Queering Cold War Poetry

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Published by The Ohio State University Press

Keenaghan, Eric.
Queering Cold War Poetry: Ethics of Vulnerability in Cuba and the United States.
The Ohio State University Press, 2008.
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Prologue


2. As I detail in the introduction, liberalism is central to my understanding of security, too. My inclusion of Cuban authors in this study is not paradoxical, though. I derive my definition of liberalism from a Foucauldian approach to operations of biopower and the management of populations, not from a political economic framework. The distinctions between the political forms of U.S. “liberalism” and Cuban “communism” are also not as clear-cut as they initially seem. Before and after the 1959 Revolution, Cuba had a changing relationship to American liberal ideals. Many conservative U.S. liberals (i.e., liberals who opposed communism and socialism as suppressions of democratic individualism) supported Fidel Castro between 1956 and 1958 because of his heroic image (Van Gosse, Where the Boys Are: Cuba, Cold War America, and the Making of a New Left, 60–135). Similar support came from both politically and culturally conservative papers such as the Chicago Tribune, Coronet, Look, Time, Life, and U.S. News and World Report. These media outlets contributed to a public discourse that paradoxically equated Cuban populist resistance with a North American strong individualism. Thus, prior to the establishment of a socialist government (later declared communist), the U.S. mainstream perpetuated a paradoxical romance of the anti-American revolution against Fulgencio Batista. That romance even inspired conservatives to become “Yankee fidelistas” and fight alongside the same Castro who also was admired by the New Left for embodying an ethos of personal politics. Unfathomably, American liberalism—in both its conservative and liberal/New Left varieties—resonates with the distinctively Cuban ideal of the communist hero.

4. For ACT UP’s mission, see the website for the NYC branch (http://www.actupny.org) and its Oral History Project (http://www.actuporalhistory.org). One could criticize U.S. chapters of ACT UP for their largely American, even local, focus. A French chapter does exist in Paris. It is still quite active, whereas many American chapters are less so now. (See: http://www.actupparis.org.) Consequently, its actions have not fostered enough of a consciousness of the uneven developments of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the resources allotted to globally address the crisis. In any cultural ecology, accounts of differences are necessary for imagining ethical and politically viable programs to redress those conditions that affect seropositive subjects globally. For a critical account of the unequal discursive conditioning of HIV/AIDS worldwide, see Cindy Patton, *Globalizing AIDS.*

5. For critical accounts of Queer Nation’s resistance to queer citizens’ economic and political exclusion by reimagining the nation as a cultural, rather than state, entity, see Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman, “Queer Nationality,” and Henry Abelove, *Deep Gossip,* 29–41.

6. The CLAGS participants upheld a classically humanist sense of coalitional politics. In contrast, the idea of commonality I outline in chapter 1 would be called “posthumanist” by theorists. Both are cognizant of an inherent ecological relationality, but I would differentiate a humanist politics as more invested in the human citizen-subject’s ability to act as a civic agent. A posthumanist ecological model would also account for the roles of “inhuman” factors—such as discourses, language, desire, even nature—in the shaping and conditioning of possibilities for political resistance. For a posthumanist ecological model, see Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies.*

7. I want to thank Belkin Gonzalez and Patricia Meona-Picado for this eloquent and concise formulation of queer politics’ changing historical relationship to vulnerability.


Introduction


2. For a brief example where sovereignty is discussed as part of biopolitics, see Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population,* 23. Roberto Esposito explores this relation in great depth, and he characterizes it as “a copresence of opposing vectors superimposed in a threshold of originary indistinction” (*Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy,* 40). The translation of his crucial contribution to this discussion was made available only as this book was going to press, so I do not treat it in detail here.


4. For accounts in queer theory that correlate biopolitics to Homeland Security, see Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times; ‘Abu Ghraib:...*

5. In Foucault’s account, capital and resources, rather than people, move through populations. Consequently, his ideas of movement are quite distinct from the nomadic circulations imagined by Gilles Deleuze. This tension is registered in Deleuze’s Foucault (esp. 23–44, 70–93), in which he forcibly imagines power operating through a disciplinary apparatus that neglects Foucault’s late turn to biopolitics and governmentality. In the future, it would serve queer theory well to read Deleuze in tandem with Foucault. This would let us more productively rethink the former’s attempts to explain modalities of resistance through Deleuze’s metaphors of traversal, the diagrammatic, and topography in his reading of Foucault. Those figures correspond with Deleuze’s better-known concepts of nomadism, lines of flight, and deterritorialization.

6. I am also working with, but establishing a strong distinction from, Noberto Bobbio’s understanding of liberalism as “a particular conception of the state” with “limited powers and functions” (Liberalism and Democracy, 1). This kind of state-form establishes a social contract based on an unquestioned “imaginary reconstruction of a presumed original state of man” as free and sovereign (ibid., 6). As I detail below, my conceptualization of liberalism does not tie it to a specific state or economic form; however, we must criticize its mythification of individualism as an absolute sovereignty. We can do so by investigating how liberalism is articulated, in particular epochs, by state, economic, and other institutions.

7. On the difference between comprehensive and political liberalisms, see Rawls, Political Liberalism, xxvii–xxx, xl–lxii, 37–46. Historicity is the fundamental element distinguishing the two. Contrary to his own intentions of elaborating how a public consensus necessary for meting out political justice changes over time, however, Rawls’s concentration on political liberalism is not as historical as he makes it out to be. Because he works with the transgenerational democratic principles of equality and liberty, he problematically glosses the exclusivist nature of the common language established by these constant “principles” and “ideals” (liii). Particular, incommensurable perspectives are sacrificed to establish a consensus. Furthermore, procedural debate presumes a shared standard of rationality that lets citizens perceive “one another as free and equal in a system of social cooperation over generations” (xliv). A rationalistic imperative actually limits procedural debate by instituting moralistic, transcendent norms that must be legible across generations. Individuals “know” they are free if they subscribe to an unthreatening normative paradigm evacuated of passions. Rather than critically reading and historicizing civic debates’ premises (liberalism can “become” because it is in a historically dynamic relationship with commonality), Rawls only superficially isolates some of its ontological dimensions in order to let others remain unexamined (liberalism “is”).


9. My critical turn toward ontology engages a methodological strategy that Foucault likens to modern thought’s own potential to move past a classically categorical logic of identity and difference by engaging “a dialectical interplay and an ontology without metaphysics” (The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences, 340). For Foucault, putting ontology back into history allows us to think the subject in the absence of the human person. For me, though, this methodology is less a part of an antihumanist project and more a means of facilitating a critique of humanism’s exclusionary premises. Rather than say there are no persons bearing their own agency, we must inquire as to what forces determine who and what count as human or as citizens in particular moments. Here I am working with Jacques Rancière’s theorization of the count in Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy. A supposedly democratic consensus is monitored by “a count whose complexities may mask a fundamental miscount” that is corrected only when the excluded raise their voices to call attention.
to a social order’s contingencies (5). A politics inheres in “a multiplicity of speech events” (37) in which a collective (or, as Rancière terms it, a “world,” 42) voices its dispute with a dominant order (or “world”). What is more, that political “disorder” entails a troping of the language structuring a dominant political paradigm. “The modern political animal is first a literary animal, caught in the circuit of a literariness that undoes the relationships between the order of words and the order of bodies that determine the place of each” (37). As I argue below, lyric is such a literary form through which a politicized disorder between words and bodies, order and disorder, transpires. For Rancière’s work on lyric as a political form, see The Flesh of Words: The Politics of Writing, 9–40.

