

FALLING INTO THE QUEER ARCHIVE:
A FLORIDA ENCHANTMENT AND THE USES OF A HISTORY OF U.S.
CONSUMER CAPITALISM

By

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Joel Christian Adams

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This project returns to a "lost" text of the late nineteenth century: Archibald Gunter's and Fergus Redmond's 1891 mass-market novel, *A Florida Enchantment*. Increasingly re-discovered by virtue of its 1914 Vitagraph film adaptation, *Enchantment* follows the development of Lillian Travers, a young and wealthy Northern heiress, to her/his final incarnation as Lawrence Talbot, a young, wealthy, and newly wedded groom. The nature and dynamics of such a process of transformation explicitly mark the narrative as a powerful historical and cultural artifact not only for the areas of lesbigay, trans, and queer studies and historiography, but also in connection to a number of critical explorations concerned with the rise of American consumer culture during the 1890s.

As a reading of *Enchantment* demonstrates, the rise of consumer capitalism not only changed the conditions of identity and its formation, but further, radically altered the spaces in which one moved, lived, and desired. The *Enchantment* novel is, as such,

highly invested in representing more than simply gender or sex change; it additionally functions to link such changes to wider socio-economic conditions. Ultimately, this project proposes that representations of "troubled" gender and sexuality must be seen as existing in relation to the particularities of their specific historical, economic, and cultural milieux.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCING CHIMERIC BODIES

Sexual irregularity is seen as belonging more or less to the realm of chimeras. That is why we rid ourselves easily enough of the idea that these are crimes, but less easily of the suspicion that they are fictions which, whether involuntary or self-indulgent, are useless, and which it would be better to dispel. Wake up young people, from you illusory pleasures; strip off your disguises and recall that every one of you has a sex, a true sex. (Barbin x)

The injunction to proclaim the truth of one's sex and gender, and the assumed list of traits, behaviors and very states of being that seem to follow so easily – for some at least – beyond this initial naming lies at the heart of ongoing battles: legal, medical and social, over the status and nature of the body and the knowledges and laws that control and define it. As the opening epigraph for this project seeks to point out though, even as we become supposedly more amenable to a consideration of “sexual irregularity” as something not quite a crime, we nonetheless continue to figure it as something other than a necessary reality. Hence, the chimeric qualification that comes with the deeming of certain bodies, certain desires, and certain practices as “irregular” to begin with. As the OED tells us after all, denotatively the chimera posits not only monstrous, imaginative and unruly bodies, but also those bodies – mythological and otherwise – that are marked as monstrous by the very “incongruous unions” that define them. The complex machinations that must occur in order to tie these fictive, self-indulgent and unruly bodies down continues to serve as one of the chief enunciations of our culture's sexual system of knowledge and understanding. To be made “real” if not regular, these bodies must be made known. Foucault at an earlier point in his introduction to one of the “lost” texts of

the nineteenth century, the memoirs of the French hermaphrodite Herculine Barbin, poses the situation thusly:

Do we *truly* need a *true* sex? With a persistence that borders on stubbornness modern Western societies have answered in the affirmative. They have obstinately brought into play this question of a “true sex” in an order of things where one might have imagined all that counted was the reality of the body and the intensity of its pleasures. (Barbin vii)

But as recent instances at the level of juridical decision-making have shown the issue of what counts and what does not extends well beyond the confines and contours of the body and the individual subject. The matter of making bodies real, regular, and known is deeply intertwined with an order of things not always contiguous with the body itself. There is rather, always already, a social field of and for the body’s legibility. The injunction to speak one’s sex and one’s gender then is never the final moment of decision. For that act of naming to be deemed true, it must also be made subject to those same processes of authentication, regulation, and understanding that compelled the speaking and the act of the naming from the start. To perform one’s gender and desire, one must, it seems, perform for a select audience – for the doctors, judges and lawmakers whose role it is ultimately to adjudicate the success or failure of that performance.

Liminal bodies, unruly and chimerical as they are, for the most part find themselves in a losing battle of voices; for all the imperatives laid upon us that we speak the truth of our bodies, there are always those who nonetheless have the power to overturn, or rather, to deny that truth. But, as Foucault himself like so frequently to remark, to recognize the systematicity and tenacity of a sexual order of things need not function as a refutation of those gaps and fissures that yet remain within such an order. The precise need to adjudicate a truth of the body means that such a truth is hardly as natural, or as real and regular, as it purports to be. Contesting and challenging the

judgments placed upon us – whether in the form of law, science or culture – is as such the frontline for those who find their desires and bodies outlawed or pronounced unworthy. Tracing these gaps and fissures in a sexual system of knowledge and representation works as a retort to the injunction to speak any unequivocal sexual or gendered truth. Over and against the stubbornness of those who demand a “true sex” what is posited instead is a complexity, indeterminacy and a malleability of the body and its status. And while such a status might remain constrained by its discursive and disciplinary positioning within the particularities of history, of the social and the cultural, what is produced is more than simply the leading question: do we truly need a true sex, Fundamentally, what is allowed to emerge is a consideration of gender and sex – their truths and their fictions – as open questions in themselves.

Troubling this imperative for a “true sex” through a historiographic exploration of that imperative’s dependence upon a particular contextual milieu defines in large part the outlines of this project in its effort to return to yet another “lost” text of the nineteenth century: Archibald Gunter’s and Fergus Redmond’s 1891 novel *A Florida Enchantment*. Increasingly rediscovered by virtue of its 1914 Vitagraph film adaptation, *Enchantment* promises to provide a unique and extraordinarily appropriate text with which to discern more fully the issues and conflicts that the shifting status of identity, gender and sexuality began to experience in the modern United States during the late 1800s. Out of print since its initial offering, the novel follows the development of Lillian Travers, a young and wealthy Northern heiress, to her/his final incarnation as Lawrence Talbot, a young wealthy and newly wedded groom. The nature and dynamics of such a process of transformation explicitly marks the narrative as a powerful historical and cultural artifact

within the emergent areas of lesbigay, trans and queer studies and historiography. If the nineteenth century bore witness to the increasingly vital need to demarcate the boundaries and borders of a “true sex” the question remains as to how – and in what manner – such a need came to be represented within the popular format of a mass circulated paperback novel. Within *Enchantment*, such a transformation is articulated in relation to overlapping fields of social, economic, and cultural concern. Lillian’s materialization as Lawrence can be read as not simply a switch along lines of gender and/or sexuality, but as transference intimately commingled with anxieties over consumption, space, and desire. Focusing on these related facets within the narrative allows one to connect the possible malleability of gender and sex to other turn of the century conversations – foremost among these being the uncertain status of the individual under consumer capitalism.

