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"RAZING" ADULTS AND ILLEGIBLE CHILDREN: NARRATIVES OF (IM)MATURITY DURING AMERICA'S PROGRESSIVE ERA

By

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ABSTRACT

"RAZING" ADULTS AND ILLEGIBLE CHILDREN: NARRATIVES OF (IM)MATURITY DURING AMERICA'S PROGRESSIVE ERA

By

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Maturity marks a limit point between child and adult and assists in determining their relations; maturity also avails itself in regulating both experience and identities by inscribing differences and their significances. Arguing that narratives invested in re(de)constituting adulthood employ the child as a centralizing agent that is simultaneously occluded, this dissertation examines select narratives produced in the United States to demonstrate that the question of maturity and its counter-construct immaturity pervade those narratives as a decisive though overlooked subtext. Representations of children and adults are examined to highlight the complicated and conflicted operations of maturity while also interrogating inclusive gestures toward the child. The dissertation adopts a poststructuralist orientation toward the child and family that emerges in Deleuze and Guattari's influential theory of rhizomatics to reveal the ways it productively dismantles the adult-child binary and what alternatives their critical project suggest.

For Britta,

with whom I travel and find my joy.

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PREFACE

What the hell's wrong with something being childish?

--Walt Disney

Childhood is the first manifestation of the deficiency which, in Nature, calls for substitution. Pedagogy illuminates perhaps more crudely the paradoxes of the supplement. How is a natural weakness possible? How can Nature ask for forces that it does not furnish? How is a child possible in general?

--*Of Grammatology*, Jacques Derrida

Philosophy makes us ripen quickly, and crystallizes us in a state of maturity. How, then, without "dephilosophizing" ourselves, may we hope to experience the shocks that being receives from new images, shocks which are always the phenomena of youthful beings? When we are at an age to imagine, we cannot say how or why we imagine. Then, when we could say how we imagine, we cease to imagine. We should therefore dematurize ourselves.

--*The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard

When I began considering researching and writing a dissertation on the figure of the child in concert with representations of family, one question became immediately apparent: What rubric would one use as a kind of shorthand for the conjured distinction between adult and child? More accurately, what rubric was already in place? The term "age" did not seem to have the resonance or breadth to capture the range of meanings and values produced and (re)circulated, but rather seemed limited by its denotative linkage to generational difference.[1] The term "maturity," however, seemed broad enough to allow for "age" for example among a host of other concepts one might associate with an adult-child distinction, such as developmentalism, while implying questions of dependence and autonomy.

The term appears in what one might consider an unlikely text, T. S. Eliot's Presidential Address to the Virgil Society delivered in 1944. Eliot, posing and responding to the question, What is a Classic?, which also forms his Address's title, captures, consciously or unconsciously, the continually contested, unstable "nature" of the term that this dissertation hopes to foreground. In

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[1] See Kathleen Woodward's *Aging and Its Discontents: Freud and Other Fictions*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991 for an examination of how psychoanalysis and Western Culture repress old age in favor of youth, terms which, despite gradations like "adolescent," "devolve" into a polarized, hard binary opposition (5-6).

his attempt to answer his own question, he relies heavily, almost solely, on "maturity," but first negotiates the contested terrain surrounding the term "classic" by limiting the linguistic playing field, explaining "I am concerned with one meaning in one context" (Eliot 115). At the same time Eliot's usage encompasses literature, language, history, and civilization to provide the broadest applicability so that one might come to know something like the "universal classic," or that which might then lend coherence to and adjudicate "literary politics" (Eliot 116, 115). As president of a literary society, broaching if not settling questions of canonicity would define an administration. As Eliot explains, "the classical criterion is of vital importance to us. We need it to judge our individual poets" (126).

Implicitly, "classic" presents an already unstable term in contested grounds because in order to introduce a stabilizing conception to "literary politics" he resorts to yet another term, which he presents this way: "If there is one word on which we can fix, which will suggest the maximum of what I mean by the term 'a classic', it is the word maturity" (Eliot 116). The double movement of both "fixing" and opening up to "maximum" suggestiveness, and one might say the possibilities of dissemination, that

"maturity" allows militates against the aims of providing a point of coherence to an unwieldy literary situation. Eliot is quick to note maturity's very possible semantic impossibility, however, when he writes:

> To define maturity without assuming that the hearer already knows what it means, is almost impossible: let us say then, that if we are properly mature, as well as educated persons, we can recognize maturity in a civilization and in a literature, as we do in the other human beings whom we encounter. To make the meaning of maturity really apprehensible - indeed, even to make it acceptable - to the immature, is perhaps impossible. But if we are mature we either recognize maturity immediately, or come to know it on more intimate acquaintance. (116-17)

A pathway across the impossible communication gap exists nonetheless through a force of will and the immature can be made to understand maturity through a pedagogical gesture demanding apprehension. Eliot's essay attempts the feat - to communicate and thereby compel the "lesser" counterpart to understand and appropriate the message if not the mystical identity of the mature who enunciates. For the mature person, maturity need not be defined since that person can "recognize maturity immediately." In effect,

Eliot relies on commonsense notions of maturity, particularly ideas of history as "an ordered though unconscious progress" and the fundamental notion of developmentalism whereby language, in this case, can "realize its own potentialities within its own limitations" (117). Immediate recognition of the mature and maturity in another person would require instantaneous demarcation, and therefore necessarily exclusionary.

Rather than attempting to define "a classic" and rather than use "maturity" to "fix" anything, this dissertation attempts to demonstrate that the question of maturity upsets everything, or erupts from an always already "disturbed" condition. However, Eliot's problem is an issue the dissertation takes up once again. In searching for a language or a grammar to organize this inquiry, I read Eliot's "maturity" as already problematic and destabilized while attempting to avoid recapitulating its commonsense to adjudicate textual value or work toward its apocalyptic end.

As adults and children attend questions of maturity, this dissertation attempts to shift slightly critical inquiry examining representations of the child. One might envision this project as a response to Caroline F. Levander and Carol J. Singley's call "to investigate fully how the

child helps to perpetuate and disrupt the complex social formations that produce particular racial, ethnic, class, sexual, gender, and national identities" ("Introduction" 5). If positioned in this way, one would have to question while also be wary of what the "investigation" might implicate, indicate or "prove" as the operative term in their particular call risks a certain will to knowledge. This project also builds on work produced by critics such as Jacqueline Rose, who in particular argues that there is no child in "children's fiction" "other than the one which the category itself sets in place, the one which it needs to believe is there for its own purposes" (qtd. in Lesnik-Oberstein 25). Levander and Singley sum up these and other critics works by pointing to the reflexive ways they have "studied the child as a means of thinking in new ways about the adult self" ("Introduction" 5).[2] Foregrounding narratives producing "new" imagined adult selves demonstrates the child's conceptual necessity and the impossibility of its narration.

As any study interrogating the child's centrality in Western culture must, this dissertation also travels guided by Philippe Ariès's landmark study *Centuries of Childhood*

[2] In a shot across the bow of critical paradigms, Beverly Lyon Clark asserts that "structuralist and poststructuralist approaches succeed in dehumanizing children" (14).

published in 1962 in which he argued childhood should be understood as a "socially, culturally, and historically contingent construction" (Lesnik-Oberstein 8).[3] Ariès dates the concept's invention, in Europe, generally between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, arguing that the idea of childhood was not an immutable stage of life and therefore subject to historical change whose baseline he locates at the tenth century's pictorial depiction of the child as a scaled down man. Through an examination of paintings, diaries, educational documents and other artifacts, he identifies the nobility's attempts to secure their economic and social privileges through genealogy as the determining factor of the birth of childhood.[4]

In the United States, according to Joseph M. Hawes and N. Ray Hiner, the importance of childhood also rose along economic lines. The change occurred, they argue, along an

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[3] Lesnik-Oberstein points out that in prefatory sections, arguments about whether Ariès positioned himself as either an essentialist or a constructivist indicates what a work's particular stance toward the figure of the child might be. The "essentialist" mode is characterized by the establishment of "emotional bonds" and "trans-historically and trans-culturally consistent beings" whereas the "constructivists" hold that the child constitutes and is constituted by "sets of meanings in language" (Lesnik-Oberstein 8, 2). Lesnik-Oberstein contends that the field of children's literature still holds to an essentialist framework (18-19).

[4] Muriel Shine asserts that "Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Restoration dramatists and poets, like their predecessors, did not consider the child a suitable medium through which to comment on the condition of man" (3). Despite Christianity regarding the child as "a symbol of innocence and an object of compassion," which Wordsworth and Blake resuscitate, the occlusion occurs specifically in literature where neither the symbol nor the object appeared (4).

axis of producer/consumer. In the seventeenth century, children were regarded as integral contributors to the family's production of wealth, whereas in the eighteenth century, with its shift from agrarian to industrial production, children were seen as consumers and wives became household managers. At the same time, the urban poor often had little choice but to leave their children homeless and starving. Various philanthropists viewed children as society's product and eventual future and reacted to the epidemic with aggressive reform movements reflected in building the New York House of Refuge in 1825 and perhaps most notably with Charles Loring Brace's 1853 establishment of the "Children's Aid Society" in New York. By the late nineteenth century, and suffering the Gilded Age's economic fallout, a wave of progressive reforms rose with children clearly in mind. Compulsory school attendance, while in part an effort to undermine exploitative child labor practices, gauged the extent to which children represented the future and its security by means of directly influencing behavior (6-22).

This study locates itself in the heart of the United States's Progressive Era, roughly that historical moment Peter Conn describes as one of "traumatic" and "dizzying change" (12, 5). While 1890 witnessed the murderous

suppression and relegation of American Indians to a reservation system and claimed the frontier closed, Conn explains the years from approximately the turn of the century to World War I as "dizzying change" in terms of an exponential increase of immigrant populations and continental migration, change in isolationist to imperialist political leadership, and "above all in the multiplied achievements of science and technology" (6).[5] I agree with Conn's historical approach as an "effort to take quite seriously Lionel Trilling's admonition about the irreducible complexity of any cultural moment" so that one might minimize the risk of reductively treating any particular moment (3).

Building on constructivist insights, the project analyzes attempts to secure and destabilize adult-child distinctions and seeks to elaborate the complicated ordering of relations based on "naturalized" notions of what constitutes the "essence" of the adult or the child.[6] The question of maturity and its counter-construct immaturity, (with the adult typically aligned with the

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[5] Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd's study *Middletown: A Study in American Culture* (1929) locates 1890 as a base-line date for their comparative analysis of mid-Western families because of the availability of data after this point and because a natural gas "boom" inaugurated a local industrial revolution (5-6). My choice signals a different upheaval.

[6] For a thematic study of the literary child, see Reinhard Kuhn's *Corruption in Paradise: The Child in Western Literature*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1982.

former and the child aligned with the latter), are examined either implicitly or explicitly throughout the following pages.

To begin examining inclusive and exclusive efforts drawing on (im)maturity's rhetorical immediacy and power, the project chooses late nineteenth and early twentieth century U.S. narratives that employ the child while also foregrounding "properly" adult concerns as initial starting points for the inquiry in the hopes of highlighting exclusionary representations of community. The dissertation's main contention is that commonsense notions of maturity regulate relations, "experience," and identity by determining differences and their significances whereby such knowledge entails exclusion and hierarchies, both of which operate upon the double movement of including the child to exclude and silence her or him. Such is Eliot's movement when he writes,

> a society, and a literature, like an individual human being, do not necessarily mature equally and concurrently in every respect. The precocious child is often, in some obvious ways, childish for his age in comparison with ordinary children. (117)

The child's usefulness extends only insofar as it provides an alibi for uneven development as well as an experiential

and comparative basis for what he terms a "mature literature" whose legitimacy one might grasp by determining whether a literature presents "an ordered though unconscious progress of a language to realize its own potentialities within its own limitations" (Eliot 117). At the implied level of "culture," Eliot suggests its maturity would be attained if "society" and "literature" "mature equally." The child helps illuminate how maturity is reflected in a commensurate relation between age and behavior and Eliot suggests that one already intuitively understands how age delimits behavior. That which is mature then can only be determined retroactively from a different "age" whose own maturity could only be understood as already questionable.

The regulative idea of maturity operates in such a way that the "presentness" of an "age" is questionable from the beginning since, in this particular instance, some children are more childish than other, "ordinary" children. What Eliot means by "ordinary" here is unclear except to say that it is not "precocious," but rather perhaps sober and stable, which would largely contradict the commonsense notion of childishness and signify typical attributes associated with adults. One would have to question how a child could be deemed mature, in any degree, when that

concept and existential marker could only be wielded and recognized by an adult, one who is already mature despite the fact that defining this term is "almost impossible" in the first place. The possibility exists that the question of maturity might be endlessly applied to children and an individual child, except that the "ordinary" child seems the logical stopping point for such deliberations, since she provides an apparent stable referent for "other," more childish children.

Similarly, within Eliot's larger discussion of literature, the horizon for a mature literature remains unsurpassed as no referent is possible. He asks: "Is there any one period of English literature to which we can point as being fully mature, comprehensively and in equilibrium? I do not think so; and, as I shall repeat later, I hope it is not so" (Eliot 117). At the limits of Eliot's thinking, full and comprehensive literary maturity is not yet realized nor completed nor well-defined yet an indispensable rubric. From the poles of "ordinary children" to "precocious children" and grounded by the horizon of maturity present the limits and possibilities of literary politics. As such maturity also founds adult and child, and their reversals such as childish adults and parentified children, while it sustains processes of (de)valuation.

This is to say that while Eliot can open up the question of "literary politics" he also limits its playing field as the commensurability of age and behavior determine the degree of maturity for both children and poets. Thus it helps determine their proper ordering since maturity itself is always known as the "as yet," or rather believed because incomplete, so that one might begin to formulate an answer to the "What is. . .?" question and contain the anxiety difference produces.

The Introduction examines recent theoretical work by Deleuze and Guattari foregrounding the child as a resource for interrogating inclusive communal and epistemological models. To say the same thing differently, theory returns to the child for its (un)grounding and the chapters' readings are guided by as they illuminate this post-structuralist conceptualization. Attending to Deleuze and Guattari's child also guides the dissertation's form and content relationship as its lack of heft or smallness, however unsatisfying, mirrors the short texts, and arguably their academically short stature, constituting the dissertation's body. Similarly, the relationship between the theoretical framework and period, nationality, and individual texts is one exposed to a charge of being arbitrary as the theory opens up, without delimiting from

the beginning, avenues for research that have no intrinsic justification. This is not to say that, when posed with the question of why one text over another, a reasonable justification cannot be conjured and believed. It is to say that the selected period, roughly 1890 to 1915, is highly arbitrary and simplistically necessary, convenient and supported by published research. Given Peter Conn's periodization for his study, 1898 to 1917, and his assessment of early twentieth-century America as a "time of genuinely traumatic change," provides a justification of "discomfiture" between the theoretical framework, period and nationality (12). While not the only "fit" one might find, the question of the texts remains. For my purposes, I have attempted to include those ignored texts not only produced in the roughly demarcated period and geographic location, but also those exhibiting a schizophrenic discourse, one multiply divided, multiply interpolated and ambivalent. For instance, Chapter One reads W. E. B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* as a complexly constructed narrative addressing African-American identity, which questions valuations of the child as it appropriates the child for critical and redemptive purposes. Chapter Two examines Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* and Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, arguing that utopian and dystopian

feminist narratives occlude the child as they critique mature or "civilized" patriarchal U.S. culture. Chapter Three examines the collaborative and radically intertextual novel *The Whole Family* (1908), conceived by William Dean Howells and edited by Elizabeth Jordan, for the possibilities and limits available to children and adults within a more or less predominant familial formation. While each chapter proceeds by close readings to elaborate the complexities and contradictions attending questions of (im)maturity as figured through representations of children and adults, they form a coherent whole to argue that the child provides an imaginative resource for narrative responses and at the same time resists being narrated. In other words, the argument resists incrementally evolving in order to elaborate evolution as positing and then marginalizing the child as an alibi and point of narrative departure. At the turn-of-the-century when psychological developmentalism and industrial efficiency captured U.S. imaginations in response to a reality Hilton Obenzinger describes as "bizarre and incoherent," this dissertation seeks to interrogate literary responses to the imposition and perpetuation of "an adult-centered notion of structured becoming" articulated through representations of maturity ("Better Dreams" 171; qtd. in Clark 11).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: DIS-ARTICULATING MATURITY: RHIZOMATIC CHILDREN AND THE OEDIPAL FAMILY IN *A THOUSAND PLATEAUS*

> We can guess what fear is. We are afraid of losing. Our security, the great molar organization that sustains us, the arborescences we cling to, the binary machines that give us a well-defined status, the resonances we enter into, the system of overcoding that dominates us - we all desire that.
> -- Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's two volume *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* elaborates an affirmative "theory" of the rhizome, or nomad thought in which the traditionally conceived two-parent family becomes a figure and location for the universal desire for security and a basic organizational social unit(y) embodying stasis, repressing 'intensities' and centralizing what might otherwise be configured as multiple, spontaneous and creative. In the second volume *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari attempt to demonstrate this affirmative thought and anticipate a metalogical problem when they write that, "We employ a dualism of models only in order to arrive at a process that challenges all models" (20). The "family tree" as a handy metaphor, spatial representation, and binary structure is of course not an arbitrarily chosen site for critical intervention, since a family, typically understood, seeks to maintain power by

centralizing itself in one location while abhorring dispersion; this monadistic desire is precisely what Deleuze and Guattari militate against because for them desire is social, insofar as its object is always in the world, and without grounding support because it is "a process of production without reference to any exterior agency" such as lack or pleasure (*Plateaus* 154).