10. Connolly delineates a third category: civic liberalism (or, liberal communitarianism). He aligns this form with identity politics and multiculturalism, which are based on exclusions made in the interest of a so-called “common good” (see Identity/Difference, 87–92). I am glossing over this category because I feel that, if we read his liberal individualism more closely in light of Foucault’s notions about the population, it is difficult to distinguish liberal communitarianism from liberal individualism. Both are premised on exceptions (the liberal individualism of some is secured by excluding others from the social order), and both render the individual’s sovereignty a function of the population’s common will (which secures its status as “common” via normalizing apparatuses).

11. Foucault reminds us that statistics, that mechanism instrumental to governmentality’s biopolitical management of populations, precisely means “science of the state” (Security, Territory, Population, 101).

12. Dewey’s historicized and politically motivated treatment of the tension between collectivity and individualism warrants more attention than it has received. For key works constituting that phase of his interwar thought, see Individualism Old and New (1930), Liberalism and Social Action (1935), and Freedom and Culture (1939).

13. The coexistence of liberalism and commonality are articulated in a manner aptly described by Chantal Mouffe as both paradoxical and antagonistic (The Democratic Paradox, especially 1–16, 99–105). A liberal grammar of equality and liberty exists alongside a hierarchy that stabilizes liberties and thus limits freedoms. A rhetoric of freedom impossibly coexists with neoliberalism’s reinforcement of an antagonistic pluralism that determines what identity groups are most entitled to the rights measuring such individual equality. Thinking through other facets of the democratic paradox depends, in part, on examining other moments’ articulations of aporetic dynamics.

14. Eric Paras’s discussion of the “strong subject” (Foucault 2.0: Beyond Power and Knowledge, 101–23) opens a useful way of thinking about ascesis that relates to what I imagine for queer theorists’ ethical relationship to crisis. His account pertains to Foucault’s critical relationship to but continuing involvement with liberal politics, and I find it useful for correcting others’ uncritical appropriations of Foucault for their own liberal projects (see, for example, Kwame Anthony Appiah, The Ethics of Identity, especially 1–35). One can develop a politicized ethic that lets one work more freely in a liberalist system, without merely reproducing its transcendent, exclusivist categories.

15. Thomas Keenan (Fables of Responsibility: Aberrations and Predicaments in Ethics and Politics, 27–42) expresses a similar view of ethics as originating in the interruption of an unknown that threatens the individual’s coherence. For Badiou, that change-incurring alterity is a singular “event” to which one becomes a subject by remaining faithful to it. In contrast, Keenan’s subject is produced out of a negotiation of conflicting calls.

16. See Badiou, Manifesto for Philosophy, esp. 79–88.

17. Despite queer theorists’ and activists’ attraction to revolutionary models, historically in the United States the connection between revolution and queerness has been tenuous at best. A famous case in point: Huey Newton, the Black Panthers’ Minister of Defense, urged his brethren to overcome “personal opinions and insecurities” about gay and women’s liberation movements. While laudably calling for a coalition between racial and sexual politics, Newton’s public letter actually tempers one form of violence by urging his fellow revolu-
titionaries to shore up some of their defenses, in the name of sympathy. Rather than giving in to “our first instinct” of “want[ing] to hit the homosexual in the mouth because we’re afraid we might be homosexual,” he instead directs his audience to “gain security in ourselves” so as to generate the appropriate “respect and feelings for all oppressed people” (“Manifesto,” 89). In the final analysis, the revolutionaries’ own security was to be ensured. A coalition based on such security, articulated through a rhetoric of tolerance, only preserves a priori definitions and thus is limited in its ethicopolitical potential.

This limit is an effect of the surprisingly disciplined nature of revolutionary articulations of desire. When reassessing Newton’s seductiveness, Robert Reid-Pharr notes that “revolutionary desire is not undisciplined. On the contrary, the revolution enforces a narrative of desire that ultimately denies the realities of individuals involved in their blind pursuits of pleasure” (Once You Go Black: Choice, Desire, and the Black American Intellectual, 141). In this case, queerness is devalued and disciplined so as to promote a revolutionary idea of blackness. That racial ideal is tied to a mythologized tradition borne by an ahistoricized body that maintains ages-old dichotomies such as straight and gay, black and white. Reid-Pharr tries to rescue Newton, though: “I would argue that his willingness to address topics as seemingly out of character for a black nationalist leader as sexual liberation and gay rights acts itself as evidence of a will to break the hold that the logic of black historical and cultural profundity holds within the American imagination” (144). I am not convinced of this conclusion, though. Newton expressly articulates his desire to link black and sexual and gender revolutionaries so as to defensively maintain a secure sense of (reproductive) blackness. The narrative of what is “acceptable” for black nationalism may be changed, but the identitarian and liberalist logics underlying it remain untouched.


19. For critical responses to Edelman, see John Brenkman, “Queer Post-Politics” and “Politics, Mortal and Natal: An Arendtian Rejoinder,” and the position papers by Robert L. Caserio, Judith Halberstam, José Esteban Muñoz, and Tim Dean constituting “The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory.” Edelman’s own responses to each are published at the end of this dossier of position papers, too.


21. Many theorists imagine that queer subjects illustrate an ontological condition of vulnerability because they live in proximity to an outside force (power, desire, the death drive, the Real, jouissance, attraction, hegemonic narratives) beyond one’s control. However, because this attitude often produces a disruption that affirms identity-based difference even as it opposes the rhetoric and logics of community, queer theory often comes dangerously close to reproducing, rather than challenging, the biopolitical liberalist logic of a seemingly autonomous openness to risk-taking (as elucidated by critics such as Martin; see note 4). For a representation of queer theories that walk a fine line between vulnerable passion and the affirmation of an identity-based difference, see Leo Bersani, “Is the Rectum a Grave?” and Homos; Tim Dean, Beyond Sexuality; Jonathan Dollimore, Sex, Literature, and Censorship; Elizabeth A. Povinelli, “Sexuality as Risk: Psychoanalysis Metapragmatically”; and John Paul Ricco, The Logic of the Lure. Other queer studies more responsibly consider the realities of loss, injury, and shame without deploying a rhetoric of risk. However, they frequently evince an identity-based communitarian impulse, rather than what I call a similarity-based idea of commonality-in-difference. They use either shame or injury to remedy the exclusions brought about by the standards defining present minority communities or implicitly (and, in some cases, explicitly) express a romanticized yearning for impossible communities. A small sampling of work in this vein includes Heather Love, Feeling Backward: Loss and the
Politics of Queer History; Kathryn Bond Stockton, Beautiful Bottom, Beautiful Shame: Where “Black” Meets “Queer”; Judith Halberstam, In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives; José Esteban Muñoz, Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics; and Christopher Nealon, Foundlings: Lesbian and Gay Historical Emotion before Stonewall. I do not treat vulnerability as a trauma to be worked through or as what sets queerness absolutely apart from heteronormativity. Instead, I see it as articulated in some subjects’ specific material experiences, which do result from their differences from the norm, but as ultimately supplying the basis for a more universalizing possibility. In this way, my theorization is closest to Judith Butler’s (especially in Undoing Gender), but with significant caveats that I elaborate below.

