhearing a scene of sadomasochistic sex, the narrator believes "a terrible crime was about to be committed unless somebody arrived in time to reveal it."[556] However, it is the narrator himself who reveals what he hears: "I thought I heard stifled moans. I walked quickly in their direction and placed my ear to the door. 'I beg you, mercy, mercy, have pity, untie me, don't hit me so hard, said a voice. I'll crawl, I'll kiss your feet, I shan't do it again. Have pity."[557] The reader is offered a voyeuristic moral denouncement of the downfall of a once-great aristocrat through the consciousness of an onlooker. Lawrence's novel *Women in Love* also embodies the struggle in the

555 Ibid, 187.
556 Proust, *Finding Time Again*, 123.
557 Ibid.

representation of homosexual voices, his reticent and evasive metaphorical depiction of repression becoming, as Chapter Three argues, the language of the closet. Lawrence writes of Gerald and Birkin's deep attraction to each other and the love both men held, yet his novel is pervaded by the "strange silence between them, and a strange tension of hostility. They always kept a gap, a distance between them, they wanted always to be free each of the other. Yet there was a curious heart-straining towards each other."[558] The repression of the men's desire for one another is subsumed into the language Lawrence had access to in depicting it. The penetrative aura of the Japanese wrestling made physical the pledge of *Blutbruderschaft*, which constituted the men's spiritual and sexual union, allowing Lawrence to unite Gerald and Birkin in physical love without the obscenity that the language of homosexuality would have caused.[559]

As Heather Love argues: "since the classic period of aesthetic modernism coincides with the emergence of modern sexual identities, there is a historical fit between the two terms," modernism and queer.[560] As a result, the "outsider glamour of *queer"* is intrinsically linked to the formal experimentations of modernism, such as the depiction of inner consciousness. This is a result of the integration of new and unstable sexual identities into the representations of human experience at the exact moment they were being formulated.[561] Ford and Tyler's embrace of the 'psychic automatism in its pure state" of Bretonian surrealism integrated the exploration of a "queer consciousness" with the modernist novel.[562] This overlapping of Julian's consciousness occurs in "I Don't Want to be a Doll," working as the precise, systematic challenge that Heather

558 Lawrence, *Women in Love*, 100.
559 Ibid, 212, 282.
560 Heather Love, "Modernism at Night," *PMLA*, 124, no. 3 (2009): 745.
561 Ibid.
562 Breton, "First Manifesto of Surrealism," 87-88.

Love mentions in its portrayal of frank discussions of homoerotic desire. This chapter begins with a conventional description of the drag ball attended by Julian before descending into a fragmented blurring of Julian's thoughts and the snatches of conversation he hears as he passes through, with unpunctuated and unattributed speech blending into one another:

> needed seven yards of lace
> curtain six of the finest rats jumped
> out spoke to me said it was a good racket I should keep it up I was good at it he held my arm my dear as we walked back after I had petrified four or five males who walked into the tea-room two standing before the urinal dying to and yet so embarrassed waiting for my permission to pull their things out and another said standing still on entering my leg being strung across the wash basin blind as a bat
> screaming for the
> daylight excuse me for putting this bromide
> in pink curlpapers take them off in the
> morning did not shit Miss Bitch though she's here […][563]

As Julian makes his way through the crowded ball, snatches of conversation he overhears as he passes people interweave with his thoughts, and the narration becomes fragmented and nonsensical. This extract begins with a discussion of "lace curtains" and, through an unpunctuated sprawl of prose, shifts to an anecdote about bathroom cruising: "I had petrified four or five males who walked into the tea-room two standing before the urinal." The unnamed voice specifies that the men were "waiting for my permission to pull their things out" before the conversation immediately shifts to "pink curlpapers." This shift occurs within the very same line with no warning, the disjointed narration rendering the scene with a chaotic and dreamlike quality of the unconscious mind: "blind as a bat screaming for the daylight [/] excuse me for putting this bromide in pink curlpapers." Homoerotic sexuality is imbedded into the narration of the passage yet masked by the dense, overlapping conflation of voices and "cuttings-off" mid-sentence of the surrealist prose. In an interview with Bruce Wolmer, Ford defines his avant-garde "surrealist mission" as

563 Ford and Tyler, *The Young and Evil*, 160.

"tapping the unconscious, the irrational, the incongruous and the nonsensical."[564] The incongruous and often nonsensical stream of text which makes up the drag ball functions as an automatic writing which is not connected into a logical sequence. Nevertheless, within this collection of disparate sentences, Ford and Tyler intersperse conversation of a homoerotic and sexual nature.

Joseph Allen Boone states that "modernist writing, of course, is nothing if not a self-conscious performance of style, of textual inscriptions that – like the coded gay body – simultaneously flaunt and conceal 'meaning' in a masquerade of allusion and self-referentiality."[565] The linking of the "coded gay body" with Ford and Tyler's modernist surreal form underpins the structuring of *The Young and Evil* as a depiction in language of the coded gay experience of characters in New York. As Wilde and Proust utilised coding to make same-sex desire legible for those who know how to read the signs, Ford and Tyler's novel is written in camp language that brings homosexuality to the forefront. Sam See argues that *The Young and Evil's* "queerness undergirds its most consummately modernist ambitions: to renovate myth for modern purposes and to create folklore for a burgeoning ethnic community."[566] See locates this creation of folklore within the novel's very first sentence, analysing the use of gay argot and its intertwinement with the language of existing cultural narratives:

> Well said the wolf to little red riding hood no sooner was Karel seated in the Round Table than the impossible happened. There before him stood a fairy prince and one of those mythological creatures known as Lesbians. Won't you join our table? They said in sweet chorus. When he saw the most delightful little tea-pot and a lot of smiling happy faces.[567]

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564 Wolmer and Ford, "Charles Henri Ford," 54.
565 Boone, *Libidinal Currents,* 210.
566 Sam See, "Making Modernism New: Queer Mythology in *The Young and Evil*," *ELH* 76, no. 4 (2009): 1074.
567 Ford and Tyler, *The Young and Evil,* 11.

As See unpacks, Ford and Tyler structured the language of mythmaking and fairy tale around queer aims. The opening sentences reference Little Red Riding Hood, the Arthurian legend, Greek Chorus, and mythology. These allusions work to mask a society of queer inhabitants for the uninitiated by utilising the language of folklore to represent homosexual language. The Roundtable is a speakeasy, the wolf is not the one from legend but represents a sub-identity of homosexual men in the 1920s, and the "tea-pot" is a veiled reference to prohibited alcohol. As Karel gets drunker, he sees a "bullfrog beckoning to him," recites a poem for some "naiads and a satyr," is shouted at by "the big black bear" who owns the cafeteria and is "accosted by an ogre."[568] This language works to create a world in which the mythological blurs with the real opening space for the liberation of a homosexual milieu. This use of fairy tale imagery is surrealist as the language frees readers from rationality and the constraints of verisimilitude, allowing them to explore the impossible through illogical fantasy.

This language use links the homosexual experience of the characters explicitly with the modernist techniques used to depict it. As Howard argues, "*The Young and Evil* clears room for constructing an important camp aesthetic, one that gives voice to hitherto marginalised 'others' and this is conducive to the articulation of polymorphous, queer desire in modernist literature."[569] Through the modernist depiction of consciousness presented in a collection of fractured surrealist images, such as those taken from folklore, *The Young and Evil* conveys a "camp aesthetic" uninterested in the moral or pathological questions that preoccupied their literary forbears. Although a pejorative stereotype characterised homosexuality in the 1930s as evidence of a male's

568 Ibid, 12, 13.

569 Alexander Howard, "Camp, Modernism, and Charles Henri Ford," *Modernism/modernity* 23, no. 1 (2016): 13.

true "womanlike character," Chauncey argues that for many homosexual men, "adopting effeminate mannerisms represented a deliberate cultural strategy, as well as a way of making sense of their sexual difference. It was a way to declare a gay identity publicly and to negotiate their relationship with other men."[570] This adoption of effeminate mannerisms is integral to constructing camp aesthetics and plays out in Julian's first meeting with Karel on the pier. Up until this time, Julian has only known Karel through letters:

> Julien raised his big blue eyes from the telephone directory on the slanting shelf outside the booth on Pier 36 and saw a slightly orange face containing eyes with holes in them […] he knew that this was Karel. For one thing he expected eyelashes made up with mascara.[571]

Karel has adorned himself in effeminate signifiers through wearing makeup and, by doing so, was declaring publicly his homosexual identity. Moe Meyer argues that this adoption of effeminate styling in the aftermath of the Wilde trials as a creation of homosexual aesthetics is the crux of the philosophy of camp, which aesthetically had grown out of the aesthetic of decadence. Meyer writes that camp is "the total body of performative practices and strategies used to exact a queer identity."[572]

Meyer's characterisation of camp as a set of "performative practices" evokes Judith Butler's theory of the performativity of gender. Butler theorises that "gender is the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being."[573] Gender is reinforced by a series of repetitive performative acts which are shaped by societal expectations. These actions themselves are not mere expressions of gender; instead, they come to constitute

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570 Chauncey, *Gay New York,* 56.
571 Ford and Tyler, *Young and Evil,* 15.
572 Moe Meyer, *The Politics and Poetics of Camp* (London: Routledge, 1994), 4.
573 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 35.

gender, which thus has no "interior truth."[574] Butler argues that "where there is an 'I' who utters or speaks and thereby produces an effect in discourse, there is first a discourse which precedes and enables that 'I' and forms in language the constraining trajectory of its will."[575] Butler suggests there is no inherent gender essence behind its cultural inscription, that gender performativity is cited on the cultural understandings of sex and their expectations. In doing so, she posits that gender identity is produced by discourse as "the 'I' only comes into being through being called, named."[576] In short: "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender […] identity is performatively constituted by the very expressions that are said to be its results."[577] Butler then suggests that subverting this gendered dynamic is the way towards liberation, where performativity lends itself to the possibility of subversion: "gender really is performative, which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed […] subversive bodily acts, in their exaggeration, expose the illusion of the natural and mock the expressive model of gender."[578] In this regard, Ford and Tyler's camp expressions of effeminacy expose the construction of a strictly gendered dynamic that oppressed expressions of homosexuality. Marsha Bryant and Douglas Mao argue that "doing camp means *over*doing it, pushing the limits of good taste, soliciting a verdict of outrageousness," the judgements of which "often hinge on how gender is constructed or construed," echoing Butler's notion of parodic exaggeration."[579] Notions of camp are therefore seen to be explicitly tied to the gendered performance of homosexual men and the self-conscious stylings of a decadent sensibility which has surpassed the pathological fears of moral degeneration.

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574 Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 171.
575 Ibid.
576 Ibid.
577 Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 25.
578 Ibid.
579 Marsha Bryant and Douglas Mao, "Camp Modernism Introduction," *Modernism/modernity* 23, no. 1 (2016): 1.

When Karel and Frederick attend the Harlem Drag Ball, they interact with Tony:

> He had on a black satin that Vincent had made him, fitted to the knee and then flaring, long pearls and pearl drops.
> Tony dear aren't you overdressed! Asked Frederick.
> I suppose *you* would say overdressed Tony answered but I'm not Sheba surrounded by food and Mary what you look like in that outfit he said to Julian.[580]

Here, Frederick, who did not attend in drag, points to the over-the-top "outrageousness" Bryant and Mao cite as the main characteristic of camp aesthetics by asking if Tony was overdressed, pointing to the ostentatiousness of his pearls. Through inverting gendered language by referring to males as "her" because of the adoption of a dress or makeup, camp seeps into the very language of homosexual encounters. Vincent, "who had large eyes with a sex-life all their own and claimed to be the hardest-boiled queen on Broadway," enacts a homosexual identity precisely through this language.[581] Throughout *The Young and Evil,* homosexuality becomes attached to the instability of gender performance. As Scott Nelson argues: "the cultural and historic forces that shape homosexual identity and the discursive practices that define homosexual textuality shift continually."[582] Within *The Young and Evil,* the discursive practices that define homosexual textuality have shifted away from a first-generation modernist rendering of homosexual identity through pathological essentialism to explore the instability of identity categorisation. Schaffner, writing on modernism in general, argues:

> Although the modernists are still partly under the spell of the 'perversion' paradigm they played a pivotal role in the depathologisation of deviant sexualities, each writer in his own manner paving the way for a broader cultural acceptance of sexual difference. In this respect they both anticipated and pioneered conceptions that were developed further in queer theory, which advocated the potential of deviant sexualities to challenge binaries and subvert hetero-normative standards.[583]

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580 Ford and Tyler, *The Young and Evil,* 153.
581 Ibid.
582 Scott Nelson, "The Textual Construction of Homosexuality in E. M. Forster's Novels," *Style* 26, no. 2 (1992): 325.
583 Schaffner, *Modernism and Perversion,* 25.

The unravelling of what Butler terms "essentialist" conceptions of gender in *The Young and Evil* represents a "pivotal" event in the timeline of homosexual textual production and the theorisation of homosexuality in social and cultural history. In the chapter "Love and Jump Back," Ford and Tyler present queerness as an adoptable aesthetic and a continual process of living:

> It was sad to Frederick as it was to Julian to see that Karel's appearance was not what it used to be. But Karel was thinking of Louis turning queer so beautifully and gradually and beautifully like a chameleon like a chameleon beautifully and gradually turning."[584]

Rather than a pathological deviation, queerness is characterised as a way of life adopted by the transplants who move to Greenwich Village to live relatively freely within the cultural bounds of American homophobia. Queerness becomes something one can "turn" toward, and this turning is a thing of beauty. This queer turning is remarked upon through the repetitive use of the words "beautifully," "gradually," and "chameleon." This repetition imbues the narrative with a surreal element, as the sentence structure is made strange and irregular, mimicking a non-linear and repetitive thought process in the style of free-form association. The homosexual content of the novel is thus deployed through a queer stylising of modernist prose.

This "turning" is heavily interconnected with the aesthetic rendering of non-normative sexual desire linked to the visual language of camp. During the Drag Ball:

> Frederick was not made up more than usual except his eyebrows were plucked thinner but Julian had on his face the darkest powder he could borrow, blue eyeshadow and several applications of black mascara; on his lips was orange-red rouge and a brown pencil had been on his eyebrows showing them longer.[585]

Julian attends the ball in drag, as do the rest of the attendees, to signify their belonging to an underground community of homosexuals. This feminised aesthetic and the use of makeup became

584 Ford and Tyler, *The Young and Evil*, 124.
585 Ibid, 151.

a visual language for homosexual men to identify with each other. While getting ready for the ball, Frederick remarks, "I hope we don't get arrested tonight."[586] Here, the camp aesthetics of femininity and queerness are linked to Schaffner's notion of "the potential of deviant sexualities to challenge binaries and subvert hetero-normative standards," as gender presentation was thought to be inextricably linked with deviant sexual activity and rigidly policed by the authorities.[587] Frederick's fear of the authorities illuminates the subversive nature of the drag ball and the danger inherent to the performativity of incorrect gender expressions for men. The narrator thus describes: "the dancefloor was a scene whose celestial flavour and cerulean colouring no angelic painter or nectarish poet has ever conceived. This place is neither cosy nor safe Frederick said. It's lit up like high mass."[588] Frederick highlights the cultural danger represented by the subversive events of the ball as it is described as a space ushering in a new way of life. The "scene" has never been conceived before in artistic representations of culture precisely as the transgressive nature of the ball is ushering in a counterculture which subverts the traditional hierarchy of American society. Being "lit up like high mass," this new culture has the fervour of a new religion. This policing of deviant gender expression is further elucidated in the chapter "Cruise." After being attacked by sailors while cruising, Julian and Frederick are taken along with the sailors to the police station, where Karel pre-emptively "had his handkerchief out, spitting on it and wiping off the mascara."[589] Karel removes the mascara as a signifier of sexual deviance, which would incriminate him as soliciting a homosexual encounter. They were all arrested for "disorderly conduct" and searched: "contents of Karel's pockets: one black makeup pencil (with protector), comb, key, money, all

586 Ibid.
587 Schaffner, *Modernism and Perversion*, 25.
588 Ford and Tyler, *The Young and Evil*, 152.
589 Ibid, 183.

returned but makeup pencil and Karel thought I'll have to buy a new one."[590] The article of subversion is confiscated from Karel, becoming a pertinent image of the social control enacted through the suppression of homosexual activity in the 1920s and 1930s.

The frank homosexuality of *The Young and Evil* initially caused Kahane to worry about the lack of profits that would derive from such a formally radically and potentially offensive novel, even within the relaxed culture of Paris publishing.[591] Neil Pearson argues that "the complete absence of editorial moralising is *The Young and Evil's* most revolutionary attribute, and gave Kahane his biggest headache […] the characters wear makeup and women's clothes, they have sex with strangers, they sleep three to a bed – and they're *happy*."[592] As a result of this "absence" of "moralising," the novel did not reach English-language markets. Steve Watson notes that after publication, "British customs seized and burnt 500 copies," and "American customs turned back the shipments that made it to American shores."[593] The novel was not made fully available in the United States until 1975.

Conclusion

Paris holds a vital place in the production of modernism, not only as a joining space for British, American, and French modernists to meet and produce radical work but also for facilitating the existence of subversive English-language novels. Despite the reticence of publishers toward the

590 Ibid, 184.
591 Neil Pearson's research on the Obelisk Press highlights this fear in the correspondence between Kahane and Ford during contract negotiations. Pearson cites letters between author, publisher and agent held in archives: Pearson, *Obelisk*, 383-5.
592 Ibid, 385.
593 Watson, Steve, "Introduction," 25.

publication of homosexually charged novels, initiatives such as the Obelisk Press championed sexually subversive texts such as *The Well* and *The Young and Evil*, allowing them to be discovered and read by the public. *The Young and Evil* is ostensibly American, yet is written utilising the stylistic innovations of the French Surrealists. The following chapter will argue that the fantasy and erotic elements afforded by surrealism were utilised by queer novelists to carve out space for the homosexual within the modernist novel. This is because homosexual authors such as Ford, Tyler and, subsequently Genet, drew on the movement for their own artistic ends. In this regard, *The Young and Evil* is pivotal in liberating a figure too often silenced and derided in literary representation.

Jean Genet Poised at the End of Modernism

I would like the word not to change so that I can be against the world.[594]

- *Jean Genet, Gay Sunshine Interviews*

Michael Warner's *Fear of a Queer Planet* (1993) opens by asking: "what do queers want?"[595] In posing this question, Warner attempts to answer the issue of the "context [in which] queers have political interests, *as queers."*[596] In 1956 Genet gave an interview in which he defined his conception of the queer, outlining his understanding of the political stance of homosexuality:

> What is a queer? A man who, by his nature, opposes himself to the way of the world, who refuses to enter into the system by which the world is organised. The queer refuses this, negates this, unsettles this […] if the queer consents more or less to play a role in this comedy, like Proust or Gide, he deceives, he lies; everything he says becomes suspect. My imagination is plunged into abjection, but, on this point, it is noble, it is pure. I refuse to pretend.[597]

Genet's definition of queer anticipates the subsequent definition posed by David Halperin, who designates "queer" as a "positionality" that "acquires its meaning from its oppositional relation to the norm" – with the norm in this case referring to hetero-patriarchal power structures.[598] Genet cites two of his French homosexual literary predecessors – Proust and Gide – as "consenting" to the way of the world through the reticence of their writing and, by doing so, lying about their queer nature. Heather Love writes of queer studies "attempt to counter stigma by incorporating it," and this is a sentiment which illuminates Genet's artistic ethos.[599] In defence of his community, the

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[594] Jean Genet, "Interview with Hubert Fichte," in *Gay Sunshine Interviews*, ed. Winston Leyland (San Francisco: Gay Sunshine, 2004), 79.