A centralized family both constructs and jeopardizes the illusion of security and reassurance that the people with whom one interacts knows one, and who one in turn knows; translucent knowledge becomes an illusory effect of identities remaining uncontested and reaching a point of stasis. What is at stake in such a system that propagates and validates identities is that those identities ultimately come at the expense of "othering" family members. The "other" to a clearly defined identity is then relegated to a relatively fixed position in the family hierarchy of importance through a consensus reached between family members as to the "other's" identity. Thus, through processes of differentiation and identification, all members and non-members come to occupy stable positions in the family's evolutionary schema, reproducing roughly the same structure each generation and creating a stable, homogeneous and unified genealogy. As Charlotte Perkins

Gilman once noted, "[t]he family is a social group, an entity, a little state" (*Women and Economics* 105). And to the extent that she was analogizing a prototypical - one might say stereotypical - nuclear family, her equation holds up spatially insofar as the male, the female, and the child mimic the three separate triangulated points, or "branches," of U.S. democracy.

The broad intervention Deleuze and Guattari suggest with rhizomatics seizes on the possibility that "process" could be thought of as a non-hierarchical model in direct opposition to "product" oriented models, or that "process" might destabilize privileged positions of power and fascistic constructions of identity. What might Deleuze and Guattari offer toward thinking socialization without normalization, without the fear attending losing status and exclusion from "resonances"? This Introduction examines Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualization of the "minoritarian" figure of the child as one point of possibility for challenging oppositional models premised upon security. To lend coherence to this examination, I provide a brief review of their critical dialogue with psychoanalysis and sociology while organizing the review in terms of the child.

While the above question might pose too neat a formulation with which to approach such aggressively dynamic thinkers, it serves as only one entry-point among innumerable others. For example, Mark Poster's analysis of Deleuze and Guattari's work, limited to *Anti-Oedipus*, focuses on two concepts: the unconscious and desire as they relate to the social, particularly in the form of capitalism. While Lacan theorizes the unconscious as a language premised upon the Phallus's absent presence, Deleuze and Guattari theorize the unconscious as "a place of libidinal production" that capitalism represses by using the Oedipus complex (Poster 105).[7]

Because they posit that capitalism employs the Oedipus complex and "its castrations" in structuring or "territorializing" consumer desire, the processes of socialization are invariably despotic and specifically affect the child. Putting the question to such a figure in Deleuze and Guattari's work and scrutinizing their concern with the child's socialization forms a faithfulness to their work. Brian Massumi, in his translator's foreword to *A Thousand Plateaus*, quotes Deleuze characterizing his early work by saying that "'I imagined myself approaching

[7] Mark Poster summarizes the Oedipus complex, at the level of desire, as a "double operation of first structuring a desire and then interdicting it" and that in Deleuze and Guattari's analysis Oedipus as law elicits incestuous wishes rather than prevents them (106).

an author from behind and giving him a child that would indeed be his but would nonetheless be monstrous'" (x).[8] The question, in the context of Deleuze's extended concern over children and the family, approaches him, one might say, face-to-face or at least side-by-side because the child is employed to perform theoretical work of frustrating models and whose importance goes largely unremarked.[9] Following such terms, Deleuze and Guattari's work can be read as extended and fragmented reflections on the child who is positioned against and deterritorializes the Freudian family and offers "areferential" possibilities for libidinal production. Unlike Mark Poster's focus on *Anti-Oedipus* in his critical survey of theories of family, my concern is mainly with *A Thousand Plateaus* where, after Oedipus is dismantled in *Anti-Oedipus*, the decoded flux of desire plays across the pages.

Besides the dominant Western metaphor of the mirror, "whereby reality is translucently reflected in consciousness," as Steven Best and Douglas Kellner aptly

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[8] See Gilles Deleuze, "I Have Nothing to Admit." Trans. Janis Forman, *Semiotext(e), Anti-Oedipus* (1997):2.3

[9] For a study examining the deployment of childhood in the works of Walter Benjamin and Jean-François Lyotard and the implications for understanding modernity and postmodernity see Erica Burman, "The Pedagogies of Post/Modernity: The Address to the Child as Political Subject and Object." *Children in Culture: Approaches to Childhood.* Ed. Karin Lesnik-Oberstein. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.

summarize, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the Western tradition has a:

> second major metaphor, that of the tree, whereby the mind organizes its knowledge of reality (provided by the mirror) in systematic and hierarchical principles (branches of knowledge) which are grounded in firm foundations (roots). These allow arborescent culture to build vast conceptual systems that are centered, unified, hierarchical, and grounded in a self-transparent, self-identical, representing subject. (98-9)

In addressing these cultural metaphors, or the dramatis personae, rhizomatics proposes to open up arborescent, organizational systems like the Oedipal family and its dominant manifestation in the form of the state by pluralizing, disseminating, and diversifying the ways in which we create new communal and epistemological associations.

The theory also illuminates dispersion in militating against the family, for whom centralization is key in preserving identity and (re)producing and maintaining power over offspring. Moreover, their project of opening multiple, non-teleological epistemological pathways and heterogeneous modes of communal existence is grounded by a

stance against hierarchy and seeking the possibilities in the concept of Becoming, arguing that:

> Becoming is not an evolution, at least not an evolution by descent and filiation. Becoming produces nothing by filiation; all filiation is imaginary. Becoming is always of a different order than filiation. . . . Becoming is a rhizome, not a classificatory or genealogical tree. Becoming is certainly not imitating, or identifying with something: neither is it regressing-progressing: neither is it corresponding, establishing corresponding relations: neither is it producing, producing a filiation or producing through filiation. Becoming is a verb with a consistency all its own: it does not reduce to or lead back to, 'appearing,' 'being,' 'equaling,' or 'producing.' (*Plateaus* 238-9)

Formulating the definition of Becoming through negation itself signals a binary operation, enabling the move to characterize Becoming as without content and, in the only positive definition, as an action, "a verb". Catherine Malabou, in her essay, "Who's Afraid of Hegelian Wolves?," points out that "becoming-animal has no foreseeable end. Its operation is ateleological and for this reason it subverts knowledge and calculation" (129). Yet she asks,

"does not conceiving of becoming as something unassignable, as resisting all anticipation including the divine, amount to positing this becoming as more divine than God himself?" (129). Thus a religious commitment attends their political radicalism of "becoming-minoritarian," in its general form, which includes the creative "becoming of everybody" and "continuous variation" (*Plateaus* 106). Being remains implicit in this definition and operates as the "other side" to Becoming, in which case, as Slavo Zizek has pointed out in his analysis, "This story of the Hegelian Deleuze goes on ad infinitum," which would constitute an accurate reading rather than a refutation (51). Defining Becoming in this manner, sets the metaphysical stage for speaking or thinking in terms of the rhizome and the "tribe" while marking a clear distinction from Being as a fascistic desire for security and death. The point for Deleuze and Guattari, of course, is to find what lies outside the triangulated state model or Being to provide thought with a paradoxical non-organizing model and perpetuate thought's connective movement through something other than hierarchal filiation. However, Deleuze and Guattari couch their model of communal subjectivity dialectically and retain the notion of kinship in theorizing a new subjectivity: "Every thought is already a

tribe, the opposite of a State" (*Plateaus* 377). The counter formulation of the "tribe," if one might come to understand its contours, at least implicitly foregrounds the work filiation entails. In questioning Freud's totalizing Oedipal triangulation, the "tribe" offers an alternative model to kinship metaphors to elaborate their theory of rhizomatics. They argue in *Anti-Oedipus* that,

> boxing the life of the child up within the Oedipus complex, by making familial relations the universal mediation of childhood, we cannot help but fail to understand the production of the unconscious itself, and the collective mechanisms that have an immediate bearing on the unconscious: in particular, the entire interplay between primal psychic repression, the desiring-machines, and the body without organs. (48-9)

Replacing the Oedipal family with the "tribe" signals an attempt to escape stultifying familial relations, and thereby understand better the production of the unconscious, by way of "other" repressed types of familial relations. Implicit in this criticism, and explicit elsewhere throughout their critique, is that making "familial relations" universally mediate childhood is ideological and supports a privileged, authoritarian position of the parent or psychoanalyst. The "tribe" as an

apparently ethnographically real entity attempts to arrive at the truth of the production of the unconscious, which is an orphan that "produces itself within the identity of nature and man" (*Anti-Oedipus* 49).

Theory's 'Monstrous Child'

Such a commitment to what might be called the dispersed family becomes evident by following a marginal argument Deleuze and Guattari engage in with Louis Althusser. Very early in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari deny the efficacy of ideology as a critical concept when they write that, "There is no ideology and never has been" (4). At a much later moment, however, they posit their own critical theory of "[n]oology, which is distinct from ideology, [and] is precisely the study of images of thought, and their historicity" (*Plateaus* 376). Noology denies limited referentiality around a conceptual locus and thus releases thought. Nevertheless, categorically denouncing ideology seems extremely uncritical in itself. More importantly, the notion of "historicity" implies not only establishing dualisms between historical epochs but also establishing clearly discernable linkages between periods. According to Althusser's theory of ideology, one can only locate and identify ideology as such retroactively and denying

ideology in the present tense and retroactively could only highlight ideology's pervasiveness, in which the denial of ideology becomes an ideology itself.

The categorical denial of the existence and efficacy of ideology without directly engaging this pervasive and multivalent concept represents, speaking strictly within the framework of ideology, ideology par excellence. One reason for the denial is because the family plays a pivotal role in Althusser's elucidation of how ideology functions despite the fact that he uses it only as a brief, though concise, example. He centers his theory around the family because for a structural Marxism, the family represents a base socio-economic unit since "[i]t intervenes in the reproduction of labour-power. In different modes of production it is the unit of production and/or the unit of consumption" (Althusser 164). Moreover, if one is to think through/about/in ideology (without assuming one will reach, or has reached, a space beyond ideology) than there seems no better place to start than by examining what Althusser says about his own discourse of ideology, a kind of meta-discourse of ideology the basis of which is difficult to locate. For instance, he claims that, "[Thus] in order to represent why the category of the 'subject' is constitutive of ideology, which only exists by constituting concrete

subjects as subjects, I shall employ a special mode of exposition: 'concrete' enough to be recognized, but abstract enough to be thinkable and thought, giving rise to knowledge" (Althusser 162). The "abstraction" in his mode of exposition generally prefaces and follows such examples; that is, the examples are nested within and centralize his theoretical discourse. After briefly demonstrating in quotidian terms how interpellation functions by providing a literal "person in the street" example, Althusser explains that,

> for the convenience and clarity of my little theoretical theatre I have had to present things in the form of a sequence, with a before and an after, and thus in the form of temporal succession. . . . But in reality these things happen without any succession. The existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing. (162)

In sorting out interpellation's progression by bracketing simultaneity and installing an artificial linearity, Althusser continues, explaining that:

> ideology has always-already interpellated individuals as subjects, which amounts to making it clear that individuals are always-already interpellated by

> ideology as subjects, which necessarily leads us to one last proposition: *individuals are always-already subjects*. Hence, individuals are 'abstract' with respect to the subjects which they always-already are. This proposition might seem paradoxical. (163)

That is, ideology operates on a "double constitution" principle in which the subject exists as such through interpellation and ideology exists as such through the subjects' acting on and practicing ideas formed through an "imaginary" relation to the material forms of existence. To risk the pitfalls of summarizing, one might call this a more nuanced articulation of an inescapable double-bind. Of course Althusser's own elegant summarization of ideology states that it, "represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (155).

On one level, the repetition derives from how Althusser plays on the connotations of "individual" and "subject" where, on the one hand, the term individual carries with it a liberal tradition's notion of a self-willed, self-made being unconstrained by or free from autocracy or theocracy with enough volition to consent to a social contract that enhances one's freedoms; whereas, in this same tradition, subject connotes precisely the opposite. The irony, of course, turns on the fact that

there could still be "subjects" at the apex of liberalism's social, political and economic project. In this sense, Althusser's "play" on words represents more than play, and signifies a sustained, continual and even repetitive critique lacking an emancipatory hubris and the possibility for utopian escape. While the repetitive discourse helps denaturalize "individual," in order to concretize the abstraction of individual, Althusser relies upon a paradoxically concrete and abstract example when he writes:

> That an individual is always-already a subject, even before he is born, is nevertheless the plain reality, accessible to everyone and not a paradox at all. Freud shows that individuals are always 'abstract' with respect to the subjects they always-already are, simply noting the ideological ritual that surrounds the expectation of a 'birth', that 'happy event'. Everyone knows how much and in what way an unborn child is expected. Which amounts to saying, very prosaically, if we agree to drop the 'sentiments', i.e. the forms of family ideology (paternal/maternal/conjugal/fraternal) in which the unborn child is expected: it is certain in advance that it will bear its Father's Name, and will therefore have an identity and be irreplaceable.

> Before its birth, the child is therefore always-already a subject, appointed as a subject in and by the specific familial ideological configuration in which it is 'expected' once it has been conceived. I hardly need add that this familial ideological configuration is, in its uniqueness, highly structured, and that it is in this implacable and more or less 'pathological' . . . structure that the former subject-to-be will have to 'find' 'its' place, i.e. 'become' the sexual subject (boy or girl) which it already is in advance. (163)

The familial example illustrating both the impossibility of an individual's abstraction and the "subjectedness" that constitutes ideology qualifies utopian and emancipatory thought by centralizing one's attention around the concrete as well as drawing on the etymology of family, which derives from *famlus* or slave. For Althusser, the family is responsible for the inevitability of becoming a subject, perennially the child. Therefore, in Althusser's analysis structural expectation equals subjection and the "necessary" outside of this expectation - what might be called the "unexpected individual" - remains unthinkable and largely irrelevant. One might also wonder if bearing the father's name is necessary rather than habitual.

Employing the concrete and apparently universal experience everyone has had with the clichéd notions and at the same time the traumatic experience of expecting a child, Althusser not only attempts to lead one toward thinking at the limits of the subject by undercutting thinking that most abstract category of "individual" but also, and at the same time, instantiates the family as a powerful allegory used in thinking state power, subjectivity, and history against which one ought to oppose. Furthermore, this seemingly innocuous and seemingly inconsequential example grounds not only Althusser's notion of interpellation but also ideology as such since ideology attempts to maintain a critical stance toward the initial and repetitive expectation of a birth into a sociopolitical configuration.

Ideology could thus be said to be born at the moment the expectation of a birth erupts. Presumably, the upheaval fostered by ideology's critical efficacy would result in a concentrated and more rigorous critique of the family and the state, which Deleuze and Guattari inherit, while retaining within itself not only the potential for sheer repetition but also the risk of absolute structural determination. They avoid ideology because it presupposes an Oedipal family model, which is itself complicit with capitalist (re)production, and which the concept of

ideology understands as naturalized. In relation to Althusser's "process" of ideology, Deleuze and Guattari vigorously seek to dismantle the conceptual force of a double-bind (e.g. structuring and interdicting desire) while illuminating the repressed rhizomatic or unforecastable matrix of possibilities, in which a birth is always only expected.

Although *A Thousand Plateaus* devotes little attention to family in its specificity, it does appear in more abstract clothing through several organizational concepts, such as genealogy, homogeneity, unity, resemblance, evolution, and state power, whereby the conventional family, as a social unit, embodies all of these concepts in a microcosom, if it exists at all. In order to critique state sanctioned forms of kinship, and a concomitant binary and hierarchical episteme, Deleuze and Guattari must associate the concept of a "collective body" concretely with the family and, on another level of their critique, to the State: "They [collective bodies] have a special relation to families, because they link the family model to the State model at both ends and regard themselves as 'great families' of functionaries, clerks, intendants, or farmers" (*Plateaus* 366). More importantly, all collective bodies on the family model and the State model channel

desire through repressive trajectories already outlined by not only beliefs in unity, identity, and representational verisimilitude but also by what Deleuze and Guattari identify as a universally constructed desire for security and stasis. Such a desire is ultimately an individualized or micro fascism, a love for the power that dominates, a love for family, nation, and state. In order to push the idea of "collective body" to its breaking point, however, they argue that:

> it seems that *in* many of these collective bodies there is something else at work that does not fit into this [State] schema. It is not just their obstinate defense of their privileges. It is also their aptitude . . . to constitute themselves as a war machine, following other models, another dynamism, a nomadic ambition, over against the State. As an example, there is the very old problem of the lobby, a group with fluid contours, whose position is very ambiguous in relation to the State it wishes to "influence" and the war machine it wishes to promote, to whatever ends. . . . What we wish to say, rather, is that collective bodies always have *fringes* or minorities that reconstitute equivalents of the war machine . . . in specific assemblages such as building

> bridges or cathedrals or rendering judgments or making music or instituting a science, a technology. . . . (*Plateaus* 366)

The affective content of a nomadic ambition entails, contrary to Althusser's child, pure, critical resistance to, or transformation of, any and all imperatives. And despite what may be read as a rare equivocation in this text, the "it seems" stands in stark contrast to the axiom with which the "plateau" "1227: Treatise on Nomadology - The War Machine" begins: "The war machine is exterior to the State apparatus" (*Plateaus* 351). Taken together, the ambivalent spatial representation cited above and the axiom signal a critical stance toward oppositional responses to the question of kinship and an exuberance toward the anticipatory "grounds" of multiplicities, "war machines," whose dispersal and connective movement originate within and from without collective, hierarchical bodies, both nonetheless born together. Yet, Deleuze and Guattari remain committed to elaborating if not theorizing relationality without a binary arrangement:

> It is not out of the question, however, that in order to pass from one [pole of sovereignty] to the other there must occur, 'between' them, an event of an entirely different nature, one that hides outside the

> image [of the state with two heads], that takes place outside. (*Plateaus* 375)

Subverting if not resisting understanding is "an event" that situates itself "between" two poles yet remains outside of them. Appropriating Althusser's polar formulation of the state's ideological apparatuses, the two poles of sovereignty become analogous to the two parents of a nuclear family, while the third "event" steps into the position of a child to "complete" the triangulation in an apparently dynamic, divergent, and flexible modality. Yet, at the same time, the child must remain completely separate ("of an entirely different nature") from those to whom it must relate. That is, "outside" of sovereignty one can "expect" an unanticipated "event" that is never interpellated, a subject of noology, which would, if couched in a familial analogy, be a child productively defying thought at every turn. Similarly, within the framework of their political analogy above, what remains unaccountable is the "very old problem of the lobby" whose political ends remain undetermined and therefore a greater threat and perhaps promise than that of the war machine's.