Before closely attending to *Enchantment*, I first seek to juxtapose and negotiate between two later and overlapping readings of consumer capitalism and its emergence at the end of the nineteenth century. Working towards different ends, and through differing methodological frameworks, both of these histories pose the question of identity in terms of its intertwinement with capital. Strangely, however, it is only on rare occasions that one finds such historiographic readings placed in close proximity. By doing so, what is allowed to emerge is a new and more complex understanding of those associations existing between changes within economic, social, and cultural spheres to the more intimate matters of the body. Reading the *Enchantment* in coordination with these converging historiographies foregrounds how the intersections of space and the individual and of emerging identities and historical context, function to find expression

within fictive form. As both histories contend, and as Gunter's novel demonstrates, the rise of consumer capitalism not only changed the conditions of identity, but radically altered the spaces in which one moved, lived, and desired. I find in *Enchantment* a novel highly invested in representing not simply gender or sex change, but also a text that links such changes to other social and economic concerns. What the *Enchantment* ultimately proposes is a conception of the body, its condition, and its desires, as a signifying presence that only finds pragmatic meaning within a social field of legibility and authentication. By exploring these various mutations and shifts within the narrative, I hope to foreground the vital importance and urgency of these fictional and chimeric bodies to real spaces, contexts, and concerns.

CHAPTER 2 VISIBILITY AND CONTEXT IN QUEER HISTORIOGRAPHY

In his key essay "Capitalism and Gay Identity," John D'Emilio issued an early challenge to historians of sexuality:

Most lesbians and gay men in the 1960s first discovered their homosexual desires in isolation, unaware of others, and without resources for naming and understanding what they felt. From this experience we constructed a myth of silence, invisibility, and isolation as the essential characteristics of gay life in the past as well as the present. . . . These myths have limited our political perspective [and] have contributed . . . to an over reliance on a strategy of coming out . . . and have allowed us to ignore the institutionalized ways in which homophobia and heterosexism are reproduced. (D'Emilio 468)

As D'Emilio goes on to note, much of this ongoing institutionalization of oppression finds itself directly and historically intertwined with the massive changes the United States underwent during the nineteenth-century. "[G]ay men and lesbians have *not* always existed. Instead, they are a product of history, and have come into existence in a specific historical era" (D'Emilio 468). "Their emergence," he finds:

Is associated with the relations of capitalism; it has been the historical development of capitalism—more specifically, its free labor system—that has allowed large numbers of men and women in the late twentieth century to call themselves gay, to see themselves as part of a community of similar men and women, and to organize politically on the basis of that identity. (D'Emilio 468)

Twenty odd years later—and within the context of a new century complete with its own novel and increasingly complex social and political challenges to lesbian and queer communities, D'Emilio's thesis might serve as a starting point for a discussion of the shifting and multiple ways of tracing the past—and of its role in determining the horizons of action and resistance within the present. More specifically, "Capitalism and

"Gay Identity" might be seen to occupy a fateful position in the discourses of sexual history and of queer historiography—serving, albeit not singularly, as an indicative example of how these discourses have become consolidated—even if uneasily—over the past two decades into academic frames of reference. In other words, "Capitalism and Gay Identity" *did* something when it was first delivered and published in the early 1980s. It not only designated innovative and original avenues of inquiry for an emerging discipline—lesbian and gay history—but it did so through a particular type of positioning, tying these histories and discourses to wider socio-political, cultural and economic transitions.

As D'Emilio himself warned, the ways in which we write our history work in large part to determine how we conceptualize our present choices and future political options, and as such we ignore the intersections of the social, the political, and the economic, with our histories at our own peril. It is not enough, as it were, simply to recapture isolated moments in an evolving narrative of identity construction. Rather, we must continually seek to place these moments within particular contextualized understandings of the past. Understandings in turn that might ultimately work against any notion of a simple, stable, or foundational history of identity itself. As Joan Scott put it in her equally influential essay "The Evidence of Experience," the goal is to situate identities within the past without allowing those identities to become re-naturalized as eternal, unchanging, or final. Such a history is one of contingencies and contestations that "would constitute a genuinely nonfoundational approach . . . [and] one which retains its explanatory power and its interest in change but does not stand on or reproduce naturalized categories" (Scott 411). A historiographic methodology, in other words, that not only allows for

specificity at the level of identity: whose identity, at which time, in which place, in relation to whom, but further one that oftentimes might function to trouble the very identities we might be seeking to trace.

As Lisa Duggan observes in "The Discipline Problem: Queer Theory Meets Lesbian and Gay History" historians of sexuality beginning in the 1970s have sought to travel this discursively dangerous road, attempting to balance the twin needs of delineating the various forms that sexual identities and practices have taken in the past, while simultaneously exposing these forms to an ongoing questioning in terms of their very historicity. Such a balancing act is at the root of Scott's own tensions and anxieties with particular types of lesbian and gay history:

Histories that document the "hidden" world of homosexuality, for example, show the impact of silence and repression on the lives of those affected by it and bring to light the history of their suppression and exploitation. But the project of making experience visible precludes critical examination of the workings of the ideological system itself, its categories or representation (homosexual/heterosexual, man/woman, black/white as fixed immutable categories), its premises about what these categories mean and how they operate, and of its notions of subjects, origin and cause. Homosexual practices are seen as the result of desire, conceived as a natural force operating outside or in opposition to social regulation (Scott 400).

Historiographic projects motivated by this hermeneutics of uncovering and of visibility are relegated, for Scott at least, to "a chronology that makes experience visible, but in which categories appear as nonetheless ahistorical" (Scott 400). In other words, Scott here finds herself giving voice to a profound hesitancy in the face of those

historians who might seek in the past—and in the individuals and communities populating that past—an unproblematic reflection of the present. As she concludes:

Presenting the story in this way excludes, or at least understates, the historically variable interrelationship between the meanings "homosexual" and "heterosexual," the constitutive force each has for the other, and the contested and changing nature of the terrain that they simultaneously occupy. (Scott 400)

Given this apprehension on the part of Scott I nonetheless cannot help but ask, not only with Duggan but also with Kim Emery in her recent examination of queer historiography in *The Lesbian Index*, why is it not possible:

To make the historical "experience" of lesbians and gay men "visible" *at the same time* that categories of identity are presented as historical, contingent and political—as products of changing and contested systems of representation? (qtd. in Emery 6)

Duggan and Emery's pointed assessment on the interrelatedness of visibility and historicity seems in many ways to speak back to D'Emilio's earlier project—and as such it might prove useful to return briefly to D'Emilio's complete argument in "Capitalism and Gay Identity." One of the reasons I find the argument there so interesting, and ultimately so compelling lies with its ability—oftentimes despite itself—to address those concurrent and conflicting desires to at once make lesbian and gay lives and histories discernible while at the same time being mindful to locate this discernibility within the frame and constraints of historical context.