[595] Michael Warner, *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 12.

[596] Ibid, 14.

[597] Robert Poulet, "Jean Genet: Fouillez l'ordure," *Bulletin de Paris*, no. 145 (1956): 10. My translation.

[598] David Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 65.

[599] Heather Love, *Feeling Backwards: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009), 2.

narrator of Genet's first novel, *Notre Dame des fleurs* (*Our Lady of the Flowers* 1942), addresses a heterosexual audience that lives outside of the homosexual milieu: "our domestic life and the law of our homes do not resemble your homes. We love each other without love. Our homes do not have the sacramental character. Fags are the great immoralists."[600] Alongside making an intertextual reference to Gide's novel *L'Immoraliste* (1902), Genet disavows stigma by accepting the concept of immorality with pride.

Genet's champion, Jean-Paul Sartre, noted a stark difference between Proust's homosexual world and Genets. He writes that Proust:

> Does not let us hear the voice of the guilty man himself, that sensual, disturbing voice which seduces the young men, that breathless voice which murmurs with pleasure, that vulgar voice that describes a night of love. The homosexual must remain an object, a flower, an insect, an inhabitant of Sodom […] anything you like except my fellow man, except my image, except myself.[601]

In contrast to Genet, Proust utilised the figure of the homosexual as a case study in perversion, with his narrator analysing Charlus and his kind through the lens of scientific and religious understandings of inversion. Sartre continues:

> Genet refuses to be a pebble; he never sides with the public prosecutor; he never speaks to us *about* the homosexual, *about* the thief, but always *as* a thief and *as* a homosexual. His voice is one of those that we wanted never to hear; it is not meant for analysing disturbance but for communicating it.[602]

Proust's novel presents an analysis of the homosexual condition from an outside observer, however, this is not the case with Genet, who speaks "*as"* and not "about." Instead, Genet's unapologetic eroticism disrupts analysis through speaking in the voice of one of society's most

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600 Jean Genet, *Our Lady of the Flowers* (London: Faber & Faber, 2019), 100, 120.

601 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Saint Genet: Actor and Martyr* (New York: Plume, The New American Library, 1963), 587.

602 Ibid.

controversial and despised figures. Genet produces a novel centring on the erotic fantasies of his narrator, who imagines sexual encounters that satisfy his masturbation: "my stiff penis is caught in my underpants; it is freed by the touch of my hand, strikes against the sheet, and forms a little mound. Darling! Divine! And I am alone here. It is Darling whom I cherish most."[603] The narrator speaks about homosexuality in words that evoke pleasure to satisfy his erotic desire, "communicating" the very "disturbance" that Sartre believes the homosexual identity produces in society.

Considering this, *Our Lady's* commitment to explicit homosexuality becomes a form of activism which Genet intended to unleash on "unsuspecting minds."[604] In an interview with Madeleine Gobeil, Genet made clear his intentions for publishing *Our Lady* and the disappointment he had in its initial mode of private publication:

> My dream would have been to have been in cahoots with a publisher who would have brought it out under plain wrappers in a very limited edition of three or four hundred. The book would have made its way into unsuspecting minds. Unfortunately, it wasn't possible. It had to go unsuspecting to a real publisher who sold it to homosexuals and writers […] I would have liked for my book to fall into the hands of Catholic bankers, or policemen, or concierges, people like that.[605]

Genet wanted his novel to be deployed as an assault on the very "unsuspecting" French society he felt excluded him as a result of his homosexuality. Writing "obscene" material with the intention or "tendency to deprave and corrupt" the minds of those "whose hands a publication of this sort may fall" was the British definition of an obscene publication and precisely what Genet wanted to

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603 Genet, *Our Lady*, 109.

604 Jean Genet interviewed for *Playboy* by Madeleine Gobeil reprinted in Jean Genet and Edmund White, *The Select Writings of Jean Genet* (New Jersey: Ecco Press, 1993), 453.

605 Ibid.

accomplish in getting his novel read by "catholic bankers" or "policemen."[606] Through giving the homosexual a voice in the same way as Ford and Tyler, Genet broke away from the strained dichotomy of affirmation and conservative repression that characterised modernist depictions of homosexuality outlined in the previous chapters on Proust and Lawrence. If Proust represents first generation modernism's systematic analysis of homosexuality-as-identity, which resulted from the decadent period, and Lawrence represents the repression and rejection of such a dangerous category, Genet's novels, much like *The Young and Evil,* discard these concerns altogether. As argued in Chapter Two, the view of homosexuality in Proust's work is always mediated to the reader through the heterosexuality of the narrator; in this way, Proust's homosexuals never truly "speak." In contrast, Christopher Robinson argues that "Genet had broken out of the apologetic mode; he had challenged his readers by presenting homosexuality not even as a simple fact of existence but as a source of pleasure equal in value and status to heterosexuality."[607] As in *The Young and Evil,* Genet allows the representation of homosexuality to be mediated through the voice of a homosexual narrator. Pascal Gaitet argues that Genet has written "what is surely one of the campiest of narratives."[608] Through compiling a fractured, surrealist account of his functioning imagination, Genet moved away from the modernist dedication to representing reality through the realism of conscious experience. In doing so, Genet's work joins Ford and Tyler's in the surrealist turn taken by the homosexual novel. This surrealist aesthetic merged with a commitment to the depiction of homosexual *ressentiment,* presenting a turning point in the taxonomy of the homosexual novel.

606 J. E. Hall Williams "Obscenity in Modern English Law," *Law and Contemporary Problems* 20, no. 4. (1955): 632.
607 Robinson, *Scandal in the Ink,* 57.
608 Pascal Gaitet, "The Politics of Camp in Jean Genet's 'Our Lady of the Flowers,' *L'Esprit Créateur* 35, no. 1 (1995): 40.

Homosexual *Ressentiment* as a Parodic Integration of Decadence

Discussing the 1983 text – "Four Hours in Shatila" – Genet declares:

> Obviously, I am drawn to peoples in revolt. And this is very natural for me, because I myself have the need to call the entire society into question […] I have been crushed by the concept of France. So it is natural that I have responded to people who are rebelling and who asked for my support.[609]

While Genet's activism attached itself to organised political organisations from the 1960s onwards, his fiction writing from 1942 to 1949 expressed the same commitment to "revolt." Fredric Jameson explains in *The Political Unconscious* (1981) that literature which professes to be apolitical nevertheless "produces ideology" as "the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal 'solutions' to unresolvable social contradictions."[610] Genet's novels become political as his *ressentiment* towards France "produced ideology," which challenged the heterosexual status quo, with the rejection of France becoming the solution to his social alienation. Genet began writing his novel while incarcerated in Fresnes Prison and defines all his writing as a form of *ressentiment.* Nietzsche argued that all moral values are born out of the conditions of *ressentiment.* For Nietzsche, this emotional condition represented a *"*repressed priestly vengefulness" directed at the system the man of *ressentiment* believed to be subjugating him.[611] The prime example of *ressentiment* revolves around a "master" and "slave" dynamic in which the enslaved peoples reverse the value system which upholds their enslavement in "an act of the *most spiritual revenge*," freeing themselves from a moral system which validates their oppression.[612] Genet's novel follows this

609 Jean Genet, Layla Shahid Barrada and Ruediger Wischenbart, "Affirmation of Existence Through Rebellion," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 16, no. 2 (1987): 67-69.
610 Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1981), 79.
611 Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 33.
612 Ibid.

Nietzschean dynamic in which the *ressentiment* he feels because of his outcast status reverses the very French-Catholic value system which oppresses him as a result of his homosexuality. Genet gestures to this in his conversation with *Playboy*:

> *Ressentiment* is something I still have a bit towards society, but less and less, and I hope eventually not to have any at all. But when I wrote [his definition of poetry], I was still caught up in *ressentiment*, and poetry consisted of transforming seemingly vile materials into noble-seeming materials and this with the help of language. Today the problem is different. *You* don't interest me any more as an enemy. Ten or fifteen years ago I was against you. Now I am neither for you nor against you.[613]

Genet admits that during his novel writing years he viewed heterosexuals of general French society as the "enemy," resenting the social institutions which designated him as other. Through transforming aspects of his identity which precipitated social rejection – his homosexuality, his status as state-ward, his criminality, his vagrancy – from "vile" into "noble" through art and language, Genet's *ressentiment* produced a solution to his stigmatisation.

This *ressentiment* underpins *Pompes funèbres'* (Funeral Rites, 1948) celebration and eroticisation of a militia boy, Riton, who betrays France in his aid of the German occupation of Paris.[614] Gaitet points out that Genet "was certainly no more an active collaborator than he was a member of the resistance […] he spent the war years in and out of prison."[615] However, his hatred of France was rendered as an erotic identification with their enemy. The narrator describes Riton's feelings towards his country:

> The awareness, in the midst of that infernal solitude, of what that solitude had made of him – a barbaric divinity of all-out war looking down at the city it condemns – filled him with

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613 Genet, *Playboy*, 452.

614 This novel was written in response to the death of Genet's lover, Jean Decarnin, by the *Milice Français* in WW2.

615 Pascal Gaitet, "Sleeping with the Enemy: Jean Genet's Erotic Reconfiguration of the Occupation," *SubStance* 27, no. 3 (1998): 76.

> an evil joy, the joy of being joyous and handsome in a desperate situation which he had evilly got himself into, out of hatred for France (which he rightly confused with society).[616]

Riton is filled with "joy" at the thought of the "condemnation" of Paris, fuelled by his hatred of French society. Genet's narrator identifies with Riton's hatred: "I have the soul of Riton," outlining that "one day, when I saw German soldiers firing at Frenchmen from behind a parapet, I was suddenly ashamed of not being with the former, shouldering my rifle, and dying at their side."[617] Reflecting on this novel in 1976, Genet explained that as an orphaned child, he was deemed "foreign" by the other children of his village and, from that moment on, felt rejected by his country. In response, Genet turned this rejection into hate: "French society was injured, and I could only love the one who had dealt such a severe blow."[618] Similarly, when the narrator of *Journal du voleur* (*The Thief's Journal*, 1949) is asked to return to France by his lover, he thinks, "[Salvador] did not understand my loathing – no my hatred – of France."[619] As a result, Genet's narratives produced an ideological backlash to the country whose values hold no place for him. Genet attributes this kinship with oppressed groups of people to his sexual identity: "homosexuality, since it places the homosexual outside the law, obliges him to question social values," where Genet's total rejection of society exposes a desire for social reformation.[620] In this regard, Genet's work throughout the 1940s represents a new phase of the homosexual novel; his first novel, *Our Lady*, embodies one of the most explicit depictions of male same-sex desire in the twentieth century.

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616 Jean Genet, *Funeral Rites* (New York: Grove Press, 1970),
617 Ibid, 116.
618 Jean Genet and Hubert Fichte, *Dialogues* (Paris: Editions de Cent Pages, 1976), 16.
619 Jean Genet, *The Thief's Journal* (London: Faber & Faber, 2019), 27.
620 Genet and Gobeil, *Playboy*, 452.

While the novels of Genet represent another turning point in the trajectory of the homosexual novel, marking a break with the language of the closet, the influence of decadence on Genet is unmistakable. There are echoes of the criminality of Dorian Gray in Genet's works, which inscribe a now 50-year tradition into the figure of the homosexual. Decadent artists such as Beardsley, Wilde and Huysmans glorified the perverse, emphasising the grotesque, the criminal and the erotic in their response to modernity. As Wilde writes of Dorian: "there were moments when he looked on evil simply as a mode through which he could realise his conception of the beautiful."[621] Wilde inverts accepted notions of morality; evil becomes beautiful, and hedonistic sin becomes the new morality in the fight against "uncomely puritanism."[622] However, while Wilde and his contemporaries argue that this glorification is purely aesthetic as "art never expresses anything but itself," Genet's glorification comes from his *ressentiment* and thus becomes politically charged.[623] While Edmund White has acknowledged that Genet "takes liberties with the facts" in mythologising his life, White maintains that Genet's novels are "presented" as "autobiographical," through covering "the major periods of his life."[624] Genet's novel *The Thief's Journal* is his most explicitly autobiographical. Although it changes specific facts about his existence to further the poetic legend of the down-and-out writer, the emotional sentiment it conveys can be considered part of his aesthetic philosophy. *The Thief's Journal* states that "abandoned by my family, I already felt it was natural to aggravate this condition by a preference for boys, and this preference by theft, and theft by crime […] I thus resolutely rejected a world which had rejected me."[625] Genet's dissenting attitude to bourgeois French values comes from his

621 Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*,107.
622 Ibid, 95.
623 Oscar Wilde, *The Decay of Lying* (London: Penguin, 2020), 43.
624 Edmund White, "Introduction," in *The Select Writings of Jean Genet*, ed. Edmund White (New Jersey: Ecco Press, 1993), xii.
625 Genet, *The Thief's Journal*, 71.

social rejection. This rejection grew into a hatred for the country, which, since the conditions of his birth, relegated him to the margins. Aggravating the condition of abandonment by identifying with the most maligned figures – the thief and the homosexual – *The Thief's Journal* expands on this psychology, which allowed Genet to "survive my desolation:"

> With each charge lodged against me, no matter how unfair, in my heart of hearts I answered yes. Scarcely had I muttered this word – or a phrase that meant the same thing – that I felt within myself the need to become what I'd been accused of being. I was sixteen years old. I'd been understood: in my heart I'd maintained not a single corner where I could preserve the feeling I was innocent. I recognised that I was the coward, the traitor, the thief, the faggot that they saw in me […] I was stunned to know that I was made up of such filth. I became abject. Slowly, I grew accustomed to this condition. I admitted it with tranquillity.[626]

Beginning as a ward of the state, Genet consistently existed on the periphery, his very existence a reminder of his status as other. Genet absorbed the vitriol levied at him by a social order he had no place in and decided to "become" the criminal he was "accused of being." Jean-Paul Sartre uses Genet's life as the prime case study in his theory of existentialism, which attributes this "choice" Genet made of "becoming what [he had] been accused of being" to his homosexuality and criminality.

Genet uses this conception of "becoming abject" as the basis of his artistic work, inverting the morality of his literary characters. As homosexuality is seen as immoral, Genet raises the criminal to the position of a saint, utilising the language of an oppressive Catholicism to affirm homosexuality. The narrator begins *Our Lady* by compiling a list of known criminals in France: "Maurice Pilorge killed his lover, Escudero, to rob him of something under a thousand francs […] A young ensign, still a child, committed treason for treason's sake: he was shot. And it is in honour

626 Ibid, 198.

of their crimes that I am writing my book."[627] The narrator "paste[s] on the wall" images of criminals he cuts out of the newspaper, suggesting they "will fall from the wall onto my pages like dead leaves to fertilise my tale."[628] However, to be pasted on the narrator's wall, physical signs of the criminal must be visible: "if I have nailed him to my wall, it was because, as I see it, he had the sacred sign of the monster at the corner of his mouth or the angle of the eyelids."[629] Joanna Grant writes that references such as these "to the tell-tale signs of moral decay written on the body and discernible by those in the know hearken back to Lombroso's work on the criminal, whose bad blood creates evolutionary throwbacks."[630] Cesare Lombroso was the foremost nineteenth-century criminologist whose work pioneered the concept of physiognomy as it pertained to degeneration theory. As Grant makes clear, Genet's appropriation of decadence finds its basis in degenerative theories of the legibility of the criminal type.

However, in Genet's parodic reinterpretation, the novel creates a social enclave that removes French society's moral structuring and, by doing so, inverts the very language that represents it: sin becomes good, and criminals become saints. Ford and Tyler create a similar enclave in their depiction of the homosexual milieu of Greenwich Village. Through this isolated representation, both novels imagine a cityscape where homosexuals are the norm. Divine is described as drinking water "as it would be drunk, if he drank it, by the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove."[631] The narrator tells the reader that "unlike most saints, Divine had knowledge of it," and in professing her desire and adoration for Our Lady, Mimosa swallows a photograph of him

627 Ibid, 61.
628 Ibid, 66.
629 Ibid, 65.
630 Joanna Grant, "Sexology Makes the Scene: Writing the Modernist Gay Bar," *English Language Notes* 45, no. 2 (2007): 118.
631 Genet, *Our Lady*, 94.

declaring, "I'm communioning her."[632] Religious terms are divorced from their context: "canonisation," "consecration," "divinity," "communion," and "sainthood" not only no longer signify the cultural institution of the church, which gives the concepts their meaning and power, but this power is given directly to the people in society oppressed by the institution that gave them meaning. This language reversal is notable during the scene of Our Lady's murder trial. Asked why he committed murder, Our Lady responds: "I was fabulously broke."[633] The narrator then continues:

> Since the word fabulous is used to qualify a fortune, it did not seem impossible to apply it to destitution. And this fabulous impecuniousness made for Our Lady a pedestal of cloud; he was as prodigiously glorious as the body of Christ rising aloft, to dwell there alone and fixed in the sunny noonday sky […] Our Lady was alone and kept his dignity, that is, he still belonged to a primitive mythology and was unaware of his divinity and divinisation.[634]

The poverty of Our Lady, which led to the murder, becomes the basis for his divinity. The narrator compares Our Lady to "the body of Christ rising," as, like Divine, Our Lady was the prime example of Genetian sainthood. The narrator proclaims that in the courtroom, "all eyes could read, graven in the aura of Our Lady of the Flowers the following words: 'I am the Immaculate Conception.'"[635] Alongside this impression of divinity, the narrator posits, "was [Our Lady] the favourite of the creator? Perhaps God had let him in on things."[636] With the narrator's inversion of religious language, the concepts that the language itself represents cease to hold their cultural power. In this regard, Genet's writing resists dominant language structures by violating the signifier system, removing the link between a word or concept and what it is known to signify. Our Lady is a

632 Ibid, 307, 214.
633 Ibid, 288.
634 Genet, *Our Lady*, 288.
635 Ibid, 280.
636 Ibid, 241.

homosexual and a murderer, but through his "abjection," he becomes "the immaculate conception," the "body of Christ rising," "the favourite of the creator."

The Postmodern Turn

Genet links his conception of novel writing to the techniques of Proust: "you know as well as I, that the first sentence in the entire work of Proust begins 'for a long time I went to bed early.' And then he recounts his whole childhood, which lasts 1,500 pages, over 2,000 pages."[637] Genet began reading Proust's *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* (*In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower,* 1919) while incarcerated, and Genet's admiration for Proust's work precipitated his writing of *Our Lady.* White argues that "[Genet's] reading inspired him to write; he hoped to become the Proust of the underclass."[638] Genet's utilisation of Proustian technique forms a continuity of the homosexual novel in which modernist technique became subsumed into the postmodern through parody in its effort to depict the homosexual subject. In *Swann's Way,* Proust introduces *mémoire involontaire,* most famously with the image of a madeleine dipped in tea. However, it is a concept that, as Genet highlighted, underpins the entire narrative project of *A la recherche*. The taste of the madeleine unlocks "the image, the visual memory which is attached to this taste," yet this memory does not arise until he dips the madeleine in his lime-blossom tea.[639] Marcel's experience of memory is intrinsically linked to Proust's modernist representations of human consciousness, as the invocation of memory shifts the narrative focus:

> As soon as I had recognised the taste of the piece of madeleine dipped in lime-blossom tea that my aunt used to give me, immediately the old grey house on the street where her bedroom was, came like a stage set […] so now all the flowers in our garden and in M.