22. Winnubst concentrates on liberalism’s classic political form, as first articulated by John Locke. As such, it promotes what she calls the neutral individual’s “phallicized whiteness.” She uses an alternative idea of sovereignty modeled by Georges Bataille and his philosophy of the accrued share to counter such exclusivist forms of liberalist privacy.

23. Harper still holds out for a transformative social agency discovered by queer subjects who “seize and interpret the meanings of ‘public’ and ‘private’ in a way that enhances, rather than hinders, our free subjectivity” (Private Affairs, 82). Although the redefinition of the public–private divide may not transpire through an agentic seizure of opportunities as easily as he implies, it is worth noting that shifts of power in liberalism’s biopolitical order are owing to the two spheres’ relatively uncontrollable and fluctuating division.

24. In Giving an Account of Oneself, Butler also notes the corporeality of this condition, but she ends up foregrounding rhetoric, or what she repeatedly terms the “structure of address.” In Undoing Gender (esp. 17–39), she primarily concentrates on embodiment and so gives a fuller account of a “condition of primary vulnerability” (24). My work here tries to make more of an explicit connection between these two modes of embodied and linguistic vulnerabilities. Butler does not explicitly formulate them as analogous modes; however, because she treats them separately she does end up aligning language’s improper qualities more with an epistemological and ethical enterprise than a civic one. These should not be treated as separate projects, though: the epistemological, ethical, ontological, and civic dimensions of these inquiries are interrelated. In the midst of those connections, the line between theoretic subject and civic person are blurred. We are thus called on to reformulate queer theory’s antihumanist foundations.

25. Deleuze’s reading of Whitman focuses on how an American whole (a “web of variable relations” that preserves the integrity of each of its constituent parts; Essays Critical and Clinical, 60) arises from the combinative fragments of relations between individuals, groups, and histories. “Relations are not internal to a Whole; rather the Whole is derived from the external relations of a given moment, and varies with them” (59). Individuals are not atomistic and self-contained Wholes, but only approximations of such. Resemblance arises from their various, fragmentary, contingent senses of self, which derive from their relations with others.

26. Butler has developed her recent thinking about responsibility largely in light of her sense of the precariousness of life and the necessity of risk. For her, an ethical stance entails questioning the norms of social recognition, of subjecting one’s self to impersonal standards and an impersonal language that challenges our egos’ self-containment and integrity. It “involves putting oneself at risk, imperiling the very possibility of being recognized by others” (Giving an Account of Oneself, 23). Butler uses vulnerability as a conceptual fulcrum to shift our political sensibilities about nationalism, gender definition, or embodied life from an immobilizing melancholic frame to one that allows for hope and healing by permitting the mourning of injury and losses. “Perhaps . . . one mourns when one accepts that by the loss one undergoes one will be changed, possibly for ever. Perhaps mourning has to do with agreeing to undergo a transformation (perhaps one should say submitting to a transformation) the full result of which one cannot know in advance” (Precarious Life, 21; emphasis in original; repeated virtually verbatim in relation to transgender politics in Undoing Gender,
18. The gravitas of mourning is itself a first step in reclaiming hope. It historically connects us to a past that is lost and to a future potentiality that comes from working through that loss. As I elucidate below, however, we need not associate vulnerability only with mourning to critically appreciate certain forms of this fundamentally ontological condition.

27. On courage and the risk of the polis, see also Arendt, The Human Condition, 28–37.

28. Badiou's theory of the joyful nature of poetry differs from mine insofar as he sees the poem as a threshold or a Heideggerian opening. For him, poetry merely "waits"; it does not think actively of (and thus enact) the future (The Century, 21–22). But if poetry is truly active, and if that activity is the reason for its joy, we ought to remember that it is composed by an embodied subject. Badiou's metaphysics disembodies poetry and renders it an ahistorical text that only welcomes history when it eventually arrives. While it might not manifest a direct action, a poem, as I see it, does not merely wait. Its action, as I detail below, is a kind of seduction. Through the text, the author calls us to receive and complete what (and who) the poem voices.

29. To this extent, I imagine queer theory's ethical project as proceeding along the lines of a Foucauldian archaeology. In that methodology, texts from various discursive archives provide a "positivity" that "defines a field in which formal identities, thematic continuities, translations of concepts, and polemical interchanges may be deployed." Historical work is based on an analysis of what is "given" and of "things actually said" (Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge, 127). That is to say, we work with a legible discursive field from the past; but our textually mediated engagements with that past bear the potential to unsettle our selves, as historical actors. In How to Do the History of Homosexuality (1–23), David M. Halperin outlines a similar Foucauldian methodology as crucial for escaping the tautology of much post-Stonewall gay and lesbian historiography. Maintaining such archaeological dimensions that contribute to what Halperin (after Foucault) terms "a history of the present" is key for preserving the ethicality of our work.

30. For a different formulation of such incommunicative articulations (as socially originating "lines of flight" and "expression machines," rather than Adorno's immanent encroachment of a Hegelian world spirit), see Deleuze and Guattari, Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature, esp. 28–42.

31. Although I disagree with his assessment that Wallace Stevens and other high modernists endorsed a conservatively liberalist ideal of privacy, Joseph Harrington's reading of some lyricists as asserting the need for their work to be read as forms of public discourse, rather than as private expression, is worthwhile. Interestingly, he also notes that the public nature of lyric comprises the poet's "ethical duty toward an audience, or anyone else" (Poetry and the Public, 13).

32. In Giving an Account of Oneself (30–40), Judith Butler makes a similar move in relation to Cavarero but does so by emphasizing the risky vulnerability that subjects assume in their struggles for recognition with linguistic norms. Like Cavarero, Alphonso Lingis posits a similarly othering mode of intersubjective contact that begins with the voice. While his model allows for one's own voice to introduce a continual, repeated disruption of selfhood, that disruption ironically introduces some coherence and renarrativization. One might think of it as shifting strategies for aesthetically fashioning one's self by, as Lingis terms it, honoring one's word (The First Person Singular, 37–44). The risks attending one's living encounters with others, the inherent violence of that contact (by encountering what he terms their interior "visionary space"), and their challenges to the narrative one honors about one's self risk sliding into dishonor and, ultimately, death.

33. Mladen Dolar illuminates possibilities for thinking of the text as a third body. Revising Lacan's concept of extimacy, he theorizes the object voice as "the pivotal point precisely at the intersection of presence and absence" through which one "recogniz[es] oneself as the addressee of the voice of the Other," but "at the same time . . . inherently lacks and disrupts any notion of a full presence" (A Voice and Nothing More, 55). This voice functions "as an [assumption of] authority over the Other and as an exposure to the Other, an appeal,
a plea, an attempt to bend the Other. It cuts directly into the interior, so much so that the very status of the exterior becomes uncertain, and it discloses the interior, so much so that the very supposition of an interior depends on the voice. So both hearing and emitting a voice present an excess, a surplus of authority on the one hand and a surplus of exposure on the other” (80–81). Through this mediating voice or virtual body, one is brought outside one’s self and into relation with the Lacanian Other, thus complicating the divisions between public and private, exterior and interior, submission and sovereignty.

Chapter One

1. Perhaps that career division overstates Stevens’s early aestheticism. As James Lon- genbach (Wallace Stevens: The Plain Sense of Things, 41–82) details, that volume’s later poems—including “The Death of a Soldier” and “Sunday Morning” —respond to an interwar condition, but their “ambitions [are] circumscribed” because of Stevens’s “awareness of the frightful unreality that may arise from a poetry that tries to be political” (63).