As D'Emilio elaborates:

The expansion of capital and the spread of wage labor have effected a profound transformation in the structure and functions of the nuclear family, the ideology of family life and the meaning of heterosexual relations. (D'Emilio 469)

Continuing he finds that beginning with the growth of the industrial (free-/wage-) labor system in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the traditional family unit found itself increasingly under siege by social and economic forces that were acting to

break down the very insularity and integrity of the family as central to the production process. "Men and women were drawn out of the largely self-sufficient household economy . . . and into a capitalist system of free labor" (D'Emilio 469). Abandoning the household as the sole means of production and of survival—or rather, forcibly being evicted by the labor system, ultimately served to alter the relationship between the individual and the home—radically changing the nature of not only the family but of its imperative to produce (whether goods or children) as well. D'Emilio is careful here to remark that while the industrial labor system altered the dynamics of family and productive life, it did not simply ameliorate their importance. Rather, as production moved outside the home and into a newly arisen public sphere predicated on production and consumption, the family was refigured as not a primarily economic unit but also as "an affective unit" and as "an institution that produced not goods but emotional satisfaction and happiness" (D'Emilio 469). At the same time that the family finds itself so reconstituted, those individuals moving through and living in this newly emergent and capitalistically determined public sphere were in the process of incorporating new modes of subjectivity and identity. With the destruction of the family's insularity came a multitude of additional and possible modes of existence:

By the second half of the nineteenth century . . . as the capitalist system of free labor took hold . . . [and as] *individuals* began to make their living through wage labor, instead of as parts of an interdependent family unit . . . [it became] possible for homosexual desire to coalesce into a personal identity—an identity based on the ability to remain outside the heterosexual family and to construct a personal life based on attraction to one's own sex. (D'Emilio 470)

Or as he puts it more succinctly, "these patterns of living could evolve because capitalism allowed individuals to survive beyond the confines of the family" (D'Emilio 471). This aspect of D'Emilio's argument is by now well known and well commented

upon. Notably, it is Scott herself who labors to critique D'Emilio's narrative here as exactly the type of history to be set aside as politically and historically questionable in that (and in spite of D'Emilio's own opening salvo against historical mythologies noted above) it seems to function solely as a means of bringing lesbian and gay identity to light and to account for the emergence of those identities without questioning what the possible limits and boundaries might be to those identities. Yet it is important to note that D'Emilio goes a bit further in his essay, positing not only sexual identity as a product of economic and social forces, but also as a mode of being that is always also profoundly at risk of erasure:

[T]he relationship between capitalism and the family is fundamentally contradictory. On the one hand, capitalism continually weakens the material foundation of family life, making it possible for individuals to live outside the family, and for a lesbian and gay male identity to develop. On the other, it needs to push men and women into families, at least long enough to reproduce the next generation of workers. The elevation of the family to ideological preeminence guarantees that capitalist society will reproduce not just children, but heterosexism and homophobia. In the most profound sense, capitalism is the problem. (D'Emilio 474)

In other words, the identities let loose and made possible by the emergence of the industrial labor system are not only endangered by those very same forces, but also are fundamentally constituted as ceaselessly contingent and instable. The possibilities opened up by the rise of capitalist labor and the consumer culture of the nineteenth century are not eternal and foundational possibilities, they ebb and flow with changes wrought by economic and historical transitions. More than this—and to expand D'Emilio's framework outward—as many lesbigay and queer historians are seeking to do currently, any effort to chart these contingent and historically determined identities—to make to them "visible" as it were—must in the end come to acknowledge the fundamental indissolubility of these contingent identities from their situatedness within

multiple and intersecting historical, socio-political, and economic contexts. Further, much might be gained in positioning D'Emilio in relation to other examinations of the historical rise of consumer capitalism—examinations that have not traditionally been thought of in connection with issues of identity construction or formation. This resulting historical narrative might be seen to function not only through a bracketing out any final decision in that oldest of queer theory questions: between the essential and the constructed, but in addition, might enter into the conversation concerning consumer capitalism a certain amount of that same skepticism that Scott points to. Ultimately it is by way of a historiographic exploration of the play (even if such play be violent, and marked by an intense anxiety) between subjectivities and situations, between contingencies and contexts, that I hope finally to approach an understanding of the usefulness that such a playful intervention might provide to ongoing attempts to grapple with turn of the century America and its troublesome representations and experiences of identity.

CHAPTER 3 INCORPORATING A HISTORY OF CONSUMER CAPITALISM

In his opening section of *The Incorporation of America*, Alan Trachtenberg provides a forcefully precise outline of his project. In tracing those changes that swept over the United States in the post-bellum years he remarks:

I am concerned chiefly with effects of the corporate system on culture, on values and outlooks, on the "way of life." . . . My treatment of the corporate system extends beyond the technical device of incorporation in business enterprise. By "incorporation " I mean a more general process of change, the reorganization of perceptions as well as of enterprise and institutions. I mean not only the expansion of an industrial capitalist system across the continent, not only tightening systems of transport and communication, the spread of a market economy into all regions of . . . a "distended society," but also, and even predominantly, the remarking of cultural perceptions this process entailed. (Somerville 3)

Published nearly contemporaneously with D'Emilio's "Capitalism and Gay Identity," *Incorporation* centers its study on much of the same ground as D'Emilio, both asking, even if from differing perspectives and towards different ends: what did the rise of consumer culture and industrial capitalism do to those who lived through it? For the former such changes manifested themselves in a dual and dialectical process of creation and erasure, outlined above through the twin narratives of the emergence of identity in association with the wage-labor system and the corollary movement of disavowal and forceful reincorporation of sexual possibilities and identities within the confines of the home and family. For the latter however, these transitions are made to mean through a dialectics and logic of order and disorder and of a dark unseen and a reasoned visibility. As Trachtenberg notes, such oppositions can be found operating through nearly all the major sites of culture and society: it is present not only in the evolving definitions and

representations of the American "frontier," but also in the processes of mechanization, the tense relations between capital and labor, the figure of the city and the metropolis, and ultimately in the series of ongoing debates within literature and culture concerned with how to manage the very relation between the chaos of capital and the desire for an ordered state. Situated at the core of his text, Trachtenberg specifically isolates the city as the appropriate form through which to think about these conflicts between order and chaos in the Gilded Age:

The great city had enlarged the scope and scale of mystery itself . . . to form a new figure, a fusion of social, political, and technological peril. Mystery had been raised to the level of spectacle, the daily performances of city life now seemed to more and more commentators to be parades of obscurity, of enigma, of silent sphinxes challenging the puzzled citizen. The response of middle-class citizens to that challenge represents the new attitude . . . of the age of reform, of more concerted, collective efforts on the part of homeowners and property holders, newly aroused to their potential metropolitan powers, to take control of urban reality, to define it, shape and order it. (Trachtenberg 104)

If for D'Emilio's analysis wage labor had torn apart the insularity of home life and consequently allowed laborers to lead lives somewhat less encumbered by the narrowness of that sphere, even as these same lives remained the property of the system, for Trachtenberg, wage labor is merely one aspect, even if a highly pivotal one, of a complete remaking and re-imagining of the nation, of its spaces, and of the institutions existing in those spaces. As Trachtenberg remarks in his discussion of the emerging urban fictions of the era, the city became a place that "must be recovered, recaptured as the city upon a hill," a site of intense scrutiny and activity which sought to achieve this mastery through its own "campaigns for reform [and] crusades to cast out darkness, to replace mystery with light and reason" (Trachtenberg 107).

This interplay among the conflicting and often contradictory factors of lightness and darkness, organization and confusion, is charted by Trachtenberg onto the very body

of the city itself. In effect, he takes an analysis of the wage labor system (such as the one provided by D'Emilio) and of the reallocation of capitalism from production to consumption, and he spatializes it. Two levels of reading might be taken from Trachtenberg here—two levels correspondingly encountered as increasingly minute figurations of the city and its fragmentation. By briefly looking to these moments: to the changed linkages between the city and its non-urban neighbors and specifically to the appearance of the tourism industry, as well as to the growing imposition of a grid and sector system of division and understanding within the city itself, what might be allowed to emerge is a more complete awareness of exactly how the transitions in capital and in its social contexts seeped into space much in the same way as they seeped into the bodies of those laborers alluded to by D'Emilio. Together their analyses help us to understand not only how capital altered the family, the home, and the very identities of those inhabiting them, but also how these bodies might have encountered the shifting spaces of the very public sphere they found themselves moving through and living in.

It [the city] has become an entity without clear demarcation, a form without precedent. Its rise and the doom of the countryside were one and the same, simultaneous and contingent on each other. Throughout the world, industrial urbanization had created "metropolis" and "colony" at one stroke. Wherever the imperial metropolis arose, a stricken countryside lay prostrate in its streets, its demise and impoverishment essential to the city's very greatness. (Trachtenberg 113)

The growth in urbanization and the mass processes of migration and immigration into urban spaces during the post-bellum years marked a fundamental refashioning of the connections between the city and the country and as Trachtenberg finds, between the newly emergent category of the "metropolis" and the smaller town. The latter began to find itself not so much subsumed by the city, but rather discovered that it had begun to be influenced by and subservient to the city's increased grasp in terms of both production

and consumption. The city did not destroy the country—it simply created out of it a "hinterland" and a new market:

Backward regions . . . represented easy markets for mass-produced goods. No place was so backward as to be out of reach of a railroad head and telegraph office, transmission belts which fed goods and information to country stores at rural crossroads . . . The countryside founds a place fashioned for it within the urban system: it became an impoverished zone, a market, colony, a cheap source of food, labor, and certain raw materials. Its function was precisely to remain a backwater, to remain dependent. (Trachtenberg 115)

Although at this point Trachtenberg does not ostensibly call attention to one such new correlation between the city and the country, at an earlier moment he does remark on the transformation enacted upon the frontier during this period from a wilderness into yet another force to be controlled, incorporated and consumed. How such a transformation was enacted in particular parts of the nation, most notably within certain areas of the South, was through the growth in the industry of tourism. Tourism was perhaps the archetypal industry of a new consumer capitalism promising as it did through the burgeoning field of mass advertising, to bring space itself under the command of the individual consumer. These spaces became highly marketable for precisely those factors that distinguished them from the city: an absence of business, a suspension of the progressively more regimented urban experience, and a sense that they were, for all intents and purposes, exactly the type of frontier space that there were increasingly not. The tourist space and the resorts that inhabited them only could emerge so long as it remained firmly tied to the city, whether through lines of communication, transportation, or commerce. Despite the marketing of these resorts as a diversion from city life, they could not help but exist as mere subsidiaries of the very urban centers that they were purportedly escaping from.

As Trachtenberg elaborates, this joined progression of disintegration and combination at the macro level of the nation and its cities, was also apparent within the city itself. Observing the seeming orderliness of some urban spaces, Trachtenberg sees undercutting this order social and economic forces that were remaking the city along lines of power and control.

American cities had almost universally adopted the "grid" system as their basic scheme, a scheme which blocked out spaces as parcels of property to be filled in at the will of the owner. . . . Dividing space into private packages for sale, for development or speculation, the grid proclaimed a rule of profit, delineating the city as "real estate" rather than communal space. (Trachtenberg 115-116)

This "real estate" city was the imposition of capital onto the contours of the public sphere that spoke not to "rationalization alone [and] not the production-distribution nexus," but rather was the embodiment of "the principle of hierarchy" (Trachtenberg 116-117).