637 Genet, "Affirmation of Existence," 71.
638 White, *Marcel Proust,* 3.
639 Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way* (London: Penguin, 2003), 48-9.

> Swann's park, and the water-lilies on the Vivonne, and the good people of Combray, and its surroundings, all of this which is assuming form and substance, emerged, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea.[640]

With this pronouncement, the curtain falls on the narrator's present, and the narrative shifts, as Genet points out, to recount Marcel's childhood in Combray. In speaking of Proust, Genet believes that "the act of creating is always to speak of one's childhood. It's always nostalgic. In any case, it's true of my writing and modern writing principally."[641] Genet here marks a distinction between the modern writing of Proust, of whom he has just been talking, and his own novels, yet notices a continuum in their relationship with depicting the past.

At several points in Genet's novels, an invocation of this Proustian technique can be found. In *The Thief's Journal,* the narrator is detained by the Spanish police, and they place his tube of Vaseline on the table between them. This object becomes a source of ridicule as it represents the narrator's homosexuality, yet it is utilised as a literary device which shifts the narrative focus:

> The content of the tube made me think, by bringing to mind an oil-lamp (perhaps because of its unctuous character), of a night-light beside a coffin. In describing it, I recreate the little object, but the following image cuts in: beneath a lamp post, in a street of the city where I am writing, the pallid face of a little old woman, a round, flat little face, like the moon, very pale; I cannot tell whether it was sad or hypocritical. She approached me, told me she was very poor and asked for a little money.[642]

Genet writes with cinematic language, with images cutting into one another. Scenes shift in a montage of association where the image of the tube of Vaseline forces the narrator to recall an altogether different scene, associating the "unctuous character" of the tube to the glow of a lamp post. The narrative thus leaves his detention and shifts to the depiction of memory, the narrator recalling a woman begging on the street whom he imagines to be his absent mother. The narrator

640 Ibid, 50.
641 Genet, *"*Affirmation of Existence," 71.
642 Genet, *The Thief's Journal,* 17.

of *The Thief's Journal* reflects on his past consciousness in a Proustian manner: "the tube of Vaseline, which was intended to grease my prick and those of my lovers, summoned up her, who, during a reverie that moves through the dark alleys of the city, was the most cherished of mothers."[643] While as an object, Vaseline is the most apparent stand-in for the madeleine, the structuring of *Our Lady* includes the most sustained parody of Proustian technique.

The narrator depicts Divine who "for days and nights on end" would "remain lying in bed," constructing erotic fantasy: "with her head beneath the sheets, she would devise complicated debauches, involving two, three, four persons, in which all the partners would arrange to discharge in her, on her, and for her at the same time."[644] Through this period of desire construction, the narrator tells how Divine's mind is invaded by memory:

> It was then she sought out the memory of Alberto and satisfied herself with him. He was a good for nothing. The whole village mistrusted him. He was thievish, brutal, and coarse […] it was inevitable Culafroy should meet him. It was the summer he spent wandering the roads.[645]

Divine's sexual fantasising draws on the erotic memories of her youth, and the narrative shifts to a consideration of Divine's childhood as a boy named Lou Culafroy. The narrator tells of Culafroy's friendship and sexual encounters with an older boy, Alberto, speaking of Culafroy's fears and desires instead of Divines. Waiting at night for Alberto, it is of Culafroy's fear the narrator writes: "he was very much afraid of being discovered, especially by Alberto. 'What would I say to him?' He thought of the suicide that might save him, and he decided on hanging."[646] When Divine's masturbatory fantasies end, the narrative switches back to the present. Like Proust's

643 Ibid, 18.
644 Genet, *Our Lady*, 166.
645 Ibid, 167.
646 Ibid, 173.

mémoire involontaire, when Divine's childhood memory is triggered by certain adult experiences, Genet's narrative shifts into Divine's past. However, as *Swann's Way* depicts Marcel's childhood courting of Gilberte, *Our Lady* explores Divine's sexual awakening and the impact this formative experience had on her fantasy creation. Genet's aesthetic intervention "politicises" a canonised modernist technique by reorienting Proust's stylistic innovations to focus on the erotic function of memory within an explicitly homosexual character. This reorientation signals, in Linda Hutcheon's theory of parody, "how present representations come from past ones" and the "ideological consequences [which] derive from both continuity and difference."[647] Hutcheon argues that "the postmodern appears to coincide with a general cultural awareness of the existence and power of systems of representation which do not *reflect* society so much as *grant* meaning and value within a particular society."[648] Hutcheon believes that parody – "often called ironic quotation, pastiche, appropriation, or intertextuality" – is central to this granting of value in postmodernist texts.[649] Despite being "tainted with eighteenth-century notions of wit and ridicule," Hutcheon believes that parody can be "seriously respectful."[650] In the postmodernist sense, parody involves "rummaging through the image reserves of the past in such a way as to show the history of the representations their parody calls to our attention."[651]

In contrast, Fredric Jameson posits that "with the collapse of the high-modernist ideology of style," parody became an essential component of postmodernist literature: "the producers of culture have nowhere to turn but to the past: the imitation of dead styles, speech through all the

647 Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 2003), 89.
648 Ibid.
649 Ibid.
650 Ibid, 90.
651 Ibid, 89.

masks and voices stored up in the imaginary museum of a now global culture."[652] Unlike forms of parody that involve satirical reinterpretation, Jameson characterises postmodern parody as lacking in critical stance. It is "a neutral practice of such mimicry," involving the repetition of past styles devoid of a sense of irony where, in Jameson's estimation, postmodern parody becomes "blank."[653] Postmodern pastiche lacks the critical engagement of "traditional" forms of parody in its reproduction of historical styles.[654] Hutcheon's view characterises postmodern parody as a form of cultural negotiation that transforms past styles, adding critical significance to the postmodern work through reintegration. Genet's novels invoke the hallmark stylistic innovations of Proust's *mémoire involontaire* and utilise this modernist technique for more explicit representations of homosexual desire. In this regard, Genet's novels are ideologically grounded in a type of queer activism, which can be seen in his appropriation of the modernist technique of *mémoire involontaire* and the break away from the language of reticence.

Jean Cocteau's Canonisation of Genet

Jean Cocteau is responsible for the publication of *Our Lady* and notably made comparisons between Genet and his modernist predecessors, such as Proust:

> The Genet bomb. The book is here, in the apartment, extraordinary, obscure, unpublishable, *inevitable*. One doesn't know by which angle to approach it. It is. It will be. Will it force the world to become as it's portrayed in its pages? For me it's the greatest event of the epoch […] would Proust be more solid and vast if he didn't lie? Does his prestige come from his lies?[655]

652 Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 17-18.
653 Ibid.
654 Ibid.
655 Jean Cocteau and Jean Touzot, *Journal: 1942-1945* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1989), 271-2.

Cocteau views Genet's novel as the "greatest event of the epoch" precisely because of its potential to be epoch-transforming. Cocteau's view encapsulates the position of early postmodernism as both an extension and rejection of modernist writing. In Cocteau's estimation, *Our Lady* marks a shift in the form of novel writing, a shift he cannot yet define as Genet was the precursor to a cultural moment that was only beginning. Questioning if the world will be reshaped in its image, Cocteau reveres *Our Lady* as an almost biblical text. While writing about the images of convicts he cuts out of the newspaper, Genet's narrator fantasises about sexual activity with "big, inflexible, strict pimps, their members in full bloom," where "in the evening, on my knees, in thought, I encircle their legs with my arms."[656] Genet's narrator is describing the fantasies he creates from the newspaper images, his "evening thought" furnishing masturbatory illusions. The narrator then turns to address an unnamed "you:"

> The memory which I gladly give as food for my night is of yours, which, as I caressed it, remained inert, stretched out; only your rod, unsheathed and brandished, went through my mouth with the sudden cruel sharpness of a steeple puncturing a cloud of ink. You did not move, you were not asleep, you were not dreaming, you were in flight, motionless and pale, frozen, straight, stretched out stiff on the flat bed, like a coffin on the sea, and I know that we were chaste, while I all attention, felt you flow into me, warm and white, in continuous little jerks.[657]

Within this passage, memory and fantasy collide. It is not made clear of whom the narrator is writing, if this was a memory of a sexual encounter, or a memory of a fantasy of a sexual encounter. Regardless of the truth of the fantasy, the narrator explicitly outlines a scene of homosexual sexuality. This explicitness of prose is what Cocteau deems "unpublishable," and it marks a break with writers such as Proust, who wrote about homosexuality without eroticising, who wrote *about* homosexuality but not through it. Cocteau's sentiment can also be applied to Ford and Tyler's *The Young and Evil*, which Chapter Four has demonstrated was equally "epoch transforming" in its

656 Genet, *Our Lady*, 63.
657 Ibid, 64.

sexual candour and depiction of a subcultural homosexual milieu. Cocteau's response to Genet's novel then shifts immediately without prior reference to an accusation of dishonesty in Proust's writing. He wonders if *Á la recherche* is only held in such regard due to Proust's refusal to make his homosexuality more overt. Cocteau's discussion of Proust here implies a continuity between the two authors: Genet produced the kind of novel that Cocteau believes Proust should have written if his reticence had not constrained him.

As well as being Genet's mentor, Cocteau was a hero of Ford, who described the artist as "one of my gurus," as his surrealist art specifically propelled Ford's move from New York to Paris.[658] Cocteau was a surrealist, although he was disavowed from the official movement by Breton. Ford describes that "Jean Cocteau was Breton's *bête noire*, and that symbolised the whole sexual ambience […] Cocteau was pushed out."[659] As a result of the tension between official surrealism and Cocteau, Ford, and Genet's homoerotically charged utilisation of surrealist imagery, Vicari Justin questions "how Cocteau's gay desire can exist side by side with, say, Breton's heterosexual desire. Just as the [heterosexual] male surrealists placed attractive women at the centre of their art, so Cocteau placed attractive men."[660] Justin sees this deviation as the crux of Cocteau's estrangement from the official movement. However, despite being at the centre of the Parisian homosexual world, as Robinson remarks, Cocteau "never acknowledged his sexuality in print."[661] *Les Livres Blanc* (*The White Paper*, 1928) is Cocteau's only text that explicitly deals with homosexuality, yet this text was published anonymously. It was accompanied by homoerotic line drawings, for which Cocteau eventually took credit. These drawings reconstitute the desire of

658 Wolmer and Ford, "Charles Henri Ford," 54.
659 Ibid.
660 Justin Vicari, *Mad Muses and the Early Surrealists* (North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 2012).
661 Robinson, *Scandal in the Ink*, 45.

the text into a visual language of blended fantasy and myth. Cocteau's drawings appropriate the imagery of ancient Western myth in aid of investigating existence beyond reality, linking this existence to a deviant form of erotic desire. As Cocteau wrote in the essay "On Invisibility," "man seeks to escape himself in myth, and does so by any means at his disposal […] he invents, he transfigures. He mythifies. He creates."[662] In 1947, Genet's *Querelle de Brest* was issued in an illustrated edition, which contained 29 erotic depictions of sailors in the same line-drawing style produced by Cocteau for *Les Livres Blanc*. A visual companion to Genet's novel, Cocteau's line drawings focused on the coarse masculinity of the novel's characters depicted in differing stages of sexual intercourse, pleasure-seeking, and street hustling. At the heart of Cocteau's illustrations is an exaggerated sense of proportion, which imbues the visual aspect of the novel with an absurd fantasy element typical of surrealism. The drawings are interspersed throughout the text, and many illustrate specific scenes from the novel, such as the "buggery" of Querelle by the brothel owner Nono, with the other images comprising erotic depictions of naked or masturbating sailors. One of Cocteau's images depicts the side profile of a male made from a continuous singular line, which connects to a disembodied, ejaculating phallus by the figure's tongue. Within this drawing, the figure of the man is fluid. The lines which make up his form blend and transform into the object of his sexual desire, where the two separate figures morph into one, creating a fantastical, dreamlike atmosphere in the illustration of Genet's novel. Cocteau's sparse form defies the constraints of reality, and the surreal nature of his illustrations enhances the eroticism of Genet's fantasies. Cocteau writes in *Les Livres Blanc* that "the world accepts dangerous experiments in the realm of art because it does not take art seriously; but it condemns them in real life," encapsulating the strained position that modernist authors such as himself and Proust found themselves in, fearing

662 Jean Cocteau, *Diary of an Unknown* (New York: Paragon House, 1991), 8.

that their artistic exploits would expose their erotic desires.[663] The narrative ends with a plea for homosexual acceptance: "in France this vice does not lead me to prison because of the way Cambacérès lives and the longevity of the Code Napoléon. But I will not agree to be tolerated."[664] Cocteau's declaration encapsulated the change in representing homosexuality between the early modernism of Proust and that of Genet. Genet encapsulated a refusal to be merely tolerated through his sexually explicit novels, achieving a defence which evaded Proust's reach.

This defence of homosexuality can be seen explicitly in his sanctification of Divine and the way she is presented to the reader. At specific points in *Our Lady*, the narrator instructs the reader on which emotion they should feel towards her. This instruction makes it clear that Genet hoped to unleash his novel on "unsuspecting minds" and non-homosexuals. When Divine enters a Montmartre café, the narrator describes:

> The customers were a muddy, still shapeless clay. Divine was limpid water. In the big café with the closed windows and the curtains drawn on their hollow rods, overcrowded and foundering in smoke, she wafted the coolness of scandal, which is the coolness of a morning breeze, the astonishing sweetness of a breath of scandal on the stone of the temple, and just as the wind turns leaves, so she turned heads, heads which all at once became light, heads of bankers, shopkeepers, gigolos for ladies, waiters, manager, colonels, scarecrows.[665]

The background characters of the novel are lumps of clay – lifeless props, only moulded into consciousness when they interact with Divine, coming alive only as the narrator needs them to further his narrative. The customers begin as "shapeless," becoming the figures of Genet's ideal readers, his "bankers" and "policemen." This "shapeless clay" is subsequently formulated to convey homosexual marginalisation through their response to Divine's presence in the café. The

663 Jean Cocteau, *Les Livres Blanc* (London: Peter Owen Modern Classics, 2013), 75.
664 Ibid, 76.
665 Ibid, 81

waiter "snickers" at her, and the manager thinks about asking her to leave. Divine then smiles at the room:

> Each one answered only by turning away, but that was a way of answering. The whole café thought that the smile of (for the colonel: the invert; for the shopkeepers: the fairy; for the banker and the waiters: the fag; for the gigolos: "*that* one"; etc.) was despicable […] The café disappeared, and Divine was metamorphosed into one of those monsters that are painted on walls – chimaeras or griffins – for a customer, in spite of himself, murmured a magic word as he thought of her: "homoseckshual [sic]."[666]

Divine's presence disgusts the other patrons, and in the minds of general society, which the customers represent, her homosexuality enacts a monstrous change in her perception. Divine becomes a chimaera, a creature depicted in art and mythology but never actually seen. Each customer has a different pejorative term with which they classify Divine; they all view her with disdain. However, the narrator stipulates that "for the poet and the reader, her smile will be enigmatic," directing the reader in how they should view Divine, specifying that they should oppose the hostile reception she receives in the café.[667] Divine's interactions are used by the narrator to recreate heterosexual hostility for his readership yet undercut that homophobic abuse. As Warner writes:

> Every person who comes to a queer self-understanding knows in one way or another that [their] stigmatisation is connected with gender, the family, notions of individual freedom, the state, public speech, consumption and desire […] class identity, truth and trust, censorship, intimate life and social display, terror and violence, health care, and deep cultural norms about the bearing of the body.[668]

The concepts flagged by Warner speak to this tension between heterosexual and homosexual cultures as a person's homosexuality puts them at odds with the entire fabric of social culture, the stigmatisation levied at those with same-sex desires resulting from their (in)ability to perform their expected role as a citizen. The narrator aligns the reader with the hostile world that Divine

666 Ibid.
667 Ibid, 81.
668 Warner, *Queer Planet*, 14.

navigates, his social critique becoming more potent as he exposes the marginalisation and stigmatisation inherent within the structuring of French society in the 1930s and 1940s.

The Surrealist Rejection of the Stability of Language

In *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1975), Hélène Cixous argues that "writing is precisely the very possibility of change, the space that can serve as a springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures."[669] Cixous outlines the radical potential writing has in challenging dominant cultures, focusing on the political challenge *écriture feminine* posed to a phallocentric literary tradition, citing Genet (alongside Colette and Marguerite Duras) as the only French writers who embody this feminine style. Elizabeth Stephens reorients Cixous's theory to explain how Genet challenged this tradition through the insertion of homosexuality into a heteronormative language order, terming his intervention *écriture homosexuelle.* Stephenson argues that "writing is for Genet a means by which to open an apparently closed representational system to the perverse influence of his queer subjects, forcing it to signify in new and unpredictable ways," where his "use of language produces transformations within it: they 'alter,' 'parody,' and 'dissolve' it."[670] The utilisation of a homosexual voice and a specific camp language pattern for the "girl-queens and boy-queens, the aunties, fags, and nellies of whom I am speaking" offers the precise transformations Stevenson references.[671] The narrator describes that "the queens on high had their own special language" termed "whore,"

669 Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," in *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*, ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), 249.
670 Elizabeth Stephenson, *Queer Writing: Homoeroticism in Jean Genet's Fiction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 64.
671 Genet, *Our Lady*, 69.

incomprehensible to the uninitiated.[672] This language is utilised by the two queens, Divine and Mimosa:

> "My Roger's off to the wars. She's gone to play Amazon […]"
> "No news from Rogerboy?"
> "No," said Mimosa, "I'm the Quite-Alone."
> She also meant: "I'm the Quite-Persecuted." When they had to express a feeling that risked involving an exuberance of gesture or voice, the queens contented themselves with saying:
> "I'm the Quite-Quite […]
> "I really am, sure sure sure, the Quite-Profligate."
> "Oh, Ladies, I'm acting like such a harlot."
> "You know (the *ou* was so drawn out that that was all one noticed), *yoouknow*, I'm the Consumed-with-Affliction."
> Here here, behold, the Quite-Fluff-Fluff."[673]

Genet writes in formal French instead of the Morvan dialect of the village Alligny-en-Morvan, which he was fostered in until he was 13 years old, to force it to signify in new and unpredictable ways. Genet does this by deploying words in an absurd fashion. In disrupting the formalities of French, the homosexuals of Genet's world are given a language of their own within the dominant heteronormative language system. The characters refer to each other using incorrect pronouns: Roger becomes *she*, and the group become *ladies*. The speech pattern of the "queens" transforms the expected functioning of a grammatically correct sentence: "I'm the Quite […] I'm the Consumed" alters natural patterns of speech, "opening" space for Genet's queer characters within a representational system that ignores them. Among these language games, Divine declares, "oh, I'm such a camp!" situating Genet's intervention into the taxonomy of the homosexual novel with the absurdity of the camp turn, alongside Ford and Tyler.[674] This reminds us that that camp sensibility was utilised as an "in" language for homosexuals, a protective style of communication which sounds absurd to the uninitiated.

