ANDROGYNOUS DEMOCRACY:
AMERICAN MODERNITY AND THE DUAL-SEXED BODY POLITIC

By

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Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,
Missing me one place search another,
I stop somewhere waiting for you.

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"Androgynous Democracy: American Modernity and the Dual-Sexed Body Politic" explores how late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American writers used the concept of androgyny—as it was understood within the specific artistic, religious, scientific, and economic discourses of the time—to design their ideal formulation of the modern body politic. I argue that within these contexts androgyny has come to symbolize both democracy's self-destructive impulses and its potential for gender, racial, and social equality. As a means of providing the proper historical context for the study, chapter 1 broadly sketches androgyny's reception in the pre-national and antebellum periods, specifically highlighting how the Transcendentalists' affirmative vision of androgyny stemmed from the "organic" nationalist principles of the early German romantic Johann Gottfried von Herder. The second chapter then examines how Henry James grappled with the implications of his own homosexuality (understood then as "psychical androgyny") and international citizenship as the United States reassessed who was included in the
post-Reconstruction body politic. In chapter 3 I explain how evolutionary science's notion of “atavistic androgyny" provided Frank Norris and Charlotte Perkins Gilman with different ways to understand the liberal subject's place within a pre-World War I economy that increasingly blurred the lines between “masculine" production and “feminine" consumption. Chapter 4 addresses the reactionary and radical politics of the 1930s South. Both conservative agrarian John Crowe Ransom and proletarian writer Grace Lumpkin evoked the dual-sexed body politic during the Great Depression, though with very different political agendas in mind. The final chapter turns to W. E. B. Du Bois's radical reformulation of the black folk/volk. His paradigm had later implications for the Harlem Renaissance writer Marita Bonner, whose androgynous urban characters grappled with a modern polis separated as much by race as by gender and sexuality. The Epilogue then considers how Rosie the Riveter's appearance on the cover of The Saturday Evening Post in 1943 anticipated a larger debate during and after second-wave feminism about the efficacy and assumptions of androgyny.
INTRODUCTION: 
HUMAN FORMS AND THE DEMOCRACIES THAT HAUNT THEM

And in the restless mood in which one takes books out and puts them back again without looking at them I began to envisage an age to come of pure, self-assertive virility, such as the letters of professors (take Sir Walter Raleigh’s letters for instance) seem to forebode, and the rulers of Italy have already brought into being. For one can hardly fail to be impressed in Rome by the sense of unmitigated masculinity; and whatever the value of unmitigated masculinity upon the state, one may question the effect of it upon art and poetry. At any rate, according to the newspapers, there is a certain anxiety about fiction in Italy. There has been a meeting of academicians whose object it is “to develop the Italian novel.” “Men famous by birth, or in finance, industry or the Fascist corporations” came together the other day and discussed the matter, and a telegram was sent to the Duce expressing the hope “that the Fascist era would soon give birth to a poet worthy of it.” We may all join in that pious hope, but it is doubtful whether poetry can come out of an incubator. Poetry ought to have a mother as well as a father. The Fascist poem one may fear, will be a horrid little abortion such as one sees in a glass jar in the museum of some country town. Such monsters never live long, it is said; one has never seen a prodigy of that sort cropping grass in a field. Two heads on one body do not make for length of life.

—Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own* (1928)

Taking its cue from the epigraph by Virginia Woolf, this dissertation puts notions of androgyny and American nationalism into conversation with one another. Musing on how one creates a nationalist poem in the early twentieth century, Woolf believes that writing from a purely masculine perspective produces an “abortion” that, in David Hume’s famous line, falls “dead-born from the press.” The goal of creativity, especially when writing on a national scale, is to achieve a perspective that is “man-womanly” or “woman-manly”: “It is when this [male-female] fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilised and uses all its faculties. Perhaps a mind that is personally masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine” (102). In Woolf’s opinion, only the
truly great writers of the world such as Shakespeare or Coleridge knew how to write from this perspective, regardless of their personal thoughts on women as a sex.

Yet ever since Woolf's critical inquiry into the link between nationalism and androgyny as given in the sixth chapter of *A Room of One's Own*, surprisingly little has been said on the matter in Anglo-American scholarly circles.² Beginning with Carolyn G. Heilbrun's groundbreaking 1973 *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny*, studies of combined male-female creativity have often implied that questions of national representation or nation-building are small, if non-existent, concerns. For her, the "hidden river of androgyny" has been a constant in writings throughout western literature, from the ancient Greeks and Shakespeare to Henry James and the Bloomsbury group. By and large, the focus of Heilbrun's and other such studies has been literary and philosophical history, not political or cultural history. Kari Weil's *Androgyny and the Denial of Difference* (1992) assesses the dual-sexed figure in the European Romantic and modernist periods while saying little about the contemporaneous development of European nationalism. Lisa Rado's 2000 *The Modern Androgyne Imagination: A Failed Sublime* bypasses issues of nationalism altogether, looking instead at how the androgyne has, by the modernist period, taken the place of the female muse-male poet paradigm.

From the tacit suggestion of these and other studies, it would seem as if artistic renditions of the androgyne exist in a political vacuum. In an attempt to get back to Virginia Woolf's initial inquiries, "Androgynous Democracy" investigates how various nationalist

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² While George L. Mosse's groundbreaking *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe* (1985) does make incidental mention of androgyny, it does so only within a Continental context. Also Laura Behling's *The Masculine Woman in the United States, 1890-1935* (2001) concentrates on gender transgression, but she largely overlooks the ways in which the specific historical and political contexts of androgyny informed the "masculine" woman's prominence in Gilded Age and modern America.
paradigms involved in the development of American democracy have worked themselves out in texts that include various notions of androgyny. My intention is to show that, theoretically speaking, democracy and androgyny are and have been more interwoven than most may realize.

Though this study focuses on American literature and culture from roughly the 1870s-1940s, I want to begin by close reading a few key passages from Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (1840) to suggest how the specter of androgyny has long resonated at the level of national representation. While Tocqueville's famous book was indeed optimistic about the young republic's general prospects, it also revealed a certain anxiety about the relations between men and women. In his chapter "How the American Understands the Equality of the Sexes," Tocqueville writes: "I believe that the social changes that bring nearer to the same level the father and son, the master and servant, and, in general superiors and inferiors will raise women and make her more the equal of man" (2:222). Yet Tocqueville's celebration of egalitarianism is further tempered or qualified by fears of what democracy appeared to have done in his native land.

There are people in Europe who, confounding together the different characteristics of the sexes, would make man and woman into beings not only equal but alike. They would give to both the same functions, impose on both the same duties, and grant to both the same rights; they would mix them in all things—their occupations, their pleasures, their business. It may readily be conceived that by thus attempting to make one sex equal to the other, both are degraded, and from so preposterous a medley of the works of nature nothing could ever result but weak men and disorderly women. (2:222)

As the passage subtly suggests, Americans during the early nineteenth century often felt immense anxiety about their government—and perhaps with good reason. Being constituents of the first modern democracy, they were setting out into uncharted waters, and they quickly sensed the economic, social, and political vicissitudes of a country that
had no monarch and no recognizable caste system on which to base relations among citizens. Furthermore, as G. J. Barker-Benfield has shown, American men often felt their patriarchal prerogative threatened under a democratic philosophy that had the theoretical potential to erase the socially created boundaries between themselves and women (40-1).

Finally Tocqueville reassures his readers that in America there was no need to fear: the separation of spheres, which was rapidly taking hold of bourgeois American culture, reined in democracy's penchant for the complete blending of the sexes. “The Americans have applied to the sexes the great principle of political economy which governs the manufacturers of our age, by carefully dividing the duties of man from those of woman in order that the great work of society may be carried on” (2:222-23). Tocqueville suggests that where European nations were destined for gender anarchy, America will maintain order and balance based on rules of how and where men and women carry out “duties” in society.

These musings are perhaps not as clear or straightforward as they may first seem. In fact, it is wholly possible to read them in two different ways. We can readily infer that Tocqueville sees men and women as inherently different—not only anatomically, but also psychologically. American democracy will therefore be successful, readers might assume, because the young nation will heed the dictates of nature and develop its “political economy” and its marketplace on these immutable distinctions. In this reading, the “weak men and disorderly women” back in Europe are understood as freaks of nature who presumably threaten stability.

The second and more complex way of reading these musings is to venture that Tocqueville is attempting to “imagine” the American nation as a society that adheres to a
putatively "natural" separation of the sexes doctrine, although he begrudgingly admits that democracy does in fact have the ability to create new gendered categories for its citizens. Linda K. Kerber has argued that separate spheres "were due neither to cultural accident nor to biological determinism. They were social constructions, camouflaging economic service, a service whose benefits were unequally shared" (34). In this second reading, there is stronger evidence of the existence of a social contract, a tacit agreement among men and women that the well-being of the body politic relies first and foremost on creating the rhetoric of immutable sexual boundaries. The ideological requirements of republican womanhood, Kerber asserts, entailed not only toleration of this rhetoric, but also its propagation.

The very fact that we cannot completely pinpoint Tocqueville's sentiments may signal a larger indeterminacy on the part of western medical science to understand what constitutes true psychical and psychological difference between men and women. Thomas Laqueur sees this uncertainty coming to a head roughly around the year 1800, a time when science began to move away from the "one-sex" to the "two-sex" model (4-8). Prior to the nineteenth century, physicians assumed that human anatomy derived from one corporeal prototype. The difference between a man and a woman, therefore, was not necessarily a difference in genitalia, but in how a universal set of genitalia manifested itself on men's and women's bodies. "For thousands of years it had been a commonplace that women had the same genitals as men, except that, as Nemesius, bishop of Emesea in the fourth century, put it: 'theirs are inside the body and not outside it'" (Laqueur 4).

The movement away from the one-sex model that occurred around the beginning of the nineteenth century no doubt fueled the separate spheres ideology that was quickly
becoming a staple of western bourgeois culture. If sexes are inherently different at the anatomical and psychological level, a great weight has been lifted from American democracy, since democracy only has to follow the dictates of nature and allow men and women to gravitate to their proper places. But should Tocqueville's ruminations still be haunted by the one-sex model of a universal androgynous prototype, American democracy itself might run the risk of creating a polity of weak men and disorderly women by blurring lines of sexual distinctions.

It becomes increasingly evident from Tocqueville's musings that gender plays a significant and contested role in the development of American nationalism. This term “nationalism,” needless to say, is and has been the subject of great controversy. For the most part scholars agree that nationalism is a sense of political, economic, and cultural collective identification that developed sometime after the breakup of the medieval world—a time that also marked the decline of the Catholic Church's unrivaled cultural and spiritual authority. Roughly concurrent with this ecclesiastical weakening was the development of capitalism, which frequently sought out new markets and resources in distant lands. When unifying for mutual economic or political benefit, kingdoms or fiefdoms would rely less on the notion of the divine rights of kings and more on a sense of cultural or linguistic similarity to bind citizens together.

From there, scholars have disagreed on what is at the core of nationalist sentiment. Much of nationalist discourse has often centered around kinship and ethnic ties. These "primordial" ties are given their greatest voice in the early German romantic Johann

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2. Anthony Smith provides one of the most basic, and hence one of the most durable, definitions of nationalism. In *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (1999) he calls it “an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining [the] identity, unity and autonomy of a social group some of whose members deem it to constitute an actual or potential nation” (18).
Gottfried von Herder, who suggested that any one people or Volk is so deeply rooted in the past that it seems to have no detectable origin—as if it had sprung from the primordial soil: “The most natural state [. . .] is one nation, with one national character [. . .]. [A] nation is as much a natural plant as a family, with only more branches” (qtd. in Young 39). This view has given birth to the related concepts of the Volknation and the Kulturnation. Whereas proponents of the Volknation argue that nations have sprung from a common race, proponents of the Kulturnation believe that nations develop out of a common culture that may or may not have the same racial stock (Yuval-Davis 12).

Though the two terms are not exactly the same, they are very often synonymous—enough so that I have combined them into the functional term Volk-kulturnation for the purposes of this study. The Volk-kulturnation, for example, bases its strict cultural cohesion on a set of seemingly prediscursive or “natural” traits. Fascist Germany, in extending Herderian organicism in ways that most certainly would have appalled Herder himself, provides perhaps the most infamous manifestation of the Volk-kulturnation in the modern period: its notion of true “German” culture was predicated on the putative biological superiority of the Aryan race. As Hans Hanak, the National Socialist Kreisleiter of Innsbruck, remarked in 1938 to a group of Nazi women, “Culture can’t be acquired by education. Culture is in the blood. The best proof of this today is the Jews, who cannot do more than appropriate our civilization” (qtd. in Hobsbawm 63).3

3. This Volk-kulturnation “legitimacy” is further amplified by German intellectual Helmuth Langerbucher, who claimed in 1938 that, “[t]he historical knowledge gained since the days of Grimm has taught us to go beyond the concepts of a common language to the more comprehensive concept of a common blood.” Therefore the Volk refers not only to “a spiritual law,” but also “the Sign under which all persons of German blood join together into a life community felt as a community of destiny” (qtd. in Hess 6).
Most scholars in today's postmodern world doubt the veracity of the *Volk-kulturnation* paradigm. Historians ranging from Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson to Yira Nuval-Davis, Etienne Balibar, and Immanuel Wallerstein largely agree that nations are discursively constructed entities made to look timeless or primordial.\(^4\) Gellner, for example, argues that “[n]ationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist” (169). In a similar vein, Benedict Anderson sees this “imagining” of cultural and biological cohesion as a way to clearly determine who does and does not belong to the national imaginary. “[A]ll communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined,” he insists. “Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined” (6).

Running contrary to the *Volk-kulturnation* paradigm of the primordialist camp, therefore, is the *Staatnation*. Craig Calhoun points out that “the United States was conceptualized—at least in part—as a willed community, which meant that membership depended on commitment, not just ethnic or other categorization” (49). By arguing that democracy is based on the Lockean system of natural rights, proponents of the *Staatnation* see sexual, cultural, religious, or racial difference as no reason to bar members of the community from political participation. This nationalist formulation, while being the most inclusive, is also the most contested because it has to rely on more “internal” or subjective means to define its (often polymorphous) body politic. And while most democracies profess to be *Staatnations*, their pasts can reveal a different story.

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American history has shown that eligibility for civic participation has come very slowly for racial and ethnic minorities and women. As many gays and lesbians remind the nation in their current struggle to serve openly in the military, to marry, or to adopt children, the potential of the American Staatnation is far from exhausted. Indeed, one might argue that the history of most democracies is the ongoing attempt to live up to its Staatnation promise.

Furthermore, the problem that nations run into, as Tocqueville's Democracy in America tacitly suggests, is how to make a Staatnation seem like a Volk-kulturnation in order to clearly define its constituents and the national/cultural traditions that order them. Certainly the Frenchman would not be familiar with the more contemporary terminology I use here, but he seems to sense the implications of these terms' principles all too well. Ultimately undecided as to whether sexual difference can stand the test of democracy in general, Tocqueville cloaks the American Staatnation in the language of the Volk-kulturnation paradigm of the two-sex model. Though it remains unclear whether he believes that the doctrine of separate spheres is based in nature, we see nevertheless how quickly he glosses over that particular question to say definitively that democracy in America is safe because the country's men and women adhere to the doctrine anyway. As we shall see in later chapters, this intentional ambiguity proves symptomatic of a nation-state that cannot determine just how much of gender is either natural or culturally inscribed culturally inscribed.

We might safely conclude that the concept of the American Staatnation both excited and terrified Tocqueville, as it does the later writers who comprise the bulk of this study. While the Frenchman was encouraged that democracy was meant to give common
citizens a political voice, he also realized how easy it was for democracy to blur the
distinctions between men and women, as it seems to have done to disastrous effect in
Europe. As his fear of “a preposterous medley of the works of nature” suggests,
democracy's theoretical inclusiveness is tantamount to an advocacy of androgyny among
its citizenry.

The difficulty in reconciling the *Volk-kulturnation* with the *Staatnation* paradigm
became all the more prominent in the postbellum and modern(ist) eras. It was during this
time—a time after the slaves had been freed and questions of woman suffrage loomed
large—that America came face to face with its mysterious and diverse self. Yet over one
hundred years ago the term “diversity” would have had no special significance—nothing,
that is, in comparison to what we understand it to mean today. Universities, courts of law,
and places of business are now abuzz with the word's special implications as a
representative snapshot of the American population. For the past decade or two, diversity
has usually meant extracting an economically wide ranging ladleful of whites, blacks,
Hispanics, Asian Americans, Native Americans, gays, and lesbians from the “melting
pot” of America—sometimes with regard to national population proportionality,
sometimes not.

In the years immediately following the Civil War, however, no one word, symbol,
or phrase easily encapsulated class, ethnic, racial, and sexual diversity. David Leverenz
has recently referred to this particular time in American history as a type of Contact
Period, a term usually reserved for initial encounters between early European explorers
and native inhabitants of the New World. In this second age of contact, “many African
Americans, immigrants, and women dreamed of rising to respectability, and some
achieved it" (*Paternalism* 5). Leverenz's term is applicable for two reasons. First, it bespeaks a time when America had to rethink its past reliance on race as a means of bestowing citizenship. The nation, tested by four years of fratricidal bloodshed, would have to come into contact with the *Staatnation* imperative that all men—and later all women—are created equal. Second, just as early explorers used Old World tropes and symbols to demarcate, legitimate, or explain new and surprising New World phenomena, Americans after Reconstruction relied on familiar male-female models (and variations of those models) to explain other types of diversity for which there was no name or for which there was barely even an ideological concept.

As various scholars have shown over the years, the epistemologies of race, class, and sexuality are quite new in comparison to those of sex and gender. Linda Kerber has pointed out that culturally acknowledged differences between men and women in the Western tradition—though always evolving and arbitrary—are at least as old as the ancient Greeks (38-39). Yet it took until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for blackness/whiteness, heterosexuality/homosexuality, and bourgeois/proletarian distinctions to achieve articulation and relative mass comprehension. Ethnology, the forerunner of modern-day anthropology, was only beginning to codify human phenotypical differences into a consistent, albeit Eurocentric, pattern of race and ethnicity. Sexology, which attempted to classify various kinds of sexual expressions, conditions, and maladies, came onto the scene as late as the 1850s and ‘60s. As the nineteenth century progressed and the middle class became larger and more powerful, class differences and antagonisms became more pronounced. It is certainly no wonder that Americans would rely on gender differences they understood (or at least think they
did) to represent other types of difference, diversity, or ambiguity within the American polis that were new and that barely made sense.

What we now know as racial, ethnic, and class diversity as well as sexual orientation, consequently, was often articulated and negotiated by a language of sexual distinction that inevitably evoked androgyny. Instances of this androgynized nomenclature range from politics to literature. The presidential election of 1884, for example, witnessed the rise of the mugwumps—those Republicans who crossed party lines to vote for Democrat Grover Cleveland because he advocated much needed civil service reform. In an attempt to keep other Republicans from leaving the fold, loyalists often relied on the language of sexual indeterminacy to describe these mugwumps, calling them, among other things, “eunuchs,” members of a “third sex,” and “political hermaphrodites” (qtd. in Hoganson 23). These names, of course, conveyed the more subtle suggestion that the Republican Party was manly while the Democratic Party was weak and womanly. (This particular perception, as I will show in the epilogue, still exists today.) Anything that straddled these two parties was tantamount to sexual blending, if not sexual degeneracy.

Similar to political identity, racial identity has often been infused with the language and imagery of the androgyne. Though black men have often been regarded as rapacious sexual predators, blackness itself was regarded as a less advanced form of humanity akin to (white) women's intellectual and moral inferiority to men. Using a gendered analogue made common during the days of paternalistic southern slavery, whiteness was to male as blackness was to female. No doubt these and related sentiments prompted Chicago sociologist Robert Park to remark in 1918 that “[the Negro] is, so to speak, the lady
among the races" (280). The scientific roots of this linkage found amplification in the early 1860s with the famed Harvard professor Louis Agassiz. In a letter to abolitionist Samuel Gridley Howe, for instance, he warned that government policies implicitly promoting race mixing would transfigure the United States from a "manly population descended from cognate nations" into "the effeminate progeny of mixed races, half Indian, half negro, sprinkled with white blood" (qtd. in Sollors 131).

According to Agassiz, then, should "contact" between the races result in offspring, the child was understood not only as a racial halfbreed, but as a human not altogether male and not altogether female. William Faulkner flirts with this notion in a number of his famous works. Charles Bon, Thomas's Sutpen's repudiated first son in Absalom, Absalom! (1936), is a young man whose mixed-race pedigree feeds further into his sexual and gender ambiguity. His character—depicted at times as "catlike," "opulent, sensuous, sinful," and "femininely flamboyant"—is always suspect because of the ways in which he seduces his half-siblings Henry and Judith (102, 110). Through a type of androgynous psychical transference, Bon sets out to marry Judith so that he and Henry can use her as a "vessel" through which they can sublimate their erotic attraction for each other (108). It is altogether fitting that the history of these three figures is told to and by the neurotic Quentin Compson, who, according to Lisa Rado, sees himself as the male component of an androgynous whole that includes his sister Caddy (Modern Androgyne 126).

The biracial Joe Christmas is another of Faulkner's androgynes. Though he carries all the hot blood of the stereotypical black buck, his castration at the end of Light In August leads a reader to wonder if he has lost his genitalia or simply had a particularly messy period, one in which the "pent black blood seemed to rush out" of the "slashed
garments about his hips” (465). As these examples from novels published as late as the 1930s show, it was a long time before “sex and gender” would be subsumed under the larger rubric of “diversity” along with race, class, and sexuality; during the years I chart in this dissertation, race, class, and sexuality were still frequently subsumed under sex and gender.

During the modern period, however, androgyny was not always looked upon as an “abject” figuration against whom, in Judith Butler’s observation, nation-states “circumscribe[d] the domain of the [enfranchised] subject” (Bodies 3). In some cases, as we find in chapters 1 and 2, androgyny does indeed figure as such—especially when it became embroiled in sexological and racial discourses of degeneration. At other times, androgyny functioned conversely, symbolizing personal and national harmony. These views, as contradictory as they may be, nonetheless signal a larger modern consistency of the desire for wholeness, even if “wholeness” is simply another form of male prerogative or empowerment. For the patriarchal John Crowe Ransom, the subject of the first half of chapter 4, androgyny had both cohesive and disintegrative potential, but not surprisingly, the former relied on feminine submission while the latter entailed women's political, intellectual, and occupational mobility.

In distinguishing the postmodern age from the modern, Fredric Jameson suggests that the moderns “thought about [the world] itself, substantively, in Utopian or essential fashion. [. . . .] In modernism [. . .] some residual zones of ‘nature’ or ‘being,’ of the old, the older, the archaic, still subsist” (ix). Despite belief in these verities, those living within the modern period often saw the world fragmenting at a faster pace than it could reassemble itself. From the time of the peace treaty at Appomattox in 1865 to the end of
the Second World War in 1945, the United States experienced a number of rifts including, but certainly not limited to, violent labor struggles, the contentious enfranchisement of African Americans, the first wave of feminism, the Spanish-American and Great Wars, the genocidal violence leading to the “closing” of the frontier in 1890, the emergence of mass culture, the shrinking of the rural populations as urban wage labor became more prominent, and the advancement of science and technology that in one way or another contributed to these other events. This growing sense of general unease was most eloquently and poetically articulated by the expatriated high modernist T. S. Eliot, who in *The Waste Land* sought to “shore against [his] ruins” the “fragments” (46) and “broken images” (30) of an enervated western civilization. No wonder it is the androgyne Tiresias—the prophet “throbbing between two lives / Old man with wrinkled female breasts”(38)—who in Eliot's opinion is “the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest" (50). Ahistorical, omniscient, and yet still patriarchal, Tiresias *qua* archetypal androgyne symbolizes the regenerative potential of the West, which Eliot saw in both spiritual and cultural terms.

While the androgyne's timelessness has been attractive to literary modernists, it has also contributed more recently to androgyny's critical repudiation, especially among many feminists.\(^5\) For the past thirty years scholars have handled the subject with kid gloves—something I learned the hard way when trying to convince certain colleagues of

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\(^5\) Despite Christophe Den Tandt's assertion that androgynous literary representations, especially among male writers, fell away after World War I (660), it seems more than clear that the opposite is true. Lisa Rado's *The Modern Androgyne Imagination*, for instance, addresses its figuration in Woolf, Faulkner, H. D., and Joyce specifically. She also notes Wallace Stevens's “androgy nous" imagination, Ezra Pound's poem "Ortus," the "psychically pregnant narrator" in Sherwood Anderson's *Winesberg, Ohio*, Hemingway's "preoccupation" with androgyny in *A Farewell to Arms* and *The Garden of Eden*, and the transvestite Matthew O'Connor in Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* (23-4).
the validity and usefulness of my project. Carolyn Heilbrun *Towards a Recognition of Androgyny* sought to eke out the androgynous artistic impulses in western writers from ancient times to the modernist period. Second-wave feminists, largely seeing Heilbrun's postulations as another rearticulation of gender fixity, felt the book eclipsed women's history and experiences. Chief among the dissenters was Cynthia Secor, who also objected to androgyny on the grounds that it does not "take into account the rough going of historical process" (164). Though Heilbrun and others would no doubt disagree with this assessment, Secor's insistence that androgyny must be analyzed within political and temporal contexts is certainly reasonable.

In approaching this subject, I come neither to praise androgyny (as Heilbrun did) nor to bury it (as second-wave feminism did), but to historicize it. In the chapters that follow, I therefore explore how the *Volk-kulturnation* and the *Staatnation* paradigms both incorporated prevailing notions of androgyny—as they were understood within the varied contexts of religious, medical, racial, economic, and artistic discourses—into their formulations of the body politic.

It does little good for me to adhere to one set of gender definitions, since these boundaries are contingent upon time, culture, age, geography, and a host of other factors. Rita Felski's *The Gender of Modernity* has helped me understand the necessity of "partnering up" with these texts instead of trying to impose my own system of absolutes. In the introduction she states, "Rather than simply subsuming the history of gender

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6. I would like to thank David Leverenz and Susan Hegeman in particular for their faith in my project's potential.

7. Toril Moi also disagrees with Secor's line of thinking. For Moi, Heilbrun's androgynous paradigm advances the deconstruction of gender roles (13-4). I will detail this dissent in more detail in the epilogue.
relations within an overarching meta-theory of modernity articulated from the vantage point of the present, feminist critics need to take seriously past women's and men's own understanding of their positioning within historical and social processes" (8). Trying to decipher what constitutes the “eternal” masculine or feminine would only reinscribe a gender fixity that my study works against.

Working from a poststructural standpoint, in fact, makes it even less imperative to provide any “meta-theory”—except perhaps the assumption that genders, like nations, are themselves subject to cultural and historical contingency. “That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality” (Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 136), and these acts themselves are predicated on conventional patterns inscribed in time and place. The individuals I examine set up their own definitions of male and female, masculine and feminine, which they then play with or even question in innumerable ways. In cases such as John Crowe Ransom's *God Without Thunder* and his essay included in the agrarian manifesto *I'll Take My Stand*, the definitions are given explicitly, whereas in Henry James's *The Bostonians* the definitions are suggested through action and mood. For example, Basil Ransom knows that modern American manhood is predicated on competitive commercialism, but he dislikes such a cultural imperative. Olive Chancellor knows that the proper bourgeois women is not supposed to demand the vote, but she does so anyway. This hazily demarcated middle ground between the writers' historically conceived gender poles of male and female is open for critical examination, and it allows me to negotiate a space for discussion of the androgyne.
Though this dissertation sketches a narrative that generally moves from the postbellum era to World War II, there are certain places of overlap and backtrack. For the most part, I have paid greater attention to chronology within individual chapters. This approach, which ultimately privileges themes and concepts over a seamless historical progression between chapters, better emphasizes the interdisciplinary nature of the study. By looking at novels, essays, press releases, sexology reports, works of sociology, and politics, I show just how much these different media informed one another and in turn shaped a growing American middle class's attitudes about gender and national representation. Conversely, by simply organizing each chapter as a window of time that builds upon the next, I run the risk of missing the multiple points of contact between nationalism and androgyny that may occur in one relatively small temporal frame.

The first chapter sketches a genealogical framework of the androgyne from the pre-national to the modern period in the United States. I first show how the dual-sexed figure was deeply ensconced in the debate between the Volk-kulturnation and the Staatnation. I argue that despite Tocqueville's fears, many American writers associated with the Transcendental movement saw the androgyne as an affirmative embodiment of democracy. I conclude with a brief overview of postbellum and modern views of androgyny, which were highly influenced by three overlapping phenomena: the nascent discourse of sexology, the advent of the New Woman, and the curious popularity of androgyny in the American marketplace.

The second chapter focuses exclusively on Henry James, who considered himself to be what contemporaneous sexologists called a "psychical hermaphrodite" by virtue of his homosexuality. Coming of age as a novelist during the advent of sexology, James was
very ambivalent about the Transcendentalists' androgynous ideal. Using *The Bostonians* (1886) to open the chapter, I argue that James was as deeply troubled by the implications of race in the national imaginary as he was by "aberrant" sexuality. As Olive Chancellor and Basil Ransom attempt to discern Verena Tarrant's sexuality, they muse upon her racial origin and what that origin means for a nation reuniting after four years of civil war. By late career, James's opinions had begun to change. Looking at "The Manner of Our Speech," "The Speech of American Women," and "The Manners of American Women," and *The American Scene*, four pieces the writer wrote during and after his last visit to America in 1904, I argue that James cautiously envisioned greater public affirmation of citizens who found themselves in flux between conventional gender poles.

The third chapter shows the corporate appropriation of the androgyne as America moved into the twentieth century. First using Frank Norris's 1901 "epic of the wheat," *The Octopus*, I elaborate upon a system that I call "incorporated androgyny." The Supreme Court's sanctioning of corporate citizenship in 1886 helped create a new form of liberal subjecthood, one that combined both the production impulse, usually coded as masculine, and the consumption impulse, usually coded as feminine. Through his characters Norris ties the new liberal subject to evolutionary discourses of atavistic androgyny, thus creating a narrative that "naturalizes" capitalism. In the second part of the chapter I discuss Charlotte Perkins Gilman, whose writings just before and after the turn of the century provide a different view of the modern liberal subject. Especially in her 1915 utopian novel *Herland*, Gilman suggests that consumption impulses in human beings are no more feminine than production impulses are masculine. Searching instead for the non-gendered, "human" qualities of American citizens, she questions to what
extent the entire discourse of androgyny is a part of a masculine signifying order that helps prop up a nation's rhetoric and self-conception.

The next two chapters then investigate the ways in which an androgynous body politic has been entwined with fears of class and racial unrest. The fourth chapter details the political maneuverings of two southerners during the 1930s: the conservative agrarian John Crowe Ransom and the proletarian novelist Grace Lumpkin. For Ransom, the welfare state was a sign of the government's fusing of "masculine" rationality (demography, sociology, statistics) and "feminine" sentiment (charity and missionary service) in ways that ripped individuals out of their putative "organic" southern communities. Lumpkin sought a different tack in To Make My Bread, her 1932 novel based on the violent textile mill strike in Gastonia, North Carolina in 1929. Initially reacting against the volkish sensibilities of Ransom and his agrarian intellectual "brethren," the novel explores to what extent striking southern workers can safely and successfully subsume gender under the aegis of class. In the strikers' creation of a union, women laborers in particular question what it means to advocate a welfare state that regards women as nothing but pseudo-men. These questions, I argue, indicate the American Communist Party's difficulty to adopt a clear and consistent stance on "the woman question" during the tumultuous 1930s.

The final chapter discusses the work of black intellectual and leader W. E. B. Du Bois and Harlem Renaissance writer Marita Bonner. I contextualize both authors' works within the discourse of the Volk movement, which had been developing in Europe and America throughout the nineteenth century. In resisting the scientific and social discourses that had linked blackness to androgyny throughout much of the nineteenth
century, Du Bois reformulated his black folk to position manhood, not racial purity, as its prime component. In setting up the inner-city black man as the unmanly foil to his black folk, he often fell back on the very androgynous discourses he sought to escape. In her writings from the 1920s and ‘30s Marita Bonner exposes the fallacies in Du Bois's scheme and suggests that the inner city neighborhood provides the most hospitable site for the transgression of racial and gender boundaries. As fascism was on the rise in Europe during the 1930s, Bonner implicitly questioned to what extent the Untied States's notion of order and civility was simply a mask for the violent suppression of racial and gender fluidity.

The epilogue then examines Rosie the Riveter and her late twentieth-century legacy. Her appearance in wartime production anticipated not only second-wave and postmodern feminism in some important respects, but also a larger debate about the efficacy and legitimacy of the male-female binary in American nationalist discourse. Highlighting the controversy Heilbrun's *Towards a Recognition of Androgyny* stirred in the early 1970s, I suggest that even in the deconstructive postmodern era the binary still has a remarkably strong hold on America's self-conception, a point borne out by the recent 2004 presidential election.

Androgyny—be it manifested psychologically, spiritually, artistically, or physically—has indeed been a key concern in the history of this nation's ideological formation. As the next chapter shows in greater detail, many others shared the muted anxiety Tocqueville felt over psychically androgynous citizens. Yet at the same time, there were those who felt that androgyny was the ultimate triumph of a democratic
nation. The philosophical conflict that ensued is testament to the simultaneous joy and fear that democracy continues to instill in the minds of Americans.
CHAPTER 1
A GENEALOGY OF THE AMERICAN ANDROGYNE FROM THE PRE-NATIONAL TO THE MODERN PERIOD

The trope of the body structures concerns for (among others) integration, boundaries, power, autonomy, freedom, and order. Thus the idea of the body works to delineate who shall be a part of the polity and to describe the nature of the polity itself.


Who need be afraid of the merge?

– Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (1855)

1.1 Androgyny and Nationalist Paradigms in Colonial and Antebellum America

Can countries be adequately represented by a single human body? The question I pose has loomed over the intellectual development of nationalism. The individual qua nation-state is due in large part to nationalism's relatively coterminous evolution with the humanist discourse of natural rights and the liberal subject. As opposed to Plato's notion that the human is a communal being within a state, or the medieval notion that the state exists within the larger realm of Christendom, nations during and after the Enlightenment have been understood “as themselves being individuals—both in the literal sense of being indivisible, and metaphorically as singular beings that move through history as ordinary people move through their biographical life courses” (Calhoun 44). John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, Jean Jacques Rousseau, and Johann Gottlieb Fichte have all shown in their own ways that the modern notion of personhood is understood within the context of a nation

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that attempts to reflect that person's social, economic, and political desires.\(^1\) Hobbes's *Leviathan*, for example, was depicted in early printings as a singular human male body constituted by thousands of smaller bodies. The image suggests that the body politic has a direct and symbiotic relationship with its autonomous constituents.

By the time classical political philosophy emerged in the seventeenth century, rulers had already created rhetorical and visual precedents for androgynous representations of the body politic. Thus Elizabeth I carefully constructed the legend of her own androgyny as a way of assuaging her subjects' fear that she was unfit to rule without a king beside her. In rallying her troops at Tilbury in 1588 for impending battle with the Spanish Armada, she remarked: "I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and a king of England too." The spectacle was made all the more curious by her appearance before the troops carrying a phallic truncheon and wearing an armor plate made especially for a king going into battle (Marcus 137-38). In similar fashion, France's François I had himself painted with the head of a Virago emerging from his chest as a display of his sovereignty over a dual-sexed body politic (Laqueur 123; Marcus 143).

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1. These four political philosophers, though all conceding that the individual “liberal subject” is the foundation of the modern nation-state, felt very differently about how the individual related to that nation-state. In his first and second *Treatise on Government*, Locke argued that humans possess natural rights, which opposed the idea that humans were subject to a divine hierarchical ordering. Starting from the premise that humans are innately competitive and acquisitive (and hence self-destructive), Hobbes’s *Leviathan* (1651) also argued that humans are free, but that they must submit to a ruler or monarch who would keep the state from falling into anarchy. Rousseau was more optimistic than Hobbes, believing that humans were born good but were often corrupted by the institutions that comprised the state. In each, however, the “general will” is abstracted to the point where the nation-state is once again understood as a singular individual. Moving beyond the body-as-state metaphor, Fichte's post-Kantian philosophy abstracted the world into an ego. His 1807 “Address to the German People” is even regarded by some as the founding document of western nationalism.
Yet can modern democracies—which putatively acknowledge the equality of male and female adult citizens before the law—be represented by a dual-sexed individual? Under closer examination androgyny has long resonated as much in the era of the democratic republic as it did in the Renaissance. In his still oft-cited essay “The Image of the Androgyne in the Nineteenth Century” (1967), A. J. L. Busst shows that early nineteenth-century writers often conceived of the mysterious male-female figure as a positive embodiment of emerging democracy. According to the essay, the androgyne gained its greatest recognition in post-revolutionary France with the help of mystics and occultists Fabre d'Olivet and Pierre-Simon Ballanche. These individuals saw the prelapsarian Adam and Eve as two parts making up an androgynous whole. No doubt the mystics’ interpretation of prelapsarian life is based in part on Aristophanes's story of the androgyne that Plato recounts in his Symposium. In the Greek tradition, the androgyne was man and woman combined in one globular form.² Fearing that their kind might one day rule Olympus, Zeus rent the androgyne in two with his thunderbolts. Since that violent separation, men and women have desperately sought out ways to regain their original wholeness. The sexual act, in the ancient Greek framework, was therefore the attempt to regain physical wholeness. “So you see how ancient is the mutual love implanted in mankind,” Aristophanes concludes in The Symposium, “bringing together

2. As a testament to the western tradition's heteronormative and phallocentric control over the discourse of androgyny, little is made of homosexuals in Aristophanes's story of the androgyne, though they existed right alongside the men and women who desired each other. According to The Symposium, there are “women who are a cutting of the ancient women [who] do not care much about men, but are more attracted to women, and strumpetesses also come from this sex. But those which are of the male pursue the male and while they are boys, being slices of the male, they are fond of men, and enjoy lying with men and embracing them, and these are the best of boys and lads because they are naturally bravest. Some call this shameless, but that is false; no shamelessness makes them do this, but boldness and courage and a manly force, which welcome what is like them ” (Warmington 87-8).
the parts of the original body, and trying to make one out of the two, and to heal the natural structure of man" (Warmington 87).

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, only after the Fall did the first humans notice their nakedness and sexual difference. In Ballanche's scheme, the Fall resulted not only in sexual division, but also in “the designations of castes and of classes, [and] the distinctive character of the races” (qtd. in Weil 69). For Ballanche, the progression of time is instrumental in regaining prelapsarian wholeness. After being exiled from the ahistorical, non-political world of Eden, Adam and Eve must wander through historical time and space and find a way to get back to their androgynous unity. As Busst claims, “The androgynous Adam of the occultists, divided into myriads of individual men and women, gradually recomposing itself throughout all ages and civilizations, became a symbol of the whole of mankind considered as an individual, endowed with a single mind, pursuing its single destiny throughout all events of universal history” (12). Paradoxically, Ballanche argues that reclaiming the Garden of Eden requires a progressive political and social agenda, and a democratic government is therefore instrumental in the attainment of prelapsarian androgyny. For Ballanche, democracy holds the promise that men—the most active component of the original androgynous composite—can teach the passive female "initiates" to find their own political voice (Weil 68-9). The American and French Revolutions pinpoint a significant step in reclaiming these mystics' prelapsarian vision. Based on the Lockean concept of natural rights, democracy is seen as the best governmental system to recognize humans' individual agency; yet at the same time citizens use their agency to seek a unity with their complementary other-sexed halves.
Ballanche's and d'Olivet's writings, however, did not necessarily anticipate the immense anxiety that many early Americans felt in rejecting aristocratic rule and embracing democracy. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, they still used single-sexed figures to represent their body politic. The image of the Indian princess, for instance, gained particular cachet in the years immediately leading up to the revolution. As a way of showing England's mistreatment of the colonies, cartoonists often pictured her as being sexually abused by malevolent Englishmen. Revolutionaries looking for a more martial, less vulnerable figure chose the mythical Indian chief Tammany. From this persona sprang the patriotic Tammany societies, which gained more and more prominence right after the colonies achieved their independence (Deloria 53, 46-7).

Within a generation of the revolution these male and female Indian images gave way to more European influences. By 1815, the figure of Columbia had become the most visible embodiment of the fledgling nation. The Indian Princess, though symbolizing the traditional gender for a fertile landscape to be conquered, was still too exotic, too “different,” and perhaps too seductive for many white citizens (Deloria 53). Columbia sought to keep ideas of sexual rapacity at bay. Generally understood as the daughter of Britannia, she stood for American liberty, progress, purity, refinement, and civilization (Schlereth 937). From her civic bosom she would nurture new generations of Americans who, especially during and after the Jacksonian era, would carry the torch of western civilization west toward the Pacific Ocean. From time to time Columbia would have to move aside for another Anglo-influenced icon, Uncle Sam, who first made his nominal and iconographical appearance during the War of 1812. Sam, like the proud Tammany
before him, came to stand for an America ready to protect its polity from the tyranny of foreign foes.

In negotiating among these figures over the years, America has often relied heavily on an either/or dichotomy. Though the United States has deployed two different gendered icons at the same time—Columbia and Uncle Sam, for instance—they embody very different virtues that conform to essentialized notions of American manhood and womanhood. Can the maternal Columbia adequately represent the American male citizen, or is the male citizen separate from Columbia but still sworn to uphold her national virtue? Conversely, to what extent could American women, especially before achieving the federally sanctioned right to vote in 1920, identify with Uncle Sam? He might be her imagined patriarchal guardian, but her political disenfranchisement would have meant a severe limitation on how much she could see herself in him. Are Columbia's nurturing, maternal aspirations always in accordance with Uncle Sam's martial endeavors? Or perhaps this: is it ever possible to combine Columbia and Uncle Sam into one androgynous likeness, thus attempting to represent the rights and destinies of both male and female citizens in one body?

Writing in 1844, the famous Congregationalist minister John Todd cautioned against adopting a national icon that blurred Victorian gender lines. In his widely-read tract, *The Young Man, Hints Addressed to the Young Men of the United States*, he points with disgust to French revolutionaries who often conceived of liberty as a masculine-looking woman. According to Todd, these radicals had “ordained the worship of a vile woman,” and as a consequence France had become a “nation of fiends and furies” (278-79). His anxiety may have been further fueled by suspicions commonly held among early
nineteenth-century Europeans that French men appeared weak and effeminate alongside strong revolutionary women (Shires 156-57). A drawing from the revolutionary period entitled *Citoyens né libre* [Citizens born Free] might provide the right image to understand the reverend's anxiety: it depicts a stout woman giving birth to an ambulatory child while herself standing. Aside from the visible outline of the breasts, the parturient embodiment of the People possesses a manly face, sturdy calf thighs, and robust forearms. Eugène Delacroix's famous 1830 painting *La Liberté Guidant le Peuple* [Liberty Leading the People] attests to the durability of this image: the manly visaged, broad chested, strong armed Liberté stands atop a mound of dead bodies leading her countrymen and -women forward to victory.

American writers in the early and mid-nineteenth century—so famously concerned with establishing an "American" ethos and literary tradition—were not oblivious to the androgynous potential of democratic representation. To contextualize the subject better, it is worth pausing for a moment to sketch the philosophy of the early romantic theologian Johann Gottfried von Herder, whose theory of "organic" nationalism would generate a debate among these writers about the validity of both androgyny and gender equality in national representation.

Herder's organicism stemmed from his cosmological view that humans are intimately linked to the world around them. F. M. Barnard explains that "[Herder's] universe is seen in terms of an organism, or perhaps more precisely, as a complex of interrelated organisms and envisaged as a whole of unity in the sense in which we think of the human organism as a whole or unity. [. . . ] One cannot, therefore, manipulate the parts without at the same time fundamentally affecting the structure and nature of the
This precept lays the groundwork for a nationalist doctrine in which humans emanate from their local surroundings just as surely as plants spring from some soils but not others. The cultures that therefore emerge from various communities' unique experiences with their local surroundings are hardened and perpetuated in language, and hence this linguistic solidarity serves as the basis for Herder's concept of the Volk. Herder found language and culture as mutually constitutive. His ideal formulation of the nation-state was one in which the linguistically pure Volk could establish full political self-determination. While his disapproval of cosmopolitanism and intermixing of Volk groups would be taken to irrational extremes by twentieth-century fascism, his theory actually rejected autocracy or totalitarianism.3

This organicism also had its metaphysical element. Herder believed in a life force—one he called in Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschicte der Menscheit (1785) a "Kraft"—which constituted the spiritual wholeness of a culture. The Kraft thoroughly pervaded a Volk—its language, its institutions, its religion, its economics, even its everyday relations among men and women. And while Herder remarked little on male-female relations in his writings, antebellum writers concerned with establishing an "American" ethos used Herderian notions of the nationalist Kraft to sanction radically different views of gender relations.

3. Barnard continues: "In his model State Herder clearly looks upon the conservative forces within the community as the surest safeguard against any encroachment on the liberties of its members. [. . . .] Custom and tradition, maintaining the 'reverence for the Law,' will act as a brake on the their legislative freedom, especially if the 'reverence' is backed by any of the various co-existing sections and foci of influence" (66). Moreover, "[i]t is the 'natural' social framework within which various sectional bodies and associations operate and co-operate, and not an administrative machine. Indeed government is virtually reduced (or elevated) to 'co-operation.' There are no 'rulers.' Their existence is regarded as a denial of the rule of law" (67). Adolf Hitler provided tautological expediency for his unrivaled political supremacy, allowing him to hold tight to the Herderian rhetoric of the people's sovereignty: as political scholar John A. Hess observed in 1938, the Nazis espoused an undying belief in the Volk, but it was the exclusive job of the Führer to "interpret"—not determine—its will (5-6).
Of course in establishing a new *Kraft*, American writers had to make their own variations; for logic would dictate that the superimposition of white European culture onto a new continent flies in the face of Herder’s localized organicism. But even Herder himself may have left room open for this organic transference in remarking of the American colonies that, “[p]erhaps when the arts and sciences shall have become decadent in Europe, they will arise there with new blossoms, with new fruit” (qtd. in Bluestein 16). James Fenimore Cooper for one made much of this possibility in his conservative formulation of a national ethos based on immutable gender differences. In his reading of *Last of the Mohicans*, Steven Frye explains that Cooper imbued Herderian organicism with a “natural” expansionist impulse that suited the growing American ethos of manifest destiny: “Herder suggests a pre-Darwinian system of nature in which the physical world functions as a matrix within which discrete organisms become transformed into higher forms, participating in an evolutionary process that leads to higher and higher levels of physical complexity. Within the context of historiography, Herder posits an explicitly teleological model, suggesting that human societies evolve ‘naturally’ to higher and more complex forms” (42). In functioning as the basis for the ascendency of Anglo-Americans in the New World, Herder’s evolutionary forces also serve as Cooper’s basis for the “natural” distinctions between American men and women—distinctions which appear as primordial as the British soil from which the author’s ancestors sprang. Taken at its most literal, Herderian self-determination precludes this type of manifest destiny, but Cooper reworked the German romantic’s philosophies towards a discourse of anti-miscegenation that foreshadows not only mid- and late-nineteenth century ethnography, but also twentieth-century German fascism.\(^4\)

4. Writing in 1934, Albert Guerard expressed frustration that Herder could have been so naïve as to think
With regard to the *Kraft*, its pervasive force is so strong in Herderian philosophy that social custom, not artificially imposed law, would guide the *Volk* in its everyday operations, which presumably include the relations between men and women. As Barnard points out, some of Herder's greatest nationalist tenets feature "the family or clan origin, fostered and perpetuated by [. . . ] reverence for the forefathers" (62). In Cooper's rendering, the imminent marriage between the British major Duncan Heyward and the Columbia-like Alice Munro signals the British transferral of patriarchal custom to the American shores. Whereas Alice is clearly a forerunner of what Barbara Welter calls the "cult of true womanhood," which relied on women's relegation to the domestic sphere, Duncan embodies the resoluteness and bravery that would sanction American men's exclusive control over the political realm and marketplace.

The closing pages of *Last of the Mohicans* exemplify the separate spheres *Kraft* that informed Cooper's American *Volk-kulturnation*. Observing how the young Lenape women honor his slain daughter, Colonel Munro instructs Hawkeye to tell the women, "[T]he Being we all worship, under different names, will be mindful of their charity; and [. . . ] the time shall not be distant when we may assemble around His throne without distinction of sex, or rank, or color." When Hawkeye replies that certain distinctions are irreducible, the colonel then concedes: "It is the will of Heaven, and I submit" (472). The tendency among critics is to focus on the racial implications of Hawkeye's dissent, but equally evident is the divine sanction of gender immutability, which often informed his linguistic theory of the *Volk* would not soon lead down a racialist path: "[Herder's] notion was, to start with, linguistic, not racial. Any one who spoke German as his mother tongue was a German and a brother. But speech affinity, by an easy if misleading transition, suggested the idea of blood relationship. The Germans were one in speech because they were one in origin. This fallacy is already found in Herder, that originator of high-sounding confusions. It has been exploded, not destroyed. Its consequences would be to turn an Alabama negro into an 'Anglo Saxon,' a Spanish-speaking Zapoteca into a 'Latin,' and Adolf Hitler into a 'Nordic'" (3).
male-female relations in the early republic. Ultimately, the *Volk-kulturnation* impulse that set Great Britain up as the germ of the American *Kraft* also inscribed a putatively natural distinction between men and women.

Whereas Cooper argued for an “organic” Americanness based on whiteness and sexual difference, many of the writers associated with the transcendental movement used Herderian nationalism as a means of promoting their androgynous vision for American democracy. The emphasis on the fluidity of consciousness among God, humans, and nature that serves as the backbone of transcendental philosophy has its roots, just like Herderian organicism, in a rejection of John Locke's experiential-based materialism. Unlike Locke, who regarded human identity as the result of the outside world's active inscription upon the passive, unformed mind, Herder believed that existence presupposed activity, and therefore the human mind actually does not merely receive impressions from the outside world, but instead creates impressions based on those experiences. In this sense humans and nature, subject and object, even man and woman, are symbiotically linked within their *Volk* communities. This postulation was akin to Kant's notion of intuitive-based “Reason,” which Ralph Waldo Emerson saw in “The Transcendentalist” as the groundwork for transcendental fluidity.