In attempting to overturn nuclear, hierarchical and patriarchical forms of kinship, rhizomatics inverts the Oedipal triangle and theorizes kinship based upon a child's

"originary" subjectivity. Jerry Aline Flieger, in identifying Deleuze and Guattari's indebtedness to Freud in *Anti-Oedipus*, argues that their "frontal attack on psychoanalysis . . . smacks of classic Freudian denial" and that the "virulence of this disavowal indicates that Deleuze and Guattari are more Oedipalist than they aver" (601). Flieger opens the essay by pointing out that their book's title positions them in "a binary, oppositional, either/or antagonism which draws a line in the sand" and thus imposes and reaffirms a limit in the same way Oedipus marks a limit imposed upon myriad multiplicities Deleuze and Guattari advocate (601). But if *Anti-Oedipus* positions Deleuze and Guattari as co-conspirators in the work of exclusion and reaffirms (through negation) Freudian psychoanalysis, then *A Thousand Plateaus* could only repeat these acts since it continues the work of *Anti-Oedipus* insofar as it employs and privileges a theory of a child's subjectivity as one basis for rhizomatics, an epistemological rupture, and gestures toward a communal formation challenging repressive and oppositional or Oedipal forms of kinship. In this reading, privileging the child's subjectivity would not short-circuit the work of difference but rather places the child's presumed radical instability against the parental or state authoritative

power while also preserving the antagonistic and tripartite family structure. However, by acknowledging the metalogical problem of binary structure, the theory of the rhizome becomes a matter of inhabiting, one might say, the space between—rendering boundaries (im)permeable if not untenable, a space between the child and parents—while a radical commitment privileges neither term in the binary, such that the limits of employing and then erasing the child as a grounding concept for a developmental theory of subjectivity, which Freud enacts in the pages of *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, might be fully elaborated.

Polymorphous Freudianism

The main feature appropriated from Freud is the idea of "polymorphous perversity" which he identifies as a "general and fundamental human characteristic" (57). This universal propensity can most readily be observed in children, who "under the influence of seduction can become polymorphously perverse, and can be led into all possible kinds of sexual irregularities. This shows that an aptitude for them is innately present in their disposition" (Freud 57). It is this infinite play of possibilities that rhizomatics attempts to (re)theorize without codifying. In the opening chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus*, "Introduction:

Rhizome" Deleuze and Guattari attack psychoanalysis for its program of suppressing infinite play when they read the case of Little Hans as:

> an example of child psychoanalysis at its purest: they kept BREAKING HIS RHIZOME and BLOTCHING HIS MAP, setting it straight for him, blocking his every way out, until he began to desire his own shame and guilt, until they had rooted shame and guilt in him, PHOBIA (they barred him from the rhizome of the building, then from the rhizome of the street, they rooted him in his parent's bed, they radicled him to his own body, they fixated him on Professor Freud). (*Anti-Oedipus* 14)

For Deleuze and Guattari, psychoanalysis' project will always be one of domination over an originally "polymorphously perverse" subjectivity and rooting it within an oppositional Oedipal conceptual framework. Moreover, the child's "originary" and "natural" subjectivity will always remain outside of and the other to a model of hierarchical power formations.

In the "plateau" "1227: Treatise on Nomadology - The War Machine," Deleuze and Guattari cite Jacques Meunier's ethnographic study of groups of street children in Bogotá in support of "Proposition II: The exteriority of the war

machine is also attested to by ethnology. . . ." and their claim that "[p]acks, bands, are groups of the rhizome type, as opposed to the arborescent type that centers around organs of power" (*Plateaus* 357-8). This group's characteristic "organizational" features consist of dispersal, decentralization, and maintaining a position of exteriority to familial and state orders. The marginalized and occluded exteriority and rhizomatic organization elaborated through ethnographic studies advocates essentialisms of children, but essentialisms that refuse to be located. The gang's characteristics Deleuze and Guattari find most supportive for their theory of rhizomatics are the leader's structural inability to acquire stable power; internal alliances among individual members that may threaten the group's cohesion if an alliance decides to split off from the larger gang; and an age limit for participation in the gang's activities (*Plateaus* 358). These safeguards codify communal instability and, at the same time, sound remarkably similar to some of constitutional democracy's guiding principles rather than markers of the oppressively tragic socio-political determinations of ideology. In response to Althusser's theory of ideology and interpellation's founding of subjectivity, rhizomatics reacts decisively toward

structural determination and attempts to theorize an avenue for renewed, inassimilable and self-sustaining agency. The rhizomatic "structure" of subjectivity and kinship Deleuze and Guattari propose resonates a Freudian conception of a polymorphous perverse subjectivity located in the figure of the child, whose presumed capacity for limitless libidinal play (re)presents the subordinated conditions of possibility for Oedipalized familial structures and establishes a "war machine" capable of escaping polarized sovereignty. They write that the "only way to get outside the dualisms is to be-between, to pass between. . . ." and that the "girl and the child do not become; it is becoming itself that is a child or a girl" (*Plateaus* 277). Deleuze and Guattari resist Althusser's structural determination and iron-clad interpellation by exploiting the simultaneity Althusser brackets and reverses and resists brute determination implied by the widely accessible experience of birth. The imperative "to be-between" marks out or "territorializes" a (non)position from which one might reinvigorate one's own self-fashioning without conceivable end while acknowledging and critiquing the hardened, non-porous "dualisms" on either side.

In addition to approaching Freudian psychoanalysis from behind, Deleuze and Guattari take an intertextual

stand toward the discipline of sociology, particularly in reference to two of its forebearers, Herbert Spencer and Lester Frank Ward, who affirmed that the field of inquiry could, and perhaps should, be seen as organizing itself around the "exercise of a directive control over human zeal for the improvement of mankind" (21). Although Ward commits largely to progress on the level of affect rather than intellect, his purpose entails mapping life's possibilities in which the deficient child plays a prominent, legitimating role for legislative and "directive control."

Lester Frank Ward's contribution to sociology builds on Herbert Spencer's theory of how natural selection operates in the social sphere or on the level of the human. Any progress, in fact, Ward attributes to natural selection:

> There has been progress in civilization just as there has been progress in organic life, because the highest and best has been selected and preserved, and the lowest and poorest has perished. (15)

As one of sociology's founding figures, Herbert Spencer's scientifically-inspired and eclectically supported evolutionary theory remains a seductive framework for understanding the totality of life. Spencer's lasting legacy is his insistence on a dialectically driven advance,

across both the organic and inorganic spheres, toward greater complexity - a march from homogeneity to heterogeneity through integrative processes. Spencer writes that the law of evolution expresses "how existences of all orders *do* exhibit a progressive integration of Matter and concomitant loss of Motion" (Spencer 307). Yet, death thought as finality, end or complete arrest resists integration within what might be called Spencer's total system of possibilities. Integration, of course, is the gentler formulation for the violence of "subjugation" and "subordination" of the homogenous, lower orders of tribes and children - those orders Spencer delineates as the origins from which complex civilization erupts (Spencer 316). Death for these orders remains necessary to advance complex lifeworlds and at the same time arrests such work, rendering it impossible. The question plaguing Spencer is: What kind of Life, understood as integrative movement, warrants termination or extermination as a preconditional, founding move? Within Life, such an act remains an impossible possibility, one that Spencer could not adequately integrate into the Law of Evolution.

From such a position, Spencer is able to construct rigorous analogies on the way toward mapping the totality of life's possibilities; he thinks, therefore, from a

position that cannot be mastered but which masters all else and allows him to declare the relativity of all knowledge, relative that is to his thought of "perfect agreement." For Spencer, analogies are all that exist; in order to live, one must proceed by analogy rather than by critical questioning. Agency, however, requires the negation of an other in the evolution of life, which rends progress from itself. Death, which can never be left behind safely enough, nonetheless regulates this epistemology, included and disavowed through phrases like "continual re-adaptation" or the key word "integration." More importantly, death's extremity and harshness is ameliorated by the notion that it works only on the deficient. Determining how far death recedes, relative to oneself, becomes the measure of Progress. The generative paradox of Death's necessity in Life is one in which Spencer's theory of life begins with the death of someone. As a prerequisite to living, there is always already a deficient life form inherently calling for its own modification so as to attain a better fit with what surrounds and encloses it, in order merely to survive and not necessarily to live better than before. If that which is deemed deficient remains so, the narrative runs, its death changes from a possibility to a biologically justifiable inevitability; in

this logic its own stasis, its radical lack of a persistent force, justifies its extinction. His evolutionary theory demands deficiency, those "inferior creatures," in the form of the "infant" who represents "the first stage of incipient intelligence" in which there are "no cognitions strictly speaking" (Spencer 507, 80). As such, the child stands as a mere primordial intellectual breeding ground for thought itself, that which occurs before the act of organizing experiences into classifiable groups and therefore something not necessarily excluded from knowledge, but rather already known as inscrutable (Spencer 80). The problem the infant represents is that it stalks as an unknowing life form existing within and haunting the knowable structure of life - thus a certain death in life. For Spencer, the infant as such stands at life's unaccountable origins and must be integrated at all costs.

Lester Frank Ward, in *Dynamic Sociology* advances Spencer's "progressive" thought by articulating sociology's normative impulse ("That which considers the conditions of social *progress* is social dynamics") in the hopes of creating a "*Sociocracy*" in which natural laws guide politics for the "good of society" (60, 56). Ward, however, shares Spencer's anxiety over the threat of social

stasis, leading him to codify, paradoxically, society's limits:

> the normal condition is the dynamic one. The forces, so long as unimpeded, produce motion. . . . So long as it is free, society will act. This is the sole condition of all social progress. Interpose obstacles to the movement of these forces, and it is slackened or arrested entirely. A statical condition is brought about. . . . Social stagnation results. Such is the condition of those societies which are under an absolute despotism. Progress is impossible. (42)

Sociology's progressive project depends upon a double movement of identifying and modifying those deemed antiquated, regressive, inert in society and imposing a "directive force" to such candidates (Ward 21). For democracy to secure its existence as a just governing system, there must be the complimentary thought of inert, static and totalitarian societies whose existence is both dangerous and constitutive. Ward's project, from the beginning, crosses itself by codifying political freedom and social progress. Moreover, Ward insists that progress without purpose, which he argues runs through Spencer's thinking, remains an empty practice easily usurped for totalitarian ends. To guard against this possibility and

thereby ensure democracy's possibility, progress must be guided by a teleological plan or design, rather than left to the dictates of genetic development. This is so, he argues, because metaphysical teleology is analogous to "*anthropo-teleology*" insofar as "the acts of men are regarded as emanating from motives which lie within each individual" (Ward 28, 29). As a limit thought, a body without organs (BwO), however, offers a paradoxically hollow entity that effectively resists as it understands territorialization, or rather manipulation and control, while valorizing the child's capacity for "continual variation" or what one might understand as unassimible cognition (i.e. if 'becoming' itself is a child) over against a paternal life-giving and controlling force (*Plateaus* 150). The BwO, "If it is tied to childhood," excludes the possibility of regression to a presumable state of childhood for the adult; rather it functions as an "intense germen," an intense singular organism, "where there are not and cannot be either parents or children" (*Plateaus* 164). Elaborating and giving back Freud's disavowed or unthought polymorphous perversity, then, hinges on reversing his conception of the child as primitive, undeveloped adult and "the child as the germinal contemporary of its parents" (*Plateaus* 164). Deleuze and

Guattari, in this sense, think in opposition to an "anthropo-teleology" (i.e. person of contents guided to a particular end) by elaborating the silenced and excluded rhizomatic "process" without end and continually divesting the body of interiority (which calls for "small supplies of significance and subjectification") in the hopes of eluding if not deflecting an anthropological, territorializing gaze found in psychoanalysis (*Plateaus* 160). However, the BwO not only presents a counter-concept to "anthropo-teleology," but also weds death and life, bringing them into close contact rather than valuing one over the other, and if hypothetically "tied to childhood," interrogates a psychoanalytic developmentalism and a legislative sociological impulse over bodies.

The following chapters read "minoritarian" texts of short stature, one might say, that fail to adhere to classic definitions of "novel" but that nonetheless engage in narrating the adult self. The dissertation itself consciously fails to live up to the status of "tome" in its physical features since it should be understood as an experiment in becoming-minoritarian by attending to representations of a singular "intense germen" Deleuze and Guattari suggest which could be tied to the child. Virginia L. Blum, in her book *Hide and Seek: The Child*

between Psychoanalysis and Fiction, similarly describes the child's conceptual usefulness as a "resolving link" in adult efforts aimed at unification but who nonetheless functions as a mediating "go-between who cannot help but reveal the chasms, the spaces of difference, the heterogeneities it is the child's mission to elide—that makes the go-between child so perilous" revealing rather than ameliorating the grounds of adult self-constructions as tenuous if not violent while elaborating an indifferent social world (7).

CHAPTER ONE: EX-CHANGING THE CHILD IN W. E. B. DU BOIS'S *THE SOULS OF BLACK FOLK*

To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word.
--W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*

The important essay collection, *The American Child*, contains two essays foregrounding the economies operating on and around the child. The one most relevant for my purposes is Laura Dawkins's "Black Babies, White Hysteria: The Dark Child in African-American Literature of the Harlem Renaissance," which examines late-nineteenth century fables portraying births of black babies as emblematic of "horror, disruption, or simply imperfection" in tales by Harlem Renaissance writers whose stories are haunted ("eerily reminiscent") by, as well as maintain, the same racial fear white-authored stories constructed and reproduced (168, 169). Within the eugenicist context that black writers "deplored," Dawkins argues that "light-skinned African-American families, whose dedication to the repression and containment of unruly 'dark elements' disturbingly mirrors the racial obsessions of American white supremacists" (172). Her essay situates this discussion by considering children within the context of economic exchange in which black bodies are repeatedly devalued and none more so than those bodies identified as child-like.

Dawkins cites Patricia Williams's assertion that "'the market valuation of children is reiterated at every level of social and legal thinking'" to indicate the logic's pervasiveness in attempting to contain children so that within such a market logic race might be sorted out for adults by way of children (168). Analyzing several Harlem Renaissance writers' representations of the "'black baby' fable," the essay considers the limits of appropriating the child as a vehicle for "racial redemption" (Dawkins 181). On the one hand, there are those narratives, like Wallace Thurman's *The Blacker the Berry*, Eloise Bibb Thompson's "Masks," that remain aligned with an eugenicist ideology as these stories present "a destructive intrafamilial campaign to eradicate the black 'curse' in mulatto offspring" (Dawkins 173). On the other hand, "the black baby was a beacon for the future, a sign of the strength and resilience of the African American - living proof that the race had survived both enslavement and the genocidal violence following Reconstruction" and takes up Jean Toomer's *Cane* to argue how "Toomer transforms the dark child's 'taint' into a cloak of destiny" via miscegenation or the "'hybrid' child" championed in late-twentieth century fiction and theory (Dawkins 175, 176). Such miscegenation or 'hybridity' leads one back to thinking how

the child might be produced en vitoro or how transracial adoption might lead to possibilities beyond racial coding. The limit to both propositions is that one must, in the first place, recognize what one is "mixing" and account for those differences. Yet the "dark child" remains inassimilable insofar as it is a "horror" or "imperfect" or "devalued" and, in a different version of the same logic, the figure for an "unrealized vision" of "racial redemption" and therefore of the highest value beyond valuation. Nonetheless, Dawkins concludes that "the disowned and devalued dark child . . . still haunts the contemporary American landscape" struggling for and against racial redemption (181). Thus, Dawkins demonstrates how adult-child distinctions and attendant valuations infuse discourses concerning race.

W. E. B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk*, a dynamic, frustrated and complexly constructed text, questions such valuations and at the same time appropriates the child for his critical and redemptive program.[10] Du Bois offers, as

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[10] In the Preface to the Norton Critical Edition of *The Souls of Black Folk*, editors Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Terri Hume Oliver confirm the novel's complex structure and cite Shamoon Zamir's characterization of Du Bois's work as "*Bildungsbiographie*" which they see as "instructive because it suggests the central role of authorship in Du Bois's strategy for winning prominence for himself and his political views" as well as underlining the "centrality of literacy to a claim of humanity [that] is particularly African American" (xvii). Shamoon Zamir's term can be found in "'The Sorrow Songs'/'Song of Myself': Du Bois, the Crisis of Leadership, and Prophetic Imagination." *The Black Columbiad*.

an activist, fiction writer and recognized scholar, at least three different and overlapping vantage points from which he examines race, and these perspectives converge in his book, transforming it into a multiplicity of reflections organized under the rubric of "souls" living and dying under oppression. Yet, Du Bois's complex use of the child in this text has gone largely unremarked.[11]

Laura Dawkins's "disowned and devalued dark child" without question remains as such within a culture of white privilege. Du Bois, however, begins at this conclusion in *The Souls of Black Folk*, and dates its dawning sometime during his "boyhood." The child in Du Bois is both a touchstone for his analysis and yet a figure whose essence is never elaborated. Du Bois begins with a different approach to the presumably gratuitous analogy of the child as gift by which he examines racial hierarchy in the United States, or what he calls the problem of the color-line. Two threads closely linked to the child are exchange and

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Eds. Warner Sollors and Maria Diedrich. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994.