672 Ibid, 100, 119.
673 Ibid, 121-2.
674 Ibid, 163.

The camp language used in the novel mirrors real-life homosexual language patterns. Colloquial homosexual language creation was a common practice in underground homosexual communities, such as in London, where homosexuals developed their own coded language. This coded language use was termed Polari, a form of cant which evolved from the theatre slang of the nineteenth century. Between the trials of Wilde and the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1967, Polari was a ubiquitous form of sub-cultural communication. Paul Baker terms it a language of "fast put-downs, ironic self-parody and theatrical exaggeration," where pronouns were reversed so that every man had the potential to be a she.[675] Polari worked to codify homosexual men's conversations for the uninitiated, much like the conversations between Divine and the other queens above. However, as Houlbrook suggests, "Polari was a constituent element of camp as a cultural style, a vocal embodiment of sexual character consistent with men's 'womanlike nature.'"[676] Through the terms *trade, camp, mince, cottage, do-a-turn, cruise, omi (man), bona (good), and palone (woman),* alongside the manipulation of grammar rules, homosexual men were provided with a language that could both signify their queerness yet negate the danger of speaking openly about their desires and lives in public. Despite the use of Polari being indigenous to urban-dwelling British homosexuals, beginning in London, the terms mentioned above proliferated throughout gay sub-cultures worldwide. The language of *The Young and Evil* (1933) depicts the use of Polari in New York, and the (translated) language of *Our Lady* its utilisation in Paris. Those who used Polari also rechristened themselves with camp, parodic names, much like the names Mimosa III, Our Lady of the Flowers and Divine. The narrator of *Our Lady* explains why he gave such names:

> I can hardly give exact reasons why I chose such and such a name. Divine, First Communion, Mimosa, Our Lady of the Flowers, and Milord the Prince did not occur to me

675 Paul Baker, *Polari – The Lost Language of Gay Men* (London: Routledge, 2003), 2.
676 Houlbrook, *Queer London*, 150.

> by chance. There is a kinship among them, an odour of incense and melting taper, and I sometimes feel as if I had gathered among them the artificial or natural flowers in the chapel of the Virgin Mary.[677]

Camp stylings allowed gay men to construct a performative identity for themselves in a community. This identity theatrically parodies the construction of gendered and sexual roles that were primarily based on Christian traditions. In this regard, a camp cultural style had formed, much like the cultural style of decadence, to signify same-sex desire, uniting homosexuals of differing nationalities with a commonality of experience. The narrator writes of this camp language: "Darling liked what the faggots talked about. He especially liked, provided it was done in private, the way they talked."[678] The first time Darling heard the queens talk, he looked "in bewilderment […] he was amused" as he could not decode the meaning of their expressions.[679] In describing this speech, the narrator suggests that "from their conversations (from their mouths and hands) would escape ripples of flowers, in the midst of which they simply stood or sat about as casually as could be, discussing ordinary household matters."[680] Darling's inability to understand the language of the queens is presented in surrealist guise as the strange phrases become ripples of flowers, the surreal element of the "ripple of flowers" enhancing the absurdity yet beauty of the camp language use for those such as Darling, who do not understand. As discussed in Ford and Tyler's novel, Genet's novels also intertwine notions of camp and surrealist image. This can be seen most plainly in the artificial nature of his character's gender performance, taken to the extreme in the figure of Divine, and the language utilised to represent it.

677 Gent, *Our Lady*, 291.
678 Ibid, 119.
679 Ibid, 121.
680 Ibid, 122.

Both *The Young and Evil* and *Our Lady* investigate gender performance as it relates to sexuality, and both include depictions of drag balls. A disavowal of verisimilitude and an embrace of the surreal made a break with the moralising, scientific inquiries into the homosexual condition. Within this break, Ford, Tyler and Genet unmasked the very notion of identity creation and its links to the coded gay body. Gaitet outlines the link between camp and gender presentation, arguing that "it is precisely because of its reliance on artifice, its emphasis on performance, on how a thing looks rather than on what it is, that camp is most fully realised in drag."[681] In this regard, Divine and the assortment of Queens throughout *Our Lady* "fully realise" the camp sensibility. The narrator writes: "I shall speak to you about Divine, mixing masculine and feminine as my mood dictates," presenting the undoing of gender within Divine's identity and the cultural language that exists to represent it.[682] As often as the narrator describes Divine in the feminine, he always emphasises the performance of her womanhood: "Divine was a male wearing makeup, dishevelled with make-believe gestures […] all the 'woman' judgements she made were, in reality, poetic conclusions."[683] The narrator continually highlights her wigs and makeup, reiterating that however feminine her appearance, there was "no doubt she herself was not a woman."[684] Genet separates the notion of biological sex from the traditional roles that they are assigned and thus, as Eve Sedgewick declared, "fractures" the binary oppositions inextricable from the structuring of Western culture.[685] In Proust, Charlus's homosexuality lies in the fact of sexual inversion, that he is, indeed, a woman. In Ford and Tyler's novel, effeminacy is transformed into adopted

681 Gaitet, "The Politics of Camp in Jean Genet's 'Our Lady of the Flowers,'" 41.
682 Genet, *Our Lady*, 81.
683 Ibid, 235.
684 Ibid.
685 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 244.

mannerisms which work as cultural signifiers for gay men. Similarly, in Genet's work, gender itself becomes a mere role to be played.

> The narrator tells of a drag ball Divine, Our Lady and Seck Gorgui attend:
>
> The little cabaret of which I have already spoken, *The Tabernacle,* where habitués practice sorcery, concoct mixtures, consult the cards, question the bottom of teacups, decipher the lines of the left hand, where good looking butcher boys are sometimes metamorphosed into princesses in flowing gowns.[686]

The narrator characterises the cabaret as a space where sorcery happens, the habitués transform and transgress social acceptability, and men become women and enter a space where reality is suspended. However, the suggestion of danger is found within all these references to fortune-telling and magical transformation. In Europe, non-Christian spiritual belief systems caused unease due to their challenge to cultural orthodoxy; traditionally, they are associated with folkloristic representations of othered cultures. In linking the cabaret to notions of witchcraft and divination, the narrator positions it as an event that can alter radically. This alteration occurs through subverted gender performance. For attendance at the cabaret:

> It is customary to come in drag, dressed as ourselves. Nothing but costumed queens rubbing shoulders with child pimps. The makeup and lights distort sufficiently, but often we wear black masks or carry fans for the pleasure of guessing who's who from the carriage of a leg, from the expression, the voice, the pleasure of fooling each other, of making identities overlap.[687]

Anticipating Judith Butler's notion of performativity, as discussed in Chapter Four, in this passage, gender is seen as a costume, with identity something one can pick up and take off as one pleases. The queens "come in drag," dressed as themselves, alluding to the idea that all they are is *drag*, that identity is solely performance. The way Divine presents herself is seen as being no different

686 Genet, *Our Lady*, 229.
687 Ibid.

to the "natural" masculine performance of Darling or Our Lady's "pimp" persona, even though they conform to dominant conceptions of masculinity.

Divine dresses our Lady for the occasion, who has "dug out for this evening her two 1890 silk dresses, which she keeps from former carnivals."[688] Two men wearing 1890s dresses to attend a cabaret ball evokes the perverse spectre of decadence by making a specific allusion to the decade that inaugurated the cultural legibility of queer styling. This decadence, coupled with the camp styling of the event, suggests the power of subversive reverie. After Our Lady donned Divine's dress, a camp metamorphosis occurred: "Our Lady walked down the street as only the great, the very great ladies of the court knew how to walk."[689] No longer a paragon of masculinity, Our Lady's drag transformation alters his gender performance and, as a result, his sexuality. In getting a taxi home, Gorgui thus treats Our Lady like a woman:

> The driver opened the door and Our Lady stepped in first. Gorgui, because of his position in the group, ought to have got in first, but he moved aside, leaving the opening free for Our Lady. Bear in mind that a pimp never effaces himself before a woman, still less before a faggot (which, however, with respect to him, Our Lady had that night become).[690]

Our Lady's entire description thus becomes feminised in opposition to the masculine portrayal that had dominated his character before this, highlighting further the performativity of gender expression. While wearing a dress, Our Lady thus succumbs to the 'feminine, submissive role' associated with the role of women, and he allows Gorgi to sexually "penetrate him," an act he had never considered before the events of the cabaret.[691]

688 Ibid.
689 Genet, *Our Lady*, 232.
690 Ibid, 234.
691 Ibid, 243.

Bronski argues for the politicisation of camp aesthetics: "because it has been used by gay people as a means of communication and survival, camp is political. And because it contains the possibility of structuring and encouraging limitless imagination – to literally create a new reality – it is not only political, but progressive."[692] This possibility of "limitless imagination […] creating a new reality" Bronski sees as the political nature of camp underscores Genet's parodic utilisation of surrealist imagery. Anna Watz suggests that "rather than instructing the reader in how to think and feel, surrealist texts invite us to make our own associations; rather than dealing in detailed descriptions, they create sparks that seek to ignite our imagination and provoke our unconscious desires."[693] The narrator describes the meeting of Darling and Our Lady: "they became friends. I leave you free to imagine any dialogue you please. Choose whatever may charm you. Have it, if you like, that they hear the voice of the blood, or that they fall in love at first sight […] conceive the wildest improbabilities."[694] Utilising the surrealist tendency to provoke unconscious desires, the narrator invites the reader to invent their own fantasies, project them onto Darling and Our Lady and mix them with his narrative. Breton's rejection of the nineteenth-century realist novel, as outlined in the Introduction, hinges on the lack of "discretionary power" given to the reader who can only either accept or reject a text: "I am spared not even one of the character's slightest vacillations: will he be fair headed? What will his name be? […] the only discretionary power left me is to close the book."[695] In Genet's work, the reader is granted space for the desired creation of the imagination. As Hutcheon argues that postmodern parody reintegrates past styles to add political significance to their transformations, Genet's recontextualisation of surrealist imagery

692 Michael Bronski, *Culture Clash: The Making of Gay Sensibility* (Cambridge: South End Press, 1984), 43.
693 Anna Watz, *A History of the Surrealist Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 3.
694 Genet, *Our Lady*, 135.
695 Breton, "First Manifesto of Surrealism," 88.

into the erotics of homosexual desire liberates the imagination for a specifically homosexual purpose.

Our Lady is a surrealist montage of several different narratives, some of which may be true and based on memory, others which only occur in the narrator's imagination. The first layer of the narrative follows the life of the imprisoned narrator. The narrative then continually shifts to an exploration of his unconscious masturbatory fantasies, centred on the character Darling: "for the past two days, in my daydreams, I have been again mingling his (made-up) life with mine. I wanted him to love me […] for two successive days I have fed with his image a dream which is usually sated after four or five hours."[696] The narrator explains how, for "two days," he has "mingled" Darling's life with his own within his imagination. After the "image" of Darling has "sated" his desire, the narrator becomes "exhausted; I have a cramp in my wrist."[697] Within these two days, "between my four bare walls, I experience with him and through him every possibility of an existence that had to be repeated twenty times and got so mixed up it became more real than a real one."[698] All of the variances in the story of Divine and Darling are shown here to be variations in the narrator's "experiences" with the characters as he created erotic fantasy. The narrator describes the relationship between Darling and Our Lady:

> Darling and Our Lady of the Flowers quietly wove a brotherly friendship. How hard it is for me not to mate the two of them better, not to arrange it so that Darling, with a thrust of the hips – rock of unconsciousness and innocence, desperate with love – deeply sinks his smooth, heavy prick, as polished and warm as a column in the sun, into the waiting mouth of the adolescent murderer who is pulverised with gratitude. That too might be, but will not.[699]

696 Ibid, 86.
697 Ibid.
698 Ibid.
699 Ibid, 137.

Within this passage, the narrator clearly articulates to the reader the process of fiction-making, acknowledging that the character's "destiny" is plotted by an author. The narrator acknowledges the difficulty in allowing his imagination to "mate" Darling and Our Lady. In doing so, the narrator professes that the novel's events arise from imagination rather than an attempt at reflecting reality. The narrator desires to "mate" Darling and Our Lady but refrains from doing so, creating fantasy within fantasy – he fantasises about mingling his imagined characters but ultimately cannot. Michael Lucey argues that "even though this is the narrator's fantasy, he apparently cannot just produce any scenario he wants. Even though the characters of this novel exist only in the narrator's mind, even though they form his sleep, nonetheless the dreams occasioned by sleep will not provide every possibility."[700] The sexual fantasies that make up the narrative of Divine and her companions are constrained by the narrator's ability to produce them. In this regard, *Our Lady* becomes a parody of surrealism that attempts to liberate the unconscious imagination by creating a *surreality.*

In *Our Lady*, notions of memory and fantasy conflate; at specific points, the reader is told Divine exists only in the narrator's imagination; at other points, the reader is told the narrator met her in prison. Darling is arrested, and the narrator tells of his letters to Divine. The narrator writes, "a guard opens the door and pushes a newcomer into the cell. Is it I or Darling who will receive him? He brings with him his blankets, mess tin, cup, wooden spoon, and his story. He keeps on talking but I am no longer there."[701] In this moment, the narrative becomes unstable, and it is unclear which layer the narrator is referring to: his erotic fantasy or his prison life. The question

[700] Michael Lucey, "Genet's *Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs:* Fantasy and Sexual Identity," *Yale French Studies*, no. 91 (1997): 86.
[701] Ibid, 267.

of who will receive the new inmate changes the narrative focus from Divine to the narrator's prison life as the inmate walks into his cell. Writing about the erotic bond between Darling and Our Lady, the narrator describes:

> Darling drew Our Lady towards him, and the better to embrace him, struggled with him briefly. I would like to dream them both in many other positions, if, when I closed my eyes, my dream still obeyed my will. But during the day it is disturbed by anxiety about my trial.[702]

The story of Darling and Divine reflects the narrator's dreams and how his fantasy is interrupted by his daily life, forcing his writing to return to the realm of reality during the passages in which he is writing solely about himself. The surrealist commitment to the representation of the "actual functioning of thought" becomes clear in Genet's appropriation of the literary technique. The narrator cannot manipulate his dreams and fantasies to obey his will because he is not consciously controlling them. The narrator's worry about his trial's outcome affects the fantasies his mind conjures. The sudden shifting in narrative that results is described by White as "cinematic:"

> [Genet's] books are constructed through montage; their images are not static but always in motion […] through flashback, flash-forwards, broken sequences, Möbius-strip replays of scenes, fade-outs, jump cuts and montage, Genet applies the full vocabulary of cinematic techniques – and he does so in order to disorient us.[703]

This cinematic writing is linked formally to Genet's surrealism as it accounts for the unconscious, "psychic automatism" of Our Lady's fantasy state.[704] The non-linear "flashbacks" and "cutaways" represent the oscillation of a "psychic automatism" and the unconscious functioning of the imagination. As a result, the novel's structure follows the narrator's unconscious thought, oscillating between fantasy and the worries of reality that impede this imagined world outside of prison.

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702 Ibid, 138.
703 Edmund White, *Genet, A Biography* (New York: Random House, 1994), 24.
704 Breton, "First Manifesto of Surrealism," 87-88.

Conclusion

The Thief's Journal depicts the procession of the Carolinas, a group of Spanish homosexuals making a pilgrimage to lay roses before a condemned pissoir:

> The faggots were perhaps thirty in number, at eight o'clock, at sunrise. I saw them going by. I accompanied them from a distance. I knew that my place was in their midst, not because I was one of them, but because their shrill voices, their cries, their extravagant gestures seemed to me to have no other aim than to try to pierce the shell of the world's contempt.[705]

Genet's final novel displays the commitment to radical dissension, forming the basis of his writing in the post-novel years. Genet felt kinship with the Carolinas because they railed against the polite society that similarly alienated them, and they became the prime image that encapsulates Genet's philosophy, for after all, his novels, too, attempted to "pierce the shell of the world's contempt." Despite the shocking nature of Genet's prose, Genet as a writer was legitimised by the French intelligentsia. This fact is integral to the dissemination of his explicitly homoerotic novels. In court, Cocteau declared Genet "the greatest writer of the modern period" while Genet was on trial facing life imprisonment for his multiple arrests for theft.[706] Cocteau became pivotal in publishing *Our Lady* alongside Simone de Beauvoir and Sartre, who published text excerpts in *Les Temps moderns.* Beauvoir writes that Genet "had obviously been influenced by Proust and Cocteau and [Marcel] Jouhandeau, but he nevertheless possessed a voice of his own, inimitable. It was rare nowadays for us to read anything that renewed our faith in literature; these pages revealed the power of words to us anew."[707] The newness inherent in the power that Genet's words offered was the idea that fantasy and dream were the only way those on the fringes of society could revel in

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705 Genet, *The Thief's Journal*, 58.
706 White, *Genet: A Biography*, 224.
707 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Prime of Life: The Autobiography of Simone de Beauvoir* (New York: Pagan House, 1992), 458.

and affirm their presumed immoral identities. Sartre subsequently produced the book-length essay *Saint Genet* (1963), which became available in the United States before Genet's text. Moreover, once *Our Lady* was published in the English-speaking world, a preface written by Sartre would be attached to it, helping Genet to be legitimised by the literary establishment. Genet's novels from *Our Lady* onwards would continue to be published. However, their radical politics continually worried his collaborators. In 1947, *Querelle de Brest* was published clandestinely and included 29 unsigned erotic drawings by Cocteau. The prestigious publishing house Gallimard, publishers of Proust, published *Funeral Rites* and *The Thief's Journal*. However, it was not until 1951 that they did so with the publisher's name attached to the project. Genet's novels and his film *Un chant d'amour* (1950) caused controversy abroad, and the sale of his novels was legally prohibited in the United States and the United Kingdom until 1963. However, in stark contrast to his homosexual predecessors, Genet told Gobeil: "I am perfectly willing to talk about homosexuality. It is a subject that pleases me immensely […] I owe a lot to it. If you wish to see it as a curse, that is your problem; for my part, I see it as a blessing."[708] Reorienting homosexuality from sin into a blessing is ultimately the crux of Genet's artistic expression. It lies at the heart of what makes his novels so crucial to the taxonomy of homosexual fiction writing.

[708] Genet, *Playboy*, 457.

William S. Burroughs: Toward the End of Literary Censorship

This citizen says a queer learns humility, learns to turn the other cheek, and returns love for hate […] I never swallowed the other cheek routine, and I hate the stupid bastards who won't mind their own business.[709]

- *William S. Burroughs to Allen Ginsberg*

Burroughs identified with the transgressive nature of Genet's prose. By doing so, he appropriated the absurdist, fantasy nature of Genet's work to present homosexuality openly and explicitly within his fiction. Reflecting on his early literary influences, Burroughs connects his reading habits with the lure of Paris and his homosexuality. The prologue to *Junky* (1953) states: "I read more than was usual for an American boy of that time and place: Oscar Wilde, Anatole France, Baudelaire, even Gide. I formed romantic attachment for another boy and we spent our Saturdays exploring old quarries, riding around on bicycles and fishing in ponds and rivers."[710] Here, Burroughs can be read as constructing a genealogy of homosexual writing derived from the decadent tradition and overtly linked to France; three writers mentioned as integral to Burroughs's youth are French, and three have known connections to same-sex relationships. As Chapter One argued, anglophone countries viewed the decadent movement as the result of the perverse influence of France. After the Wilde trials in 1895, decadence became inextricably linked to homosexuality. As a child, Burroughs sought novels that spoke to his desires. In a letter to Allen Ginsberg from 1955, Burroughs added another name to this lineage: "[I] have Genet's *Journal of a Thief* in English and have read it over many times. I think he is the greatest living writer of prose."[711] Burroughs quotes

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709 William S. Burroughs letter to Allen Ginsberg (Mar 20, 1952) in *The Letters of William S. Burroughs: 1945 – 1959*, ed. Oliver Harris (New York: Viking, 1993), 106.