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5. F. M. Barnard provides a useful explanation of Herder's rejection of Lockean materialism: “The self's awareness of its environment as of its inner states is seen as a function of the continuous interaction that is taking place between the self's ‘inside’ and ‘outside.’ The individual, far from being enclosed within himself, derives the awareness of himself, from outside, from his contact with the world around him, in the absence of which it could probably never awaken in the first place” (37).

6. Emerson remarks: “It is well known to most of my audience that the Idealism of the present day acquired the name of Transcendental from the use of the term by Immanuel Kant, of Königsberg, who replied to the skeptical philosophy of Locke, which insisted that there was nothing in the intellectual which was not previously in the experience of the senses, by showing that there was a very important class of ideas or imperative forms, which did not come by experience, but through which experience was acquired; that these were intuitions of the mind itself; and denominated them Transcendental forms. The extraordinary profoundness and precision of that man's thinking have given vogue, in Europe and America, to that extent
1829 at the encouragement of his brother William several years before. His insistence in *Nature* (1836) that “[w]ords are signs of natural facts,” and that “[p]articular natural facts are symbols of particular spiritual facts” (13) is clear evidence of Herder's organic influence (Bluestein 19).

Emerson further reworked Herder's notion of symbiosis to help create an American ethos based on the psychic interpenetrability of men and women. Many of his opinions on the matter were supplemented by his understanding of Emmanuel Swedenborg, the Swedish mystic whose writings contributed significantly to the tradition that regarded angels as androgynous beings. Especially under this second influence, Emerson saw true men and women of genius as those who sought out and internalized these angelic traits. “The finest people marry the two sexes in their own person,” he wrote in an 1843 journal entry. “Hermaphroditus is then the finished soul” (Gilman et al, VII, 380).

The Sage of Concord was also fascinated by Plato's thoughts on the creation of the “Ideal State” as described in *The Republic*. The members of the elite stratum of the Republic—called the guardians—Plato describes as androgynous beings, uniting “female” compassion and gentleness with “male” toughness, endurance, and courage. No doubt Emerson's understanding of Plato prompted him later in 1843 to write in his journal, “I notice that an Emperor in his robes is dressed almost in feminine attire, because the supreme power represents woman as well as man, the moral principle as well as the intellectual principle” (Gilman et al, IX, 21). Erik Thurin is quite right, I think, to claim that whatever belongs to the class of intuitive thought is popularly called at the present day *Transcendental*" (86).
that Emerson's conception of androgyny is still very male-centered.\(^7\) Like Plato, Emerson may have felt that women were theoretically capable of directing the nation-state, but it is worth noting that even his hope in democracy could not escape patriarchal presuppositions. His version of the ideal leader, after all, is a man clothed in womanly attire, not the other way around (189).

Emerson's colleague and fellow *Dial* editor Margaret Fuller put forth a more reciprocal version of androgyny in her 1845 *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. Based on an earlier article entitled "The Great Lawsuit: Man versus Men, Woman versus Women," published in a July 1843 issue of *The Dial*, the treatise leveled a heavy indictment upon American democracy for leaving its women citizens politically disenfranchised and socially disempowered: "It is inevitable that an external freedom, an independence of the encroachments of other men, such as has been achieved for the nation, should be so also for every member of it" (14). Democracy, she asserts, should lead not only to women's political enfranchisement, but also promote a national ethos of female self-cultivation: "What woman needs is not as a woman to act or rule, but as a nature to grow, as an intellect to discern, as a soul to live freely unimpeded, to unfold such powers as were given her when we left our common home" (20).

Like Emerson, Fuller adhered to an essentialized notion of male and female, and the country's democratic potential could only come to fruition when women got in touch with their masculine side and men got in touch with their feminine side: "Male and female represent the two sides of the great radical dualism. But, in fact, they are

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\(^7\) David Leverenz likewise has analyzed the transcendentalist's deep insecurities about his own masculinity, which led him at times to prop up his manhood using women as his foil. See his chapter "Emerson's Man-Making Words" in *Manhood and the American Renaissance* (1989).
perpetually passing into one another. Fluid hardens to solid, solid rushes to fluid. There is
no wholly masculine man, no purely feminine woman" (68-9). The ideal republic, one is
left to surmise, is made up of men and women who resemble the archetypes Apollo and
Minerva, for in the sensitive and intuitive man and in the strong and bold woman is the
true power of democracy and the full embodiment of the nation-state (69).

Perhaps America's greatest expression of the androgynous-democratic ideal came
from another of Herder's intellectual legatees, Walt Whitman. "For Whitman," Gene
Bluestein comments, “the designation of America as essentially barbaric became
advantageous, since it enabled him to capitalize upon Herder's view that primitive
communities contain the energy and creative force upon which a national literature must
be based" (41). First publishing his *Leaves of Grass* in 1855, Whitman sings of the
American polis as an organic creation. Further, he formulated a new kind of national
narrative for his country, one James E. Miller, Jr. calls a "lyric-epic" (9). As traditional
genre theory holds, the lyric and epic exist on opposite ends of the poetic spectrum.
Whereas the lyric is an extremely personal, introspective, and short poetic expression, the
epic is expansive, active, and community-based. Moreover, as Georg Lukács states, “the
epic hero, as bearer of his destiny, is not lonely, for this destiny connects him by
indissoluble threads to the community whose fate is crystallized in his own"(67). Such
"immanence," as Lukács calls it, between hero and homeland is part and parcel of
Herderian nationalist organicism.

As a lyric-epic, then, *Leaves of Grass* endeavors to reconcile the tension contained
within the concept of the “united states." Speaking of the relationship between the citizen
and the nation, Whitman said: “What is any Nation, after all—and what is a human
being—but a struggle between conflicting, paradoxical, opposing elements—and they themselves and their most violent contests, important parts of that One Identity, and of its development?" (Memoranda 65). In this passage Whitman elevates the human body to the body politic, and within the scope of the lyric-epic mode, any struggle between “opposing elements” can be harmoniously enveloped within the transcendental “One Identity,” a spiritual entity that clearly resembles the Herderian Kraft. Choosing to envision his poetics in terms of “both/and” instead of “either/or,” Whitman speaks for himself as well as for his fellow citizens.

In taking Herderian organicism to a new extreme, Whitman speaks of himself not only as a man, but also as other people—including women. This particular dynamic most clearly links androgyny and nationalism in Whitman's poetics. In biographer Justin Kaplan’s opinion, androgyny “seemed only natural and right” to one wishing to represent the dual-sexed body politic (183). For example, “One's-Self I Sing,” the opening poem of Leaves of Grass, begins in traditional epic fashion with an invocation to the muse:

One's-Self I sing, a single separate person,  
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse.  
Of physiology from top to toe I sing,  
Not physiognomy alone nor brain alone is worthy for the Muse,  
I say the Form complete is worthier far.  
The Female equally with the Male I sing.  
Of life immense in passion, pulse, and power,  
Cheerful, for freest form’d under the laws divine,  
The Modern Man I sing. (3)

Though the poem's title and first line might lead us to believe that Whitman speaks only for his male-gendered self, succeeding lines reveal the ease with which his

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8. While this poem was not added until the 1871 edition, critic Michael Moon notes that these lines were found in notebooks attached to Whitman's original 1855 edition. This information suggests that Whitman's androgynous vision was clearly a part of poem's early guiding principles.
consciousness infiltrates others' minds and bodies—despite their sex or gender. The sentiment of "One's-Self I Sing" hearkens back to the French revolutionary optimism that democracy brings the sexes together—if not physically to inhabit one body, at least spiritually to inhabit one national consciousness. Moreover, the temporal projection of Whitman's poem, as well as his heralding of "Modern Man," hearkens back to Ballanche's theory that with the progression of time and the perfection of democracy, androgyny is attainable.

While Betsy Erkkila notes that Whitman's appropriation of the female voice is still a larger sign of male prerogative, she does concede that his expansive, transgendered voice provides a sense of democratic egalitarianism heretofore unseen in American poetry (Political Poet 101, 95). Indeed, one needn't be too surprised to find Whitman's energetic, erotic, permeating voice appear in one form or another on almost every page of Leaves of Grass. As the embodiment of democracy, he is "the poet of the woman the same as the man, / And I say it is as great to be a woman as to be a man" (43). At other points Whitman assumes these different "American" personalities, male and female. As his poem "The Sleepers" proclaims, "I am the actor, the actress, the voter, the politician, / [. . . .] I am she who adorn'd herself and folded her hair expectantly, / My truant lover has come, and it is dark" (358).

Whitman also forges an American landscape that Benedict Anderson has famously called an "imagined community." Anderson claims that the development of public literacy after the medieval period gave people in a certain geographical community the ability to imagine themselves more and more as participants in a national entity:

The idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogenous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which also is conceived
as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history. An American will never meet, or even know the names of more than a handful of his 240,000-odd [sic?] fellow-Americans. He has no idea what they are up to at any one time. But he has complete confidence in their steady, anonymous simultaneous activity. (26)

A poem such as “The Sleepers” illustrates Anderson's theory. Over the course of a night, the national poetic persona peers into many houses across the American landscape. The persona imagines who these citizens are and explains what their greatest dreams entail. In a move that goes beyond the typical instance of “imagining” that Anderson mentions, the speaker becomes the many different-sexed Americans he sees, showing once again that the lyric-epic form is successful only if it is an androgyne who gives it voice.

Just as prominent in the poet's political vision was the idea that democratic androgyny could open the door for a wider range of class and racial representation. In the original 1855 edition of Leaves of Grass, Whitman asks his readers, “Who need be afraid of the merge?” (667). In the mind of such a radical thinker, this merge might easily reach beyond the limits of man-woman integration within one nation. The androgynous body politic, as later chapters show, is as deeply embroiled in issues of race and class as it is in issues of sex and gender. As Comte imagined in the early nineteenth century, the human race—itsf being a global composite of males and females—is androgynous (Busst 3-4). But certainly an androgynous humanity is just as easily broken down into various races, ethnicities, religions, languages, and so on. The same can be said of Whitman’s America. By claiming to be the poet of the “Female equally with the Male” before ever mentioning other types of demographic breakdowns, he is subsuming all Americans—those of different classes, ages, religions, and races—under an androgynous poetic persona. As section ten of Song of Myself shows, even runaway slaves find a place in his poetry.
While transgressive and iconoclastic, Whitman's poetic voice is further evidence of a nineteenth-century mindset that still regards the man-woman split as the fundamental breakdown of humanity.

By the time the third edition of *Leaves of Grass* was printed in 1860, the United States was about to rip itself apart. Though the Civil War would prove to be the bloodiest conflict this country has ever fought, Whitman felt the struggle was necessary to fulfill the promise of democracy for all races and sexes. He even called the first half of the 1860s America's "real parturition years," which would forever secure a "homogenous Union" (qtd. in Miller 7). Given his poetic emphasis on merging, I speculate that he saw this "homogenous," post-natal America as an androgynous body politic. Once again, a comparison with Ballanche is appropriate, since for both men the future holds great promise for the unity of the sexes. As M. Jimmie Killingsworth points out, the poems Whitman added to the post-1860 editions of *Leaves of Grass* showed a significant retreat from the "radical politics" of the poems in the pre-war years (xviii). Most scholars nevertheless agree that the poet never gave up hope in the forward progression of time.

"The democratic ideal, he believed, was by no means a reality in the present, but endured only in poetic, or spiritual, 'vistas'—visionary glimpses into future possibilities" (Miller 7).

Betsy Erkkila remarks, "By equating democracy with sexual liberation, Whitman was [...] the first poet to provoke among his unsympathetic readers what was (and perhaps still is) the deepest underlying fear of democracy in America: that in its purest form democracy would lead to a blurring of sexual bounds and thus the breakdown of a social and bourgeois economy based on the management of the body and the polarization
of male and female spheres" (*Breaking 8*). Erkkila's statement suggests a radical destabilizing of gender categories that, I argue, is latent even in the more conservative versions of androgyny in Emerson and Fuller. While these authors more or less subscribed to essentialized notions of femininity and masculinity, the very idea that one mind could encompass two genders already began to challenge the *Volk-kulturnation* nationalist mindset that recognized the legitimacy of what we now call the "cult" of true woman- and manhood.

The concept of two genders inhabiting one body is in some respects a throwback to the one-sex model that Thomas Laqueur argues was so prominent in the years before 1800. For Laqueur, gender—the mental assumptions about what constitutes maleness and femaleness—remains constant within a culture, whereas sex is simply the bodily signifier subject to historical change and differing cultural perceptions (8-10). This idea opposes the more traditional notion that sexual distinctions are static (say, insofar as a "man" has a penis and a "woman" has a vagina) and that gender is the culturally coded response to this corporeal difference. In her own well regarded work on the subject, Judith Butler roughly concurs with Laqueur's basic premise. "It would make no sense" Butler argues, "to define gender as the cultural interpretation of sex, if sex is a gendered category. Gender ought not to be conceived merely as the cultural inscription of meaning on a pregiven sex (a juridical conception); gender must also designate the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established" (*Gender Trouble* 7). In relation to sex, then, gender exists *a priori*. While it may be premature to call Whitman and his transcendental colleagues the forerunners of poststructural gender theory, the fact that they envision two seemingly immutable genders—conceived as they are to distinguish
them from one another—peacefully cohabitating in one corporeal signifier clearly anticipates Laqueur's and Buter's twentieth-century queries into gender, sex, and the inevitable slippage between the two.

The organic nationalism of Emerson, Fuller, and especially Whitman was based less on ethnic, gender, or racial homogeneity, and more on the inclusive concept of the Staatnation, with the androgyne-poet as one of its dominant symbols. While elder writers such as Cooper looked back to the past for a sense of cultural and racial legitimacy, the Transcendentalists looked toward an androgynous democratic vision that was yet to be unrealized. Life after 1865, however, would show just how controversial an androgynized Staatnation could really be.

1.2 Postbellum Androgyny: Sexology, New Women, and Commercial Culture

A. J. L. Busst claims that around the middle of the nineteenth century the image of the androgyne had lost its ability to represent “human solidarity [and] the brotherhood of man” (38); sometime after 1850, the androgyne had come to symbolize “isolation, loneliness, [. . .] and despair in the future” (39). Busst further remarks, “[W]hereas the earlier image [of the androgyne] was above all a symbol of virtue [. . .], the later image is above all a symbol of vice, particularly of cerebral lechery, demoniality, onanism, homosexuality, sadism, and masochism” (39).

The tension between pre- and post-1850 androgyny is evident in the Statue of Liberty. When the “new colossus” was finally unveiled atop her pedestal at Liberty Island in New York Harbor in 1886, she seemed to be a cross between the maternal Columbia and the mannish Liberté of Delacroix’s La Liberté Guidant le Peuple. Chief sculptor F. A Bartholdi intended for the statue to symbolize political moderation rather than radical upheaval; still, the statue does not completely shed its androgynous French origins. “The
face set off by [. . .] Third Republic sausage-curls is the face of a Greek god, without the redeeming sensuousness" (Warner 7, 9). Moreover, Stephanie A. Smith rightly points out that Liberty's "alarmingly spiked crown," reminiscent of the god Helios, has the phallic intensity of a Gorgon (13). But in keeping with the statue's more feminine aspects, Lauren Berlant claims that "the female body of the American National Symbolic eternally desires to be relieved of desire, to be passive and available for service, to contribute to the polis by being and needing where it needs to be" (27-8). In other words, true to her maternal instincts, our copper-riveted National Mother is most attractive because she's co-dependent.

But why this unrest about Lady Liberty and other androgynous representations within the national realm? The advent of the "discourse of sexuality," the rising visibility of the New Woman, and the spread of commercial culture were at least three prominent reasons why the androgyne's ability to symbolize democracy came under fire. The rest of this chapter provides a rough sketch of their emergence in the post-Civil War world.

1.2.1 Sexology and the Pathologizing of Androgyny

According to Foucault, the prominence of the discourses of sexuality, which began just after midcentury, was a watershed moment in the epistemology of sex (History 36-37). By about this time medicine and so-called sexology had begun to pathologize certain sexual expressions and conditions. Whereas to varying degrees Emerson, Fuller, and Whitman felt that androgyny was a transcendental or spiritual quality meant to enhance democracy, the advent of the discourses of sexuality grounded androgyny in "diseased" bodies and brains. Foucault explains in his introduction to Herculine Barbin that "[t]he years from around 1860 to 1870 were precisely one of those periods when the
investigations of sexual identity were carried out with the most intensity, in an attempt not only to establish the true sex of hermaphrodites, but also to identify, classify, and characterize the different types of [sexual] perversions [extant in bourgeois society]" (xi-xii). The case of Herculine Barbin is a real-life example of how French authorities relied on the notion of the Volk-kulturnation to impose a juridically undisputable sex on one who had previously lived in a “happy limbo of a non-identity” (Foucault, Barbin xiii): the state would rather recognize one of its citizens as male (largely on the basis of Herculine’s ill-defined penis) than recognize and/or legitimate biological hermaphroditism.

While initially trying to lend credence to the bourgeois notion of innate sexual difference through stigmatizing certain “aberrancies,” the discourses of sexuality often brought more unrest than calm to western society. Much of this unrest came with the heightened visibility of individuals who were sexually attracted to members of their own sex. The terms “homosexuality” or “homosexual” would not gain widespread usage until the early twentieth century; until that time, sexologists often relied on the term “androgyny” or “hermaphroditism” to describe same-sex attraction. “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 hermaphroditism of the soul” (Foucault, History 43). The conflation of androgyny with same-sex attraction found its greatest mouthpiece in the famous Viennese sexologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing. His monumental Psychopathia Sexualis, originally published in German in 1886, identified homosexuals not only by their sexual object choice, but also by their supposed mental androgyny: men were “females in feeling; in women, males” (279). But the “degeneration” found in homosexuals went well beyond mental or psychological
aberrancy; according to Krafft-Ebbing, these individuals also experienced a certain amount of genital deformity, which, while falling short of full biological hermaphroditism, still “approach the opposite sex anthropologically”—meaning that homosexuality was an atavistic trait that had its roots in a primitive physiological bisexuality akin to the one-sex model so prominently recognized in medical discourse before 1800 (Psychopathia 304).

Well into the twentieth century, variations on the notion of psychical and physical hermaphroditism would appear in medical and psychological studies. Freud's 1905 Three Essays on Sexuality, for instance, takes Krafft-Ebing's concept and makes it a part of both physiology and childhood mental development. Also influenced by the one-sex model, Freud felt that normal male and female bodies partook of the same genitalia, but with different results: “[A]n originally bisexual physical disposition has, in the course of evolution, become modified into a unisexual one, leaving behind only a few traces of the sex that has become atrophied" (19-20). Even more astounding was what Freud had to say about children's psychological development. Psychical hermaphroditism among infants, he postulated, was “the original basis from which [...] the normal and inverted types develop" (23).

Similarly, Freud's former disciple Carl Jung based his theories of the anima, animus, and persona also on a human's supposedly innate psychical hermaphroditism. Jung felt that in order to obtain a total “self,” men needed to come into contact with their female gendered anima whereas women needed to find their male animus, both of which lay deep within the individual's unconscious. In “The Psychology of the Child Archetype"

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9. Freud makes other remarks about primitive androgyny in Civilization and Its Discontents (1930): “The individual corresponds to a fusion of two symmetrical halves, of which, according to some investigators, one is purely male and the other female. It is equally possible that each half was originally hermaphrodite” (61).
he declared, “The hermaphrodite means nothing less than a union of the strongest and most striking opposites" (173). Jung's theory is heavily reliant on balance; for example, males could temper their aggressive and acquisitive masculine personae with the help of their gentler, softer anima, should they take the time to find her. Many of Jung's theories on the subject came from a series of conversations he held with his own anima named Salomé, who convinced him that his studies in psychology were not as much science as they were art. He came to believe that creativity in poetry, painting, or even politics requires finding a suitable balance between archetypal masculinity and femininity. In fact, later scholars have speculated that because Jung was so invested in finding a balance between the persona and the anima/animus, his ideal form of government was democracy, though perhaps on a small scale. Volodymyr Walter Odajnyk sees the key to Jung's hope for democracy in his advocacy of the liberation of the self. Whereas Freud believed that civilization could only advance by repressing individuals' desires and instincts, Jung "[had] a conception of the psyche that allows for a natural development of the individual and the society that could lead to a harmonious and democratic resolution of the political and moral conflicts of mankind" (Odajnyk 187). This assessment sounds strikingly similar to Whitman's directive in Song of Myself to “Unscrew the locks from the doors! / Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs!” (46)—that is, to free the mind from repression and stale convention.

The most striking blow that Freud, Jung, and other colleagues could give bourgeois culture was the insinuation that biology apart from established cultural norms

is not destiny. One of the most significant differences between Freud and Krafft-Ebing is the former's insistence that pre-Oedipal hermaphroditism was universal and hence not necessarily pathological. Women might become homosexuals if, during their early childhood, they had trouble transferring their libidinal drives from their mothers to their fathers. Still, this failure could be the result of environmental or behavioral factors, not necessarily nature. In a later essay entitled “The Psychology of Women,” he argued that even as adults “the proportions in which the masculine and feminine mingle in the individual are subject to quite extraordinary variations. [. . . ] What constitutes masculinity and femininity is an unknown element which is beyond the power of anatomy to grasp” (155, 156). For Freud, culture did the normalizing work that Krafft-Ebing was certain only biology did. As later chapters detail, the implications of Freud's theories were indeed significant. What might happen, for instance, if larger numbers of people did not emerge from the pre-Oedipal phase and were thus stuck in a state of polymorphous sexual perversity? Or in the Jungian model, what might happen if a man allowed his feminine anima to converse with his masculine persona at the conscious level?

1.2.2 The New Woman

While momentarily delaying the larger public visibility of the discourses of sexuality in America, the Civil War also helped make their impact all the more apparent in the postbellum world. The reason for these effects was due in large part to the emergence of a bourgeois culture in a rapidly industrializing country. Though it created the ethic of middle class respectability and the ideology of separate spheres, the bourgeoisie in America and Europe contradictorily gave rise to the “New Woman,” whose repudiation of domesticity purportedly made her out to be a pseudo male. The
New Woman will be explored in more detail in the following chapter on Henry James, yet we might pause briefly to understand the national context for the reluctant emergence of this so-called androgyne. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg remarks that in “[e]schewing marriage, [the New Woman] fought for professional visibility, espoused innovative, often radical, economic and social reforms, and wielded real political power” (245). Though the term “New Woman” was not coined until 1894, Smith-Rosenberg places under this rubric a number of American women who emerged in the 1870s. These earlier women she calls the “first generation,” and they did not repudiate marriage nearly as much as those of later years would do.11

During the years leading up to the Civil War, the “first generation” fought simultaneously for the liberation of southern slaves and the cultural emancipation of women, which included gaining the vote. After the slaves were freed, these women hoped that universal suffrage would be the next step on the Republican agenda. They were gravely disappointed. While the Fifteenth Amendment gave black men the right to vote, women of both races were left out. Advocates of universal suffrage claimed that getting the vote would not mean the end of femininity; rather, femininity would be used to purify a political system too often viewed as competitive, corrupt, and cutthroat. Even as late as 1902 the aged Elizabeth Cady Stanton argued for the vote based on “love and sympathy of the mother-soul” (9). What the United States needed was concerned mothers to make politics more like the home: warm, genial, moral.

11. See Ann Ardis’s New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism (1990) for one possible origin of the term “New Woman.” Ardis argues that the term was used in 1894 by the British author Ouida in a series of published debates with fellow British novelist Sarah Grand.
Despite these cries for suffrage from middle-class women who were fully “at home” in their femininity, the male political establishment—even in the Republican party—denounced woman suffrage for tinkering with the very core of the *Volk-kulturnation*: the ideology of separate spheres. By the 1880s and ‘90s, a second generation of New Women had emerged, which treated marriage with greater skepticism. As both Smith-Rosenberg and Laura Behling have shown, the media and politicians often relied on scientific arguments of degeneration and mental illness to keep this second generation out of politics; suffragists were not just delusional, they were “organic oddities.” The popular press often depicted suffragists in this way, intimating as well that these women stripped men of their masculinity (Behling 31-2, 39). With an expanding medical lexicon at their disposal, conservatives who saw America strictly as a *Volk-kulturnation* envisioned the androgynous woman suffragist as a freak, a symbol of disunity; thus the men whose virility she sapped could themselves no longer serve as appropriate representatives of the American polity. Could this androgynous woman be the future embodiment of American democracy? Moreover, what might it mean for American men, who felt that their access to economic and governmental power was based in part on the strict separation of spheres? In short, the argument ran that the nation would crumble into disunity if these mannish women got the vote.

The woman suffrage issue seemed to make the androgyne more of a national phenomenon—though pathologically so. As with the mugwumps before it, populism gained the stigma of being a movement made up of strong, masculine women and weak, effeminate men. Aside from advocating a graduated income tax and public ownership of postal services, railroads, and telegraphs, the People's Party also held strong sympathies
for politically disenfranchised women and urban laborers of both sexes. Because of the objections of populists in the South, women's suffrage never made it officially onto the party's national agenda, but after Colorado and Idaho populists won majority seats in their legislatures, women in those states won the vote. Moreover, women were allowed to take up leadership positions in local populist networks (Edwards 92). After the People's Party continued to make significant inroads in the West and even the South, political and cultural conservatives evoked the androgyne as a means of scaring bourgeois America back into its separate spheres. One critic called women populists "short-haired amazons," while male members were commonly referred to as "she-men." William Jennings Bryan, the robust Democrat who also championed many populist causes, was dubiously hailed in Leslie's Weekly as a man "dominated by emotionalism and [. . .] therefore incapable of logical performance" (qtd. in Edwards 121, and in Hoganson 23). Stumping in Chicago, then-New York governor Theodore Roosevelt implicated Bryan when saying that "it is not only school girls that have hysterics; mob leaders sometimes have that and so do well-meaning demagogues." By the presidential election of 1896, populism had suffered much for its reputation and was sentenced to marginal, third-party status. Within the first few decades of the twentieth century it vanished altogether (Edwards 123).

The New Woman was also partly or indirectly responsible for the upsurge in manly sentiment that hovered over the last decade of the nineteenth-century. This sentiment culminated in the second half of the 1890s, when the United States considered supporting Cuban belligerency against Spanish colonial rule. By the turn of the century many American men lamented the dying out of the Civil War generation—those who had exhibited their manhood and bravery at Gettysburg, Shiloh, and Antietam. Having felt
that their country had become too commercial, too complacent, and too adrift in the clamor for woman suffrage, many American men saw the Cuban nationalist uprising as a means to jump-start martial-based manhood by lending aid to a colony that purportedly adhered to a premodern sense of chivalry and honor. Kristin L. Hoganson explains that the United States, in staying true to the chivalric romance scenario, regarded Cuba as the archetypal damsel in distress; joining forces with knightly Cuban men, the heroic Uncle Sam could save the day by beating back brutish Spanish imperialism (51-6). By deploying the figure of Uncle Sam in numerous press releases, the message was clear: America was a man, despite what advocates of universal suffrage said to the contrary. The Cuban rebellion also gave men of both the North and South a common objective. The type of manhood bashing that was very much a part of each section's partisan rhetoric before and after the Civil War had abated significantly. Now, instead of flinging insults at each other, they could come together under the aegis of manly liberators to attack a common foe (Silber 178 et passim).

1.2.3 The Rise of Commercial Culture

Androgyny was not always pathologized in post-Civil War America. But because they could threaten bourgeois gender hierarchies, androgynous representations were often best subdued or regulated through appropriation by commercial culture. Alan Trachtenberg argues that Gilded Age America moved away from the notion of egalitarian unity toward incorporation, which implied not only capitalism's gradual appropriation of the public arena, but also “the emergence of a changed, more tightly structured society with new hierarchies of control” (4). Being the first public monument fully funded by private donations, the Statue of Liberty suggests this postbellum move toward capitalist incorporation. While ostensibly “public” in the sense that it came voluntarily from
American citizens, the statue's funding also shows the extent to which the commercial mindset had infiltrated the country. In other words, Lady Liberty might not have been supplied had there not been a big enough demand for her presence.

If the Statue of Liberty's financing by private citizens was a subtle move toward this "incorporation" of androgynous representation, female and male impersonation was a further solidification of it. Gaining prominence in various American cities at the close of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, this form of popular entertainment was in certain respects a larger part of the Foucauldian "deployment of sexuality," in which the bourgeois state contained sexuality and sexual expression by channeling them through certain economic modes of legitimacy. Thus deployed, female and male impersonation made androgyny and related spectacles of gender bending not so much an object of pathological disgust, but one of mass commercial amusement that could reflect the topsy-turvy world of American modernity.

Gender impersonation in America had its roots in blackface minstrelsy, a theatrical venue wherein men would "black up" to portray a whole range of female characters, including the mammy, the "yaller girl," and the tragic mulatta. Even male impersonators such as Vesta Tilly, Ellie Shields, Bessie Bonehill, and Kathleen Clifford were popular attractions who graced vaudeville stages on both coasts. The primary objective of male impersonation was often for women performers to create a believable representation of a boy, not a full-fledged adult man. As Sharon R. Ullman has recently

observed, this focus on performing boyhood “reinforces the fact that much of the
discourse surrounding gender impersonation in what was essentially a male-produced
press focused primarily on notions of masculinity in one form or another” (150). In other
words, given the immense tension many men felt about current-day women suffragists' challenge to conventional gender roles, the figure of the boy—whether comically or seriously portrayed—was a much less threatening spectacle to behold.

On the other hand, men's impersonation of women was much more high-minded in many circles. These performances aimed less to spoof women's "peculiarities" than to provide a skillful simulacrum of adult femininity. Actors such as Julian Eltinge, Bothwell Browne, and Francis Yeats all made a large hit with an American public willing to see just how successfully a man could feign womanhood. Eltinge, who began his impersonating career in New York in 1905, set the standard by which almost every other male performer was judged. In 1909 Variety magazine gushed, "As an impersonator of girls, or 'the' impersonator of 'the' girl, Eltinge excels" (qtd. in Ullman 50). By 1912 Eltinge had his own New York theater named after him, and his career—which even included starring in several films—spread into the 1920s. Though Eltinge often went to great lengths to prove his masculinity when not on stage, the financial success of his act proved just how much commercial culture had appropriated androgyny. For example, The Julian Eltinge Magazine and Beauty Hints (published for a short run in 1912 and 1913) shared makeup and fashion tips that were directed not only at fellow impersonators, but at enthusiastic women readers as well (Gilbert and Gubar 328-29). Anticipating latter-day mass culture divas Martha Stewart, Dame Edna, and Oprah Winfrey, Julian Eltinge was one of the earliest multi-media moguls based on fashion, femininity, and fan clubs.
The popularity of female impersonation signaled a change in the American public's view of androgyny that has current day implications. As one early twentieth-century critic remarked, “Just as the white man makes the best stage Negro, so a man gives the best photographic interpretation of femininity than the average woman is able to give” (qtd. in Slide 51). In asserting that ideal womanhood is best depicted by a man, the critic implies that men have invented womanhood. Femininity is therefore an inherent part of any man's psyche. These sentiments anticipate Luce Irigaray's contention in *The Sex Which Is Not One* that women cannot truly speak for or represent themselves because the whole notion of femininity is a part of a closed signifying process created and regulated by men. In this sense, “female subjectivity” is a contradiction in terms because men had been inventing “woman” all along.

Eltinge and others like him who made a living out of gender bending may prompt one to assume that by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, androgyny had lost its national(ist) significance. I would argue differently, however, by understanding the commercial culture of this time as indicative of—and not antithetical to—a larger national ethos. Business and cultural historians have noted that this particular time period introduced a new type of political participation: consumer citizenship. As Joel Spring believes, “Shopping becomes a patriotic act that demonstrates the superiority of the American way of life over other political and economic systems. The anthem of the consumer-citizen is ‘Shop ‘til you drop.’ Seemingly apolitical, the consumer-citizen is wedded to the ideology of consumerism” (6). The reason for the “seemingly apolitical” nature of consumerism that Spring mentions comes in part from a complex system that Jurgen Habermas believes is fundamental to liberal models of the public sphere. As
opposed to democracies based on the mass welfare state model, the bourgeois public sphere “can be understood as the sphere of private persons assembled to form a public” (233). What we may take as commercialism, then, is perhaps the language of patriotism that the American masses best understand, especially if their consumption habits helped keep a national economy progressing through more overtly political struggles such as wars, embargoes, and a series of nation-wide depressions that came along at least once every decade in the last thirty years of the nineteenth century.

What might Habermas’s assessment have to say about someone such as Eltinge, who fostered a long-standing public sphere based on androgyny? Eltinge’s career shows how commercial culture made the androgyne relatively tolerable in the larger society by making the female impersonator’s “private citizen” status—a status that allows for and indeed encourages capitalist entrepreneurship—a national phenomenon. He may not have necessarily been unleashing his anima in quite the way Carl Jung would have envisioned it, but we might say that he was letting enough of it out to contribute to a national economy that increasingly championed commercial spectacle and the immediate gratification of consumer curiosity. Insofar as American democracy allows for a relatively laissez faire capitalism, it is entirely possible to claim that Eltinge him- (or her)sself more accurately represented the American body politic simply by being a successful commercial phenomenon. Eltinge’s success provokes a somewhat paradoxical question that I hope to address in various ways in succeeding chapters: did national or public toleration of androgyny rely upon making those understood as androgynes into private citizens? If the answer is yes—and I believe it is for the most part—the power of capitalism is almost indistinguishable from the cultural effects of American nationalism.
In this chapter I have tried to provide a useful historical and social context to which later chapters will invariably refer and upon which they will build. These indexical lines of philosophy, religion, politics, science, race, economics, and art framed the matrix of androgyny that was developed during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The immense shift in America's attitude toward androgyny that took place around the middle of the 1800s was not set off by any one event, though the Civil War does make for a convenient marker. But certainly anxiety about democracy's potential to blur gender boundaries resonated among many citizens after 1865, especially when race was a new dimension of American citizenship. As we shall see in the next chapter on Henry James, questions of nationalism and national reunification concerned not only democracy, but also the ambiguously gendered and racialized citizens who would embody that democracy.
2.1 Transcendentalism’s Ambivalent Son

Henry James had a love-hate relationship with transcendentalism. Certainly his ambivalence is evident in Isabel Archer, the protagonist of *A Portrait of a Lady* (1881), who brings her optimism and innocence along with her to Europe. Like Emerson, Isabel sees the world as a place without evil, a place that provides knowledge and experience without the requisite threat of corruption. After moving to Europe and inheriting much of her late uncle's wealth, she finds the world to be a much bigger and less benevolent place than her books on “German Thought” back home in Albany had told her (79). Above all else, Isabel's marriage to Gilbert Osmond becomes a prison. In a clear allusion to Emerson, the novel explains that Osmond despised Isabel. In his mind “she had no traditions and the moral horizon of a Unitarian minister. Poor Isabel, who had never been able to understand Unitarianism!” (482). Isabel's folly is two-fold: not only does she have an incomplete understanding of transcendentalism (insofar as it was influenced by Unitarianism), but transcendentalism itself has an incomplete understanding of the world. We feel pity for Isabel just as her creator seemed to feel, and we know as well as James knew that her return to Osmond at the end of the novel is her recognition that once the psyche is tainted by knowledge of good and evil, there is no return to one's former idealism.
By the time James began work on The Bostonians in 1883, however, his ambivalence towards transcendentalism had turned into skepticism, if not pessimism. No doubt fueling this pessimism was the failure of his transcendentalist father, Henry Sr., to achieve the philosophical or literary fame to which he aspired. In fact, the poor critical reception of The Bostonians, as it appeared in serial form in both Britain and America, caused James to muse upon his father's professional failures in an 1885 letter to brother William:

I fear The Bostonians will be, as a finished work, a fiasco, as not a word, echo or comment on the serial (save your remarks) have come to me (since the row about the first two numbers) from any quarter whatever. This deathly silence seems to indicate that it has fallen flat. I hoped for much of it, and shall be disappointed—having got no money for it I hoped a little glory. [...] But how can one murmur at one's success not being what one would like when one thinks of the pathetic, tragic ineffectualness of poor Father's lifelong effort, and the silence and oblivion that seems to have swallowed it up? (Edel 102)

There is a sad irony in how James compared the failure of his novel, which lampoons a group of transcendentalist-influenced radicals, to his father's earnest efforts to become one of the philosophy's leading spokesmen.

Yet much had changed in America since the transcendentalist heyday of the 1830s, '40s, and '50s, including a bloody civil war and the death of two of the movement's most prominent proponents, Thoreau and Fuller. And just as Henry Jr. did not altogether purge transcendentalism from his novels, as Portrait of a Lady bears out, nor did he completely ignore the transcendentalists' vision of androgyny, though he would arrive at very different conclusions on the subject. As mentioned in the previous chapter, it was around the middle of the nineteenth century when sexology and medical science began to use the terms “androgyny” and “hermaphrodism” to describe same-sex attraction, a condition that was also regarded as pathological and degenerative. While James's writings therefore
evoked androgyny with relative frequency, they also signaled this larger shift taking place in America and Europe.

No doubt having a famous physician for a brother helped the author keep current on the many theories circulating in these medical communities. In *Henry James's Thwarted Love* (1999), Wendy Graham explains that

James's incorporation of a feminine identity was a socially mediated act; that is, it was influenced by James's desire to avoid unwelcome duties (military service and supporting a family) and his upbringing. It is also true that James's self-portraits (fictional, epistolary, and autobiographical) are consistent with sexologists' constructions of homosexuality during his lifetime. [Forensic scientist J. L.] Casper published in the 1850s and 1860s. [Karl] Ulrichs and Carl Westphal published in the 1860s. By the 1880s a mass of information about homosexuality had accumulated, and much of it was remarkably uniform in outlook, in that it labeled homosexuality as simple gender inversion. By the 1880s inversion had become a mainstream concept. (22)

Though mentioning sexology to support her claim about James's androgyny, Graham echoes what other critics have sensed for years. Critic and biographer Leon Edel has said of the Master that he “seemed to look at women rather as women looked at them [. . . .] Women look at women as persons; men look at them as women” (359). Carolyn Heilbrun credits *The Portrait of a Lady* with helping to usher in a new phase of “androgynous” literary creativity. As opposed to strictly “feminist” novels, androgynous novels such as *Portrait* ask the reader to identify “with the male and female characters equally,” just as the author has done (58). More recently, Kelly Cannon has claimed that James and many of his male protagonists subscribed to “a nonaggressive [gender] model that draws upon the androgynous quality at the core of [societal] marginality” (8).

Moreover, the “sexual inversion," which Graham also mentions, was synonymous with psychic androgyny, an association made not only by the scientists named above, but also by John Addington Symonds, another noted sexologist with whom James frequently
corresponded throughout the 1880s and early 1890s. It is no surprise, then, that the many effeminate men and masculine women so common in James's fiction would resemble the medical portraits drawn up by many of these prominent physicians and scientists.

But the emerging science of sexology did more than co-opt androgyny for its new classifications of sexual identity. Bound up in this new codification was the question of race. As sexologists Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds wrote in the 1890s, “And now that the problem of religion has practically been settled, and that the problem of labour has at least been placed on a practical foundation, the question of sex—with the racial questions that rest on it—stands before the coming generations as the chief problem for solution” (x). Thanks in large part to Siobhan B. Sommerville's recent scholarship, we are beginning to understand the larger implications of Ellis and Symonds's remarks. Attempting to give coherence to these vague suggestions, she argues that “the formation of notions of heterosexuality and homosexuality emerged in the United States through (and not merely parallel to) a discourse saturated with assumptions about the racialization of bodies” (4).

This chapter therefore gauges American democracy's ability to come to terms with androgyny—in both its sexual and racial dimensions—by way of certain writings in the James canon spanning from The Bostonians (1886) to a number of essays and addresses

1. Sommerville sees the discourse of race and sexuality intersecting at three basic points. First, sexologists attempted to prove through comparative anatomy that (white) homosexuals had bodily features similar to blacks. For example, “[o]ne of the most consistent medical characterizations of the anatomy of both African American women and lesbians was the myth of an unusually large clitoris” (27). Secondly, just as race theorists of the time attempted to classify individuals along a “continuum” of absolute whiteness and blackness (with the mulatto holding a place in the middle), sexologists attempted to classify sexual inverted along similar lines. Somewhere between the axes of heterosexual men and women existed what sexologist Edward Carpenter termed the “intermediate sex,” that is, persons with same-sex desire (170). And finally, sexology and scientific discourse theorized that both same-sex and interracial desire were “unnatural,” and therefore they were types of psychological perversion.
the author composed between 1905 and 1907. After concluding in *The Bostonians* that homosexual desire was destructive because of its pseudo-scientific link to racial degeneration, James began to see new hope for androgyny by means of a dual-gendered, yet disembodied, *vox Americana*, which he believed marginalized or mitigated the problematic sexualized and racialized bodies that constituted it.

### 2.2 The Bostonians: Crossbreeding Discourses and Unstable Women

When Henry James started compiling notes for *The Bostonians* in 1883, he summarized his intentions for the new project: “I wished to write a very *American* tale,” he claimed, “a tale very characteristic of our social condition, and I asked myself what was the most salient and peculiar point in our social life. The answer was: the situation of woman, the decline of the sentiment of sex, the agitation on their behalf [. . .] (*Notebooks* 47, emphasis in original). In the author’s attempt to capture the entire postbellum age within the confines of women's liberation, one can’t help but wonder if something else is left out. Given the immense upheaval the United States had experienced since 1860, writing an “American” tale in the early 1880s would be a project of almost epic proportion. The Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments had finally given African American men legal citizenship and all privileges appertaining thereto; but still, American women—black and white alike—were not yet fully acknowledged as citizens. Though American women would not be given the vote until well into the twentieth century with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, they were making their voices known at the time James was formulating ideas for his novel. It is evident from the novel’s subject matter—with its themes of women’s suffrage, the “Boston marriage,” and postbellum sectional discord—that James was somewhat attuned to the social and political controversies stirring in his native land. Still, it would have been unthinkable for the
author, whose famous directive in “The Art of Fiction" is to be a writer “on whom nothing is lost,” to overlook the racial issues that were so much a part of Gilded Age America (Tales 352).

To what extent James knew about the imbrication of racial and sexual discourses that Siobhan B. Sommerville has outlined is not at all clear. We do know that James was at least vaguely aware of the link between androgyny and Africa. Having written a review for Alvan S. Southworth's memoir *Four Thousand Miles of African Travel: A Personal Record of a Journey up the Nile* in an 1875 issue of *The Nation*, James remarks: “Mr. Southworth's style is, it must be said, sometimes rather odd, as, to take another instance, when he speaks of Egypt as a 'hermaphrodite land, half savage, half civilized'” (*Literary Criticism* 600). It is worth noting that James chose to linger on this particular line in a review of only a few pages in length. Though Southworth presumably speaks of hermaphroditism in terms of masculine civilization and feminine nature, it is impossible to know exactly what James himself thought of the analogy.

Regardless of what a hermaphroditic Egypt may have meant for James, the previously quoted notebook entry about his intentions for *The Bostonians* makes one thing certain: in the late nineteenth century, America and Europe had developed a widespread fear of women—alarm over their consumption habits in the marketplace and dread over their psychic mystery. This fear has been throughly discussed by a number of social historians and critics,² but only recently has scholarship attempted to expose how the emerging “New Woman”—that androgynous specter gaining greater public visibility by the 1880s—was implicated in the criss-crossing discourses of race and homosexuality.

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Like Sommerville, Lisa Duggan engages these themes in *Sapphic Slashers: Sex, Violence, and American Modernity* (2000). The book recounts the events surrounding the 1892 murder of Freda Ward by her lover Alice Mitchell in Memphis, Tennessee.

Alongside this story Duggan posits the various lynching narratives made known by Ida B. Wells, who, in the same year and in the same city, edited the anti-lynching pamphlets *Southern Horrors*. In both cases, Duggan pays particular attention to the role of the “unstable” woman. In the lesbian murder case, this persona is exemplified in Freda Ward, the outwardly “feminine” love object of Alice Mitchell's ostensibly mannish desire. What makes Ward unstable in the public's opinion is that she could choose to involve herself in a lesbian relationship or she could choose to reject Alice's love altogether and marry a male suitor, thus living up to Victorian American ideals. Moreover, Freda's sexual “instability” was also considered a type of “mental hermaphrodisim” at the time—meaning that she had the (heterosexual) erotic impulses of both men and women (Katz 20-21).

Duggan also points out how the unstable white woman appears in Ida B. Wells's depiction of various southern lynching narratives. Challenging the conventional notion that white women were the passive, hapless victims of black men's sexual desire, Wells refigures this narrative to expose the white woman as actually having a choice to engage in sex with a black man (21). Given these events in Memphis, the country was vexed and alarmed: the “modern” woman, poised at the brink of the twentieth century, could exercise her own agency, choosing either heterosexuality or homosexuality; and she could even choose her own love object, black or white.

James himself was intrigued by various types of unstable women, writing stories that depicted their frequent opaqueness or capriciousness. In *Daisy Miller* (1878), for
example, Winterbourne can never decide if Daisy is "exceedingly innocent" or an "unscrupulous" flirt (*Tales* 10). Similar mysteries characterize the alluring Madame de Vionnet, Chad Newsome’s possible lover in *The Ambassadors* (1903). But Verena Tarrant, the young, eloquent suffragist of *The Bostonians*, may elude the reader more than any other of James’s women. The narrative notes quite early that Verena has a "singular hollowness of character" (85). Because we do not have access to her thoughts, we are unsure of her sexual inclinations—or even her own racial makeup.

Already there exists an extensive critical debate over whether the novel's female protagonist Olive Chancellor is a lesbian and to what extent Verena reciprocates that affection. I would like to update this critical conversation by adding to it a much-needed discussion of race as it developed alongside late nineteenth-century notions of androgyny. The first portion of this chapter will therefore consider how *The Bostonians* reflects or anticipates these overlapping sexual and racial codifications. Consistently throughout the novel, James endows his two protagonists Olive and Basil with the ability to perceive homosexual desire in racialized terms. Not surprisingly, their perceptions come to bear on the "empty" vessel Verena (Wilt 293). In wishing to make Verena her lover, Olive sees this young radical as a racialized, exotic Other whom she can guide and control. Insofar as Basil Ransom perceives Verena to be involved in a lesbian relationship, he, too, sees her in racialized terms. His perception is perhaps more complex than Olive's because he is both attracted to and repelled by Verena's perceived blackness and psychic androgyny.

In short, she presents a challenge: having "surrendered the remnants of his patrimony" by

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3. For example, Lionel Trilling argues that Olive lives a life of "homosexual chastity" (151). Mildred E. Hartsock claims that the "portrayal of Olive Chancellor is a precise anatomizing of a hapless Lesbian love" (301). For David Van Leer, "whether she is finally judged tragic or pathetic, Olive Chancellor is certainly the first fully conceived lesbian protagonist in modern fiction" (93).
failing to eke out a living on his Mississippi plantation, Ransom is looking for a way to reclaim his manhood (43). In his struggle to woo her—and thus domesticate her through marriage—he is not only “saving” the young suffragist from lurid lesbianism and blackness, but also re-establishing his own place in the gender hierarchy. That Ransom ultimately wins out over his cousin Olive suggests that James may be making a larger statement about the role of race and androgyny in the postbellum imagination. Just as James sees the nation not yet willing to take on larger issues of sexual liberation at the end of the nineteenth century, he cannot conceive of a racially diverse America, an America that makes room for blacks within its citizenry or national iconography. Through its overlapping (homo)sexualized and racialized imagery, *The Bostonians* reflects a nation's deeper broodings about the social makeup of American modernity.

The reform-minded Olive Chancellor is, in James's artistic vision, the postbellum legatee of the transcendentalist movement. Her progressive stance on women's emancipation, her Boston lineage, her abolitionist sympathies, and her argumentative personality in many ways make her the fictional reincarnation of Margaret Fuller. Just as James was ambivalent about transcendentalism, so too was he about its leading female voice. This ambivalence, as John Carlos Rowe points out, was one he no doubt inherited from his father, who himself had mixed personal relations with Fuller (38-41). The commitment to social and political reform that Olive Chancellor has in common with Fuller is what separates her from the subtly rebellious “drawing room feminists” (Rowe 41), such as Isabel Archer, Milly Theale, and Maggie Verver, with whom James himself seemed to identify and sympathize. While James the artist may have embraced Fuller's
dictum that “there is no wholly masculine man, no wholly feminine woman,” James the social critic probably did not.

In other respects, James moved well beyond Margaret Fuller for his portrait of Olive, suggesting that her sexual desire for other women may be read as a type of physical and psychical hermaphrodisism. The narrator tells us: “It was a curious incident of [Olive's] zeal for the regeneration of her sex that manly things were, perhaps on the whole, what she understood best” (137). The “manly things" the narrator mentions carry over into her de-sexed appearance. Her lack of ornamentation and "plain dark dress" emphasizes that “[s]he had absolutely no figure, and presented a certain appearance of feeling cold" (40, 48).

Within the larger context of the overlapping discourses of androgyny and race, Olive represents what sexologist Karl Ulrichs termed an Urninde—a woman “with a masculine love drive" (qtd. in Katz 51). Olive's resemblance to this particular type of psychical hermaphrodite, I contend, keeps James from racializing her as he will Verena in subsequent pages. According to Ulrichs's writings from the 1860s, Urnings and Urnindes were respective terms for homosexual men and women found in white, bourgeois populations. Though their same-sex desire was an anomaly, these individuals themselves were neither pathological nor dangers to society (Kennedy 30). In fact, the more civilized classes of Urnings and Urnindes might also possess “fine romantic feeling" similar to Olive's romanticizing of Verena (qtd. in Duggan 160). For James, Olive's class status and her penchant for understanding “manly things" make all the difference, for if nothing else, such similarities draw her closer to her creator. Casting a black racial hue on Olive might therefore appear too close to a self-indictment, seeing as
they have not only same-sex desire in common, but also a Boston patrician pedigree and an artistic imagination.

From its outset the novel makes clear that Olive has a deep-seated hatred of anything conventional: “She always felt more at her ease in the presence of anything strange. It was the usual things of life that filled her with silent rage; which was natural enough inasmuch as, to her vision, almost everything that was usual was iniquitous” (42). As the novel will show soon enough, this disdain for the humdrum of Victorian American domestic life can be seen in both sexual and racial terms. It is “natural enough” to Olive that the quotidian and conventional are “iniquitous,” that heteronormativity and the bourgeois manifestations of whiteness it supports are as unnatural to her as women’s suffrage is to her cousin Basil.