2. For his complete discussion, see Alan Filreis, Modernism from Right to Left, 12–45.

3. For excellent readings of Stevens’s ethical reflections on various sociopolitical concerns, see Angus J. Cleghorn, Wallace Stevens’s Poetics: The Neglected Rhetoric, and Jacqueline Vaught Brogan, The Violence Within, the Violence Without: Wallace Stevens and the Emergence of a Revolutionary Poetics.

4. I do not have the space to do so here, but reappraising Stevens’s investment in, and critique of, liberalism could be more thoroughly historicized as engaging Dewey’s rethinking of democratic individualism in the 1930s (see introduction, n. 12). Dewey and Stevens published in the same magazines, including The Partisan Review and The New Republic; and the poet found the philosopher’s work “valuable,” as he wrote Henry Church in 1941 (LWS 441).

5. I am thinking specifically of a 1949 letter to José Rodríguez Feo where Stevens remarks that “one is always desperately in need of the fellowship of one’s own kind” as well as “the fellowship of the landsman and compatriot” (SM 165). The question remains, though, whether he easily equated that “kind” with “compatriots.” What is evident is Stevens’s ambiv- alent relationship to his affective connections with the U.S. people. He both longs for his “kind,” yet is critical of settling for the sort of security provided by the steadfastly liberalist nationalism of the Cold War.

6. The few other existing investigations of the exchange between Stevens and Rodríguez Feo focus on the letters’ “camp” and gender elements (David R. Jarraway, “Creatures of the Rainbow: Wallace Stevens, Mark Doty, and the Poetics of Androgyny”); its imperialist asymmetries (Roberto Ignacio Díaz, “Wallace Stevens y el discurso en la Habana: Palabras de José Rodríguez Feo”); or the poet’s criticism of the young editor’s indiscriminate reading of other national literatures (Alan Filreis, Wallace Stevens and the Actual World, esp. 187–206).

7. I am not suggesting that Stevens was a queer subject or even that he was politically or culturally a homophile. (Quite the opposite is true: he tended to be paranoid about the effeminacy of queer men, including Rodríguez Feo.) However, there are affinities between his ethical reappraisal of liberalism and queer writers’ resistances that highlight similarity, commonality, and even cosmopolitanism. I am not alone in sensing the “queerness” of his project. Jarraway (Going the Distance: Dissident Subjectivity in Modernist American Literature, 1–17), for one, has made explicit links between an idea of “distancing” (i.e., the subject’s internal division) in Stevens’s work and some queer theories. His concept of distancing is akin to the effects of resemblance explored here; however, I read Stevens as less interested in the subject’s internal division than in the subject’s relation and connection. The queerness
of this dynamic is owed to the embodied nature of relationality and its resultant eroticism, what Stevens calls “pleasure.”


11. On nativism as the drive to cement essentialist identifications in interwar American literature, see Walter Benn Michaels, Our America: Nativism, Modernism, and Pluralism. During the interwar period, pluralist thought had an ambivalent relationship to nativist policies; often both reinforced liberalist ideologies of privatization and personal autonomy. For example, see Everett Helmut Akam’s discussion of John Collier and the Indian New Deal of 1934 in Transnational America: Cultural Pluralist Thought in the Twentieth Century, 126–28. For an account of how that ambivalence was worked through by American intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s in order to address the realities of international markets and the inadequacies of domestic cultural pluralism, see David W. Noble, Death of a Nation: American Culture and the End of Exceptionalism. Stevens’s later career is marked by the influence of earlier pluralist thought and its ambivalences, while demonstrating his own commitment to reassessing American exceptionalism.


16. The Good Neighbor Policy promoted a dependence sustaining the singular differences between North and South; ultimately, though, the resultant diplomatic model was conservative. It reinforced national asymmetries based on a persistent faith in cultural purism, security, and U.S. exceptionalism. Pike criticizes the policy’s merits, based on FDR’s personal antipathy toward Latin America (FDR’s Good Neighbor Policy, 216–26). As he argues, FDR used the hemispheric model to win credibility from the European nations on whom he focused his diplomatic attentions and energies. However, he does not note that this pan-American enterprise is also motivated by a nationalism common to FDR’s policy of nonintervention and Herbert Hoover’s earlier, more openly conservative presumption of the superiority of U.S. political and cultural systems.

17. Badiou’s model of a poetic disruption of the “we” hinges on his opposition of the “eloquence” of St. John Perse to the murmuring of Paul Celan (see The Century, 90–97). Stevens’s lyric falls closer to Perse’s style than Celan’s, but our American also importantly avoids the sort of “nihilistic epic” evident in the former’s oeuvre. Significantly, Stevens models the sort of lyric thinking Badiou is interested in, even if this poet avoids the avant-garde ruptures the philosopher esteems in figures like Celan, Bertolt Brecht, Samuel Beckett, and Osip Mandelstam.

18. Perhaps Rodríguez Feo was drawn to Stevens’s phrase “the major men” because he believed it specifically addressed the gendered and sexualized dimensions of national belonging. After all, in the same paragraph in which he asks Stevens about the meaning of the major man, he proceeds to complain about Ernest Hemingway’s machismo. Although Rodríguez Feo brings Stevens’s attention to the trope, his hints about possibly queer content did not register.

20. This suggests a difference that distinguishes Stevens’s project of reordering the world from much interwar American aestheticism. Russ Castronovo reads the cultural and philosophical proponents of aestheticism between roughly 1890 and 1930 as metaphorically substituting the order of culture for the anarchy and violence of politics. At one point, he draws on Foucault to note that a more ethical “aesthetics of existence” could develop an aesthetic practice that does not “aestheticize life but rather politicizes it by revealing the subject as ethically—but not morally—situated among others” (Beautiful Democracy: Aesthetics and Anarchy in a Global Era, 59). Castronovo’s implicit point about politicized art’s preservation and cultivation of violence and disorder puts into relief the ethicopolitical dimensions of Stevens’s project (which deems both chaos and order necessary). Moreover, Stevens’s example shows that in this late modernist moment a transformative aesthetics of existence was imagined as including, not precluding, metaphorical strategies. Metaphor is (dis)figuration, rather than mere substitution and beautification.

21. Pressing the point, Stevens can be said to cling too much to an idea of “private resemblance” here. If perceptual proclivities are bodily and social, the resemblances a poet discovers are never truly private. Acknowledging this lack of privacy and proprietorship would complicate his reproductive metaphor (“the mind begets”). This presents a cautionary lesson for any theorizing out of poetry: Stevens provides a point from which we can begin to think about similarity, not an ethical template we should adopt without revision or criticism.

22. For Deleuze on “the middle,” see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, 3–25, 492–99, and Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, Dialogues, 36–76.

23. In chapter 2, I discuss a key essay from Orígenes where Lezama explicitly mentions the centrality of Stevens’s influence. In my analysis of Duncan in chapter 3, I do not go into any depth about similar influences. This is largely because his critical prose does not focus on Stevens, though he did regard him as one of his “masters” (alongside Gertrude Stein, H.D., Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, and Laura Riding Jackson). Much like Stevens, Duncan rejected group identification on the grounds that it separated the writer from the rest of human commonality. While his anarchism is not exclusively influenced by Stevens, Duncan found in Stevens’s work a useful model for an individualized poetic opposition to a priori communities and identity groups. Stevens’s thematic emphasis on poetic freedom as deriving from reading and reflection also resound in Duncan’s poetics of derivation (from his readings of others) and rewriting (from rereading his own previous work). The centrality of reading to both may result from the influence of Ralph Waldo Emerson that they share. Duncan pays explicit homage to Stevens in one late text: “Structure of Rime XXVIII In Memoriam Wallace Stevens” (Ground Work, 60). Significantly, this poem singles out “Desire” and “Imagination”—two Stevensian tropes—as the means of resisting the imperialist and nationalist effects of the Vietnam War on identity.