Cities did not expand and change mindlessly, by mere entropy. If they lacked democratic planning, they submitted to corporate planning—which is to say, to the overlapping, planned evolution of many private competitive enterprises. The visible forms make this clear: the power of organized wealth, answerable only to the limits of the possible. . . . It was plain, as well, in the stark divisions of land use, the increasingly divisive "sector-and-ring" patterns . . . that segregated spaces by function (commercial, industrial, and political downtown; surrounding and outlying residential neighborhoods) and by class and income. (Trachtenberg 117)

What resulted was a highly fragmented urban space whose various internal borders were patrolled not so much by the arm of the law (although this was an important component) as by the factions of production and consumption. But these borders were never sacrosanct and were hardily impenetrable. People not only crossed them on a regular basis, but arguably began to conceptualize themselves as peculiarly fit to do so. These spaces did not so much define their identities as it rather served as the situated context in which these identities would be played contingently and historically out. As

can be seen in other readings of the cityscape and identity during this period, these demarcations functioned not only as various segregations in terms of class, but also in terms of race, gender, and sexuality as well. As Siobhan Somerville explains in *Queering the Color Line*, at the same moment that cities are undergoing this regimentation there is also a simultaneously amplified desire to divide and partition the bodies in those cities:

Social anxieties about racial identity during this period led to a deluge of Jim Crow Laws and antimiscegenation laws, laws that can be understood as an aggressive attempt to classify, separate, and racialize bodies as either "black" or "white."
(Somerville 2)

And as such Somerville's reading provides a nice bridge of sorts: linking the concerns of D'Emilio and his effort to historicize the emergence of new sexual identities through the lens of the labor system with Trachtenberg's figuration of the incorporated public sphere. How might one understand the need that arose around the turn of the century to make such differentiations at the level of the body, and how such differentiations were not only determined by capital, but reflective of similar movements at the level of urban space and the public sphere? Or rather: what might reading these phenomena together do in terms not merely of interpretation, but in terms of defining the horizons of action today?

CHAPTER 4
A FLORIDA ENCHANTMENT AND THE CONTIGENCIES OF CHANGE

Looking back in 1922 to the massive changes that had transformed the nation around the turn of the century, Van Wyck Brooks noted, "some one ought to write a book about the eighteen-nineties in this country" (Brooks 318). Doubtless Brooks did not have Archibald Clavering Gunter in mind. Gunter, whose books are barely recalled today, was the author of over forty novels between 1887 and 1907. None of them, with the exception of his 1897 novel *Bob Covington* remain in print. Born in England at mid-century, by the 1870s he had relocated to the United States, moving back and forth between various cities: San Francisco, Chicago, and New York among others, dependent on both his writing and stage productions for survival. By far his most famous work during his lifetime was 1887's *Mr. Barnes of New York*. The novel sold well in the United States becoming one of the best-selling novels for the period. For a reviewer in 1907, the character of Mr. Barnes remained "the most talked-of and sensational hero of a decade" (qtd. in Somerville 193 n.2). At least according to Gunter's own self-marketing he was by the 1890s, "the most read living author" ("Back-matter" *Enchantment*). In addition, Gunter has continually been recalled for his role in the popularization of Ernest Thayer's "Casey at the Bat."

Gunter's 1891 *A Florida Enchantment* remains one of the lost works, out of print since its initial appearance. It has, nonetheless, in recent years managed to become the author's most widely discussed work. The 1914 Vitagraph film of the same title has indeed become a progressively more common fixture at many queer film festivals over

the past two decades. Highlighted by Vito Russo in *The Celluloid Closet* as one of the first sustained filmic engagements with issues of sexual and gender transgression, the *Enchantment* film has come to be situated as an ur-text within the emergent history of lesbian and gay visibility. Returning to the *Enchantment* novel through a critical and interpretative lens provided by the various historiographies of the rise of consumer capitalism examined above, allows one to explore how the intersections of space and the individual and of emerging identities and historical context work to inform that novel's representations of shifting gender and desire. By specifically attending to the processes through which the transformation of that novel's central character is inscribed, the *Enchantment* emerges as perhaps just what Brooks was seeking: a novel of and for the 1890s.

The novel opens with what will turn out to be an ongoing central feature for the text's progression: an act of consumption:

"Yes, right there! The one between the rattlesnake's fangs and the alligator's skin."

"Oh! the little black box," remarks the saleswoman.

"Yes—the ebony casket," says Miss Lillian Travers to the woman who presides behind the counter in that portion of Vedder's extraordinary museum, which is devoted to commerce in the form of disposing of Florida curiosities and horrors, to Northern tourists. (Gunter 7)

From the beginning what one finds working its way throughout the narrative is an intense concern not only with geographical oppositions: between the North and the South, between the financial center in the city (whether New York or Jacksonville) and its seeming abandonment in and through tourism, but additionally and importantly, an embodiment of these oppositions through consumption and through gendered and racialized identities. Lillian's purchase of the "old moth-eaten, cobweb covered black

box" takes place not only within a localized economy that is structured around a relationship with outsiders: the Northern tourists, but further, is reflective of the very space that the curiosity museum inhabits: St. Augustine, like the museum, is site of spectacle and consumption (Gunter 8). As a resort town it founds its success on its ability to avoid any sense of the normal. Whether figured as the repository of various "sharks' jaws, manatee-skins and bead-work" or as a reconstructed Spanish frontier outpost, both the city and the museum foreclose any resemblance to the Northern urban centers from which its customers originate (Gunter 8). Yet as the narrator notes, this dissimilitude is in itself a creation of those very outsiders: "St. Augustine—this old town of the Spanish conquistadors, now rebuilt and revived by a modern conqueror of finance and oil" (Gunter 19). Alluding to both Flagler and Carnegie, the narrator highlights not only the intersecting worlds of high capital and in Trachtenberg's phrasing, the hinterland, but also the complex associations at once tying and severing this hinterland's history to its present. St. Augustine was an "old town of Spanish conquistadors" but never one known for its high Baroque cathedrals or Moorish influenced architecture (both continually referred to by the narrator). These were latter, planned and financed constructions—ones which sought to refashion what had been a relatively backwater village into a bustling haven for wealthy Northern tourists and European investors. History is here commodified, made marketable, and cleansed of any unseemly vestiges and sold back to the same class of people who did the cleaning. Not all history escapes. Lillian's box, lost for nearly a hundred years on the shores of Anastasia Island contains within it not only a strange, powerful, and exceptionally profitable piece of merchandise, it also includes a forgotten and disavowed historical

narrative—one directly fixing Lillian, her fortune and her family to piracy, the slave-trade, and to an expedition into the "darkness" of Africa.