When Olive then shows up at Miss Birdseye's house with Ransom in tow, she meets Verena and finds in her a potential love object. Enthralled by the speech Verena gives later that evening, Olive invites the young suffragist to meet her the following day. Through subtle probing during this second meeting, Olive wonders if Verena might be a more outwardly feminine variant of her own psychically androgynous type. She then admits, “You seem to me very wonderful. I don’t know what to make of you” (100). We do understand only a page later, however, that Olive's imaginative faculties have gotten the best of her. Regarding Verena, she thinks:

It was just as she was that she liked her; she was so strange, so different from the other girls one usually met, seemed to belong to some queer gipsy-land or transcendental Bohemia. With her bright, vulgar clothes, her salient appearance, she might have been a rope-dancer or a fortune teller; and this had immense merit, for Olive, that it appeared to make her belong to the “people,” threw her into the social dusk of that mysterious democracy which Miss Chancellor held that the fortunate classes know so little about, and with which (in a future possibly very near) they will have to count. (101)
Given these racially coded images, Olive is less likely to see Verena's complexion as *uber*-white (Dr. Prance had noted the night before that Verena looked “certainly very pale” and must be “anaemic” [82]), but instead as a blank page upon which Olive can paint her own portrait of racial and sexual desire. Though this premise may appear contradictory, it is really no more than an interpretive reaffirmation of James's role as a proponent of psychological realism; for psychological realists contend that the psyche, often caught up in a solipsism of desire, superimposes its own sense of reality on the outside material world.

In Olive's mind Verena runs the gamut from Bohemian to a circus rope dancer. Considering the narrow definitions of whiteness extant in the nineteenth century, these exotic figures are very much racialized. The most tantalizing aspect to Verena's gypsy-like appearance is that her racial origin is ambiguous. With the transient lifestyle attributed to Bohemians, the narrative implies, Verena might very well be the daughter of an exotic moor or a Middle Eastern sultan—or even, given her father's Hebrew first name, Selah, a wandering Jew. This hint of Jewishness that James slips into his text may be more indicative of blackness than at first glance, for as Katya Gibel Azoulay remarks, the dissemination of Jews across much of the world spawned people whose skin color ranged from the “pale northern European Jew” to the “dark African or Asian” (11). Azoulay’s

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4. Harriet Ann Jacobs’s 1861 *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, for example, recounts how after escaping to the North, white friends eventually had to purchase her freedom from her southern master for three hundred dollars. Similarly, Frederick Douglass's white patrons in Britain and America bought his freedom while he was safely away in Europe.
premise merely echoes a larger historical conflation of Jewishness and blackness that first gained public visibility at about the time James was writing in the 1870s and 1880s.\(^5\)

Though this Jewish strain is not as prevalent throughout the rest of the novel, it does open the door to a larger consideration of blackness as it would have been coded or articulated in postbellum America. Given the passage's emphasis on both darkness (the "social dusk") and impending political enfranchisement, Verena appears in Olive's mind as an adumbration of the American polis once the manacles of racial oppression and prejudice have been lifted from African Americans. Her clothing is not only "bright"—suggesting the garish hand-me-downs of black slaves—but also "vulgar," implying that Verena is common in the sense that she is now "of the people." She is the new "flower of the great Democracy" (128) for whom both abolition and universal suffrage have been fought in their respective eras. The novel recognizes early on, after all, that the suffragists of the postbellum era were the abolitionists of the 1830s, '40s, and '50s (56, 111). It is worth noting here the importance of the novel's title, for Boston was undeniably the center of nineteenth-century abolitionism and suffrage in America.\(^6\)

In James's novel, Miss Birdseye most clearly embodies this double legacy of reform. "She was in love, even in those days, only with causes, and she languished only

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6. Well known abolitionists such as Lydia Maria Child, who was white, and African American Maria W. Stewart were residents of Boston. There and elsewhere, women such as Child, Stewart, and the Grimké sisters from South Carolina began to link black slavery to the domestic confinement of white middle class women. Child, for instance, proclaimed that "the comparison between [white] women and the colored race is striking. [...] [B]oth have been kept in subjection by physical force, and considered rather in the light of property, than as individuals" (qtd. in Walters 105).
for emancipations. But they had been the happiest days, for when causes were embodied in foreigners (what else were Africans?), they were certainly more appealing” (56). Though too young to have participated in abolitionism, Olive seems especially sensitive to the American lower classes, of which newly-freed slaves were most certainly a part. We cannot help but wonder if Olive, like Miss Birdseye, “did not sometimes wish the blacks back in bondage” so as to be able to free them all over again (56).

It is no surprise, then, that Olive conflates racial and sexual liberation. She “liked to think that Verena, in her childhood, had known almost the extremity of poverty, and there was a kind of ferocity in the joy with which she reflected that there had been moments when this delicate creature came near (if the pinch had only lasted a little longer) to literally going without food. These things added to her value for Olive” (128). As James intimates, the sober minded suffragist may be casting herself as William Lloyd Garrison opposite Verena's Frederick Douglass. In such a case, the escaped slave narrative of mid-nineteenth century America seems to work its way subtly into the text. As literary historians tell us, the popularity of antebellum slave narratives was attributed in large part to northern women who, like Olive, had the education and the leisure time to invest in reading. Given an Urninde's purported sensitivity to art and sentiment, it seems that “the romance of the people” (62) Olive conjures in her mind guides her feelings for Verena.

Yet Verena's “value” for Olive goes well beyond romantic sentiment. Despite the embarrassment of being from the Boston gentry, she cannot help but think in pecuniary metaphors. The more Verena resembles an escaped slave, the more Olive's fantasies circulate in the realm of commerce: “[T]he prospect of suffering was always, spiritually speaking, so much cash in [Olive's] pocket” (129). The narrative pronounces this race-
cash association most prominently when Olive takes the necessary steps to literally buy Verena's freedom from her mesmerist father. Olive suspects that Selah loves his daughter only because she can make him rich through her work in the women's liberation movement. The meeting between Olive and the mesmeric healer had “the stamp of business,” the novel states. “It assumed that complexion very definitely when she crossed over to her desk and wrote Mr. Tarrant a cheque for a very large amount.” Without hesitation Olive then commands, “Leave us alone—entirely alone—for a year, and then I will write you another” (176). This scene hearkens back to the widely-read narratives of Harriet Ann Jacobs and Frederick Douglass, both of whom were purchased from their southern masters by white patrons.\(^7\)

Once Verena is safely purchased, Olive can begin educating her about the history of women's oppression. Olive takes great pride in effecting a racial and sexual “uplift” of sorts, taking Verena away from her father—itself a move unmistakably linked to slavery—and turning her into a more visible spokeswoman for sexual liberation. The way Olive does so is also connected to the white patron-escaped slave narrative: she takes her abroad for a speaking tour. Numerous slaves had made names for themselves at home and abroad after escaping from southern bondage—Harriet Ann Jacobs, Frederick Douglass, and Sojourner Truth among the most notable. Not coincidentally, these figures also advocated (to one degree or another) women's suffrage and liberation.\(^8\)

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7. Harriet Ann Jacobs's 1861 *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, for example, recounts how after escaping to the North, white friends eventually had to purchase her freedom from her southern master for three hundred dollars. Similarly, Frederick Douglass's white patrons in Britain and America bought his freedom while he was safely away in Europe.

8. Perhaps the most famous of these speaking engagements was Frederick Douglass's successful trip to the British Isles under the auspices of William Lloyd Garrison and the American Anti-Slavery Society. Douglass's tour was so successful that he was able to continue it for two full years, from 1845-1847.
Under Olive's guidance (or perhaps ownership), Verena will fulfill all the duties expected of her: she will stay true to the cause of women's liberation and she will not marry any prospective suitor, especially Basil Ransom. In Olive's opinion, she is not possessing Verena, but merely saving her: “You must be safe, Verena—you must be saved; but your safety must not come from your having tied your hands” (152). In one instance Olive echoes the paternalistic rhetoric of southern masters, who would argue that slavery was in the best interest of slaves because they lacked the intellectual and mental wherewithal to live in a free world. Nevertheless, her bondage metaphor is distinctly racial and libidinal: the enamored Olive cannot bear to let Verena loose, especially to the conservative former slave owner Ransom; if so, the loss would be tantamount to Verena being thrown back into slavery, almost as if that is literally where she had come from. The point becomes even clearer when Olive bluntly states that Ransom has “the delicacy of one of his own slave drivers” (363), and therefore Verena must steer clear of him at all costs.

Numerous critics have argued that Basil and Olive, almost paradoxically “unified” by their desire for Verena, are involved in a dopplegänger relationship. For Thomas F. Bertonneau, “It appears that Olive and Basil become rivals from [the moment they meet Verena]. More than models and rivals, they become doubles, converging disastrously on the same object, the initially characterless Verena herself” (60). Bertonneau's point is worth further consideration not just because the two protagonists are similar in their love for the same woman, but because they attempt to give form and substance to one who seems so “characterless.” As I have previously suggested, Olive manages to give Verena

form through erotically racializing her. Ransom, too, is invested in this project, as Verena's exotic allure and possible lesbianism pique his sexual curiosity. In the process of wooing Verena, Ransom will have to work through his own libidinal desire, ultimately to claim her through marriage as a model of virtuous southern womanhood.

Moreover, I read Ransom as anxious about Verena's sexual "instability" because failing to domesticate her will further cripple his sense of masculinity. He understands from the outset that visiting the "city of reform" will be a test of his manhood. As Olive's sister Mrs. Luna tells him in the novel's opening pages, Olive "would reform the solar system if she could get hold of it. She'll reform you, if you don't look out" (38). As a former slaveholder and a staunch believer in the patriarchal order, Basil feels doubly besieged by these remarks. The thought of Olive transforming him hearkens back to the female abolitionists of the 1830s, those such as Maria W. Stewart who publicly castigated black and white men alike for not opposing slavery more virulently. To succumb to Olive's radical program would compromise his manhood in other ways as well. Abolitionist men often sought a model of masculinity quite different from the one of acquisitive aggression that was becoming so prominent in the business communities of mid-nineteenth century America. Modeled chiefly on the meek and somewhat androgynous Christ, this new sense of manhood "encouraged expressions of lavish affection between (heterosexual) men. Male friends routinely exchanged kisses when greeting one another and passionate letters when separated" (Wolff 601). A southern

9. Maria W. Stewart for one gained immediate notoriety in 1833 for scolding members of a Boston black Masonic Lodge. She told these men that if they would spend more time fighting for abolition than "gambling and dancing, [she] might have remained at home, and they stood contending in [her] place" (qtd. in Romero 63). For further readings on Stewart, consult James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860 (1997).
aristocrat, Ransom does not feel at home in the industrial-capitalist North, but for him to accept this sentimental version of manhood would equally alienate him from familiar gender norms.

When he meets Verena at Miss Birdseye's, an androgynous cast of characters in attendance immediately unsettles him. Aside from Olive—whom the narrator has already pinned as being “unmarried by every implication of her being” (47)—there is also Dr. Prance, who “looked like a boy, and not even like a good boy” (67). Noticing how all the women at the meeting flock to Verena once she enters the room, Ransom considers the young suffragist's potential lesbianism. Verena is beautiful, but she is “disturbingly beautiful”—that is, her physical appeal has a caveat that might make a southern gentleman pause (239, italics mine). As the narrative hints, her character might be marred not only by psychic hermaphroditism, but also by a certain racial ambiguity: “The girl was pretty, though she had red hair” (60). The seeming trepidation with which the narrative admits this detail is well worth pondering. Red hair often comes across now, as well as it did over a hundred years ago, as a sure signifier of Irish blood. Noel Ignatiev's *How the Irish Became White* argues that Irish Americans, despite their obvious phenotype, had an immensely difficult time establishing or claiming their whiteness in the nineteenth century. In the eyes of Anglo-Protestant America during the mid-1800s, the Irish not only brought with them to the New World a distasteful Catholicism, but also a “lower class" status that made many in northeastern cities very anxious. This anxiety, as Ignatiev claims, often coded the Irish in terms of blackness as the two groups “developed a common culture of the lowly” (2).
If red hair signifies a type of “blackness” for Ransom, it also gives that blackness an erotic charge. Ransom feels a furtive thrill in fantasizing about Verena’s potential psychic androgyny and racial otherness when he first meets her. She was “such an odd mixture of elements. She had the sweetest, most unworldly face, and yet, with it, an air of being on exhibition, of belonging to a troupe, of living in the gaslight, which pervaded even the details of her dress, fashioned evidently with an attempt at the histrionic” (82). Several aspects of this short description are highly suggestive. Being “on exhibition,” Verena can have particular resonance in the southern male imagination as being a black slave who is put up for sale. Indeed, the auction block and the theater shared many performative similarities. Just as a theater presentation puts actors and actresses before a crowd of paying customers, the slave auction requires its human commodities to speak, flash their teeth, flex their muscles, and show off their agility as a means of making them suitable for commerce. Therefore when Olive tells Verena that Ransom is “becom[ing] one of his own slave-drivers,” we may very well see Ransom in exactly that role when viewing Verena for the first time.

Ransom’s confusion is exacerbated by his perception of Verena as “belonging to a troupe.” Even when seen beyond the larger world of minstrelsy, nineteenth-century American theater had a reputation for about every kind of perversion imaginable. Among them, of course, was “androgyny” (in the form of homosexuality and male/female impersonation) as well as interracial mingling and miscegenation. In her examination of the 1892 lesbian murder in Memphis, Duggan notes that the world of theater in the late nineteenth century provided a site of socialization outside of the parlor or drawing room. By coming out of the domestic sphere (even if only for a few hours of entertainment),
young white women became susceptible to more subversive forms of living. Duggan claims that the theater “created a space for diverging or dissenting performances of class, gender, and sexual relations, for complexly ambiguous interpretations of actors’ speech and acts, and for forms of shared living and economic support outside the white home” (148). After the murder and trial had taken place, various media attributed Mitchell's and Ward's sexual inversion to their exposure to the theater. Ransom may suspect that Verena's many speaking engagements across the country have a similar corrupting influence.

The doppelgänger relationship between Basil and Olive makes itself evident even in the ways they imagine Verena. Like his cousin, Ransom sees the suffragist as a Bohemian gypsy:

If she had produced a pair of castanets or a tambourine, he felt that such accessories would have been quite in keeping [. . .]. Ransom would have thought she looked like an Oriental, if it were not that Orientals are dark; and if she had only had a goat she would have resembled Esmeralda, though he had but a vague recollection of who Esmeralda had been. (82)

While gypsies may be alluring and sensual, they are anything but symbols of white domestic womanhood. Most provocative about Esmeralda is that until the end of Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris*, we do not know who her parents are. Similarly, Ransom's understanding of Verena's pedigree is anything but stable. Given the amount of miscegenation that occurred between masters and women slaves and given the relative mobility of many whites from one part of the South to another, public knowledge of long standing, well documented family bloodlines was a considerable concern for southern aristocrats whose social and economic livelihood rested on such notions of racial purity.

Basil's exoticizing and eroticizing of Verena suggests a larger historical trend among the slaveholding class. As historians of antebellum southern culture have noted, a
strong sexual tie often linked masters and women slaves. Bertram Wyatt-Brown, for
example, claims that while wholesale application of Freudian paradigms are “always
risky,” he does understand how the Madonna-Whore complex often worked its way into a
white southern man's perception of a female slave. It is no secret that the white plantation
matron held particular significance in antebellum southern culture as the emblem of
virtue and domesticity. But southern men felt themselves unable to sexualize this woman
who purportedly symbolized the best of southern morals. The young southern man also
found that he could not compete for the affection of his own virtuous mother in an
Oedipal triangle that would involve his father. Wyatt-Brown therefore argues that “[i]n
repressing his fantasies, he splits the sexual and affectional impulses in his relations with
women. Sex becomes associated with an inferior, an expendable woman whom, outside
of wedlock, he both enjoys and socially despises” (319). With regard to Verena, Ransom
finds himself caught in a similar Madonna-Whore bind.

Insofar as the southerner perceives the beautiful Verena to be the object of lesbian
desire, she corresponds to the stereotypical black seductress so commonly found in
minstrel or fictional representations of the time. True, Ransom wants to “convert” Verena
to both heteronormativity and whiteness, yet he revels in the momentary possibility of
lesbian desire and the supposed blackness it evokes. More simply put, the challenge
excites him in much the same way current-day pornography depicting lesbian sex might
be said to tantalize a heterosexual male viewer: if the male viewer could somehow enter
into that scene, he thinks that his own masculine attractiveness would redirect the
women’s libidinal desire onto himself instead of just each other.
Verena's psychic androgyne and racial exoticism must eventually give way to whiteness and heternormativity in Ransom's mind. The challenge before him is worth the struggle only if in the end he can claim his prize, which in this case is a heterosexual and white bride who willingly succumbs to his plan of southern domesticity. Sometime after the novel's midpoint, he tells Verena of his wish to marry her. While trying to win her favor, he reassures her that he wants to preserve her coveted voice:

Believe me, Miss Tarrant, these things will take care of themselves. You won't sing in the Music Hall, but you will sing to me; you will sing to every one who knows you and approaches you. Your gift is indestructible; don't talk as if I either wanted to wipe it out or should be able to make it a particle less divine. I want to give it another direction, certainly; but I don't want to stop your activity. Your gift is the gift of expression, and there is nothing I can do for you that will make you less expressive. It won't gush out at a fixed hour and on a fixed day, but it will irrigate, it will fertilize, it will brilliantly adorn your conversation. Think how delightful it will be when your influence becomes really social. Your facility, as you call it, will simply make you the most charming woman in America. (379-80)

Since it was Verena's speeches that erotically bound Olive to her, Ransom suggests that giving her voice “another direction” is to redirect her libidinal impulses toward men instead of women. Under his guidance and “cultivation,” that voice will speak instead for the world of the domestic sphere, thus removing her from the public debate concerning women's full citizenship in America.

Ransom's celebration of domesticity seems to question the “naturalness” of both interracial and androgynous desire. As Sommerville has pointed out, the sexological discourse of the day argued that both interracial and same-sex desire were often codified as “a type of congenital abnormal sexual object choice” (36-37). Ransom himself seems to have been interpellated by this discourse, for his own diction reveals a preoccupation with contrasting images of natural growth and mechanized industry: in marrying Verena and “making” her both heterosexual and white according to Victorian American norms,
he is restoring a biological balance in Verena's genetic makeup. Ransom can enact his own type of “irrigation" and “fertilization," using the wedding bed to cultivate her into a stable woman. Intercourse—his own ability to “gush out" with regularity—will be the pivotal act to thwart any unnatural forces that would make Verena sway in her devotion to him or heteronormativity.

The stream of images Ransom produces also carries with it a Volk-kulturnation paradigm that has been near and dear to many American theorists of national belonging. Charles R. Anderson argues that Ransom is the intellectual forerunner of the Southern Agrarians, a group of intellectuals and poets who, as we shall see in chapter four, attempted to define Americanness more in terms of how (white) southerners purportedly identified with the South (Bostonians 25). Key to their cultural and economic program was a repudiation of industrial capitalism and a return to the soil by means of agriculture. (Not surprisingly, they were responding to the devastation caused by the Great Depression.) In premordialist-nationalist fashion, the Agrarians felt that all true Americans, like true southerners, would see themselves in the soil. Ransom implies that only a "natural" woman springs up out of the American ground. In this sense, as I have argued in a previous study, Verena's name is significant because of its phonic similarity to verbena, a plant found in the New World (Shaheen 184). Verena can be the voice of American womanhood by ironically keeping mute in the public arena. Coupled with Basil, another vegetative name, Verena is destined for greatness within the confines of her native “soil," the home.

Verena, too, speaks of pastoral settings when articulating her own nationalist vision, although hers hearken back to a prelapsarian existence. When giving a speech at
Mrs. Burrage's home midway through the novel, Verena implores the men in her audience to envision a new egalitarian America: “You would like so much better to walk there, and you would find grass and trees and flowers that would make you think you were in Eden. That is what I should like to impress to each of you, personally, individually—to give him the vision of the world as it hangs perpetually before me, redeemed, transfigured, by a new moral tone.” (268). Though my research has not been able to determine whether or not James was familiar with the writings of Ballanche and d'Olivet, the ideas in Verena's speech are strikingly close to these mystics' vision. For all three, an androgynous pastoral vision, lost with the Fall of Man, can be recovered provided men and woman work for democratic equality.

At times such as these when Verena speaks before a crowd of like-minded men and women, Basil Ransom's mind transports him to locales where Verena is a nymph "sinking on a leopard skin, [...] with the native sweetness of her voice forcing him to listen till she spoke again" (229). James's use of "native" and "leopard" here suggests that as long as Verena speaks of women's liberation, she is neither American nor white, but rather a magical inhabitant of some exotic African land whose sole purpose is to seductively await domestication by a white man. The African exoticism of Basil's fantasy is especially resonant, for when Mrs. Luna had joked earlier that Verena might one day "run off with some lion tamer," she did not know at the time how close she was to the truth (213).

Within the sexualized and racialized terms of my reading, the narrative ultimately gives Ransom the final (albeit qualified) victory over Olive, providing him an assuredly white and heterosexual bride. In the novel's last scene, he whisks Verena away just as she
is about to give her suffrage speech before a riotous Boston crowd. The plot's reliance on a conventional ending suggests that the author as well as his Victorian American readership quake at the thought of endorsing more transgressive possibilities of sexual and racial liberation. Neither sexually liberated (hetero- or homosexual) women nor newly-freed African Americans can achieve a place in what Shane Phelan calls the "national imaginary." In racializing lesbian desire only to have it succumb to heternormative whiteness, the novel suggests that neither population has found placement among the "persistent images and rhetoric that, however inadequately and imperfectly, signal to a population who and what it is" (7).

After Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) treated James's "The Beast in the Jungle" to a queer reading, scholars have probed more deeply into the recesses of James's biography. From the speculative explorations of Wendy Graham and others has emerged a general portrait of a man who understood himself to be psychically androgynous, but who also managed to "privatize" his sexual impulses in order to maintain a Victorian sense of propriety. In Graham's opinion, this intimacy may have been nothing more than James writing erotic letters to other men (47-48). Others such as Sheldon M. Novick are more bold in asserting that "[h]istoric fact . . . supports, or is at least consistent with, a portrait of James as a rather conventional, conservatively inclined man—a man who while closeted was sexually active, who was 'homosexual' in

10. Sedgwick claims that part of the reason it has been so difficult to speculate on James's possible homosexuality is that he and his works have been protected by conservative critics. "It is possible that critics have been motivated in this active incuriosity by a desire to protect James from homophobic misreadings in a perennially repressive sexual climate. It is possible that because of the asymmetrically marked structure of the heterosexist discourse, *any* discussion of homosexual desires or literary content will marginalize him (or them?) as, simply, *homosexual*" (197).
the clinical language that my generation uses for such matters" (11). Although James seems never to have felt apologetic or “ashamed” of his same-sex attraction (at least as far as critics can tell), he saw no room for his sexual inclinations to be mentioned or known in the public sphere. To make one’s homosexuality visible, as the Oscar Wilde trials of 1895 proved, would certainly have devastating personal and professional repercussions (Ellman 218).

This privatizing impulse is at work in *The Bostonians*. Although James may allude to such lesbian goings-on between Olive and Verena, and though much of the novel is filtered through Olive’s consciousness, the reader will never encounter any *explicit* scenes of lesbian desire. As Terry Castle states, “though we can’t see what exactly is ‘going on’ between Olive and Verena, ‘it’ nonetheless seems to stare us brazenly in the face” (170). James cuts the reader off from viewing anything that might be too revealing. While at home studying women’s history, for example, Olive and Verena “watched the stellar points come out at last in a colder heaven, and then, shuddering a little, arm in arm, they turned away with a sense that the winter night was even more cruel than the tyranny of men—turned back to drawn curtains and a brighter fire and a glittering tea-tray and more and more talk about the long martyrdom of women.” (185). We must therefore stand on the sidewalk of Olive’s Charles Street home wondering about things we cannot see for ourselves. What goes on behind drawn curtains, be it idle conversation or even lesbian sex, is sanctioned in the private sphere, a place where not even the reader is allowed.

11. Though stating that James was sexually active, Novick is vague about the details. He does state that James most likely had relations with the young Oliver Wendell Holmes, and that “this first bite of the apple was not an isolated incident, but was repeated with some regularity throughout his life” (12). With little evidence to support his claims, Novick also states that James most likely disapproved of “buggery,” and speculating that “petting a young man may stand for that we know of the sexuality in James’s feelings and attractions” (10-11). See also Novick’s *Henry James: The Young Master* (1996).
From this safe narrative distance, there is even a hint of tenderness to the scene, suggesting that James does not necessarily condemn lesbian desire. David Van Leer insists that “[t]he negative implications of the process by which readers identify Olive's lesbianism do not mark James's personal discomfort with homosexual passion. [. . . .] James's problem with homosexuality concerns not its moral dimension, but the ways in which it can be represented in literature” (101, 102). To Van Leer's assertion I might add the issue of homosexuality's representation in the larger realm of American national expression. James's deeper reservation lies not in Olive's homosexuality, but in her insistence on making Verena's sexuality a public issue. Verena would then become just as much a “slave” to Olive's public ambition as she does to Ransom's domestic one. Olive loses Verena for good when the young woman is about to make her Boston public debut. In absconding with Ransom, Verena escapes from the many devious characters—Mathias Pardon and Selah Tarrant most notably—who want selfishly to capitalize on her public name.

Also through racializing Verena and placing her within a white patron/escaped slave narrative, Olive doubly devalues James's coveted realm of privacy. Thus his thoughts on homosexual (in)visibility roughly parallel his attitudes concerning racial (in)visibility. The American Scene, James's account of his 1904-5 visit to the United States, shows the particular difficulty the author had in conceiving of blacks as having a place in the postbellum national imaginary. In this book James can only imagine blacks to be “alien,” never a part of America's larger depiction of itself (Caramello 454). For example, when watching several African Americans loitering about the streets of Richmond, Virginia, James registers shock at the scene: the free black, “all portentious
and ‘in possession of his rights as a man,’” is the same “Southern black as [America] knew him not” (*American Scene* 297).

A later chapter in *The American Scene* recounts James leaving Charleston, South Carolina for Florida. Boarding the train, he finds that a black porter had indifferently dropped his luggage in the mud. While claiming that at this moment James sees the porter as embodying “physical and social mobility” and thus symbolizing blacks’ entry into the “American imaginary,” Sara Blair also acknowledges how the ubiquity of black porters in Pullman cars had often evoked “the most trenchant anxieties of racial purity and social mastery” among whites (202). Indeed, the porter’s appearance in this memory shows how little James (or indeed white America) acknowledged blackness within the body politic unless it was, as Blair says, as a servant that promotes the larger white “ethos of bourgeois self-making” (202). The only way that James can imagine race infused within the national imaginary is in a decidedly pre-bourgeois, antebellum southern context. Immediately after he sees the porter drop the baggage into the mud, he meditates on how “[o]ne had remembered the old Southern tradition, the house alive with darkies for the honor of fetching and carrying” (*American Scene* 312). The porter’s apparent insolence triggers James to imagine a time when blacks had no legally recognized subjectivity, a time when any effrontery would almost surely invite a trip to the whipping post. Since emancipation, the role of American blacks had changed dramatically, but neither James nor the country for whom he purports to speak can conceive of blacks as a part of mainstream postbellum life.

This sentiment sheds light on *The Bostonians*. In one particular scene Verena and Ransom visit Harvard’s Memorial Hall, a building erected to commemorate “the sons of
the university who fell in the long Civil War" (246). Realizing that the Mississippian might not feel comfortable visiting a memorial for Union soldiers, Verena tells Ransom that perhaps they are better off not to enter. Overtaken by curiosity, Basil remains unfazed.

They lingered longest in the presence of the white, ranged tablets, each of which, in its proud, sad clearness, is inscribed with the name of a student-soldier. The effect of the place is singularly noble and solemn, and it is impossible to feel it without a lifting of the heart. It stands there for duty and honour, it speaks of sacrifice and example, seems a kind of temple to youth, manhood, and generosity. Most of them were young, all were in their prime, and all of them had fallen; this simple idea hovers before the visitor and makes him read with tenderness each name and place—names often without other history, and forgotten Southern battles. (246)

James uses Memorial Hall as an indication of what symbols, attitudes, and sentiments clearly have been admitted into the postbellum national imaginary. Worth considering is what the narrative leaves out of this description. While the Civil War was fought in large part to liberate and patriate almost four million slaves, there is no such mention of race in the passage. Implicitly enshrined upon Memorial Hall's "white ranged tablets" are what James sees as Anglo-American virtues of "duty and honour," "sacrifice," "youth, manhood, [and] generosity" (italics mine). When we speak of America, James implies, these are the qualities that we dare mention. Gesturing toward white solidarity, Memorial Hall even goes so far as to commemorate southern battles (and presumably the white southerners who fought in them), but once again, the narrative stops short of making room in the national imaginary for blackness.

Similarly, Memorial Hall implicitly ennobles heteronormative virtues of manhood and womanhood. The stone tablets suggest that student-soldiers, guided by inner principles of duty and courage, claimed their rightful place as men within a traditionally gendered framework. Had these men survived the war, they surely would have been
expected to return to Harvard, graduate, enter the marketplace, and get married. The "singularly noble and solemn" atmosphere also holds sway over Verena, impressing upon her the "true" virtue of heteronormativity—of men who live up to their full potential as men. Obviously in awe of Ransom's own sense of manhood, she silently "sat down on a low stone ledge, as if to enjoy the influence of the scene" (246). Her attitude shown here anticipates her repudiation of psychic androgyny by the end of the novel. In this scene Verena is not depicted as "unstable"; instead, she is impressed by the public, heteronormative virtues that the hall represents, and she accepts her "low," fixed position on the stone ledge. After reading this scene one need not be too surprised to find the southerner winning her over by the novel's end.

Only a few pages back I claimed that the *The Bostonians*’s denouement reinscribes a patriarchy that can imagine neither blackness nor androgyny in the national imaginary. Yet in the novel's closing passages, James seems to second guess his own ending as the final sentences read: "But though [Verena] was glad [to leave the company of the suffragists], [Ransom] presently discovered that, beneath her hood, she was in tears. It was to be feared that with the union, so far from brilliant, into which she was about to enter, these were not the last she was destined to shed" (433). The mentioning of a union, of course, functions also at the level of the national imaginary. As Nina Silber has shown in previous studies, postbellum literary romances often depicted the reunion of the nation as a marriage between a northern man of business and a southern woman. "This image of marriage [. . .] stood at the foundation of the late nineteenth-century culture of conciliation and became a symbol which defined and justified the northern view of the
power relations in the reunified nation" (7). In the configuration Silber outlines, the man and wife together may show how the country itself has become an androgynous whole.

Yet in James’s novel the gender roles are reversed and the simplicity of the “romance of reunion” becomes all the more complicated. The novel seems to ask, “What is to become of a man and a woman who subscribe to traditional southern gender roles in the age of the New Woman and the corporate man? Verena's tears show that she is not fully prepared to move south to the plantation, presumably to live alongside Basil's sister and mother in a state of white, heterosexual contentment. Any attempt go back to a pre-industrial social and economic order would move against the general current of history. The great irony with which James leaves his reader is that Verena is still a prisoner, somewhat akin to the state Olive Chancellor put her in when she bought her from her father. In many symbolic ways, James's closing lines almost completely undo what it took him over four hundred pages to tie together.

So where has James left us by the novel’s last sentence? A white, heteronormative patriarchy? Or perhaps a new ideological and artistic frontier that anticipates a more inclusive national imaginary? James's calculated yet frustrating choice to make Verena an empty vessel only adds to our demand for definite answers. But perhaps the reason this novel is most American—recall that the author wanted to write “a very American tale”—is that its movement into the future beyond the Boston Music Hall is fraught with peril. James's ambivalent, inconclusive ending is perhaps the best one imaginable, for if the author, publishing his novel in 1886, knew at the time how to negotiate race and sexuality in the public sphere, it is certainly something later writers and thinkers could not easily
resolve. The issues with which James grappled continued to be a part of the national conversation well after the Civil War.

2.3 The Androgynous Vox Americana: James's Early Twentieth-Century Writings

The ending to The Bostonians has been so fascinatingly problematic because it implicitly asks readers which character truly is the Jamesian spokesman. Critics of an earlier era felt that Basil Ransom was most assuredly the mouthpiece of the author. Yet more recent critics, “sensitized by feminist interrogations of culture-based gender roles,” see James as sympathetic to Verena and Olive (Scheiber 235). My own reading of the novel borrows from Bakhtin's theory of the polyphonic novel. According to the Soviet critic, “In no way do [the characters or their ideologies] become principles of representation or construction for the entire novel as a whole, that is, principles of the author himself as the artist” (25). The novel's most remarkable accomplishment in my opinion is the way in which James neither fully endorses nor repudiates his protagonists' conflicting ideologies.

The polyphony of The Bostonians is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the monologue Basil huffily delivers to Verena about the diminishment of the masculine voice in America. He wants to save his country from

the most damnable feminization! I am so far from thinking, as you set forth the other night, that there is not enough woman in our general life, that it has long been pressed home to me that there is a great deal too much. The whole generation is womanized; the masculine tone is passing out of the world; it's a feminine, nervous, hysterical, chattering, canting age, an age of hollow phrases and false delicacy and exaggerated solicitudes and coddled sensibilities, which, if we don't soon look out,

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will usher in the reign of mediocrity, of the feeblest and flattest and the most pretentious that has ever been. The masculine character, the ability to dare and endure, to know and yet not fear reality, to look the world in the face and take it for what it is—a very queer and partly very base mixture—that is what I want to preserve, or rather, as I may say, to recover; and I must tell you that I don’t in the least care what becomes of you ladies while I make the attempt! (327)

The polyphony of this passage is comically ironic: Basil embodies not only the “masculine” critique of the Boston suffragists, but also the feminine hysteria he fears and despises. By the end of the novel, then, Basil seems hardly any more heroic than his doppelgänger Olive.

This polyphony also suggests that in James's reckoning, neither the isolated masculine nor feminine voice could carry out America's social and political discourse. In subsequent years James invested a significant amount of mental and creative energy working out the various conundrums that the New Woman brought with her as she publicly questioned the ideology of separate spheres. As I have argued in the first part of this chapter, James's reluctance to embrace the visibility of the New Woman was in large part due to the ways in which sexology linked “mental hermaphroditism” to racial degeneracy. But just as Basil's quote also signals, the New Woman was not going away. In fact, it was the Ransoms of America—replete in their chivalry, agrarianism, and gentility—who were on their way out, to be replaced in due time with a man deeply ensconced in materialism and commercial competitiveness. Coming to terms with the New Woman would therefore mean finding a more “artful” form of androgyny for her to embody as she made her way in the public realm.

By looking at *The American Scene*, “The Question of Our Speech,” “The Speech of American Women,” and “The Manners of American Woman,” which were all published between the years 1905 and 1907, I argue that James's notion of androgyny was in
transformation. His solution to the gender and racial disarray he found in modern America was to form a new and cohesive embodiment of American identity. Ironically, however, this new embodiment was not based in corporeality at all, since The Bostonians had shown just how problematic racialized and sexualized American bodies could be. Instead, the author sought out a "voice" for his native country, one that would actually reside most comfortably in the New Woman. In James's opinion, it is relatively inconsequential that it takes a living body to produce a voice; in a move that in many ways anticipates linguistic structuralism, James holds that speech not only defines the citizen—it becomes the citizen. Moreover, the national voice James advocated was a mixture of what he would term the "classic" masculine and feminine characteristics of control and charm respectively (American Scene 19). The nascent androgynized vox Americana therefore became the author's greatest attempt to settle the gender chaos in a country he abandoned but could never forget.

The four works that I examine are all related in some way to the trip James took to America in 1904 after a twenty year absence. While in Massachusetts in June 1905, he delivered the commencement address entitled "The Question of Our Speech" to the graduating class of the all-female Bryn Mawr College. The next year he published a series of installments in Harper's Bazaar entitled "The Speech of American Women." Later in 1907 he wrote a follow-up piece, "The Manners of American Women" in the same magazine. And finally, also in 1907, James published The American Scene, which recounts the author's travels in the North, Midwest, and South two years earlier.

As these four works bear out either directly or indirectly, James had a strong interest in American women in general and the New Woman in particular. The one thing
James makes perfectly clear in all of these writings is the singularity of the American woman's position in the world. In “The Speech of American Women” James says it most clearly: “The conditions of American life in general, and our great scheme of social equality in particular, have done many things for her, and left many others undone; but they have above all secured her this primary benefit that she is the woman in the world who is least ‘afraid’” (33). Here, James seems more at ease mentioning “social equality” than he did in the 1880s. What makes the New Woman masculine is not necessarily her sexual desire for other women, as *The Bostonians* would have had us believe, but rather her bold willingness to be seen in various public spheres, be they institutions of social reform, commerce, education, or social intercourse.

Yet this bravery can be a positive attribute only if it is used properly, which includes developing a civic voice that bespeaks national civility, charm, and unity. Much of James's interest in American women's voices no doubt stemmed from his disillusionment with American men, who, he felt, were too involved in commercial affairs to be of any long lasting significance to American culture. As he claims in “The Speech of American Women,” “the American male, in his conditions, is incapable of caring for a moment what sounds his women emit [. . .]. Of what sounds other than the yell of the stock-exchange or the football field does he himself, we on these lines hear it asked, give the cheering example?” (39).

Here James has put his finger on a common phenomenon among industrializing western countries of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. According to theorist Ernest Gellner, nationalist unity fully matured when states became industrialized. Before that time, states were usually characterized by the “low” cultures of their various
fragmented peasantries. As industrialism set in, many of these low cultures disappeared, to be replaced with a “high” culture, which achieved national unity primarily through standardized education, mass literacy, and consequent professional classes. Given the presence of a high culture, “a situation arises in which well-defined educationally sanctioned and unified cultures constitute very nearly the only kind of unit with which men willingly and often ardently identify” (Gellner 55). Obviously then, capitalism was key to the development of the nation-state because it gave citizens—and men especially—a common lexicon of technology, competition, and commercialism that made them relatively interchangeable and expendable in modern industrial society.

Yet while early twentieth-century America’s “high” culture would certainly meet Gellner's requirement for national cohesion, it fell disastrously short for Henry James. National unity based on a commercial lexicon and vocational interchangeability was still too vulgar, crass, and soulless. “The Question of Our Speech” draws out the general parameters of a linguistic homogenization to better suit modern America. Being nascent New Women, the graduates of Bryn Mawr College could benefit from the men's disappearing into the recesses of commercial life and themselves develop a public voice based on James’s idea of civility. But there was more than personal decorum at stake. James points out to his female audience that “there is no such thing as a voice pure and simple: there is only, for any business of appreciation, the voice plus the way it is employed; […] when such influences [of beauty and refinement], in general, have acted for a long time we think of them as having made not only the history of the voice, but positively the history of the national character, almost the history of the people” (26).
This, for James, is the *vox Americana* to which he exhorts the American New Woman to cultivate in her fellow citizens.

As the commencement address also makes clear, nations arise and perpetuate themselves through narratives that themselves constitute the historical pedagogy of the people as well as provide the basis for their current-day speech. No doubt this address would have particular resonance for the graduates of Bryn Mawr, many of whom surely would have entered the working world as teachers or school administrators. This dual-pronged function of narrative is evidence for critic Jessica Berman that James was coming to terms with modern American womanhood, which “mov[ed] beyond the parameters of the nineteenth-century domestic model and into the conflicted discourse of the progress woman” (64). For Berman, then, James's *vox Americana* is an attempt to feminize the nation. In her reading, James is claiming that very little about American men is redeemable, and so the whole onus of national character rests firmly on the backs of those such as the Bryn Mawr graduates, left as they are “on every inch of the social arena that the stock-exchange and the football field leave free” (“SAW” 39).

But by occupying this somewhat liminal space between the world of domesticity and the world of greater political enfranchisement, these New Women of modern America are not feminizing the nation in James's vision so much as they are androgynizing it. Supplementing Tom Nairn's premise that the nation is the modern Janus that looks simultaneously to a rich past and promising future, Anne McClintock gives genders to the nation's two faces. She claims that “[w]omen are represented as the atavistic and authentic body of national tradition [. . .], embodying nationalism's

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conservative principle of continuity" while men “represent the progressive agent of national modernity" (263). In James's reckoning, the New Woman must serve both national functions that have traditionally been dichotomized by male and female faces.

Moreover, Berman does not take into account how James's notion of ideal masculinity subtly pervades these later writings, showing that the *vox Americana* is a composite of the best of manly and womanly virtues. To understand James's breakdown of male and female attributes, it is useful to look at Walter Pater's aesthetics, which, as John R. Bradley has asserted, influenced James significantly. Pater's 1893 *Plato and Platonism* contends:

> Manliness in art, what can it be, as distinct from that which in opposition to it must be called feminine quality there,—what but a full consciousness of what one does, of art in the work of art, tenacity of intuition and of consequent purpose, the spirit of construction as opposed to what is literally incoherent or ready to fall to pieces, and, in opposition to what is hysterical or works at random, the maintenance of a standard. (280-81)

In other words, the difference Pater makes between masculine and feminine art is the difference between control and chaos, integrity and fragmentation. Though I have suggested that James ultimately sides with no one particular character in *The Bostonians*, Basil Ransom's “rant" to Verena on the disappearance of the masculine voice closely follows Pater's dichotomy. What in *The Bostonians* is "a feminine, nervous, hysterical, chattering, canting age [. . .] of hollow phrases and false delicacy" is in Pater's mind a type of art that is “hysterical," random," and “ready to fall to pieces." Conversely, Basil Ransom's idea of masculine character, based on “the ability to dare and endure, to know and yet not to fear reality, to look the world in the face and take it for what it is" roughly echoes the sense of control and mastery found in Pater's concept of masculine art.
This breakdown James makes in *The Bostonians* by no means suggests that women cannot express themselves artistically; rather, they should use those attributes that come "naturally" to them. As *The American Scene* implicitly argues, essential feminine artistic qualities do exist. Early in the book James recalls visiting Chocorua Mountain in New Hampshire. The landscape evokes "tenderness" with its "postures and surfaces [...], slimness and thinness and elegance" (19). James asks his reader: "What was that but the feminine attitude?—not the actual, current, impeachable, but the old ideal and classic" (19). True enough, there is a suggestion of weakness to these classic features, but only if men allow their penchant for control to turn into a passion for conquest. The landscape wished "to be liked, to be loved, to be stayed with, lived with, handled with some kindness, shown some courtesy of admiration" (19). This allure of the feminine landscape has all too often summoned avaricious men to her hills to possess and destroy it. But lest we see the feminine landscape as destructively co-dependent, James imagines the landscape as wishing for a mutually beneficial relationship:

The "Do something kind for me," is not so much a "Live upon me and thrive by me" as a "Live with me, somehow, and let us make out together what we may do for each other—something that is not merely estimable in more greasy greenbacks. See how 'sympathetic' I am," the still voice seemed everywhere to proceed, "and how therefore I am better than my fate: see how I lend myself to poetry and sociability—positively to aesthetic use: give me that consolation." (19-20)

This passage lends credence to Virgina Fowler's premise that James saw American men and women as too polarized, "resulting in an overriding masculinization of the worlds of commerce and industry and a thorough feminization of the social world" (6). To close this gap, citizens must strive for a way to make masculine and feminine impulses cohabitate in mutually productive, non-destructive ways. As this passage and the quote from Pater show, James's notion of the classic masculine and feminine is
reciprocal. Whereas the masculine artistic faculties of control and endurance can decay into conquest and destruction, feminine art can decline from tenderness and sociability into ranting and raving. There are, in other words, good traits and bad traits in both men and women, and the trick for the New Women of America is to find the best of both worlds and champion a national ethos based on an androgynous national voice.

In fact, the masculine-feminine reciprocity was something James had written about as early as 1878 when describing the writer Charles Saint-Beuve:

There is something feminine in his tact, his penetration, his subtlety and pliability, his rapidity of transition, his magical divinations his sympathies and antipathies, his marvellous art of insinuation, of expressing himself by fine touches and of adding touch to touch. But all this side of the feminine genius was in Saint-Beuve reinforced by faculties of quite another order—faculties of the masculine stamp—the completeness, the solid sense, the constant reason, the moderation, the copious knowledge, the passion for exactitude and for general considerations. In attempting to appreciate him, it is impossible to keep these things apart. (320)

Though such sentiments are latent throughout the four works I examine, James has the most to say about the melding of masculine “exactitude” and feminine “fine touches” in “The Manners of American Women.” Because the New Women are still novitiates in the art of cultivated speech, they should look to a gentlemanly form of conduct even if there are no gentlemen to be found. Once again emphasizing reciprocity, the author explains that charm, amiability, and tenderness are enhanced by “manly competence and control” (78). In earlier times aristocratic gentlemen used to take responsibility for the conduct of women—be they wives, daughters, or sisters. Traditionally, “[i]t is from his maintenance [. . .] that the woman, as a social creature, gets her cue and best sanction for her maintenance.” But having “abdicated” his role as teacher, the American man leaves women to internalize the masculine sense of “discipline” for her own self-maintenance
(78). The real test comes for women when they must give up their “queenship”—that is, their arrogant sense of self-entitlement—to enhance the American voice (78).

This voice is, in many respects, akin to art, a subject James knew very well. First of all, the voice is something that must be practiced if it is to be perfected. Repetition and imitation provide a “stage of development” for those seeking competent articulation. And to this end, James sets himself up as a possible mentor—the androgynous novelist teaching androgynous elocution. Secondly, as James reminds the graduates of Bryn Mawr in “The Question of Our Speech,” “there is only, for any business of appreciation, the voice plus the way it is employed” (26). In other words, the vox Americana is not just substance, but also form. The form is itself a delicate mediation between feminine charm and masculine control; the masculine keeps the feminine from becoming too hysterical and the feminine keeps the masculine from becoming too brutish and aggressive. Yet ultimately, speech-as-form comes back to a question of function: “Speaking badly is speaking with that want of attention to [. . .] any other controllable motion, or voluntary act, of our lives” (“Question” 23). In other words, if Americans are sloppy in their verbal articulation, they are no doubt remiss in other areas. The lesson of clearly formulated speech comes back to the idea found in “The Art of Fiction”: “Try to be one of the people on whom nothing is lost.” Patriotism is wasted on those whose mouths are full of nothing worth saying.

It seems almost too perfect that the one city in America where this cohabitation of masculine and feminine is most apparent is the District of Columbia—not only the nation's capital, but also the midpoint between the North and the South. As Virginia Fowler points out, Washington's geographic location mediates between these two
regions' gendered identities. James believes that any culture completely dominated by either masculine or feminine impulses is bound for disaster. Whereas James finds the North to be overrun with masculine business interests (the phallic skyscrapers of Manhattan say it all), he sees the South as entirely too feminine. While vacationing in Charleston, South Carolina, the author realizes that the Civil War has made the South shift from one extreme to another: "The feminization is there just to promote for us some eloquent antithesis; just to make us say that whereas the ancient order was masculine, fierce, and moustachioed, the present is at the most a sort of sick lioness who has so visibly parted with her teeth and claws that we may patronizingly walk all round her" (American Scene 307).

Yet in Washington, James finds that American men are not unduly given over to commercial endeavors, an observation that gives the author greater encouragement that they, too, can be purveyors of the androgynous vox Americana. Unlike Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner, who satirized politicians' greed in The Gilded Age (1873), James shows a sincere affinity for the culture of Washington. Among its citizens, "smiles and inflections" make up the "medium of exchange," not stocks, bonds, and shares. James continues: "I have described this anomaly, at Washington, as that of Man's socially 'existing'; since we have seen that his fidelity to his compact throughout the country in general has involved his not doing so" (American Scene 247, 257). In the broader view, Washington D.C. presents itself as an androgynous metropolis whose male and female components are so much in accordance with one another that they prompt James to call the capital the "City of Conversation" (American Scene 252). Even more important, James's trip to the city on the Potomac proves that men can and must eventually find a
way to cultivate their speech. National cohesion simply will not endure if it only exists for half of America's population.

But what of race in James's configuration of the androgynous *vox Americana*? His dislike for sexual polarity, so evident in his remarks on the masculine North and the feminine South, also resists a larger movement in America to codify races along gender lines. The very years in which James visited American and in which he published his writings on the trip all fell within a three-year time span, from 1904-1907. During these years, Theodore Roosevelt occupied the White House, and in his own way he was also deeply concerned about the gendering of the nation.  

Having risen to prominence for his famous (albeit overblown) charge up San Juan Hill in 1898, Roosevelt became vice president under William McKinley and then ascended to the presidency after McKinley was assassinated in 1901. Advocating a tough-minded "Big Stick" policy that ushered in the beginning of American imperialism, TR did more than perhaps any other individual to "masculinize" the nation by insisting on a virile, hardy, and civilized American "race." Born a New York patrician, TR prided himself on being a rugged frontiersman—though he lived only a little over two years on a ranch in South Dakota, and much of that time he spent back in New York (Bederman 178). The story of the frontier experience is what made the American race unique from other "white" races, and, as Bederman rightly

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14. Bederman also points out that Roosevelt's own preoccupation with manhood may have stemmed from his sickly childhood and from insecurities he may have developed while serving in the New York State Assembly. While in Albany, he was lampooned in the press for his high voice and dandified appearance, enduring epithets such as "weakling," "Jim Dandy," and perhaps most revealing of all, "Oscar Wilde." (170). By the time Cuba rebelled against Spain, Roosevelt was determined to shed his dandified reputation. While James subscribed to a more genteel model of manhood than Roosevelt did, he did not seem to have any personal animus for the Rough Rider-turned-president. In fact, James dined with TR at the White House upon visiting America for the last time. No doubt James's longtime friend Secretary of State John Hay was key in arranging the dinner.
argues, “the hero of Roosevelt’s story was a race whose gender was implicitly male” (178, italics in original).

Not surprisingly, Roosevelt was not quite sure what to make of African Americans, but given his gendering of whiteness as masculine, blackness was either feminine or childlike. In either capacity, black men were subject to the patronizing attitude of those such as TR who could not embrace them as true brothers. Yet underneath TR’s condescension lay the somewhat counterintuitive fear that blacks threatened white supremacy, since their biological inferiority might sap white manhood of its virility. To assuage the anxiety that white America was committing race suicide, Roosevelt went to great lengths to parade his masculine whiteness all around the nation—whether in speeches, in photographs, in heavily publicized trips to the wilderness, or in autobiographical writings.