24. If we accept Edward Said’s classic definition of literary imperialism as perpetuating a representational logic “which not only misrepresented them [i.e., colonized peoples] but assumed they were unable to read and respond directly” (Culture and Imperialism, 31), Stevens is not a hard-and-fast imperialist. After all, he did respect the origenistas’ intellectual and aesthetic integrity. Despite Stevens’s requests for “little vistas” of Cuba, Rodríguez Feo also never saw Stevens as an imperialist. Instead, the editor openly accused others, such as Charles Henri Ford, of “that stupid, tourist-exotic vision of our tropics” and “the silliest, most unintelligent bit of Americana” (SM 60). In contrast, he singled out Stevens as “an almost legendary amigo of us Cuban writers” (SM 190).

25. In my study of Lezama (chapter 2), it becomes clear why Stevens’s presumption that the Cubans are not concerned with nationalism and the state actually misses the mark. His conclusion also ignores all the other global contributors to Orígenes. Given that he himself published in the magazine, this is a remarkably strange oversight. Setting these criticisms
aside, though, Stevens’s comment still can help refine our understanding of his poetic ethic.


Chapter Two

1. All translations from the Spanish are mine, unless otherwise noted. Here I have translated the title of Lezama’s essay with the English preposition “about” to capture his diction’s spatial dimensions. *Alrededor* signifies the direction of an approach, or proximity, but one still remains on the outskirts of one’s destination.

2. The core members of *Orígenes* consisted of poets (Lezama, Baquero, Gaztelu, Piñera, Solís, Justo Rodríguez, Fina García Marruz, Cintio Vitier, Eliseo Diego, Octavio Smith, Lorenzo García Vega); painters (Mariano Rodríguez, René Portocarrero); musicians (Julián Orbón, José Ardévol); and other writers (Rodríguez Feo, Bella García Marruz, Agustín Pi). Later issues of the publication involved younger poets, such as Roberto Fernández Retamar and Fayad Jamís.

3. Unruh’s subscription to conventionally existentialist ideas about vanguardist resistance is evident in that she gives some attention to the *minoristas* but ignores the *origenistas* altogether.

4. James Buckwalter-Arias addresses how some contemporary Cuban authors glorify the *origenistas* as pre-Revolutionary predecessors. Many regard Lezama and the rest of the *Orígenes* group as using art to realize “the highest expression of true, individual liberty,” an alternative to the later Revolution’s recasting of liberty “in explicitly collective terms” that is believed to be still capable of resisting the global market (“Reinscribing the Aesthetic: Cuban Narrative and Post-Soviet Cultural Politics,” 364). In contrast, my project unsettles such an easy attribution of individualism to the *origenistas*, who were known for their emphasis on *amistad* or “friendship.” Such an amicable—indeed, amorous—model can resignify both resistance and collectivity without reading their aesthetic in overly individualizing, transcendental terms.

5. Gustavo Pérez Firmat’s “The Strut of the Centipede: José Lezama Lima and New World Exceptionalism” is one of the few pieces about how Lezama’s poetic connects Northern and Southern identities.


7. Since the Missouri Compromise (1820) and the annexation debates before the Emancipation Proclamation (1862), the United States had desired to possess Cuba. Those debates heated up again during the colony’s first attempt to win independence from Spain (the Ten Years’ War, 1868–78) and before the War of Independence (1895–98).


9. Rojas specifies that Cuba’s political Right identified with the liberalist imperative of an individualistic pursuit of happiness, and the Left pursued liberalist independence through a collective form of nationalistic sovereignty.

10. For Nuez’s complete discussion of “confrontation,” “reproduction,” and “appropriation,” see *La balsa perpetua*, 21–40.

11. One of Lezama’s more famous poems is “Para llegar a Montego Bay” (*Orígenes* 35, 1954; reprinted in *Dador*, 1960). Julio Cortázar’s essay “Para llegar a Lezama Lima” (“To Reach Lezama Lima,” 1967) plays on the poem’s title, as does the *origenista* Cintio Vitier’s late essay collection *Para llegar a Orígenes* (1994). Neither deals with the trope of approaching as I do here, as ultimately maintaining distances rather than achieving a goal because the *telos* itself is the limit, a pure impossibility.
12. Elsewhere Lezama names that arche-image the *imago*, thus distinguishing the desired image from what is produced by poetic metaphors. An image (*imagen*) is thus only the approximation or fragmented re-presentation of the *imago*’s ultimately unknowable *telos*. See “Introducción a un sistema poético” (“Introduction to a Poetic System”; *Orígenes* 36, 1954), in *TH* 9–36.


14. This is not to say that metaphysics always precludes social ethics. Emilio Bejel (*José Lezama Lima: Poet of the Image*, esp. 16–69, 124–47) offers an excellent reading that connects the metaphysical and postcolonial dimensions of Lezama’s poetic. Brett Levinson (*Secondary Moderns: Mimesis, History, and Revolution in Lezama Lima’s “American Expression,”* esp. 159–81) supplies a strong postcolonial account of Lezama’s critical engagement with Aristotelian and Platonic metaphysics. Neither connects postcolonial and queer critique, though. I facilitate that link here by focusing on less-discussed essays that work through the principles outlined in their shared primary text, Lezama’s well-known “Introduction to a Poetic System.”

15. For another reading of Zambrano on the “pre-natal” nation’s innocence and Lezama’s secret, see Carlós Barbáchano, “La Cuba secreta o la íntima historia de un encuentro inacabable.”

16. For her full discussion, see Zambrano, *Persona y democracia*, 162–65. Not incidentally, she theorizes that individuals experience overlapping forms of temporality (esp. 11–25, 59–92). Because love, family, and commonality are experienced in different temporal registers, what is called “history” should be seen as just one kind of temporality. This notion of different experiences of time resonates with Lezama’s distinction in “The Dignity of Poetry” between historical and poematic time. If read in light of Zambrano’s philosophy in *Persona y democracia*, which appeared at about the same time, his elaboration of two forms of temporality can be read as overlapping and mutually affecting one another.

17. Despite their ontological vocabulary, Lezama’s and Zambrano’s opposition to Sartre is distinct from that posed by Martin Heidegger in the form of the ecstatic metaphysics elaborated in “Letter on Humanism.”

18. See Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, 9–18. In his response to Sartre, Barthes argues that “style is never anything but metaphor, that is, equivalence of the author’s literary intention and carnal structure. . . . So that style is always a secret; but the occult aspect of its implications does not arise from the mobile and ever-provisional nature of language; its secret is recollection locked within the body of the writer” (12). His concern with the writer’s body and its secretive nature connects Lezama’s poetic to Severo Sarduy’s, who was influenced by Barthes and his differences from Sartrean existentialism (as I discuss in chapter 4).