[11] Du Bois's *Brownies' Book* periodical, to which he contributed regularly, sought to inform, entertain and educate African-American children. One study of this periodical, brought to my attention by Eleanora E. Tate, is *The Best of the "Brownies' Book"* edited by Dianne Johnson-Feelings (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). The reference can also be found in Beverly Lyon Clark's *Kiddie Lit: The Cultural Construction of Children's Literature in America*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), page 59, note 55.

exclusion, variously couched in approving and disapproving terms of maturity or socialization.

Du Bois's 'Black Baby'

While Dawkins concludes that the "black baby" offers a resistant figure, a certain insolvable "problem" within an economic and race-based logic, Du Bois finds the child, particularly the autobiographical child, a bottomless account to fund his analysis and also strangely lacking the sophistication necessary to question race-consciousness. Indeed, in nearly every chapter, the contrast between the adult and the child figures as a peculiar subtext. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that Dawkins examines and acknowledges as "the lowest point of black-white relations in the United States," with an estimated one hundred lynchings per year from 1900 to World War I, William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, writing "within and without the Veil," opens his *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) by asking the "unasked question . . . . How does it feel to be a problem?" (Dawkins 168; Conn 135-6; Du Bois 359, 363). Such a question arises and the responses Du Bois offers, I hope to suggest, are linked to accounts of childhood in the restricted economy of adulthood. That is, the problem Du Bois elaborates rests on a system of white recognition of difference and sameness that derives its

valuations from relative comparisons to a mythic gold standard, one both white and adult in its contours. Recounting the genesis of the "problem," Du Bois says:

> And yet, being a problem is a strange experience, -- peculiar even for one who has never been anything else, save perhaps in babyhood and in Europe. It is in the early days of rollicking boyhood that the revelation first bursts upon one, all in a day, as it were. I remember well when the shadow swept across me. . . . In a wee wooden schoolhouse, something put it into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting-cards - ten cents a package - and exchange. The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card, -- refused it peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil. (363-4)

Du Bois figures "babyhood" as an antecedent to "boyhood" but also as the uncertain ("perhaps") subjective space opening the question of "problem-solution." While "rollicking boyhood" as a space delineated by pastoral innocence, it maintains such a configuration only in relation to an impending consciousness of difference

produced by exclusion and subsequent valuation. One can read Du Bois's book as a larger consideration of how the "problem" is constructed in its discursive production but also how to begin to dismantle this problem on its own terms.

The opening pages, however, offer one thematic set by which to consider the "problem" the conjured issue of difference foregrounds. The term "conjured" here is significant because Du Bois himself admits as much when he says "something put it into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting-cards." One is left to speculate as to the ('pedagogical') origins of such an idea or notion of exchanging cards, representative not only of monetary value ("ten cents a package") but also invested with self-worth, as a symbolic extension of one's social capital. The mystical origins of exchange initiate a baby and boy into a system of inclusion and exclusion that sustains a community in the violent work toward realizing its own completion.

Du Bois also points out the conjured grounds of producing difference when he writes, "or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out" nonetheless, implying that while significant similarities that might allow entrance to a certain sociality may or may not exist, the refusal without ground and put forth "peremptorily"

forces upon him a demand not to exchange with those who grant value or withhold it. The paradox issuing from "something" and confronting the young Du Bois with the imperative to exchange while that "something" also structurally limits with whom one can exchange not only signifies the difference between "boyhood" and adulthood (not knowing one's worth versus knowing one's value and the ability to confer or withhold value) but also establishes the apparent necessity of exchange couched within an educational context. Thus Du Bois's examination of the "problem" in its existential and social structuration continually foregrounds an often overlooked conceptual binarism of child-adult.

In addressing the cultural question forced upon him, he writes "To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word" (Du Bois 363). Of course, he writes a rich, multi-dimensional analysis out of what some might consider a child-like strategic and resistant silence arbitrarily maintained. One might consider Du Bois's book an answer ("seldom *a* word" rather than "I seldom answer *with a* word.") to the question insofar as it anticipates that any answer could provoke myriad responses or understanding that to answer would also

mean, however minimally, acquiescing to the question's terms.

This is not to suggest that Du Bois lacks a rhetorical purpose or political project: "This, then, is the end of his striving: to be a co-worker in the kingdom of culture to escape both death and isolation, to husband and use his best powers and latent genius" (365). The first chapter's following pages enumerate the contradictions inherent in the Kantian ideal, from a foundational exclusion from the "kingdom" to the notion of "culture" as such that is both racialized and, I hope to suggest, adult in terms of an imperative to reach "cultural" maturity by recognizing and cultivating one's status within a circumscribed community.

Du Bois addresses the "problem" that confronts him by positioning himself, at various moments, within and without the worlds separated by a veil and somewhere between "double-consciousness" in order to better interrogate the "something" that compelled boys and girls to buy and exchange visiting-cards. One might call the "something" ideology, meta-narratives or narrative as such. Thus Du Bois's examination couches itself in narrative, but a narrative endowed with the facility of double-consciousness adopted as a strategic capacity for cultural critique as well as a pernicious, debilitating problem for those unable

to wield it or integrate it effectively (365). However, Du Bois is able to criticize and assess from an analytical position of "babyhood" that is both before the exchange of cards and the consciousness of difference as well as after the realization that "for all the worlds I longed for, and all their dazzling opportunities, were theirs, not mine" (364). Appropriating the "problem child" as the ungrounded basis for criticism allows Du Bois's work to contain many voices and "rationalities" even as he doggedly held to reason's liberating potential. For instance, even as he sets out the Kantian goal he sees its limits insofar as "this strange prejudice as is founded on just homage to civilization, culture, righteousness, and progress, he humbly bows and meekly does obeisance" (Du Bois 369). He thus reads African Americans approaching "prejudice" passively, as an effect of assuming "culture" as monolithic. One could charge Du Bois with "race traitorism" by adopting a Western ideal of community whose basis is exclusionary on the one hand but, on the other hand, his criticism foregrounds his stance as one of the most ambitious advocates for African Americans excluded from such community.

Writing about a post-Reconstruction era in a Progressive one, despite the Fifteenth Amendment's passing

as an attempt to end Reconstruction, Du Bois's vision of disrupting the circle of hate, or burning contempt he felt as a child, revolves around the question of maturity and focuses on the child since "The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, -- this longing to attain self-conscious manhood" and integrate "his double self" (365). This concern could be explained by the fact that Du Bois's professional training as a sociologist sensitizes him to legitimized processes and objectives for proper socialization. Without the categories of adult and child, the former typically marked as autonomous and the latter dependent, the study of the latter reaching the point of the former would not exist. Du Bois's use of the child is readily apparent when he introduces the curious term "race-childhood" when discussing communal ideals fading due to relentless and pernicious prejudice (369). T. J. Jackson Lears contextualizes the terms' currency, explaining that:

> By the 1880s, the link between the childhood of the individual and the childhood of the race was firmly established in the bourgeois imagination. The notion had become a nineteenth-century commonplace, used by Spencerians and Hegalians, positivists and idealists; it was less a product of self-conscious

analysis than an outgrowth of widespread prejudices and habits of mind. . . . (147)

The analogy's explanatory efficiency, then, seems sweepingly seductive because it was backed by yet another; the "common tendency to analogize individual and social development" (147).[12] Although Lears points out that the prevailing social perspective saw "nineteenth-century liberalism [as] the maturist outlook known to man," Du Bois locates inequality at the individual level of upbringing occurring on a less than conscious-level when he asserts, "Much that the white boy imbibes from his earliest social atmosphere forms the puzzling problems of the black boy's mature years" (462).

Although the terms of child and childhood pervade his discourse, he refrains from appropriating "adult" as something worth pursuing, at least as it is understood as including wealth, training, and political power, that is a certain unproblematic presence in the world. (He writes that the "power of the ballot" is necessary only to the extent that it provides "sheer self-defense" rather than understanding it as that which signals political autonomy equal to that of whites and providing leverage in seeking

[12] Lears also provides G. Stanley Hall's dictum "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny" as an exemplary dominant scientific expression (147).

"Freedom" (Du Bois 370).) Indeed, the adult emerges by negation. In addition, the communitarian ideals Du Bois lists - "human brotherhood gained through the unifying ideal of Race," and "developing the traits and talents of the Negro . . . in conformity to the greater ideals of the American Republic" - are continually contested by "the Negro Problem" (370).

The linkage Du Bois draws between the "American Republic" and the "striving in the souls of black folk" rests on a conception of the child. Caroline F. Levander and Carol J. Singley write that U.S. national identity is not only "persistently configured in the language of family" but also "identified with and imagined as a child" in relation to the adult Great Britain and inscribed most notably in the Declaration of Independence (4). Bringing the Declaration of Independence to bear on itself, Du Bois asserts that "there are to-day no truer exponents of the pure human spirit of the Declaration of Independence than the American Negroes" (370). Such a reversal of dominant white bias is quite in keeping with his vision of education, by which one might come "to know and test the power of the cabalistic letters of the white man" (Du Bois 367). That is, for Du Bois the "Negro Problem" is, among other things, neither problematic enough nor solved.

"A Great Work of Social Reform Is No Child's Task"

In exposing U.S. policy blunders, hypocrisy and ineptitude, while careful to stress its successes, Du Bois's chapter "Of the Dawn of Freedom" takes the Freedmen's Bureau from the period of 1861 to 1872 as its focal point for inquiry. Arguing that the Freedmen's Bureau became a labor bureau of unanticipated success, he demonstrates that the U.S. government's ideological conception of the Bureau as well as the Bureau's own self-conception as contingent and temporary in nature failed to produce sustainable social equality (Du Bois 387-90). Among such ideological conceptions was the notion that the Bureau functioned in the capacity of "government guardianship" rather than a "permanent" system a "social seer" might envision to produce "a great school of prospective citizenship" (Du Bois 389-90). Toward the analysis's end, Du Bois presents a holistic overview of the Freedmen's Bureau up to the Fifteenth Amendment's passing and reveals a paternalistic, and as he points out, "common-sense" logic constructing African Americans as children. On the one hand, the government's attempts to ameliorate black suffering and social injustices, however well-intentioned they may have been, were couched in an

autonomous-dependent dichotomy typically figured in adult-child terms. Du Bois summarizes the logic this way:

> For, argued the plain common-sense of the nation, if it is unconstitutional, unpractical, and futile for the nation to stand guardian over its helpless wards, then there is left but one alternative, -- to make those wards their own guardians by arming them with the ballot. (389)

Once the "guardian" reaches a limit in its own powers to "correct" the "helplessness" of its own "wards," once it reaches a maximal point of its own abilities, the guardian grants a measure of political opportunity or "right," whose nature is by definition non-conferrable, to transform "wards" into "guardians."

One sees the movement in terms of an adult figure reduced to child-like incapacity and dependence in the face of its presumed child. The adult, to recuperate its authoritative position, grants autonomy from its incapacitated state, to end helplessness by opening up the political opportunity to help one's self within a system not of one's own choosing and hostile to the ward—by virtue of obligation—to begin with. Thus the government's very "escape" from helplessness and (dis)solution into a childish incapacity, which it perceives in its "wards,"

entails reaching the very point of incapacitation and to displace it onto "others" thereby reinstalling a cycle of (in)dependence it simultaneously disavows. Du Bois lays bear the disavowal on two levels: At the level of concrete reform, he concludes that the Freedmen's Bureau's demise could be contributed to mismanagement, vague and conflicted objectives, inadequate leadership at various levels, fierce political opposition as well as weak political support (387-8). He concludes that "the Freedmen's Bureau died, and its child was the Fifteenth Amendment" pointing out how, at a certain limit, governmental incapacity in the face of its presumed "wards" was displaced into legislation that would turn "wards" into their own autonomous caretakers. However, the legislation "ended a civil war by beginning a race feud" (Du Bois 389). At the level of concrete social reform, Du Bois points out that the work certainly is not a "child's task" as paternal governmental reactions to its own (dis)solution, its products, erupt into its very insolvable "problems."

Yet the problematic status of "babyhood" in which one does not know one is a "problem," and at various points appropriates the designation only to re-problematize certain structural "givens," travels throughout the book that itself defies categorization by genre. Du Bois's

notion of "babyhood" becomes the only subjective space (in contrast to the geographical space of Europe) that inhabits and grounds a problem-solution economy of thought without becoming subject to such an economy. In the "After-Thought," Du Bois (re)presents his book as a new-born and couples this to arboreal images in the hopes that it will not be "still-born" (547).

Childish Points of Departure

Du Bois's well-known criticism of Booker T. Washington in *The Souls of Black Folk* commends Washington's tireless striving and self-reliance and specifically focuses on and elaborates what Du Bois's understands as an underrepresented Northern criticism: "Mr. Washington's counsels of submission [that] overlooked certain elements of true manhood, and that his educational programme was unnecessarily narrow" (394). Peter Conn, in *The Divided Mind*, succinctly and usefully reviews Washington's self-image and its political limits in contrast to Du Bois's own critical project, concluding that Washington's "blindness" to white oppression must be attributed to how "Washington interlinked his own fate with that of his race so intimately that his personal success *required* a commensurate collective success" (130). As Du Bois points out, however, such fate is imaginatively marked at boyhood

and one of the most decisive differences between Du Bois and Washington stems from Du Bois's vision of childhood differences and the value systems implied in those differing visions.

As if to condense the contrast as well as starkly present the cruelty of Washington's logic, which lies in Washington's intellectual accommodation, Du Bois writes:

> Mr. Washingtion knew the heart of the South from birth and training, so by singular insight he intuitively grasped the spirit of the age which was dominating the North. And so thoroughly did he learn the speech and thought of triumphant commercialism, and the ideals of material prosperity, that the picture of a lone black boy poring over a French grammar amid the weeds and dirt of a neglected home soon seemed to him the acme of absurdities. One wonders what Socrates and St. Francis of Assisi would say to this. And yet this very singleness of vision and thorough oneness with his age is a mark of the successful man. (393)

Although Conn has remarked on the irony of this criticism - that Du Bois's integrationist hopes in relief of double-consciousness share an affinity with Washington's "singleness of vision" - (123) Du Bois attempts to severely undermine Washington's project *a priori* - to go back

further into Washington's life it would seem necessary for Du Bois to appropriate a genetic argument. Counter to Washington's pragmatic predispositions and radically passive learning style, Du Bois offers an apparently incomprehensible non-economic scholastic martyr willing to sacrifice material comfort for intellectual engagement in fluid French grammar. In the chapter "Of the Wings of Atlanta" Du Bois continues to disengage education of the young from economic aggrandizement, but at this point Du Bois criticizes the misdirection of Washington's largely egocentric ambitions, with important but brief exceptions, by finding in youth the explanatory principle upon which to base his critique (403).

The critique of Washington-the-adult finds its ground at its genealogical roots where the child, if left to his own resources and immediate environment, will result in an "abortion," which is how Du Bois characterizes an idealistically bankrupt educational and social system (423). Du Bois thus sees no value in money itself and the limited effort of working strictly for pay; rather, the most valuable asset is an expenditure of effort and concentration directed toward ideals of Right and Truth one seems predisposed to in youth if also left to one's own devises. This is not to say that Du Bois excludes wealth

from the system he imagines because he reminds one that within a capitalist system that can become and often is rigorously exploitative, evidenced by slavery, "thrift and toil and saving are the highways to new hopes and new possibilities" (417). Yet focus merely on the means, turning into greed, deludes those like the mythical and youthful Atlanta, who is finally domesticated by a husband who exploits her weakness for wealth; whereas the true end must be "manly self-respect" which would not entail "silent submission to civic inferiority" as does Washington's "manly self-respect" coupled to thrift (398-9).

Washington's "triple paradox" hinges, in Du Bois analysis, on a developmental notion of maturity, that Washington has not yet grown up because he has not yet refused or deeply questioned the premises of his upbringing. Because Washington refuses to meet the challenges of expending his efforts uselessly, or at least not for his personal, material benefit, in the way the studious child does, he remains inferior to the boy seemingly compelled to read French grammar as well as inferior to, by representing the apotheosis of, the self-respecting man unwilling to abdicate self-assertion.

If Du Bois cannot affirm Washington's self-defeating ends nor his limited means, particularly in terms of

industrial training, what he can affirm is youth. After examining Du Bois's *The Quest of the Silver Fleece*, Conn concludes that the novel discloses "Du Bois's personal struggle to discover what could be affirmed" but despite Conn's otherwise penetrating and illuminating analysis, he overlooks youth even though he characterizes the main protagonists, Zora and Bles Alwyn, as "two young Alabama blacks"(155, 150). Thus what Conn takes as adjectival, I read as primary, but not in order to necessarily revalue what he elides, but rather to make explicit an implicit grammar of both Du Bois's analyses since, as Conn rightly points out, it was "ambivalence that both energized and frustrated him" (150).