Given this Zeitgeist of performative masculine bravado in early twentieth-century America, how could James insist on cultural cohesion if it meant acknowledging the polarity of the gendered and racialized bodies that always seemed to be threatening the polis? James had dealt with these difficulties before when writing The Bostonians, only to conclude that America was indeed a fragmented country. Subsuming racialized and sexualized bodies under the larger aegis of a unified disembodied voice was his only way out of the bind. By the time James returned to America the immigrant bodies within the American body politic had grown well beyond what he had known as a boy living in New York. In the first decade of the twentieth century, for example, six million immigrants came through New York Harbor, most of them either Jewish or Italian. In these early years 12.2% of the entire American population said it could not speak or write English.
That number had risen to 22.8% by 1910 (Sears xii). In “The Question of Our Speech” James is very mindful of the changes this “vast contingent of aliens” can have on the American character. Indeed, it frightens him to think that “from the moment of their arrival, they have just as much property in our speech as we have, and just as good a right to do with it as they choose” (29). Moreover, the English language might be used by these other races and ethnicities as one might use a “freely figured oilcloth” that lays on the kitchen floor or staircase. And to finish his tirade about the potentially negligent immigrants, James claims that the broken English they produce will become a vulgar commodity: “durable, tough, cheap” (29). The point to glean from the material image of the oilcloth is this: if the “aliens” use English improperly, they will turn James's coveted disembodied vox Americana into something akin to a disposable material product. A voice can be most beneficial because it has the power to elide materiality and thus steer clear of the marketplace—a place that he feels polarizes citizens more and more by sex, class, and race.

In fact, James feels that African Americans, newly-arrived immigrants, or other marginalized persons might actually benefit economically and socially by embracing the androgynous, disembodied vox. As John Carlos Rowe explains, while the author feared the masses—as my own reading of The Bostonians bears out—he was nonetheless an advocate of a “social utopianism” that often contradicted his nativism (30).\textsuperscript{15} Along with Rowe I argue that language, not bodies, is at the core of James's utopian vision. A later

\textsuperscript{15} Sara Blair follows a similar train of thought, asserting that James's late writings “promote an ethos of openness to racial exchange even as they record vivid urges to conduct, and to resist, racial management" (163).
passage from the Bryn Mawr address details this utopian vision with its heavy insistence on linguistic assimilation:

It is prosperity, of a sort, that a hundred million people, a few years hence, will be unanimously, loudly—above all loudly, I think!—speaking it, and that, moreover, many of these millions will have been artfully wooed and weaned from the Dutch, from the Spanish, from the German, from the Italian, from the Norse, from the Finnish, from the Yiddish even, strange to say, and (stranger still to say) even from the English, for the sweet sake or the sublime consciousness, as we may perhaps put it, of speaking, of talking, for the first time in their lives, really at their ease. [. . .] [T]he thing they may best do is play, to their heart's content, with the English language, or, in other words, dump their mountain of promiscuous material into the foundations of the American. (28)

The language James uses in this passage is striking for a number of reasons. Speaking easily and “artfully” ultimately allows these individuals to make a living and join the larger American community. And while it is true that as late 1905 James still had a difficult time conceiving of blacks in particular within the national imaginary, these assertions in “The Question of Our Speech” suggest that it is not impossible for them to gain such ascendancy.

At first glance, James appears to follow Roosevelt's scheme of gendering race, putting the non-Anglo Others in the same position as the New Women; even those who already speak some form of English—presumably African Americans and lower class whites—are aligned with the Bryn Mawr graduates. Yet while James seems to feminize these various populations, he actually androgynizes them by giving them the right kind of voice, which mitigates the significance of their culturally marked bodies. The language James uses in the passage above bears out such a move. Given the way I read The Bostonians in terms of blackness and same-sex eroticism, the words “promiscuous material” have particular resonance: the idea behind the American linguistic melting pot—or the pot au feu, as James so eloquently calls it in The American Scene (50)—is the
purifying or effacing effects it has on corporeality, be it black bodies, homosexual bodies, or anything else that concerned James during the writing of *The Bostonians*. This is no small point, for it allowed someone such as James—whose sexuality and gender identity he felt to be in flux throughout his life—to stake a claim in American national character, though he had not permanently lived in the United States since the 1870s. One must remember, after all, that the title of his commencement address is “The Question of Our Speech,” not “The Question of Your Speech.”

Though James treats the issue of race and assimilation with trepidation, his remarks suggest that he sees the United States as something more than a *Kulturnation*, but perhaps still short of a full *Staatnation*. Given that James died in 1916, he did not live to see American women’s full political enfranchisement, which came in 1920. But certainly he had come a long way since 1886, when issues of race and sexuality had apparently muddled his idea of American civic participation. Though we may legitimately criticize James’s *vox Americana* for simplifying or mitigating the deep racial and sexual rifts in the country, we can nevertheless credit him for having the courage to question the nativist impulses so common in those of his own race and caste.

While most critics regard the trip to America as a reaffirmation of James’s choice to expatriate, they must also be willing to concede that his native land still remained his greatest source of artistic inspiration. This claim is no doubt ironic, given the fact that one of the main reasons he left his the country was because he found it lacking the cultural refinement of Europe. Throughout James's long career, America was a painting always in the process of becoming. In an 1885 letter to his brother William, James confessed to the shortcomings of *The Bostonians*: “The whole thing is too long and dawdling. This came
from the fact (partly) that I had the sense of knowing terribly little about the kind of life I had attempted to describe—and felt the constant pressure to make the picture substantial by thinking it out—pencilling and ‘shading’ (Matthiessen 329). One can easily see that he was never satisfied with his portrait of America as he created it in the mid-1880s.

In later years, the author seemed less disappointed and more fascinated by his inability to “flesh in” the country and its inhabitants. In the chapter entitled “Richmond” in The American Scene, James attempts to come to terms with the changing visage of America after having first reflected on the relations between blacks and whites in Virginia. “What is the picture, collectively seen,” he asks the reader, “but the portrait, more or less elaborated, of a multitudinous People, of a social and political order?—so that the hands and feet and coat and trousers, all the accessories of the figure showily painted, the neat white oval of the face itself were innocent of the brush” (280). What better image might the author of A Portrait of the Lady provide than a portrait of America? While the sketched features of the “People” suggest it is male (note the trousers) and probably white, we can never say for sure as long as the face is still missing. His reliance on visual representations of the American polis once again leads him to more unease. One might wonder, for example, if the portrait is in the process of being filled in or of being erased and remade. Therefore while his emphasis on the vox Americana is a way to circumvent troublesome issues of corporeality, even James cannot completely seem to convince himself that the voice exists without the body. Ultimately we are never sure if the voice is an attempt at democratic inclusion so much as it is a means of deferring problems of race and sexuality for another generation.
3.1 Corporate Personalities

In 1885, the same year James's *Bostonians* was serialized, Santa Clara County, California faced off against the Southern Pacific Railroad before the United States Supreme Court, claiming that it was fair and legal to tax the Railroad at a higher rate than individual citizens. In its defense, the Railroad cited, among other things, that the County had no right to tax the at a higher rate because the corporation was protected as an individual under the Fourteenth Amendment—despite the fact that the amendment's initial purpose was actually to ensure freed slaves and other African Americans of their constitutional rights. Though *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad Company* was ultimately decided a year later in the defendant's favor based on other grounds involving faulty taxation claims (T. Hartmann 99), the practical and long-lasting effect of the ruling was that corporations were entitled to many rights of citizenship, including the right to sue in court.¹

Not just the legal, but also the theoretical and philosophical implications of this ruling revitalized the question of exactly who or what constituted the liberal subject—a question that surely included deciphering the liberal subject's gender. Debates about what

¹ The legacy of “corporate citizenship” that the case initiated came largely as a result of remarks made by Chief Justice Morrison Remick Waite (himself a former railroad lawyer) before the official rendering of the Court’s decision: “The court does not wish to hear arguments on the question whether the provision in the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which forbids a state to deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws, applies to these corporations. We are of the opinion that it does” (qtd. in T. Hartmann 104).
human characteristics can be imputed to this basic theoretical unit of government are traceable to the classical political philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As Thomas Laqueur suggests, the liberal subject that evolved out of John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau, and Adam Smith was neuter in order to represent the universality of God-given natural rights: “Social-contract theory at its most abstract postulated a body that, if not sexless, is nevertheless undifferentiated in its desires, interests, or capacity to reason. In striking contrast to the old teleology of the body as male, liberal theory begins with a neuter individual body: sexed but without gender, in principle of no consequence to culture, merely the location of the rational subject that constitutes the person” (196).

The liberal subject’s gender neutrality has its ontological grounding in Locke’s famous *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, which asserts that the human mind at birth is a “white paper, void of all characteristic, without any ideas” and waiting to be inscribed upon by experience with the external material world (33; italics in original). In Melissa A. Butler's optimistic reading, the gender neutrality is an implicit acknowledgment of women's inclusion within the paradigm, as if to suggest that what Locke does not outright dismiss he accepts: “Taken as a whole Locke's thoughts on education clearly suggest that men and women could be schooled in the use of reason. The minds of both men and women were blank slates to be written on by experience. Women had intellectual potential which could be developed to a high level” (148). For Carol Pateman, however, gender universality was curtailed by the political philosophers—Rousseau in particular—who tried to “smuggle social characteristics into the natural condition” as a means of finding justification for excluding women from civic participation (41).
The gendering of the liberal subject took on even greater complexity as industrial capitalism gained momentum and the economic processes of production and consumption themselves acquired masculine and feminine genders respectively.² Victoria de Grazia demonstrates that in configuring *homo oeconomicus*, the commercial adjunct to the liberal subject, Adam Smith merely declares that consumption is the logical outcome of production: “Consumption is the sole end and purpose of all productions; and the interest of the producer ought to be attended to, only so far as it may be necessary for promoting that of the consumer. This maxim is so perfectly self-evident, that it would be absurd to attempt to prove it” (715). Yet by the nineteenth century the two economic processes became the ideological bedrock for the bourgeoisie's separation of spheres. This division, based on the idea that women stay home while men enter the world of the marketplace and politics, did more than anything else to impinge upon the universality of the liberal subject.

Moreover, it led to a certain hierarchy whereby men's needs took precedence over those of women. This hierarchy “involved distinguishing those needs that were defined as irrational, superfluous, or so impassioned that they overloaded the political system from those that were rationally articulated and cast in terms appropriate to being represented and acted upon through the normal political processes” (de Grazia 15). While the women stayed home and consumed commodities, men were off doing the “important” work of civilization at the factory, office, or the statehouse. As a result, production and

2. De Grazia gives two basic reasons for these boundaries. One reason was the assumption that all femininity was in some way related to matter. In Simone de Beauvoir's words, women are forever regarded in the Western world as bound to material “immanence,” whereas masculinity represents, among other things, the immaterial, the transcendent (xxxv). It would only make sense, according to this worldview, that women would covet the material. Secondly, femininity, like material objects, has been regarded as inconstant and malleable. Not only might this such malleability refer to the trinkets a woman would wear around her neck, but also to her capricious moods and desires (13).
consumption took on a gendered distinction—despite the fact that America's earliest factories such as the Lowell, Massachusetts textile mills chiefly employed women. But because these women were usually from the lower classes and single, they found themselves excluded from a separate spheres paradigm that often associated “women's work” with loose morals and prostitution. “Ironically, Laqueur states, “the genderless rational subject engendered opposite, highly gendered sexes”—not to mention highly gendered economic processes (197).

Therefore the Santa Clara ruling issued in 1886 only complicated what was already a deeply complex issue concerning the constitution of liberal subjecthood in capitalist democracies. For as corporations now acquired many rights of citizenship under the Fourteenth Amendment, the question inevitably turned to the corporation's gender. In a well recognized 1911 Harvard Law Review article entitled “Corporate Personality,” Arthur W. Machen, Jr. cites the many ways scholars and lawyers had understood the corporation over the course of the nineteenth century, from the postulation by some that “corporations are real persons [. . .] both real and natural, recognized but not created by the law” (256) to others who carry that doctrine to greater lengths, viewing the corporation as “possess[ing] sex: some corporate organisms, like the church are feminine, while others, such as the state, are masculine” (256). While for Machen such genderings are “grotesque,” the pliability of his own definition nevertheless invites such theoretical speculation: “A corporation is an entity—not imaginary or fictitious, but real, not artificial but natural. Its existence is as real as that of an army or of the Church” (262).

But given the Supreme Court's sanctioning of corporate personhood under the Fourteenth Amendment, and given the gendering that had already discursively bifurcated
production from consumption, it is not surprising that the thinkers mentioned in
“Corporate Personality” gendered corporations. In refuting Machen, Walter Benn
Michaels suggests that the tabula rasa of the abstract corporate entity, just like that of the
liberal subject, presented thinkers with a chance to inscribe upon it whatever human
likeness was most expedient: “Common sense dictates that the ‘legal imagination' can
attribute to corporations any characteristic of persons it chooses. The restraints lie not in
any 'logical' considerations but only in the demands of something like good taste” (Gold
Standard 202-03).

Corporate personhood's juridical legitimacy in turn brought the gendered history of
consumption and production to bear on works of fiction. As a collective entity that itself
had to consume raw materials in order to produce goods ready for sale, the corporation
was neither immune nor indifferent to what Frank Norris's Octopus calls the “two world
forces, the elemental Male and the Female” (131). In its depiction of the Pacific and
Southwestern Railroad—the fictional analogue of the Southern Pacific Railroad that
successfully argued its case before the Supreme Court—the novel creates a reciprocal
framework whereby the corporation informs the makeup of human subjectivity just as
surely as humans imbue corporations with “personality.” 3 I argue that the new theoretical
possibilities for the constitution of the modern American citizen, predicated in large part
on the corporation's dual commitment to production and consumption, engendered a new
type of liberal subject, one I call the “incorporated androgyne.” Since in reality the

3. As Michaels deftly concludes, the "legal imagination" provided the artistic imagination ample fodder for
bestowing not just personhood on corporations, but just importantly, corporatehood onto persons. Micheals
bases much of his rationale on naturalist determinism, which renders humans as machines when it comes to
fulfilling their fates. He states: “Here is perhaps the deepest complicity between naturalism and the
corporation. In naturalism, no persons are natural. In naturalism, personality is always corporate and all
fictions, like souls metaphorized in bodies, are corporate fictions” (213).
American marketplace consisted neither exclusively of male producers nor female consumers, this new type of liberal subjectivity (though with some limitations) allowed men to enter the marketplace as consumers alongside women.  

My theory owes much to Christophe Den Tandt's conception of the "corporate androgyne," which he defines as "male protagonists [in realist and naturalist American fiction] whose willingness to develop a supreme form of masculinity paradoxically involves the appropriation of feminine features" (640). Relying on early twentieth-century fictional accounts that depicted cities and corporate entities as ambiguously female, Den Tandt argues that males merge with these female bodies to reap greater pecuniary and commercial rewards. Whereas his figuration accepts the corporate body as feminine *in toto*, I am more cautious in noting how the corporation's involvement in both production and consumption affected perceptions of gender and civic participation for human beings. Yet like corporate androgynes, *incorporated* androgyynes do not regard the business world with fear, and in fact they mediates quite seamlessly between the worlds of production and consumption as a means of both economic survival and personal (material) pleasure. Finally, to borrow once again from Alan Trachtenberg's theory of incorporation, I argue that the incorporated androgyne represents the industrialized American nation by forging a national(ist) ethos not from abstractions of egalitarian unity, but from private enterprise and material satisfaction.  

This chapter closely examines Frank Norris and Charlotte Perkins Gilman, both of whom anticipated America's unrivaled post-war economic ascendancy in their turn-of-

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4. This type of legitimized androgyne was usually not reciprocal. Women did enter the market place as producers, yet they were treated with considerably more hostility because their presence in factories threatened to displace male workers. The argument also ran that men on the other hand needed a higher wage to take home to the wife and family.
the-century writings. It is not uncommon to locate studies that compare these authors, in part because of their contemporaneity. Gilman was born in 1860 and Norris in 1870. Both lived most of their adult lives in California, Norris moving to Oakland as a teenager in 1884, and Gilman moving to Pasadena after the 1888 split with her husband, which eventually culminated in a divorce. Both even pursued careers in the visual arts before turning to literature; Norris spent the years 1887-89 at the Académie Julian in Paris, while Gilman attended the prestigious Rhode Island School of Design in the late 1870s. Even more importantly, both writers identified themselves with some form of progressive or leftist politics, which is evident in two of their works published within three years of each other: Gilman's 1898 feminist manifesto *Women and Economics* and Norris's 1901 populist-inspired *The Octopus*. Apparent in these works—as well as in Gilman's 1915 *Herland*, also to be discussed in this chapter—is a profound meditation on how the rise of the abstract corporate "person" as well as the gendering of production and consumption both influenced modern renderings of the liberal subject.

*The Octopus* shows how the incorporated androgyne emerged in conjunction with Norris's personal attempt to combine the often-antithetical forms of epic and romance. The novel illustrates how, in accordance with the Platonic myth, men and women come together to form an androgynous whole. This configuration nevertheless favors its male component, allowing him to consume alongside his female counterpart without impingement on his masculinity. The female component must content herself with production in the form of biological reproduction. The combined epic-romance form legitimizes a search for the other-sexed component of the "self." This search, in true
naturalist fashion, is driven by instinct, by an atavistic impulse that ultimately reinscribes androgyny as a form of male economic empowerment.

Gilman rejected androgyny, since she considered it to be largely predicated on culturally inscribed characteristics that ideologically pigeonholed women as weak, dependent, and incompetent. For Gilman, history had done great injustice to the liberal subject, for even when it was coded as androgynous in an attempt to achieve human totality or corporate legitimacy, it still bespoke masculine privilege, as Norris's novel surely attests. By dismantling the gendered assumptions that structure society's notions of production and consumption, Gilman shows that the liberal subject is most representative of humanity while still a tabula rasa—that is, before modern gender roles are inscribed upon it.

3.2 Androgynous Atavism: Norris's Epic-Romance of Private Citizenship

Five years before the Pacific Southern Railroad appeared before the Supreme Court, it had already ingrained itself rather dubiously in California lore as well as in Frank Norris's populist imagination. The Octopus is a fictionalized account of the 1880 Mussel Slough shootout, which was a land dispute in Tulare County between U. S. marshals acting on behalf of the infamous Railroad giant on the one side, and the Railroad's rancher-tenants on the other. Going back on a previous "gentleman's" agreement, the Railroad hyper-inflated the price of the ranchers' land before agreeing to sell it to them. Faced with eviction, bankruptcy, and public humiliation, the ranchers defended their homesteads with arms. All in all, eight men were killed in the incident, and though the surviving ranchers were convicted for their instigation of the violence, their sentences were astonishingly lenient. In the eyes of most Californians, they were
epic heroes who protected their homes from a huge and uncaring industrial monopoly (Starr viii-ix).

In its rendering of events, the novel proves very conflicted. Though it calls itself the first in the “Epic of the Wheat” trilogy, *The Octopus*—with its intense focus on personal miseries, ascetic mysticism, and private relationships—is equally representative of the romance.5 Despite Whitman's relative success in combining the two forms, they have traditionally been at odds with one another. As mentioned in chapter one, the epic is a narrative of national cohesion while the romance is one of introspection, seclusion, and internal struggle.6

Throughout his brief writing career, Norris's creative impulses—be they epic or romantic—were symbolized and mediated by a gargantuan, if not androgynous, muse. As Norris explained in a 1901 article, “The muse of American fiction is no chaste, delicate, super-refined mademoiselle of delicate roses and 'elegant' attitudinizing, but a robust, red-armed *bonne femme*, who rough-shoulders her way among men and among affairs, who finds a healthy pleasure in the jostlings of the mob and a hearty delight in the honest,

5. James L. Machor cogently argues that while the epic form is most prominent in the first three quarters of the novel, the final quarter gives way rather awkwardly to romance (44). With that shift comes a different emphasis on characters. During the epic conflict between the ranchers and the railroad, Annixter and Magnus Derrick are the chief protagonists. After their defeat at the irrigation ditch, the focus shifts to the poet Presley, who tries in true romantic fashion to make cosmic sense of the horrific events that have taken place. Machor concedes in his concluding remarks that “the major flaw in the novel results from Norris's inability to create a structure that combined epic and romance in a pattern sustained throughout the narrative” (52). To this day there has been no adequate way to reconcile this “flaw.”

6. Though naming the novel the first in an “epic” trilogy, Norris also admitted in a letter to friend Isaac Marcosson that *The Octopus* “is the most romantic thing I've ever done” (qtd. in Walker 265). These dual impulses are also apparent in his contemporaneous literary criticism. In his 1902 essay “The Neglected Epic,” he laments that no writer of considerable merit has taken up the challenge of writing a national narrative. The frontiersman of the American West makes the most suitable epic hero, but “[n]o literature has sprung up around him” (122). Yet just a year earlier Norris wrote “A Plea for Romantic Fiction,” scolding American realists for neglecting the “unplumbed depths of the human heart, and the mystery of sex, and the problems of life, and the black, unsearched penetralia of the soul of man” (78).
rough-and-tumble, Anglo Saxon give-and-take knockabout that for us means life." It would seem that Norris's painting apprenticeship in Paris during 1887-89 brought him in contact with androgynous embodiments of democracy such as Liberté, for not only is his muse a "hearty, vigorous girl with an arm as strong as a man's," she is also a singular "Child of the People" ("Novelists of the Future" 13). Norris's interest in musclebound women goes beyond a mere repudiation of Victorian delicacy, as Donald Pizer, Mark Seltzer, Francesca Sawaya, and Christophe Den Tandt have all discussed.⁷ Den Tandt is the most vocal about Norris's interest in androgyny, arguing that "[his] awkward similes [for the muse] point to the existence of male writers' androgynous fantasies of empowerment in the public sphere" (654). Such empowerment based on "gender oxymorons" then positions Norris within the Whitmanian tradition as a writer who is both a singular male subject and an androgynous transcendental embodiment of the collective, of "the People" (Den Tandt 654).⁸

Norris uses androgyny's insistence on simultaneous singularity and collectivity to create a complex fictional form in which the personal romance of the American individualist becomes the modern epic. Jacques Lacan helps us to further understand not only how an artist such as Norris can write affirmatively of androgyny (albeit with a

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⁷ Another critical debate has developed over Norris's (re)figuring of gender roles in The Octopus and other novels. The more recent voices of this critical camp have in one form or another drawn from Donald Pizer's earlier observation that Norris's male characters achieve "a correct masculinity with the aid of women who themselves move from masculinity to femininity" (89). Noting the anxiety men feel toward women in the text, Mark Seltzer argues that Norris's response is to depict "a non-biological and miraculated production that circumvents these threats and projects an autonomous (and male) technique of creation" (16). Francesca Sawaya notes that Norris imbues his male characters with a type of sentimentality that reinforces their bonds with other men in the community. In this sense, "naturalism's construction of itself as a serious genre results in a dependence on the sentimentalism against which it defines itself" (261).

⁸ Norris's androgynous configuration of himself via his muse is especially ironic given his resentment of the effete Henry James, who actually appears more "manly" than Norris insofar as Norris identified manliness as self-sustainability in the artistic marketplace while still producing works of true literary merit.
masculine prerogative in mind), but also how his androgynous muse can simultaneously inspire individual freedom and national collectivity, which are represented by the romance and epic respectively. Though Lacan came a half century after Norris, his musings on the Platonic myth of the androgyne effectively amplify Norris's naturalist premise that desire for both community and individual wholeness are one and the same:

Aristophanes’ myth pictures the pursuit of the complement for us in a moving, and misleading, way, by articulating that it is the other, one's sexual other half, that the living being seeks in love. To this mythical representation of the mystery of love, the analytic experience substitutes the search by the subject, not of the sexual complement, but the part of himself, lost forever, that is constituted by the fact that he is only a sexed living being, and that he is no longer immortal. (205)

By the time Lacan wrote on the androgyne, psychoanalysis had come to embrace the notion of atavistic androgyny as a presupposition of pre-natal human experience. Lacan himself believed in the innate bisexuality of the pre-natal subject. The process of passing through the imaginary order to the symbolic—in which subjects move from a recognition of imagistic to linguistic signification—is a process of coming to terms with one's sense of lack, given in this particular instance as a yearning for that pre-natal sense of androgynous wholeness.9

As we shall see in subsequent pages, these notions had their genesis around the time Frank Norris was writing. Like Norris's epic-romance, Lacan's depiction of the androgyne as both a singular and dual entity is dialectically structured. The recovery of oneness is intimately wrapped up in community, even if “community” in Lacan's case

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9. In accordance with the Platonic myth, Lacan believed that the sexual act will only defer the sense of fragmentation that subjects feel within the symbolic order. Norris seemed to suggest that androgynous primal oneness was possible.
involves just one other person, who is the subject's other-sexed complement.\textsuperscript{10} With this general dialectical framework in mind, \textit{The Octopus} becomes a meditation on the mixing of the "the elemental Male and Female" world forces. For Norris, these elements are initially traceable in two ways: through the main characters' search for their complementary other-sexed halves and through capitalism's gendering of consumption and production. Vanamee, Angéle, Annixter, and Hilma all have a deep primordial longing for androgynous wholeness. These characters eventually come into contact with his or her other-sexed complementary self, and in so doing recognize their individual roles in the American industrial marketplace as combined producer-consumers. To be sure, the incorporated androgyny paradigm of liberal subjecthood that Norris describes is highly heterosexist and phallocentric: whereas Vanamee and Annixter become arch consumers without any real impingement on their masculinity, women such as Hilma must re-channel their (masculine) productive impulses back to traditional reproduction. Only in the case of Vanamee and Angéle is this producer-consumer citizenship fully realized. Yet the novel clearly shows that had Annixter, Hilma, and even Presley followed Vanamee and Angéle's lead, they too would have found happiness instead of death or alienation.

The reclusive Vanamee sets up the proper paradigm that others in the novel should follow if they are to find peace and economic prosperity in industrial America. Having fallen in love with Angéle Varian during a college vacation, Vanamee visits her one night

\textsuperscript{10} In effect, the androgyne's symbolic reconciliation of the one and the many complements Alan Trachtenberg's general theory of incorporation. As I have mentioned earlier, Trachtenberg suggests that in searching for more hierarchical and capitalistic structures to regulate social, economic, and political relations with one another, Americans have come to rely, quite paradoxically, upon a community ethos of economic individualism, competition, and privatization. In other words, Americans are unified by their sense of distance or seclusion from other Americans.
only to find that she has been raped by someone known simply as the “Other.” After nine months Angèle gives birth to a daughter and immediately dies. At first, the young mystic sets out to avenge the rape, but never finds the Other. Unable to come to terms with his grief, he walks about the American West year in and year out, only stopping in his native California for short stints before moving on again.

Vanamee’s love for Angèle hearkens back to the Platonic myth of the androgynes, who, after being rent in two by Zeus’s thunderbolts, cleaved desperately to their other-sexed halves: “It was small wonder that Vanamee had loved her, and less wonder, still, that his love had been so intense, so passionate, so part of himself. Angèle had loved him with a love no less than his own. It was one of those legendary passions that sometimes occur, idyllic, untouched by civilization, spontaneous as the growth of trees, natural as dew-fall, strong as the firm-seated mountains” (36; italics mine). If in Lacan’s scheme humans seek out love objects in order to escape back to a pre-natal or pre-mirror stage of primacy, the passage’s evocation of a spontaneous and primordial drive to unify comes through with unmistakable clarity. Theirs was to be “the Perfect Life, the intended, ordained union of the soul of man with the soul of woman, indissoluble, harmonious as music” (134). Since that time of unmitigated bliss, however, Vanamee has been marked by his sense of lack. “The long, dull ache, the poignant grief had now become a part of him” (39).

Despite his wanderings, Vanamee is never too far removed from economic processes of production and consumption that keep food in his stomach and clothes on his back. His stint as a shepherd and plower on Annixter’s wheat ranch may at first appear to be a timeless or premodern occupation, but in reality it is done in support of the
proto-agribusiness. In fact, when he acts in the service of the marketplace, his atavistic longing for androgynous completeness is most apparent. For example, the description of the plowing is erotically charged, and it becomes clear that the action positions Vanamee as both male and female. On the one hand, the land is depicted as female, and the plowing done by the men including Vanamee is the agricultural equivalent of a lusty heterosexual seduction: “It was the long stroking caress [of the plow], vigorous, male, powerful, for which the Earth seemed panting” (131). Yet Norris’s description of the pseudo-sex act between the male plowers and the female land takes a curious turn: as Vanamee plows on, the phallic plow seems to take on a life of its own in his hands and he appears to be penetrated psychically as much as the soil is physically: “Underneath him was the jarring, jolting, trembling machine; not a clod was turned, not an obstacle encountered, that he did not receive the swift impression of it through all his body, the very friction of the damp soil, sliding incessantly from the shiny surface of the shears, seemed to reproduce itself in his finger-tips and along the back of his head” (129; italics mine).

That Vanamee identifies himself as both male and female in this primordial, earthy scene is not surprising considering the contemporaneous discourse of atavistic androgyny that scientists and sociologists were in the process of developing. In previous chapters I have suggested that sexologists were instrumental in pathologizing androgyny as homosexuality. As the late nineteenth century wore on, a counter-discourse developed that came to regard androgyny as the origin of normative evolutionary patterns. In fact, James G. Kiernan, an American evolutionist who wrote much of his most influential
works in the 1890s, had a foot in both camps.\(^{11}\) Kiernan, along with evolutionist biologist G. Frank Lydston, had declared that the ancestors of the vertebrates were hermaphrodites (qtd in Rado MAI 18). This atavistic hermaphroditism was something that later scientists and psychoanalysts would take up. Freud drew from these studies during the 1890s, and his findings that anatomic hermaphroditism occurs in humans from time to time informed his conclusions in the 1905 *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* that infants were inherently bisexual.

By 1901, the year *The Octopus* was published, Otto Weininger took the idea of atavistic androgyny even further. By looking at a range of life forms along the evolutionary chain that included flowers, water fleas, beetles, and horses, Weininger concluded that \("whether it refer to the brain or to any other part of the body[,] absolute sexual distinctions between all men on the one side and all women on the other do not exist. [. . . .] It can be shown that however distinctly unisexual [that is, sexually polarized] an adult plant animal, or human being may be, there is always a certain persistance of the bisexual character, never a complete disappearance of the characters of the undeveloped sex" (3, 5). Weininger believed that all human cells are made up of male arrhenoplasms and female thelyplasms, and therefore there was no such thing as \("man\) and \("woman,\) but only male and female \("conditions\) encapsulated in a universal corporeal frame (8). Should a man therefore contain certain womanly characteristics—be they physiological or psychological—they can be attributable to a higher than normal distribution of thelyplasm in his body.

\(^{11}\) According to Jonathan Ned Katz, Kiernan was responsible for first using the terms \("heterosexual\) and \("homosexual\) in the United States. He did so in a Chicago medical journal in May 1902. Kiernan felt that heterosexuals were \("psychical hermaphrodites\) who abnormally felt same-sex \(\text{and}\) different-sex love instincts (19-20).
Less than a decade before the publication of Weininger's book, French sociologist Emile Durkheim had already speculated on the communal or national implications of sexual complementarity. In 1893 he published his famous *Division of Labor in Society*, a study that sought to determine not only the functions of the division of labor, but also "the causes and conditions on which it is dependent" (45). In explaining his rationale, Durkheim references contemporary evolutionary studies that point to the relative lack of sexual distinction between primitive men and women. As civilization developed, he notes, the differences became more pronounced to the point that men and women found solidarity not in their sameness, but in their complementary lack: "One urges on, another consoles; this one advises, that one follows the advice" (58). On the macro level, complementary lack and fulfillment catalyzes "the integration of the social body to assure unity" (63). Anticipating Lacan in some respects, Durkheim sees personal and communal fulfillment as reciprocal: "The image of the one who completes us becomes inseparable from ours. [. . . .] It thus becomes an integral and permanent part of our conscience, to such a point that we can no longer separate ourselves from it and seek to increase its force. That is why we enjoy the society of the one it represents, since the presence of the object that it expresses, by making us actually perceive it, sets it off more" (61-2).

My aim here is to use Vanamee as an example of this normative pattern of evolutionary and sociological development. If scientific naturalism is the chronicling of humans' evolutionary link to the world of instinctual drives and natural selection, literary naturalism is the fictional rendering of how certain primitive, animalistic traits can promote human survival and national perpetuation. As the novel shows, those who are most willing to embrace their atavistic androgynous impulses best embody modern
liberal subjecthood. The recluse's own male and female atavistic impulses, which come alive during the plowing scene, compel him to fulfill his lack in the form of his lost love. In a later scene he sets out, as if telepathically summoned, to visit Angéle's grave at the mission next to the Seed Ranch. After Vanamee sees Father Sarria and begs him to help conjure Angéle, the priest lashes out, "I thought you were a man; this is the talk of a weak-minded girl" (148). What at first seems like an insult proves to be all too true, for if thinking and speaking like a little girl is what it takes to find his lost love, Vanamee "was ready to be deluded" (150).

Later in the novel, in a romantic move that relies heavily on the suspension of disbelief, Angéle eventually comes back to Vanamee in the form of her sixteen year old daughter, also named Angéle, who looks just like the original. Mark Seltzer suggests that "Vanamee's reincarnative power [...] amounts to a mechanical reproduction of persons" that allows Norris to exclude women from the procreative process (33). Yet Vanamee's act of creation is as much organic as it is mechanical, for the text suggests that the young mystic's parturient impulses are the result of harnessing the elemental Male and Female.

By the novel's end, Vanamee has recovered not only his other-sexed half, but also his place within the industrial economic system as a consumer-producer. In a final discussion with Presley, the narrative suggests that material reality is greater than romance alone: "Romance had vanished, but better the romance was here. Not a manifestation, not a dream, but her very self" (638). Having materially "produced" both the wheat and Angéle, Vanamee has the requisite finances and sense of self-completion to enter the marketplace as a consumer. Since it was Angéle's death that sent him in flight across the desert for sixteen years, it is safe to assume that in recovering her he need no
longer live his nomadic life of material self-denial. In other words, so long as he stays in the California marketplace as a shepherd or ranch hand, he has the monetary potential to consume at a rate in accordance with his class status. After all, despite such asceticism, the novel suggests that he is originally from the bourgeoisie—even “college bred,” like the dandified Presley (36). Given his upbringing, it is not unreasonable to assume that he can now settle back down and find additional material rewards, for as the novel states, “Angéle or Angéle's daughter, it was all the one with him. It was She” (392). Angéle's greatest value is her ability to be replicated, not only like a trinket on a factory assembly line, as Seltzer has intimated, but also like the wheat itself. In this sense Vanamee, is the producer of the commodity he plans to consume on the wedding night. Presumably, the consummation of the wedding vows will ineluctably hasten more consumption of commodities needed to keep house and raise a family.

Contrary to James L. Machor's argument that the young mystic originates completely out of the romantic tradition (47), the narrator suggests that he has at least one foot squarely in the epic realm. If romance has vanished in the recluse's reckoning, it is reconstituted as an epic narrative of material accumulation on the personal and national level. True, Vanamee's consumption impulse is hard to track, especially because the focus shifts so dramatically to Presley in the second half of the novel. Yet one thing we do know about him is the comfort he feels within a community of male consumers—particularly the men who eat a massive feast after a hard day's work plowing the wheat field. "It was a veritable barbecue, a crude and primitive feasting, barbaric, homeric," the narrative explains (132). With volkish enthusiasm, Vanamee “saw nothing repulsive [in] this feeding of the People, this gorging of the human animal, eager for its
meat” (132). Still, given the fact that this feast takes place after a full day of wheat production on a large, proto-corporate ranch, it is hard to forget that these men, epic though they may be, are surely consuming mass-produced commodities. In fact, the soiree at Mrs. Gerard's home, which Presley attends as a guest of Mrs. Cedarquist, exposes how the plowers in the field are integral in making millionaires out of the husbands whose wives attend these lavish dinners. At first glance class difference makes these two groups seem worlds apart; but given the cosmic forces that tie everyone together in the capitalist economy (hence the metaphor of the octopus’s tentacles), one wonders if these manly men who gorge themselves on meat are all that different from the refined women who pleasantly nibble their “raw Blue Point oysters” and sip their Haut Sauterne (602).

Buck Anniixter and Hilma Tree offer a vision of what goes wrong if one does not find a proper balance between the epic and the romantic, between the public world of wheat production and politics and the private world of marriage and commodity consumption. Like Vanamee and Angéle, they first appear as severed halves in search of androgynous wholeness. Though the narrator describes him as determined, aggressive, and direct, Anniixter is also a brooding, choleric malcontent whose weak stomach and irrational hatred of “feemales” makes him guilty of the same faults he finds in women. Hilma Tree is a young woman whose large frame, thick neck, strong arms, and slow gait give her a distinct amazonian look. Her last name even attests to her androgyny, suggesting a phallic yet feminine nature. In short, Anniixter is so masculine that he is almost feminine; Hilma is so feminine she is almost masculine.
After finally realizing that he cannot live without Hilma, Annixter comes into contact with his atavistic androgynous impulses, and as a result his gruff masculine exterior falls away. “In that rugged composition, confused, dark, harsh, a furrow had been driven deep, a little seed planted, a little seed at first weak, forgotten, lost in the lower places of his character” (366). Just as Vanamee and the soil are simultaneously penetrated by the phallic plow when planting the wheat seed, Annixter metaphorically becomes the feminine soil that contains the gestating seed of love for Hilma.

By a supreme effort, not of will, but of emotion, he fought his way across that vast gulf that for a time had gaped between Hilma and the idea of his marriage. Instantly, like the swift blending of beautiful colors, like the harmony of beautiful chords of music into one, and in that moment into his harsh, unlovely world a new idea was born. Annixter stood suddenly upright, a mighty tenderness of spirit, such as he had never conceived of, in his heart strained, seemed to burst. Out of the dark furrows of his soul, up from the deep rugged recesses of his being something arose, expanding. [. . . .] The little seed, long since planted, gathering strength quietly, had at last germinated. (367-68; italics mine)

This passage is most poignant because it suggests that Annixter, like Vanamee, gives birth to himself through the acquisition or materialization of his other-sexed complementary half. As the various organic metaphors of seeds, germination, and soil suggest in the above passage, Annixter is as much mother to his new self-conception as he is its father.

If the narrative is fairly abstruse when detailing Vanamee's and Angéle's consumption in the marketplace, it more than makes up for these gaps when describing their marriage. Shortly after exchanging wedding vows, they commence upon a renovation of the ranch that quite literally takes on epic proportions. Curiously, the narrative couches their consumption excursion within a larger logic of labor and production. Before their shopping spree begins, “Hilma abruptly declared they had had enough of ‘playing out,’ and must be serious and get to work” (406). Understanding the
shopping as “labor,” Hilma seems as much involved in the production of the commodities she buys as Annixter does in the production of wheat. Of course Annixter is in ecstacy over these new purchases, too, and he goes about his “work” with the rigorous methodology as one rotating crops or mobilizing a harvesting crew. In a move that ultimately assuages guilt over consumer gluttony, Norris provides a tautological capitalist fantasy that makes consumption look like ample reward for the hard work of consumption.

The week they spend in San Francisco buying all their new furniture is, according to the narrative, “delicious”—underscoring the sense of blissful work *qua* consumption that the marketplace sanctions under the aegis of androgynous wholeness (406). “Nearly an entire car load of carpets, curtains, kitchen furniture, pictures, fixtures, lamps, straw matting, chairs and the like were sent down to the ranch” (406). The listing of the commodities, which runs for nearly two full pages of text, gains such poetic, rhythmic consistency that it echoes the various catalogues found throughout Whitman's longer poems. In the novel's reasoning, all this amounts to a reformulation of the epic form that rivals the lyric-epic *Leaves of Grass*. Now the new flow of commodities mediates the social exchange between members of the nation. Even the much maligned Pacific and Southwestern Railroad is involved in the exchange, as it is the means by which all the new commodities are brought to the Annixter household.

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), Adorno and Horkheimer argue that the epic, for all its talk of national cohesion, is a narrative first and foremost of alienation.

Precipitated in the epic is the memory of an historical age in which nomadism gave way to settlement, the precondition of any homeland. If the fixed order of property implicit in settlement is the source of human alienation, in which all homesickness and longing spring from a lost primal state, at the same time it is toward settlement
and fixed property, on which along the concept of homeland is based, that all longing and homesickness are directed. (60-1)

In comparison to Lukács, who sees the epic hero as a fundamentally monological and unalienated, Adorno and Horkheimer take a different tack. Especially with regard to *The Octopus*, I tend to agree with the latter theorists, for as Vanamee, Angéle, Annixter, and Hilma all show, their successful attempt to reach their other-sexed complements suggest their alienation from themselves as well as the commodities that, in Norris's capitalist logic, seem to further complete themselves. True, the notion seems all too superficial and materialistic, but Norris, writing at the very beginning of the twentieth century, has caught onto something here. The larger current of consumerism that accelerated over the course of the twentieth century has borne out the fact that American's sense of personal wholeness has long been predicated on acquisition.

While the shopping spree in San Francisco clearly shows how easily a man such as Annixter can feel primordial wholeness in a department store, Hilma's production impulse is certainly not as transgressive. If “get[ting] to work” (i.e., producing) simply means consuming commodities in a department store, her androgyny manifests itself tautologically. The immense irony of this situation is even more evident in Hilma's mannish, gargantuan size—her sturdy hips and broad shoulders—which makes her especially suitable for the traditional role of birth and motherhood, of being the “perfect woman” (504). But even in child birthing the phallocentric hypocrisy of Norris's androgyny is evident. When Hilma miscarries at the same time Annixter is shot, it is clear that Annixter, his “feminine side” having previously been recovered, is as psychically or physically involved in the child's birth (or death) as Hilma.
The primal androgynous completeness that men and women find in one another is lost on the exclusively production-minded League of Defence [sic], a collection of rugged ranchers united to save their means of production—the land—from the monopolistic Pacific and Southwestern Railroad. The ethos of agrarian production that binds these men together is made all the more striking in comparison to Annie Derrick, the wife of the League's leader, the manly rancher Magnus Derrick. A devotee of Paterian aesthetics, she winces at the "direct brutality of ten thousand acres of wheat" being produced outside her door (60).

Anniaxter's initial participation in the very volkish and hyper-masculine League of Defence keeps his atavistic androgynous impulses at bay. Of course his attitude changes when he gets married. Acting together as husband and wife, Hilma and Anniaxter are so enraptured with one another that they almost forget about the outside world in much the same way Vanamee and Angèle do once they (re)unite. It is no coincidence that once Anniaxter finds Hilma, his commitment to the League and his hatred for the railroad wane. After the honeymooners finish their shopping spree in San Francisco, they even travel back home in a Pullman owned by the very railroad company the League has sworn to thwart. Eventually Anniaxter's past catches up to him, and he is called upon by the men of the League. Wary of appearing domesticated and sissified, Anniaxter reluctantly makes good on his commitment and pays the price. In a skirmish at the irrigation ditch, he is shot to death.

In Norris's cosmic logic, the ranchers have always been a part of the "elemental Male and Female" that guides production and consumption, though they refused to see it. Instead they subscribe to an outdated notion of national cohesion that has no true efficacy
in the modern American industrial economy. The ranchers' greatest flaw is that they speak in epic terms of "The People" when they never really have a secure notion of what it means. Their version of the Volk does not take into account a growing and ethnically diverse middle class that has moved from the farm to the city to engage more fully in mass production and consumption. Even though the farmers live outside the city, their livelihood is intimately caught up in the consumption of wheat in the urban areas. The League casts itself as the hyper-masculine legatee of this Jeffersonian agrarianism instead of seeing itself for what it really is: the progenitor of agribusiness whose reliance on "feminine" consumption is just as necessary as the reliance on its own "masculine" production. As the capitalist Cedarquist tells Presley, "Our century is about done. The great word of this nineteenth century has been Production. The great word of the twentieth century will be—listen to me, you youngsters—Markets" (305).

There is some dramatic irony here. Though the novel takes place in the late 1800s, the author, writing in the new century, knows what the members of the League cannot see. The rubric of the "Market" is general enough to engulf both production and consumption. The League's demise is at least partially attributable to lack of foresight—something any good capitalist needs. Within Norris's naturalist logic, those such as Magnus Derrick who refuse to move beyond their masculine productive drive are left weakened and crippled. As Durkheim might assess the situation, Magnus erroneously "see[s] perfection in the man seeking, not to be complete, but to produce" (42). Knowing no other way to make a living, he becomes an assistant to the freight manager of the very

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12. Richard Chase argues that Norris used the language of Populism when describing some mystical agrarian golden age in America (201-02). Here I differ with Chase slightly in that I see certain characters falling for this rhetoric while the narrative—at least by the end of the novel—seems to know better.
railroad he opposed. Now a “tamed lion” whose “old-time erectness was broken and bent” (624, 622), Derrick shows that resisting incorporated androgyny paradoxically means losing one's masculinity and phallic prerogative.

Norris's epic of androgyny does not end there. The poet Presley proves in many respects to be the one who most clearly evades the incorporated androgyny paradigm I have set up thus far. While Norris sees androgyny as an atavistic trait that, once animated, can be used to further the state and the marketplace, he was probably attuned to its seamier side. As I have previously shown, sexology went to great lengths to pathologize men and women who did not fit into “proper” Victorian gender norms, even if they were not homosexuals. Norris portrays Presley in much the same light that A. J. L. Busst does the post-1850 androgyne: isolated, onanistic, lonely, and a symbol of “despair in the future” (39). A brooding poet recovering from that most romantic of diseases, consumption, he has features that are “of a delicate and highly sensitive nature [. . .]. One guessed that [his] refinement had been gained only by a certain loss of strength” (8). Always on the periphery of all-male communities, he is neither an employee of the ranch nor a part of the League of Defence. While the ranchers are having their first League meeting, he stylishly “lounge[s] on the sofa, in corduroys and high laced boots, smoking cigarettes” playing with Annie Derrick's cat, Princess Nathalie (95). On the day of the skirmish, his only participation is to stay back with the women and nurse all the wounded brought back to the homesteads.

So, given his effete appearance and consumption habits (his clothes in particular), why does Presley threaten the incorporated androgyny paradigm? Balance is the key: whereas Magnus Derrick's exclusive commitment to masculine production leads to ruin,
Presley’s effete consumption habits lead to alienation. Moreover, Presley cannot produce anything that buttresses the modern American economy. True, he does attempt to get in touch with his atavistic androgynous self; when he feels his epic “germinating from within” his mind (8), he sounds very much like Annixter giving birth to himself or Vanamee materializing Angéle. Yet his poem, like Virginia Woolf’s notion of the Italian “Fascist poem,” is a “horrid little abortion” (Woolf 107), never fully making it to paper. His previous bout of consumption and his overwhelming desire to write verse, Walter Benn Michaels adroitly observes, signals “his consuming desire to be consumed” (Gold Standard 186). When Presley finally does produce something, it is a “socialistic” diatribe against capitalism called “The Toilers.” But by now his notion of “the People” has changed dramatically. He sees them not as the bulwark of a nation-state, but as a social body that transcends nation, Volk, and even gender. Presley’s only product during the whole course of the novel, then, is a piece of literature that runs counter to the goals of national cohesion under capitalist expansion.

Presley embodies Carroll Smith-Rosenberg’s formulation of the androgyne-trickster. This figure, she argues, “demonstrate[s] the contingency of disorder, the fragility of social custom. [. . . ] A creative force at war with convention, beyond gender, the trickster personifies unfettered human potential” (291). True, while recovering from consumption Presley seems to personify anything but boundless potential. Yet the fear that he seems to instill in the narrator time and again attests to his sense of power, which resides more than anything in his ability to embody different forms of governmental or philosophical organization throughout the novel. At first a self-absorbed romantic recovering from illness, he then becomes a nationalist obsessed with writing a “vast,
tremendous" epic of the West (9). Disillusioned by the railroad's bullying tactics, he then becomes a socialist who writes a moderately successful proletarian poem. Realizing that socialism is still impotent in the face of capitalist monopolies, he becomes an anarchist and tries to assassinate the railroad's local representative, S. Behrman. Finally, disillusioned to the point of ideological paralysis, he becomes a romantic once again and flees to India aboard a steamer full of wheat for starving children in Calcutta. Just as American citizens during the time of Toqueville felt unease about the variables in a democratic system, *The Octopus* reveals a similar dread that democracy allows its citizens the freedom to shed political and economic skins as quickly and dramatically as gender skins. In other words, in contrast to Vanamee and Annixter, the androgynous Presley shows how self-destructive and/or ineffective democracy can be.

Always the student of naturalism, Norris subjects Presley to natural selection, though somewhat benignly. Since the "morbidly sensitive" (8) poet does not direct his atavistic impulses toward finding an other-sexed complementary half, and since he will not (re)produce, Norris instead sends him with the wheat on a steamship to Calcutta. Presley's only consolation is that once aboard, he learns the lesson of the elemental Male and Female forces. In an insightful article on the presence of fascism and aesthetic formalism in *The Octopus*, Russ Castronovo remarks that in going away to India, the poet is able to create an aesthetic unity out of the entire massacre at the irrigation ditch. Noting that the novel cheerfully justifies Annixter's death as a chance to feed starving children, and also how the trip to the far East leads Presley back to the starting point of civilization, Castronovo suggests that "just as 'everything' flows into the formal properties of the
artwork, the pressures of globalization force every political tendency from democracy to fascism into alignment" (184).

This same reasoning applies to the male-female unity that the novel achieves with androgyny. These forces of consumption and production, which find unity in Cedarquist's twentieth-century buzzword “The Market,” keep America a dominant power. Considering how the novel ends with a movement toward a globalization that the world would experience more readily after World War II, Castronovo sees Presley in yet another political manifestation: a “postfascist.” Yet while the novel's end does give way to a globalist impulse, a rigid sense of nationalism is never left behind. To Presley, the Anglo Saxon race will use its capitalist might across the world. While Americans will trade with and produce for other nations, it will never be corrupted or weakened by cultural or racial exchange. In Norris's calculation, globalism does not interfere with national cohesion; it reinforces it. As the closing lines of the novel reveal, “Greed, cruelty, selfishness, and inhumanity are short lived; the individual suffers, but the race goes on” (652). Globalism, guided by production and consumption, sustains the superior Anglo Saxon Volk just as surely as it sustains the inferior and distinctly different peoples in other parts of the world.