19. The little magazines published either separately or jointly by Lezama, Gatzelu, and Baquero prior to *Orígenes* were: *Verbum* (1937), *Espuela de Plata* (1939–41), *Clavileño* (1941–43), *Nadie Parecía* (1942–44), and *Poeta* (1942–43).

20. José Quiroga (*Cuban Palimpsests*, 25–50) argues that such an idea of the “redeeming force of history” continues to be important to the post-Revolutionary Cuban state. It rewrites history in terms of “a cohesive set of symbols geared toward a future teleology,” a mythopoetic symbolization overwriting the actualities of cultural fragmentation in order to generate a false sense of security in the present order (4).

21. In *The American Expression*, Lezama describes Eliot as “essentially pessimistic and crepuscular,” settling only “to repeat” old narratives because “he believes that the ancient masters cannot be surpassed.” In contrast, a baroque use of myth and history more optimistically strives to create something new by recombining old materials. “Everything will have to be reconstructed, invented anew, and the old myths, upon reappearing, will offer us their conjurations and enigmas with an unfamiliar face” (*EA* 286).

22. This point is made all the more poignant by the fact that the poetry collection where this essay originally appeared was sponsored by the Cuban government, published by the Council of National Culture, only six years after the Revolution. It is quite powerful that
Lezama’s piece surreptitiously undermines the state’s official hermeneutic strategy and instantiates an antinationalistic ethic by implicitly encouraging Cuban readers’ sympathetic identification with Columbus, the preeminent colonizer.

23. Cinito Vitier (Para llegar a Orígenes, 18–34) narrates the politicized shift in Lezama’s poetics differently. He reads The American Expression as beginning to promote Lezama’s idea of “the image as creator of fact” (29). This change in Lezama’s poetic supposedly responds to the “full insurrectional struggle against Batista” (29). Vitier’s full response to Lezama constitutes part of his lectures at Havana’s Lyceum, Lo cubano en la poesía (The Cuban in Poetry).

24. Martin Jay (“Scopic Regimes of Modernity,” in Force Fields: Between Intellectual History and Cultural Critique, 114–33) similarly argues that the Enlightenment de-eroticized relationality by introducing distances between self and other. As he argues, baroque aesthetics seek to restore intimate points of contact to rectify that situation.

25. In “Discurso origenista y Cuba postsoviética,” James Buckwalter-Arias warns against such approaches to Lezama’s work, especially by post-Soviet Cuban gay writers. Willful misreadings reduce Lezama to a homosexual martyr persecuted by a homophobic totalitarian system and are used to endorse market logics and identity politics. Ironically, he has become an icon, rather than a critic, of liberalism.

26. “It is not only identifications across definitional lines that can evoke or support or even require complex and particular narrative explanation; rather, the same is equally true of any person’s identification with her or his ‘own’ gender, class, race, sexuality, nation” (Sedgwick, Epistemology of the Closet, 60–61).

27. Quiroga distinguishes between silence and the secret in his analysis of another origenista, Virgilio Piñera. The secret refuses disclosure, but silence—the one associated with Piñera—entails a “coding [that] calls attention to itself: it plays with the full spectacle of the disclosure” (Tropics of Desire, 103). I would argue that that sort of seduction flirts with identity and thus begs to be deciphered in a liberalist manner. This befits Piñera, who left Orígenes to found Ciclón with Rodríguez Feo so as to explore more overtly queer, resistant expressions in art.

Chapter Three

1. Allan Antliff (Anarchy and Art: From the Paris Commune to the Fall of the Berlin Wall, 113–32) gives a good historical account that reads Duncan’s early essay on sexuality, as well as an attack on the gay poet Charles Henri Ford’s surrealist magazine View, as part of his anticapitalism and anarchism.

2. Ekbert Faas (Young Robert Duncan: Portrait of the Poet as Homosexual in Society, 146–60) provides an overview of the composition, publication, and reception of “The Homosexual in Society.”


4. In his edition of A Selected Prose, Robert J. Bertholf published the expanded 1959 version of Duncan’s “The Homosexual in Society.” This version includes an “Introduction” and a “Reflections 1959” conclusion that frames the 1944 original. Duncan also included additional footnotes that provide running commentary, as a kind of palimpsest, about the context and ideas prompting the essay fifteen years earlier.

5. For example, in the first edition of Leaves of Grass (1855), Whitman introduces his poetic persona as “Walt Whitman, an American, one of the roughs, a kosmos.” In the fourth edition (1865), he amends the potentially exclusivist nature of this self-introduction by dropping the masculinist identification with the “roughs” and the nationalist one with “America”: “Walt Whitman, a kosmos, of Manhattan the son” (For the two versions, see the Norton Critical Edition, 52).
6. Levertov complained of the hypocrisy of Duncan's disapproval of her politicized antiwar poetry by pointing to “Up Rising” (see LRD 664–86). Although he portrayed it as an apolitical piece, the poem's bibliographic history does suggest otherwise. “Up Rising” was solicited by Levertov for a 1965 issue of the liberal periodical The Nation, and the next year Duncan included it in Of the War, a small chapbook locally distributed by the Berkeley-based Oyez Press. The national reader would not be able to dissociate “Up Rising” from The Nation's antiwar articles and editorials. In fact, the poem was singled out as exemplary for its antiwar position in its readers' letters (LRD 515). Of the War's local readers arrived at similar conclusions. Although the metaphysics of his poetic can be read in the chapbook's title, which is akin to that of an eighteenth-century philosophical treatise, his ontological perspective is in tension with the visceral cover image: a negative exposure of a body dragged behind a tank. That image would have been read by many in the Bay Area—the hub of U.S. antiwar activism—as a clear indictment of Vietnam War atrocities. As Duncan recounts, Robin Blaser, for one, found “Up Rising” and the rest of the chapbook to be politically didactic “examples of bad verse and the public corruption of my talents” (LRD 573). Elsewhere (“The Queerness of Poetic Action during Vietnam”) I consider the political dimensions of his Vietnam-era poetic as encompassing a critique of the biopolitical state rather than a protest of the war, a subtle distinction.

7. For a historical overview of the ideological policing of American sexual mores during the Cold War, see John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America, 284–95.

8. Michael Warner (The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life, 52–61) argues against the idea that sexual normalcy rests on a distinction between "statistical norms" and "evaluative norms," or between statistical means and standards of judgment.

9. Because homosexuality was increasingly equated with communism, the Mattachine Society (1950–61) dissociated its homophile politics from the Communist Party in 1953. The organization was restructured so that it was no longer based on a "secret society" model like the American Communist Party, and its members moved from radicalism toward assimilative politics stressing the normalcy, respectability, and patriotism of gays and lesbians. On the links between the Communist Party and the Mattachine Society, see John D'Emilio, Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940–1970, 57–91. On the Mattachine Society's rhetoric about national integrity to promote a moderate liberal agenda, see Joan Meyerowitz, "Sex, Gender, and the Cold War Language of Reform."

10. I borrow the distinction between "American" and "Americanism" from Philip Wander ("Political Rhetoric and the Un-American Tradition"), who identifies the Cold War as an ideological struggle between these two concepts of nationhood. Political progressives promoted an ideal of "American" culture that ensures civil liberties and individual rights not limited to the nation-state. The more conservative ideologies of "Americanism," however, were based on nationalistic loyalty to a bounded geopolitical entity. Factions supporting an "Americanist" worldview constituted a cultural and political hegemony during the Cold War.