Even though ambivalence is often associated with youth, in perhaps its most commonsensical formulation, Du Bois pursues youth with tireless intensity, and rhetorically capitalizes on it. In the chapter "Of the Meaning of Progress," Du Bois recounts both his search for a teaching position when a student at Fisk as well as an unspecified amount of time after "The ten years that follow youth, the years when first the realization comes that life is leading somewhere. . . ." (410). In the course of Du Bois's search for a teaching appointment, he stumbles upon Josie, "a thin, homely girl of twenty" eager to learn

(406). The chapter's principal purpose is an ethnographic attempt to describe the empirical and spiritual contours of the obstacles African Americans encounter in "isolated" Southern communities. While the Veil looms as a constant source of oppression, Du Bois documents its effects of enforced poverty, the monotony of chores, and unrequited longing as that which opposed "common consciousness" (410). He posits that

> The mass of those to whom slavery was a dim recollection of childhood found the world a puzzling thing: it asked little of them, and they answered with little, and yet it ridiculed their offering. Such a paradox they could not understand, and therefore sank into listless indifference, or shiftlessness, or reckless bravado. (410)

The chapter confirms and denies this sociological paradox confronting a generation once removed from the era of slavery and attempts to resist it through the youthful, or more accurately ill-contented, Josie and, by what seems the next generation, Little Doc (Du Bois 410). The ethnography confirms both indifference through a depiction of silent Josie worked to death as well as shiftlessness through "fat Reuben" who Du Bois describes upon his return visit as "a Baptist preacher now, but I fear as lazy as ever" (Du Bois

411-12); confirms reckless bravado through Ben, a defiant "hungry boy" lynched before he could murder his boss. Yet, despite near futility Du Bois presents, even to the extent of ending the chapter with the provocative image of himself riding to Nashville in a Jim Crow car, he leaves a trace of exuberance in Little Doc riding a horse with him and hints at prosperity by visiting a farm "fat with the growing crop" although it is clear this cannot assuage his discontent (414).

Temporally, the chapter is divided and structured between past and future present, insofar as it ends at a time beyond the opening narrative. Gérard Genette painstakingly elaborates narrative discourse or that which mediates a relationship between "events" and the "act" of narrating a situation or event and devotes a significant amount of his attention to analyzing narrative's temporal order (27). In Genette's terms, and to contextualize my oversimplification, Du Bois's chapter could be characterized as "*mixed* analepses" as it extends "back to a point earlier and whose extent arrives at a point later than the beginning of the first narrative" (49). This presupposes, of course, that Du Bois's story and the reader agree on an orienting moment of time. Genette puts the consensus-seeking best when he writes that "The narrative

text, like every other text, has no other temporality than what it borrows, metonymically, from its own reading" (34). Curiously, however, Du Bois opens this chapter, despite the "unavoidable *difficulty of beginning*" Genette emphasizes, with "Once upon a time. . . ." and thus perhaps the most formulaic and "complexly structured openings" since it begins at a particular though unspecified time, refusing to "borrow" time from its reading but starting out, *in medias res*, without "time to *position his voice*" (46). "Once upon a time" signals a fibrillation in Du Bois's search for a "meaning to say" of progress, a search marked at the outset by a phrase immediately recognizable to most readers as indicating youthfulness, specifically Du Bois's youth. Indeed, approaching the last household in his survey, Du Bois formulates its disappearance this way: "In that little valley was a strange stillness as I rode up; for death and marriage had stolen youth and left age and childhood there" (414). Among the multiple efficacies the Veil wields, in its triumph over "Progress," one consists of the ability to steal youth, not necessarily through utopian contentedness presumably found in maturity - although "'Uncle Bird's'" prospering farm supports this - but through severe necessity evidenced through Josie.

Philippe Ariès, in *Centuries of Childhood*, traces the contemporary notion of adolescence back to the eighteenth century when "the ambiguity of puberty [that] was uppermost, and the stress was laid on the effeminate side of a boy just emerging from childhood" and by "around 1900" "Youth gave the impression of secretly possessing new values capable of reviving an aged and sclerosed society" (29, 30). In light of Ariès's observation, Du Bois harried and conflicted search could be characterized as compelled by the possibilities of youth, at least in the adolescent boy, Little Doc, but only if it assists in overcoming rampant racism, which it seems both Little Doc and Josie cannot. Thus Du Bois's progressive agenda appropriates widely accessible nostalgic and mournful rhetoric to focus efforts toward combating an immediate and concrete oppression while recapitulating the equation of youth with weakness. With Josie's death, and likewise it seems Du Bois's exuberant hopefulness as an educator, material necessity tempers if not crushes youth in order to attain a mature "manly self-respect" prepared to confront and dismantle the Veil.

CHAPTER TWO: THE INCLUDED AND OCCLUDED CHILD IN *HERLAND* AND *THE AWAKENING*

That was precisely the experience of this awakening: receding waves of half-caught swirling vision, memories of home, the steamer, the boat, the airship, the forest - at last all sinking away one after another, till my eyes were wide open, my brain clear, and I realized what had happened.
--Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*

At the end of this awakening stand clarity and objectivity, a renewed life, operating as the ostensible goals of *Herland* and its comparative critique of patriarchal community. The "awakening" belongs to *Herland*'s narrator, Vandyck Jennings, whose ideological effacement is tantamount in establishing a just, inclusive and open community able to sustain and foster egalitarian relations between men and women. The novel, read primarily as a socialist-feminist utopian narrative, holds a mirror up to early twentieth-century U.S. culture to highlight the violence against women and how its masculine bias - figured either through sentimentalizing and romanticizing women as Jeff Margrave perpetuates or through outright visions of conquest as Terry O. Nicholson advocates -- subjugates women.[13] What Vandyck realizes is that he and his companions, after their containment and anesthetization,

[13] The term utopian implies the notion of human society in perfect harmony with itself and with nature, even perhaps a Christian paradise free of misery. Richard Gerber defines the denotative status of "utopia" as "a non-existent country on the one hand and a perfect commonwealth on the other" (3).

were stripped of their clothes and, in Terry's words, "put to bed like so many yearling babies" (*Herland* 22). Because Vandyck fails to comment on, correct, or apologize for Terry's comparison, as he does in so many other instances, he accepts this comparison and likens their care to infantilization, which all three men attempt to displace. Such "immaturing the mature" is key to their re-education or rather awakening. As the men's exploration evolves, the intellectual and emotional re-education for both women and men can be read as a contested exploration of the question of maturity.

The feminist texts examined here illustrate the ways in which some feminist literature rhetorically employs the child in the re(de)construction of mature adulthood. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* imagines an exclusively female community sustained through its citizens adopting, as evolutionarily natural if necessary, the sole interest of carefully cultivating children while Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* presents the protagonist's, Edna Pontellier, demise at the hands of a stifling Victorian domesticity. Both texts foreground motherhood as a central question but this chapter is interested in scrutinizing how these texts represent the child "woven" within this question. However, utopian and dystopian visions do not easily lend themselves

to neat and convenient opposition where utopias, for instance, might render more inclusive visions for children while the dystopias dismiss them.

I argue that children present a distinct blind spot in these narratives such that, in the case of *Herland*, their radical inclusion entails their subsequent neglect or dismissal while implicit allegations of child neglect compete with autonomous self-exploration and development, as in *The Awakening* where emphasis is placed on adult predicaments. Beverly Lyon Clark argues that the "relationship between feminism and childhood is complicated, however, because adulthood is exactly what many feminists want to claim. The cost of doing so is that we grind children under our heels" (5). Clark proceeds to argue that "feminist theorizing has rarely recognized, let alone addressed, the position of the child. We are so adult centered that the only child we adults can see is ourselves; we do not recognize what it means to attend to children's perspectives" (7). Clark deftly supports the dismissal of children with attentive readings of prominent feminist theorists such as Julia Kristeva and Barbara Johnson through whom the occlusion of the child is laid bare. Although Clark overlooks feminist literature in favor of academic scholars and critics, this chapter traces

this failure of recognition, or what I have termed the illegible child, in late-nineteenth and early twentieth century feminist literature. Interestingly, except for those representations of the child in the children's literature she examines, the "child" remains conspicuously absent in Clark's study as well.

This oversight could be explained by the fact that Clark limits her study to "revalu[ing] what has been dismissed as kiddie lit" by examining its critical reception, the trajectory of which she argues roughly proceeds from minimal segregation of adults from children in nineteenth century literary reception to more segregation in the twentieth (15-16). Clark's argument illuminates the inverse relationship between a rising literary professoriate at the cost of subsequently devaluing children's literature, a move subscribing to a bourgeoning ideology of maturity, which she locates with Henry James's literary and critical production, wherein subtle mastery of complexity establishes authoritarian adulthood and trumps childhood's supposed brute sentimental simplicity. Clark's evasion of the "question of the child," however, is strategic because to define the child would entail, at some level, an essentialism whereas the force of her argument aims at opening up and securing a

larger professional space in literary studies for children's literature.

My argument attempts to build on Clark's insights to indicate that even in those texts critical of phallocentric culture and according children's positions with respect, such positions are already understood as indicating insufficiency with respect to cultivating mature adulthood. Consequently, children's voices are simultaneously excluded from the critical endeavor. Including children's voices, however, does not guarantee direct access to the truth of their positions.

Gilman's narrative uses children to subvert patriarchal excesses while not meaningfully including them. Upon their arrival and attempting to come to terms with Herland's community, the three explorers face a confounding possibility that this world lacks men. But the fact that they spy "babies" everywhere comforts them since biological reproduction ensures the necessity of men. The infants are a matter of concern only insofar as they lend evidence to male necessity, even if that necessity is biologically contingent. As their education begins and tutors are assigned, they learn how reproduction occurs without men through "Parthenogenesis" or "virgin birth," which effectively hobbles the paternalism Terry unwaveringly

embodies (*Herland* 39). Terry repeatedly regresses to this position and is carefully corrected or detained, but Jeff and Vandyck accept the fact that there is no recourse to this ideological support so that their dialogical education might begin largely unfettered.

Unmanning Men with Children

Gilman prepares one for the ideological unmanning through a controlled deployment of comparisons to children. As the men enter the town, they encounter and are surrounded by close, evenly-ranked, middle-aged women. Vandyck feels immediately "of being hopelessly in the wrong" and links this feeling to his own youth "when my short legs' utmost effort failed to overcome the fact that I was late to school" (*Herland* 17). At a much later point, Vandyck analogically links his tutors to children to indicate the women's refreshing innocence or the lack of an agenda beyond informational exchange:

> But just as a clear-eyed, intelligent, perfectly honest, and well-meaning child will frequently jar one's self-esteem by innocent questions, so did these women, without the slightest appearance of malice or satire, continually bring up points of discussion which we spent our best efforts in evading. (*Herland* 53)

Speaking for Jeff at the point of contact, Vandyck describes his emotional state in terms of childishness, which bonds them in a wise brotherhood: "We felt like small boys, very small boys, caught doing mischief in some gracious lady's house" (*Herland* 17). Then, as they are solidly ushered into a building presumably meant for their detainment, they resist and Terry fires a revolver into the air and then again, possibly injuring a woman, at which moment they are physically overwhelmed. Gilman's language mirrors the action as Vandyck describes their seizure in readily accessible infantile terms: "we were lifted like children, straddling helpless children and borne onward, wriggling indeed, but most ineffectually." and immediately follows this description, through Vandyck's reportage, repeating that "We were borne inside" toward anesthesia (*Herland* 20). More importantly, as tension escalates and the men attempt to retreat rather than enter Herland's stone fortress, Vandyck interrupts his account with what Gérard Genette usefully terms a narrative achrony (because temporally "unplaceable" or "dateless and "ageless") glossing their position in the entire encounter: "It make me laugh, knowing all I do now, to think of us three boys - nothing else; three audacious impertinent boys - butting into an unknown country without any sort of guard or

defense" (Genette 83 and 84; *Herland* 18). Not only are the men retroactively self-infantilized and childhood minimized by this laughing gesture, but the intrusion into the smooth narrative flow reinforces how children are often conceived of as rude, "impertinent," interruptions to serious, even life-threatening, adult endeavors.

Genette explains achrony in terms of "narrative's capacity for *temporal autonomy*" (85) forcing the question of whose voice attains and maintains a privileged narrative position? If Vandyck functions as Gilman's narrative device for unbiased, ideologically filtered, access to Herland's feminist-socialist utopia, the achrony both arrests the narrative's flow and the reader's textual consumption while the content stabilizes how the reader understands the male characters. The form and content relationship indicates that narrative's capacity for temporal autonomy requires, in the instance of *Herland*, reversing patriarchal infantilization of women by infantilizing men—at least temporarily—without itself becoming implicated in such a relation. In other words, what one awakens to is the notion that no one in *Herland*, perhaps even including children, wants to become a child in another's eyes. Vandyck, for instance, reports with chagrin that Herland's isolated inhabitants developed the

sciences, which he prides himself on, to a "fullness" of degree that "made us feel like schoolchildren" (*Herland* 55).

This does not preclude Gilman from appropriating qualities typically associated with children in order to dismantle patriarchal subjugation. At key moments of contact in Herland's Edenesque garden, Vandyck couches his descriptions using child-like terms or resorts to comparing key actors to children. The initial encounter with Herland's inhabitants transforms from a possible greeting into an actual pursuit, during which the men find three women who Vandyck describes as "with no more terror than a set of frolicsome children in a game of tag" (*Herland* 13). Through such a description, the once "objects of pursuit" elude male conquest of the female subject by displacing as child-like any appropriation their prior "studying" may have facilitated (*Herland* 13, 12).

The matriarchal culture Gilman carefully elaborates, counters the stereotypes and identifies the limits of patriarchal U.S. society by walking, sometimes literally, the men through their education in Herland. The alternative model Herland offers, and the conclusion Vandyck reaches, is that "mother-love" based on a questionable "maternal instinct" rather than what one might

call paternal power based on a will to knowledge produces a more "civilized" and humane form of social organization (*Herland* 49). Although "instinct" and its concomitant "natural" grounding remain deeply suspect for their propensity to reproduce ideological limits for women, each of Herland's organizational elements is connected to Motherhood, which in Vandyck's many descriptions includes even-temperedness, cleanliness, and understanding while also containing truancy (*Herland* 37). Religion, for instance, evolved into "Maternal Pantheism" evidenced by "Mother Earth['s]" capacity to bear food and human life (*Herland* 51). Children then function as the clinamen bonding the community together while protecting Motherhood from potential narcissism. Moadine, one of Herland's tutors, explains it this way: "'The children in this country are the one center and focus of all our thoughts. Every step of our advance is always considered in its effect on them - on the race. You see, we are *Mothers*,'" (*Herland* 57). The educational system sustaining and improving that life itself not only culls to mind "Signora [Maria] Montessori" but determines its end as "education for citizenship" in which the children "never knew they were being educated" (*Herland* 91, 92).

With such focus, however, children rarely appear. This is not to say that they are never seen, because the men do see them and Vandyck is careful to note when he does: "the children, seeming to be in groups by themselves generally, were less in evidence. We caught many glimpses of girls and children in what seemed to be schools or in playgrounds. . . ." (*Herland* 37). Within the many cultural exchanges in which one learns that "children were the - *raison d'être* in this country" the children are not only neatly contained they also remain silent while their activities and reactions are brokered through the men's tutors, Zava, Moadine, and Somel (*Herland* 44). Similarly, Herland's perfection depends on physical homogeneity "as they lacked all morbid or excessive types" (*Herland* 66). One also learns that in the service of preserving life, Herland's social planning requires the pragmatic deployment of negative eugenics as a way of controlling over-population, which not only arrests women's "longed-for motherhood," "maternal instinct" and "overmastering demand for a child," but also excludes some women from caring for children (*Herland* 49, 59, 119). Gilman explains this imperfection or "flaw" by one's higher commitment to reasonable altruism, as those women deemed "unfit" "voluntarily" sublimate instinct and abnegate right and

thereby executes what might be called a perfectly executed hegemonic process (*Herland* 60, 71).

The opportunity to speak with "hundreds" of girls presents the closest interaction with children offered to men. However, the talk's staging resembles what might be orchestrated for "guest lecturers," where the audience's main responsibility lies in offering interesting anecdotes, suggesting further areas for study and posing probing questions. In this forum, the children resemble sedate undergraduates, whose questions one never hears and whose personal interactions with the men one never sees. The episode mirrors the control evidenced in an earlier sighting of children corralled in a schoolyard and in clarifications the "special guides" propose for questions and responses (*Herland* 73). Herland's children are produced as self-directed, confident, restrained and inquiring adults while the men become insecure and overwhelmed.

The possibility of re-uniting with men carries with it not only the installation of sexual desire but also the additional issue of what to do with children. The communion of the men and women occurs predictably enough through marriage - Jeff and Celis, Terry and Alima and Vandyck and Ellador - despite the "lack of any sex-

tradition" and sexual desire (*Herland* 79, 85). What is not lacking, however, is the "child-motive" sustaining Herland's women in their pedagogical mission, which leads Vandyck to claim proudly that "I never heard a child cry in Herland, save once or twice at a bad fall. . . ." as each child's every longing appears satiated.