In my younger and more radical days, which happened to coincide with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of communist states in central and eastern Europe, I often got into debates with more conservative fellow undergraduates about the relative

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13. On this point I would call into question Castronovo's point of reference. Oftentimes he uses Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's Empire to assess and delineate The Octopus's close. Yet I see it as misleading to use Empire, a study that details the current postmodern phenomenon of globalization, to explain a novel that was written and published well before Mussolini and Hitler were ever defeated (or had even come to power.)
merits and drawbacks of capitalism. Without a doubt, the most common response I got from those capitalist apologists was that communism did not take into full account humans' acquisitional side, their innate lust for money and commodities. In short, capitalism was superior to communism—and certainly more durable—because it took into account “human nature.” These perceptions of capitalism's naturalness are with us today in large part because of those such as Frank Norris. In his attempt to reformulate the modern liberal subject by wedding androgynous recidivism to capitalist ideology, Norris created an epic-romance that fueled an American mythology of economic conquest on a national and global scale. But during and after his lifetime, other writers were arriving at different conclusions about the evolutionary and economic efficacy of androgyny. Charlotte Perkins Gilman was one such author who questioned not only the gendering of production and consumption, but also the modern liberal subject it seemed to enforce.

### 3.3 Utopian Matriarchies and the Deconstruction of Androgyny in Charlotte Perkins Gilman

If subversion is possible, it will be a subversion from within the terms of the law, through the possibilities that emerge when the law turns against itself and spawns unexpected permutations of itself. The culturally constructed body will then be liberated, neither to its "natural" past, nor to its original pleasures, but to an open future of cultural possibilities.


This epigraph by Judith Butler comes at the beginning of a discussion of Michel Foucault's *Herculine Barbin: Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth-Century French Hermaphrodite*. As I have briefly outlined in the introduction, Herculine Barbin was a hermaphrodite who, in Foucault's opinion, grew up in “a happy limbo of a non-identity” (xiii) before the discovery by a medical examiner that she had a small, ill-formed penis. Once her “true” sex was brought to light, Herculine was forced to live as a
man—until sinking into a deep depression and committing suicide. Butler calls Foucault out on his apparent misreading of the case, insisting that while Herculine was confused about what her body told her she was, the so-called “happy limbo” in no way existed. Instead, “Herculine's anatomy does not fall outside the categories of sex, but confuses and redistributes the constitutive elements of those categories” (101).

Similar to Butler, Kari Weil doubts the premise that androgyny evades or transcends gender roles completely. In Weil’s opinion, language itself is suspect, for anytime one tries to describe a dual-gendered or dual-sexed individual, the language used is part and parcel of what Lacan has famously called the masculine Symbolic Order (5-8). To make her point, she relies on Irigaray’s claim in The Sex Which Is Not One that “the sexes are now defined only as they are determined in and through language. Whose laws, it must not be forgotten, have been prescribed by male subjects for centuries” (87). Being “the sex which is not one,” woman does not have a linguistic foothold to challenge masculine signifying authority since she herself is circumscribed by the very language that always sees her as outside and foreign. Kari Weil then insists that androgyny can never be any different. Androgyny reveals itself to be “constructions of patriarchal ideology and not the results of divine of natural law” (11). These musings prompt a key question: can “androgyny” ever subvert or transcend phallogocentric norms of gender signification and inscription? Moreover, is androgyny anything but the ideological construct of a male signifying order?

As I have pointed out in the previous section on Norris, incorporated androgyny's masculine bias only validates Butler's, Weil's, and Irigaray's assumptions. Whereas men can, in Norris's vision, ironically get in touch with their “feminine side” in order to enjoy
the benefits of consumption, women such as Hilma end up merely redirecting their masculine productive impulses back toward a buttressing of the nation through reproduction. Despite Hilma's miscarriage, the terms of androgyny are clear in *The Octopus*: male appropriation of the “feminine” is simply another aspect of masculine entitlement. Given this tautological thinking, one wonders why consumption was ever regarded as “feminine” in the first place. Norris never addresses this concern, but only exposes the need for it to be answered.

Given the current advancement and dissemination of feminist and poststructuralist thought throughout the academy, it is not difficult for critics and scholars to accept these thinkers’ conclusions. But did the moderns ever deconstruct androgyny? One look at Norris's *The Octopus* and the answer would most certainly be no. But at least as far as Charlotte Perkins Gilman is concerned, the answer is a definite maybe. Gilman was one of the leading feminist thinkers of her day, despite coming from a broken home, having a peripatetic and financially unstable upbringing, and a spotty formal education. A great granddaughter of Lyman Beecher, she was exposed to religion, philosophy, feminism, and ethics at an early age. Some of her earliest life lessons came from her father's abandonment of her mother—an abandonment that left Mary Westcott Perkins with a lifelong sense of inferiority. Unwilling to live the domestic life forced upon her mother by Victorian American society, Gilman, who “wished to help humanity,” embarked upon a system of self-education that exposed her to history, sociology, and primitive anthropology (Bederman 126). Perhaps most famous today for her short story “The Yellow Wallpaper” (1892), during her own day she was best known for *Women and Economics: A Study of Economic Relations between Men and Women* (1898), which was
subsequently translated into Japanese, Dutch, Danish, Italian, German, and Russian (Bederman 135). In more recent years Gilman has become equally well known for her feminist utopian novel *Herland*, which was initially published in her serial *The Forerunner* in 1915 and later republished in 1979.

A closer look at these two latter works suggests that Gilman was attuned to the controversies over androgyny as they were played out in her day in sociological, anthropological, and medical communities. Beyond that, she seemed even more attuned to the ways in which the discourse of androgyny and the liberal subject it strove to produce were deeply predicated on masculine prerogative. In privileging and emphasizing racial distinctions over sex distinctions, she came to the same conclusions as Durkheim that at an earlier stage of evolutionary development women lost many of their physiological similarities to men. For her, the loss was most unfortunate, since in her opinion the ability to sustain a healthy Anglo-Saxon race was predicated on gender equality in the home, in politics, and in the workplace. Gilman's plan for future racial development was to recover that earliest primitive moment of equality, which she likened to a prelapsarian time. Her utopian novel *Herland* speculates on how women would have fared had they been able to recover that prelapsarian moment and develop a civilization without men's insistence on unreasonable sexual differentiation.

Like her contemporary Frank Norris, Gilman was especially interested in the gendering of labor and economics. Much of *Herland*'s thematic force is driven by a reimagining of material production and consumption without their respective significations of masculine and feminine. In doing so, Gilman exposes not only the

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14. For two works that detail Gilman's racial—if not racist—theories, see Gail Bederman's *Manliness and Civilization* and Louise Michelle Newman's *White Women's Rights.*
phallocentric thinking of androgynous discourse at the turn of the century, but also the way in which that discourse embeds itself in nationalist paradigms. At the heart of the tension between Norris's and Gilman's visions is the overall conceptualization of androgyne. Whereas Norris suggests that the blurring of “male” and “female” constitutes a primal human androgyne, Gilman suggests the blurring of such categories shows just the opposite: an asexual, primal “human” category that precedes the superimposition of culturally constructed gender roles. Yet despite the bold claims Gilman makes about the masculine biases in the various intellectual configurations of androgyne, the question that perpetually looms over *Herland* is whether or not an all-female utopia can ever actually escape—and not just momentarily subvert—a masculine signifying system that encodes not only gendered notions of production and consumption, but also gendered notions of the liberal subject and national destiny. Finally, would we who live within the confines of the symbolic ever recognize an alternative system if it were presented to us?

Also like Norris, Gilman had been interpellated by the larger intellectual current of evolutionary thinking, a point she makes plain in *Woman and Economics*. Gilman starts from the premise that the evolution of the Anglo Saxon race took place in two phases, the first being a type of prelapsarian existence in which men and women barely recognized their sexual differences. The “Proem” at the beginning of the book bears this out: “In dark and early ages, through the primal forests faring / Ere the soul came shining into prehistoric night / Twofold man was equal; they were comrades dear and daring, / Living wild and free together in unreasoning delight” (ix). Later in the book Gilman describes this moment by claiming, “Primitive man and his female were animals, like other animals. They were strong, fierce, lively beasts; and she was as nimble as ferocious as he,
save for the added belligerence of the males in their sex-competition. [. . .] At other times she ran about the forest, and helped herself to what there was to eat as freely as he did" (60).

In many ways, these sentiments echo Otto Weininger's argument for atavistic androgyne, though Gilman herself does not go so far as to use the term “androgy nous” to describe her own primitive man and woman. A few years later, in a 1906 review of Weininger's *Sex and Character*, she does acknowledge the fundamental plausibility of his line of thinking, remarking that the German sexologist “advances a theory much of which seems reasonable and borne out by facts, namely, that sex is not manifested in two absolutely opposite types, either in humanity or lower forms: but that there is an ‘ideoplasm’ in all our constituent cells; ‘Arrhenoplasm’ (male plasm), Thelyplasm (female plasm), and that this distinctive plasm different in amount not only in different personas, but in different cells of the same body” (414-15). Though *Sex and Character* develops an intensely misogynistic theory about women's evolutionary inferiority, Gilman felt that Weininger's emphasis on primitive sexual similarity was the correct starting point on which to base an understanding of modern human equality. Sounding a call that diverges dramatically from Weininger, she tells her readers at the end of the review, “We need a new understanding of the immeasurable difference between sex-distinctions, which we share with other animals, and our pre-eminent race distinction, which is beyond sex” (417).

It was in the arena of “sex-competition” that the Fall took place. In the “Proem” the Fall occurs as Man eats from “that awful tree” of knowledge and learns to sin. Instead of competing with other men for the right to mate with the female as was the case in the
prelapsarian moment, the fallen man simply takes or even rapes the woman and enslaves her as his wife and concubine: “Close, close he bound her, that she should never leave her never; / Weak still he kept her, lest she be strong to flee” (x). The ensuing history of the various races was one of female dependence and of growing sexual differentiation: “The human female was cut off from the direct action of natural selection, that mighty force which heretofore had acted on male and female alike with inexorable and beneficial effect, developing strength, developing will, developing endurance, developing courage—developing species” (62). Worth noting here are the attributes she ascribes to women in the prelapsarian stage, attributes that make her not an androgyne or an amazon, but simply a fellow member of the human “species.” Furthermore, Gilman already seems to be aware of how men have appropriated universal characteristics as their own while seeing the female body as marked by its difference from this universality.

Since this evolutionary “Fall,” the atavistic trait that has defined the Anglo Saxon race most prominently is male aggression, which has led to the development of industry and civilization, but also to the atrophying of women's minds and bodies. No longer concerned with hunting and gathering alongside their male counterparts, they prefer to augment their sexual differences through adornment in order to attract their husbands. As Louise Michelle Newman points out, the Victorian era, steeped in its separate spheres mentality, amplified the Anglo Saxon evolutionary crisis at hand. In Gilman's opinion, something needed to change since “weak, oversexed women bred weak ineffectual men. [. . .] Civilization, although initially brought about by sexual difference, was now in danger of producing too much sexual difference: excessive sex was threatening the future progress of the white race” (143).
In this evolutionary pattern we find two things: Gilman's implicit insistence on the difference between sex and gender, and the overt recognition that “masculine” production and “feminine” consumption are culturally constructed gender dichotomies. First, Gilman understands that all humans are classified by various breakdowns. Though never using the word “gender” (a word not nearly as popular as it is today), she separates sex difference from human difference. While these distinctions pervade *Women and Economics*, their most succinct and direct delineation comes in Gilman's *The Man-Made World* (1911), which I quote at length:

> It seeks to show that what we have all this time called “human nature” and deprecated, was in great part only male nature, and good enough in its place; that what we have called “masculine” and admired as such, was in larger part human, and should be applied to both sexes; that what we have called “feminine” and condemned, was also largely human and applicable to both. Our androcentric culture is so shown to have been, and still to be, a masculine culture in excess, and therefore undesirable. (204)

Like gender traits, “human” traits are those not related to physiological processes such as birth, ovulation, and menstruation for women, or sperm production and semen ejaculation for men. But the lion's share of all human functions can be done by both men and women, just as hunting and gathering occurred in primitive societies. When human traits such as writing or material production are misunderstood as sex distinctions, it is because they are “performed,” in Judith Butler's formulation “in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts” to provide the illusion of sexual fixity (*Gender Trouble* 140). As I will show in my discussion of *Herland*, Gilman gropes feverishly to understand the linguistic parameters of the masculine signifying system that seems so obvious to Butler.
Yet already Gilman understands that biology is rarely destiny, since men and women have more “human” traits that unite them than they have “sex” traits that divide them.

Secondly, Gilman rejects the traditional genderings of production and consumption, while begrudgingly admitting to their efficacy in the modern industrial world. With men in firm control over economic institutions, shared human traits that operate under the guise of male and female sex traits sustain a rigid and often punitive hierarchy. Sounding at first like Adam Smith in his non-sex specific defense of production and consumption, Gilman states simply that “we find that production and consumption go hand in hand; and production comes first. One cannot consume what has not been produced. Economic production is the natural expression of human energy—not sex-energy at all, but race energy—the unconscious functioning of the social organism” (116). Yet Gilman acknowledges that in the modern western world, woman “is forbidden to make, but encouraged to take,” and hence the current misunderstanding that production is masculine and consumption is feminine.

Further, it is not just women's culturally enforced propensity for taking that codes consumption as feminine; more so, it is what they take:

To consume food, to consume clothes, to consume houses and furniture and decorations and ornaments and amusements, to take and take forever—from one man if they are virtuous, from many if they are vicious, but always to take and never to think of giving anything in return except their womanhood—this is the enforced condition of the mothers of the race. (116)

In other words, women consume the very things that make them seem most different from men, namely decorations, domestic furnishings, and clothing. The consuming woman then becomes her own worst enemy: “As the priestess of the temple of consumption, as the limitless demander of things to use up, her economic influence is
reactionary and injurious" (120). Through the years, sex distinctions have increased to the point that they create, in Butler's words, “the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core” that duly and “regularly conceals its own [culturally constructed] genesis” (Gender Trouble 136, 140). But teaching women to recognize their own humanness would be quite a feat. To make inroads in economic production, as their prelapsarian primitive foremothers had done, women must first realize they have just as much emotional, intellectual, and physical aptitude for production as men.

On the disadvantages of extreme sexual differentiation Gilman spoke with authority. After being courted for sixteen months by Charles Walter Stetson, the twenty-two year old Charlotte decided to marry, even though she was fairly certain the conventional constraints of wifehood would limit her intellectual growth. Her suspicions turned out to be correct: within two months of marriage, Gilman had fallen into a deep depression (Bederman 129). To make matters worse, she sought the help of famed psychologist S. Weir Mitchell, who diagnosed her with neurasthenia and prescribed bed rest with minimal mental exertion. Separated from any form of intellectual exertion—her own form of production—and relegated completely to the domestic sphere, Gilman was certain she would go insane. “The Yellow Wallpaper,” which chronicles a new mother's descent into madness while being treated with a rest cure, became the fictional account of her own physical and mental confinement. Confronted with the choice of either “cowering on the floor in the women's sphere” or moving back into the men's professional realm of writing, she opted for the latter (Bederman 132). Leaving her husband and daughter in 1888, Gilman moved to California. Once established, she called for her daughter and then began a successful career as a writer, lecturer, and political
activist. After trying for four years to be the model wife, Gilman realized that the advancement of the Anglo Saxon race depended in large part on women being able to break free of the material trappings of the domestic sphere and make their own inroads into various forms of production.

When Gilman published *Herland* in several installments of *The Forerunner* in 1915, she took part in a larger discourse on primitive and extinct cultures. Primitivism had often served the interests of conservative-minded male modernists who sought out ways to reinstate hierarchies that were threatened in the modern age of political, gender, and economic upheaval. Even the dandified and cosmopolitan T. S. Eliot lamented the passing away of certain primitive customs that bound people to each other and to “their” land.¹⁵ But, as Lisa Rado points out, female modernists insisted that primitivism was not just a “naughty game played by insecure white men” (“Primitivism” 283). Seizing hold of various anthropological studies that relied on the new notion of cultural relativism, scholars such as Gasquione Hartley looked to primitive matriarchal societies to argue that women in the second decade of the twentieth century were “reclaiming a position that is theirs by natural right—a position which once they held” (Hartley 13). And while Rado concedes that many of the primitive matriarchies invoked in anthropological studies were “scientifically unsupportable,” they fed a larger need among the progressive-minded to develop “a full-scale utopian vision” (287).¹⁶ Gilman differed from Hartley in that she

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¹⁵. Consider the closing lines of Eliot's *Waste Land*: “Shantih shantih shantih” (46). The Sanskrit lines, according to Eliot’s own notes, are “a formal ending to an Upanishad,” and they are translated as “The Peace which passeth understanding” (54). Also refer to Eliot’s use of middle English in the “East Coker” sections of *Four Quartets*.

¹⁶. Gilman’s primitivist impulses are also evident in *Woman and Economics* through her favoring of the rural over the urban. The urban areas are the most notorious breeding grounds for the intensification of sex distinctions. Revealing her own volkish affinities, Gilman suggests that “[i]n the country, among the peasant classes, there is much less sex-distinction than in cities, where wealth enables the women to live in
was not so interested in using the model of a primitive matriarchy to reinscribe a current-day matriarchy. Rather, she used her fictitious all-female nation to question the modern world's excessive need for categories of gender.

In discussing *Herland*’s themes, I first want to digress for a moment in order to detail the various influences Gilman had in constructing her novel. As mentioned earlier, Weininger’s *Sex and Character* certainly made an impact, but so did sociologists Lester Ward and Thorstein Veblen. Ward was most helpful in supplying Gilman with a “gyneacocentric theory,” which suggested that females carried all of a species’s traits. Ward also claimed that presexual creatures that reproduced through parthenogenesis should be regarded as female (Ward 313-23). Parthenogenesis would reappear in *Herland* as the women of the remote country are able to give birth autonomously long after all the men had died out. In more recent years, Louise Michelle Newman has made a strong case for the influence of Thorstein Veblen’s *Theory of the Leisure Class* in Gilman's understanding of evolution. Veblen believed that primitive men and women had both cooperative and competitive instincts. The modern-day capitalist, caught up in his aggressive drive for financial domination, was the beneficiary of this atavistic competitiveness, whereas his more peaceful and cooperative instincts were left to languish. As Newman argues, Gilman was able to take these atavistic theories and accomplish “the same kind of intellectual transmutation for sexual difference: sexual difference originated in primitives, but had come to manifest itself as an archaic survival in civilized peoples” (146). As *Women and Economics* suggests, there is another atavistic

absolute idleness; and even the men manifest the same characteristics” (73). Being more primitive in their forms of economic production, the racially homogenous peasantry does not have the luxury idleness to make the world more unequal.
drive—that of cooperation, which mitigates sex distinction—but it is vastly overshadowed in the modern world.

*Herland*, Ann J. Lane points out in her introduction to the 1979 republication, was one of the first self-consciously feminist utopias written in America (xix). The tale begins with three male explorers who venture into uncharted territories to seek out a legendary “Woman Country” (5). Each explorer is representative of a type of conventional American manhood. First there is Terry Nicholson, the wealthy and oversexed playboy of the group, who sees women as little more than romantic conquests. At the other end of the spectrum is Jeff Margrave, the chivalrous physician who “idealized women in the best Southern style” (9). And occupying a “middle ground” between the two is the narrator Vandyck Jennings, a mild-mannered sociologist by profession. Being the one most open to the Herlanders' way of life, Van attempts to provide the most sympathetic view of the all-women civilization.

From the men's first encounter with the Herlanders, issues of gender, production, and consumption are at stake. Once the three men reach the outer limits of the lost country, they enact a version of *Women and Economics's* "Proem" in which Terry plays three roles simultaneously: the producer of commodities, the tempting serpent, and the rapacious Adam. Spotting a Herlander, Alima, for the first time, he tries to lure her down from a tree with a necklace. Van recounts: “Terry's smile was irreproachable, but I did not like the look in his eyes—it was like a creature about to spring” (17). Seeing the grab for the necklace as more a game than a temptation, Alima snatches it before Terry can capture her. While her agility proves she is every bit as strong as her male tempter, the bigger issue at hand in this moment of contact is the future of the Herland society.
Symbolizing the movement toward greater sex-distinction, the necklace would surely have meant Alima's “fall” from her primitive “human” state to that of an irrational, over-sexed consumer whose lust for ornamentation would make her economically and socially dependent on men.

Having avoided capture, Alima then draws the men into the nearest city, where they are themselves captured after instigating a row with the various women who see them on the street. Though held captive for a time, the men are treated more as students than prisoners, receiving tutoring from three older women who teach them the history of Herland and its egalitarian societal structures. Van, Jeff, and Terry find that several thousand years ago men did exist in the community, but because of wars, sickness, and natural catastrophes, they all died out, leaving the women to fend for themselves. Quite miraculously, one of these early women gave birth to five daughters through parthenogenesis. The current-day citizens of Herland are all descendants of these five daughters, and like those original daughters, can themselves reproduce through parthenogenesis. Given the thousands of years the women have lived without men, they have become nearly oblivious to their own sex traits, seeing themselves quite simply as human; therefore the country itself is not feminized so much as it is humanized. Implicit in this argument, then, is the notion that the modern world has allowed humans' primitive cooperative instincts to atrophy, and that a stronger reliance on those very traits would mitigate the need for gender distinction. As Van puts it:

Here you have human beings, unquestionably, but what we were slow in understanding was how these ultra-women, inheriting only from women, had eliminated not only certain masculine characteristics, which of course we did not look for, but so much of what we had always thought essentially feminine. (57)
Van, Jeff, and Terry come to realize that these women understand the world without the aid (or hindrance) of binary thinking. Women are not understood in relation to men any more than good is understood in relation to evil. Van remarks that “[t]hey had no theory of the essential opposition of good and evil; life to them was growth: their pleasure was in growing, and their duty also” (102).

In one respect, Gilman seems to crib from Marx and Engels, though in most other respects her own system of socialism differed greatly from theirs.¹⁷ Like Marx and Engels, Gilman creates her utopian vision around the suspension of time insofar as calendrical history is the record of the Hegelian dialectical struggle of opposing forces. The larger forces of history have stopped because the civilization has arrived at an ultimate contentment that provides more than adequately for the common good. Terry finds this stasis particularly disgusting, “because he found nothing to oppose, to struggle with, to conquer,” and he insists, “If there is no struggle, there is no life—that's all” (99).

Through Terry, Gilman provides keen insight into the dominant mode of masculine self-definition. For Terry, men cannot exist without women simply because men have defined themselves over centuries in direct opposition to them.

Gilman's fiction eventually focuses on industry and the Herlander's methods of production and consumption. But because the women do not live in a world of binary oppositions, there is obviously no arbitrary breakdown between masculine and feminine with regard to economic modes. The men are initially surprised to see that cities and

¹⁷. For a helpful understanding of Gilman’s differences with Marx, consult Naomi B. Zauderer’s “Consumption, Production, and Reproduction in the Work of Charlotte Perkins Gilman” in *Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Optimist Reformer*. For an essay on Gilman’s similarities with Marx see Mark W. Van Wienen’s “A Rose by Any Other Name: Charlotte Perkins Stetson (Gilman) and the Case for American Reform” in volume 55 of *American Quarterly* (2003).
industry had evolved to such a degree in Herland, and to them it first proves the existence of men, though they never find any. The Herlanders even have motor cars and finely paved roads, which prompt Terry to sneer pompously to his chums, “No men, eh?” (18). At this point, even Van is in subtle agreement with his oversexed colleague.

When finally coming to grips with the fact that women are the country's only means of production, the men go into an ontological tailspin. Through them Gilman takes issue with her own country's economics by revealing the less than desirable facets of American industry. To the Herlanders, the separation of spheres is not so foreign a concept because the country is devoid of men, but because it is simply illogical to proscribe one sex from economic production. This discussion goes to great lengths to deconstruct the notion of incorporated androgyny espoused by Norris. In it we find that other-sexed complementarity, which brought Angéle to Vanamee and Hilma to Annixter, is based on fallacious and detrimental social assumptions. The reason why such characters as Hilma and Angéle never break out of their one-dimensionality is that androgynous complementarity is no more than a form of male entitlement. These women are idolized but never allowed true subjectivity. Given the extensive economy of manufacturing, agriculture, and arts the women of Herland have developed over the years, women are obviously just as capable of men in the realm of production. Even though there are no men in the country, the separation of spheres simply does not make sense for those countries that do have both sexes. Somel, one of the tutors, does not even understand the word “home” because there is no equivalent to it in her language. In Herland, all the women live, and all the children are raised, communally.
Gilman exposes the sexist underpinnings of incorporated androgyny most obviously through Terry. A wealthy man whose consumption habits include the acquisition of planes, boats, and automobiles, he is also the alpha male of the group. Aleta Cane has argued that *Herland* entertains the male quest romance genre only to turn it on its head (27). Terry exemplifies the romance hero in the search to find his other-sexed complementary other, which, as his attempted rape of Alima shows, is really just a pursuit of base sexual fulfillment. Furthermore, Gilman exposes the contradictory impulses men feel in finding their other-sexed complements. Certainly Terry wants a young seductress to fulfill his need for sexual mastery, but he is an equally strong supporter of traditional marriage. “We do not allow our women to work,” he tells Zava. “Women are loved—idolized—honored—kept in the home to care for the children” (61). In other words, while he and other men of his class can feel equally at home in the realm of consumption, the women are to redirect any productive drives they may have toward reproduction. The women find the traditional marriage scenario, and the sex act that accompanies it, either undesirable or repulsive. Jeff and Van are only slightly better in this respect. Like Terry, they are deeply confused and frustrated when their Herlander wives will not consent to sexual intercourse, the very act in the Platonic tradition that fuses men and women back into androgynous wholes. Their language of seduction is loaded with images of completeness, and fulfillment, as when Van explain to Ellador, “Why, to touch you—to be near you—to come closer and closer—to lose myself in you—surely you feel it too, do you not?” (126). But Ellador indeed does not, leaving Van to explain to the reader, “There was no sex feeling to appeal to, or practically none” (92).
Yet if incorporated androgyny is at its most basic level the blurring of masculine production and feminine consumption, it actually does exist in America beyond the middle-class standard of consuming males and their child-producing wives. Only begrudgingly does Terry admit that women in America do participate in other forms of production besides childbearing. To Zava's question of whether or not any women in America work outside the home, he responds, “Some have to, of the poorer sort” (61). Much to their dismay, the tutors find that roughly one-third of women in America do participate in production, but only the poor ones who have no other options. The conversation bears out the larger reality of early twentieth-century America. As technology made manufacturing jobs less skilled and less sex-specific, more and more women entered the industrial workforce. Many of them were young, poor, and unmarried—those for whom the term “lady” was never meant. By 1900 roughly 932,000 of these women were employed in clothing trades or textile mills. By 1910, there were over 8,000,000 employed outside the home, mostly working as factory hands or store clerks (Painter 235, 242). From her time as a member of the Equality League of Self-Supporting Women, an organization of some 19,000 women whose aim was political and labor equality, Gilman came to know the plight many of these women faced. In his Spencerian explanation of social determination, Van acknowledges this reality: “[W]here there was severe economic pressure the lowest classes of course felt it the worst, and [. . .] among the poorest of all women were driven into the labor market by necessity” (63).

Nevertheless, childbirth is very much a part of these poor women's lives—but only to their detriment. In fact, a large brood signified not so much a mother's high and revered status in America as it does her abject poverty. Jeff explains that “the poorer
[working women] were, the more children they had" (63). A personal friend of Margaret
Sanger's, Gilman was a staunch supporter of birth control for women, though given her
anxiety over the threat of race suicide, most likely with a white supremacist agenda in
mind. With many immigrant women flooding American shores and taking many of the
lower-wage manufacturing jobs mentioned by Terry, Jeff, and Van, Gilman felt that birth
control was one way to keep non-white populations in check (Long 190-91). But
certainly for these women wage earners mentioned in Herland, children are not the telos
of a women's existence. Motherhood under the wrong circumstances can be a prison as
much as a blessing. In this conversation, poor fathers are nowhere mentioned, suggesting
their possible absence from the family altogether. So much for other-sexed
complementarity.

Gilman exposes the ways in which not only production and consumption, but also
the larger discourse of androgyny, are fully encapsulated within a masculine signifying
system. In her deconstructionist reading of Plato's Symposium, Kari Weil sees any
attempt to vocalize or envision a unified primordial androgyny as inherently flawed. “The
presymbolic and presexual state associated with the androgyne,” she states, “can only be
envisioned from what Lacan calls the symbolic, and with a language that is already
marked by difference” (8). For Weil, androgyny too easily and too contradictorily
symbolizes that which is dual-sexed and non-sexed. The problem with the imagination
and the language that gives it voice to, she maintains, is that it is riddled with what
Derrida has famously called differance—which implies both that language is inherently
constituted by difference (“I know a cat because it is not a dog”) and that language
interminably defers a word's ultimate meaning (10). Somewhat anticipating Julia
Kristeva's notion of a semiotic maternal language, Gilman's *Herland* tries to find a way to look beyond male and female difference or *différance.* When critic-historian Nell Irvin Painter therefore calls these women's culture “andrognous,” she misses the point (247). For the Herlanders, who presumably possess a language outside of the Lacanian symbolic, androgyny is a meaningless term because it denotes difference, even if the difference is amalgamated into one entity.

Yet whenever those of us speaking from within the symbolic try to understand non-sexed human traits that both men and women share, we still fall back on fundamental concepts of difference, which either implicitly or explicitly bespeak androgyny. These conclusions amplify Carol Pateman's point that the liberal subject as envisioned by Locke, Hobbes, and Rousseau never did exist (even theoretically) before gender—or for that matter, before the linguistic signification that created and ordered gender. Locke's non-gendered *tabula rasa* may correctly delineate the human mind at birth for Gilman, but the blank slate inevitably encounters masculine inscription. The novel's greatest force, I therefore argue, is its persistence in wondering if there ever was a time in primitive history when language existed without the trappings of masculine signification,

18. Julia Kristeva has suggested that a pre-oedipal or “semiotic” maternal language would defy the Symbolic Order. Yet Judith Butler has proven how even Kristeva’s own delineation of this alternate order is inscribed in the “paternal law” (*Gender Trouble* 88): “The maternal body in its originary signification is considered by Kristeva to be prior to signification itself; hence it becomes impossible within her framework to consider the maternal itself as a signification, open to cultural variability” (91). Butler’s critique of Kristeva is instructive because it shows the dilemma Van unwittingly finds himself in when explaining a pre-phallogocentric signification. The country of Herland may actually possess this much coveted non-gendered language, but when recapitulated by those inscribed within the Symbolic Order such as Van or Terry, the language is lost. Closed off as it is, their original language operates in Derridean terms as a type of “transcendental signified” that can only be articulated by a language inherently riddled with gender, difference, and *différance* (Derrida 280). Within the terms of the novel, the language of the Herlanders is a transcendental language that for us is forever deferred because we only have knowledge of it through our own system of signification. If readers are never fully able to envision the their existence as a pregendered “human” one, it is because we fall prey to the same linguistic traps they do. Androgyny may be a human invention, but the most language seems able to do is articulate its discursiveness, seeing that “human” itself never escapes the Symbolic Order's confines.
and if so, what might the modern world do to recover that language as the Herlanders seem to have done.

Kathleen Margaret Lant has argued that Gilman failed to envision a feminist utopia because “[s]he could not banish patriarchal conceptual structures from her writing” (297). As a result, the novel's true pivotal figure is neither the enlightened Van nor the Herlander Ellador, but the playboy Terry, who both pushes the action forward and gives voice to the novel's greatest thematic and ideological contradictions. Lant makes a compelling case, for Terry reminds the reader that Utopian literature has efficacy only through the articulation of difference, through at least implicit juxtaposition with the “real” world. For Terry—and perhaps for so many readers in 1915 or even now—the women of this mystical country are never simply “human” because of their agility and strength; since his world is circumscribed by the symbolic the Herlanders must fit into identity categories marked by difference. The Herlanders are, in Terry's nomenclature, “old Colonels,” or else they are “neuters, epicenes, bloodless, sexless creatures”—all familiar terms for androgynes or hermaphrodites. But since we readers are also enclosed within the symbolic order, we run into the same problems as the male characters. Therefore when Van describes the women as “tall, strong, [and] healthy,” we must fight our own tendency to revert back to the image of the androgyne. Given these imaginative difficulties, Lant may indeed be correct to see Terry as pivotal. Though we may

19. In a similar vein, Thomas Galt Peyser see the novel as failing to overcome the assumptions and ideologies of a patriarchal culture. For Peyser this occurs because Gilman “leaves wholly intact […] the notion of a center itself,” and thus simply inverts the malefemale binary to privilege women over men (2). For Lant, the very structure of the novel, which culminates in a attempted rape scene, undercuts “an ideology of expansive, supportive, strong femininity” (292). For these latter writers, Gilman's novel fails at the most basic level because it belies the attempt to escape binary thinking. I find myself agreeing with these critics, for they implicitly point out that binary thinking is itself a symptom of entrapment within the Symbolic Order.
disapprove of his oversexed and insulting disposition, we unwittingly find him at times to be our hermeneutical ally since he interpellates us with a familiar nomenclature to suit our inescapably phallogocentric imagination.

Is it ever possible to escape the binary thinking inherent in the Symbolic Order? *Herland* seems to want it both ways. On the one hand, it wants to reinscribe a feminine signifying order, but on the other it wants to transcend all gendered orders. Van himself reflects these contradictions. At first he tries simply inverting his gendered figures of speech to: “I took the bull by the horns—the cow, I should say!” he jests (81). While Lou Ann Matossian sees Van's verbal slip-up as Gilman's larger groping towards a common language without gender distinctions (17), Van only shows the deep oppression of Symbolic Order since all he is able to do it invert the binary, not erase it. At a later time he then strives to get beyond his gendered thinking: “When we say *men, man, manhood, and all the other masculine derivatives, we have in the background of our minds a huge vague crowded picture of the world and all its activities*” (137).

Gilman's greatest fictional feat in *Herland* may be her ability not to fully imagine the parameters of a truly presymbolic or non-symbolic order, but rather implicitly to critique America's overwhelming reliance on gender difference and hierarchy. As a result of their conversation with the Herlanders about the country's modes of production and consumption, Van then interrogates his own national sentiments: “I had always been proud of my country, of course. Everyone is. Compared with the other lands and other races I knew, the United States of America had always seemed to me, speaking modestly, as good as the best of them” (62). Yet as the women ask simple questions about the economics of America, he finds himself “evading” certain points (62). Van's sheepishness
is countered directly by Terry's brazen chauvinism, as he spouts the old party line, “Ours is the best country in the world as to poverty. [. . .] We do not have the wretched paupers and beggars of the older countries, I assure you” (63). Not only do these sentiments ring false and dissatisfying in light of what the Herlanders learn about America, but they provide the reader with Gilman's most incisive critique of American nationalist articulation.

Like humans, nations are inextricably bound up in difference. “No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind,” Benedict Anderson explains. “The most messianic nationalists do not dream of a day when all the members of the human race will join their nation” (7). By the end of the novel only Terry is left among the men pledging his undying love for his homeland, a love intensified by his experience among people who go to great lengths to marginalize arbitrary differences. His attempted rape of Alima near the end of the novel then serves as a last-ditch effort to exhibit his masculine difference/dominance over his wife. For Gilman the rape serves as an implicit commentary on the hyper-masculine aggression of America at a time when it had begun its own colonial expansion into the Carribean and the South Seas. Though she eventually supported American's involvement in World War I, Gilman was at her core a pacifist. Just a year earlier, in fact, she served on the organizing committee of the Women's Peace Parade along with settlement house reformer Lillian Wald and suffragist leader Carrie Chapman Catt (Painter 297). Perhaps Gilman's most biting line of the novel comes when Van remarks, “Patriotism, red hot, is compatible with the existence of a neglect of national interests, a dishonesty, a cold indifference to the suffering of millions. Patriotism is largely pride, and very largely combativeness. Patriotism generally has a chip on its
shoulder" (94). Yet for Terry, patriotism and gender are indelibly linked because each one relies on binary opposition for its existence.

While Gilman's novel never does break out of the Symbolic Order, her queries into gender, language, and economics shed a revealing light on Frank Norris's notion of incorporated androgyny. Norris's epic-romance of consuming males suggests that capitalism and the nation-state are natural outgrowths of primordial androgynous instincts. Though Gilman was interpellated by the same intellectual currents of atavistic androgyny that spread through the West in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, she interrogated the “naturalness" of androgyny and the liberal subjecthood that purportedly sprang from it. For her, production and consumption were roles that transcended sex. Still, these gendered categories persisted. As America became one of the top producing nations in the world after World War I, new questions arose about the larger role of the capitalist-friendly government and the strangely gendered social body it governed. The following chapter will explore some of the these complex issues during a time of economic crisis in post-war America.
CHAPTER 4
REACTIONARY AND RADICAL ANDROGYNES: TWO SOUTHERNERS ASSESS
THE DEPRESSION-ERA BODY POLITIC

4.1 Bleeding Red in Dixie

The Great Depression, which was triggered by the plummeting of the stock market on October 29, 1929, unleashed a torrent of miseries and anxieties that were felt in very material, psychological, and imaginative terms, not least in the South. It was the South, after all, that Franklin Delano Roosevelt called “the Nation's No. 1 economic problem” in the famed 1938 Report on Economic Conditions of the South, which was compiled by the National Emergency Council at FDR's behest (Carlton and Coclanis 42). As this report and others like it avowed, the South felt the Depression more deeply than perhaps any other part of the country. Not only did unemployment rates surpass those of other regions, but even southerners' education, health, and housing were far inferior. The Report showed, for example, “that 16 percent of [southern] children enrolled in school are in high school as compared with 24 percent in States outside the South.” In terms of health, pellagra was the most prominent disease of the day, made worse in the region because of its poverty and the subsequent lack of dietary options for many families. In terms of housing, the Report was especially blunt: “By the most conservative estimates, 4,000,000 southern families should be rehoused. This is one half of all families in the South” (Carlton and Coclanis 58, 61, 63).

These and other statistics attest to the absolute destitution in the region. Still, one avenue that has been less explored in relation to the Depression-era South is various
southerners’ reactions to the threat of radical takeover during a time when the nation in general, and the region in particular, were vulnerable on almost every front. In some cases the threats of radical takeover appeared more imminent, at least within certain communities. For instance, in 1914, a major walkout at the Fulton Bag and Cotton Mill broke out in Atlanta, led in part by the president of the Ladies Auxiliary of the Order of Railroad Telegraphers, O. (Ola) Delight Smith, dubbed the “Mother Jones of Atlanta.” The strike marked the first time both the American Federation of Labor and the United Textile Workers of America deployed their organizing energy into the South (Hall 250, 249). Later, between 1929 and 1940, the Alabama Communist Party became a local hotbed of insurgency that sought racial as well as economic equality for local textile workers. In 1929, the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) organized strikes at the Loray textile mill in Gastonia, North Carolina. In this particular instance—one that I will explore later in greater detail—the strike led to violence. In other cases, the threat of radical takeover was more of an intellectual abstraction bantered about by conservatives who felt traditional hierarchies were being displaced. Among such intellectuals were the Southern Agrarians, a group I will also take up in the pages that follow.

The intent of this chapter is to assess these various threats—be they perceived or real—as they presented themselves along both class and gender lines. I plan to show that the same general fears and fascination Henry James experienced when he tried to “flesh in” the abstract body politic at the turn of the century were still an issue during the tumultuous 1930s. In order to better gauge the gender anxiety of the era, I want to outline briefly the various conflations between androgyny and radicalism that have surfaced over the course of American history. As I mentioned in chapter one, the People's Party's
radical promotion of female suffrage and government control over certain parts of the infrastructure led some to call populist men “she men.” This moment, however, only marks a small part in the history of this perception. To find an origin, as Marxist historian Paul Buhle explains, one must go as far back as the Pennsylvania-based Ephrata community of the 1720s and ‘30s, which was grounded in the spiritual principles of the mystic Jakob Böhme. Böhme himself believed in an androgynous Christ, whose female aspect he called Sophia. Christ/Sophia would lead followers “to an earthly paradise where androgyny replaced sexual polarization and where the new species lived in perfect peace with animals” (Buhle 59).¹

While the onslaught of industrialism helped solidify the perception—if not always the reality—of the separation of spheres among the bourgeois classes in America and other western nations, it also gave rise to a whole stratum of working-class women.² And as Marx and Engels famously note in *The Communist Manifesto*, technology in the factory made capitalist society reassess the “intrinsic” differences between men and women: “The less the skill and exertion of strength implied in manual labour, [. . .] the more modern industry becomes developed, the more is the labour of men superceded by that of women. Differences of age and sex have no longer any distinctive social validity for the working class. All are instruments of labour, more or less expensive to use, according to their age and sex” (59). While I do not intend to rehash the number of

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¹ For a more complete understanding of the androgyny celebrated among the Ephrata members, see Jeff Bach’s recent book, *Voices of the Turtledoves: The Sacred World of Ephrata* (2003).

² See again Linda K. Kerber’s “Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place” for a compelling discussion of how the notion of separate spheres in bourgeois America was more rhetorical than real.
studies that assess Marx and Engels's attitudes toward gender roles, it is worth noting that the *Manifesto* bears witness to the relative interchangeability of men and woman in an industrial framework, something that writers such as Rebecca Harding Davis explored in greater detail.

Even sexology, the very pseudo-science that had given birth to the term “psychical hermaphrodite,” became a part of the androgyny-radicalism conflation, in part because two of the most famous sexologists of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis, were openly homosexual and socialist. Though both of these men were British, their names were well known among medical and literary communities in America. Carpenter in particular developed his theories of socialism after first reading Walt Whitman's *Democratic Vistas*. In fact, much of our current-day understanding of Whitman's personal life and androgynous poetic impulses originates with the many pieces Carpenter wrote. For example, *Some Friends of Walt Whitman: A Study in Sex Psychology* argues that Whitman was someone who had achieved an androgynous mental state, which Carpenter felt to be the ideal mode of existence for those aspiring to live in an egalitarian society (14, 15).

If socialism was merely a theoretical abstraction for most Americans and western Europeans, after the Bolshevik revolution in October 1917, it became a reality to those in


3. Davis's “Life in the Iron Mills” makes its own variation on this theme, detailing the life of the “girl-m[ä]n” Hugh Wolfe, whose artistic self-representation is an androgynous looking statue sculpted out of korl, which is the dross from the production of iron. Labor, the message is clear, cares little for sex or social propriety. Those who can do the most amount of work for the least amount of pay get the job (11). Unable to resolve the gender duality inherent in industrialism, the narrative often resorts to the gender-neutral term “hand” to describe the male and female workers in the Virginia factory town where the story takes place (14 *et passim*).
Russia. A part of the Bolsheviks' social and economic program was to recognize women's and men's political equality as well as to employ and educate women alongside men. Though some of the Soviet feminist doctrines were never as radical as the western presses and critics made them out to be, feminists such as Alexandra Kollontai were outspoken in their advocacy of a new Soviet culture that would abolish the notions of sexual distinction promoted by the bourgeois patriarchal family.⁵ “In place of the individual and egotistical family,” she argued, “there will arise a great universal family of workers, in which all the workers, men and women, will be above all, workers, comrades” (qtd in Stites 351). Kollontai was perhaps the most visible of the Soviet feminists, even publishing opinions in American newspapers such as the Baltimore Sun.⁶

Inspired by the Bolshevik revolution, the American professor Emanuel Kanter wrote The Amazons: A Marxian Study. Published in 1926, this short book advocates using the infamous women warriors as a model on which to base a current-day sexual revolution: “The Amazons [. . .] symbolize woman's desire for freedom. They signify that there is, latent in womanhood, the primitive spirit of equality; that the warrior in woman is not yet dead; that if she (the working woman) is to attain freedom, she must rally with her class around the standard of the Proletarian Revolution” (121).

⁴ See Richard Stites's chapter entitled “The Sexual Revolution” in The Women’s Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism, 1860-1930 for a summary of many of these opinions.

⁵ The image of the gargantuan woman that has so long populated American iconography of Soviet Russia, I suspect, drew much of its power from a country whose political program put women in the role of economic production to such a degree that by the time World War II began, women made up 45 percent of the Soviet workforce (Stites 395). When American satirist Henry von Rau wrote his 1929 story The Hell of Loneliness, a parody of Radcliffe Hall's 1928 lesbian novel The Well of Loneliness, he included in it a very masculine Russian princess Ivanova-Feodronova Kaskawisky, who smokes pipes, woos other women, and dresses in men's clothing. The Russian's amazonian stature suggests that von Rau had been influenced by the tremendous sexual upheaval taking place in the Soviet Union in years previous.
The preceding chronicle is by no means exhaustive. It merely serves to illustrate a larger point that by the time John Crowe Ransom and Grace Lumpkin wrote much of their key social criticism and/or fiction before and during the Great Depression, there was already a deep anxiety about what the future held for countries that entertained radical ideas of class upheaval and gender equality. The are several reasons for centering this chapter on these two figures. As I have just mentioned, they were both interpellated by the larger cultural currents around them, though they usually responded in very different ways. Whereas the conservative Southern Agrarian Ransom remained a staunch critic of a social welfare state throughout most of the Depression era, fellow southerner Grace Lumpkin moved in the opposite direction, advocating communism as the only effective means to put the struggling South on sounder economic and racial footing. Secondly, each writer's notion of an American welfare state implicitly evoked an androgynous body politic—a specter that horrified the conservative Ransom while intriguing, at least for a time, the radical Lumpkin. Thirdly, I will argue that at the base of these differing opinions about the androgynous body politic was a deeper concern about the role of women in positions of production and politics. In fact, as the 1930s waned and Lumpkin's radical fervor turned toward a conservative high-church Episcopalianism, she actually found much more in common with Ransom when it came to the role of women in society.

Yet perhaps the most compelling reason for pairing these two authors is that their focus on the South as either a land of tradition and stasis or as a fertile soil for radicalism brings myth and history together in an intricate tangle. As a symbol of the body politic, the androgyne negotiates between these two contending forces. Southern literature critic
Patricia Yaeger has questioned the relationship between women's bodies and southern history and myth. In *Dirt and Desire: Reconstructing Southern Women's Writing, 1930-1990* (2000) she specifically addresses the figure of the female southern gargantua, a staple of the southern grotesque subgenre. In assessing these bodies, Yaeger relies heavily on Susan Stewart's premise that

> [t]he giant is represented through movement, through being in time. Even in the ascription of the still landscape to the giant, it is the activities of the giant, his or her legendary actions, that have resulted in the observable trace. In contrast to the still and perfect universe of the miniature, the gigantic represents the order and disorder of historical forces. (86)

In her reading of Stewart, Yaeger contrasts the petite and passive bodies of southern belles such as Amy in Katherine Anne Porter's "Old Mortality" with those of gargantuas such as Miss Amelia in Carson McCuller's *The Ballad of the Sad Café*.

For Yaeger, the difference between these two bodies lies in how they are inscribed by different narratives. For the diminutive and beautiful Amy, myths of the Old South graft themselves upon her body in ways that fix her in time, thus reinscribing a premodern patriarchy at the expense of female subjectivity. Contrary to the miniature's embodiment of myth is the gargantua's embodiment of history, a narrative that bespeaks a subject's three-dimensionality, her movement through time and space. As Yaeger adds, "Traditionally giants—as opposed to the intensely private, palm-sized scale of the miniature—are associated with epics and monuments, with governments as they rise and fall, with the sacerdotal moments of public life" (117). When mannish or garganutan southern women such as Miss Eckhart in "Eudora Welty's *The Golden Apples* are present in literature, they often challenge patriarchal norms by demanding that readers examine the historical and political forces at play in their attainment of personal autonomy.
By implying that the gigantic is traditionally the realm of manhood and of the public communities that men have historically created and fostered, Yaeger certainly gives reason to conclude that the gigantism and androgyny are often congruent, if not synonymous. This link deserves more consideration. Is it possible, for example, to apply her theories not only to personal bodies, but to political and social bodies as well? Can we understand the body politic as an androgyne or gargantua that bespeaks, at least nominally, women's political, social, and economic parity with men? By bringing dainty Columbia out of the mythical ethosphere, we might better understand how her virtuous femininity has cloaked a larger historical narrative about American women's attempt to overcome social, political, and economic suppression.

I wish to examine more closely this contention between myth and history as it played out in the Depression-era writings of John Crowe Ransom and Grace Lumpkin. Similar to his contemporary T. S. Eliot, whose *Waste Land* uses the androgynous Tiresias to embody poetic universality, Ransom sought out a synthesis of his own “masculine” intellect and “feminine” sentiment as the means to create an image of an organic southern community. Ironically, the image formed was none other than that of the diminutive, ultra-feminine white woman. Yet even more ironically, constantly threatening his feminine symbol is the androgynously-envisioned social body, whose historical development from the economic liberalism of separate spheres to a social welfare state based on gender equality signifies the dissolution of the organic community. In many respects, the trajectory of Lumpkin's life, art, and politics moved in the opposite direction. In seeking out gender equality under a communist banner, she grafted Marxian historical narratives of class struggle onto the dual-sex proletarian social body. Yet
lending credence to Adorno and Horkheimer's notion of the “dialectic of enlightenment,”
her writings show how quickly and easily history falls back into mythical images, in
particular the miniature and ahistorical southern woman.

4.2 John Crowe Ransom's Southern Nationalism: The Androgynous Godhead and
the Threat of the American Welfare State

Let the universe then be the body and manifestation of an inscrutable God, whose
name shall mean: Of a fullness of being that exceeds formulation.

–John Crowe Ransom, God Without Thunder: An Unorthodox Defense of
Orthodoxy (1930)

[The southern landscape] was a fair but dreadful mistress, unpredictable and
uncontrollable as God.