11. Duncan does not believe that modern poetry creates neat correspondences between the author's sex and the text's "gender." The desire to eliminate "feminine" excesses, such as sentimentality or lyricism, is not unique to male poets. "Even for women, areas of poetic feeling must contend with limits that social attitudes would set within the psyche itself against womanish excess" (HD 2.9: 80). Male authors can also exhibit "feminine" flights of fancy, such as the unicorn in Williams's Paterson V or the Aesopian ant in Pound's Pisan Cantos. But because he presents such sentimental moments in male-authored texts as exceptions, and because he discusses female poets such as Edith Sitwell or H.D. as more consistently exemplifying sentimental poetics, he does seem to unconsciously conflate sex and gender in a way that reinforces how bodies pose limits to his deconstructive project.

12. For an overview of gender ideologies, countercultural resistance to the Cold War consensus, and homosexual opposition to popular culture's normalizing ideologies of "virility,"

13. Ginsberg inscribed Duncan’s personal copy of *Howl* with the following: “FOR [sic] Robert Duncan in the hope that *Howl* seems more gracious—mellow—a lament to him as time goes by; or that it drops out of my own affection in the Future” (reproduced in Matt Theado, *The Beats: A Literary Reference*, 242). As Theado notes, the inscription “suggests that the poem was a cause for disagreement between Ginsberg and his fellow poet Duncan.” In an interview from the mid-1970s, Duncan reveals that gender and sexuality were at the center of that disagreement. *Howl* exhibited a “pan-sexuality [which] directly came in conflict with my very strong sense of Apollonian dedications. I mean, strong enough for a householder . . . I found it very threatening.” Sexuality would become less threatening if writers were to give it “boundaries and various centers.” Such “an architecture” would not contain desire but would provide a public structure and visible core missing in work by gay writers like Ginsberg and Burroughs, who try to escape the problem of masculine agency by “melting down, or breaking down, and wanting to disappear” (Duncan in Faas, *Towards a New American Poetics: Essays and Interviews*, Charles Olson, Robert Duncan, Gary Snyder, Robert Creeley, Robert Bly, Allen Ginsberg, 66).

14. Hereafter I do not note Duncan’s idiosyncratic phonetic spellings of past participles with [sic]. His usual pattern is an elision of the “e” or switching the “ed” to a “t.”

15. Robert J. Bertholf (“The Concert: Robert Duncan and Writing out of Painting,” 67–68, 89) has paid the most attention to Duncan’s household trope. He remarks that the household establishes a sanctuary apart from politics, but I read it as politically deconstructing Cold War distinctions between public and private, work and home. Sherman Paul (*The Lost America of Love*, 169–276) reads love as central to Duncan’s politics, but he oddly ends up reading the household trope as a mythopoetic and ahistorical means of arriving at that politics.

16. Elsewhere (“Jack Spicer’s Pricks and Cocksuckers: Translating Homosexuality into Visibility”) I have written about Spicer’s poetics as extending homosexual visibility beyond private coteries.

17. Peter O’Leary’s *Gnostic Contagion: Robert Duncan and the Poetry of Illness* provides a strong account of H.D.’s correspondence with Duncan and of the resultant influence of her poetics. However, O’Leary tends to normalize the exchange by insisting on a Freudian oedipality that positions H.D. as mother, Freud as father, and Duncan as child (53). I read Duncan’s engagement with Freud and psychosexual identity structures as much more contentious, as is exemplified in one poem he sent H.D., “Apprehensions” (discussed below).


Chapter Four

1. See Althusser, *For Marx* (esp. 221–47), and “The Humanist Controversy” (in *The Humanist Controversy and Other Writings*, 220–305).


3. All translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.


6. On the queer theory and performativity’s metaphysics, see Brad Epps, “The Fetish of Fluidity.”


8. See Julian Bourg, *From Revolution to Ethics: May 1968 and Contemporary French Thought*.


10. Sarduy posits that the baroque exemplifies two qualities (*artifice* and *parody*). Each is produced by one of several writing strategies: *substitution*, *proliferation*, *condensation*, *intertextuality* (consisting of *citation* or *reminiscence*), *intratextuality* (consisting of *phonetic grammars*, *semic grammars*, or *syntagmatic grammars*). He illustrates his discussion with brief examples from several Southern authors, visual artists, filmmakers, and musicians.

11. In many ways, Sarduy’s neobaroque, with its emphasis on the proliferation of fragments and partial objects (as I discuss below), is closer to Lezama’s baroque than he admits. In “The Baroque and the Neobaroque,” he argues that Lezama’s baroque—like any version of this aesthetic—is eroticized, but how he characterizes that eroticization points to a different way of understanding Lezama’s secret than what I outline above (chapter 2). Sarduy writes that his predecessor’s baroque is based on a metaphorical substitution that “expels the ‘normal’ from the [linguistic] function, and puts in its place another that is totally foreign [*ajeno*], which has the effect of eroticizing the entire work” (*OC* 2: 1388). Eroticization remains tied to a metaphysic that privileges the author as the one who knows the truth. (In my reading of Lezama, no one knows a truth since the “image” where the truth resides compels the continuing production of fragments.) As Sarduy imagines it, his own preferred neobaroque style is not so metaphysical even if it is still difficult. Rather than promoting obscurity through substitution, it is elliptical. Thus it generates a metonymic proliferation that produces a desire like Lacan’s or partial objects like Deleuze and Guattari’s.


14. In a graduate course discussion on Barthes and modernist lyric, my student Michael Jonik first used the sharp geometric metaphor of the asymptote to describe this configuration.

15. Carol Maier’s translation reads: “. . . in spite of our resistance we are beginning to explore a plane of literalness previously off limits, formulating the question about our own being, about our humanity that first and foremost questions the being of our writing” (*WB* 22). Sarduy’s original reads: “. . . a pesar de sus resistencias, el hombre se adentra en el plano de la literalidad que hasta ahora se había vedado, formulando esa pregunta sobre su propio ser, sobre su *humanidad* que es ante todo la del ser de su escritura” (*OC* 2: 1137). The primary difference is that Maier’s first person plural version (“we” and “our”) of the original third person “el hombre” (man) and “su” (his/her) misses Sarduy’s point about writing’s *impersonality*, about the author’s disappearance as a person. In typical antihumanist fashion, his depiction of writing here challenges presumptions about “man” and “humanity.” It even questions who “we” are.

16. As Robert Duncan’s poetic (chapter 3 above) suggests, anarchistic and liberalist individualism are distinct. The first intrinsically ties the individual to a commonality, while the latter exists in an aporetic relationship with it (see the introduction). Theorizing anarchistic
individualism is beyond the scope of the present project but may be integral for furthering queer theory's and critical theory's examinations of individualism, freedom, and collectivity.

17. A fact not to be overlooked: Sarduy's obsession with the Big Bang—a theory of origins (in Spanish, orígenes)—also coincides with his return to Lezama's work. Because he values the origenista's theorization of the baroque, he tempers his youthful dismissal of Orígenes and his early adoption of an identity- and agency-based transgression when he was associated with Rodríguez Feo and Piñera's vanguard publication Ciclón.

18. Sarduy's Foucauldian epistemic model challenges prevalent ideas about another sense of "revolution" in the 1960s: the scientific. Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) popularized a revolutionary model to explain major epistemological shifts as occurring exclusively in scientific communities through discoverers' individual genius.