710 William S. Burroughs, *Junky* (London: Penguin Classics, 2008), xxxviii.

711 William S. Burroughs letter to Allan Ginsberg (Oct 21, 1955), Harris, *The Letters of William S. Burroughs*, 289.

a passage for Ginsberg to "dig," in which the narrator "is being fucked" in the Sante prison.[712] It is clear that Burroughs admired the explicit eroticism of Genet's brazen prose.

The importance of Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* for the taxonomy of the homosexual novel is vast as the obscenity trial surrounding the novel heralded the end of the age which this thesis has been tracking. As Frederick Whiting argues: "the controversy surrounding [*Naked Lunch's*] publication was the last instance of complete censorship in the U.S. – the end of the unspeakable per se."[713] Initial extracts of *Naked Lunch* were published in the *Chicago Review* and *Big Table* and were subsequently banned. Norman Mailer argues the extracts "were more arresting, I thought, than anything I've read by an American for years […] Burroughs will deserve rank as one of the most important novelists in America, and may prove comparable in his impact to Genet."[714] Burroughs's contemporaries continually used Genet as a reference point for the radical thematic and formalistic elements of *Naked Lunch*. Alongside this, Genet was a figure Burroughs himself idolised. This chapter is interested in tracking Genet's influence on Burroughs's literary output, and the broader implications of being influenced by such a radical voice. Burroughs's relationship with the so-called Beat Generation will be outlined, as his aesthetic vision is explicitly interwoven with the countercultural ethos of his literary peers, Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac. These writers were rejecting what they saw as the cultural stagnation of 1950s America and the governmental oppression of minority figures. The homosexual elements of Burroughs's novels will be discussed to convey the impact Burroughs himself had on the broader history of homosexual expression. As

712 Ibid.
713 Frederick Whiting, "Monstrosity on Trial: The Case of Naked Lunch," *Twentieth Century Literature* 52, no. 2 (2006): 145.
714 Barry Miles, *The Beat Hotel: Ginsberg, Burroughs, and Corso in Paris, 1958-1963* (New York: Grove Press, 200), 172.

a result of Genet's influence on Burroughs's own dissenting voice, the radical nature of *Naked Lunch* was tried for obscenity. The final trial against the novel in 1965 joined a lineage of similar trials which aided in ending literary censorship in the United States, freeing homosexual voices for publication.

The Radical Influence of Jean Genet

Genet became a symbol of transgression who presided over the Beat Generation as a mythical figure of nonconformity, representing the possibility of societal escape for the trio of writers. Intrinsically linked with the notion of societal escape is the idealisation of non-American culture and the Paris literary scene. Veronique Lane has tracked the French influence on the Beats, arguing the movement:

> Coincided with the rise of overwhelming American military, economic and cultural power. In such a context, they contested definitions of American national identity but lacked ideological alternatives or any models of writing and living beyond the nation-state, and French literature had the appeal of a readymade mark of cultural difference, of moral and artistic otherness.[715]

Lane recognises a Beat identification with specific French cultural figures who fit the non-conformist mould. Lane argues that "they identified with the poems and novels of specific authors whose status as outsiders within their own societies enabled them to explore ways out of their own."[716] Writing about *Naked Lunch* for *The Spectator,* Kenneth Allsop describes Burroughs as "Rimbaud in a raincoat, with his nearest modern equivalent in Jean Genet."[717] Burroughs produced an unpublished manuscript titled "Cut-Ups with Jean Genet and Writing in His Style" (ca. 1960)

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715 Veronique Lane, *The French Genealogy of the Beat Generation: Burroughs, Ginsberg and Kerouac's Appropriations of Modern Literature, from Rimbaud to Michaux* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 10.

716 Ibid, 4.

717 Kenneth Allsop, "Rimbaud in a Raincoat," *The Spectator,* Jul 29, 1960.

housed in *The New York Public Library Archive*. This work is not a cut-up. Rather, it is Burroughs's own words, written in an imitation of Genet's style. It retells the Genesis story outlining the creation of Eve in highly misogynistic language: "woman is literally being made out of man as the virus a sort of electronic orchid that flowers from the broken intestines the genitals and bones of its host uses the host cells pitilessly to expand its sneering spiteful image."[718] By the 1960s, the utilisation of religious motifs and the inversion of their meaning to glorify the perverse had become synonymous with the style of Genet's work, and Burroughs utilises this convention to ape the cadence and imagery of Genet's prose. The woman figure in Burroughs's piece is viewed with hostility. She becomes a "spiteful" and "sneering" "virus" spawned from the male host. A virus which comes to "slash at the rg groin and hold the bleeding gentiasl to the rising sun […] asserting its spiteful sperateness and implacable hostility [sic]."[719] Women thus become a "spector" to flee, "like the grgon cannot be looked at lest it turn the beholder to frrez the beholder in death to see his life so tarsnformed [sic]."[720] The narrator describes "God," who created these beings, "now fallen on the naked unconscious body of Adam lying there with an erection pulsing tadoration for ~~the creator~~ its creator [sic]."[721] This is an example of the conflation of religious imagery and homosexuality ubiquitous throughout Genet's work. As Adam was created in God's image, his desire for the creator and God's rejection of the gorgon-like apparition of the woman "virus" becomes a scene of homosexual desire with the two male bodies joined by a "pulsing" erection. The narrator states, "this ventoloquist dummy made from a bleeding rib will now create itself from the manure the bone meal the rich intestines and the pubic hairs of Adam [sic]."[722]

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718 William S. Burroughs, "Cut-Ups with Jean Genet and Writing in His Style," *William S. Burroughs Papers, Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature.* Folio 65, Item, 35. The New York Public Library, New York [n.d. ca. 1960).

719 Ibid.

720 Ibid.

721 Ibid.

722 Ibid.

However, it is then specified that "the baneful flower has stolen its colors from the small souls of hoodlums and ~~que~~ fairies [sic]."[723] As the female figure of Burroughs cut-up is made from the image of Adam, but also from the souls of hoodlums, fairies and queers, the implication arises that the figure of Adam was one of these "queers," for he was the only man. In this regard, Burroughs projects homosexuality onto the relationship between Adam and God, inverting religious narratives to glorify a desire seen in the cultural imagination as perverse. This sentiment is taken directly from Genet's oeuvre and depicted through imitation of Genet's specific language use.

In the translated novels of Genet, which Burrough was reading, the words "hoodlum" and "fairy" abound. The narrator describes that "the imaginary lovers of my prison nights are sometimes a prince – but I make him wear tramp's castoffs – and sometimes a hoodlum to who I lend royal robes."[724] Divine's main love interest was described in this manner: "though a hoodlum, Darling had a face of light."[725] Alongside this, when a woman realises Darling is attracted to men, she is "outraged and uttered the word 'fairy.'"[726] Similarly, when Divine enters a café, she is called a "fairy" by a customer.[727] The language use, mixing hoodlums and fairies, is taken up by Burroughs with his reference to the "small souls of hoodlums and fairies." Moreover, the sentiment of blending religious iconography with scenes of homosexual desire evokes the Genetian style explicitly. Genet describes his arousal through religious metaphors. In describing his memory of Darling, the narrator writes: "certain details persist more obstinately in remaining: the little hollow key with which, if he wants to, he can whistle; his thumb; his sweater; his blue eyes … If I continue,

723 Ibid.
724 Genet, *Our Lady*, 221.
725 Ibid, 80.
726 Ibid, 123.
727 Ibid, 81.

he will rise up, become erect, and penetrate me so deeply that I shall be marked with stigmata.[728] As the narrator begins to write of Darling, his description fades away into ellipses as sexual desire takes over his imagination. The narrator warns that Darling will "rise up" with a sexual power so strong he will be "marked with stigmata." Darling has already been characterised as "the eternal," and the reader has been told he was "baptised privately, that is, beatified too, practically canonised, in the warm belly of his mother."[729] He is continually introduced through the ornamentation of Christianity. The narrator imparts to Darling the sacred power of the angel who rose before Francis of Assisi and imparted to him the Stigmata. However, the narrator reorients this narrative from an act of God's providence, which, according to St Bonaventura, provided Francis with "only a greater ardour of love" for God, to a supreme act of sexual desire, which imparted Genet's narrator with the same ardour of love for Darling.[730] As Burroughs's imitation of Genet finds God "now fallen on the naked, unconscious body of Adam lying there with an erection pulsing for its creator," Burroughs can be seen ornamenting his homoerotic prose with the same religious iconography.

Similarly, chapter eight of Burroughs's *The Wild Boys: A Book of the Dead* (1969) is named after Genet's *Miracle of the Rose*, a homage published after their 1968 meeting in Chicago. The last novel published in Burroughs's lifetime – *My Education: A Book of Dreams* (1995) – explores dreams Burroughs had throughout his life and mentions Genet at various points. One dream outlies Burroughs's experience reading Genet's *Prisoner of Love* (1986), with another detailing meeting Genet: "driving across Paris in a taxi at breakneck speed, expecting a crash at any moment. A remote district of warehouses and empty streets. We are going to visit Monsieur Genet."[731]

728 Genet, *Our Lady*, 87.
729 Ibid, 90.
730 St. Bonaventura, *The Life of Saint Francis* (London: J. M. Dent, 1904), 167.
731 William S. Burroughs, *My Education: A Book of Dreams* (New York: Viking, 1995), 171.

Burroughs finds Genet seated in a wheelchair: it "seems [Genet] wants my help in some way as a therapist. I am not sure I can be of any help."[732] These references highlight a continual reverence for and imitation of Genet's work throughout Burroughs's working life.

The Beat Movement and American Conformity

The publication history of *Naked Lunch* is steeped in the precedent of modernist censorship. In other words, its serialisation was banned in the United States, and Burroughs looked to Paris for publication in novel form. This ban was a result of the novel's sexually explicit scenes, epitomised by the routine "A.J.'s Annual Party." This routine depicts the premiere of a "blue movie" hosted by the director Slashtubitch and a depiction of the acts on screen. The red curtain opens to reveal a screen:

> [Slashtubitch] pirouettes and disappears in a blue mist, cold as liquid air … Fade Out … *On Screen:* Red-haired, green-eyed boy, white skin with few freckles … kissing a thin brunette girl in slacks.[733]

What follows is a cinematic montage of sexual scenes between Mary, Johnny and Mark and graphic depictions of sodomy, which was illegal in the United States at the time Burroughs was writing.[734] Burroughs writes:

> Mark jumps up and grabs Johnny's ankles, throwing his legs over his head. Mark's lips are drawn back in a tight snarl. "All right, Johnny Boy." He contracts his body, slow and steady as an oiled machine pushing his cock up Johnny's ass. Johnny gives a great sigh, squirming in ecstasy. Mark hitches his hands behind Johnny's shoulders, pulling him down onto his cock, which is buried to the hilt in Johnny's ass […] his whole liquid spurting into Johnny's quivering body.[735]

732 Ibid.
733 Burroughs, *Naked Lunch,* 75.
734 The first state to decriminalise homosexuality and, as a result, sodomy, was Illinois in 1962.
735 Burroughs, *Naked Lunch,* 79.

These explicit scenes were not intended as a work of pure pornography as they are interspersed with more comprehensive social critique. As the movie continues, the actors' characters kill each other at the height of their erotic pleasures:

> They push Johnny forward onto the gallows platform covered with mouldy jock straps and sweatshirts. Mark is adjusting the noose […] Mark reaches up with one lithe movement and snaps Johnny's neck […] Johnny's cock springs up and Mary guides it up her cunt, writhing against him in a fluid belly dance.
>
> Johnny dowses Mary with gasoline from an obscene Chimu jar of white jade … he anoints his own body … they embrace, fall to the floor and roll under a great magnifying glass set in the roof … burst into flame […] fucking and screaming through the air.

These erotic murders render the scenes fantastical and absurd as the pornographic scenes continue after death, and, in scenes reminiscent of the Marquis de Sade, the actors are continually revived to die again. Burroughs defended this scene in his "Atrophied Preface," writing: "certain passages in the book that have been called pornographic were written as a tract against Capital Punishment."[736] While this sentiment was written as a pre-emptive defence against obscenity charges and, therefore, cannot be taken at face value, this is the overwhelming sentiment of the routine. Burroughs combines scenes of execution with sexual sadism of a primarily homosexual nature, which, as the novel's censorship attests, mainstream America viewed as perverse and obscene. In doing so, Burroughs presents capital punishment as no less obscene. As a result of this explicit sexuality, the novel's initial serialisation was halted in the U.S., and Burroughs was forced to publish in novel form in Paris, following the tradition of Joyce, Lawrence, and Ford. *Naked Lunch* initially appeared with The Olympia Press, a continuation of The Obelisk Press – publisher of *The Young and Evil* – as set up by Jack Kahane's son, Maurice Giordias. Therefore, by way of Paris publication, Burroughs's sexually explicit novel helped set a precedent in which the

[736] Ibid, 205.

censorship of sexuality found itself mainly at an end, allowing for the production of explicit novels within the borders of the United States.

While this chapter's primary interest is the taxonomy of the homosexual novel as continued by Burroughs through the influence of Genet, Burroughs's work cannot be separated from the influence of the Beat Generation as a collective. Much of *Naked Lunch* was formulated through Burroughs's incessant letter writing, and the individual works produced by Burroughs, Ginsberg and Kerouac were actively constructed in collaboration. Consequently, to speak of one of these writers inadvertently references all three. In 1955, Burroughs wrote to Ginsberg of *Naked Lunch*: "I need you so much your absence causes me, at times, acute pain. I don't mean sexually. I mean in connection with my writing […] In fact, I think we might even be able to collaborate on this novel."[737] This letter outlines the collaborative nature of Burroughs's fiction writing and Ginsberg's influence on the creation of *Naked Lunch*. As Len Gutkin outlines, "the Beats were a post-war American resurgence of the *fin de siècle* demimonde […] on the run from Cold War conformity," who explored taboo subject matter in their attempt to create countercultural disruption.[738] John Clellon Holmes describes the *beatific* as arising from Sartre's theory of existentialism, involving "a sort of nakedness of mind, and, ultimately, of soul; a feeling of being reduced to the bedrock of consciousness."[739] The 1950s was the era of McCarthyism and J. Edgar Hoover, when America was politically focused on eliminating communist threats, including the mass expungement of gay and lesbian government officials on the grounds of sexual deviance,

[737] William S. Burroughs letter to Allen Ginsberg (Jan 6, 1955), Harris, *The Letters of William. S. Burroughs,* 251.
[738] Len Gutkin, *Dandyism: Forming Fiction from Modernism to the Present* (Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2020), 95-6.
[739] John Clellon Holmes, "This is the Beat Generation," *The New York Times,* Nov 16, 1962.

known as the Lavender Scare. The protagonist of Burroughs's novel *Queer* (1952/85) references this purging of homosexuality: "I hear they are purging the state department of queers. If they do, they will be operating with a skeleton staff," and the state treatment of homosexuals became a common theme for Burroughs's novels to examine.[740] As this thesis has been tracking, the homosexual novel was formed alongside the creation of sexology, integrating the ever-changing medicalised theories of same-sex desire and their accompanying legal realities, or their flight from them, into the structuring of the novels. From the degeneration of Wilde's decadent excess (Chapter One) to the sexual inversion of Proust's descendants of Sodom (Chapter Two) to the repressed desire of Lawrence's masculine confusion (Chapter Three) and the rejection of the pathology of homosexuality in Paris-published homosexual novels (Chapter Four and Five), these texts all grapple with the dominant cultural response to illicit desire. Burroughs's novels are no different. As will be shown through an exploration of "Benway," "The Examination," and "Dr. Berger's Mental Health Hour," Burroughs weaves the 1950s medicalisation of homosexuality into the events of *Naked Lunch*, rejecting the absurdity of control these socially accepted and enforced treatments represented.

John D'Emilio writes that into the 1950s, "Americans came to view human sexual behaviour as either healthy or sick, with homosexuality falling into the latter category."[741] D'Emilio quotes a senate report which states that "one homosexual can pollute a government office," encapsulating the 'witch-hunt' climate of McCarthyism.[742] In February of 1950, Senator Joseph McCarthy gave a speech in which he claimed "205 card-carrying Communists were

740 William S. Burroughs, *Queer* (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2010), 90.
741 John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940 – 1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 17.
742 Ibid, 37.

working for the State Department."[743] The Deputy Undersecretary denied these claims but admitted that "a number of persons considered to be security risks had been forced out," among them 91 homosexuals.[744] Following this, the Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, gave a speech to Capitol Hill clarifying that a "security risk" referred to individuals engaged in espionage, the divulging of classified information, and the joining of Communist organisations. He elucidated that state departments screened for "whether the person has, as a matter of character, any defect which would lead him into any of these difficulties."[745] Questioned by a reporter whether homosexuality would be one of these defects, Acheson replied, "that would be included."[746] Homosexuals were, therefore, viewed as a national threat who needed to be removed from government positions. This presumed threat was because homosexuality was seen as a psychological disturbance that led to a lack of state loyalty. As a result, in 1953, President Eisenhauer signed Executive Order 10450 banning homosexuals from working for the federal government.

Alongside the bureaucratic expansion of the security state, the medical and psychiatric institutions of the United States heightened the experimental treatments of same-sex desire. *Naked Lunch* critiques this perverse culture of medicalisation, surveillance and marginalisation, which entrapped homosexual men by rendering McCarthyistic policies with a Kafkaesque absurdity, exposing the absurdity of institutional homophobia in the post-war years. Burroughs rejected cures for homosexuality, as seen in his correspondence with Allen Ginsberg. After Ginsberg had spent

743 David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 1.
744 Ibid, 2.
745 Ibid, 17.
746 Ibid.

time at Columbia Presbyterian Psychiatric Institute alongside Carl Solomon, he believed that the psychiatrists had cured him of his same-sex desires. Burroughs disagreed:

> I am more than a little dubious of a program to overcome queerness by "attentive work like studying for a job." I think you will find it is not as simple as that. The fact is that no one at present understands this condition, though, of course, psychiatrists will claim to understand anything.[747]

Ginsberg went through periods of his life where he believed that his homosexuality had been "overcome." Burroughs always reacted in disbelief and horror at this suggestion, viewing himself as homosexual and believing this could not be changed.[748] This sentiment directly influenced *Naked Lunch's* critical representation of the American governmental system. Colin Spencer's *Homosexuality: A History* (1995) details the "treatments" propagated by American governmental and psychiatric institutions for what was perceived as a "psychopathic state." [749] The U.S. Army set up screening tests to weed out homosexuals. Spencer describes that these tests "listed three possible signs for identifying male homosexuals: feminine bodily characteristics, effeminacy in dress and manner and a patulous or expanded rectum."[750] These signs were based on the effeminate paradigm as inherited from the 1890s and furthered a regressive stereotyping of homosexuality as a lack of masculine virility. Allerton, the desired object of *Queer*'s protagonist, dramatises the effeminate paradigm which stigmatised homosexuality through misunderstanding Lee's sexual advances: "Allerton felt at times oppressed by Lee […] he was forced to ask himself: 'what does

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747 William S. Burroughs Letter to Allen Ginsberg (May 1, 1950): Harris, *The Letters of William S. Burroughs*, 69.