Neither her purchase of the box nor her presence in St. Augustine are accidental though. Drawn as a "youthful" twenty-five year old on the verge of a large inheritance, Lillian:

[H]ardly looks even that age as she trips gracefully along with cheeks reddened in the seabreeze that is tossing her delicate laces and mousseline de soie about her lithe and charming figure and giving passing glimpses of a pair of pretty feet and charming ankles perfectly booted and hosed. (Gunter 10-11)

Engaged to a Northern hotel physician who earns a living caring for the rich and infirm and who, further, must migrate with them as they travel to Florida for the winter, Lillian has come to St. Augustine in order to finalize plans for her intended marriage. Like her fiancé, Dr. Fredrick Cassadene, Lillian is someone caught in the middle of social and geographic worlds:

Miss Travers . . . is an importation direct from New York. Her father had been a Wall Street banker, though her mother was a member of the Oglethorpe family, one of the best known in Florida, descendents from the grand old governor of colonial times. (Gunter 14)

She is in short neither Northern nor Southern, new rich nor old money. An amalgamation of both she presents a pointed contrast to those other prominent female characters in the narrative: Bessie Horton, one of Lillian's winter acquaintances, Constantia Oglethorpe, Lillian's aunt and "a maiden of some fifty summers and winters" and Jane Rouser, Lillian's "mulatto" maid (Gunter 14/17). With the exception of the widow Stella Lovejoy, Lillian remains during the entirety of the text the only Northern and urban female to receive any length of attention. Unremarkable at the commencement of the narrative, Lillian's separation from these other Southern women will prove vital to her ability to manage the transformation she will undergo. Unlike them, Lillian is

enabled by her mixed status to move about in ways none of the others can alone. This mobility—even if considered unimportant during its initial descriptions—is nonetheless inscribed early on through Lillian's persistent referencing back to trains, railroads and to the lengths of time it takes to travel to various different locations. Over and against this itinerancy stands Constantia perpetually rooted in her St. Augustine home. It is Constantia who will recount for Lillian some aspects of a "romantic history" of the black box and as we learn, of its twin currently in Constantia's care (Gunter 31).

"Aunt Connie, tell me the story of that old ebony casket—the little one in your parlor—the family heirloom. . . . To which Miss Constantia replies:

"There is nothing peculiar connected with *that* casket, though I believe there is a very extraordinary story connected with the other one." (Gunter 30)

Both, she explains, "belonged to old Captain Hauser Oglethorpe" who had brought them back from one of his travels (Gunter 30). In one he had deposited an extremely valuable souvenir while the other was to serve as a decoy; empty and useless, this was the box that Lillian finds in her aunt's parlor. As Constantia continues:

"During the war of 1812, when my grandfather and your great-grandfather returned from a voyage to Africa, where I believe, my dear"—here she laughs a little—"he had been for a cargo of slaves, though that is omitted in the family annals, he was pursued by a British sloop-of-war, the *Falcon* and his vessel, the *Firefly* was wrecked . . . " (Gunter 31)

During the conflict and the subsequent sinking of the *Firefly*, only one of the boxes had been salvaged and to Oglethorpe's dismay it was the "barren" one. As Constantia resumes her story, she tells Lillian of her great-grandfather's eventual fall into senility, during which he remained fixated as a "gibbering idiot" on his lost treasure:

He was always crying and pointing to that island, and saying that in the other casket, lost forever beneath the ocean, was what would make him very rich and some woman very happy. . . . The poor old imbecile had some curious ideas, however, for he said it would make that woman a man. (Gunter 31)

Wealth and gender are fixed together—not simply in Oglethorpe's senility—but in the narrative of the *Enchantment* as two inseparable and unstable states of being. The secret of that connection lies at the heart of the novel, not to mention within the contents of the black box. As Lillian discovers when she opens her newly purchased black casket, Oglethorpe's cache is wrapped up (literally) in an even more detailed history. His admonition for the one who discovers his treasure: "for all women who suffer" (Gunter 50).

Lillian's purchase and the historical ties unraveled by its hidden history come about in the narrative in the midst of her own intended and increasingly fraying marriage plans. Realizing that her fiancé has been infelicitous, Lillian refuses to heed her aunt's advice:

"Marry and believe! . . . If your husband says he has been detained until two in the morning by business, *swallow* it! If he declares that he has been at his club until three—don't ask him *which* Club! . . . DON'T DOUBT IT! Have the faith of martyrs and believe in miracles! It is the only way to be a happy wife . . . men are what nature made them—selfish animals, and as nature has been very kind to them " remarks her aunt with a grim smile, "they do the best for themselves and have pretty good time in *this* world. Ours will come in the *next* my dear!" (Gunter 46)

Lillian's reply seals her ultimate intertwinement with the black box: "I can't wait! I have too impatient a disposition . . . I believe I'd like to be a man" (Gunter 46).

The manuscript Lillian finds upon opening the box is wrapped around a simple vial containing four amber and incandescent seeds. Turning to the document: "The Marvelous Record of Hauser Oglethorpe," she reads the outlines of her great-grandfather's surreptitious find in its lengthy subtitle: "Record of My Marvelous Discovery of the Tree of Sexual Change" (Gunter 51). This internal narrative takes the reader, via the *Firefly*, on "an excursion after both white and black ivory" (Gunter 51).

Driven off course on the west coast of Africa by policing British ships, the *Firefly* happens upon a rumor of an all male tribe that move about surrounding tribes capturing females who "soon after entering the village became men also" (Gunter 51). Seeking to expose the veracity of the rumor, Oglethorpe captures the tribe's chief, Quassi, and through the threat of physical punishment and death, forces him to take Oglethorpe to the "Tree of Sexual Change." Traveling with a number of his shipmates on a two-day march through swampland and jungle, the crew:

[L]anded, bringing Quassi with them, and we stood upon the shore—myself, five white men and one grinning negro, and before us was the tree, in whose wondrous power we as yet scarcely believe but soon would know. (Gunter 56)

Five of the men, including Oglethorpe, test the magic of the tree and soon find themselves "women, and thought ourselves beautiful and had wench's airs, graces, feelings" (Gunter 57). In what becomes a standard reaction to the seeds' effects for all those who ingest them the men/women immediately find themselves sexually desirous of the "opposite" gender:

[W]e five did look lovingly upon the boatswain, for he was the only white man among us, and so grew jealous of each other, and fought with each other, that the boatswain might be our own best fellow, scratching and tearing each other's hair, while he, our lord and master, looked on and laughed, crying in a jocular way: "Go it, Poll! Scratch her Sue! Ho ho! This is a rare harem for the boatswain of the *Firefly*—I have as many wenches as an Arab sheik!" (Gunter 57)