Perfection in a non-existent land, an advertisement promising a product able to nullify one's desires, *Herland* and Herland constructs as it interdicts the promise of gender equality at the expense of excluding children. As the narrative closes, one finds the marriages completed and Terry's sexual frustration finds its cathartic outlet through aggression. Jeff and Celis consummate their marriage and find themselves expecting the birth of their first child. Although the marriages, Vandyck tells us, were more "a concession to our prejudices rather than theirs," the women of Herland married solely for "'the Great New Hope'" of "dual parentage" (*Herland* 119). The short description of Jeff and Celis's announcement, however, reveals more about Celis's reactions - "ineffable joy and pride" - and the society's realization of its hopes than concern with their child:

> There was no pleasure, no service, no honor in all the land which, two thousand year ago, that dwindling band

> of women had watched the miracle virgin birth, was the deep awe and warm expectancy with which they greeted this new miracle of union. (*Herland* 119)

Vandyck and Ellador, however, postpone conception for concern over their child's safety during their return and exploration of Vandyck's world. The child for Jeff and Celis, on the one hand, is made to matter only insofar as it confirms Herland's hopes for "dual parentage." On the other hand, Vandyck and Ellador's choice to forego conception reveals that the greatest concern for a child manifests itself in electing to not have a child, or to practice negative eugenics in the face of "'the Great New Hope.'" Yet, the 'product' fails to appear in either case.

Grasping for Children

Framed by the prospects of life and death, *Herland* and Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* respectively and in their own ways, grasp at the child for narrative stability. *The Awakening*'s central conflict involves Edna Pontllier's burgeoning desire for something beyond circumscribed, conventional roles limiting her personal and sexual freedom. In order to open up the social regulations governing her New Orleans Creole society, she attempts to pursue her latent artistic talents, which provides both meaning to her life and an avenue to escape the economic

dependence of women concomitant with "proper" nineteenth-century marriages. Her dogged pursuit of self-discovery is beset by the competing and contradictory values of autonomy and dependence enveloped within Victorian domestic ideals from which she cannot disentangle herself. Immediate characters, such as her husband, question both her mental stability as well as her morality. At the limits of her social environment, stands the life she desires and is denied her.

The obvious place to demonstrate a grasping for the child would be the moment Edna witnesses the birth of Adèle Ratignole's child. Although Adèle, a "mother-woman" as Chopin deems her, embodies perfect bourgeois American womanhood and precisely what Edna finds debilitating, she attempts to orient Edna, despite labor-pains with her fourth child, when she exclaims "'Think of the children, Edna. Oh think of the children! Remember them!'" (Chopin 112). Adèle appeals to what she believes Edna cannot deny, the linkage between them as mothers of children so that Adèle might communicate a more significant truth and commitment beyond Edna's dedication to herself. Adèle's exhortation attempts to bridge a prior communication failure in which "Edna had once told Madame Ratignolle that she would never sacrifice herself for her children or for

anyone" and the exchange is narrated as a break-down because "the two women did not appear to understand each other or to be talking the same language" (Chopin 49). In the course of the exchange, Chopin seems to recapitulate Edna's position in order to communicate, as Edna explains that "I would give my life for my children; but not myself" (49). Edna admits that she is only "beginning to comprehend" what it means to withhold "oneself" from exchange, and thus refuse to become a consumable object. Adèle, however, cannot meet Edna at this point and recoils from Edna's dawning thought by relying on Biblical edicts, or at least her interpretation of the Bible: "'a woman who would give her life for her children could do no more than that - your Bible tells you so'" (Chopin 49). Interestingly enough, Chopin resists characterizing Edna's ultimate refusal as selfish, which would seem a readily available criticism for Adèle to craft at this point. What they both implicitly agree on is that their children are already configured as valuable stakes, and the value is determined by how much of oneself one would give or withhold. They also subscribe to valuations of themselves produced through competing perceptions of how much or how little each values her children. Edna's dilemma consists of resisting such valuations while Adèle appropriates them.

Edna's husband, Léonce Pontellier, not only scolds Edna for her "neglect" but also senses through his irreality that "his wife failed in her duty toward their children," which operates as a default position (Chopin 7, 9). His deprecation could be retaliation for Edna's earlier lack of interest in his concerns while she "valued so little his conversation" and could be dismissed as marital retribution (Chopin 7). Nonetheless, if Léonce's perception fails to satisfy the reader, Chopin's omniscient narrator takes liberty to construe Edna's value this way:

> She was fond of her children in an uneven, impulsive way. She would sometimes gather them passionately to her heart; she would sometimes forget them. The year before they had spent part of the summer with their grandmother Pontellier in Iberville. Feeling secure regarding their happiness and welfare, she did not miss them except with an occasional intense longing. Their absence was a sort of relief, though she did not admit this, even to herself. It seemed to free her of a responsibility which she had blindly assumed and for which Fate had not fitted her. (20)

Edna's fickle parental affection and inability to face up to her responsibility, which is one she can never fully assume, relegates her to a perpetual adolescence despite

being on the verge of turning thirty. Edna's inability to recognize the affective requirements tied to children and then generate those affective responses makes her appear 'unseemly' and childish. Chopin equates Edna with the child throughout the novel thereby devaluing her even as Edna struggles to attain autonomous adulthood. However, unless Edna willingly sacrifices herself to her children, adulthood, and its attendant valuation, will elude her. Chopin's deadly double-bind is such that Edna can't be an adult woman unless she sacrifices herself to her children (thus a valuable object) and if she refuses, she is condemned to live an unseemly adolescence (thereby devalued).

"Unthinking" Children

Despite Edna's parental inabilities and apparent neglect, and despite Léonce's criticism of Edna, her children are not spoiled or acutely sensitive as one might suspect. The brief description Chopin provides of Raoul, age five, and Etienne, age four, presents them as resilient and aggressive in "childish battles" or play and thus frequently overcoming the "mother-tots," something Edna fails to do with Grand Isle's "mother-women" (9-10). Because the children appear already self-sufficient in their community, Chopin is relieved from the responsibility

of focusing on them. Thus the children appear more valuable in the ways they assist in constructing Edna's character rather than as significant and complex individuals in their own right. Chopin's most elaborate and concentrated focus on children occurs when narrating a weekend dinner-party, during which the children entertain the adults. However, the narrator omits revealing their subjective dispositions, other than to say that the Farival twins "might have danced together, but they did not think of it" (Chopin 26). Similarly, Chopin depicts Edna's relationship with her husband as founded on Edna's lack of thought or force of "habit," rather than her "submission" (33). Not only does one often find Edna with children, but her presumably childish lack of thought links Edna to children and arguably propels her to her death (Chopin 21, 23).

Edna's relationship with Robert Lebrun is founded on this lack of thought and thus characterized as an infatuation. Edna's self-diagnosis reveals this lack of thought. For instance, sitting on the porch overlooking the beach, Edna notices the haunting young lovers and then gazes at the sea. When Adèle asks for her thoughts, Edna resists an unthinking response of "'Nothing'" to elaborate a childhood recollection from Kentucky when she runs from a

dismal Presbyterian service (Chopin 18). Edna characterizes herself as "a little unthinking child in those days, just following a misleading impulse without question" and employs that description to characterize her present condition as "'unthinking and unguided'" thereby circularly returning to the point at which she began (Chopin 18). Chopin then constructs Edna's previous involvements as well as the circumstances of her present marriage to demonstrate Edna's surrender to imagination and absence of thought, rather than her commitment to "realities" (20). Robert Lebrun's solicitations of Edna are equally fatuous as Adèle Ratignolle acutely points out. Even though Robert defends his chivalrous behavior toward Edna as sincere romantic interest, Adèle dismantles his rhetoric, arguing that "'You speak with about as little reflection as we might expect from one of those children down there playing in the sand'" (Chopin 22). She proceeds to argue that if Robert wanted Edna to take him seriously he would not be a gentleman. As if to prove the assertion that "The mother-women seemed to prevail that summer at Grand Isle," Adèle takes the opportunity to infantilize Edna. After Edna returns from seeing her children, who she sent with her mother-in-law to stay in Iberville, and while living alone in her new 'Pigeon House,' she visits her

friend, who observes that "'In some way you seem to me like a child, Edna. You seem to act without a certain amount of reflection which is necessary in this life'" (Chopin 97). To resist perceptions of themselves as child-like, each performs daring and defiant acts; Robert leaves for Mexico to seek business opportunities and Edna leaves her home for a modest, near-by cottage to begin her artistic career. The collapse of their relationship and Edna's death become consequences of their rash behavior, which confirms what the novel sets out to explore: the division between adult and child must be policed. Nonetheless, the novel betrays this imperative because in maintaining the division, some children, like Edna's, are not entirely childish and prevail without giving their defeats a second thought. As such, Edna's children must be excluded from the narrative or quarantined within it.

Edna's culminating death, like her identity, is linked to her "childlike" refusal of reflection, her desire for "unthinking" existence, and opting for self-possession. Chopin represents both children and water as purveyors of this epistemological release but they also signify limits with which Edna ought not identify. Edna's titillating experience with water reveals childishness as an ambivalent metaphor as it represents incapacitation and diminution

while also operating as the basis of resistance and agency. Chopin uses childishness to expose limitless possibilities beyond motherhood but which are also ideologically forbidden, particularly by penalty of death. Edna's first significant encounter with water entails her overreaching and faltering swimming abilities. While her predisposition to swimming is conditioned by an "ungovernable dread," she feels reassured with someone, "a hand," close by and available to steady her. "But that night" Chopin explains,

> she was like the little tottering stumbling, clutching child, who of a sudden realizes its powers, and walks for the first time alone, boldly and with over-confidence. A feeling of exultation overtook her, as if some power of significant import had been given her to control the working of her body and her soul. . . . She grew daring and reckless, overestimating her strength. She wanted to swim far out, where no woman had swum before. . . . 'How easy it is!' she thought. . . . 'Think of the time I have lost splashing about like a baby!'. . . . As she swam, she seemed to lose herself. . . . A quick vision of death smote her soul, and for a second time appalled and enfeebled her senses. But by an effort she rallied her staggering faculties and managed to regain the land. (29)

The initial discovery of her physical and spiritual agency finds its limits at the unlimited. Death, however, comes only as a "vision" not as a physical reality or immediate threat, but its apparition is sufficient to "enfeeble" the newborn Edna. Afterward, all of Edna's significant actions and interactions are filtered through the lens of Chopin's appropriated visions of childishness, principally the "unthinking," "unreflective" and incapacitated individual who has yet to surpass adolescence.

This is not to suggest Edna acquiesces to every demand and law. Before her swim, we learn that she would "have yielded to his [Léonce's] desire" habitually or "unthinkingly" (Chopin 33). But soon after her joyous and frightening experience, Edna summons the resources and elects to sleep on the porch, resisting Léonce's subtle hints to come to bed with him. However, the physical drain caused by her swim "left her helpless and yielding to the conditions which crowded her in" and she eventually leaves the hammock for bed while Léonce, wishing not to be outdone by his wife's resistance, stays outside to finish his cigar (Chopin 33). The following morning, however, Edna surrenders to "unthinking" action that "freed her soul of responsibility" and when she learns Robert will leave for Mexico she grasps his hand as she would when first learning

to swim (Chopin 34, 46). If avoiding responsibility is a definitive marker of immaturity, much like searching for a hand to hold, then whatever amount of self-sufficiency and independence she gained from her swim alone quickly dissipates.

Perhaps her most authoritative display of independence is illustrated when she moves out of her own, or rather her husband's, house into a small cottage she dubs the 'Pigeon House'. Chopin's description of Edna's subjective condition reveals that evading responsibility supplements "her strength and expansion as an individual" while her desire for "unthinking" disappears as "She began to look with her own eyes; to see and to apprehend the deeper undercurrents of life. No longer was she content to 'feed upon opinion' . . . ." (Chopin 96). Her children, nonetheless, imaginatively attend Edna's maturation as the next sentence informs one that Edna leaves the 'Pigeon House' to spend time with her children in Iberville. Yet, at this point, her children provide her a source of solace that the 'Pigeon House' cannot whereas, in her first conversation with Adèle Ratignolle, Edna understands her children as antagonists to her individuality and self-determination.

Edna's views of her children irrevocably oscillate then as she formulates responses to questions of her identity, responses framed in terms of maturity. After Edna leaves Adèle's site of "torture" during her labor, Doctor Mandelet escorts Edna home as if appointing himself an authoritative midwife in Edna's self-realization and deems Edna's presence "cruel" due to her impressionability (Chopin 112). Although the Doctor infantilizes Edna by calling her "dear child" and "my child," Edna's response to Adèle's imperative to remember the children and the Doctor's question about whether she will go abroad is tentative, confused and, as she recognizes, incoherent: "'I'm not going to be forced into doing things. I don't want to go abroad. I want to be let alone. Nobody has any right - except children, perhaps - and even then, it seems to me - or it did seem - '" (113). Her self-determination and adult identity hinge on her views of children. For the Doctor, of course, this question poses no problems since in his cosmology "Nature" dictates that mothers devote themselves to their children. By implication, the Doctor also frames Edna as a "youth," a term by which Edna must formulate her response. But Edna's response indicates that the linkage between mothers and children is neither absolute nor necessarily redemptive, that the linkage is

socially constructed from biology, and that adulthood cannot be paternally adjudicated and granted to women based on one's degree of devotion to one's children.

Edna's suicide at Grand Isle offers the only imaginable response to the Doctor's and Adèle's oppositional, either/or terms in which child and adult are clearly delineated. In that logic, free, independent adulthood transforms her children into "antagonists who had overcome her; who had overpowered and sought to drag her into the soul's slavery for the rest of her days. But she knew a way to elude them" (116). But at the same time, "she was not thinking of these things" and Chopin characterizes her as regressing to a desired child-like state in terms of affect ("She felt like some new-born creature, opening its eyes in a familiar world that it had never known.") and in terms of nostalgic memory ("thinking of the blue-grass meadow that she had traversed when a little child") (117). As Edna's physical strength diminishes, she turns to those closest to her and remembers her family as a source of entrapment and imagines her artistic mentor Mademoiselle Reisz as thoroughly disappointed over Edna's lack of courage.

CHAPTER THREE: HENRY JAMES'S LOVE AND LOATHING IN *THE WHOLE FAMILY*

Of course, with such a deep diversity of feeling, we simply loath each other. . . .
--Henry James, *The Whole Family*,

During a surprise doctor visit, arranged needlessly by her son, Grandmother Evarts relieves what the doctor identifies as 'mental anxiety,' confiding in him that "'no one suffers alone in a family like ours. An event like this is like a wave that disturbs the whole surface of the water. Every one of us feels anything that happens, each in his [sic] separate way'" (Howells et. al. 77). The grandmother of *The Whole Family* concretizes this theory with a hypothesized example: "'Why I can't be sick without its causing inconvenience to Billy [Talbert]'" (Howells et. al. 77). The narrative never reveals whether her "illness," a loss of appetite, affects her grandson Billy who, one learns from the granddaughter Alice, seems most oblivious to family affairs. Affect then functions as familial clinamen able to hold the relatives together despite their separate and individual reactions, and as the grandmother points out, a disturbing event such as a daughter's engagement will necessarily be felt from the highest genealogical rung down to the lowest.

The grandmother's formulation anticipates Mark Poster's argument that "we must redefine family structure away from

issues of family size and toward issues relating to emotional patterns" (xvii). Water unmoored, one might say, from ocean or lake for instance, metaphorically links grandmother Evarts family to a potentially unbounded body and fluidity, although her example acknowledges her family's genealogical limits and hierarchical structure in Billy. Nonetheless, the grandmother theorizes the family in terms of its affective content moving away from brute questions of size. This chapter examines the grandmother's affective hypothesis as represented in the collaborative novel to begin to indicate, however tentatively, its limits and possibilities as it promises to open the family for more inclusive forms of relationality, while paying close attention to the daughter's, Peggy Talbert, treatment. Initially, it seems that if this were the case, the "family" of *The Whole Family* collapses into non-distinction, or at least refuses completeness, since each reader is potentially a family member capable of being affected by the narrative. For my purposes, I will limit the "family" to that provided in the novel.[14]

Poster's concerns with the family are specifically

[14] The tentative definition of "family" employed here follows Eli Zaretsky's "universal" or anthropological definition: "any grouping of parents or other relatives with children, embodying a sexual division of labor, and distinguishing itself as a unit by legal, economic, and sexual rights and taboos" (25).

epistemological because, after sifting and critiquing prominent psychological and sociological theories of the family, he finds the main theoretical problem remains one of coherently constituting the family as an object of inquiry, making it intelligible for examination. According to Poster, this epistemological problem can be resolved by developing flexible and coherent psychological categories

> which permit the understanding of vastly divergent family structure in terms of their emotional patterns. The family is thus the place where psychic structure is formed and where experience is characterized in the first instance by emotional patterns. (143)

By keeping Poster and Grandmother Evarts closely aligned, this chapter attempts to interrogate emotional patterns offered in *The Whole Family* in order to suggest what might operate as constitutive of family (and I take the novel as one complex, serious and overlooked instance of such an attempt at defining family) while remaining sensitive to what Poster identifies as neglected areas of domination by age and sex.

It is important to note that *The Whole Family* contains twelve chapters written by twelve different authors compiled and arranged by the editor Elizabeth Jordan. The chapters were published serially in *Harper's Bazar*,

appearing from December 1907 to November 1908, and then collected into book form (Bendixen, xi and xxxv). William Dean Howells, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, and Henry James top the list of high-profile contributors to this largely overlooked literary experiment. The narrative does in effect follow Howells's basic conception as the plot revolves around the Talbert family's young daughter and her surprise engagement to which each chapter, narrated by a different character, attends creating multiple levels of complications and subplots. Alfred Bendixen's "Introduction" recounts the ways in which the novel departs from Howells's literary aspirations as well as the disputes erupting between individual authors as they reviewed one another's drafts and communicated with Elizabeth Jordan. Departing from Howells's original outline, "The Father" opens the narrative in its published form, whereas Howell's outline set the grandmother as the narrative's opening voice, which I have foregrounded here.