748 Burroughs believed this about himself despite being married to Joan Volmer. In 1949 Ginsberg accusing Burroughs of living a lie because of his sexual orientation. Burroughs responded: "now this business about Joan and myself is downright insane. I never made any pretensions of permanent heterosexual orientation. What lie are you talking about? Like I say I never promised or even *implied* anything. How could I promise something that it is not in my power to give? I am *not* responsible for Joan's sexual life, never was, never pretended to be. There is, of course, as there was from the beginning, an impasse and cross purposes that are, in all likelihood, not amenable to any solution." Harris, *The Letters of William S. Burroughs*, 45.

749 Colin Spencer, *Homosexuality: A History* (London: Fourth Estate, 1995), 348.

750 Ibid.

he want from me?' it did not occur to him that Lee was queer, as he associated queerness with at least some degree of overt effeminacy."[751] Allerton's conception of queerness conjures Eve Sedgewick's conception of the closet, his confusion toward Lee representative of the broader (mis)understandings of the legibility of sexual difference. As discussed in Chapter Two, Sedgwick argues that the "closet" is not only an individual, but a cultural phenomenon shaping the way societies understand sexuality. Sedgwick understands that "the closet is the defining structure for gay oppression in this century [twentieth]."[752] This understanding creates rigid divisions between heterosexual and homosexual identities, which reinforce the stereotyping of homosexual signifiers. Non-normative performances of gender became indicators of same-sex desire, and the masking, or absence of these indicators, became a protective form of hiding, which Sedgwick terms the closet. In *Queer,* Allerton's understanding of same-sex desire follows the dominant cultural view outlined by Sedgwick, where Lee's lack of femininity "closets" his homosexuality, even from other homosexuals he encounters.

Within *Queer,* Burroughs presents the effeminate paradigm, which as shown in Chapter One, has characterised male homosexuality since the trials of Wilde as emblematic of this legibility of sexual difference. Lee describes a queer bar:

> Three Mexican fags were posturing in front of the jukebox. One of them slivered over to where Lee was standing, with the stylised gestures of a temple dancer, and asked for a cigarette. Lee watched them from an inner silence. He registered something archaic in the stylised movements, a depraved animal grace at once beautiful and repulsive. He could see them moving in the light of campfires, the ambiguous gestures shadowed out into the dark. Sodomy is as old as the human species.[753]

751 Burroughs, *Queer,* 24-5.
752 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet,* 71.
753 Burroughs, *Queer,* 16.

The language Burroughs utilises – "slivered over, temple dancer, archaic, animal grace" – both eroticises and others the "fags," in a way which sets them apart from their humanity. They cease to be regular people, rather vestiges of an "archaic" people that society has long since passed. This dehumanisation of feminine homosexual men mirrors the prevailing view of American culture in the 1950s, which, as argued earlier, John D'Emilio described as viewing homosexuality as a "sickness."[754] Similarly, Jamie Russell argues that one of the characteristics of the McCarthy years was "the work of the American psychoanalysts […] coding homosexuality both as a pathology and a deviation from the heterosexual norm."[755] The dehumanisation inherent to notions of "deviation" is apparent in Burroughs's characterisation of the "fags." This passage forges a direct link between sexual behaviour and identity; Lee attributes the act of "sodomy" to the 'stylised' movement of the men's bodies reading their effeminate, "repulsive" gestures as indications of their homosexuality. As Chapters Four and Five have discussed, these movements were integrated into the camp aesthetic, and allowed gay men to signal their queerness to those who could recognise the signs. In doing so, the men in the bar appropriated the legibility of sexual difference in their courting of one another. However, within this paradigm, Lee's othering of the gay male positions the figure of the sodomite as a separate race – much like Proust's *la race maudite* as discussed in Chapter Two – one "as old as the human species," yet one steeped in the decadent language of "archaic" culture. Dominic James argues that with the outing of Wilde, "effeminacy became, potentially, a queer quality," and Lee in *Queer* continues the association with perceived effeminacy and the primitivism of homosexual decadence.[756] This legibility of sexual difference inherent to the spectacle of the closet becomes paradigmatic of Lee's conception of decadent homosexuality.

754 D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics*, 17.
755 Jamie Russel, *Queer Burroughs* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 34.
756 James Dominic, *Oscar Wilde Prefigured: Queer Fashioning and British Caricature 1750 – 1900* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 7.

Len Gutkin writes that "Burroughs was a late explorer of pathological interiority" who "literalised familiar metaphors of psychical illness."[757] This literalisation becomes more evident in the metamorphosis of *Naked Lunch* yet can be seen in the decadent conception of homosexuality as illness and decay:

> "A curse," said Lee. "Been in our family for generations. The Lees have always been perverts. I shall never forget the unspeakable horror that froze the lymph in my glands – the lymph glands that is, of course – when the baneful rod seared my reeling brain: *homosexual*. I thought of the painted, simpering female impersonators I had seen in a Baltimore nightclub. Could it be possible that I was one of those subhuman things?[758]

Continuing the tradition of decadent thought, Lee initially conceptualises his homosexuality as an inherited disease. As with the Mexican "fags," and "Baltimore" queens, Lee sees homosexuals as "subhuman," indicated by a feminised gender performance. Jamie Russel argues:

> The widespread deployment of the effeminate model by the heterosexual dominant in the post-war period – through popular, legal, medical, and psychoanalytic discourses – attempted to render the gay male subject 'schizophrenic,' as his masculine identity was usurped by the demand that he act like a woman."[759]

In this regard, Lee feared that his same-sex desires would herald a regression into what society at large saw as a monstrous 'schizophrenic' condition—a condition which would make him, as a result, less of a man. Death seemed preferable: "I might well have destroyed myself, ending an existence which seemed to offer nothing but grotesque misery and humiliation. Nobler, I thought, to die a man than live on, a sex monster."[760] In Lee's mind, homosexuality was a condition irreconcilable with modern society.

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757 Gutkin, *Dandyism*, 95.
758 Burroughs, *Queer*, 35.
759 Russel, *Queer Burroughs*, 13.
760 Ibid.

Fragmentation of Form

Within Burroughs's "atrophied preface," he states: "you can cut into *Naked Lunch* at any intersection point."[761] This sentiment resembles what Burroughs wrote to Ginsberg in 1955: "start anyplace you want. Start in the middle and read your way out. In short start anywhere."[762] The entire *Naked Lunch* project was compiled out of fragmented and disparate parts. Meagan Wilson argues that *"Naked Lunch* is a difficult text to follow; it takes its reader through a labyrinth of incoherent narrative fragments."[763] As a result of this "incoherent narrative" fragmentation, James Grauerholz and Barry Miles argue that "by its very nature, *Naked Lunch* resists the idea of a fixed text."[764] The resistance to fixity arises from its compilation of narrative voices and fantasies: as Nicolas Tredell understands it, "the peculiar geography of his fiction […] exists in an imaginary space where different times, places, and states of being and consciousness intersect."[765] This fragmentation was not an accident. Instead, it was inherent to the composition of the novel's manuscript. In 1957, Ginsberg and Kerouac travelled to Tangier and began the attempt to compile Burroughs's work into a coherent whole. In January 1958, Burroughs joined Ginsberg in Paris, where this process continued with the aid of Alan Ansen. Ginsberg wrote of the process: "then the harder job of going through his letters from 1953 – 1956 extrapolating and integrating material, autobiography, routines and fragments of narrative. We work 6 hours a day or more."[766] Burroughs described *Naked Lunch* to Allen Ginsberg: "I can work in all my routines, all the material I have

761 Burroughs, *Naked Lunch*, 187.
762 Letter from William S. Burroughs to Allen Ginsberg (Jan 6, 1955), Harris, *The Letters of William S. Burroughs*, 251.
763 Megan Wilson, "Your Reputation Precedes You: A Reception Study of Naked Lunch," *Journal of Modern Literature* 35, no. 2 (2012): 98.
764 James Grauerholz and Barry Miles, "Editors' Note," in Burroughs, *Naked Lunch*, 233.
765 Nicolas Tredell, "Interanimations: William S. Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*," in *Critical Insights: Censored and Banned Literature*, ed. Robert C. Evans (Massachusetts: Salem Press, 2019), 152.
766 Letter from Allen Ginsberg to Lucian Carr (May 1957), Burroughs, *Naked Lunch*, 237.

written so far on Tanger that is scattered through a hundred letters to you."[767] These routines were not initially conceived as being part of a literary work; *Naked Lunch's* most famous "talking asshole" routine was sent in a letter to Ginsberg on Feb 7, 1955.[768]

Similarly, in July of 1954, Burroughs's German doctor routine – afterwards incorporated verbatim into *Naked Lunch* – was mailed to Ginsberg:

> Flushed with success, he then began snipping and cutting out everything in sight. "The human body is most inefficient machine. Filled up vit unnecessitated parts … you can get by with von kidney, vy have two? […] the inside parts should not be so close in together crowded. They need *lebensraum* like der Vaterland [sic].[769]

In the wake of the Second World War, Burroughs's depiction of the German doctor becomes satirical. The absurdity of likening the "crowding" of the body's organs to the need for "*lebensraum"* takes a mocking view of Hitler's expansionist ideology as it is presented in a phonetic mimicry of a German accent. The editorial process of creating *Naked Lunch* would then begin again in Paris. Burroughs remarked that they "made the selections from about a thousand pages of material."[770] However, he insists "much of what went into the book had been previously retyped by Alan Ansen and Allen Ginsberg," who formed the manuscript's initial base.[771] When Barry Miles asked Burroughs about this process, suggesting the novel seems 'framed by police,' Burroughs expressed its incidental nature: "that's the thing, we didn't order it, it just had come out right. That was purely random."[772] Whiting argues that "the fragments and routines were locally coherent (if utterly fantastic) but exceedingly difficult to synthesise into a coherent whole […]

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767 Letter from William S. Burroughs to Allen Ginsberg (Jan 12, 1955), Harris, *The Letters of William S. Burroughs*, 255.
768 Letter from William S. Burroughs to Allen Ginsberg (Feb 7, 1955), Ibid, 260.
769 Letter from William S. Burroughs to Allen Ginsberg (Jul 3, 1954), Ibid, 219.
770 Miles, *The Beat Hotel*, 178.
771 Ibid.
772 Ibid.

because it lacked both a unified consciousness and the standard continuities of time and space that characterise conventional novels."[773]

Burroughs repeatedly complained that the novel form, in general, was an inadequate form of expression, writing to Kerouac: "I am having serious difficulties with my novel. I tell you the novel form is completely inadequate to express what I have to say. I don't know if I can find a form. I am very gloomy as to prospects of publication."[774] However, the following year, Burroughs finds the solution to his issue of form, informing Ginsberg:

> I have just conceived, at this second, the way to achieve my work, solving the contradictions raised by dissipation of energy in fragmentary, unconnected projects. I will simply transcribe Lee's impressions … the fragmentary quality of my work is *inherent* in the method and will resolve itself so far as necessary. Tanger novel will be Lee's impressions of Tanger, discarding novelistic pretext of dealing directly with his characters and situations.[775]

Like Genet's method, Burroughs's novel was conceived as a series of vignettes unconnected in time and space. The absurdity of his various episodes is further exacerbated by the confusion of the novel's fractured form. As Adam Meyer argues: "Burroughs goes out of his way to create a literary climate that is distinctly non-realistic […] distinctly surreal."[776] Meyer's statement could apply to Ford and Tyler's *The Young and Evil* and Genet's *Our Lady of the Flowers*, where *Naked Lunch* joins this space of reality-disruption towards which the homosexual novel moved. Burroughs conceives of his writing as being trapped in the satirical vein, expressing his dismay to

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773 Whiting, "Monstrosity on Trial," 158

774 William S. Burroughs letter to Jack Kerouac (Aug 18, 1954), Harris, *Letters of William S. Burroughs*, 227.

775 William S. Burroughs letter to Jack Kerouac (Jan 6, 1955), Ibid, 251.

776 Adam Meyers, "'One of the Great Early Counsellors': The Influence of Franz Kafka on William S. Burroughs," *Comparative Literature Studies* 27, no. 3 (1990): 212.

Ginsberg during the writing of *Naked Lunch*: "why do I always parody? Neither in life nor in writing can I achieve complete sincerity […] *except* in parody."[777]

Fredric Jameson views satire as a means of critical engagement with social and economic transformations, serving as a cultural critique that exposes contemporary society's absurdities.[778] Burroughs's novel includes satiric portrayals of characters such as Dr Benway to expose the absurdity of the things they represent. When questioned under oath about the depiction of the political parties and agents of control within *Naked Lunch* and their similarity to the current American administration, Allen Ginsberg argued for the "parodic" impulse: "I think he is laconically, satirically analysing them and presenting evidences of these activities in our modern culture, now and then in a science-fiction style, projecting them into the future, nightmare situations if control took over."[779] In this regard, certain characters within *Naked Lunch* can be read as satirical representations of authoritarianism regardless of Burroughs's initial intent. This satire works as a critique of the psychiatric industry, which in the post-war years intensified its pathologising and attempted control of homosexuality. The political nature of Burroughs's depiction provokes critical reflection and distances *Naked Lunch* from Jameson's theory of "blank parody," as outlined in Chapter Five. Instead, Linda Hutcheon, in recognising the diversity of parody, recognises the political function of postmodern parody in "deploying the image reserves of the past" to question existing power structures and norms.[780]

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777 William S. Burroughs letter to Allan Ginsberg (Apr 20, 1955), Harris, *Letters of William S. Burroughs*, 272.

778 Jameson, *Postmodernism.*

779 Attorney General vs. A Book Named "Naked Lunch." (Oct 8, 1965 – Jul 7, 1966) 351 Mass. 298.

780 Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism,* 89.

This politically charged attack on American culture can be seen from the outset of *Naked Lunch,* which opens with the flight of William Lee from New York police, framing the novel with paranoia and rejection of said authority:

> I can feel the heat closing in, feel them out there making their moves, setting up their devil doll stool pigeons, crooning over my spoon and dropper I throw away at Washington Square Station, vault a turnstile and two flights down the iron stairs, catch an uptown A train.[781]

Lee leaves the United States and travels to various imagined states, including "Interzone." Lee undergoes a drug cure to curb his addiction. As a result, Fiona Paton argues that "the hallucinations he suffers during withdrawal comprise the majority of the novel's plot, and since his deranged consciousness is the medium for the action, there is nothing that cannot be represented."[782] Much like Genet before him, Burroughs abandons verisimilitude and explores unconscious fantasy and hallucination. *Naked Lunch* is full of images of what Adam Meyer calls "the spontaneous transformations of the human body into lower forms of life."[783] In "Ordinary Men and Women," a Male Hustler complains about his trade: "what a boy hasta put up with in this business […] I am fuckin this citizen so I think, 'A straight John at last'; but he comes to a climax and turns himself into some kinda awful crab.'"[784] Alongside this, "The Black Meat" tells of creatures with razor-sharp beaks called Mugwumps who "secrete an addicting fluid from their erect penises," an addictive substance for those known as "reptiles."[785] The bars in which the reptiles and Mugwumps meet are continually raided by the "dream police," forcing the Mugwumps to "take refuge in the deepest crevices of the wall," and the reptiles go mad with withdrawal.[786] Ihab Hassan argues that

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781 Burroughs, *Naked Lunch,* 3.
782 Fiona Paton, "Monstrous Rhetoric: *Naked Lunch*, National Security and the Gothic Fifties," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 52, no. 1 (2010): 51.
783 Meyer, "One of the Great Early Counsellors," 218.
784 Burroughs, *Naked Lunch,* 105.
785 Ibid, 46.
786 Ibid.

this metamorphosis "achieves more than a literary effect of terror. [They] destroy the objective reality of the world, the identity and separateness of things […] they are the actual image of disintegration."[787] This destruction of objective reality is a continuation of the turn towards fantasy that Genet's novels represented within the taxonomy of the homosexual novel, allowing for the explicit representation of homosexuality as seen in "A.J.'s Annual Party." At a moment when Genet's narrator attempts to connect the two figures of Darling and Our Lady, the reality of the narrative disintegrates: "Darling put his arm around Our Lady's neck. He was going to kiss him. Suddenly eight savage young men leaped forth from Our Lady; they seemed to be dethatching themselves from him in flat layers as if they had formed his thickness, his very structure."[788] Here, Our Lady himself turns into a surrealist image as copies of himself "leap forth," destroying the reality of the moment, a reminder of Genet's fantasy construction. Burroughs's spontaneous transformations and his Mugwumps achieve the same effect. As satire involves notions of estrangement from reality, the parodic use of surreal imagery in Burroughs's work destabilises reality to expose the absurdity of the political situation of America during the McCarthy years.

Through William Lee's flight from the United States, Burroughs introduces several political organisations of Interzone vying for power, and the novel becomes a mediation on the absurdity of control. There is Islam Inc., which most characters work for as destabilising undercover agents whose "exact objectives are obscure. Needless to say, everyone involved has a different angle, and they all intend to cross each other up somewhere along the line."[789] Among the other political parties are the Divisionists, who create replicas and disseminate them into the

787 Ihab Hassan, "The Subtracting Machine: The Work of William S. Burroughs," *Critique* 6, (1963): 7.
788 Genet, *Our Lady of the Flowers*, 212.
789 Ibid, 160.

world to curb dissent; the Liquefactionists, who hold a similar aim; and the Senders, who aim for telepathic control of the population. Alongside them, psychiatrists and medical doctors are presented as agents of political agendas for population control. Jamie Russel argues that "while *Junkie* and *Queer* are documentary accounts of life on the cultural margins, *Naked Lunch* is a savagely satirical attack on the dominant that produces those marginal spaces."[790] That is, an attack on McCarthyism and the culture of homophobia, which pathologises homosexuality. Throughout *Naked Lunch*, homosexuality is mentioned as often as narcotic addiction. It is ostensibly linked to notions of sexual control, as becomes clear in "Dr Berger's Mental Health Hour" and "The Examination."

The routine "Dr Berger's Mental Health Hour" satirises the horrors of the medicalisation of homosexuality, which ran from convulsive shock therapy beginning in the 1930s to the hormonal medicalisation of the 1940s to the lobotomies and aversion therapies of the 1950s.[791] In this routine, Dr Berger appraises a variety of "cured" patients. First, the Technician brings forth a "Cured Criminal Psychopath." However, Berger finds him "unsuitable," asking that he "report to Disposal," highlighting the experimental nature of the medical interventions and their failure.[792] The Technician moves on:

> Technician (resigned and exasperated): "Bring in the cured swish."
> The cured homosexual is brought in … He walks through invisible contours of hot metal. He sits in front of the camera and starts arranging his body in a countrified sprawl. Muscles move into place like autonomous parts of a revered insect. Blank stupidity blurs and softens his face …
> "Yes," he nods and smiles, "we like apple pie and we like each other. It's just as simple as that." He nods and smiles and nods and smiles and –
> "Cut! …" screams the Technician. The cured homosexual is led out nodding and smiling.[793]

790 Jamie Russel, *Queer Burroughs* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 43.
791 Spencer, *Homosexuality: A History*, 353.
792 Burroughs, *Naked Lunch*, 115.
793 Ibid, 116.