–Donald Davidson, The Attack on Leviathan: Regionalism and Nationalism in the
United States (1938)

In November of 1930, at the start of the Great Depression, twelve southern men
affiliated either directly or indirectly with Nashville's Vanderbilt University banded
together to write a symposium decrying the devastating effects of industrial capitalism.
Among the most famous of these men were the modernist poet-critics John Crowe
Ransom, Allen Tate, and Robert Penn Warren, as well as their decidedly anti-modernist
colleague, the poet Donald Davidson. Calling the symposium *I’ll Take My Stand: The
South and the Agrarian Tradition*, these self-proclaimed Southern Agrarians attacked
industrial capitalism from all possible fronts: economic, artistic, religious, historical,
racial, and philosophical. Though virulently anti-Marxist, the Southern Agrarians shared
with Marx a terrific anxiety about alienation and how Taylorism and the applied sciences
negatively impacted various forms of human expression such as art, religion, and social
custom.
Though the Agrarian moment was relatively short-lived, it has commanded a considerable sphere of influence that lasts to this day. In more recent years Michael Kreyling has convincingly argued, for example, that the Agrarians were largely responsible for the success of the southern literary renascence. Paul V. Murphy has shown how modern American political and social conservatism sprang from the Agrarians' emphasis on states' rights and resistance to racial cohesion. Yet current critics have given relatively little attention to the ways in which gender pervades the Agrarians' thought. Primarily concerned with the preservation of a “southern” economy and/or premodern religious communities, the argument might go, the agrarian platform reserved little room for more “peripheral” issues such as the relations between men and women, not to mention the relations between whites and blacks.

As Anne Goodwyn Jones and Susan Donaldson have argued, the concept of the “representative” southerner as developed by the Agrarians, W. J. Cash, and other twentieth-century southern thinkers has come with the presumption of whiteness and maleness.

The first half of this chapter implicitly calls these earlier critical approaches into question. It may very well be that in avoiding sustained mention of gender in their assessment of southern identity, the Agrarian “brethren” were actually speaking volumes about it. John Crowe Ransom in particular made many peculiar comments about the roles

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6. See Michael Kreyling’s *Inventing Southern Literature* and Paul V. Murphy’s *The Rebuке of History* for more insight into the long-lasting literary and political legacies of the Agrarian movement.

7. As central as the “Negro question” was to the development of postbellum and twentieth-century southern society, race was originally marginalized as much as possible in these works. In fact, *God Without Thunder* mentions race only insofar as it suggests that religion must rest on organic racial communities. Upon finding out that Robert Penn Warren’s contribution to *I'll Take My Stand*, “The Briar Patch,” was to address the place of the blacks within the agrarian tradition, Donald Davidson wrote to Allen Tate, “I think there are some things [in Warren's essay] that would irritate and dismay the very Southern people to whom we are appealing” (Fain and Young 250).
of modern manhood and womanhood throughout his career. Upon second glance, it is very evident that Ransom, especially during the 1930s, was deeply interested in gender constructions in much the same way that Henry James and Frank Norris were at the turn of the century. At the heart of Ransom's social criticism, I argue, is a deeper fear of the New Woman, that hallmark of modernity who demanded greater public visibility through both her consumption habits and her demands for education and professional advancement. No doubt the vulnerabilities of the American economy during the first year of the Great Depression fueled this fear. As I have mentioned in previous pages, capitalism's precarious existence during the 1930s not only sounded a tocsin for those on the Right who feared a communist takeover, but it also exacerbated fears that a more politically active woman-citizen would enter the public arena. In other words, such economic instability would have clear resonance for a larger wave of American women who were either dissatisfied with their traditional roles as wives and mothers, or who wished to ameliorate society's social and economic ills by embracing certain aspects of a Soviet-style welfare state. One might suspect that Soviet Russia's nominal enfranchisement of women weighed heavily on Ransom's mind.

One context for the Agrarians' emergence was modernism. In 1922, James Joyce and T. S. Eliot published their respective masterpieces *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land*. In the United States, James Weldon Johnson edited *The Book of American Negro Poetry*, the first major anthology of black verse, which helped ignite the Harlem Renaissance. Also in this year, many of the poet-critics from Vanderbilt who would go on to publish *I'll Take My Stand* launched the literary magazine *The Fugitive*. Already a successful
poet,\textsuperscript{9} Ransom was largely responsible for the journal’s creation, and its Foreword in the first issue anticipates certain social themes he would later take up: “THE FUGITIVE flees from nothing faster than the high caste Brahmins of the Old South. Without raising the question of whether the blood in the veins of its editors runs red, they at any rate are not advertising it as blue; indeed, as to pedigree, they cheerfully invite the most unfavorable inference from the circumstances of their anonymity” (Editors 1). In other words, though the authors—who all published under pseudonyms in the first few issues—might be amused by readers’ speculations about their class standing, there must be some parameters in place nevertheless; the writers are certainly not blue bloods, but neither are they flag waving or bomb throwing reds.

The 1925 Scopes “monkey” trial in nearby Dayton, Tennessee, exacerbated the Fugitives’ social conservatism. The trial arose after John T. Scopes, a biology teacher at the local Dayton high school, defied a state mandate by teaching his biology class the basic principles of Darwinian evolution. The trial became a media carnival, with the famous Chicago lawyer Clarence Darrow representing Scopes and an aged William Jennings Bryan acting on behalf of the prosecution. The Vanderbilt Fugitives were angered at the press’s portrayal of Dayton—and by extension the South—as a breeding ground of illiteracy and ignorance. But more than that, they resented the ways scientific inquiry threatened the community’s religious bonds. At the heart of the matter for Ransom in particular was the question of rationality and positivism. Had it gone too far in its ontological and epistemological assumptions? Already ravaged by a civil war, a

\textsuperscript{8} Ransom was considered the unofficial leader of the Fugitive-Agrarian group. He was older than most of the others, and in the case of Tate and Warren, he was their literature professor at Vanderbilt. By the late 1920s, he had already made a respectable reputation for himself as a poet in the Eliotic classical-modernist vein.
disastrous Reconstruction, strained race relations, and an economy in transition from agriculture to industry, the South as “the South” might one day dissolve if conservative Protestant religion could not sustain its cultural centrality. While *The Fugitive* suspended publication in 1925 for unrelated reasons, some critics have argued that the trial was the impetus for the marshaling of intellectual forces that later led to the eventual publication of *I’ll Take My Stand*.¹⁰

The year 1930 was transitional for Ransom. By this time he had turned away from publishing poetry and began writing social and religious criticism. Aside from his part in *I’ll Take My Stand*, he published a full-length study on Christianity, *God Without Thunder: An Unorthodox Defense of Orthodoxy*. In their own ways, these books brought Ransom's suspicions about modernity and American radicalism face to face with his deeper concerns about the shattering of traditional gender roles. In both, the figure of the androgyne plays a significant, yet very different role. Not surprisingly, for the conservative Ransom, the affirmative form of androgyny outlined in *God Without Thunder* was one that actually reinscribed a patriarchal order. The dystopian form described in “Reconstructed but Unregenerate,” his contribution to *I’ll Take My Stand*, was one that gave women too much control over the nation-state, hence bringing out the chaotic and self-destructive side to democracy.

In *God Without Thunder*, Ransom questions how modern western society—which he calls the Occident—interprets Christianity. In its quest for material acquisition and

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¹⁰ It seems clear from later statements by Ransom and the other poets involved in the magazine's publication that the Scopes trial helped stir the southern nationalism that would find its ultimate expression five years later. See for example the introductory remarks to the Southern Agrarians in the anthology *The Literature of the American South* (389-90). See also William C. Havard's chapter “The Search for Identity” in *The History of Southern Literature* (415-28).
scientific knowledge, the Occident has chosen to put its faith in a God without thunder—that is, a benevolent God who loves His children so much that He opens up the secrets of the universe for them to exploit for their own scientific and commercial gains: “[T]he new religion,” cautions Ransom, “presents god as a Great Man with all the uncertainties left out: a Great Man whose ways are scientific and knowable and whose intention is amiable and constant” (20). Consequently, Ransom believes that the West is bent on self-destruction, and he exhorts his readers to understand God as the “Orientals” (i.e., the pre-modern Church or the Jews of the Old Testament) once did, as a jealous God of contingency, one who could be “capable of evil as well as good” (GWT 301). “When God was pictured in the likeness of a fabulously Great Man, of marvelous technique and uncertain favor, it was fairly difficult for one to be at ease in Zion; for his fiat was unaccountable and unpredictable; and man worshiping him was necessarily humble, and for the time being neglectful of the ordinary routine of practical life as a very vain thing” (20). Only by living in fear of God as the Orientals once did can the West reverse the course of industrial capitalism, which had fragmented traditional communities, laid waste to arts and social customs, and brought humans into interminable warfare with their natural environment.

Yet unlike fellow modernist T. S. Eliot, who found personal refuge from the fragmentation of modernity in Anglo-Catholicism, Ransom was not a staunch follower of any religious tradition. Talking with Robert Penn Warren in 1931, Ransom made some very curious remarks about God Without Thunder: “I found it very odd that I who am not a religious man, should write such a book; but I had to write it for the truth that was in it” (Watkins, Hiers, and Weaks 382). The apparent “truth” for this son and grandson of
Methodist preachers was the cultural efficacy, though not the verifiable reality, of religious myth. For Ransom, religion was a social contract of sorts, one that outlined what a community would be willing to give up for the greater good of stasis and tradition. Just as one sacrifices certain “natural” rights in order to gain other civic freedoms, a cohesive religious community would come at the expense of one's own doubts about the existence of God. The true theme of submission, then, is not unlike Hobbes’s political theories, which are based on the principle that a strong central government. In this case, however, the “Leviathan” is an orthodox church, not a state. Such an institution must exist to prevent humans from using their free will to annihilate one another. Because of their willingness to forfeit personal intellectual submission in the name of cultural cohesion, the Agrarians were sometimes labeled fascist or fascist sympathizers.\textsuperscript{11}

At the center of this book stands a Godhead who has been largely understood in the Occident as implicitly male, but who in the author's opinion should be seen as androgynous. Remarkably, the gendered construction of Ransom's irascible Oriental god has gone unnoticed over the years, even though it has everything to do with the book's basic thrust. The God of Thunder that Ransom would like to reinstate is not the Trinitarian deity commonly worshiped in traditional Christianity; Ransom believes that Christ is merely a demi-god, and thus the two remaining components of the Trinity are

\textsuperscript{10} See Paul V. Murphy’s \textit{The Rebuke of History: The Southern Agrarians and American Conservative Thought} for a description of this labeling. Much of it stems from Allen Tate's personal and professional association with Seward Collins, editor of \textit{The American Review}. During the early 1930 Collins expressed pro-fascist sentiments and often invited Agrarians and other proponents of the “antimodern Right” to discuss reactionary politics (71).
the true and supreme components of the Godhead. Ransom calls these co-equal figures the Mother and the Father:

God is the Father, the masculine, cosmic, and rational Creator. But the material is the Mother, who is feminine, anarchical, and irrational. (We would add, with Plato's permission: The Father is the personification of Quantity, and the Mother is the personification of Quality.) It is upon such a Mother that God [the Father] must beget his children, the objective creatures which we now know on earth as nature. They partake of the being of both parents; and so far as biology can generalize them, in equal degrees. (300)

The Mother is for Ransom what has otherwise been known as the Holy Ghost. “It is a significant fact,” he says, “that the Holy Ghost for the Old Testament authors, and for Christ himself speaking in his native Aramaic, was of the feminine gender. But this was the right gender for defending the demonic and irrational aspect of his being” (304). These musings make for a heady proclamation. In short, Ransom asserts that nature (of which humans are a part) is the metaphysical or cosmological product of a masculine and feminine “Godhead.” Ironically, the Godhead's phallic thunderbolts come from the feminine, irrational side of its being. This configuration may very well be what Ransom had in mind when he claimed in a later in an essay in The World's Body (1938) that the male poet is an “intellectualized woman”: he partakes of both the Father's spirituality and the Mother's mutable, sensual materiality.

The southern soil, which is at the ideological, spiritual, and imaginative core of I'll Take My Stand, also partakes of the Father and Mother. The soil exists on one level as a certain quantity of atoms that can be represented by the rational—that is,

11. In Ransom's orthodoxy, Christ plays a different role. Now relegated to the inferior position of "demi-god," he does not command nearly the authority that he does in the Trinitarian tradition. For Ransom, Christ was "The Demigod who knew he was a Demigod and refused to set up as a God" (305, italics in original). In other words, Christ, being male and partially divine, was an emanation of the Godhead's rational masculine principle, what Ransom calls the “Logos.” (Notice, for example, that the word “logic” and the suffix -ology, as in “sociology” and “anthropology,” come from this Greek word.)
masculine—abstraction of a molecular compound. Yet simultaneously, the soil elicits a certain amount of sentiment from its cultivator. Through his daily toils on the farm he establishes a personal relationship with the soil, something that cannot be represented merely by a chemical equation. The poem “Antique Harvesters,” published in the 1927 book of poetry *Two Gentlemen in Bonds*, Ransom invokes the landscape’s feminine aspect. In the first stanza, the poet asks: “what shall this land produce?” The answer, which comes at the end of the poem, is an image of a “Proud Lady” who “hath not stooped” (*Two Gentlemen* 50, 51). As the poem suggests, physical matter such as the soil possesses its own personality that people can experience in infinite varieties. The Proud, Lady, though old, *is* the primordial landscape, and the (presumably male) Antique Harvesters, made in the Godhead’s androgynous image, are in touch with their feminine sides enough to experience the soil in more than just scientific or “masculine” ways.¹³

As a mythical object of homage, the Proud Lady becomes what Anne Goodwyn Jones has called the symbolic Confederate woman who dutifully wears Dixie’s diadem. “Rather than a person,” Jones remarks, “the Confederate woman is a personification, effective only as she works in others’ imaginations. Efforts to join person and personification, to make self into symbol, must fail because the idea of southern womanhood specifically denies the self” (4). Not unlike Frank Norris, Ransom sees androgyny as a form of male prerogative. The male antique harvesters, mystically in touch with both their masculine rationality and feminine sensibility, cultivate a female art

¹² These sentiments inform Ransom’s later New Critical approach in which art, and especially poetry, are understood to be a complex system of formal structures that are interwoven into certain abstract or thematic principles. As Michael Kreyling has deftly argued, Ransom tends to aestheticize his South in much the same way he does art objects during his New Critical period. Understanding the South, just like understanding a piece of poetry, is to hermetically seal it off from history (Kreyling 47 *et passim*).
object. As such, she is displaced from politics and the marketplace, standing still eternally, never disrupting the traditional order. In fact, she becomes the very symbol of that order. In this sense, then, the Proud Lady's advanced age is not so much a sign of temporal decay as it is an embodiment of the sweep of (white) southern myth and “tradition.”

In “Reconstructed but Unregenerate,” his contribution to *I'll Take My Stand*, Ransom rarely mentions religion, but the principles in *God Without Thunder* obviously serve as the essay's philosophical basis. Coming at the opening of the symposium, the essay is in many ways the most general. While he claims not to miss the Old South per se, he at least misses the leisurely approach (white) southerners took to life—one that allowed them to experience the aesthetic pleasures of the quotidian. Since the Civil War, industrial capitalism has encroached upon the South's traditions and ripped them apart. Yet underneath Ransom's worry about capitalism was a deeper brooding about socialism. The Agrarians believed, for example, that it was through the crisis in capitalist overproduction that labor would organize to the point of melding government to the modes of production. The Agrarians ironically believed in the Marxist dialectical narrative of history but certainly did not condone its ends. Considering that the nation was sinking deeper and deeper into the Great Depression while the Soviet Union was reporting a surge in its economy under the first Five Year Plan, the Agrarians no doubt felt they had legitimate reason for concern. It is little wonder why Allen Tate originally proposed calling the Agrarian manifesto *Tracts Against Communism*. The manifesto's “Statement of Principles,” which Ransom had a direct hand in drafting, touches on these threats, arguing that a band of “super-engineers” will “adapt production to consumption
and regulate prices and guarantee business against fluctuation: they are Sovietists. [ . . . ]

[T]he true Sovietists or Communists—if the term may be used here in the European sense—are the industrialists themselves" (xxiii).

As “Reconstructed but Unregenerate” makes clear in later passages, the modern age of industrial capitalism distorts the “orthodox” view of androgyny God Without Thunder delineates. In its place is a secular male-female coupling akin to the incorporated androgyny paradigm we have observed at work in Frank Norris. In particular, Ransom speaks of masculine and feminine forms of ambition that operate symbiotically, yet destructively, in the modern world. The masculine form of ambition manifests itself in a war against nature, and its bottom line is production. Sounding like Henry James in The American Scene, Ransom worries that men have used their intellectual grasp of chemistry, physics, and engineering to promote a pioneering spirit of progress that sees no end to this conquest. This war is sustained in large measure by an insatiable need for consumption: “If it is Adam’s curse to will perpetually to work his mastery upon nature, it is Eve’s curse to prompt Adam every morning to keep up with the best people in the neighborhood in taking the measure of his success. There can never be stability and establishment in a community whose every lady member is sworn to see that her mate is not eclipsed in the competition for material advantages” (9-10).

Yet these gendered forms never adhere categorically to men and women, an indication of incorporated androgyny’s centrality to the modern American economy. Their distribution “may not be without the usual exceptions” (9). Furthermore, the blurring of the masculine and feminine impulses emerges through the irrational fears of cultural emasculation men feel at their wives’ behests. In God Without Thunder, as a
matter of fact, the impulse to consume so preoccupies men that we easily forget that consumption was once considered the traditional realm of women. Moreover, the male consumer becomes subject time and again to the irrational sense of lack usually ascribed to women—a lack that leads him to consume more and more right alongside his wife. For Ransom the pioneering spirit that eventually leads to a crisis in overproduction is symbiotically structured: male production and female consumption remain so dependent upon each other that a reliable gender distinction no longer exists. Whereas in *The Octopus* a man's fulfillment of lack through the acquisition of a wife and commodities signals the “natural” outcome of incorporated androgyny, in Ransom's writing, it leads to economic and social devastation.

The feminine sense of ambition goes well beyond turning men into castrated individuals who fulfill their lack through consumption. As "Reconstructed but Unregenerate" further explains:

The feminine form is likewise hallowed among us under the name of Service. The term has many meanings, but we come finally to the one which is critical for the moderns; service means the function of Eve, it means the seducing of laggard men into fresh struggles with nature. It has special application to the apparently stagnant sections of mankind, it busies itself with the heathen Chinee, with the Roman Catholic Mexican, with the "lower" classes in our own society. Its motive is missionary. Its watchwords are such as Protestantism, Individualism, Democracy, and the point of its appeal is a discontent, generally labeled “divine." (10-11)

In essence Ransom suggests that the feminine bourgeois devotion to "Service"—a common term in the contemporaneous discourse of the New Woman—evolves slowly but surely into the modern welfare state. At first glance one might suspect that Ransom would be relieved if “laggard” men could find work; a strong employment rate, after all, might keep workers from organizing and rebelling. Yet Ransom is also mindful that the industrial economy will always have a surplus labor force that women will thus enjoin the
state to employ. “Along with the gospel of progress goes the gospel of Service,” he explains. “They work beautifully as a team” (8). As Ransom later wrote in response to Stringfellow Barr’s indictment of I’ll Take My Stand, “The old Southern instinct which identifies [socialism and communism] is perfectly right in the long run [. . . .] Big business, which [Barr] accepts, and which every day becomes bigger business, will call for regulation, which every day will become more regulation. And the grand finale of regulation, the millennium itself of regulated industrialism, is Russian communism” (qtd. in Davidson “Counterattack” 49).

The reforms established in the Progressive era and 1920s were largely fueled and populated by women activists such as settlement house founders Jane Addams and Lillian Wald, Women's Christian Temperance League president Frances Willard, feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Florence Kelly, the general secretary of the National Consumers League. Not surprisingly, many of these women not only promoted a broader base of gender and social progressivism (if not outright socialism), but were also women who had often been accused of being mannish and aggressive.14

By 1930 the South had certainly experienced its share of philanthropy, so much of which came at the behest of northern New Women. As soon as the Civil War ended, northerners—eighty percent of whom were women—went south to educate newly freed slaves under the auspices of the Freedman's Bureau and the American Missionary Association. Around the turn of the century, northern women directed their philanthropic efforts toward white southerners as well, helping inhabitants in remote locations

"preserve" their cultural traditions as well as providing them with a basic education. Vassar graduate Susan Chester, for example, founded her Log Cabin Settlement in Asheville, North Carolina. Katherine Pettit started the Hindman Settlement School in 1902 and the Pine Mountain Settlement School in 1913. David E. Whisnant has suggested that these women's intent to preserve indigenous southern culture was indeed dubious. As well intentioned as they may have been, they more often than not created their own brand of southern culture that directly or indirectly reflected the urban middle-class values of New England (7, 9 et passim).

By looking at the deeper gendered implications of Ransom's writings of the 1930s, one might find that the status, power, and legitimacy of the New Woman was still very much at issue. With one foot in the bourgeois world of mass consumption and another in the world of social reform, the New Woman was an anathema to the conservative agrarian. Just as American men live out the "pioneer doctrine" in their never-ending battles with nature, so do women in their striving to ameliorate the inevitable effects of those battles ("Reconstructed" 11).

It would seem that Ransom had been hailed by cultural currents that regarded social amelioration in general as an oddly-gendered ideological construct. As social historian Daniel J. Walkowitz deftly notes:

The decade of the 1920s is a significant historical "moment" in the production of [women] social workers' professional identities. During this decade and into the early 1930s, they developed new self-definitions in response to conflicting pressures. They had to contend with management's efforts to rationalize work and economize, with their families' expectations of a higher standard of living, and with their desires to participate in the new consumer culture. (1052)

Women social workers effected these changes though the adaptation of scientific methods for treating clients. And "because objectivity and rationality were conventionally
associated with male professional culture [. . .], the scientific model created its own tensions for female social workers." The women social worker not only had to play the Good Mother, she “had to adopt attributes of passionless and objectivity generally associated with men, traits that easily allowed others to stereotype her as desexed and androgynous" (Walkowitz 1051, 1056).  

15 By the time I'll Take My Stand was published at the start of the new decade, social work had changed so much as a result of the “male” scientific principles it accepted that it had adopted its own manual for scientific research. Moreover, the 1930 census reported employment of 31,241 social workers with seventy-six different job titles; eighty percent of the profession was female. By 1932, social work had moved into the university curricula of twenty-five different graduate degree-granting schools (Brown 142-43).

Although the trend Walkowitz charts was national in scope, Ransom sensed that Service would have deep implications for a region that had fallen behind the rest of the nation on a number of different economic issues. The Service impulse threatened Ransom because it could abstract the South well beyond the mystical organic community Ransom so earnestly envisioned. Michael Kreyling is correct to understand the Agrarians’ South as an “imagined community” (3, 6). The insidiousness of the welfare state makes that community nearly impossible to imagine because feminine Service uses the masculine sense of intellect and rationality to carry out its program of uplift and reform. Under such positivist guises as sociology, history, anthropology, demography, and social work, the

14. Equally at issue in Ransom's writings was the so-called "social gospel," of doctrine of Christian-sanctioned progressivism that caught up many reform-minded men and women in its evangelical sweep. Middle and upper class Christians worked through established church organizations and also created new outlets for reform such as the Young Women's and Young Men's Christian Associations. This latter institution Ransom lumps in with “welfare establishments, fraternal organizations, and Rotary” as "philanthropic societies with a minimum of doctrine about God" (GWT 5).
encroaching welfare state would demystify the South's cultural "unity," which had relied mainly on myths of white supremacy and religious conservatism to keep the bond strong.

Scholars of southern literature are fond of invoking the ideological rift between the conservative Vanderbilt Agrarians led by Ransom and the liberal academics at the University of North Carolina, led by sociology professor Howard Odum. This rift developed in large part because Odum and his Chapel Hill colleagues attempted to ameliorate the poverty and racism of the South by first assessing them through the use of different empirical and abstract methods. Therefore industrialism and the various "-ologies" would not only create a proletarian state in Ransom's view, but would also use masculine modes of science to seamlessly connect the North and the South culturally, economically, and racially. Through scientific and economic abstraction, the nascent welfare state would create an androgynous and miscegenated social body by incorporating the worst of modern masculine and feminine ambitions.

The perceived racial implications of feminine service wedded to masculine rationality were far-reaching for Ransom. As sociologist John Shelton Reed has pointed out, at the heart of the Agrarian movement was a cultural nationalism that was very much in keeping with the romantic primordialism of Herder and Giuseppi Mazzini (52-3). The agrarian emphasis on primordialism might explain, for example, Donald Davidson's reluctance to include Robert Penn Warren's essay "The Briar Patch" in I'll Take My Stand because it spoke of blacks' participation in the southern agrarian tradition. Ransom himself is guilty of the same discomfort when it comes to the place of African Americans in the South. His essay awkwardly glosses over the issue of slavery, absurdly suggesting

15. See for example Fred Hobson's Tell About the South (1983).
that the peculiar institution was “monstrous enough in theory, but, more often than not, humane in practice” (14).

Ransom concerns himself primarily with the “vegetative aspect” of a person, which he asserts is the impulse to settle permanently on a piece of land, but which also implies in true primordialist fashion that white southerners spring up from their southern Volk-kulturnation. Of course he fudges the lines of descent in his assumption, and perhaps Warren's “Briar Patch” met such resistance among his colleagues because it reminded them that white southerners were no more indigenous to the land than the first slaves who arrived in Virginia from west Africa in 1619. Still, the racialized notion of an organic South had gained great currency by 1930. As Ritchie Watson among others has shown, the South went to great lengths in the years leading up to the Civil War to show that “aristocratic Norman” southerners were not only racially distinct from their slaves, but also from their “Anglo Saxon” countrymen in the North (Watson 11). Though making no specific claims as to the nature of northen bloodlines, I'll Take My Stand certainly stressed a difference between a northern and southern Kulturnation.

The inherent contradictions in Ransom's views on androgyny are, I argue, a part of his eventual turning away from agrarianism. On the one hand androgyny was the dreadful result of modernity, for as the American industrial economy inched closer to a full-scale depression by 1930, it necessitated a government intervention that put masculine rationality in the service of feminine uplift. Yet on the other hand androgyny in its orthodox, spiritual manifestation was the anodyne for such a nation-state, providing not only a belief in a Godhead half male and half female, but also enjoining individuals to see themselves as a part of the Godhead's world; like the natural world itself, humans are
both material and spiritual, intellectual and sentimental. In both forms of androgyny, masculine intellect and feminine sentiment were present, but Ransom could never articulate just how these two constitutive elements veered off in such radically different directions. In other words, could the intellectualizing and sentimentalizing of artistic creation really be all that different from the intellectualizing and sentimentalizing of the nation-state? When does history intercede in the formation of cultural myths? In a sense, citizens, like poetry, are made of abstract quantities and tangible qualities, and in coming to terms with these realities, Ransom felt he had to make a choice: either advocate the organic religious community of the South, or pursue a larger query into the realm of aesthetics.

He chose the latter. By the end of the 1930s he was no longer even a southerner. Unable in 1937 to agree on a sufficient salary and contract with the English department at Vanderbilt, Ransom uprooted to Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio and took on a dual role as professor and founding editor of *The Kenyon Review*. By this point in his career, Kiernan Quinlan argues, Ransom had moved so far away from his previous religious orthodoxy that he often found himself in the middle of the religious idealist and the secular “realist” camps that William James tried to negotiate between in his famous essays on pragmatism (9, 68, 87).

With this change came a deeper ambivalence about the cultural legitimacy and economic viability of the agrarian South. The shift appears in his 1936 essay entitled “What Does the South Want?”, which was included in *Who Owns America? A New Declaration of Independence*, a companion piece to *I’ll Take My Stand*. This essay already marks some acquiescence to the welfare state as it had developed during the first
four years of Roosevelt's New Deal. Ransom recognizes the incredible devastation the Great Depression has wreaked upon the South, and he admits to the need for a number of improvements that only a technologically advanced and centrally cohesive federal government can provide. As Paul Bové is right to suggest, this essay's concessions do have their limits (121), but Ransom does understand how the central government can lend support to blighted rural regions. Almost as if laughing about his militancy during the earlier agrarian years, he remarks: “The Agrarians have been rather belabored both in the South and out of it by persons who have understood them as denying bathtubs to the Southern rural population. But I believe they are fully prepared to concede the bathtubs” (248). In fact, he accepts the need for fairer income distribution, back-up employment, hospitals, paved roads, parks, and dependable plumbing, all of which are “urged nowadays by the welfare workers” (251). One might be shocked to see just how much Ransom acclimated himself to the idea of the welfare state. While once deriding social scientists for breaking up the organic community, he now admonishes them much more humbly: “But I should be a little wary of the professional welfare workers, and not let them drill the population too hard in playhabits and social functions. I should give the labor community its rights and let it make the most of them” (251). In other words, he exhorts the social workers to shape up the southern laborers, but still to be gentle and let them save face by keeping some of their regional-based leisure habits intact.

In fact, by the summer of 1945, when World War II was winding to a close, Ransom had gone so far adrift from his agrarian past that he found himself siding with Theodor Adorno on many issues of economy, art, and religion. As part of a symposium Ransom held with Adorno and R. P. Southard in The Kenyon Review, he remarked in an
essay entitled “Art and the Human Economy” that yeoman agrarianism was incompatible
with the modern world. Those wishing to return to it did not acknowledge that the
division of labor—one of the very things he derided in “Reconstructed but
Unregenerate”—was what gave artists the time to explore the “world's body" in all its rich
detail. In siding with Adorno's claim that “[a]rtistic production cannot escape the
universal tendency of Enlightenment” (680), Ransom remarks that “without consenting to
division of labor, and hence modern society, we should have not only no effective
science, invention, and scholarship, but nothing to speak of in art” (686).

But did androgyny disappear in his later writings? Hardly. In fact, by the late 1930s
Ransom had found a way to re-channel it back toward the aesthetic program he had
suggested in God Without Thunder—only this time he left out the overt religious
imperatives. For example, in his essay “The Woman As Poet,” a review of Edna St.
Vincent Millay's poetry that is included in The World’s Body, he remarks:

[a] woman lives for love, if we will but project that term to cover all her tender
fixations upon natural objects of sense, some of them far less reciprocal than men.
Her devotion to them is far more gallant, it is fierce and importunate, and cannot
but be exemplary to the hardened male observer. He understands it, from his
"recollections of early childhood," or at least of youth, but has lapsed from it; or
rather, in the best case, he has pursued another line of development. The minds of
man and woman grow apart, and how shall we express their differentiation? In this
way I think: man, at best, is an intellectualized woman. Or, man distinguishes
himself from woman by intellect, but should keep it feminized. He knows he
should not abandon sensibility and tenderness, though perhaps he has generally
done so. (77)

This distinction gets at the very heart of certain gender dynamics that lay hidden
just under the surface of Ransom's earlier writings. Good poets, Ransom suggests, are
those who find the right balance of sentiment and intellect. In this case Ransom shows no
anxiety about women social workers whose masculine rationality overrides their
femininity. Rather, he frets about those such as Millay, who allow their feminine poetic sentiment to override their masculine sense of discipline. Likewise, he expresses concern for the overly rational man, who gets no love from poetry and invests all his energies in the corporate or scientific world: "[N]ow that he is so far removed from the world of the simple senses, he does not like to impeach his own integrity and leave his business in order to recover it [. . . .] He would much prefer if it is possible to find poetry in his study, or even in his office, and not have to sit under the syringa bush" (77-8).17

Ransom takes a parting shot at gender roles in the welfare state, however. In the aptly titled “Forms and Citizens," which is also included in The World’s Body, he argues that “love" (the quotation marks are his) is only possible when men and women adhere to social customs that prevent their sexually undifferentiated animal instincts from dominating them. The male suitor “must approach [his female love object] with ceremony, and pay her a fastidious courtship. We conclude not that the desire is abandoned, but that it will take a circuitous road and become a romance" (33). As an example of a culture that has already “rationaliz[ed] and economiz[ed] its citizens down to their baser instincts, Ransom cites Soviet Russia, where “there is less sex-consciousness [. . .] than anywhere in the Western world" (37). While by 1938 Ransom had come to embrace much of the New Deal's welfare programs, he nonetheless reserved some of his earlier agrarian reticence. In heralding the “New Soviet Woman," Russian feminists such as Lenin's wife Nadezhda Krupskaya and Alexandra Kollontai seriously questioned what, if anything, constituted difference between men and women; Ransom

16. When Ransom wrote these lines, he was well on his way to developing the New Criticism, which would reach fruition in a book of that same title, published in 1941. By that time Ransom had moved beyond the social and cultural criticism of his Agrarian phase.
seems to wonder the same thing, though reluctantly. “I suppose,” he continues, “that the loyal Russians approach the perfect state of animals, with sex reduced to its pure biological business” (37). In other words, while Ransom may believe that the differences between genders are the result of convention, they are nonetheless necessary for sustaining an enjoyment of life. Here he readily acknowledges the relative inconsequence of sex distinctions between males and females in comparison to their gender distinctions, which are governed by culture and habit. In the absence of divinely or culturally enforced gender codes, men and women must choose to be different. In preferring “efficient animality,” which recognizes sex but not gender differences, humans are bound for a life of “perfect misery.”

His essay “Poets Without Laurels,” also included in The World's Body, serves as a farewell to his overtly political phase. In it he argues that modern poets, needing to adapt to the alienation of modern life, have chosen to write poetry about subjects that are largely divorced from the political arena. The modern poem “has no moral, political, religious, or sociological values. It is not about ‘res publica,’ the public thing. The subject matter is trifling” (59). Among these trifles, as Mark G. Malvasi has suggested, are those Wallace Stevens made famous, such as a blackbird, a seascape, or a jar atop a hill in Tennessee (79). Not surprisingly, the critical theory that would spring forth from his 1941 The New Criticism was one that would champion such poetry, removed as it was from politics, history, and authorial intention.

The nascent New Critical world view of John Crowe Ransom therefore relegated androgyny to aesthetics: men might tap into their inner woman or women such as Edna

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17. See again Stites’s The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia for more information in the life of Krupskaya, Kolontai, and other feminists.
St. Vincent Millay might try to tap into their inner man, but it was best done in the service of a poetry that leaves the laurels of the polis behind. Given Ransom's emphasis on the need for a balance of masculine intellect and feminine sentiment, would we be correct to assume that he envisioned a gender egalitarianism that existed in the aesthetic realm, if not the political? In a 1922 letter to Allen Tate he wrote: “I can't help believing more and more [..] that the work of art must be perfectly serious ripe, rational, mature—full of heart, but with enough head there to govern the heart” (Young and Core 115). One might reasonably conclude that despite Ransom's suggestion that the best male poets are those who can tap into their “feminine” emotions, sentiment is never superior to intellect. And for that matter, femininity is never superior to masculinity.

4.3 Grace Lumpkin's Feminist-Proletarian Dilemma: Pseudo-Masculinity or Female Effacement?

The American working-class is a big-boned working-woman Muscled like a man, Simple-hearted, direct and vulgar, Sweaty and stinking from the vulgarity of it,—An Amazon With great waddling dugs and obscene capabilities.


When critics discuss the southern literary movements of the 1930s, talk inevitably turns to the Agrarians and/or the artistic ascendancy of William Faulkner. Michael Kreyling attributes much of this tendency to the efforts of the Agrarian brethren themselves, who sought to turn their beloved South into one of the few remaining bastions of cultural and literary authenticity and spiritual wholeness left in the West. The rise of the New Criticism in the 1940s only helped streamline the assumption that the Agrarians and Faulkner were the only game in town during the 1930s. Critics often overlook the presence of southern writers from the Left, those who either directly or indirectly associated with the Communist Party of the United States, or those “fellow
travelers" who held out hope that the industrializing of the South might actually one day lead to a welfare state or a workers' paradise. Such writers include Grace Lumpkin, Fielding Burke (Olive Tilford Dargan), Myra Page, Erskine Caldwell, and the part-time southerner Sherwood Anderson.\(^{19}\) Over the years, Lumpkin, Page, Burke, and even Caldwell have fallen into relative obscurity. When critics take them up, they do so under the larger rubric of “Proletarian Writers,” without much regard for the ways their novels of class struggle provide another dimension to modern southern literature.\(^{20}\)

The second half of chapter five takes up this task by placing Grace Lumpkin within a broader context of 1930s southern political writing. Lumpkin provides a sharp counter-narrative to southern agrarianism, and she does so as much through a focus on gender as she does through class. In fact, androgyny creeps into her most famous novel, *To Make My Bread* (1932), in ways that implicitly respond not only to John Crowe Ransom's fears of a welfare state predicated on a dual-sexed body politic, but also to the larger ideological conflation of androgyny and radicalism that had been a part of American thought since the Ephrata Colony of the early eighteenth century.

And yet, while Lumpkin sought out a way to fuse feminism with proletarian liberation in her novel, she encountered the daunting complexities involved in giving equal voice to gender and class concerns. As Barbara Foley and others have pointed out, the personal difficulty women authors encountered in striking that balance roughly mimicked the larger difficulty the CPUSA had in doing so. Foley has shown how the

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18. Anderson lived in New Orleans for a time in the 1920s. He even rented out a room to a young William Faulkner. Anderson apparently advised his protégée to write about his native Oxford.

19. Two exceptions to this trend are Sylvia Jenkins Cook's *From Tobacco Road to Route 66: The Southern Poor White in Fiction* (1976) and Barbara Foley's *Radical Representations: Politics and Form in U. S. Proletarian Fiction* (1993). Of these, Cook's book is the most attentive to placing the southern proletarian writers within a larger southern context.
American Left's commitment to feminism was very contradictory. On the one hand the Left created different literary outlets for proletarian women during the 1930s, such as *Working Woman* and *Woman Today*, but on the other hand the leadership of the CPUSA was almost entirely male (Foley 228-31). In fact, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn was one of very few women ever to serve on its central committee (Rabinowitz 20). Critics Alice Kessler-Harris and Paul Lauter put the matter most succinctly: “Though leftist ideology in the 1930s recognized the ‘special oppression’ of women and formally espoused sexual equality, in practice, the Left tended to subordinate problems of gender to the overwhelming tasks of organizing the working class and fighting fascism” (ix).

In *To Make My Bread*, these conflicting goals play themselves out through the figure of the proletarian androgyne. In a world in which proletarian women such as Bonnie McClure seek sexual liberation though class liberation, they often find themselves being cast as either pseudo-men or as one-dimensional figures, the Proletarian Mother. In choosing the first option, Bonnie runs the risk of having gendered concerns such as motherhood dismissed, but in the second, she runs the risk of being elevated to myth or symbol—just as women in Ransom’s writing so often were—which leaves her writhing and ineffectual upon her proletarian pedestal. For men in the novel such as John McClure, androgyny means weakness, not gender equality. Ultimately, the novel shows that androgyny, as it has played itself out in radical discourse of the 1930s, signals not state-sanctioned gender equality, but rather male weakness or female effacement.

If the novel, as I have suggested, is conflicted in its aim to portray a strong feminist-proletarian agenda, the woman who created that novel was equally so. Grace Lumpkin came to radicalism from a bourgeois southern background, and after living out
most of the 1920s and ‘30s as a leftist partisan, she returned to that bourgeois lifestyle and denounced her past affiliation with radicalism. Born in Milledgeville, Georgia, in the early 1890s, she moved with her family to Columbia, South Carolina, around the turn of the century. There the young woman, along with her sister, the famed sociologist Kathrine Du Pre Lumpkin, was raised on the myths of the Confederacy, myths that were no doubt reinforced by her Civil War veteran father and her rearing in high-church Episcopalianism (Sowinska ix).

After the family fell on hard times and was forced to move to the rural outskirts of Columbia, Lumpkin became more sensitive to the economic plight of the country folk, both black and white. Seizing upon an opportunity in 1925 to move to New York and work for the Quaker-sponsored journal *The World Tomorrow*, she became increasingly attracted to the CPUSA. By 1928 she reached new personal heights in radicalism by becoming a writer for the leading communist journal of the day, *The New Masses*. There she met some of the Left’s most prominent voices, including literary editors Granville Hicks and Mike Gold, as well as Josephine Herbst, John Dos Passos, and Sherwood Anderson. In 1929, on the eve of the stock market crash, a group of workers led a walkout at the Loray Textile Mill in Gastonia, North Carolina. The CPUSA sent organizers there to lend support. By the time the strike was over, the Gastonia police chief had been killed, and in retaliation, so had one mill worker: Ella May Wiggins, the strikers’ unofficial “balladeer.” The Gastonia strike served as the historical basis for *To Make My Bread*, which was published in 1932 while the nation was sinking deeper and deeper into economic decline.21 It was met with relative warmth among critics on the

20. Lumpkin, Myra Page, Sherwood Anderson, and Fielding Burke, along with Mary Heaton Vorse and William Rollins, based novels on the Gastonia, North Carolina mill strikes. The first of the Gastonia novels
Left, even garnering the Maxim Gorky Prize for best socialist novel. By 1936, the novel's ending was adapted to the stage and appeared on Broadway for the better part of a year (Sowinska xv).

Yet by the mid-1930s Lumpkin had already started to turn away from communism. In Suzanne Sowinska's opinion, much of this turning away occurred as a result of her relationship with Michael Intrator, a brash radical who was at continual odds with the CPUSA's top ranks (xv-xviii). Though Lumpkin had never officially joined the communist party, she was a strong believer in its tenets and organization. Yet her relationship with Intrator became so intense that it started to drive a wedge between her and many of the party regulars who despised her lover. Sometime in the late 1930s she became pregnant with Intrator's child, and upon his pressuring, she had an abortion. By the time the 1940s came around, she had joined the anti-communist Moral Re-Armament movement, which sought to achieve social justice through devotion to traditional Christian tenets. By 1953, Lumpkin's anti-communism led her to testify before the Senate Sub-Committee on Government Operations, in which she stated, among other things, that the CPUSA threatened to ruin her literary career if she did not toe the official party line. Soon after, she returned to Columbia for good, still as anti-communist as ever, and a committed member of the congregation of her youth, the patrician Trinity Episcopal Church.

As the major events of Lumpkin's life suggest, the enthusiasm that led her to communism during the 1920s and ‘30s was the same enthusiasm that led her away for

*was Vorse's *Strike! *(1930)*, followed in 1932 by Lumpkin's *To Make My Bread*, Page's *Gathering Storm*, Burke's *Call Home the Heart*, and Anderson’s *Beyond Desire*. Rollins's *The Shadow Before* came out two years later in 1934.*
good by the 1940s. Of course if Sowinska's speculation is correct, Lumpkin's abrupt sea change by the late 1930s had very much to do with her gender. Trying to write according to the demands of a male-dominated communist party and having an abortion at the behest of her strong-willed radical lover are both clear signs that for many women on the left, gender equality was more theory than reality. And in her return to the Episcopalian church, she encountered an organization not unlike the Communist Party: both were very patriarchal, and both outlined a rigorous set of beliefs that required immense commitment and fervor.

*To Make My Bread* portrays the same agon between patriarchy and feminism, tradition and revolution. At the heart of the novel lies a deeper rumination on the androgyne as a mediating symbolic factor in these struggles. The novel's form has been an object of speculation for quite some time, and I plan to show how even the form makes an implicit commentary on the androgyne's mediating influence. In 1934, Granville Hicks, literary editor for *The New Masses*, attempted to codify the various types of proletarian novels he had seen spring up through the 1920s and '30s. He saw in many of these novels an attempt to give voice to a collective body, be it workers, strikers, or even the more abstract body politic. In response, Hicks formulated the parameters of the “collective” and “complex” novels. The collective novel, he maintained, “has no individual hero; some group of persons occupies in it a position analogous to that of the hero in conventional fiction.” The complex novel was a little more loose in its configuration: It “has no individual hero, no one central character; but at the same time the various characters do not compose a collective entity; they may or may not have a
factual relationship, but they do not have the psychological makeup that would entitle them to be called a group" (Robbins 27, 29).

Though Barbara Foley has argued that *To Make My Bread* resembles more of the proletarian bildungsroman than anything else (321 *et passim*), I would argue that the novel more precisely resembles a combination of the complex and the collective forms. For instance, *To Make My Bread* shows evidence of the complex novel insofar as it lacks a detectable main character. Rather, the novel chronicles the movement of three generations of the McClure family from the Appalachian hinterlands to the mill towns. While the mother Emma remains central to this movement, other family members maintain equal importance, even when their actions go against the family's overarching trajectory from the country to the city. For example, sons Basil and Kirk vie for the same woman, Minnie Hawkins, and then leave the family; whereas Basil moves away to educate himself according to bourgeois standards, Kirk winds up dead after confronting Minnie's other lover.

Yet the collective form still has resonance in the novel through young Bonnie and John. Very close in age, they are often invoked by the narrator as a single unit. Only later in the novel do they take center stage, and as the reader understands, the only way they can do so is by breaking out of their androgynous collectivity and embracing a world of polarized gender norms. In this sense, then, the novel works within a collective framework only to have that framework undercut. In so doing, *To Make My Bread* undermines the assumption that a workers' paradise leads to a leveling of the sexes along with a leveling of the classes.
The novel opens in gender disarray as the widowed Emma gives birth to John while other members of the family look on in horror. Knowing that there is no other woman there to serve as midwife, Emma implores her father, Grandpap Kirkland, to serve in the midwife's place. Concerned about her father's inadequacy in this role, "she wished in herself there was a woman who would know what to do without telling. And she wished the men were where they belonged when a woman was in the travail—somewhere out on the mountains or at a neighbor's" (12). This early scene serves several different purposes. First, it goes to show the McClure family's removal from modernity. As G. J. Barker-Benfield has noted, midwives had already begun to be replaced by certified male medical professionals by the time the novel begins in the year 1900. More importantly, the scene adumbrates the significant struggles the McClure family will have over the course of the novel to come to terms with different gender expectations in a world very much in economic and social transition.

The family's slow movement from the country to the city to find work is one that Marx in Capital has called "primitive accumulation." Recently, Michael Perelman has defined primitive accumulation more polemically as the "brutal" process whereby capitalists and capitalist-friendly governments restrict "the viability of traditional occupations in the countryside to coerce the people to work for wages" (3). For Marx, interestingly enough, primitive accumulation serves as a kind of fall from innocence: "This primitive accumulation plays approximately the same role in political economy as original sin does in theology. [. . . ] From this original sin dates the poverty of the great majority who, despite all their labor, have up to now nothing to sell but themselves, and

the wealth of the few that increases constantly, although they have long ceased to work" (873). Here Marx might be guilty of a certain mythical nostalgia for a pre-capitalist, agrarian world, and it would seem that acolytes such as Lumpkin have followed in his footsteps.

Such nostalgia, I suspect, has prompted Walter Rideout among others to suggest that *To Make My Bread* comes as much from the pastoral, "local color" tradition as it does from literary radicalism (174). John and Bonnie's androgynous pairing during early childhood hearkens back to an idyllic prelapsarian Eden, a mythical time when neither Adam nor Eve truly understood the implications of sexual distinction. (As Ballanche and d'Olivet had theorized, they recognized their nakedness only after the Fall.) The novel constantly points out Bonnie and John's collective actions. For example, during most of their Appalachian childhood they sleep together in the same bed. A little later on, they act in tandem when attempting to sacrifice a puppy after hearing a sermon about Abraham and Isaac. This distance from the towns and factories early in the novel provides John and Bonnie a safe playground, a place where they can be "boy-girls," as Emma once calls Bonnie, with relative impunity (24).

But as John grows and becomes more aware of the world about him, he longs to become a man. As he gets older he begins to resent his oldest brother Basil, whose name, religious conservatism, and teetotaling self-righteousness make him, in John's eyes, feminine. "Sometimes, big and strong as he was, Basil seemed almost like a woman. And John felt contemptuous of women and of any kind of womanish ways in man. He was tired of Bonnie hanging around" (76). Here John realizes just how much he has been
paired with Bonnie throughout his youth, yet not even Basil can be a proper masculine role model.

In regarding Basil as “womanish” because he aspires to educated bourgeois civility, John reflects certain assumptions about class and gender that many on the Left held during the first decades of the twentieth century. As the CPUSA and its adjoining proletcult movements picked up steam through the 1920s and ‘30s, the codification of a classed gender or a gendered class had begun to solidify. In her astute study of proletarian feminism, *Labor and Desire*, Paula Rabinowitz observes that “[t]he prevailing verbal and visual [proletarian] imagery reveled in an excessively masculine and virile proletariat poised to struggle against the effeminate and decadent bourgeoisie. Thus the potentially revolutionary struggles of the working class were recontained within the framework of the eternal battle between the sexes found in domestic fiction” (8). This masculine posturing was part and parcel of *New Masses* editor Michael Gold’s directive to fellow proletarian writers to “go left” as a new type of masculine manifest destiny. Gold’s description of the ideal proletarian writer was “a wild youth of about twenty-two, the son of working-class parents, who himself works in lumber camps, coal mines, and steel mills” (“Go Left” 188). Much of his masculine imagery was forged in contradistinction to writers such as playwright Thornton Wilder, whose bourgeois modernism Gold typified as “a daydream of homosexual figures in graceful gowns moving archaically among the lilies” (“Wilder” 266). Attesting to this insecurity among the working class, young John McClure most resents his brother Basil after seeing him in a stuffy nightgown.

Though Rabinowitz makes a very cogent argument about the gendering of the proletarian and bourgeois classes, she often fails to interrogate the larger insecurities
embedded within the proletarian writer's sissification of the bourgeoisie. Whereas within their own circles the proletarian writer might be able to operate on the assumption that the working class is masculine, the larger world outside the Left operated on a different set of assumptions that coded the capitalist managerial class as masculine. Gender historian Michael Kimmel has charted the developing notions of manhood in America, and as he argues forcefully, the telos or ideal of American manhood in the twentieth century has consistently been the capitalistic "self-made man." The problem with the proletarian man—a problem Rabinowitz leaves largely unexplored—is that to middle-class white men he seems culturally emasculated or feminized. As Kimmel explains:

The optimism ushered in by the Roaring Twenties was ushered out by the Great Depression and widespread unemployment in the 1930s. Never before had American men experienced such a massive system-wide shock to their ability to prove manhood by providing for their families. [. . . .] For most men the Depression was emasculating both at work and at home. Unemployed men lost status with their wives and children and saw themselves as impotent patriarchs. (192, 199)

The working class, because of its lack of access to capital, has historically been delimited by its lack. Contrary depictions by Gold or other men on the Left suggest an overcompensation reflex resulting in part from anger at the structure of the capitalist system.