What is so fascinating about these transformations, as well as all those other conversions undergone in the text, are how they all take place securely within a seemingly fixed system of gender and racial assignment. Returning for a moment to Somerville's contention above, this was a period marked by a number of "aggressive attempt[s] to classify, separate, and racialize bodies" (Somerville 2). These attempts can be understood, as Somerville herself does, in terms not only of the classification and

separation of those bodies marked as "white," and "black," (and I would argue "red" and "yellow" as well) but also in terms of an amplified desire to decisively determine the proper boundaries at the level of the body of gender and sexuality as well. In addition, we find moving its way through the *Enchantment* exactly this sense of the strange pervasiveness of these attempts, even if such logic cannot help but work in tension against the very indecisiveness of identity within its narrative. Gender in the text is undeniably mutable: the magic seeds being only the concrete encapsulation of such malleability. What is more, race is encountered in many ways as mutable too if only apparent in the shifting denotations of the boatswains. First identified as a "savage" and "cruel Spaniard" refusing to partake of the seeds, he is eventually transmogrified, if only briefly, into an "Arab sheik" (Gunter 54/56/57). What and who then exactly is the boatswain? Over and against this momentary racial flux though, Quassi remains ever more tightly positioned as the total racial Other: "cunning in his African mind" he waits patiently for the men/women to grow tired before he seeks to both protect his tribe's tree and slaughter the sailors (Gunter 57-58). Oglethorpe, deducing his plan, consumes one more seed and—changed back into a man and a captain (as he notes)—instructs his sailors to do the same. Gathering as many seeds as possible, the men set fire to the tree so that Oglethorpe might have "a monopoly of the wondrous seeds so that women would beg me for them, and queens and princesses cringe to me the gruff old sailor and the treasures of the earth be poured upon me" (Gunter 59). Surprised by the appearance of more tribesmen, the sailors narrowly escape alive finding on their return to the *Firefly*, that in the chase they lost all but four seeds. These are the four seeds Lillian discovers in

the vial, their history perpetually entangled with her family's as well as her own fortune, which must rest, if only in part, on the particular profession of her great-grandfather.

Lillian standing on the precipice between genders ingests one of the seeds:

Its effects is horrible—appalling—it seems to be alive—to have wings and fly down her throat, giving her tonsils an awful twinge as it passes them, and springs straight to the central of her brain. She reels and sinks upon the sofa and lies there half-dazed, half stunned, electric thrills run through her muscles tinge and throb . . . After a time her mind becomes more logical than it had been before, and her nerves to grow stronger, and have more toughness to defy sensation. (Gunter 70-71)

While externally Lillian observes few changes at first—the appearance of minor facial hair, a strengthening of her arms—internally, she notes that no longer is she possessed by those "feminine traits" that had so plagued her before: "jealousy, indecision, and apprehension (Gunter 84/92/106)". In their place has emerged a quiet and hidden certitude of her/his adolescence that is largely comprised by one crucial decision: to fully complete her/his own conversion into her newly self-named subject Lawrence. It is this resolution, to complete her/his transformation that finds itself played out over the course of several weeks. Importantly, it is a metamorphosis that cannot be completed within the resort town of St. Augustine. As the novel continues, Lillian /Lawrence's retreat from this hinterland is intimately tied to her/his desire to solidify her/his transference between gendered subjects. In order to accomplish this Lillian/Lawrence is forced to enter into the center of nineteenth century commerce and consumption: New York.

As dusk is falling upon New York, the Pennsylvania Railroad ferry boat brings what is called Lillian Travers . . . into that great city. . . . very tired, for a thirty-three hours railway journey, even on that most luxurious of trains – "the Florida Special" – is wearisome and Miss Travers has had a great many precautions to take during this trip, that are not necessary for ordinary travelers. (Gunter 150)

Despite the *Enchantment's* assurance that Lillian is fully poised to become Lawrence, at the level of the text and the language with which it describes this newly

emergent subject, lexical confusion and slippage are rampant. Whether the text performs a narrative distancing – as with the above’s “what is named” – or with its constant shifting in terms of referent during which Lillian becomes Lilly or Lawrence, he, she or it, Miss Travers or Mr. Talbot – all within the space of a single page, or at times within the confines of a single paragraph, the *Enchantment* can never quite decide upon the status of its main character. Lillian/Lawrence likewise is beset with her/his own confusion, and lacking any further means to ascertain internally her/his nature outside of a corollary and methodical legal authentication, returns to her/his hometown of New York to prepare for a more socially legible and ostensibly more permanent shift.

[S]he has called upon her lawyer. And incidentally looking over her securities, found a good portion is in convertible bonds. ... And, in fact, Miss Travers seems to be bent upon getting away with her fortune. She instructs her real estate brokers to sell all her realty in New York. They open their eyes at her orders, but do her bidding, Miss Travers being her own mistress, and any conveyances she may make perfectly valid and good. (Gunter 153)

What is at stake here is more than a simple liquidation of finances. For Lillian to become Lawrence requires not merely any putative alteration between gender designations. As the novel continually demonstrates, such a transformation is hardly as complete or final as it might at first appear to be, hence Lillian’s/Lawrence’s ability to move back and forth between subject-statuses at will, her/his facility at “passing” as either according to the needs of the situation. Gathering her/his wealth, L.T. engages a safety deposit box and provides the clerk with her/his own cryptic instructions:

I wish to make this deposit box open to myself and one other, Mr. Lawrence M. Talbot. I shall be away from New York, but Mr. Talbot will bring a letter of introduction here from me to you; he will also give you this password: ‘My turn next!’ This is his signature; and she hands them a card upon which she has already written in as masculine hand as she can command: ‘Lawrence M. Talbot.’ (Gunter 155)

The text's resolving into a spatial and temporal doubling and separation of Lillian and Lawrence requires that a willful suspension of knowledge. They are both, after all, inhabited the same body at the exact same moment, or rather, Lillian and Lawrence are always already the same person. Unlike the prior versions of gender shifting that were witnessed previously in the text, as seen with the crew of the *Firefly*, the L.T. character is never granted any instantaneous re-embodiment as the opposite sex. This embodiment must be planned for and achieved through an accrument of social and economic markers of authenticity. What is so striking about these various machinations of change is the utter self-consciousness of the L.T. character in relation to these needs. At an earlier moment she/he holds a self-counsel and "looks in the glass each morning, into the smiling bold ... face of the young gentleman who nods back" (Gunter 139).