The patient is depicted as apathetic, showing the intellectual impairment indicative of lobotomy. His body moves "autonomously," not consciously, his expression blank alongside repetitive movements and phrases. He has been cured through the destruction of his sense of personal identity, becoming a blank slate for the psychiatrist to mould. The reference to apple pie is indicative of the patient being brainwashed into the traditional Americana of the 1950s, which stands in stark opposition to the countercultural nature of homosexuality. The "Artistic Advisor" is displeased with the results, thinking the patient "lacks health."[794] Berger disagrees: "Berger (leaps to his feet): "Preposterous! It's health incarnate!"[795] Homosexuality is treated as a disease to be cured: "to speak of a healthy homosexual it's like how can a citizen be perfectly healthy with terminal cirrhosis," and the "washing out" of their brains is presented by Berger as a preferable condition of life.[796] With Berger's clinic, Burroughs pushes the psychiatric experimentation of America to its absurd limits; pairing the curing of a writer afflicted with Buddhism with the curing of homosexuality exposes the irrationality of the American classification of homosexuality as a curable malady and the panicked reaction to same-sex desires that characterised the 1950s. As Craig Loftin writes: "like suspected communists, gay people [in the 1950s] underwent invasive investigations into their personal lives that resulted in public humiliation and institutional ostracism."[797] Similarly, Margot Canaday argues that homosexuals "were also barred from certain federal benefits, faced increased F.B.I. and Post Office surveillance and explicit immigration and naturalisation exclusions, as well as the stain of alleged political subversion."[798] These "invasive

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794 Ibid.
795 Ibid.
796 Ibid, 116-7.
797 Craig M. Loftin, *Masked Voices: Gay Men and Lesbians in Cold War America* (New York: SUNY Press, 2012), 4.
798 Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth Century America* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009), 10.

investigations" and the "F.B.I. surveillance" of homosexuals are evidence of the cultural panic surrounding homosexual existence and the attempt by the American State to eliminate the threat of same-sex desire.

The absurd aura of homosexual regulation is continued in the routine "The Examination." Carl Peterson is summoned to meet Doctor Benway at the "Ministry of Mental Hygiene and Prophylaxis."[799] His appointment is revealed to discuss "the matter of uh sexual deviation," and Benway, who regards himself as a representative of the "welfare state" of Freeland – identifying himself as such through the inclusive "we" – clarifies the State position to Carl.[800] Benway explains: "'we regard it as a misfortune … a sickness … certainly nothing to be censured or uh sanctioned any more than say … tuberculosis … yes,' he repeated firmly as if Carl had raised an objection … 'Tuberculosis.'"[801] Setting up same-sex desire as an illness one could "become uh infected by," Benway argues that homosexuality presents a risk to "public health" where "individuals infected with hurumph what the French call '*les maladies galantes'* heh heh heh should be compelled to undergo treatment if they do not report voluntarily."[802] The utilisation of a French term is significant as so many of Burroughs's homosexual idols were French, and through the taint of decadence, France had become associated with degenerative homosexuality in the Anglophone cultural imagination. Benway's suggestion of treatment can be inferred as the "cured swish" paraded in "Dr Berger's Mental Health Hour. The absurdity of these routines is preoccupied with surrealist abjection influenced by Genetian fantasy creation. The surreality of "The Examination" and "Dr Berger's Mental Health Hour" is a direct result of the construction of what

799 Burroughs, *Naked Lunch*, 155.
800 Ibid, 157, 155.
801 Ibid, 157.
802 Ibid, 157.

Burroughs described to Ginsberg as "dream situations […] breaking through into three-dimensional reality," where the reality of the United States is presented as farcical.[803] As a result, these routines critique the institutional homophobic rhetoric of the United States. Writing to Ginsberg in 1954, the same period in which *Naked Lunch* began to take shape, Burroughs refers to this rhetoric: "do you know in the past two years 2000 people have been dismissed from the State Department Foreign Service – only twelve for Communism? The rest for being queer. What is the U.S. coming to?"[804] Moreover, in 1951, Burroughs framed homophobia as a distinctly American problem: "the problems and difficulties you complain of in queer relationships are social rather than inherent – resulting from the social environment of middle-class U.S.A. I certainly don't run into 'problems' in Mexico where there is no pressure of interference or censure."[805]

Burroughs's routine continues this homophobic rhetoric of the United States:

> In cases of suspected tuberculosis we – that is, the appropriate department – may ask, even *request*, someone to appear for a fluoroscopic examination. This is routine, you understand […] so you have been asked to report here for, should I say, a psychic fluoroscope.[806]

Benway's dialogue exposes the governmental control of its subjects. There are many departments tasked with the surveillance of citizens where the policing of sexual deviance, or rather, *suspected* sexual deviance, has its dedicated task force. Information on the interrogated subjects is kept in files, which Benway uses as a tool of intimidation. Questioning "how many times" and "under what circumstances" Carl has "indulged in sexual acts" with other men, Carl notices the dossier, which forces him to admit his sexual transgressions: "[Benway] tapped the file and flashed a

803 Harris, *The Letters of William S. Burroughs*, 68, 268.
804 William S. Burroughs letter to Allen Ginsberg (1954), William S. Burroughs, *Letters to Allen Ginsberg, 1953 – 1957* (New York: Full Court Press, 1982), 53.
805 William S. Burroughs letter to Allen Ginsberg (Dec 1951), Harris, *Letters of William S. Burroughs*, 97.
806 Burroughs, *Naked Lunch*, 159.

hideous leer. Carl noticed that the file was six inches thick. In fact it seemed to have thickened enormously since he entered the room."[807] The pressure from Benway's finger continually tapping the ever-increasing file activates an involuntary memory that Carl had no recollection of until now: "a green flare exploded in Carl's brain. He saw Hans' lean brown body twisting towards him, quick breath on his shoulder."[808] Benway has succeeded in uncovering Carl's repressed sexual desires, who tries to leave the office but finds he cannot: "he was walking across the room towards the door. He had been walking a long time. A creeping numbness dragged his legs. The door seemed to recede."[809] The dream-like quality of the space occupied by the Ministry, which warps and changes around Carl, enhances the surreality of Burroughs's text by metaphorically rendering the unconscious mind meeting the conscious. This exposes Carl's inability to escape his repressed sexual desires. Carl cannot leave the room as he cannot escape the revelations of his repressed homosexuality. Benway realises this, rhetorically asking, "where can you go Carl?" for the true answer is nowhere.[810] Carl's reply of "through the door" prompts Benway to reply with, "the Green Door, Carl?" and the routine ends suddenly by "exploding out into space."[811] Much like the surreal moment of *Our Lady* in which it becomes unclear whether Darling or the narrator was the one to receive a new cell-mate as discussed in Chapter Five, Burroughs's manipulation of time and space within the routine undermines the reality of experience, which the dream-like state of the unconscious merges with the verisimilitude of experience. In this regard, Benway's reference to the door suggests that Carl cannot return to a place of innocence, cannot un-reveal his perverse desire and that the exit from his existential crisis cannot be reached.

807 Ibid, 164.
808 Ibid, 165.
809 Ibid.
810 Ibid.
811 Ibid.

Similarly, in the routine "Benway," Lee tells how he had been "assigned to engage the services of Doctor Benway for Islam Inc," who in turn had been "called in as an advisor to the Freeland Republic, a place given over to free love and continual bathing."[812] While in the Freeland Republic, Benway sets up a reconditioning centre where the inmates undergo sadistic medical experimentation. Benway's modifications to the State are shown in "The Experiment's" treatment of its subjects. However, "Benway" outlines the police state Freeland has become and the tactics used to arrest potential homosexuals. In Freeland:

> The police had passkeys to every room in the city. Accompanied by a mentalist, they rush into someone's quarters and start "looking for it." The mentalist guides them to whatever the man wishes to hide: a tube of Vaseline, an enema, a handkerchief with come on it […] they always submitted the suspect to the most humiliating search of his naked person.[813]

The police are not searching for evidence of a crime that has been committed; they search through the shame of their citizens to find proof of sexual deviance. All the objects listed as hidden have a sexual connotation and, once uncovered, become evidence for arrest: "many a latent homosexual was carried out in a straitjacket when they planted Vaseline in his ass."[814] Burroughs's citation of the Vaseline is evocative of Genet's *The Thief's Journal*, a novel he read multiple times while writing *Naked Lunch.* As Chapter Five outlines, the Spanish police see a tube of Vaseline as evidence of Genet's homosexuality and in response, Genet's narrator presents the tube as a symbol of homosexual resistance. Burroughs utilises the same image; the police of Freeland plant the Vaseline as evidence of "latent homosexuality," becoming a symbol of their downfall. This planting of evidence and police searching for sexual deviance in Freeland becomes symbolic of the wider authoritarian policing of sexual difference in American culture in the post-war years.

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812 Ibid. 19.
813 Ibid. 21.
814 Ibid.

Novel on Trial: The Last Censorship Battle of the Written Word

Initial extracts of *Naked Lunch* were published in the American university magazine the *Chicago Review* in 1958, with ten chapters slated for the following winter edition. However, in the *Chicago Daily News* Jack Mabley accused the University of Chicago of publishing "one of the foulest collections of filth I've seen publicly circulated," denouncing the review as "evidence of the deterioration of our American society."[815] As a result of this press interest, according to Eirik Steinhoff, the university administration announced the following issue "must be of a non-confrontational nature" and could not include the work of Burroughs.[816] The editors resigned in protest and set up the little magazine *Big Table* to publish what would have been the winter 1959 edition of *Chicago Review*, inclusive of ten chapters of *Naked Lunch.* Matt Theado writes that subsequently, the "Chicago post office seized 400 copies of *Big Table* that had been posted for second class mailing," citing obscenity.[817] During a 1959 trial its contents were banned. The suppression of *Big Table* occurred when Burroughs was living at the Beat Hotel in Paris, and this journalistic interest ultimately led to *Naked Lunch* being published by Olympia Press.

As Barry Miles argues: "one of the main forms of employment for impoverished Americans living on the Left Bank was writing pornography" for the Olympia Press.[818] This is because Giordias would "announce" titles for novels that did not exist and then commission a

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815 Reprinted in R. J. Ellis, "'Little … Only with Some Qualification': The Beats and Beat 'Little Magazines,'" in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines, Vol. 2*, ed. Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1014.

816 Eirik Steinhoff, "The Making of 'Chicago Review': The Meteoric Years," *Chicago Review* 52, no. 2 (2006): 309.

817 Matt Theado, "A History of U.S. Censorship of Beat Writing," in *The Beats: A Teaching Companion,* ed. Nancy M. Grace (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2021), 28.

818 Miles, *The Beat Hotel,* 20.

writer to produce them – usually under a pseudonym – once orders came in.[819] Giordias had no initial interest in Burroughs's work, which Giordias saw as intentionally disturbing, as seen in the routine "A. J.s' Annual Party." Whiting shows that throughout the late 1950s, "Giordias had looked at the manuscript several times […] and at least half a dozen people had told him that he would be a fool not to publish it, but still he remained obdurate."[820] Jack Kerouac hand-delivered the manuscript from Tangier to Paris in 1957: "Dear Allen and Bill, yes the manuscript safe in the hands of Frenchman in Paris. When I left he hadn't yet read it."[821] Nevertheless, it was not until after the suppression of *Big Table* that Giordias agreed to publish *Naked Lunch*.[822] Although Olympia Press began as a publisher of pornographic novels, as Wilson argues, by 1960, the press "began to assert itself as leading the charge in a literary crusade against injustice and heralded Burroughs as its star writer."[823] This interest was ironic as Giordis only became interested in Burroughs when his work was censored in the United States. Suddenly, Burroughs was commodifiable. The 1960 catalogue for Olympia Press described themselves as being "recognised throughout the world as pioneer publishers of outlaw writers […] in their battle against literary censorship." [824] This catalogue shows an intentional attempt to reorient Olympia from associations with pornography towards being a libertine press focused on literary freedom, with Burroughs at the centre.

819 Ibid.
820 Whiting, "Monstrosity on Trial," 134.
821 Letter from Jack Kerouac to Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs (April-May 1957), Morgan and Stanford, *Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg: The Letters*, 341.
822 Harris, *Letters of William. S. Burroughs*, 418.
823 Megan Wilson, "Your Reputation Precedes You: A Reception Study of Naked Lunch," *Journal of Modern Literature* 35, no. 2 (2012).
824 Ibid.

After its initial Paris publication, *Naked Lunch* was published in the United States by Grove Press in 1962. This was the same publishing house that brought *Lady Chatterley's Lover* across the Atlantic. Despite the vast differences in their novel projects, Lawrence and Burroughs shared a common view of censorship and argued for the freedom of artistic expression. Regarding *Lady Chatterley*, Lawrence wrote: "and this is the real point of this book. I want men and women to be able to *think* sex, fully, completely, honestly, cleanly."[825] Coupled with Lawrence's frank commitment to the depiction of sex, Lawrence also argued for the undefinable nature of obscenity: "what is pornography to one man is the laughter of genius to another […] the same with the word *obscene:* nobody knows what it means […] what is obscene to Tom is not obscene to Lucy."[826] In doing so, Lawrence queries the legality of censorship based on such an unstable definition, where for him, sensuality is an integral part of artistic expression: "half the great poems, pictures, music, stories of the whole world are great by virtue of the beauty of their sex appeal."[827] Similarly, Burroughs described that "any form of censorship presupposes the right of the government to decide what people will think, what thought material of word and image will be presented to their minds."[828] Much like Lawrence, he viewed his work as an attack on this presupposition: "I am precisely suggesting that the right to exercise such control is called into question."[829] Burroughs poses the question, "what would happen if all censorship were removed?" and his answer makes clear the political nature of his sexually explicit prose.[830] "Not much," Burroughs declares, except "perhaps books would then be judged more on literary merit and a dull, poorly written book on

825 D. H. Lawrence and Michael Squires, *Lady Chatterley's Lover A Propos of 'Lady Chatterley's Lover'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 308.
826 D. H. Lawrence, "Pornography and Censorship," *Pornography and So On* (London: Faber and Faber, 1936), 46.
827 Ibid.
828 William S. Burroughs, "William S. Burroughs on Censorship," *Transatlantic Review* 11 (1962): 5.
829 Ibid.
830 Ibid.

sexual subjects would find few readers."[831] In this regard, Lawrence and Burroughs are linked through a joint commitment to rejecting notions of obscenity and censorship, and Grove Press brought them together in print.

Barney Rosset, the owner of Grove Press, believed that the publication of *Lady Chatterley* "could afford me the opportunity to publish the novel I had really wanted to put out into the public sphere since my college days at Swarthmore: *Tropic of Cancer* […] if I could get Lawrence through, then Henry Miller might surely follow."[832] In winning the case for the publication of *Lady Chatterley,* Rosset argues that Judge Frederick van Pelt Bryan's 1959 judgment that the novel was "nonetheless protected under a larger constitutional umbrella" would stand as a landmark precedent in deciding all future obscenity cases."[833] With the protection of this precedent, which declared Grove Press "a legitimate publisher that had delivered a literary masterpiece to the public in an appropriate manner," Rosset went ahead with the publication of Miller.[834] Subsequently, as Grove attained the American rights for Burroughs's work, the press was entangled in the legal battle *United States v. One Book Called 'Tropic of Cancer'* from 1961 to 1964. There would be nearly 60 legal actions taken against *Tropic of Cancer.* Grove Press would win some cases, lose others, and have cases that went in their favour reversed by the Supreme Court of states such as Illinois. This legal action culminated in an exoneration of the Press by the Supreme Court of the United States on Jun 22, 1964. Justice William J. Brennan's decision hinged on the concept of social importance and artistic merit:

> It follows that material dealing with sex in a manner that advocates ideas, or that has literary or scientific or artistic value or any other form of social importance, may not be branded

831 Ibid.
832 Rosset, *My Life in Publishing,* 147.
833 Ibid, 163 – 165.
834 Ibid, 161.

> as obscenity and denied the constitutional protection […] for a work cannot be prescribed unless it is 'utterly' without social importance.[835]

The precedent set by the Lawrence case helped in the defence of the Miller case, and the notion of "social importance," as argued in both cases, ultimately aided in the liberation of Burroughs's novel from the censors. However, Rosset admits the further difficulty in attempting to publish Burroughs: "Burroughs was much harder to defend than Miller. You could make a good case that Henry Miller was an established twentieth-century writer. But, as I say, nobody had heard of Burroughs. Lawrence had set the stage for Miller, and Miller set the stage for Burroughs."[836] It is not unimportant that Burroughs was working with Grove Press; it joins *Naked Lunch* explicitly with the lineage of censored and banned novels liberated in the United States by the same publishing house who, with the involvement of Richard Seaver, specifically aimed to bring French-published literature to the United States. Glass argues that Grove Press "would take the avant-garde into the mainstream, helping to usher in a cultural revolution whose consequences are with us still."[837] This cultural revolution pertained explicitly to the liberation of writers from notions of censorship, and Rosset's list towards the 1960s included more homosexually focused works. Glass highlights Grove's radical nature:

> As the trajectory from Lawrence to Miller to Burroughs economically illustrates, Grove's battle against censorship began with a quintessentially high modernist preoccupation with adulterous women – inaugurated by *Madame Bovary* and *Ulysses* – and ended up with the highly homosocial and increasingly homosexual preoccupations of late modernist figures such as Burroughs and Jean Genet.[838]

As a result, in the United States, the works of Lawrence, Genet and Burroughs were tied together not just through a connection with the same publishing house but through the sexually

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835 Ibid, 206.
836 Ibid, 233.
837 Glass, *Counterculture Colophon*, 4.
838 Ibid, 123.

transgressive nature of their work, ultimately leading to a relaxation of censorship. As the Introduction to this thesis outlines, these works join a lineage that began with the publication of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, leading to the introduction of the Obscene Publications Act, which presided over Britain and the United States throughout the modernist period.

As Glass summarises: "Grove's publication of these authors, and its active address to their audience during a time when homosexuality was still illegal across the United States, was a crucial component of its battle against literary censorship."[839] The proprietors of Grove understood the revolutionary nature of the homosexual literature they were publishing, floating the idea of packaging *Our Lady of the Flowers* together with *Naked Lunch* in paperbacks.[840] Ginsberg informed Burroughs of this in a 1960 letter held in *The New York Public Library Archives*:

> Rosset came up last week with what I thought was not a good idea, which was to publish *Naked Lunch* jointly in the same volume with Genet's *Our Lady of the Flowers.* This is to simplify his work in fighting 2 cases legally at once; and to strengthen his case with 2 'masterpieces' at once. He'll ask you. Do what you want.[841]

The publisher's pre-emptive campaign against the presumption of legal action stands out in this correspondence. In 1960, neither novel had been published in the United States, and Grove Press was not yet facing charges. As both novels dealt with sexually explicit homosexuality and their Paris publications had been accepted in literary circles by the likes of Sartre and Beauvoir as great works of art, Rosset hoped to weaponize their literary cache against the culture of American censorship. The presumption of legal proceedings further outlines the radical nature of Grove Press, as the novels they published are utilised politically to challenge the permissibility of

839 Ibid, 125.

840 Letter from Allen Ginsberg to William S. Burroughs (Oct 29, 1960), William S. Burroughs Papers, Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, The New York Public Library, 82. 2. 20.

841 Ibid.

American publishing. Similarly, Jack Kerouac wrote to Ginsberg about Ace Books' plan to publish Genet: "if Carl publishes Genet in drugstores all over America he will have done a service to his century."[842] This idea did not eventuate, and *Our Lady* was published alone as a hardback by Grove Press in 1963, legitimised by the presence of a preface penned by Sartre, taken from *Saint Genet* (1961).