John's personal trajectory from Bonnie's androgynous other half to manly labor leader therefore reveals as much as it hides—or rather, it reveals a good deal through what it hides. At the heart of John's aspiration for full manhood is an insecurity about his

22. In fairness to Rabinowitz, she does periodically notice the deeper insecurity of the male proletarian writer who feels emasculated by his lack of power within the capitalist economic apparatus, though she fails to fully develop this issue. See her chapter "Labor and Desire: A Gendered History of Literary Radicalism" in Labor and Desire.
lower-class status. Earlier I mentioned that Marx envisioned primitive accumulation as a fall from innocence, and that Lumpkin has envisioned this fall as one into a recognition of sexual differentiation. Once John moves to the mill town with his mother, Grandpap, and Bonnie, his past androgyny shames him. When he goes to school with the sons of the mill managers, the boys taunt John with degrading and emasculating names. “In the morning when the line [to class] was formed they satisfied themselves with such names as ‘Baby,’ and mimicked a baby crying. But after school they thought up other and more hateful words. ‘Baby,’ they called, ‘you're losing your diaper,’ or: ‘Doctor is it a boy or a girl.” (211).

The bourgeois boys’ recognition of John's ostensible gender indeterminacy reflects as much on his poverty as it does on his physical appearance or his reticence to brawl with them. From this point in the novel, he must work to shed the androgynous collectivity he had with Bonnie at an earlier age. The manhood he claims by the end of the novel along with his ascension to the top ranks of labor leaders suggest a deeper conservatism within the male radical tradition: despite the gender-egalitarian rhetoric of the American Left, the access to capital—whether by the proletarian or the bourgeoisie—was still the dominant benchmark of manhood. Under these conditions, how could proletarian feminism ever exist when it insisted on playing by the bourgeoisie's rules and definitions? Given Grace Lumpkin's movement toward political conservatism that came later in the 1930s, one may not be too surprised to find that she ended up reinscribing many of the same traditional gendered assumptions that guided both male proletarian writers and the patriarchal bourgeoisie.
On the other hand, Bonnie's trajectory from John's other-sexed complementary half to full-fledged woman is one that moves her more and more out of circles of power. Her struggles to make her voice heard magnify a larger difficulty on the part of women who participated in a communist community that continually subsumed issues of gender under those of class. In such a scenario, gender equality would only come after the fruition of a classless society. As I have suggested earlier, these are problems Lumpkin ran up against personally, first when being coerced to abort her child at the insistence of her lover-colleague, Michael Intrator, and second as a woman who was coerced into spouting the party line well after she had started to question its values. The issue for Bonnie—and certainly for Lumpkin throughout most of the 1930s—was how to be a communist and a woman. She risked being treated by male radical colleagues as a pseudo-man. Under these assumptions, contraception, pregnancy, birth, child rearing, and child care existed only as marginal issues. The narrative recognizes these “ancillary” issues, for not only does the novel begin with a birth, but the action reaches a dramatic urgency as both agrarian and factory women are unable to care for the children they have.

These crises have prompted Sylvia Jenkins Cook to remark that birth control activist Margaret Sanger, not Karl Marx, might be the true hero in radical women's fiction (99).

It appears, then, that Lumpkin's novel takes issue not just with American radicalism's sexism, but also with a larger discourse that has historically conflated radicalism with androgyny at the expense of female subjectivities. For John, androgyny has obviously meant weakness, as if having any feminine qualities exposes his poverty and social disenfranchisement. For Bonnie, the discourse of androgynous radicalism
assumes too much—or perhaps too little—because female subjectivity, as diverse as it is, can never be given full voice whenever women are expected to abide by the same class concerns as proletarian men.

Just as Labor assumes the pseudo-maleness of its constituents, so does Capital. Not long after Bonnie is old enough to start working in the textile factory alongside men, she nearly loses her job for reasons specific to her sex. Asking for small increments of time off from work each day to nurse her baby, her foreman, Mr. Burnett rebuffs her with his explanation that “If I let you, [. . .] I’d have to let every other woman who's got a young baby do the same” (283). Obviously, being a woman wage earner proves to be a general liability. Having no other option, she leaves her child with her mother Emma knowing full well that Emma's debilitating pellagra may prevent a consistent feeding schedule.

At this point in the novel, just when Bonnie's womanhood becomes most pronounced, John achieves his manhood. Having grown into his body and started working at the mill full-time, John finds approval from the most unlikely of sources, his brother Basil. “All along I've thought of you as a child, for that was what you were—then,” Basil says. “Now—now I feel that you are a man” (290). His praise proves deeply ironic. After all, John had once imagined Basil to be a prudish and effeminate poseur flopping around in a nightgown. Though his morality remains suspect, Basil has achieved the middle-class lifestyle and respectability he always desired. His marriage to a bourgeois woman has made him the most financially successful member of the McClure family. Basil's success must mean something to John, who has been forced from an early age to understand lower-class status as feminine. Despite the American Left's mockery of bourgeois virility, the bourgeois Basil mediates the bestowal of manhood in this
proletarian novel. Bonnie's and John's respective ascensions to womanhood and manhood, which occur within only a few pages of each other, also provide an ironic commentary on Granville Hicks's collective novel form. The two who together make up the collective hero experience their different gender identifications at roughly the same time in the novel; for John, manhood is liberating and empowering, but for Bonnie, womanhood is tantamount to punishment.

At all times in Bonnie's life, the bourgeois gaze figures as the final arbiter of her gender identification. If on the one hand the factory managers expect her to efface all her womanly or motherly distinctions in order to keep her job, the middle-class women of the town criticize her just as harshly for being too manly. By this time in the novel, Bonnie has become increasingly involved with the formation of the textile union. In one scene, she and her aunt Ora encounter the busybody Mrs. Fayon, who informs them of the scuttlebutt around town: “People are talking about you two. It's getting around that you want to be like men. And people say the Bible says the women look to their houses and let men tend to the world. It's what I do" (336). These suspicions seems especially absurd in light of the many children Bonnie has had and the lengths she goes to just to keep them all fed. Ironically, her specific activity with the union is to serve, like the real-life Ella May Wiggins before her, as the workers' unofficial balladeer, and the song that garners the most attention from the fellow workers is “The Mill Mother's Ballad," which laments the difficult choices women proletarians must make between their jobs and their children.

The difficulty Grace Lumpkin encounters in *To Make My Bread*, then, is how to reconcile womanhood with production without losing sight of her potential reproductive capabilities and desires. Paula Rabinowitz observes that such difficulties were certainly
widespread among women proletarian writers. Yet, the American Left's answer to such a dilemma was indeed a curious one. As the radical movement moved from its Third Period around the mid-1930s to the Popular Front era, a certain image of the proletarian woman gained greater iconographic prominence. The Popular Front was characterized, in part, by the Left's willingness to accommodate other, more mainstream, movements of American liberalism in an effort to fight Italian, German, and Spanish fascism. The image of woman that came out of this phase was the "Great Mother," a figure who could nurture the nascent (male) working masses and who could symbolically protect them from the totalitarian militancy of fascist regimes abroad (Rabinowitz 61). This section's epigraph by H. H. Lewis, deceptively titled "The Man from Moscow," shows the pervasiveness of the Great Mother even before the advent of the Popular Front. Published in 1932, the same year as To Make My Bread, Lewis's poem ironically suggests that the "big-boned working-woman" has no existence beyond the many rugged men who constitute her.

As the Great Mother gained greater artistic recognition among leftists, complications riddled her arrival—many of which Lumpkin anticipates in the novel. As I explore these complications, it is worth recalling the various dilemmas John Crowe Ransom faced in maintaining—or more accurately establishing—an organic community in his beloved South. At the heart of Ransom's religious and social commentary was a fear of the New Women and her ability to abstract the body politic into fragments that threatened racial or sectional cohesion. Even as he moved away from social criticism and into aesthetics, he never abandoned the mythical image of the "Proud Lady," one of his central metaphors for cultural, artistic, and spiritual unity.
Though *To Make My Bread* shows no outward sign of anti-feminist backsliding, a closer look bears out a different story, one in which the patriarchal agrarian vision voiced so adamantly by the male contributors of *I'll Take My Stand* is the darker underbelly of the socialist-feminist vision that Lumpkin ostensibly trumpets. This dark underbelly amplifies the paradigm that "Myth is already enlightenment, and enlightenment reverts to mythology" (xviii) voiced a decade later in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* by Max Horkheimer and Ransom's *Kenyon Review* symposium partner Theodor Adorno. "Just as myths already entail enlightenment," they explain further, "with every step enlightenment entangles itself more deeply in mythology. Receiving all its subject matter from myths, in order to destroy them, it falls as judge under the spell of myth" (8). Two episodes in the novel, which convey the striking similarities between conservative southern nationalism and proletarian feminism, bear out this dialectic. These similarities suggest that although Lumpkin was still years away from her complete rejection of Marxist historical narratives (a component of "enlightenment"), she held strong affinities for images of cultural purity and southern mythology.

In her assessment of the novel, Sylvia Jenkins Cook rightly argues that Proletarian writers such as Lumpkin were "subject to quite contradictory analyses of their motives—one side saying that adherence to Marxist formulas made their works false and un-American, the other arguing that their loyalty to what are often considered peculiarly American norms [. . .] far outweighed their intention to further Marxism" (92). This latter sentiment is a larger part of the local color tradition that, as Walter Rideout and others have noticed, manifests itself so markedly in the novel. The local color takes a volkish, rightward turn in chapter 28 when Grandpap and young John attend the annual
Confederate veterans' reunion in the state capital. There they listen to a young teenage girl—similar in age to Bonnie, John notes to himself—who praises the veterans for their past bravery and heroism. More than anything, this young girl functions as a reflection of the pre-industrial southern patriarchy, of those men who “saved the South from the black menace” (193). This reflective quality becomes most apparent when the men “leaned forward toward her, and seemed to swallow what she said with their open mouths,” suggesting that her words are really their own (188).

Far from antagonistic, this girl proves to be little more than another manifestation of the Proud Lady or Patricia Yaeger's miniature southern mistress, who parrots southern patriarchal rhetoric at the expense of female subjectivity. For example, the girl exclaims, “There are those who say you thought you were right. I say you know you were right, and through the long years the truth shall be written and remain where it belongs” (188). Apparently this young woman had personal resonance for Lumpkin, who as a child publicly paid homage to the Lost Cause each Memorial Day. Lumpkin has recalled that on that day, “dressed in white with a red ribbon sash about my middle, I would stand beside the iron fence that surrounds the grave of General Wade Hampton in the Trinity Churchyard [in Columbia] and with Daughters of the Confederacy and others looking on, recite ‘Furl That Banner,’ written by Father Ryan, poet-priest of the Confederacy” (qtd. in Sowinska ix). Though chapter 28 has some stark parallels to Lumpkin's childhood, it has nothing to do with advancing the plot. Rather, it serves to complicate the novel's larger themes of gender and racial cohesion, which John and Bonnie at later ages will try to forge as they lead the strikers at the textile mill. Clearly, the role of southern womanhood serves as a symbol of volkish purity and racial consolidation under a Confederate banner,
much like the women-as-art-objects that Ransom envisioned in one form or another throughout his literary career. As such, the young Confederate girl stands outside historical processes, never actively participating in it. Though still young at this point in the novel, John finds himself an initiate in a prolonged rite of passage that begins with this scene and reaches its culmination later when Basil acknowledges his manhood. In listening to past tales of male heroism in battle, and with his veteran grandfather there at his side, John becomes unwittingly indoctrinated into a fraternity that uses women to symbolize the timelessness of male empowerment and racial cohesion.

It would seem that Bonnie functions in the narrative as this young woman's foil by exposing southern nationalism as little more than a strain of American cultural fascism. Yet her death in the closing pages of the novel makes one wonder if, after all, she is really any different from the girl at the Confederate reunion. Like the miniature girl, who symbolizes a pre-industrial mythic South, Bonnie symbolizes the South through her fecundity and her married surname “Calhoun.” Moreover, both women struggle to find or maintain their own voices. While leading a chorus of workers through one of her songs, Bonnie is shot, which suggests that women labor leaders or the songs they sing cannot withstand a stronger, more determined patriarchy. Moreover, just as the Confederate girl's symbolic value eclipses her personal identity, Bonnie's death makes her into a one-dimensional symbol of labor—the Great Mother. As such, she is merely invoked by other men as they live on to lead the working masses. For example, when delivering the eulogy for his sister, John mentions her only as a rhetorical springboard for a longer tirade about the evils of private capital and the dawning of a new day when workers around the world will unite. In mentioning how “our women”(381) get beaten down by mill workers, John
evidently addresses his rallying cry really only to the men in the crowd. This eulogy signals the complete dissolution of John and Bonnie's androgynous collectivity in almost every sense but one. Recall in “The Woman as Poet” John Crowe Ransom suggests that poetic creation channels masculine rationality and feminine sentiment in order to produce a balanced and complex aesthetic object. Though New Critic Ransom would no doubt criticize John's (and Lumpkin's) attempt to use Bonnie as art object for political, worldly means, John clearly subscribes to the same principles that would later inform the New Criticism in the late 1930s and early '40s.

When the Reverend Simpkins shows up at Bonnie's grave site to offer a prayer, his words reflect the real conundrum women face in joining any revolution that subordinates gender to class: “Death is not an aristocratic event,” he proclaims. “It comes to poor and rich alike, in the mansion and in the hovel. This mill woman is not different from the man who owns the mill, for he, too, must come to the same end” (382). Though certainly not meaning to, the preacher points out the larger dilemma that the novel cannot adequately resolve: the only way a woman such as Bonnie can be equal to the “man who owns the mill" is not through socialism or labor struggle, but through death. Like socialism, death achieves democracy by transcending national, racial, and gender boundaries, but it does so only through the ability to silence and destroy, from “turning self into symbol” (Jones 4). Ironically, though death may transcend national boundaries, it delivers Bonnie back to her native soil, an action unmistakably nationalistic, considering the link between Bonnie's fecundity and the South throughout the novel. Reverend Simpkins's words on death's democratizing power belie John's “hope and belief” in a proletarian order in which women will count equally with men (384).
In later life, after she made her “return to God,” Grace Lumpkin remarked that she decided to break with the American Left on one of her trips South with the CPUSA to organize black sharecroppers. While there she had apparently visited the graveyard where many family members were buried. She then visited a local courthouse that housed many of her family member's wills. Under the weight of all this history and tradition, she felt Communism to be an abomination that mocked traditional American values. Apparently from that point on, she never regarded radicalism with the same earnestness again (Sowinska xxi).

Southern Agrarianism had already envisioned the world that Lumpkin ultimately sought—a world steeped in centuries of history and ritual. Those looking for Lumpkin's conservatism can find subtle indications of it in *To Make My Bread*. Written at the height of her radical fervor, the novel undoubtedly trumpets the future triumph of American communism while also relying heavily on traditional tropes and gender roles to sound that trumpet. To represent the androgynous body politic, the collective or complex novel would find itself in a dilemma that Vandyke Jennings in Gilman's *Herland* found himself in: how to depict a utopian world without falling back on the traditionalism that made any utopia so very hard to attain in the first place.
CHAPTER 5
ARTICLES AS PART OF THESIS OR DISSERTATION RACE, GENDER, AND
DEMOCRATIC SPACE IN W. E. B. DU BOIS AND MARITA BONNER

We are training not isolated men but a living group of men,—nay, a group within a
group. And the final product of our training must be neither a psychologist nor a 
brickmason, but a man.

—W. E. B. Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk

5.1 The Androgynous Roots of Black American Citizenship

The various reasons that would prompt Du Bois and other black men of authority
such as Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, and Marcus Garvey to emphasize
manhood have long been a salient subject of concern in academic circles. Theorists and
critics ranging from Frantz Fanon to Michelle Wallace to bell hooks to Hazel Carby have
in one form or another discussed the effects of colonialism and slavery on black
masculinity. Hooks accurately assesses the historical situation, arguing that “[a]lthough
the gendered politics of slavery denied black men the freedom to act as ‘men’ within the
definition set by white norms, this notion of manhood did become a standard used to
measure black male progress” (90). Of course emancipation and the passage of the
“Reconstruction” constitutional amendments did little to bestow that manhood on black
men in any practical and far-reaching terms. Instead, as sociologists Richard Majors and
Janet Mancini Billson suggest, African American men are often “manqué,” or unmanned,
in a society that has long established whiteness as a precondition for manliness (31).

Yet the term manqué, along with “emasculated,” “unmanly,” “or feminized,” that
these critics both black and white use in describing the historical situation of black men is
sometimes imprecise. While “androgy nous” is a term rarely ever used, it actually has more historical precedent as a frame for white perceptions of black men than most critics have currently acknowledged. This precedent, in fact, has had strong and long-lasting implications for both black men and women. As I have mentioned in chapter one, the antebellum reformist spirit trumpeted in large degree by transcendentalists held great hope for spiritual androgy ny as the means by which individual members of the American nation-state could achieve greater gender and social equality. The reformist spirit, caught up as it was in abolition by the 1840s and ’50s, also saw blackness as fitting within their larger androgynous scheme of the body politic. Black men in particular had already become equated with femininity, due in part to women reformers who had made the claim, albeit problematic, that white women and slaves were similarly oppressed. Margaret Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* makes just this case: “As the friend of the negro assumes that one man cannot by right, hold another in bondage, so should the friend of woman assume that man cannot, by right, lay even well-meant restrictions on woman. If the negro be a soul, if the woman be a soul, appareled in flesh, to one Master only are they accountable (20). Though the passage fails to recognize that black women suffered under slavery just as much as their male counterparts—a failure that was unfortunately all too common in abolitionist rhetoric—it relies on similar transcendentalist tenets voiced ten years later by Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* that individual consciousness—male and female, black and white—was fluid and interpenetrating.

As I have mentioned briefly in chapter two, the model of masculinity adopted by many northeastern reformers and abolitionists was based, as Cynthia Griffin Wolff, puts
it, “on cooperation and harmonious communal living rather than subjugation and domination” (601-02). The figure most representative of this model was Christ himself, who “united all virtues, both male and female, in androgynous harmony” (602). These are the values and traits Harriet Beecher Stowe endowed in the eponymous hero of her 1852 sentimental novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which was perhaps the best-selling piece of American fiction in the nineteenth century. Unlike other critics such as Elizabeth Ammons who see any femininity in Tom as sapping his masculinity (158), Wolff asserts that Tom is “a thoroughly masculine protagonist who exhibits feminine virtues” (598).¹ Despite their differences, both critics point to the fact that in the eyes of most readers in 1850s America, Tom's gendering would contrast sharply with the dominant model of masculinity, which in the tense decade before the Civil War was increasingly regarded as “belligerent [and] combative” (Wolff 600).

Like Wolff, Laurie Crumpacker believes that Stowe “proposes an androgynous individual and a transformed society which provides the male or female individual with both a public and private role” (78). For Crumpacker, not only does Tom embody certain feminine sentimental virtues alongside his masculine ones, but Cassie, Chloe, and Eliza are all “strong and effective” women who defy the cult of true womanhood's “cardinal virtues” of passivity and submission (79). The lesson to be learned from this novel, a sympathetic antebellum reader might surmise, was that the body politic, though increasingly severed by the issue of slavery, could be healed if men and women became

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¹ Ammons argues that Stowe feminizes (instead of androgynizes) Tom “not because she is unable to make him assertively masculine, but because she does not wish to do so” (158). In Wolff's assessment, Ammons's position erroneously implies that “Tom's manliness had been compromised, his aggressive masculinity relinquished for the more feminine values of sentiment. [. . . .] However (I would argue), Stowe herself probably would not have seen such a characterization as 'feminizing'; instead, she would have seen it as the depiction of an alternate and preferable form of 'masculinity'” (598, 615; italics in original).
more androgynous in their expressions of civic participation, religion, and human freedom.

But as is the case so often in the trajectory I have outlined in this study, postbellum developments in evolutionary and racial theory refigured androgyny into a form of degeneration and pathology. By the late 1800s, as Nancy Leys Stepan and Siobhan B. Somerville explain, evolutionary science had formulated a “recapitulation” theory in which evolutionary trajectories from primitivism to civilization were used to classify race and sex. Using the civilized white man as the telos of this trajectory, scientists as early as the 1860s claimed that [white] women’s low brain weights and deficient brain structures were analogous to those of lower races, and their inferior intellectualities explained on this basis. Woman, it was observed, shared with Negroes a narrow, childish, and delicate skull, so different from the more robust and rounded heads characteristic of males of “superior” races. Similarly, women of higher races tended to have slightly protruding jaws of lower races. Women and lower races were called innately impulsive, emotional, imitative rather than original, and incapable of the abstract reasoning found in white men. (Stepan 39-40)²

These evolutionary studies gave ironic credence to Fuller’s earlier argument that blacks and white women had much in common. Yet whereas Fuller argued on transcendental grounds that these similarities should serve to liberate both from the legal and conventional confines of Victorian America, evolutionary apologists often used “empirical” evidence of such similarities to justify both populations’ exclusion from the quotidian workings of the body politic, despite the Fourteenth Amendment’s civic enfranchisement of blacks.

². Also see Somerville’s analysis of the recapitulation theory in chapter one of Queering the Color Line, entitled “Scientific Racism and the Invention of the Homosexual Body.”
Under this scientific rationale, a black man's supposed hyper-masculinity evinced his “femininity” insofar as Victorian gender roles encoded masculinity as rationality and self-restraint. “Civilization' positioned African American men as the antithesis of both the white man and civilization itself. As such, black men embodied whatever was most unmanly and uncivilized, including a complete absence of sexual self-control. The horrors of the unfettered “Negro rapist” demonstrated to American society what could happen if civilized manliness lost its cultural power” (Bederman 49). With this in mind, the widespread notion of black men's ostensible lust for white women could mobilize further disenfranchisement of black communities while also safeguarding white men from the fear that they were somehow comparatively undersexed. Buttressed by “science,” white society held the epistemological and linguistic terms under which true manhood was bestowed.

The scientific confluences of race and gender also held deeper implications for black women. In the late 1860s, for example, W. H. Flowers and James Murie's inquiries into comparative anatomy obscured the physiological differences between black men and women based on certain bodily features found in some African Bushwomen. Among the features the two anatomists examined was an overdeveloped labia minora, which they labeled somewhat pejoratively as an “appendage” (208). For Flower and Murie, Somerville argues, the enlarged labia minora “fluttered between genders, at one moment masculine, at the next moment exaggeratedly feminine. [. . .] [I]n their characterizations, sexual ambiguity delineated the boundaries of race” (27). These observations fed into later assumptions of biologists Patrick Geddes and J. Arthur Thomson, who argued in The Evolution of Sex (1889) that so-called “primitive” human beings, especially black
women and lesbians, were less sexually differentiated than white heterosexual women: “[H]ermaphroditism is primitive,” they claimed. “[T]he unisexual state is a subsequent differentiation. The present cases of normal hermaphroditism imply either persistence or revision” (80). Indeed, atavistic androgyne figured significantly into white perceptions of blacks. Whereas hyper-sexuality in black men often showed signs of femininity, hyper-sexuality in black women revealed their recidivistic masculinity.\(^3\)

Giving further “credence” to these perceptions, sexology made much of black women's reportedly larger-than-average clitorises (Somerville 27). As we shall see in later pages, this myth of the oversexed black woman resonated well into the 1920s and beyond, for as G. J. Barker-Benfield has shown, Victorian notions of sexuality assumed that men naturally had strong sexual appetites, while women were naturally frigid (112-17, 275)\(^4\). Thus black women were more “masculine” insofar as they contained the sex drives usually attributed to men.

The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago helped to solidify all these varying androgynous notions. Placed prominently along the fair's Midway Plaisance stood the “authentic” Dahoman village exhibit. According to the *New York Times*, the “distinction [was] not obvious” between the “Dahomey gentleman” and his female

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3. In 1793, for example, the Jamaican planter and politician Bryan Edward explained blacks' libidoes as such: “The Negroes in the West Indies, both men and women, would consider it to be the great exertion of tyranny, and the most cruel of all hardships, to be compelled to confine themselves to a single connection with the other sex. Their passion is mere animal desire, implanted by the great Author of all things for the preservation of the species (qtd. in Bordo 248). Also see Trudier Harris’s introduction and later relevant chapters on black women's sexuality in *Saints, Sinners, Saviors: Strong Black Women in African American Literature* (2001). Harris explains that the image of the desexed mammy who “looked more like huge slabs of excessively dark ham” was a reaction to the perception of that black woman as a “hot mama” (3, 2).

4. In fact, women’s frigidity was understood to be so immutable that nineteenth-century doctors sometimes recommended “ethereal copulation” so that wives, whose tightly constricted vaginas supposedly forbade penetration, could become pregnant. Essentially, doctors would administer ether to wives so that their husbands could copulate with them without the wives' cognizance of penetration.
counterparts. “There are several dozen of them of assorted sexes, as one gradually makes out” (qtd. in Bederman 36). If black men and women were unable to overcome their so-called androgynous primitivism, the article's logic seems to ensue, how can they participate in a civic system that privileged the separation of spheres?

These were among the racial and gender misrepresentations W. E. B. Du Bois attempted to address when he began his career as a historian and sociologist in the years immediately following the Chicago World's Fair. This chapter argues that the troublesome legacy of androgyny blacks inherited over the course of the nineteenth century weighed heavily on Du Bois's mind as he attempted to formulate his theories of race, gender, and national belonging for the twentieth century. Understandably, his project was fraught with contradictions: though he strove to provide a definition of black manhood that rejected white epistemological notions of black androgyny, he was also careful not to reject unilaterally the “white” epistemological and cultural assumptions that had comprised much of his own education and identity. The solution was to combine black manhood and nativism into a type of mystical post-Herderian nationalism that made manhood, not blood, the very basis of the black folk identity. For Du Bois, such a mystical configuration could explain how certain black men—the “group within a group” indicated in the epigraph—could move from the southern fatherland to the city without falling prey to the blighted life of the inner cities, which he encoded as dangerously feminine.

As the Harlem Renaissance gained momentum in the 1920s, however, artists portrayed black urbanites in ways that both affirmed and questioned the bifurcated system Du Bois had laid out. Marita Bonner, one of the most prolific short story writers
of the Renaissance and post-Renaissance period, asks her readers to focus attention on those androgynously constructed black masses of the inner city. These racially and sexually indeterminate characters not only deconstruct the Du Boisian system upon which black manhood was based, but they also establish the inner city as the true testing ground of twentieth-century democratic experimentation.

5.2 The Souls of Black Volk: W. E. B. Du Bois's Curious Urban Chauvinism

In an October 1912 editorial of Crisis, the official publication of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, editor W. E. B. Du Bois remarked on the need of African American men and women to produce a new generation of educated and committed race leaders, which he famously called the “Talented Tenth”:

“[H]onest colored men and women” must not “bring aimless rafts of children into the world, but as many as, with reasonable sacrifice, we can train to largest manhood” (“Editorial” 287). One of the most curious features in this passage is the implicit narrative of descent in which adult men and women presumably give birth only to male children. Despite the race leader's personal, and at times very vocal, support of women's rights, his editorial nonetheless ignores the possibility that female children might come of these unions; as a result, the wife, by virtue of her gender, becomes marginalized almost to the point of non-existence.

In Du Bois's configuration, males beget males who beget males. Noting this elision of women in The Souls of Black Folk specifically, Hazel Carby remarks:

The map of intellectual mentors [Du Bois] draws for us is a map of male production and reproduction that traces in its form, but displaces through its content, biological and sexual reproduction. It is reproduction without women, and is a final closure to Du Bois's claim to be “flesh of the flesh and bone of the bone,” for in the usurpation of the birth of woman from Adam's rib, the figure of the intellectual and race leader is born of and engendered by other males (25-6).
Carby's reading is informed by Benedict Anderson's notion of the imagined community, arguing that Du Bois "imagines black people as a race in ways that are conceptually analogous to imagining them as a nation" (27). Given the genealogy the race leader had formulated in *Souls* and in the 1912 editorial in *Crisis*, Carby is justified in wondering if in the imagined black nation women exist—either in theory or in the flesh. Are "woman" and "folk" contradictory terms?

This first portion of the chapter explores just this question by focusing on how Du Bois specifically used the Herderian *Volk* concept to create an ideological trajectory that linked his much-cherished rural black folk unproblematically to modern city life. A sociologist by training, Du Bois was all too aware of the troubles blacks encountered when immigrating from the rural South to the urban industrial North. As his 1899 sociological study of urban black life, *The Philadelphia Negro*, makes plain, the industrial city offered little for black men looking to improve themselves. In the years following the Civil War, "untrained and poorly educated" black immigrants swarmed "suddenly into the new strange life of [Philadelphia] to mingle with 25, 000 of their race already there," Du Bois glumly remarks (45). Once there, black men became enmeshed in what Kevin K. Gaines has called the "urban pathology" of not only crime and poverty, but also matriarchal structures that undercut their ability to achieve political and social ascendancy. Yet Du Bois had to confront a certain paradox: certainly the turn-of-the-century city was inhospitable to black men from the rural South, but without the artistic and intellectual cultivation that the city offered, how would they ever "train to largest manhood" and achieve their place within the ranks of the Talented Tenth? What does it

take to move from the impoverished rural South—which Du Bois chauvinistically calls the “common Fatherland” (Souls 47)—to the heights of middle class civility without first passing through the fire of the blighted inner city?

The answer was predicated on Du Bois's implicit bifurcation of black men into what I will call the black Volk and the black masses. Like the romantic Herder, Du Bois believed in transcendental qualities that serve as the building block of the Volk. Yet Du Bois does not use linguistic, tribal, or racial purity as its quintessential determinant. For someone as racially mixed as he was, doing so would mean excluding himself from the top ranks of his own classification system. Instead, untainted manhood became the mystical, “primordial” element that figured most prominently in his black nationalist system. Because Du Bois had constructed his intellectual genealogy to exclude women, as Carby has already shown, he was free to concentrate on the more pressing distinction between those men destined to be part of the Talented Tenth and those destined for the lower ranks of black life. Whereas the manly Volk innately possessed the spiritual and mental strength needed to move into the city and cultivate themselves, the black masses consisted of men whose insufficient manliness made them unable to resist the economically and socially feminizing influences of the industrial city. That Du Bois would often set up the black masses as the black Volk's foil attests to the strength of the public image of the black androgyne that had developed over the better part of the past century—an image he invoked rather liberally whenever it suited his uplift agenda.

In his writings, Du Bois was as partial to grand, dramatic gestures as was his contemporary Frank Norris. As with Norris, many of these gestures were imbued with an epic, nationalist fervor. What gave rise to such nationalism? One must look to Du Bois's
early manhood. A native of Great Barrington, Massachusetts, he first went south in 1885 at the age of seventeen as a student of Nashville's Fisk University. During his summers as an undergraduate, he taught school to the children of farmers even further south in the “Black Belt” of rural Georgia. These experiences among the black peasantry served as the foundation for *The Souls of Black Folk*, which he wrote at the turn of the century while on the faculty at Atlanta University.

As Bernard W. Bell and Sandra Adell have suggested, the “folk” in Du Bois's title was politically charged. Adell attributes such politicization to the two years he spent in Germany at the University of Berlin under the guidance of sociologist Max Weber, the economist Rudolf Virchow, and especially the historian Heinrich von Treitschke, whose nationalism, according to David Levering Lewis, was borne out by his “volcanic bigotry” (W. E. B. Du Bois 136). At the time Du Bois was there in the early 1890s, the university was in the middle of a “Hegelian revival” and certainly under the nationalist von Treitschke, he would have been exposed to the German romantic tradition of which not only Hegel, but also Herder and Fichte, were a part (Adell 12, 22-3). Coupled with the experience among the black peasantry of the South, the introduction to German romantic nationalism left an indelible mark upon the budding black intellectual.

Arnold Rampersad has likewise noted that Du Bois was greatly influenced by “the transcendental power of folk culture” as voiced by Herder in particular (xii). This might explain the black intellectual’s penchant for speaking of peasant communities as emanating from a local, primordial soil. In *Souls*, for example, he explains, “Like all primitive folk, the slave stood near to Nature's heart” (210). Further, as Adell argues, “Du Bois reiterates Herder, whose writings on the German folksong (Volkslieder) not only
influenced the internationalistic trend of the German folklore movement of the nineteenth century but also contributed to the building of a national German literature. Indeed, the title of Du Bois's text itself, *The Souls of Black Folk*, re-marks and reiterates the two concepts—soul and folk—(Volk) that are central [. . .] to Herder's aesthetics" (22-3). While the romantic thinker was indeed opposed to the mixing of different ethnic communities, "it was not blood but language which Herder regarded as the essential criterion of a Volk" (Barnard 70). Herder's focus on language and not biology as the source of folkish purity helps us to see Du Bois in a different light, for just as Herder focused on language instead of race or blood as the building block of a politically fragmented German people, Du Bois is similarly disinclined to use racial purity as his nationalist staple for a disenfranchised and racially "impure" black populace.

Du Bois's masculinist-nationalist fervor carries over into "Of the Wings of Atalanta," the fifth chapter of *Souls of Black Folk*. Here he compares the newly-industrialized city Atlanta, the capital of the "New South," to the Greek mythological maiden Atalanta, who claimed she would marry the man who could outrun her. Knowing that the only trait greater than Atalanta's celerity was her insatiable greed, the clever Hippomenes agreed to race her, yet having first placed three golden apples along the trail to slow her pace. When Atalanta reached out for the third apple along the trail, Hippomenes lurched forward and caught her in an all-consuming embrace. "If Atlanta be not named for Atalanta," Du Bois remarks in typical grandiose style, "she ought to have been" (65).

The moral of the story is that black men should not, like Atalanta, be seduced by the promise of wealth. These men, who constitute the black masses, are not only
enveloped by the female city, but in their lack of self-control and greed, they become half female themselves. In fact, Du Bois's penchant for coding the city as female had its genesis in *The Philadelphia Negro*. In it, the author is astounded by “the growing excess of women” in the city, which he deems “abnormal” (65). Kevin K. Gaines has taken a particular interest in the scapegoating of women that goes on in the book, noting that they unfairly bear the brunt of the blame for everything from the lack of good paying jobs for black men (170), to the disintegration of the family unit (175), to the prostitution that “threatened reproductive norms that privileged patriarchy” (Gaines 169, 177).

Women's desire for gold and their libidos were closely linked in the nineteenth-century social imaginary (Dijkstra 366), and the site of these associations was the metropolis, which itself became increasingly depicted as a woman, "a demonic femme fatale whose seductive cruelty exemplifies the delights and horrors of urban life" (Felski 75). Black men who resemble the lusty Atalanta in their ambition for gold make up the ninety percent left out of the Talented Tenth. Drawing on these familiar assumptions about the prominence of feminine consumption, Du Bois portrays them as too concerned with the acquisition of goods to realize that they must first labor for them in ways that compromise their manhood.

For Du Bois, true “manhood” is measured by certain men's inherent aptitude to pursue Goodness, Beauty, and Truth. These three elements provide the basis for his own figuration of the mystical Herderian *Volksgeist*: In “Of the Wings of Atalanta,” he asks:

What if the Negro people be wooed from a strife for righteousness, from a love of knowing, to regard dollars as the be-all and end-all of life? [. . .] Whither, then, is the new-world quest of Goodness and Beauty and Truth gone glimmering? Must this, and the fair flower of Freedom which, despite the jeers of latter-day striplings, sprung from our father's blood, must that too degenerate into a dusty quest for gold,—into lawless lust with Hippomenes? (68).
Here Du Bois comes back to his organic metaphors, organically linking the abstractions of Goodness, Beauty, Truth, and Freedom to the blood of black forefathers. At the same time, he casts the lust for gold as a type of feminine, urban, and even homosexual degeneration.

Under these circumstances, it is possible to see that while Du Bois's wishes all black men to quest for Truth, Beauty, and Goodness, his system of uplift is largely predicated on making a bogey man of the black masses:

[H]ow foolish to ask what is the best education for one or seven or sixty million souls! Shall we teach them trades, or train them in liberal arts? Neither and both: teach the workers to work and the thinkers to think; make carpenters of carpenters, and philosophers of philosophers, and fops of fools. Nor can we pause here. We are training not isolated men but a living group of men,—nay a group within a group. And the final product must be neither a psychologist nor a brickmason, but a man. And to make man, we must have ideals broad and pure, and inspiring ends of living,—not sordid money-getting, not apples of gold. (72)

In one moment Du Bois suggests that only intellectuals in pursuit of Goodness, Beauty, and Truth are Volkish men, while in another breath he suggests that the psychologist as well as the brickmason are both men. In this instance, I argue, even though the passage speaks of a "group within a group," when it comes to the differences between the brickmason and the psychologist, Du Bois is now making a further distinction among the Volk. The passage nonetheless reveals a temporal progression of uplift fraught with contingencies: those in full command of their manhood such as the educated psychologist must do everything in their power to uplift other males whose aptitude for Goodness, Beauty, and Truth is not inborn. While Du Bois therefore plans to deploy the Talented Tenth to uplift the black masses, he cannot fully assuage his fear that the latter's ambition for material goods might turn them into little more than dandified,
Wildean “fops” who resemble the minstrel character Zip Coon more than they do respectable men.  

Moreover, Du Bois fears the black masses might too easily fall into the trap set for them by Booker T. Washington, who, Hazel Carby points out, often comes across in *Souls* as the embodiment of black male effeminacy or “sexual compromise” (38). In Du Bois’s account Washington’s 1895 “Atlanta Compromise” speech lays the groundwork for this effeminacy by suggesting that the Tuskegee founder’s doctrines of accommodation and industrial training are “bound to sap the manhood of any race” (*Souls* 45). As chief accommodator, Washington appears as the photographic negative of the nobly androgynous Uncle Tom: sycophant instead of kindhearted pacifist, a prostitute who sells himself for a simulacrum manhood based on material acquisition instead of a humble servant guided by Christian directives of love and compassion.

Yet if Du Bois himself is the embodiment of black manhood, certainly the city must play a role in his making, for without the liberal education a city provides through a university, those who hear the call of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness might never ascend to the Talented Tenth. In the closing pages of “Of the Wings of Atalanta” Du Bois even apotheosizes the universities of the South—both black and white institutions. His coda carries with it an implicit praise of the cities. He glorifies “Howard, at the heart of the Nation; Atlanta at Atlanta, whose ideal scholarship has been held above the temptation of numbers. Why not plant here, and perhaps elsewhere, plant deeply and for all time centres of learning and living [. . .]?” (71). Understood in this light, the city is the saving

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6. Unlike the countrified minstrel character Jim Crowe, Zip Coon was the manumitted or escaped slave who had moved North and considered himself the equal of genteel white urbanites. In his attempt to show breeding and gentility, he would speak using comic malapropisms.
grace that allows volkish manhood to reach its fruition, and even into the next decade of the twentieth century, Du Bois promoted “civilization” as the more productive rationale for race. In a 1911 editorial of Crisis for example, he remarked: “So far at least as intellectual and moral aptitude are concerned, we ought to speak of civilization where we now speak of races. [. . . .] Indeed, even the physical characteristics, excluding the skin color of a people, are to no small extent the direct result of the physical and social environment under which it is living” (“Races” 158). But of course, the pillar of civilization especially in the opening decades of the twentieth century, as Gail Bederman points out, is an unyielding belief in the perennial solidity of manliness.⁷

For Kwame Anthony Appiah, the above remarks from Crisis suggest just how uncomfortable Du Bois was in grounding “race” in immutable genetic or phenotypical terms. Though Appiah shows that Du Bois could “never completely” throw off the shackles of racial essentialism in his thinking (22, 33), he and other current-day scholars are correct to show that “race” or “ethnicity” had very elastic boundaries that suited Du Bois’s pragmatic political needs.⁸ Bernard R. Boxhill, for one, argues that Du Bois “was clear that race was not a classification given by nature or reality, but carved out by human beings to suit their purpose, which [. . .] was to find laws that could be used to enhance human progress” (58-9). The reasons why he would shy away from racial essentialism as

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⁷. Indeed, this premise is the thrust of Bederman’s Manliness and Civilization, claiming as well that “manliness” was socially constructed so as to exclude specifically black men.

⁸. In Dusk of Dawn Du Bois claims that what binds a race is not physicality, but a common heritage: “But the physical bond is least and the badge of color is relatively unimportant save as a badge; the real essence of this kinship; and this heritage binds together not simply the children of Africa, but extends through yellow Asia and into the South Seas. It is this unity that draws me to Africa” (117). In turn, Appiah concludes that Du Bois was never able to divorce his concept of race from phenotype: “What Du Bois shares with the nonwhite world is not insult but the badge of insult; and the badge, without insult, is the very skin and hair and bone which it is impossible to connect with a scientific definition of race.”
the building block of his *Volk* are clear enough. The product of African, Dutch, and French ancestry, Du Bois was in no position to promote racial purity. In fact, his dismissal of racial purity clearly set him apart from prominent intellectuals such as Marcus Garvey, whose Universal Negro Improvement Association took a more rigid stance on untainted black blood as a pillar of black nationalism (English 60). Implicitly using himself as exemplar, Du Bois declared unapologetically in an essay entitled “Miscegenation,” “In general, the achievement of American mulattoes has been outstanding” (100). Hence he simultaneously buys into and challenges white essentialist assumptions of racial purity and manhood; whereas he agrees with whites such as Theodore Roosevelt that the telos of good breeding is the creation of manhood, he suggests that the means to that telos is not contingent upon racial purity.\(^9\)

Instead, as his musings on the Talented Tenth suggest, not all men—black or white—are inherently suited for the highest ranks of manhood, based as it is on the ability to cultivate Goodness, Beauty, and Truth. Daylanne K. English suggests that Du Bois’s emphasis on the need for intraracial breeding among black elites stemmed from his deeper anxiety about the state of black manhood (44); such preoccupation, English contends, made Du Bois more of a eugenics advocate than his racist contemporary T. S. Eliot (66-7). In English's deft analysis, Du Bois's eugenicist sympathies were evidenced by his unrelenting public advocacy of an intraracial breeding scheme in which members

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9. Du Bois later recalled: “I can never forget that morning in the class of the great Heinrich von Treitschke in Berlin. [...] Clothed in black, big, bushy-haired, peering sharply at the class, his words rushed out in a flood: ‘Mulattoes,’ he thundered, ‘are inferior.’ I almost felt his eyes boring into me, although probably he had not noticed me. ‘Sie fühlen sich niedriger!’ ‘Their actions show it,’ he asserted. What contradiction could there be to that authoritative dictum?” (*Dusk of Dawn* 98-9).

10. For Theodore Roosevelt's anxieties about race and manliness, see chapter five of Bederman's *Manliness and Civilization*. 
of the Talented Tenth reproduced at a greater rate than that of poor and impoverished blacks in blighted urban areas. But if manhood is the true rationale for the Volk, as I have argued, then the lines between black and white folk are relatively inconsequential. No doubt the kinship Du Bois sometimes felt with certain whites must certainly have shocked his fellow race men. Gaines and Adell have astutely pointed out Du Bois’s pastoral nostalgia. In *Souls of Black Folk*, for example, he hearkens back to a set of images shockingly similar to those contained in the plantation myth. Just as the (stereo)typical white southerner had mourned the loss of a manly agrarian ideal, so, too, does Du Bois: “Atlanta does not lead the South to dream of material prosperity as the touchstone of all success; already the fatal might of this idea is beginning to spread; it is replacing the finer type of Southerner with vulgar money-getters; it is burying the sweeter beauties of Southern life beneath pretence [sic] and ostentation” (*Souls* 66). These remarks—complete with the ultra-dignified British spelling of “pretense”—amount to a utopian vision of brotherhood that separates the pan-racial, genteel southern Volk from the black and white masses (the “vulgar”) who, not in possession of full manhood themselves, find themselves engulfed by Atalanta/Atlanta.

Ironically, as the 1920s got underway, Du Bois’s figuration of manly black folk met its greatest resistance not in the black masses, but in the much-coveted New Negro of the 1920s. In fact, one of the founders of the New Negro movement was Howard University professor Alain Locke, the dandified homosexual editor of the groundbreaking anthology *The New Negro* (1925), who once described himself as “a philosophical mid-wife to a

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11. Gaines remarks that the *Souls*’s “rural nostalgia was rooted in a notion of an organic society, jolted out of its functional order by urbanization” (176). See also chapter one of Sandra Adell’s *Double Consciousness/Double Bind*. 
generation of younger Negro poets, writers, and artists" (qtd. in Davis 52). Though Du Bois was glad to see the greater visibility of black artists in the ‘20s, he held significant reservations about any movement that prioritized art at the expense of educational and social mobility for African Americans: “If Mr. Locke's thesis [in The New Negro] is insisted on too much,” he once cautioned, “it is going to turn the Negro renaissance into decadence” (qtd. in Watson 29).

The warning was indeed prescient, as the disastrous marriage of Du Bois's daughter Yolande to Countée Cullen in April 1928 would attest. Riveted by the prospects of marrying his daughter off to the Renaissance's unofficial poet laureate, the Crisis editor dedicated a significant part of the June 1928 issue to the wedding, which read as Yolande's “wedding album, and thus her father's family album” (English 55). Du Bois was shocked and dismayed to find that only a year into the wedding the couple had decided to divorce for reasons of “abnormality [. . .] as far as other men were concerned,” as Yolande described her husband's sexuality in a letter to her father dated May 23, 1929 (qtd in Stokes 69). Having first taken Cullen's side when news of their troubles spread shortly after the wedding, Du Bois must have been dumbfounded by this information, in no small part because he saw the young poet as the shining example of urban New Negro manhood, a surrogate son to replace the son, Burghardt, taken by diphtheria just before his second birthday, as Mason Stokes has suggested (72). More and more, it became evident that the Harlem Renaissance had a broader agenda in mind than cultivating manly black men according to a standard Du Bois had set.

When The Souls of Black Folk sought to expose “fops for fools,” it seemed to have in mind black men who moved to the city for material gain, not those such as Locke and
Cullen who benefitted from the city's educational and cultural resources. When not linked
directly to a university, the city evoked significant dread in Du Bois, a man who was
often loath to embrace the many sexual and gendered indeterminacies harbored in places
such as Harlem. As Marita Bonner's fiction of the same period would insist, however, the
city not only harbored these indeterminacies, it often celebrated them as the very bedrock
of democracy.

5.3 New Negroes, New Androgynes: Democracy in Marita Bonner's Urban Spaces

In the last decade something beyond the watch and guard of statistics has happened
in the life of the American Negro and [the sociologist, the philanthropist, and the
race leader] who have traditionally presided over the Negro problem have a
changeling in their laps. [. . . .] For the younger generation is vibrant with a new
psychology; the new spirit is awake in the masses, and under the very eyes of the of
the professional observers is transforming what has been a perennial problem into
the progressive phases of contemporary Negro life.

—Alain Locke, *The New Negro* (1925)

And the beauty of it pained him so:
The smile so double sexed and slow:
Faint fair breasts and male torso—Male into female seemed to flow,—

—Richard Bruce Nugent, “Narcissus” (1933)

It is only fitting that Alain Locke, the self-proclaimed “mid-wife” of the Harlem
Renaissance, should introduce the New Negro as a “changeling [. . . .] vibrant with a new
psychology” in the eponymous essay that begins his 1925 edited anthology *The New
Negro* (3). But as the second epigraph by Richard Bruce Nugent suggests, the term
“changeling” takes on a whole new realm of meaning if one considers the frequent gender
bending, masquerading, and sexual experimentation that went on in Harlem during the
1920s and ‘30s. Whereas Cheryl Wall, Maria Balshaw, and Judith Musser have shown
that Locke's New Negro “takes on a masculine cast” (Wall 4), other artists of the Harlem
Renaissance clearly pushed the bounds of gender identification as much and as often as they reinforced them.12

From the visual arts, to poetry, to music, androgyny was as much in vogue as Harlem itself. Countée Cullen's volumes of poetry, for instance, contained illustrations of delicately lithe figures whose sexual distinctions were as varied and vague as their racial distinctions. In music, jazz singer Gladys Bentley was a regular at Carl Van Vechten's drag balls. Her marriage to a woman in a civil ceremony, her "openly lesbian lifestyle, and scandalously parodic song lyrics," made her one of Harlem's most colorful personalities (Garber 120). And Nugent, a self-proclaimed devotee of Wildean decadence, was also fascinated by various visual and literary representations of androgyny, as his epigraph certainly attests. For example, his 1930 Salome illustrations feature "the perversity of Salome's forbidden desire" by emphasizing "the lack of gender distinction between [her] and John the Baptist" (McBreen 26). Moreover, in his prose poem "Smoke, Lillies and Jade," published in the short-lived journal Fire!! (1926), the protagonist Alex visualizes a love object who morphs back and forth between his fiancée Melva and a delicate man he calls Beauty.13 While the Baltimore Sun lambasted Fire!! as "Effeminate Tommyrot" (qtd. in Ikonné 110), the more diplomatic, but certainly disapproving, Du Bois simply limited his most enthusiastic commentary to the journal's illustrations, done by painter Aaron Douglas (Lewis, When Harlem 197).

12. See also Maria Balshaw's "New Negroes, New Women: The Gender Politics of the Harlem Renaissance" and Musser's "African American Women and Education: Marita Bonner's Response to the 'Talented Tenth.'"

13. David Levering Lewis describes this particular scene as "a montage of pederasty and androgyny" (When Harlem 197). Steven Watson remarks that Fire!! "celebrated jazz, paganism, blues, androgyny, unassimilated black beauty, free-form verse, homosexuality—precisely the 'uncivilized' features of Harlem proletarian culture that the Talented Tenth propagandists preferred to ignore" (91).
It was not just the avant garde, self-proclaimed “younger Negro artists" of the Harlem Renaissance such as the homosexual Nugent who flirted with androgyny in his writings.\textsuperscript{14} Marita Bonner, the subject of the second half of this chapter, also used androgyny to explore deeper themes of black urban life in the 1920s and ‘30s. Born into Boston's black bourgeoisie, Bonner was educated at Radcliffe. And while she spent her life outside of Harlem (living in Boston, Chicago, and Washington, D. C. instead), she was one of the Renaissance's most prolific writers, having published in both the Du Bois-edited \textit{Crisis} and the Urban League's \textit{Opportunity}. In fact, throughout the 1920s and ‘30s, she was the latter journal's most frequently published woman writer (Musser 74). Her connection to Harlem and the New Negro Renaissance is further strengthened by her frequent attendance at Georgia Douglas Johnson's famous “S" Street salon in Washington, where she could have met any number of the movement's most famous participants, from Nugent, Cullen, and Locke to Langston Hughes, Angelina Weld Grimké, and W. E. B. Du Bois himself.\textsuperscript{15}

As Judith Musser and Maria Balshaw in particular have noted, Bonner's works show that New Negrohood or the Talented Tenth are not male-only domains. For these two critics, Bonner both accommodates and resists the ideology of the New Negro and the Talented Tenth. While on the one hand she herself was a well educated bourgeois urban artist, she also “writes almost exclusively of working-class communities, and does

\textsuperscript{14} According to its cover, \textit{Fire!!} was “devoted to younger Negro artists," who would include the contributors to the first and only issue: Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Countee Cullen, Wallace Thurman (the main editor), Aaron Douglas, Richard Bruce Nugent, Gwendolyn Bennet, Arna Bontemps, Helene Johnson, Waring Cuney, Lewis Alexander, Edward Silvera.