I'm going to treat you very well, my young man. You shall be rich – almost as rich as Lillian Travers was. ... I can't make a will in your favor, for it might be disputed by envious relatives, who would say I was insane to leave to you – even handsome fellow that you are—my property, from my kindred. ... Thank you Miss Travers. You're uncommon good to an unknown fellow like me. I'll try and make myself comfortable upon your liberal donation. (Gunter 139)

Indicative of the overall schizophrenic approach the narrative maintains in connection with Lillian/Lawrence, in many aspects L.T.'s predicament recalls D'Emilio's assertion that it is through the operations of capital and consumption that such non-normative identities are allowed to emerge in the late 1800s. An act of consumption and an entanglement with a systematics of commerce has severed the ties of traditional family. L.T.'s insecure gender identification – neither male nor female – is as such not merely a matter of a magic seed, but further, an issue vitally linked to her/his position within the very market that brought the seeds into her/his possession in the first place. More so, and as D'Emilio asserted, L.T.'s gender trouble is ceaselessly embedded and

routed through this circulating market. The “social instability of the system,” which D’Emilio observes is the creation of this circulation, nonetheless continues to function through the re-constraining operations of capital that seek to foster a legibility and control over this instability. L.T. can only become Lawrence, even if uneasily and indecisively, by binding her/his self with finance and its movements. For the *Enchantment* novel, this ensnarement with capital and its gendered effects are rarely anything but playful and open to constant exploitation. As the narrative posits, the constraints and strictures of the field of gender inscription, including those economic structures that encircle it, remains, for Lillian/Lawrence ever incomplete. The final, and persistently, perplexing question: does Lillian become Lawrence is presented by the text as beside the point. So long as L.T. performs Lillian, or conversely Lawrence, even as that performance requires any number of social and economic machinations, she/he can be whatever she/he wants to be.

CHAPTER 5 INCONCLUSIVE CONCLUSIONS

Recently an advisor offered up a bit of guidance, that while not directly related to this project, nonetheless highlights a good deal of the anxieties and hesitations that suffuse it; be wary, she cautioned, of falling too far into the archive. After two years of living with these texts, and a great deal longer of living with these concerns, it seems altogether appropriate that I end not only with this reported warning – but more so with an accounting as to the immediate context for this project’s composition. Begun in the period directly prior to the *Lawrence v. Texas* 2004 Supreme Court decision, I was drawn to a swirl of issues intimately connected to the future of queer life and experience within the nation. In other—less formalistic—words, as queer I felt that my future, my survival and my life were in many ways wrapped up with others things: with laws and prohibitions handed down over the course of decades, with a constantly felt urgency in the face of systemic homophobia, and ultimately with the means through which such a logic of oppression found expression and extension through a rather particular discursive maneuver. Whether as evidenced in earlier legal moments, (*Bowers v. Hardwick* comes immediately to mind) or through that peculiar frame of reference generally called “common sense,” such a discursive maneuver might best be seen as one of historical amnesia. It was, after all, within the *Bowers* decision that an entire generation of American queers were scolded with the ever re-iterated finding that to conceive of our

lives and ours desires as in anyway “‘deeply rooted in this Nation's history and tradition’ or ‘implicit in the concept of ordered liberty’ is, at best, facetious.”

At the precise moment of that statement’s circulation however, an emergent corpus of scholarship and research was increasingly intent on recovering and reconstituting that exact historical memory and record that such performative machinations so assiduously disavowed. As witnessed in the works of those as varied as Jonathan Katz, John D’Emilio, John Boswell, David Halperin, Joan Scott, Lisa Duggan, Esther Newton, George Chauncey, and James Gifford (among many, many others) there is the palpable comprehension that doing history in general and queer history in particular, matters. For many, probing this history meant a close adherence to the Foucauldian impulse of a return to the archive, and of an investment in epistemic and discursive retrieval. Over and against any juridical fiat or “common sense”, these scholars and activists saw the promise of visibility as one that forcibly denied any fastidiousness of a queer presence in the past. As Eve Sedgwick offered, history and reading are, in themselves, more than interesting or compelling, they are further, matters of survival:

I think many adults (and I am among them) are trying, in our work, to keep faith with the vividly remembered promises made to ourselves in our childhood: promises to make invisible possibilities and desires visible; to make the tacit things explicit; to smuggle queer representation in where it must be smuggled and, with the relative freedom of adulthood to challenge queer-eradicating impulses frontally where they are to be so challenged. (Sedgwick 3)

This project was likewise motivated. Given its composition during a period in which juridical proclamation shifted to such an extent as to allow that” Bowers was not correct when it was decided, and it is not correct today” and further, that such a reversal was founded upon the very historiographic efforts noted above and throughout this

project, it comes as no surprise that in many aspects much of the struggle here to articulate a queer history that speaks to the needs of a queer present must appear in some degree as dated (*Lawrence*, “Opinion”). It was also written during a span of time in which the cultural scene was suddenly inundated with any number of popular queer representations – from *Queer as Folk*, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, to *Will and Grace* or any number of equally sanguine attempts at making “visible” certain predilections and desires. My profound unease in the face of such spectacles perhaps speaks a bit to my overall feeling that they appear to lack, in total, any awareness or impression of the very attempts and challenges that queer theory, and lesbian and gay history, have for so long sought to convey. In other words, these popular entertainments uncannily reproduce the exact fastidious in relation to identity, history and desire that the Supreme Court – once the arbiter of such insult – now so eloquently derides. These amusements do, nonetheless, have a certain power in their overall, even if ahistorical and relatively apolitical, exuberance. My vacillating qualms aside, it was exactly this exuberance that drew me to both the novel and the film version of *A Florida Enchantment* to begin with. Over the past two decades, the *Enchantment* film has come to hold a prime position as an early North American example of lesbian and gay representation and as one recent festival promoter hailed it, the film is “a madcap gender-bending, cross-dressing camp classic” (*2001 Miami Gay and Lesbian Film Festival* – “Program”). But what such a description leaves out, and what for the most part contemporary mainstream enunciations of queer life and desire ignore, is a complexity and contextuality underlying these presentations. Ultimately, it is precisely this lack that forms the most subtle of caveats, which I sought to argue here. As a political and historical impulse, it is not enough to

simply find or recover queer cultures or literatures of the past. These histories must be made to connect with and be informed by a comprehension of those overlapping and intersecting social fields through which they are discernable. For my purposes in this project, that social field was the rise of consumer capitalism during the late nineteenth century. How, I wondered, did representations of troubled gender and sexuality function in relation to this historical milieu and what were the boundaries and borders encircling the bodies that inhabited it, fictively and otherwise? Or, and to return to a vocabulary of the archive, what were the conditions of possibility for such representations as those found within the Enchantment novel? It is my concluding hope that, by so falling into the archive, I might have managed, in the least, to not only trace the lines and contours of such a contextual ground, but further, that I might have undermined those introductory injunctions to speak a “true sex” just enough for them to remain open and inconclusive.

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