Lynda Zwinger, in *Daughters, Fathers, and the Novel*, has persuasively and rigorously analyzed sexuality's construction within sentimental narratives of the middle-class, patriarchal family, arguing that the family is the "locus of the contradictory play of solicitation and denial that constructs and represses (constructs, it might be

said, *by* repressing) heterosexual desire" (11). At the risk of glossing over her argument, Zwinger examines sentimental romance to demonstrate that the father actively seduces by sentimentalizing the daughter and thus controls the daughter's desire, his masked desire for her, and by extension desire as such. The lesson these narratives inscribe is that the sentimental daughter's culturally rightful response to paternal demands is "utter self-abnegation and blind complicity" that, once internalized, produces "the feminine—and therefore by definition incapable of satisfying his [the father's] desire" (Zwinger 8). Zwinger's family representations, while pulled from what might be characterized as predominately white, middle-class literature, is not the uncomplicated, stereotypical nuclear family. She argues that the family of her analysis is already heterogeneous while composed of "a set of alibis" facilitating a blindness to such heterogeneity as well as "inscriptions of gendered familial positions" (12, 13). Interestingly, the sentimental romance of heterosexuality, (Zwinger's subtitle) in which the "dutiful daughter" develops into "a desirable woman," requires the "son's defeat" (8). Thus paternalism, the centralization of power and authority, entails subduing children by repressing (and thereby constructing) them, particularly

and most easily by establishing, among other things, clear age distinctions and then manipulating how and what they feel in the interests of socialization.

While this chapter is more heavily weighted on the side of age differentiations and domination, it does share with sex central affective patterns of "authority and love, of intense ambivalent emotions" in the dominant bourgeois family of Poster's analysis, patterns he contends make this family form coherent and unique (177, 143). Moreover, it shares Zwinger's hopefulness in discovering possibilities for family, whose competing forms mirror its multiple responsibilities, particularly the possibility of socialization without normalization, or what I take as another way of dismantling a desire for "approval from a paternal, or even a paternalized, source of unspoken desire" (9). This chapter, implicitly or explicitly, analyzes points of convergence and moments of divergence in terms of affect the narrative inscribes in representing the "real" family or the family of literary realism during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In so doing, my goal is not to pathologize the family, because, as Susanna Ashton points out, "As with any family, *The Whole Family*'s particular pathology may forever remain elusive. . . ." (52). Rather, I take as a theoretical

point of departure, and as a way of organizing the following discussion, Jean-Luc Nancy's reflections on love as that which could provide an affective and epistemological category Poster finds necessary in examining Western familial forms and as a conceptual site that might offer ways of thinking socialization without normalization. Nancy points out that thinking love "asks for an extreme reticence as soon as it is solicited," and that:

> To think love would thus demand a boundless generosity toward all these possibilities, and it is this generosity that would command reticence: the generosity not to choose between loves, not to privilege, not to hierarchize, not to exclude. . . . Love in its singularity, when it is grasped absolutely, is itself perhaps nothing but the indefinite abundance of all possible loves, and an abandonment to their dissemination, indeed to the disorder of these explosions. The thinking of love should learn to yield to this abandon: to receive the prodigality, the collisions, and the contradictions of love, without submitting them to an order that they essentially defy. But this generous reticence would be no different from the exercise of thought itself.

(82-3)

Using Nancy's notion of "generous reticence," I attempt to read *The Whole Family* in order to illuminate the possibilities and limits of affect within a particular and an arguably historically dominant version of family. The essay, then, attends to what the youngest Talbert daughter Alice identifies and abhors as happiness's necessity while attending to the productions of despair (Howells et. al. 86).

At stake in the novel is young Peggy Talbert's socialization, specifically her presumed innocence - "a perfect little *decorative* person" in James's sentimental terms - and final happiness, both of which the family fears may or may not be corrupted by both "coeducation" and by her surprise engagement to Harry Goward, an aspiring and unconfident, if not morally ambivalent, professor where she attends college (Howells et. al. 162). The opening chapter effectively asks: What is a family to do? and releases the contributing authors to contend with the question. Even within this brief summary, the novel can undoubtedly be read along Zwinger's lines, and should be, to lay bare the inscriptions of limiting and complex power relations

specifically along the axes of age and gender.[15] At the level of individual chapters, each character's identity is contested and (re)defined, which serves as both, to cite James's characterization again, "occult pages" and a kind of official "record," the public minutes of a family member's public actions and private quasi-diary of subjective experience (Howells et. al. 146, 154). Peggy's education and engagement offer pretexts to formulate opinions and responses, which might then serve as bases for tenuous familial allegiances. James's assigned chapter for the Talbert's oldest son, Charles Edward Evarts, the doted on son and businessman of artistic sensibilities, provides perhaps the novel's most sustained if not vehement set of responses.[16] James's chapter "The Married Son" continues the circulation of criticism or intertextuality sustained in the previous chapters as he writes, "It's evidently a great thing in life to have got hold of a convenient expression, and a sign of our inordinate habit of living by

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[15] A more precise example in support of Zwinger's reading might be found in Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews's chapter "The School-Boy" in which Peggy's affections are historically contextualized to show she desired the much older fourty year-old Dr. Denbigh as she simulatenously sought the twenty-one year old aspiring professor Harry Goward. However, Andrew's overzealous inscription, to use Zwinger's apt term, of Peggy's desire becomes excessive to the point of self-parody, a characteristic that decidedly haunted James.

[16] See Muriel G. Shine's chronological and thematic study of Henry James's children in *The Fictional Children of Henry James*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969.

words" (Howells et. al. 144). Out of context, this statement might seem a grand and abstract condemnation by the "Master" leveled toward those authors wielding clichés for, if not pragmatic monetary gain nor as foundational spiritual truths, than literary capital, rather than an attempting to use words to remain faithful to realistic representation and to communicate the essence of living in a pre-poststructuralist assurance.

The Whole Family's Conversational Campaign

One might use a novel like Julio Cortazar's *Hopscotch* as a contrast for *The Whole Family* which invites and anticipates a linear reading through which James's first sentence becomes more specific and perhaps mean-spirited because he is referring to John Kendrick Bangs's chapter "The Son-In-Law." Bangs's character, Tom Price, transforms well-worn turns of phrase into humorous criticisms of his in-laws, the "embroglio" of Peggy's engagement to Harry Goward, and the revelation of Aunt Elizabeth's affair and brief engagement to Peggy's fiancé. For instance, John Kendrick Bangs writes that "Into all lives a certain amount of mother-in-law must fall. . . ." and "Some are born relatives, some achieve relatives, and other have relatives thrust upon them" (Howells et. al. 125, 126). For James, this substitution principle of

writing, and employing a kind of "found object" methodology, fails to master adequately the words necessary in analyzing the family's affective content of its relations and ends up a shallow, inattentive summation of the Talbert family. James's chapter, the longest and perhaps most critical, betrays polarities symptomatic of attempts to soothe anxieties aggravated by difference and it offers, however limited it may be, the most radical solution to familial anxiety. James's chapter is indicative, although more forcefully so, of the others in terms of engaging intertextual criticism, resolving and constructing familial disturbances, and reclaiming personal identity fragmented, in this text, by collaboration.

James's interventions in the ideology surrounding family and children and his antipathy toward those writers capitalizing on the family triangle plot are well documented.[17] Considered more broadly and in order to focus on adult-child relations, I take up Henry James as one author whose literary production might be seen as extended reflections on what Karín Lesnik-Oberstein notes as a paradoxical mode of thinking the child, which she articulates this way:

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[17] See Jonathan Freedman's, "Introduction," to *The Cambridge Companion to Henry James* (1998) for a synopsis of James's critical responses.

> namely that the 'child' in Western culture serves the central double function of simultaneously protecting and upholding the claim of a vital priority of a particular version of emotion and feeling in experience, morality, education, and politics, while also policing and constituting the controlling boundaries of this emotional experience. (7)

In other words, the child is thought as both that which demands affective response and limits it at the same time thereby transforming into a particular authority figure in a reflexive mirroring. In *Watch and Ward* for instance, James represents the promises of parenthood a child activates as Roger Lawrence quickly realizes that "He could be a protector, a father, a brother" and in fact could be at all, whereas the night before he discovers Nora he had vowed "to live only for himself and turn the key on his heart" (James 34). While the overt "plot" hinges on the "lame egoist" Roger Lawrence's scheme of raising an orphaned girl for his wife in the hope that someone might love him, the question posed through internal monologue reveals the perplexing usefulness of the little girl: "What was the child before him but a tragic embodiment of the misery of isolation, a warning from his own blank future?" (James 34-35). Nora is figured as "blank" or *tabula rasa* so

that Roger might answer the question with "'God forbid!' he cried" and rouse himself out of his "lameness" and "egoism" which seems impossible because her reflective usefulness as a vexing "other" has meaning insofar as it affects his own self-image and activates his sexual prowess. At the end of the melodramatic scene, Roger "drew her towards him and kissed her" as if he were kissing himself, or at least his own possibilities, in the mirror (James 35).

James's contribution to *The Whole Family* must be examined as a dialogical engagement with those who preceded his own contribution, particularly John Kendrick Bangs's character Tom Price as well as the possibilities opened up by other contributors. One of the initial opening maneuvers Bangs's makes is to establish Price as a lawyer with an above average critical intellect and wit. However, he dismisses his mother-in-law, Ada Talbert, noticing only that, "Mrs. Talbert comes pretty close to the ideal in mother-in-legal matters. She is gentle and unoffending. She prefers minding her own business to assuming a trust control of other people's affairs. . . ." and forgets his basic familial mission of retrieving Goward's letter whose smeared address the family supposes holds the key to unraveling the affective truth between Peggy, Harry Goward, and Aunt Elizabeth (Howells et. al. 125, 143). However,

Tom Price largely resolves this complication without the aid of the Talbert's "domestic supreme court [which] controls all my private life" when he visits and presses Goward to confess his true affections for Peggy (Howells et. al. 127, 129). In the course of the conversation, Goward reveals an extenuating circumstance complicating the resolution: Goward's brief engagement to Elizabeth, Cyrus Talbert's sister. To reveal this fact to the "domestic supreme court" would only provoke the endless discussion and tension Tom Price hopes to avoid in his private life so as to secure the domestic tranquility and happiness he hopes to cultivate. Tom's reliance on the Bible's Genesis narrative of Adam and Eve, belies the extent to which he desires private happiness to counter public hostility and the violence of the family's law. He pinpoints Aunt Elizabeth as the culpable and duplicitous party in the simultaneous engagement of Goward to Aunt Elizabeth and Peggy and asks knowingly "'It was another case of 'the woman tempted me and I did eat,' was it, Goward?'" (Howells et. al. 131). And while this accusation, denied by Goward in chivalrous manner, fails to advance Tom Price's suspicions, he clings to it in modified or modernized form: "at the age of adolescence the appeal which lovely woman makes to inexperience is irresistible" (Howells et. al.

133). He supports this theory with his own boyhood experience of "corruption" by an older woman who seemed, at that moment of adolescence, "no older than I" (Howells et. al. 133). As the adult lawyer, Tom Price draws distinct borders, confessing that "I drew the line at letting Maria into that particular secret of my career" while his "illicit" companion Miss Mehitabel Flanders could not because, in Tom Price's estimation, "I don't think she was always careful to draw the line nicely between maternal love and that other which is neither maternal, fraternal, paternal, nor even filial" (133).

Bangs consciously or unconsciously extends Tom Price's initial and shallow supposition beyond "inexperienced youth falls prey to its inability to control its appetites" toward what might be called a borderless affect that cannot become circumscribed by relational terms, that which the familial law cannot tolerate. Miss Flanders subsequent announcement to marry Colonel Barrington, which Tom characterizes as "one of the wisest matches ever," resolves their affair into more normalized age relations through her "intention" to marry a man older than Tom Price's twenty years (Howells et. al. 133). Marriage between peers then attends to Miss Flanders's careless thinking for her or in spite of her. Similarly, Tom Price attends to her

carelessness with which she "disclaimed any intention to smash my heart into the myriad atoms into which it flew" and in Tom Price's discourse analysis "the refuge of 'only a boy' is sought as though it really afforded a sufficient protection against 'responsibility'" (Howells et. al. 134). Because she is thirty eight, then, Miss Flanders bears the responsibility for Tom's affections much like, according to his analogy, a "middle-aged man of the world" evokes "horror" when involved with the "hopeless infatuation of a young girl" (134). Tom Price's adolescent pain desires compensation and "sufficient protection" from abuse and parenthetically adds, sardonically, that as a politician in domestic affairs he will remember to advance "a Bill for the Protection of Boys, and the Suppression of Old Maids Who Don't Mean Anything By It" and thus both playfully and seriously advocates equality under the law of affect (Howells et. al. 134-5). However, in (mis)identifying with Goward's predicament, he imagines himself judging against Aunt Elizabeth and proceeds to amass evidence to support a conviction of the troublesome "Old-Maid Aunt" who "is chameleonic as to age" and nearing the age of his first love, "thirty-seven" (Howells et. al. 138, 139). For Tom Price, the cost of doing justice to one's affective plenitude, either in his adolescent love or adult

happiness, means eliminating that which fragmented it in the first place. While he can't obtain retribution for Miss Flanders's carelessness, he can help Goward obtain it while restoring his own domestic tranquility because "With Aunt Elizabeth out of the way it seemed to me that we would find all plain sailing again, but how to get rid of her was the awful question" (Howells et. al. 139). When Tom Price returns to the Talbert family house to "confess" he forgot to recover the missing letter, he finds that not only has Harry Goward fled to New York, but also that Aunt Elizabeth has done the same. Her self-imposed exile from Eastridge and her absence from the familial court relieves Tom Price from his responsibility of confessing and of eliminating her from the equation. Yet, from Bangs's authorial perspective, he has essentially written her out of his chapter.

Despite James's criticism of Bangs's writing, Aunt Elizabeth is a question both can agree upon because familial happiness depends upon eliminating reminders of past transgressions that she had come to signify for several people, including grandmother Evarts. James's chapter, as well as his character of Charles Edwards, can be read as not only a rebuttal of Bangs's chapter but also largely unoriginal despite an attempt to position itself as

the commanding linguistic and analytical centerpiece of the novel because it betrays an anxiety of influence from the preceding chapter. The point of convergence structuring James's disagreement with Bangs's style is Bangs's reliance on well-worn, easily digestible phrasing that neglects subtleties and displays a narcissistic analysis, one rooted in Tom Price's personal experience, which minimizes the importance of a probing, self-critical psychological excavation. James, in effect, exploits Bangs's blindspots and occlusions to launch his own chapter, a psychological missionary expedition into the "dense wilderness of nocturnal terrors" residing at "the heart of Africa" which constitutes an apparent risk Bangs's chapter fails to confront (Howells et. al. 145, 144).

Charles Edward's risk-taking emphatically counters preceding characterizations of him. Besides his wife Lorraine's speculations about him, Aunt Elizabeth, "to do him justice," provides the most sustained prefatory insight into Charles Edward. She acknowledges Charles Edward's artistic sensibilities, despite being constrained by working in his father's (Cyrus Talbert's) Plated-Ware Works; however, his aesthetic sensibilities merely recapitulate what he has been trained to see, which amounts to a "bait-and-switch" trick where Charles Edward is left

with no impression or sense of Aunt Elizabeth (46). She concludes that, "he never will know or know that he knows, which comes to the same thing." (Howells et. al. 46) Nonetheless, the characterization accomplishes its purpose insofar as Charles Edward seems an uninspired artist, dependent, and indecisive. Charles Edward admits to indecision ("mere intelligent useless wretch as I am") only to take it beyond stereotype toward an affective analysis of family and pinpoints fear as a common denominator between him and the rest of the Talbert clan (145). The key difference for him is that this psychological insight gives him power over his fears, although he claims his fears are "of different dangers," whereas they "love them" (Howells et. al. 145). Thus he gains an upper-hand by pathologizing the family despite his own repeated or perhaps obsessive admissions of cowardice (Howells et. al. 145-6).

He implicitly justifies this cowardice or "helpless" nature by turning to his "Mother" who he implicates as not knowing "*how* to dare" and unable to join the family fray due to an essentially weak psychological constitution (Howells et. al. 145, 150-1). In Charles Edward's analysis, "Mother" is reduced to childlike dependency, which not only fits with his resistance toward his sister

Peggy's "coeducation" but also voices a pervasive cultural ideology. Not fearing inconsistency, he performs an act of contrition by imaginatively "reducing" himself to a state of childhood, once again and continually reliant on his mother:

> I'm perfectly willing to recognize, as grovellingly [sic] as one likes, that, as grown-up and as married and as preoccupied and as disillusioned, or at least as battered and seasoned (by adversity) as possible, I'm in respect to *her* as achingly filial and as feelingly dependent, all the time, as when I used, in the far-off years, to wake up, a small blubbering idiot, from frightening dreams, and refuse to go to sleep again, in the dark, till I clutched her hands or her dress and felt her bend over me. (Howells et. al. 152)

Such an admission, however, is doubtlessly *his* "recognition" of a difference between independence and dependence. That is, he retains control over his identity by voluntarily relinquishing an adult or "grown-up" status and admitting his mother remains a source of security and reassurance despite his fears although he does not repudiate his previously reductive analysis.