After successfully arguing that the explicit content of Miller's work was integral to its artistic purpose as a work of literature, helping to set a further precedent for the social and artistic value of obscenity, Grove Press was free to publish Burroughs's work. However, in January 1963, a Boston bookseller was arrested. Grove became embroiled in another legal battle – *United States v Grove Press, Inc.* – for the right to continue publication of *Naked Lunch.* This case was heard in 1965.[843] Edward de Grazia represented *Naked Lunch* and presented a letter of defence written by Burroughs in which he states:

> How can these phenomena [sex] be studied if one is forbidden to write or think about them? […] A doctor is not criticised for describing the manifestations and symptoms of an illness, even though the symptoms may be disgusting. I feel that a writer has the same right to the same freedom. In fact, I think the time has come for the line between literature and science, a pure arbitrary line, to be erased.[844]

Burroughs's defence is in keeping with his positioning of *Naked Lunch* as a satirical critique of post-war America, a "must for anyone who would understand the sick soul, sick unto death, of the atomic age," as professed to Allen Ginsberg in 1955.[845] However, this defence did little good. *Naked Lunch* was declared by Judge Clayton W. Horn to be "obscene, indecent and impure […]

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842 Morgan and Stanford, *Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg: The Letters*, 175.

843 This battle is recounted in Stanley Gontarski, *Modernism, Censorship and the Politics of Publishing: The Grove Press Legacy* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 4.

844 Burroughs, *Naked Lunch*, xxxiv.

845 Letter from William S. Burroughs to Allen Ginsberg (Jan 12, 1955), Harris, *The Letters of William S.* Burroughs, 254.

utterly without redeeming social importance."[846] The Massachusetts Supreme Court overruled this verdict upon appeal, freeing *Naked Lunch* for publication after 1966. After hearing from a slew of notable literary figures, including Allen Ginsberg, Norman Mailer, John Ciardi and Paul Hollander, the judge deemed the novel not obscene:

> Thus it appears that a substantial and intelligent group in the community believes the book to be of some literary significance. Although we are not bound by the opinions of others concerning the book, we cannot ignore the serious acceptance of it by so many persons in the literary community. Hence, we cannot say that "Naked Lunch" has no "redeeming social importance."[847]

The overturning of the case against a presumed obscene transgressive homosexual novel signifies a landmark decision in American letters, closing the door on the repression of literature on sexual grounds. As Michael Goodman argues, because of the trial for *Naked Lunch,* "the legal questions of obscenity after 1966 no longer concerned works of literature." [848] Homosexual novels were thus freed to be published as explicitly as the authors desired, even despite the illegality of homosexuality itself in the United States. As Drewey Gunn and Jamie Harker's study of gay pulp-fiction novels attests: "during the last half of the 1960s, American publishers brought out over seven hundred works of fiction written by mostly gay men about gay men and marketed predominantly to a gay readership."[849] In effect, by 1966, cases of literary censorship, in which writers and publishers could be prosecuted for fiction, had thus become a thing of the past, a relic of the modernist age.

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[846] Michael Goodman, *Contemporary Literary Censorship: The Case History of Burroughs' Naked Lunch* (New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, 1981), 235.

[847] Attorney General vs. A Book Named "Naked Lunch" (Oct 8, 1965 – Jul 7, 1966), 351 Mass. 298: accessed via masscases.com [last accessed Jun 7 2023].

[848] Goodman, *Contemporary Literary Censorship,* 247.

[849] Gunn, and Harker, *1960s Gay Pulp Fiction,* 1.

Conclusion

Burroughs was arrested in 1959 in Paris, facing a drug charge from his time in Tangier. Worried that his literary output would be used against him during the trial, Burroughs penned an *apologia* published alongside *Naked Lunch* as "Deposition Concerning a Sickness." The "Deposition" attempted to moralise the novel: "since *Naked Lunch* treats this health problem [heroin addiction], it is necessarily brutal, obscene and disgusting […] Certain passages in the book that have been called pornographic were written as a tract against Capital punishment in the manner of Jonathan Swift's *Modest Proposal* […]."[850] Burroughs's addition of an explanation for what was viewed as obscene by the public draws parallels with Wilde's preface for *The Picture of Dorian Gray.* Wilde's preface argued that the depiction of immorality was not in itself an act of immorality. Nevertheless, his novel was used against him in court as evidence of his presumed immoral lifestyle. In this regard, Burroughs joins a legacy of homosexual writing, from Wilde to Lawrence, which was forced to apologise for and justify its existence. Referencing what would become *Naked Lunch,* Jack Kerouac writes that Burroughs "has just written the most fantastic book since Genet's OUR LADY OF THE FLOWERS."[851] Here, Kerouac forged a link between Burroughs *Naked Lunch* and Genet's first novel. From *Queer* to *Naked Lunch,* Burroughs's novels outline the social model of homosexual understanding in the 1950s, dramatize the dominant effeminate paradigm used pejoratively to identify and control homosexual identities and ultimately reject these categories altogether.

850 Burroughs, *Naked Lunch,* 205.

851 Letter from Jack Kerouac to Malcolm Crowley, Ann Charters, *Jack Kerouac: Selected Letters: 1957 -1969* (New York: Viking, 1999), 13.

Conclusion

With the loosening of obscenity laws in the United States precipitated by the battles of Grove Press, it was no longer necessary to publish transgressive English language literature in Paris. After the vindication of *Naked Lunch* in the Boston court, the hub of homosexual publishing moved from Paris to New York. This move occurred as Anglophone writers could begin publishing homosexual novels more easily in English speaking markets. As Alison Hennegan argues: "the struggles of the 1960s and 1970s, whether fought in public campaigns or innumerable personal, individual victories, had at last made possible a world in which 'gay literature' was here to stay."[852] The 1960s saw the emergence of political gay rights activism and the creation of a public gay community, yet homosexuality itself remained illegal. However, this decade ushered in the end of obscenity as it pertained to sexually explicit literature in the United States and Britain, and burgeoning gay rights activism would lead to legal changes that would sweep through the end of the decade into the 1970s.[853] Legal protections for homosexual Americans would begin to be enacted on a state-by-state basis throughout the late 1970s. California, for example, which would become one of the most liberal states regarding homosexuality, decriminalised same-sex sexual practices in 1976, and Wisconsin became the first state to outlaw homosexual discrimination in 1982. It would not be until 2003 that male same-sex sexual activity would be decriminalised at the federal level. The decriminalisation of sexual activity between men occurred in England and Wales in 1967, yet homosexual discrimination remained rife. Foucault writes that "literature has become

852 Alison Hennegan, "The Emergence of Gay Literature," in *British Literature in Transition, 1960 – 1980: Flower Power,* ed. Catherine Mary McLoughlin and Kate McLoughlin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 146.

853 Illinois decriminalised same-sex sexual activity in 1961, yet this legal change was an outlier in the legal rights of homosexual Americans.

an institution in which transgressions impossible anywhere else became possible."[854] Although it became "possible" to publish homosexual novels in Britain and the United States during the second half of the 1960s, the "transgression" of homosexuality still faced discrimination.

Bronski argues that "in many ways, the history of gay publishing is also the history of the ongoing battle against censorship."[855] In tracking the taxonomy of the homosexual novel, this thesis has explored the connection between obscenity and homosexual writing and the censorship that has arisen from the mere implication of same-sex desire. As in works by Wilde, Lawrence and Hall, whose works all suffered for their inclusion of same-sex desire, and the necessity of writers such as Lawrence and Ford to move to Paris to publish candidly, the homosexual novel has been constrained by the law. However, the 1960s saw a vastly changing literary landscape where the homosexual novel moved into uncharted territory. In 1963, Grove Press published John Rechy's *City of Night*. Rechy's novel explores the underground world of gay culture as his homosexual protagonist travels through various American cities – New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, New Orleans – searching for meaning, love, desire. Rechy depicts homosexual prostitution and the struggle for identity against the backdrop of societal ostracism, utilising a stream-of-consciousness technique. Much like *The Young and Evil* and *Naked Lunch,* Rechy writes that *City of Night* "began as a letter to a friend […] the day following my return to my hometown in Texas."[856] Although this letter about the Mardi Gras carnival season remained unsent, Rechy had it published in the *Evergreen Review,* and it became extrapolated into a novel about "the world [he] had found first

854 Michel Foucault, "Folie, Littérature, société," *Dits et écrits* 2, no. 1 (1971): 17.
855 Michael Bronski, *Pulp Friction: Uncovering the Golden Age of Gay Male Pulps* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2003), 5.
856 John Rechy, *City of Night* (New York: Grove Press, 2013), 1.

on Time Square."[857] Rechy had other short stories published in *Big Table* alongside Burroughs, putting him in the same company as the most transgressive homosexual writers of his time. The novel reached number one on the bestsellers list in both New York and California and peaked in the third spot nationally.[858] Glass argues that *City of Night* "was a landmark in publishing, laying the groundwork for the emergence of gay literature as a lucrative market niche in the 1970s."[859] In Peter Buitenhuis's 1963 review of *City of Night*, he argues that "this novel would surely not have been published as little as five years ago. Its issue by a reputable house marks how far the black hand of censorship has been lifted."[860] The reception of *City of Night* points to a broader shift in the literary field in which explicit, homosexual literature could be made readily available in paperback across the country.

Grove Press's connection to radical French publishing, specifically Giordias's Olympia Press in Paris, initially allowed for the (re)publication of existing sexually transgressive works in New York. The publication of *Lady Chatterley* and *Tropic of Cancer*, initially published by The Obelisk Press, the publication of Olympia's *Naked Lunch* and subsequently the novels of Genet all precipitated the publication of new homosexual novels such as *City of Night.* However, Rosset's publication of Genet's five homosexually explicit novels shows his commitment to the freedom of publishing and the liberation of the homosexual novel. Glass argues that Genet "became crucial to Grove's radical image, first with his politically explosive theatre, then with his homosexually explicit prose."[861] Grove issued *Our Lady* in hardback in 1963 as there was less chance of being

857 Ibid, 4.
858 Ibid, 9.
859 Glass, *Counterculture Colophon,* 126.
860 Peter Buitenhuis, "Nightmares in the Mirror," *The New York Times* (June 30, 1963), 8.
861 Glass, *Counterculture,* 18.

censored than if it was issued in a readily accessible paperback form. *Our Lady* was prefaced by an excerpt from Sartre's *Saint Genet* (1952). This strategy followed the defence arguments set out in the case against *Lady Chatterley* and *Tropic of Cancer* in that Genet's work was introduced to American readers through the co-signing of one of the most influential philosophers of the day. The reader was influenced by Sartre's admiring defence of Genet before they got to the first line of *Our Lady,* and thus, the literary merit of Genet's prose was reinforced by an expert in the field. The hardback novel rose to number 3 on the *New York Post's* bestseller list, and a paperback version was released in 1968 after the case against *Naked Lunch* was settled and won.

What has come to be termed paperback gay pulp novels proliferated in the following years, easily accessed in the newly formed gay-specific bookstores of the decade. As Susan Stryker argues, "gay paperbacks truly begin to flourish" in the latter half of the 1960s, "breaking into the ranks of mass-market paperback writers."[862] Gay pulp fiction was tied to these more extensive changes in cultural production after World War Two when the inexpensive paperback flourished. Gay pulps were diverse in content. Alongside the literary fiction of Genet and Rechy, a form of gay genre fiction was created, often parodying traditional genres of detective fiction, thrillers, and Westerns. Juan A. Suarez suggests a relationship between modernism and notions of post-modern mass culture: "largely because they originated around the same time and developed alongside each other, modernism and mass culture had many structural similarities. Both were products of the machine age – of streamlining, mass production, and speed."[863] Suarez believes that as a result of the machine age "and mass consumption, distinctions between high and low, experimental and

862 Susan Stryker, *Queer Pulp: Perverted Passions from the Golden Age of the Paperback* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2001), 98, 103.

863 Juan A. Suarez, *Pop Modernism: Noise and the Reinvention of the Everyday* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 2007), 9.

mainstream, avant-garde and kitsch designate temporary positions in the cultural feedback loop rather than actual substantive differences."[864] One such text which embodies the murky territory between high and low is *The Young and Evil.* Suarez describes Ford and Tyler's novel as being "a work of high modernism and a subcultural text, part experimental and part popular. And this boundary condition should prompt us to delineate the interface between modernism and the forms of popular textuality arising from queer subcultural practice."[865] Suarez suggests that "queer subcultural practice" blurred distinctions between high and low culture, and with the utilisation of the mass-produced form of the paperback, the queer subcultural practice of pulp fiction continued the "temporary" nature of such distinctions. Despite the differences in plot, gay pulp novels had in common a focus on gay sensual life and eroticism. Bronski writes that the cover art of gay paperbacks was integral to their dissemination: "their 'pulp' content was displayed through cover images that were slightly exaggerated, highly dramatised, illuminated with vibrant colour, and hovered between a tradition of strict realism and cartoon."[866] Gay novels were thus produced to cater to various literary tastes and desires, an unthinkable marketing technique in the preceding decade.

As Gunn and Harker's research shows, "adult bookstores sprang up during the 1960s and added gay sections," and "Green Leaf [publishers] brought out its gay line in 1966."[867] Other homosexual-oriented publishing presses, such as Argyle Books, Pageant Press, Sherbourn Press and Guild Press began operating in the mid-sixties. Gunn and Harker argue that "from the

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[864] Ibid, 10.
[865] Ibid, 185.
[866] Michael Bronski, "Gay Male and Lesbian Pulp Fiction and Mass Culture," in *The Cambridge History of Gay and Lesbian Fiction*, ed. E. L. McCallum and Miko Tukhanen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014),
[867] Gunn and Harker, *1960s Gay Pulp Fiction*, 6.

beginnings the books explored an enormous range of genres, to the point that in many cases a pulp novel represents the first appearance of a genre in the history of gay literature."[868] Even if publishers found getting this "enormous range" of novels stocked in traditional bookstores difficult, this did not hinder their production as pulp fiction generally operated along different production modes. David Bergman outlines the change in the literary landscape which facilitated the dissemination of homosexual erotic novels: "pulp books and pornography were handled by magazine distributors which had entirely different distribution networks and thus, in many ways, brought gay pornography to remote corners of America. Instead of being sold in bookstores, pulp was sold at bus stations and cigar stores and off magazine racks."[869] More than just providing access to homosexual erotica, Bronski argues that the proliferations of gay pulps "are integral aspects of gay male culture and gay history […] they are records of how gay men lived, thought, desired, loved and survived."[870] Novels detailing the "sexualised interiority" of homosexual men became available all across the United States, disseminating not only a contemporary homosexual culture into the mainstream, but also bringing the species of the gay male to contemporary attention.

Through an international commitment to the freedom of literary expression, Grove Press helped to disseminate the transgressive novels that constituted their list into Britain. John Calder writes of the "shared spirit" of Grove Press, Olympia Press and his own imprint, Calder Publishing, outlining that "the three companies were in constant touch with each other, exchanging rights, contracts, and information […] I agreed to import [Grove paperbacks] into Britain and sell them

868 Ibid, 7.
869 David Bergman, "The Cultural Work of Sixties Gay Pulp Fiction," in *The Queer Sixties*, ed. Patricia Juliana Smith (New York: Routledge, 1999), 36.
870 Bronski, *Pulp Friction*, 1.

in the British and Commonwealth markets."[871] Through his relationship with Rosset, John Calder became the British publisher of many of Grove's titles in Britain. After Penguin Books was acquitted in 1963 for publishing *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Calder brought *Tropic of Cancer* to Britain (1963) without government intervention. The following year, Calder published *Naked Lunch*. However, the publication of Hubert Selby Jr.'s *The Last Exit to Brooklyn* (1964), first published by Grove Press, caused the last literary censorship trial in Britain. In 1966, the novel was found obscene by an all-male jury due to its frank portrayal of sexual violence and homosexuality, although this verdict was overturned in 1968.

While censorship laws were becoming more liberal in the United States and Britain, since the end of World War Two, censorship laws were being acted upon more frequently in France. France was no longer the place to publish transgressive literature as it once was. As John Phillips argues, "the period between the end of the war and the end of the 1960s could be considered a period of extreme censorship. The principle of the protection of youth, together with the defence of public morality, have been the basis of all prosecutions of adult fiction in this period."[872] In 1958, for example, the government of Charles de Gaulle implemented laws that prohibited the display or advertisement of publications with a "licentious or pornographic nature."[873] The *Brigade Mondaine*, the French vice squad, utilised this new censorious culture to monitor the output of Olympia Press, who issued banning orders that entangled Giordias in serious legal battles as he contested the orders. The publication of Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955) came under heavy scrutiny, as did the attempt to publish an English-language edition of the Marquis de Sade's *la*

871 Rosset, *My Life in Publishing*, 209.
872 John Phillip, *Pornography and Censorship in Twentieth-Century French Literature* (London: Pluto Press, 1999), 16.
873 Ibid.

Philosophie dans la boudoir (1795). Giordias wrote to Rosset: "the situation here is really most awful and disgusting. I am being sentenced once a week, or nearly, and for the most ludicrous reasons. It seems difficult to continue publishing books in France."[874] Giordias was repeatedly arrested in France during these years and tried as a pornographer. Karl Orend writes that "in 1964, Giordias was prosecuted for publishing obscene literature. He was sentenced on March 3rd to a year in jail, banned from publishing for twenty years, and received a $20,000 fine. It was the most serious penalty ever imposed on a publisher for offences listed *outrage au mœurs par la voie du livre.*"[875] Giordias left for the United States. In 1967, the Paris-based Olympia Press relocated to the United States and opened a New York based imprint. Giordias, who had a reputation for publishing sexually explicit English novels in Paris, moved stateside in part to capitalise on the loosening censorship laws. This change knocked the bottom out of the market for expatriate publishing in Paris, as American and British writers could publish from within their own countries. With the relocation of Olympia, the United States thus became the new hub for homosexually charged novels.

In 1977, Roger Austin declared a lineage of homosexual tradition: "it seems to me to be an appropriate time to put aside all of the poses and masquerades of past decades and to declare that homosexuals, like members of other American minorities, have a literary tradition of which they need not be ashamed."[876] As this thesis has tracked, this "literary tradition" of homosexual writing was not distinctly American, as the homosexual novels of Britain, France and the United States all

[874] Rosset, *My Life in Publishing*, 215.
[875] Karl Orend, "Maximilien Vox and the Miller Affair," *Nexus: The International Henry Miller Journal* 3 (2006): 25.
[876] Roger Allen, *Playing the Game: The Homosexual Novel in America* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1977), Xii.

influenced and informed one another. However, the taxonomy of the homosexual novel does have a trackable literary history. Ever since the imprisonment of Wilde for breaching the gross indecency laws in 1885, the aesthetic of decadence has been tied to the gay sensibilities inherent to homosexual novel writing. Ultimately, this thesis has shown that the homosexual novel has a rich history in the decades prior to the Stonewall Riots and the liberation of gay rights activists in the late 1960s and 1970s. There is a direct lineage of reference in which a history of homosexual writing can be established as an aesthetic response to marginalisation. It is because of the ground-breaking work of Wilde, Proust, Lawrence, Hall, Ford, Tyler, Genet and Burroughs, amongst others, that Forster's estate could finally publish *Maurice* in 1971, and that in 1978 Larry Kramer could publish a novel like *Faggots* (1978) alongside Andrew Holleran's *Dancer from the Dance* (1978). Moving into the 1970s, novels about gay life became ubiquitous due to the struggles beginning in the modernist period. Homosexual novels were no longer deemed obscene but celebrated for their artistic merit.

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