\textsuperscript{15} For a useful biographical sketch, see Lorraine Elena Roses and Ruth Elizabeth Randolph's 1985 article “Marita Bonner: In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens." The essay provides a detailed account of an author who has commanded little attention in comparison to her Harlem Renaissance contemporaries.
so without recourse to the folk idiom so familiar in the work of the better-known Zora Neale Hurston" (Balshaw 128). Here again she goes with and against the grain simultaneously. Though she seems to take Du Bois's cue that the urban black masses are indeed ambiguously gendered, she also treats that ambiguity as a potential force of personal and communal liberation.

Being a woman in an artistic movement often restricted to male cultural and intellectual advancement, Bonner used her outsider status as a springboard for a different understanding, if not dismantling, of Du Bois's black nationalist sentiment. Seeing the cosmopolitan as a subset within the national space actually throws the privileged status of "the national" into disarray. The gender and racial fluidity that serves so often as her fiction's thematic basis deconstructs the national/global binary that undergirds modern nationalism.

Bonner's writing career began in 1925 with a short essay she published in Crisis entitled "On Being Young—a Woman—and Colored," which is written in the second person and employs the modernist conventions of fragmented sentences, ellipses, and dashes. Past critics have noted the essay's theoretical opposition to Du Bois, but they have largely overlooked the ways in which Bonner directly challenges or modifies the volkish fervor that fuels his paradigms of manhood. At its most basic the essay is a denunciation of racial and gender stereotypes that perpetuate psychological and material deprivation. Her status as a young educated black woman already makes her a walking

16. Arguing that Bonner's stories are representative of social realism, Judith Musser argues that the author takes a sociological approach in her fiction, articulating the absence of black fathers (77) and decrying the naive simplicity of "the Harlem Renaissance's call for self-improvement through education" (73). Similarly, Maria Balshaw states, "More critically than any of her New Negro contemporaries Bonner demonstrates the anomalies of the logic of uplift, that the education and refinement deemed requisite for the New Negro are precisely the qualities likely to alienate them from the masses whose lot they are supposed to improve" (133). Bonner's critique of uplift, I speculate, is a critique specifically aimed at Du Bois.
contradiction in the eyes of Jim Crow America. As the essay explains, her class and
gender have left her painfully alienated from any sense of racial solidarity:

All your life you have heard of the debt you owe “Your People” because you have
managed to have the things they have not largely had. [. . . ] If you have never
lived among your own, you feel prodigal. Some warm untouched current flows
through them—through you—and drags you out into the deep waters of a new sea of
foibles and mannerisms; of a peculiar psychology and prejudices. And one day you
find yourself entangled—enmeshed—pinioned in the seaweed of a Black Ghetto. (3)

In his assessment of the Harlem Renaissance, Houston A. Baker argues that black
modernism is based in large part on a “mastery of [white literary] form and a deformation
of [white political] mastery” (99). On this basis, Baker readily admits Du Bois into his
canon of black modernists. In the above lines, however, Bonner exhibits her own mastery
of form and deformation of mastery, using Du Bois's black Volk as that upon which she
signifies. Certainly a significant demographic change had occurred between the
publications of Souls in 1903 and “On Being Colored” in 1925, namely the Great
Migration, in which over 300,000 blacks left the South for northern and midwestern cities
between 1910 and 1920 alone (Model 138). Yet Bonner's “immersion narrative” reflects
more than a simple demographic shift; with the mysticism surrounding her phrase
“untouched current” she seems to reference the Herderian Volksgeist that Du Bois alludes
to in Souls of Black Folk. Strangely enough, however, that spirit takes her not to the
South, but to Du Bois's bête noir, the inner city.17

Bonner's juxtaposition of the black Volksgeist with the inner city provides an
implicit attack on Du Bois's penchant for romanticization, suggesting that the “untouched

17. I am borrowing the term “immersion narrative” from Robert B. Stepto's From Behind the Veil: A Study
of Afro-American Narrative (1979). The term describes a narrative recounting a black individual's
acquaintance or re-acquaintance with “authentic” black culture and folk. The immersion usually serves to
reverse a feeling of racial alienation or disfranchisement.
current" of blackness is more a product of an educated imagination than a reality based in the primordial soil. The *Volk*, she implies, is an inherently modern and urban construction, a version of the pastoral that, in William Empson's classic formulation, is neither by nor about the people it represents. In this sense, Jennifer Margart Wilks is correct to claim that the attitude of *noblesse oblige* Bonner's fellow bourgeois New Englander so ardently professed therefore appears absurd and "unteenable" (83).

Wilks further suggests that this essay provides the theoretical basis for Bonner's later works by positioning race "as a contested, conditional identity, one that is socially constructed and imposed rather than biologically fixed" (84). Yet Bonner does even more than that, for "On Being Young" makes similar claims about the socially negotiated space of gender. Attempting to find an "untouched current" between the black elite and the masses is absurd enough to turn educated black women away from urban uplift altogether, yet only to find that they suffer from the same debilitating confines as those packed so tightly in the ghetto. Bonner asks:

> Why [does the world] see a colored woman only as a gross collection of desires, all uncontrolled, reaching out for their Apollos and their Quasimodos with avid indiscrimination? Why unless you talk in staccato squawks—brittle as seashells—unless you "champ" gum—unless you cover two yards square when you laugh—unless your taste runs to violent colors—impossible perfumes and more impossible clothes—are you a feminine Caliban craving to pass for Ariel? (5)

Partly thought her haughty tone and literary allusions, Bonner decries white stereotypes that reduce black women to "uncontrolled" and indiscriminating desire. The stereotype automatically forecloses any possibility in the white imagination that an

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18. See William Empson's 1935 *Some Version of Pastoral*. In the discussion of proletarian literature Empson states: "In the wider sense of the term [proletarian literature] includes such folk-litterature as is by the people, for the people, and about the people. But most fairy stories and ballads, though 'by' and 'for,' are not 'about'; whereas pastoral though 'about' is not 'by or for.' (6)."
educated black women can exist in her own right, and not as an “empty imitation” of a white woman (“On Being Colored” 5). Bonner longs to transgress societal boundaries in order to live authentically as female, black, and middle-class; yet the only time white American culture sanctions these transgressions is when they conform to white notions of racial and sexual degeneration, as the reference to a female Caliban attests.

Understandably, Wilks wonders why Bonner chose to reference Caliban instead of his deceased mother Sycorax, “the paradigmatic woman of color in postcolonial readings of The Tempest” (87). Yet I argue that the reference to Prospero's dull-witted slave is altogether fitting, considering the series of androgynous stereotypes that have dogged blackness since at least the middle of the nineteenth century. In suggesting that the African American woman is a “feminine Caliban” with uncontrolled sexual “indiscrimination,” Bonner ruefully acknowledges the cultural force of the myth of the black seductress whose libido is on par with a man's.

Having run up against the claustrophobia of the ghetto and the mental confinement of gender and racial myths, the black woman wishes to live without boundaries: “You wish yourself back where you can lay your dollar down and sit in a dollar seat to hear voices, strings, reeds that have lifted the World out, up, beyond things that have bodies and walls” (4). Notably, the music she wishes to hear is classical, not jazz—attesting once again to Bonner's wish to transgress conventional class and race boundaries. Indeed, the wish bespeaks a need to experience the larger world without the punitive limitations of a black body that at once marks her as poor, hyper-sexual, or simply unimportant. Bonner resigns herself to waiting for a better day, invoking a final gender-transgressive image: “Like Buddha—who brown like I am—sat entirely at ease, entirely sure of himself;
motionless and knowing, a thousand years before the white man knew there was so very much difference between feet and hands. Motionless on the outside. But on the inside? / Silent. / Still. . . ‘Perhaps Buddha is a woman” (7). The essay cuts off with this image, suggesting that the mental and physical barriers separating men from women, whites from non-whites, and rich from poor, will surely dissipate over time.

In “Nothing New,” a short story published just a year later in Crisis, Bonner tests the plausibility of living beyond the limitations of gender and race. Specifically, the story disrupts the Du Boisian narrative of ascent by showing how gender indeterminacy dogs a bright young black man on his way from the rural South to the ranks of the Talented Tenth. At the same time it suggests that the black masses, along with other ethnic and racial masses, hold promise as the purveyors of democratic equality. The story takes place in Chicago in a fictional district called Frye Street that would serve as the setting for a great number of Bonner's later stories. Before the action begins, the narrative employs a metaphor that provides an ideological framework for understanding the neighborhood's gender and racial dynamics:

There was, once on a hillside, a muddy brook. A brook full of yellow muddy water that foamed and churned over a rock bed. Halfway down the hillside the water pooled in the clearest pool. All the people wondered how the muddy water cleared at that place. They did not know. They did not understand. They only went to the pool and drank. Sometimes they stooped over and looked into the water and saw themselves. (69)

To make these claims, Bonner has obviously revisited and revised certain themes she had introduced a year earlier in “On Being Young.” The image of the muddy water's distillation is a metaphor for the racially and ethnically diverse ghetto. “Frye Street flows nicely together. It is like muddy water. Like muddy water in a brook” (69).
Here Bonner takes the black *Volksgeist* to another level by first rejecting the racial purity so often embedded in volkishness, and second by acknowledging that the similarities in dwelling spaces and class status unite blacks with their German, Asian, French, and Italian neighbors. Ultimately, the muddy brook metaphor serves to subvert the binary upon which volkish purity and cohesion rests. For if in Herderian and post-Herderian circles race or ethnicity is the staple of the *Volk*, or if for Du Bois specifically, the mystical qualities of manhood are the staple, in Bonner, racial and gender diversity become the basis of human “purity.” In terms of the metaphor that opens “Nothing New,” the muddy brook gains purity only when it stops moving and settles in a pool where other muddy brooks have collected. This trajectory runs against the current, so to speak, of traditional narratives of national or tribal origins in which the individual “brooks” or *ethnies* are pure, whereas the “pools” or cities that collect them serve only as sites of contamination. Such sentiments were voiced in one form or another by many of the major nativist tomes of the 1920s, including Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World Supremacy* (1920) and Charles W. Gould's *America, A Family Matter* (1922).¹⁹

This is the “muddy” environment that the traditional-minded Reuben and Bessie Jackson find themselves in after having migrated from Georgia with their young son Denny. True to the masculinity Du Bois romantically imbues in his southern folk, Reuben worries that in this new place his sensitive son is not growing up to be a proper

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¹⁹. From Walter Benn Michaels's perspective, Gould exemplifies the type of nationalism to emanate out the 1920s in which the nation is regarded as a family, and family unity therefore structures racial inclusion and attitudes. Michaels states: “The significance of the family is that it was in terms of familial relations (as opposed, say, to economic relations or regional or even generational relations) that the new structures of identity were articulated” (*Our America* 7). As its very title suggests, *America, A Family Matter* conceives of the United States as a *Volk-kulturnation*. For example, Gould states that Americanness “must come to us with the mother’s milk, the baby's lisping questions, and grow with our nerves and thews and sinews until they become part and parcel of our very being” (163).
man. “With his oval clear brown face and his crinkled shining hair, Denny looked
too—well as Reuben thought no boy should look.” Denny's artistic temperament and
“slender little body” project a gender indeterminacy that clearly unsettles his father, who
remarks crossly one day, “Why don't you run and wrestle and race with the other boys?
You must be a girl. Boys play rough and fight!” (70). Reuben's mind is surely put at ease
in the next scene when Denny has his first fight. The reasons for and the consequences of
Denny's fight are truly ironic, given the young boy's apparent gender liminality. One day
while running along outside—as “young Frye Street, mixed as usual, raced with him”
(70)—he stops just beyond the neighborhood's boundary to pick a flower for a little girl.
Denny then encounters two white kids from outside the neighborhood who call him
“Sissy nigger” and threaten to hurt him if he does not return to his own side. This epithet,
Carol Allen argues, “acts as a salvo which helps to enforce […] de facto rather than legal
separation” (92). Of course the separation is as much gendered as it is racial. The slurs
typify Denny's inescapable double bind in which a gesture of conventional masculinity
(i.e., picking a flower for a little girl) is simultaneously, albeit unwittingly, a sign of his
femininity.

At this point in the story, it is unclear whether Denny has a romantic interest in the
little girl or if he simply does picks the flower as a friendly gesture—or if, given his
artistic temperament, he is more fascinated by the flower's appearance. Though the
reasons for picking the flower may not translate as “masculine” in the outside world, they
are still perfectly acceptable within the boundaries of Frye Street. Therefore young
Denny feels anxiety about “acting like a girl” only when people raised outside the
neighborhood, such as his father or the truculent white boys, insist that such behavior is
shameful. After all, Frye Street “flows nicely together” (69) as if it were a polymorphous mass riding high on its own “oceanic” exuberance. In Wilks’s opinion young Frye Street appears “as an allied front” and “Denny’s victory over the boy is not an individual matter, but a collective one” (110).

Whereas in Herland Charlotte Perkins Gilman envisions a utopian world where gender distinctions are reduced, or almost nearly reduced, to sex distinctions, and where any talk of androgyny is evidence of the linguistic imposition of the “outside” androcentric world, the language of gender and racial identity on Frye Street simply does not carry the negative stigma that it does beyond the neighborhood’s limits. Herland sought a way to escape the masculine confines of the Lacanian signifying order, while “Nothing New” merely seeks to show how malleable that order can be by enjoining readers to reverse their gaze and see Denny through the eyes of the fluid neighborhood, not through those of the white boys. In this sense, Bonner anticipates the poststructuralist thought of a later generation by suggesting that, at least within the boundaries of Frye Street, signifiers such as “Italian,” black,” or “girl” are slippery enough not to be necessarily fettered by self-defeating signs.

The consequences of transgressing gender and racial categories are even greater when Denny grows older and moves out of Frye Street to attend art school—despite his father’s Du Boisian passionate objections. Instead, Reuben feels Denny “ought to go somewhere and do some real man’s work. Ain’t nothin’ but women paddin’ up and down, worryin’ about paintin’” (73). Such criticism exemplifies the bind a precocious young

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20. Here I mean “oceanic” in the context Freud made most famous in the first chapter of Civilization and Its Discontents. He defines this the term as “a sensation of ‘eternity,’ a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded” (11).
black man feels in wishing to break his own path in life. On the one hand, his father simply voices the Du Boisian objection that art will sissify him the way it had evidently done to some of the Harlem Renaissance's leading male representatives. Yet on the other hand, if in the Du Boisan scheme Denny is finding his manhood through the pursuit of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness at art school, his own father—fresh from the southern fatherland that Du Bois also praises as manly—sees manhood as bestowed by manual labor found in the cities.

Having known only racial and gender liminality inside the ghetto, Denny is unaware of the repercussions involved in dating Pauline Hammond, a young white woman at the art school. The latter half of the story roughly mirrors the first half, though now Denny does not have the safety of the polyglot neighborhood or its multi-ethnic children to provide solidarity. Therefore when Allen Carter, a white art student who used to date Pauline, strikes Denny and Denny retaliates, the state, in the form of the the courts and adult correctional facilities, becomes the official arbiter of safety and morality, not the neighborhood that once "sang the song of triumph" when he beat the white boy (72). Unleashing the pent-up anger Denny had felt since the incident involving the flower years earlier, he kills Allen and subsequently receives a death sentence. “After that,” the narrative say in providing an abrupt ending to the story, “Frye Street unmixed itself. Flowed apart" (76).

While the story implicitly deconstructs the male/female binary that constitutes the basis of Du Bois's *Volk*, it also challenges the legitimacy of the narrative that outlines a black man's ascent into the ranks of the Talented Tenth. In his pursuit of Du Bois's elusive Beauty, Truth, and Goodness, Denny finds that the world beyond Frye Street does
not adhere to the same fluidity of gender and racial identity. Moreover, Denny's potential career as an artist highlights Du Bois's anxiety that the Talented Tenth might degenerate into a class of fops and aesthetes.

In a 1933 issue of *Opportunity* Bonner published “There Were Three,” the first vignette in the cycle “A Possible Triad on Black Notes.” Also set on Frye Street, the story suggests in its opening that racial and gender indeterminacies create the bedrock of democratic individualism. The foreword to the trilogy states:

*Now, walking along Frye Street, you sniff first the rusty tangy odor that comes from a river too near a city; walk aside so that Jewish babies will not trip you up; you pause to flatten your nose against discreet windows of Chinese merchants; marvel at the beauty and tragic old age in the faces of the young Italian women; puzzle whether the muscular blond people are Swedes or Danes or both; pronounce old consonant names in Greek characters on shops; wonder whether Russians are Jews, or Jews, Russians—and finally you will wonder how the Negroes there manage to look like all men of every other race and then have something left over for their own distinctive black-browns. There is only one Frye Street. It runs from the river to Grand Avenue where the El is. All the World is there. It runs from the safe solidity of honorable marriage to all of the amazing varieties of harlotry—from replicas of Old World living to the obscenities of latter decadence—from Heaven to Hell. All the World is there.* (102; italics in original)

Though written seven years later than “Nothing New,” “There Were Three” begins in a remarkably similar fashion by describing the co-minglings of Frye Street. In her deft analysis of Bonner's urban spaces, Carol Allen makes a key distinction between what she calls the local and the neighborhood: “[T]he local contains newly arrived migrants and immigrants within nuclear families that accept their roles as workers on the lowest rungs of the social ladder; on the other hand, the neighborhood represents all those practices and attitudes that resist this mechanization. What Bonner suggests is that the state directs black and immigrant citizens to certain areas, and out of these physical and psychological boundaries come the neighborhood's resisting strategies” (105-06).
Allen's formulation usefully calls attention to the tension between the state and its various regulated communities. But as the foreword suggests, the relationship between the state and community is even more complex because of a third term, “the World.” Just as Bonner deconstructs the pure/impure binary in “Nothing New” through her metaphor of the muddy brook, she likewise dismantles popular assumptions about the national and the global. Insofar as modern nationalism relies on knowing who one is by knowing who one is not, the privileging of the national disappears in Bonner's fiction when she insists that the national is not forged in contradistinction to the global, but rather that the global constitutes the nation-state. Indeed, her postulation provides the basis of a Staatnation, which the United States theoretically proclaims itself to be. If, as Frye Street shows, the neighborhood and “the World” are roughly synonymous, the national/global binary dissolves because the binary implies that the neighborhood is antithetical to the state, not a subset of it.

Although “the global" becomes the privileged term in the global/national binary, it proves to be only tentatively privileged. The foreword says as much about racial and ethnic indeterminacy as it does about revisions of nationalism. If the lines demarcating Jews from Russians, blacks from whites, or (as we shall see) men from women remain too blurry for clear demarcation, life exists in the interstices. Bonner's Frye Street inhabitants embody the “hybridity" that, as Homi K. Bhabha asserts, acknowledges a person's constantly shifting subject positions:

The move away from the singularities of “class" or “gender" as primary conceptual and organizational categories, has resulted in an awareness of the subject positions—of race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation—that inhabit any claim to identity in the modern world. What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or
processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These “in-between” spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. (1-2)

Here we see some differences between Bhabha's concept of "in-between spaces" and the androgyny espoused by Carolyn Heilbrun, which, as I have mentioned before, came under fire during second-wave feminism for its implicit advocacy of essentialism. Whereas Heilbrun attempts to find a harmonious balance between masculine and feminine traits in individual subjects that will eventually lead to a quasi-utopian world, Bhabha figures hybridity in a more poststructuralist fashion, using such abstract poles as “male” and “female” to enact their own deconstruction. It is obvious how Bhabha's postmodern theory complements Derridean and queer theories: because human experience and identity exist in “the overlap and displacement of domains of difference” (Bhabha 2), living within the interstices of national, racial, or gender labels such as “Greek,” “black,” “male,” or “female” are only transcendent signifieds to which no one subject can completely and purely adhere. In other words, one must gauge “true” identity according to one's “queerness,” or by the extent to which all subjects are always already alienated from these monolithic abstractions.

Moreover, as we shall see with regard to Lucille, the protagonist of “There Were Three,” racial and ethnic hybridity opens up larger questions of gender hybridity, especially for urban populations whose material and social circumstances put them at
odds with the bourgeois separation of spheres. Along with her two children Robbie and Lou, Lucille lives on Frye Street, making a living by prostituting herself to men outside the neighborhood. “She was fat, but most certainly shapely and she was a violet-eyed dazzling blonde. But something in the curve of her bosom, in the swell of her hips, in the red fullness of her lips, made you know that underneath this creamy flesh and golden waviness, there lay a black man—a black woman” (102-03). In ways that would abhor de Toqueville, Henry James, or John Crowe Ransom, Lucille literally embodies the hybridity and indeterminacy of which Bhabha speaks. Even more, she embodies everything that democracy theoretically attempts to embrace and represent within its purview: man and woman, black and white, rich and poor. The bounds of Lucille’s gender are fairly limitless; when asked by her children about the identity of their father(s), she simply explains, “You're all mine the both of you” (102), as if to suggest that she is both mother and father in more than just a figurative sense.

Bonner is careful not to idealize the family’s lifestyle, which, like Lucille herself, is a mixture of highs and lows: “There were silk sheets on the beds, there were toilet waters, perfumes and flashy clothes. But sometimes there was no dinner or no breakfast” (103). This view of Lucille's household in particular and Frye Street in general shows a much more complicated view than “Nothing New,” which runs the risk of romanticizing ghetto life. In this sense, the Frye Street of “There Were Three” provides a more accurate view of democratic possibilities.

Yet the neighborhood still provides the solidarity through fluidity that was evident in “Nothing New.” Fearing that her children might find out what she does after taking a taxi outside of the neighborhood, Lucille tells her children never to leave the house at
night. The neighborhood, in other words, protects the two children from the workings of an “outside” world that puts a premium on human exploitation and, as we shall see, violence. In her reading of Frye Street's solidarity, Wilks relies on Robin D. G. Kelley's concept of "congregation," which "enables black communitites to construct and enact a sense of solidarity, to fight with each other; to maintain and struggle over a collective memory of oppression and pleasure, degradation and dignity" (Kelley 51). Wilks expands this definition to include various races, ethnicities, and genders, stating that Frye Street's “shared economic, social, and geographical marginalization enables the members of these once separate groups to flow together around people, issues, or events as easily as they flow apart” (109). Therefore, “where Heaven and Hell coexist, Lucille's transgressive presence raises eyebrows but ultimately little else” (107).

The directive to stay within the confines of this fluid community is especially tempting to resist for her son Robbie, an enterprising young man whose “lithe slenderness [and] small features" amplify his androgynous kinship to Lucille (103). Robbie learns the hard way why he must not leave Frye Street, for in defying his mother and picking up a shift as a bellhop at a posh hotel downtown, he understands that the outside world adheres to stricter gender and racial codes. In responding to a call for service, Robbie takes a few drinks to a room only to find the man who has requested them is his mother's white john, and Lucille is there in his bed, passing for white. The scene hardens the boundaries of gender and race in Robbie's mind, for far from regarding Lucille as the parent who claims both motherly and fatherly rights over him, he now sees her as a person whose very livelihood is based on singular identities, as being only “white" and only female. At Robbie's shocked exclamation of “Mama!”, the john realizes the woman
he has solicited is not white, and in a rage he knocks Robbie out of an open window on the hotel's seventh floor. The story closes bleakly with an announcement of his death in the local papers, Lucille's internment in a whites-only mental asylum, and with no knowledge of Lou's whereabouts.

“Nothing New"and “There Were Three" amplify Klaus Theweleit's theory of the modern nation-state's regulation of bodies, gender roles, and spaces. His groundbreaking *Male Fantasies* (1977) analyses the Freikorps, the hyper-masculine, anti-communist, and proto-fascist mercenaries who emerged in Germany after the Central Powers' humiliating capitulation at Versailles in 1918. The Freikorps' anti-communism reflected a deep-seated hatred and fear of the loss of social, gender, and national boundaries. The figure that embodied this amorphousness was the “red nurse," whom the Freikorps often perceived as possessing a “vagina dentata" (201). Simultaneously castrating and penetrating, the red nurse is violently androgynous not only because of her multi-form genitalia, but also because of her phallic rifle, which she wields with the intent of long-range penetration (201). Most frightening for the Freikorpsmen is the growing multitude of red nurses, who, like members of Bonner's Frye Street, defy clear boundaries. The red nurses and their male cohorts constitute a “red flood" that threaten males' and states' psychic and/or physical boundaries at every turn: “The flood is abstract enough to allow processes of extreme diversity to be subsumed under its image. All they need have in common is transgression of boundaries. Whether the boundaries belong to a country, a body, decency or tradition, their transgression must unearth something that has been forbidden" (232-33).
As Bonner makes plain, the "outside" world resorts to violence when trying to contain the racial and gender fluidity otherwise tolerated on Frye Street. In such a case, the democratic nation-state contains the seeds of its own undoing by allowing citizens and institutions under certain circumstances to use democratic means for mobocratic ends. In fact, this is precisely Bonner's point in juxtaposing the neighborhood of Frye Street and all its vicissitudes with the "stable" urban world beyond its borders. The ghetto is not the problem in these stories; Frye Street has learned to live in the interstices of identity, so to speak, and accept racial and gender fluidity among its inhabitants. The true site of mobocratic governance is the "outside world"—the genteel art institutes, the pleasant whites-only picnic grounds, the posh downtown hotels—where the rule of law is supposed to reign supreme by ensuring a strict code of gender, sexual, racial, and social boundaries.

Bonner's reversal of the civil/mob binary suggests her sensitivity to the prevailing winds of world politics. In fact, in 1933, the same year she published "A Possible Triad on Black Notes," a new regime called the National Socialist German Workers' Party persuaded German president Paul von Hindenberg to appoint its leader, the eloquent and charismatic Adolf Hitler, to the post of chancellor. Not surprisingly, the Nazi Party was largely made up of former Freikorpsmen. For many political scientists and historians, the high tide of nationalism was the rise of the Third Reich under Hitler, the self-proclaimed Führer des Volkes. Ironically, the Nazi Party came to power by gaining a plurality of 230 seats in the Reichstag through none other than universal suffrage by a sovereign (albeit economically and politically beleaguered) German public.
With its radical racializing of earlier Herdian nationalist doctrine, Nazi Germany pursued a path leading to the wholesale extermination of those it saw as sexually and racially impure. These actions based on ideologies of violent containment would confirm Bonner's suspicions that the most “ordered” and “pure” in society could use democratic self-determination as a means for mobocracy, just as German citizens had done in 1932. In her fear of race-based democratic processes, she ironically holds something in common with her contemporary John Crowe Ransom. Whereas Ransom feared that democracy’s collapse under industrial capitalism would lead to a communist society caring little for the conventional distinctions between gender and race, Bonner suggests that democracy’s reliance on Darwinian individualism and libertarianism might push the country into a police state that would violently enforce those conventional distinctions. In giving literary dimensions the multi-ethnic, multi-racial, and gender fluid inner-city neighborhood, she not only turns Du Boisian assumptions of citizenship on their head, she also offers up a new site of authentic democratic experimentation. For Bonner, America had its own proto-fascist poisons circulating throughout the so-called “civilized” institutions of the body politic, and one cannot help but wonder if Denny, Lucille, and all their fellow hybrids in fiction and reality were her antidote. Ironically, the neighborhood might have proven to be the purest distillation of American democracy at a time when western nationalism was about to draw many nation-states into the bloodiest conflict the world had ever known.
EPILOGUE: FROM ROSIE THE RIVETER TO SECOND-WAVE FEMINISM AND BEYOND

The portrait of androgyny I have sketched in these previous pages is one, I hope, that elides monolithic ahistoricity. Indeed, as America moved from Reconstruction, to the Gilded Age, to the Progressive era, and finally into the “modernist” years between the world wars, writers and artists deployed androgyny to serve their varied and sometimes contradictory nationalist agendas. Still, there remained a few constants in this period, for whether writers embraced or repudiated androgyny, they did so in an attempt to find some sense of spiritual, personal, and national wholeness. Another thing was certain: amid the scientific, racial, and social discourses that evolved after the Civil War, the affirmative vision of spiritual androgyny often trumpeted in the antebellum years was too simplistic and ill-equipped to deal with the complexities of an evolving body politic.

Certainly no study of American androgyny from Reconstruction to World War II would be complete without mention of Rosie the Riveter, who came to public visibility in the 1940s during a larger era Eric Hobsbawm has called the “apogee of nationalism.”¹

The truculent nationalist fervor of Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, and Francisco Franco

¹ Hobsbawm locates the dates of this “apogee” as the interwar years and slightly after, from 1918-1950. He claims that during these years Europe most fervently entertained the notion that state borders could coincide with “ethnic” borders: “Essentially the continent became, for the first and last time in its history, a jigsaw puzzle of states defined, with rare exceptions, both as nation-states and as some kind of bourgeois parliamentary democracies. This state of affairs was extremely short lived” (131). The reasons for this ephemeral Wilsonian vision are obvious enough to Hobsbawm: “The logical implication of trying to create a continent neatly divided into coherent territorial states each inhabited by a separate ethnicity and linguistically homogenous population, was the mass expulsion or extermination of minorities. Such was and is the murderous reductio ad absurdum of nationalism in its territorial version, although this was not fully demonstrated until the 1940s” (133).
throughout the 1930s proved to be a clear harbinger of Europe's steady progression toward war. With Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939 and Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in late 1941, the United States and its British, French, and Soviet allies dug in for a long siege that resulted in a scorched European landscape and tens of millions dead.

In an effort to increase war production in the face of a military draft, the Roosevelt administration enjoined American women to enter the workforce. Over eighteen million women in one way or another answered the president's call. Far from abstractly symbolizing gender equality in America, these “Rosies” expanded the imaginative boundaries of muscular womanhood beyond Delacroix's androgynous Liberté or Frank Norris's muse whose “arm [is] as strong as a man's.” American women actually became, albeit with varying degrees of limitation, a part of American production, a part of the country's wartime call for action beyond merely reproducing little proto-soldiers or serving, in Yira Nuval-Davis words, as “the embodied possession of the victorious” (95).

Though today “Rosie the Riveter” connotes these women who donned steel-toed boots to perform “men's work” at the factory, myth clouds the reality. Of the eighteen million women employed during the war years, for example, twelve million already had some work experience, suggesting that middle-class housewives were not the only women to join war production (Frank et al 15-6). Much of the recruitment propaganda, in fact, targeted single women. Moreover, the clear majority of women did not work directly in heavy industry, as the popular images of the 1940s would suggest; rather, most found employment in traditional women's occupations, including clerical work, waiting tables, teaching, laundry, and nursing (Renov 39).
“Rosie” herself nominally originates with Norman Rockwell, who created her for the cover of the 1943 Memorial Day issue of *The Saturday Evening Post*. Throughout the war, as Maureen Honey has masterfully shown, the *Post* was a leading instrument of propaganda. In collaboration with the Office of War Information, the War Manpower Commission, and Women's Advisory Committee, it ran a series of ads and inspirational short stories that enjoined women to enter the workforce in order to keep “the boys at the front” equipped and ready for action.² The cover of the issue of the *Post* merely gave visual cohesion to a figure that had already been alive in the minds of many devoted readers. The flesh and blood Rose Hicker, a riveter employed at the Eastern Aircraft Company in Tarrytown, New York, gave further “life” to Rockwell’s illustration. Just two weeks after the Memorial Day *Post* issue hit the newsstands, Hicker and her partner gained fame across the country for driving a record number of rivets into a wing of a bomber (Warford 104-05).

But what does Rosie tell us about androgyny in America at the end of the modern era? By examining her in this epilogue I want to point out the ways the discourses of androgyny reached well beyond the first part of the century. In a keynote address to mark the founding of the Sophia Smith Collection of feminist archives at Smith College in 2002, Linda K. Kerber chronicled the “invisible antecedents of second-wave feminism.” In between the first wave, which culminated in America with the 1920 passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, and the second wave, which is traditionally marked by the 1963 publication of Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique*, there stood two figures whom

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² Honey’s *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* (1984) is a detailed discussion of the women's recruitment effort in two magazines, *The Saturday Evening Post* and *True Story*. The former was geared more toward a middle-class readership while the latter mainly targeted working class women readers (13-4).
Kerber regards as transitional: Eleanor Roosevelt and Rosie the Riveter. Like Susan Hartmann before her, Kerber makes a keen point; she notes that the many women who lost their jobs when the troops came home in 1945 and ‘46 were very reluctant to leave (91). Rosie's temporary foray into the workplace prefigures women's large scale employment in the 1960s and ‘70s. Yet Rosie served as more than simply an invisible antecedent of the second-wave feminist. She laid the groundwork for a debate about androgyny that involved some of second-wave feminism's most prominent voices. At the core of the debate—and indeed at the core of Rosie the Riveter's existence in the 1940s—was whether women could be physically, emotionally, and morally “strong” in and of themselves, or if strength in women somehow implied appropriation of an essentially male quality.

Even before the publication of the famous Memorial Day issue of the Post, columnist Max Lerner anticipated the debate in “The New Amazons,” a February 11, 1943 op-ed piece in the New York-based PM. In observing that, “dressed in their working clothes, [working women] scarcely can be distinguished from men,” and that “a group of girls coming out of a war factory behave very much like young fellows,” Lerner wonders whether gender roles have changed for the good, or even if they should change (19, 20).

Perhaps women of our race will split off [...] into a branch specialized to work alongside men, and a branch specialized to give him the sense of power he wants. Or perhaps all this is but an interlude, and we shall go back, after the war, by an eternal recurrence, to the old condition in which women console us by their beauty and fragility for our own stupid errors in running a world. (21)

Lerner's fancifully bifurcated race of women—of those who work and those who subscribe to the “old condition”—suggest the possibility that “woman” and “power” are

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3. See Susan Hartmann's 1982 *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s*. It is not clear, however, if Kerber was aware of Hartmann's book when she delivered her address.
antithetical terms, or that women may simply have created fictions of their own
powerlessness as a way of getting along with men.

Rockwell's Rosie also anticipates this later debate during second-wave feminist
through a number of visual prompts. Seated in an upright posture with her ankles crossed,
her meaty right arm crossed over her stomach to hold her lunch pail, and her large left
hand clutching a sandwich, she resembles, in Melissa Dabakis's description,
“Michelangelo's androgynous figures” (196).4 In a show of anti-fascist solidarity, a copy
of Hitler's Mein Kampf lies crumpled under her feet, and resting on her lap is a massive
riveter connected to an air compression hose. Her eyes are closed, making for a
somewhat haughty expression, and her goggles sit atop her forehead. Appearing in front
of a stars and stripes background, she bespeaks patriotism, might, and—with her ruddy
cheeks and button nose—an unassailable innocence.

Several of the cover's details suggest that viewers can regard Rosie as either proof
of women's inherent strength or as female appropriation of a man's strength. One the one
hand, Rosie's arguably androgynous appearance only emphasizes her (temporary)
appropriation of masculinity. In her analysis of the cover, Dabakis provides some helpful
insight into significance of the heavy riveter that lies across her lap: “Both the riveting
hammer (symbol of the phallic order) and the power hose (allusion to an umbilical cord)
construct femininity through coded signs of maternity. As woman, ‘Rosie' reproduces the
masculine order in the sign of the riveting hammer but does not participate in the making

4. Dabakis notes the striking similarities between Rockwell's Rosie and Michelangelo's Prophet Isaiah:
“[B]oth are seated frontally, with head turned to the right, left arms raised, right arms reaching across their
bodies, and ankles crossed. [. . . .] Rockwell imbued his image of 'Rosie' with a monumentality and power
characteristic of Michelangelo's androgynous figures, utilizing (whether consciously or unconsciously)
such famous 'masterworks' as precedents to legitimate the instability in gender construction that his image
demonstrated” (196).
of that order. Woman is relegated to the realm of reproduction rather than that of production" (198). In making the key distinction between production and reproduction, Dabakis delineates a hierarchy of strength, suggesting that production as an action of origination is inherently male, while female reproduction is only powerful insofar as it biologically creates the men who are better fitted for the work of production. Despite her imposing stature, Rosie's strength—symbolized by the riveting hammer—is therefore borrowed strength. In this sense, the power hose/umbilical cord that seemingly provides support to the men at the front betrays a reverse order in which the men at the front instead fuel Rosie's temporary "life" in the realm of production. Further, as Dabakis notes, the riveter sits in Rosie's lap while she is presently engaged in something more domestic: eating a sandwich (197-98). After the lunch whistle blows and she goes back to work, Rosie will reenter a temporary androgynous world in which heavy equipment bestows masculine strength.

This view also reinforces the OWI's initial intent, which was to keep women employed only "for the duration" of the war (Qtd. In Dabakis 185). A 1943 *Saturday Evening Post* ad for uniforms by Eureka Vacuum Cleaner Company makes this point clear. In it, three women are featured wearing three different styles of dress: military, industrial, and domestic. The ad reads: "Right here at Eureka we have a constant reminder of the good fight you're making. For more than 70 percent of those who *man* Eureka's assembly lines today are women—enlisted in war production. [. . . .] But when victory is final and complete, you—and we—will return to our peacetime jobs" (italics mine). Rather than showing a number of women with different wartime occupations, these lines suggest a parabolic trajectory in which one woman at the start of the war
becomes involved either in military or industrial work, but then returns to her traditional domestic garb once the war is over. The ad borrows from the discourse of androgyny insofar as it implies that women can temporarily enter the workforce by tapping into their masculinity and "man" the assembly line. But such masculinity comes in limited supply and, it will eventually give way to a preponderance of femininity that leads women back to their homes.

On the other hand, Rosie's entrance into production may bespeak women's inherent strength. In the Rockwell illustration, her possession of the riveting hammer suggests that the phallus is inherently accessible to anyone—either male or female—who has the internal drive and determination to wield it. In this reading, the riveting hammer not only attests to women's inherent strength, it also suggests the essential and irrevocable difference between a penis and a phallus. Traditionally, women themselves have served as the ultimate phallus, symbolizing men's masculine strength, magnetism, and right to property. But Rosie's possession of the riveter shows the democratic potential of all phallic symbols, an argument best made by Pat Califia, who makes the distinction between a "male phallus" and a "butch phallus" (24-7). For Califia the male phallus symbolizes power and domination, while the butch phallus—as she describes it within the specific context of lesbian sex—bespeaks reciprocity, equality, and mutual pleasure. The phallus is not specific to any gender or sex. As Susan Bordo reminds us, "the phallus is a creature of the cultural imagination, not biology. No one is born with one; no one can claim 'the real article.' Some men may think they can by virtue of having penises, but they are mistaken" (104).
An ad for the Pennsylvania Railroad from a June 1943 edition of the *Post* attests to the persistence of these conflicting messages. The center of the spread features a woman operating a large machine. The caption reads: “Five feet one from her 4A slippers to her spun-gold hair. She loves flower hats, veils, smooth orchestras—and being kissed by a boy who’s now in North Africa. [. . .] How can 110 pounds of beauty boss 147,000 pounds of steel? [. . .] [T]hrough the modern magic of electric power. The magic that makes it possible for a girl's slim fingers to lift mountains of metal” (qtd. In Honey 113).

In obvious respects the ad patronizes the woman in the photo by evoking a common wartime narrative of a Columbia-like woman (note the description of her dainty features and blonde hair) waiting for her beau to come back from the war. Her involvement in men's work is facilitated through a federal government in need of all able-bodied workers and through technology, which temporarily gives her a man's strength. Yet on other hand, this first argument is tripped up by its own disclosures. The ad implies that the only way a woman appropriates a man's abilities is through the use of a machine that allows her to lift 147,000 pounds. But exactly what *man* can lift 147,000 pounds without the use of technology? Upon second glance, the ad contradicts the notion of temporary male appropriation in much the same way the riveting hammer does in Rockwell's illustration. In both instances, the technological device—and not the woman—is the phallic symbol. Strength therefore cannot be calibrated by musculature, but by inner determination, which the diminutive woman apparently possesses in full measure.

But when the war ended over and the men returned from the front victorious, the majority of Rosies went back to the home, and the visibility of women's strength,
whether inherent or appropriated, declined. Sheila Tobias and Lisa Anderson have
documented Rosie's reluctance to leave the workforce. A 1944 United Auto Workers
survey reported, for example, “that fully 85 percent of the women then working wanted to
continue after the war. That meant of the 350,000 new female workers, 300,000 wanted
to go on working in manufacturing. [. . . .] Among the women who had been in school
prior to 1941, 75 percent intended to continue working, while more than 50 percent of
former homemakers had similar plans” (93).

While Rosie's tenure in the workforce may have been short-lived, she created a
legacy that resonated well into the 1960s and '70s. With the rise of second wave
feminism, feminists in a number of different academic circles reprised the debate inherent
in Rosie's national visibility. In literary and cultural studies, the debate was prompted by
the 1973 publication of Carolyn Heilbrun's Toward a Recognition of Androgyny. At the
center of the book is an impulse to seek out what Heilbrun calls “a hidden river of
androgyny,” which she claims has been integral to humans' notions of inner wholeness
for centuries. In an age when feminism was so often predicated on parsing out what was
unique and meaningful in women's history and experiences, the claim that women's
completeness relied on integrating “masculine” traits seemed absurd and
counterproductive to many feminists. For the English professor Heilbrun, however, the
balance was not only a question of literary studies; it was a question of civic participation
and democracy:

By developing in men the ideal “masculine” characteristics of competitiveness,
aggressiveness, and defensiveness, and by placing in power those men who most
embody these traits, we have, I believe, gravely endangered our own survival.
Unless we can check the power of manly men and the women who willingly
support them, we will experience new Vietnams, My Lais, Kent States. [. . . .] So
long as we continue to believe that “feminine” qualities of gentleness, lovingness,
and the counting of cost in human rather than national or property terms are out of place among rulers, we can look forward to continued self-brutalization and perhaps even to self-destruction. (xvi)

In Heilbrun's wish to chasten male aggression with feminine gentleness, she implicitly complements the argument made during the 1940s that a strong woman was essentially a contradiction in terms, that her strength was simply an appropriation of masculinity at a time in history when America had few other alternatives for wartime production. For feminists of the era, the dichotomizing of traits such as aggressiveness and gentleness was especially harmful, since the former was invariably another name for power and the latter was a simply a euphemism for weakness or passivity.

Heilbrun's book was so controversial that it generated a special session at the 1973 MLA annual conference. The fledgling journal *Women's Studies* then published the panel papers in the second number of its second volume. In the opening essay, Heilbrun defends her postulation against accusations of essentialism. She attributes previous misunderstandings and attacks to "simply a debate over terminology." Though she had used the terms "masculine" and "feminine" to denote aggression and gentleness respectively, she "would agree wholeheartedly" with any other terms that suggested the same conventional, culturally inscribed types ("Further Notes" 146). An additional essay by Nancy Topping Bazin and Alma Freeman came to Heilbrun's defense, emphasizing, though in a more essentialist vein, that "[t]he eternal human quest [. . .] is to discover and identify with the true self, to embrace the polar opposites and find again the primal wholeness which has been lost (193).

For Cynthia Secor, however, androgyny's mythological grounding evades historical scrutiny. "My fundamental objection to the concept of androgyny," she states, "is that it
is rooted in a static image of perfection, in eternity, an image which cannot take into account the rough going of historical process" (164). As a result, Secor cannot accept the term “androgyny”: “in perpetuating the categories of masculine and feminine, it necessarily continues conceptually to define women in relation to men. The term as historically used, and as it tends to be used in the present, maintains the polarity represented by genders, thus undercutting the very sense of independence and selfhood it would seem to encourage” (166). For Barbara Gelpi, who argues in a similar vein, an actual look at the history of the term reveals that androgyny is usually spoken of affirmatively when talking about male appropriation of femaleness. Though Elaine Showalter was neither on the MLA panel nor was included in the special issue of Women's Studies, her 1977 book A Literature of Their Own regards Heilbrun's concept of androgyny as a means to cover up or erase women's thoughts, histories, feelings. Basing most of her critique on Virginia Woolf's acceptance of androgyny as an artistic ideal, Showalter writes, “Androgyny was the myth that helped her evade confrontation with her own painful femaleness and enabled her to choke and repress her anger and ambition” (264).

With the advent of postmodern feminism in the 1980s, Towards a Recognition of Androgyny got a second look, this time from Toril Moi, whose Sexual/Textual Politics (1985) understands Heilbrun and Virginia Woolf's concept of androgyny as inherently deconstructive, as a “recognition of [gender's] falsifying metaphysical nature” (13). Moi's alternative perspective is helpful, not simply because it revived academic discussion of a book largely dismissed by second-wave feminism, but because it helps us to recognize the falsities of the male-female binary on which androgyny is inextricably linked.
As I have discussed briefly at other points in this study, Judith Butler took up this basic argument in critiquing Foucault's assessment of Herculine Barbin, the hermaphrodite who committed suicide in 1868 after having been declared a “being of the masculine sex” by the French courts (Foucault, Herculine Barbin, 151). As opposed to Foucault, who regards Barbin's life before juridical intervention as a “happy limbo of a non-identity” (xiii), Butler contends that Barbin's gendered identity, like that of all humans, was circumscribed by language and the juridical codes it produces. For Butler, the parable behind Barbin's tragic fate is that gender subversion still exists within the circumscription of law and language: “[I]ndeed, the free play of [Barbin's sexual] attributes has the effect of exposing the illusory character of sex as an abiding substantive substrate to which various attributes are presumed to adhere.” In light of these conclusions the androgyne helps underscore Butler's notion of gender performativity, a concept that constantly undermines the assumption of “an interior and organizing gender core” (Gender Trouble 101, 136).

Moi's and Butler's theories no doubt informed Kari Weil's useful distinction between the androgyne and the hermaphrodite. As opposed to the androgyne, who has come down to us through Plato as a being of primordial, harmonious totality, the hermaphrodite bespeaks “an original confusion or chaos of sexes and desires” (10). Weil bases the latter figure on Ovid's myth of Salmacis, whose lust for the handsome Hermaphroditus was so strong that she asked the gods' permission to be joined to him in one body: “Thus, when in fast embrace their limbs were knit, / They two were no more, nor man, nor woman— / One body then that neither seemed and both” (Ovid 85). In observing that the dual-sexed figure still goes by the name of its male half, Weil contends
that the hermaphrodite is inherently deconstructive, exposing the male prerogative implicit in androgynous “wholeness." The hermaphrodite can therefore work in the Derridean vein of *différance*, “dislod[ing] the androgyne and the sexual, aesthetic, and racial hierarchies it establishes from the universal, [and] revealing its givens to be constructions of patriarchal ideology and not the results of divine or natural law" (141, 10). Weil's impressive and thorough examination makes a compelling case for the continuing cultural significance of androgyny—and the hermaphroditism that haunts it.

Despite the deconstructive tendencies of the postmodern age, we still must recognize the state's complicity in holding tight to the male-female binary. I am reminded of muscle-bound movie star Arnold Schwarzenegger, who, in the hyper-masculine America that evolved after September 11, 2001, became governor of California and later sought to discipline the “girlie men" in the Democratic-controlled legislature for what he considered to be poor management of the state's economy. Less than a year later, Schwarzenegger reprised his taunt, this time at the 2004 Republican National Convention before a packed crowd of enthusiastic supporters. In this second instance, he implied that Democrats were "economic girlie men," unwilling to make President George W. Bush's previous tax cuts a permanent fixture of future federal budgets. The postmodern moment was too perfect for words: the Austrian-turned-American who was a weightlifter-turned-movie star-turned governor, spoofing a *Saturday Night Live* sketch from the 1980s that spoofed him for his masculine theatricality. Doubtless few in the crowd—so many of whom adored the Republican president for his Texas swagger—would have remembered or even cared that Schwarzenegger had once played a pregnant man in
the 1988 film *Junior*, or that *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd had once outed
the governor as a “metrosexual.”

In a 2004 presidential campaign in which the two major candidates sought to make
each other look like a sissy, masculinity and femininity seemed as immutable and
incompatible as it did for Alexis de Toqueville in the 1820s and ‘30s. Senator John Kerry,
running on the Democratic ticket, usually got the short end of the stick, so to speak.
Despite his constant evocations of the time he spent in Vietnam as a soldier, he could
never fully cast off the aspersions made by the Bush camp that he looked French (a sure
sign of effeminacy) or that he would be too “sensitive” in the global war on terrorism. In
this light, the flip-flopping charge the Bush campaign constantly leveled against the
junior senator from Massachusetts was as much an accusation that he wavered between
genders as it was a critique of his ambiguous stance on the funding of the U. S. troops
during the second Gulf War in Iraq. For Kerry, androgyny was nothing less than a state-
sanctioned illness for which there was no cure.

If Judith Butler’s hypothesis is correct, we can never fully escape our “gender
trouble,” and so long as “man” and “woman” continue to exist as binary opposites in the
national imaginary, invocations and discussions of androgyny are not likely to fade from
the public arena. Still, androgyny can be a very useful concept; when scrutinized
adequately, it invites its own deconstruction, as Butler, Toril Moi, and Kari Weil are
right to point out. Studying the public deployments of androgyny as they manifest

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5. The term “metrosexual,” which denotes an urban heterosexual male attentive to his grooming and
for the Modern Man*. Dowd interviewed Schwarzenegger during his candidacy for the California
governorship. The September 25, 2003 op-ed piece entitled “Gals to Gladiators” noted Schwarzenegger’s
love for shopping and self-grooming, two traits that mark metrosexuality.
themselves in literature, politics, art, and religion, is, in a sense, like asking the body politic to disrobe. For whatever lies beyond those vestments, should we dare to bear witness, is certain to reflect the democratic principles that we simultaneously exalt and fear.
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