Charles Edward's "campaign" attempts to first, rectify

his Mother's familial anonymity and ameliorate the annoyance caused her by "Eliza" [Aunt Elizabeth], second "save little pathetic Peg" from both familial domination and herself, and finally sail away with his wife to Europe and "extripate" all four of them (Howells et. al. 159, 176). For James, this seems a much less violent and coldly instrumental plan than Tom Price's pragmatic business calculus of introducing Lily's [Aunt Elizabeth's] past heart-break or "tragedy," Lyman Wilde. More importantly, taking "command" to organize and execute such a plan would trump the "truth" of community:

> It's one of the facts of our situation all round, I may thus add, that every one wants to get some one else away, and that there are indeed one or two of us upon whom, to that end, could the conspiracy only be occult enough—which it can never!—all the rest would effectively concentrate. Father would like to shunt Granny. . . . Mother, . . . would like to 'shoo' off Eliza. . . . the Tom Prices would like to extripate *us*, of course; we would give our most immediate jewel to clear the sky of the Tom Prices. . . . (Howells et. al. 164)

In James's logic, the only way to free themselves from the family's literal covert operations and manipulations is to

stage a preemptive break so as to avoid becoming causalties of someone else's strategy. The militaristic terminology might seem compulsive or excessive, but James exposes it as the largely unspoken discourse for familial oppositions played out across the novel.

James the artist and James's Charles Edward Talbert, both invested (inextricably one might say) in the collaborative project, seek to resist the familial "facts" and Charles Edward's plan is a mere beginning. In a self-reflective and metafictional moment, Charles Edward pauses to "read over" what he has written and notices the exponential multiplication of "our situation" and concludes that "any human thing . . . shine[s] out in as many aspects as the hues of the prism; or place itself, in other words, in relations that positively stop nowhere" (Howells et. al. 167). James's oft-cited statement opens up an infinite array of possibilities, especially the possibility of freedom. But when Charles Edward imagines himself a novelist the possibilities turn into threats to his identity:

> I've often thought I should like some day to write a novel; but what would become of me in that case—delivered over, I mean, before my subject, to my extravagant sense that everything is a part of

> something else? When you paint a picture with a brush and pigments, that is on a single plane, it can stop at your gilt frame; but when you paint one with a pen and words, that is *all* the dimensions, how are you to stop? (Howells et. al. 167)

One must not deliver oneself over to one's subject, in this case the infinite relations, not the least of which language's infinite referentiality. Doing so would, logically and theoretically, leave one radically ungrounded, no longer one-self, and, in Judeo-Christian terms, legion. Charles Edward's anxiety over a reflective limit point seems to support Amy Kaplan's assertion that the lack of control "may or may not be real, but the desire for control most definitely is" (qtd. in Ashton 71). The narrating subjectivity and subjectivities attempt to fulfill this desire by escaping the family and establishing stopping points for their separate and overlapping loves and loathings. Presumably mastery must be attained before each person can attain happiness. James, to take (unjustly perhaps) one example, quickly eliminates Ned Temple, Eastridge's newspaper editor. In acute paranoid speculation, Charles Edward suspects Ned Temple of "some such studious, surreptitious, 'sociological' intent" that might reveal to the town Charles Edward's as well as his

father's "central fires" which might then be revealed in the local paper and possibly manipulated (Howells et. al. 172-3). Any personal confrontation initiated, he thinks, might be both a product of Ned Temple's "plotting" and produce a gossipy newspaper article at Charles Edward's expense. Caught in a paranoid double-bind, Charles Edward's only choice, as ineffectual as it may be, is to dismiss Ned Temple as a "mere little frisking prize ass" (Howells et. al. 173).

While he distinguishes Harry Goward with the same characterization for Peggy's benefit, in addition to adjectivally infantilizing and animalizing him, his interaction with Goward, who flees to New York to escape the culminating tensions, frustrates the image of Charles Edward as "helpless" while it reveals him at his cruelest. Knowing that he possesses key information Harry Goward needs to satisfy his "dumb yearning," Charles Edward withholds any explanation to orient Harry in this romance (Howells et. al. 183). Charles Edward, talking back across the novel to Eliza, knows the answer or can provide the explanation (evidenced by the chapter itself) Harry Goward desires, proving Eliza's theory of Charles Edward wrong, while at the same time demonstrating without question who holds power and who can finally stand out as "the good

genius of the family," which he imagines himself to be and desires to become (176). This is not to say that James's literary aspirations differ significantly from *The Whole Family*'s other contributors'. Attaining such a familial position would displace "Grandmamma" from "the head and front of all our sentimentality," which Charles Edward cites as "a proof of our flat 'modernity,'" and apparently relieve "the strange stultification of the passions in us, which prevents anything ever from coming to an admitted and avowed head" (Howells et. al. 157, 165). In his effort to preserve affective depth over its flattening out, Charles Edward invokes the image of "the aged wan Flora" and "outlived" traditions to signal the decline of Grandma Evarts as if linking old age to a contemporary affective malady might compel support to reinvigorate what he understands as a bourgeois family and concomitantly "modernity."[18] Charles Edward's final resolution, however, entails fleeing Eastridge for Europe to experience "true culture" and leaving "modernity" to die a natural death he doesn't have to witness (Howells et. al. 176).

In his study of the antimodernist movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, T. J. Jackson

[18] Charles Edward's plot simultaneously stages a resistance to affective identity between parents and child, which grandmother Evarts naturalizes, and confirms grandmother Evarts's fears over being discarded (62, 65).

Lears focuses in part on quests for "authentic experience as a means of revitalizing a fragmented personal identity" in order to understand how twentieth-century dissent became reassimilated by bourgeois value-systems, culminating in contemporary "self-absorbed nihilism" (xvii). Although he does not take up James as indicative of this broad assertion, James's short chapter demonstrates many of his key points, particularly the claim that "The internalized morality of self-control and autonomous achievement, the basis of modern culture, seemed at the end of its tether; the chief source of that morality, the bourgeois family, seemed a hothouse of suffocating repression and insoluble personal conflict" (Lears 6). For instance, criticizing Tom Price's business acumen and prosperity serves as a way to critique the illusion of "autonomous achievement;" James's vehement criticism directed at various family members attempts to dispel the repression and controlled tones of the previous authors; and by devising a solution of escape, he overcomes "insoluble personal conflict". The chapter similarly confirms the ambivalence Lears finds characteristic of antimodernist movements, like the mind-curist movement, and predominant sentiments: "the antimodern oscillation between autonomy and dependence reinforced the dominant pattern of ambivalence" (219).

Charles Edward's ambivalence erupts most clearly in relation to his mother. On the one hand, he hopes to model courage for her benefit; on the other hand, he acknowledges that he will always be emotionally dependent upon her for "security."

Fleeing the Family

The decision to flee is the most decisive, committed one in the chapter and thus complicates Lears's diagnosis of antimodernism, if read through James's chapter only, as exemplifying evasion because for Lears evasion is decidedly unconscious; it is a "matter of instinctive self-deception rather than deliberate duplicity" (17). Nevertheless, James neglects to mention anything about Goward's letter, (rendered illegible by Billy's friend Sidney Tracey during a fishing trip) whereas nearly every other chapter exposes it, and because no nuance escapes his panoptic gaze, "deliberate duplicity" seems, within Lears's psycho-social reading, the only reason for evading or consciously resisting the letter's narrative and affective centrality.

If James could construct a resolution to familial conflict by resorting to geographic distance, then the letter's confession of either Harry Goward's devotion to Peggy or his dismissal of her, in whatever terms, would appear a quite straightforward and pragmatic narrative

matter. Of course, James chooses not to pursue this, not because he considers the matter closed by the cross-continental trip, but writing the letter in his chapter would mean submitting to the narrative parameters outlined by previous authors, notably Aunt Elizabeth's creator Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, which thereby resists a certain amount of consensus built by collaboration. That is, withholding the questionable letter could be another paternalistic even hegemonic gesture of securing readerly and collaborative participation in his particular narrative designs.[19]

If this is so, then the rationale leads one to question whether James's contribution to the literary experiment reinscribes normalized notions of familial affection or whether his chapter performs a more critical function or enacts both at different points. If the desire to escape is one of the "facts" of "our situation," then, by a hard logic, James does not resist this fact but rather reinforces it as he is compelled by it and performs on a larger scale what Goward did before him-flee the family (Howells et. al. 164). The conscious duplicity evidenced

[19] June Howard remarks that "Henry James was so distressed by what he called the sentimentality of the chapters following his that he wrote to [Elizabeth] Jordan wishing he could have 'saved' the novel by finishing it single-handed" (8). One can only speculate as to what James may have meant by "saved" even though Charles Edwards suggests removing Peggy from the family. (June Howard, *Publishing the Family*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2001.)

by deliberately leaving unnarrated and unbroached the question of the letter, secures rights to a question and keeping in play the letter's inherent potential for resolving the core affective mystery, effectively untangling the otherwise simple plot between an older professional man and a young female student. In other authors's hands, the letter becomes a threatened narrative and epistemological reward entrusted to the precocious Alice, her inattentive brother Billy, and then to his disheveled friend. Not inherently valuable in itself, although Goward identifies its contents as singular and unique, it serves as the main source of confusion, hope and speculation while at the same time the thought of its possible loss remains compelling to the family (Howells et. al. 214). However, this ploy seems to have run its course by the time it reaches James's hands or, in the metaphor employed to describe the grandmother, it has become an "aged wan Flora." By excluding the letter from his chapter, James frustrates what at this point must seem a transparent convention common to situation comedy. At the same time, he cannot hope to escape *The Whole Family* without claiming some superiority by wielding power or, what amounts to the same thing, compelling obedience. Charles Edward imagines such obedience will arrive some

time ("if we but give them time") after the family recovers from the discovery that he and his entourage have left the continent; when they "bless our name" they will finally succumb to his will and contemplate the other side to familial feeling - its felt absence (Howells et. al. 176).

Whether that same blessing might be applied to those analytically deep and brooding pages, his dense style, or his deft narrative maneuvers remains unclear. What is clear is that plotting to escape the family through those pages acknowledges the unthought reluctance the Talbert family provokes and reveals its inability to secure affective impermeability. Vehemently frustrating Goward's psychoanalytical desire for affective identity and coherence, James's contribution also presents a challenge to closure and hegemony through affect. Through its multiple voices, the family could be seen to have its (un)grounding in a generous reticence, which would have to be understood as neither destructive nor foundationally constitutive.

CONCLUSION

William Dean Howells contributes a short story to his own co-edited collection *The Heart of Childhood* called "The Amigo" and logically positions this story in the collection's middle, beginning on page 143 of 286 pages. Howells's Introduction carefully and respectfully acknowledges the masters of childhood antedating the stories in his collection, naming Mark Twain, J. M. Barrie and Charles Dickens, as well as initially noting that "The child's story is not a story for children but for their elders" (iii). Yet, Howells posits an advance over these masters since the collections' authors "employ a closer and subtler psychology in the study of those little souls than that known to earlier writers" because the stories' collective tenor is one of adult "self-pity" over having "outlived" certain experiences and thoughts, as if the authors knowingly wink and nod to the reader over top the child's head (iv). Howells anticipates readers will find such a gesture "very winning" because "the illusion of reality in the child's world is respected" even though, if one takes Howells' narrative as indicative of the rest, the child's illusion of reality remains to be seen (iv). While side-stepping the temptation to unravel what Howells might

mean by linking children to the illusion of reality as opposed to say an adult's "reality of reality," the order his short story throws into relief is both an adult moral order as opposed to his rendering of a more tolerant though inaccessible "childish" moral order. The amigo, as he is greeted and greets the world, travels from Ecuador to Paris with a "little man" acting as a guardian and finds companionship during his voyage with the unnamed narrator equal in stature but perhaps more reserved and mature than the amigo. Predisposed to "mischief" and mockery, the nine year-old amigo, Perez Armando Aldeano, befriends by way of inflicting injury on the unsuspecting, regardless of age: not only does the amigo, overcome by an inexplicable "seizure," spill an infant out of its carriage he had been kindly pushing, but he also trips the ship's second officer while strolling with a young woman (Howells 149). Before these specific and elaborate incidents, however, the question of the amigo's moral constitution arises during meals at the "conversational end" of the doctor's table and taken up in the interest of the "common welfare" (Howells 146, 147). The discussions lead to no consensus as the amigo's defenders remain "half-hearted" and his opponents would "intercede for him" if the boy were confined aboard the ship. Mirroring adult indecision is his friends'

inability to reconcile the amigo's mimicry of the captain with his obedience to his dark and silent guardian, or with the amigo's tolerant understanding of the captain's applying a spanking. Nevertheless, something is eventually "done" to the amigo and Howells characterizes the captain's act as a moral "caress" while the narrator decides that the amigo is merely "Impish" and, based on the amigo's nonchalant reaction to his punishment, without "malevolence," carefully delineating the amigo's motives from the possibility that the boy may conceal a homicidal hatred (Howells 151).

As the narrator departs the ship in Plymouth, he requests a picture with his amigo. The condition the friend attaches to his consent is that "he insisted on wearing a pair of glasses which had large eyes painted on them, and on being taken in the act of inflating a toy balloon" (Howells 152). The glasses' eyes look back at the camera absurdly while the balloon obscures his face thereby eluding realistic depiction and engendering the question whether "he really was a bad little boy, merely and simply?" (Howells 152). Howells leaves the answer in the hands of "Heaven" at the same time the narrator's visual perspective remains ambivalent in its attempt to decide between whether the amigo's "smallness of [his] presence"

is dwarfed by or contributes to the looming "vast liner" on which the amigo leaves for France. What is certain is that the amigo cannot stay in the narrative order he helps launch, and the question is addressed to, as it foregrounds, specifically adult moral orders which children ought not contemplate but are nevertheless subject to.

While maturity constitutes the operative rubric used to organize and develop the analyses, the proclivity for dissent links the authors and their particular imaginative productions. Their contentious voices appropriate the child as a vehicle for opening up liberatory possibilities while critiquing given social formations. Those same voices attempt to distance themselves from the conditions of their possibility and the child's presumed incapacities or deficiencies in order to claim a privileged autonomy suited to fit an individual or community. The first operation necessarily entails identifying, if not celebrating and romanticizing, a child's presumed intellectual and affective contents, even if that means going to the lengths of ascribing a lack of cognitive possibilities. The second operation relegates and excludes the child from meaningful participation, both symbolically and materially. Dissent as articulated in these narratives

becomes a purely adult matter while adults oscillate across, maintain, and wield maturity.

This is not to say that the authors fail to take children seriously or fail to take them into account because they do; it is to say that the accounting adds up to adult capital. To say the same thing differently, the child becomes an alibi for adulthood's opportunity to escape dependence while devaluing the grounds for such a movement. Maturity, as an "adult-centered notion of structured becoming" in Barrie Thorne's terminology, delineates a narrow teleological route inviting one to become something one is not. Deleuze and Guattari elaborate such conditions of possibility without exclusion and essentializing gestures. Du Bois's child, including himself and his son, become recurring touchstones, initially inaugurating his frustration with race-based logic and its inequities and later energizing his relentless critiques. Only in his adulthood can he realize his childhood's limitless value while struggling to protect it against (de)valuation. Gilman's utopian narrative critiques patriarchal bias and social organization by offering her version of a disciplined and caring matriarchal polity. The many undeniable advantages of Herland emanate from the women's near-consuming focus on

their children who paradoxically appear corralled and controlled and who are, at the novel's end, useful in organizing and reaffirming heterosexual adult relationships. Chopin's text presents a more conflicted engagement with children as they represent, at different moments, both a source of oppression and liberation. As Edna negotiates domestic forces such as her husband, her friend Adèle, and the Doctor who usher her toward an ill-defined notion of maturity, thus inscribing an already immature status, she finds there is no room for her children if she follows their lead. At moments when Edna decidedly defines her own course of action, she finds herself infantilized as childishly irresponsible. Chopin's conclusion illustrates a patriarchal as well as adult double movement that attempts to secure its primacy by deeming female self-determination neglectful and self-absorbed on the one hand, and labeling it childish "acting-out" on the other. As Edna takes her own life, Chopin articulates a consciousness divided against itself as Edna, in the midst of exhaustion, understands her act on the one hand as resisting her family's consuming possession (forcefully figured in her children) through self-determination. On the other hand, by granting credence to Mademoiselle Reisz's artistic edict that the artist

"'possess the courageous soul that dares and defies'" Edna understands her act as cowardly abandonment of her children (Chopin 117). Neither option exclusively offers sufficient guidance or grounding, as each transforms her into less than what she already is while continually placing her maturity at stake.

Examining *The Whole Family* attempts to indicate possibilities for the child beyond repressive construction of identities and the centralization of affective allegiance. James's concern for the family and the daughter Peggy Talbert reveals itself through his masterminding the plot's resolution, with the plot understood as primarily and unceasingly divergent emotional resonances. James's resolution, however, finds its limits in Peggy's final expatriation to save her from the family's hegemonic agendas of ultimately marrying her off while at the same time gesturing toward the promise of innumerable possibilities. Blum explains this logic in terms of the "go-between child [who] is fated to be expelled from the narrative resolutions it produces" (7). Peggy then forms the locus of concern, or narrative alibi, and functions as the principle mediator who cannot remain. The contours of the novel's concern stage a preoccupation with affective resolution and coherence. However, the novel confirms both

the child's value at exposing "the failure of human relationships" as well as a thinking of love that abandons itself to "the collisions, and the contradictions of love, without submitting them to an order that it would essentially defy" (Blum 269; Nancy 83).

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