19. In Baroque, Sarduy explains historical models of planetary rotation alongside analogous developments in the arts. The classicism of painters such as el Cigoli, Raphael, and Tasso reproduces the geo- and heliocentric astronomical models of Galileo and Copernicus, each of whom centers systems through a single heavenly body (Earth or Sun). In contrast, works by baroque visual artists such as Caravaggio and Velázquez, and poets such as Góngora, deploy two centers. Thus, they mirror the elliptical orbits originally theorized by Kepler.

20. Bourg (*From Revolution to Ethics*, 179–203) reads Hocquenghem and the FHAR as revolutionary and opposes their political stance to the period's more reformist French feminism. What I regard as his reformism anticipates later French writers' liberalism, which often causes them to criticize gay antihumanists, particularly Foucault, for failing to affirm the importance of identity for sexual minorities (see Didier Eribon, *Insult and the Making of the Gay Self*). Keith Harvey (*Intercultural Movements: American Gay in French Translation*, 25–91) depicts the FHAR and later French gay activism as having a vexed relationship to liberal ideals of identity-based politics, regardless of any revolutionary cant. In the 1970s, French gay politics struggled with liberal conceptions of self and community, particularly as they were articulated by a foreign minority cultural imaginary that he calls "the American gay." Harvey (55–58) singles out Hocquenghem and the FHAR as militating against a ghettoizing impulse in the American gay scene, an impulse Hocquenghem and others read as camp. Effeminacy, Harvey argues, was rejected by prominent branches of French gay politics because it was "associat[ed] with American cultural otherness" (including capitalism and liberalist ideals of personhood, privacy, and egoism). "At the same time," he continues, "effeminacy ‘breaks out’ in discourses which reject the American model with force precisely for its lack of effeminacy" because of the association of the American gay male with a sense of insulated, liberal personhood (ibid., 90; emphasis in original). Suspicious of both an American liberalism and the FHAR's minority politics, Sarduy, whom Harvey does not mention or analyze, embraces both the feminine and camp to an almost hyperbolic extreme. They are part of his queer ethical strategy of disputing any conceptualization of sexual minority identity, not an unconscious effect of rejecting just a U.S. model. Although much has been written about the transgressive nature of his tropes of femininity and transvestism, a thoroughly historicized account of Sarduy's queer ethic in relationship to French gay politics remains to be written.

21. Deleuze and Guattari (*Anti-Oedipus*, 346–50) explicitly tie such an idea of revolution to the failures of a liberal sexual politics: "No 'gay liberation movement' is possible as long as homosexuality is caught up in a relation of exclusive disjunction with heterosexuality, a relation that ascribes them both to a common Oedipal and castrating stock, charged with ensuring only their differentiation in two noncommunicating series, instead of bringing to light their reciprocal inclusion and their transverse communication in the decoded flows of desire. . . . In short, sexual repression, more insistent than ever, will survive all the publications, demonstrations, emancipations, and protests concerning the liberty of sexual objects, sources, and aims, as long as sexuality is kept—consciously or not—withing narcissistic, Oedipal, and castrating co-ordinates that are enough to ensure the triumph of the most rigorous censors" (ibid., 350–51).
22. Alicia Rivero-Potter (Autor/Lector: Huidobro, Borges, Fuentes y Sarduy, 100–17) is one of the few critics who suggest that Sarduy generally privileges readers more than authors, especially since his fiction rejects transcendent authorship and has lacunae that allow readers interpretive freedom that effectually makes them co-authors. Due to the erotic relation between author and reader, my reading pushes “co-authoring” in a different direction.

23. It is worth noting that Barthes echoes this passage by Lacan in Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes (1975, 168), one year after Sarduy invokes it in Baroque.

24. Sarduy plays Barthes and Lezama off one another to make the queerness of literary eroticism more visible, even more physical. His French and Cuban mentors’ names appear together in the 1968 essay “Dispersion/False Notes (Homage to Lezama Lima),” which echoes the language of Writing Degree Zero while commenting on his Cuban forebear’s baroque poetic. Lezama’s image provokes an “expression” and “discovery” that “cause enjoyment” by revealing “the potential multiplicity of its realities” (WB 72). “The poet’s role is to discover those potentialities, make them visible, reflect them in the concavity of language, and even use them to displace the truth of written History” (WB 72–73; emphasis in original). Pleasure disrupts history as it is conventionally known and narrated. Thus it provides proof of the writer’s commitment. The “word” of Sarduy’s baroque poet is revolutionary because it “has been freed of all transitive ballast, of that about . . . which is the injury inflicted by information, by its morality, and has thus been restored to its fundamental eroticism, to its truth” (WB 72). Here Sarduy invokes Barthes’s notion of intransitive writing from “To Write: An Intransitive Verb?” (1966). According to Barthes, writing is produced by a scriptor, the subject “constituted as immediately contemporary with the writing,” rather than by an author who stands outside the text to deliver some message through it (The Rustle of Language, 19).

In a review of Sarduy’s Cobra (“The Baroque Side,” 1966), Barthes reads the neobaroque style of that novel as a reminder that “besides cases of transitive or ethical [meaning, “moralistic”] communication . . . there is a pleasure of language, of similar fabric, similar silk as erotic pleasure, and that this pleasure of language is its truth” (ibid., 233). In Sarduy’s hands, the baroque is not just similar to eroticism; rather, it is an unadulterated form of pleasure. He runs with Barthes’s ideas and would use the erotic nature of writing to strengthen the link between a Cuban baroque tradition and his queer ethic.

25. Because of their disavowal of structuralism, Barthes felt “rejected by the students, whose cause he supported almost instinctively” (Louis-Jean Calvet, Roland Barthes: A Biography, 163). He took umbrage at the facts that students packed halls to hear Sartre lecture, and that they attacked Barthes for offering a seminar to study the student movement’s use of verbal language. He wanted to preserve his theory’s antieexistentialist integrity, yet he also wished to appeal to the student movement by offering structuralism as a compatible ideological critique. On Barthes’s relationship to May ’68 and later gay politics, see Calvet, Roland Barthes, 163–86.

26. For other passages drawing a strong distinction between bliss and pleasure, see Barthes, Pleasure of the Text, 14, 39, and 52–53.

27. Throughout his career, Sarduy was not remiss at deploying traditional Cuban lyric forms such as sons and décimas. Privileging style and its pleasures over the clear communication of a message, traditional forms actually work against the same humanist tenets of existentialism and liberalism that alienated him from his homeland.

28. For an analysis of how the first edition of the poem “Big Bang” mirrors French and Spanish, as well as scientific and poetic discourses, see Jacinto Fombona Iribarren, “La poética ‘cuántica’ de Severo Sarduy: Una lectura de Big Bang.” On “Big Bang”’s exemplification of the poetic theorized in Baroque, see Perla Rozencvaig, “El Big Bang de Severo Sarduy o la explosión poética.” The reprint edition from which I cite does not reproduce the French versions of Sarduy’s texts or the chapbook’s five original illustrations of “machines” by Ramón Alejandro.
Epilogue

1. Said’s turn to philology to articulate his politicized ethic is heartening, but I take issue with his equation of reading’s passionate openness with the opportunity “to put oneself in the author’s position sympathetically” (Humanism and Democratic Criticism, 62). Such sympathy unwittingly ends up endorsing liberalism’s sharp divide between identity and difference because the reader ultimately sits in judgment over the text in order to utilize it as a subjective tool. Consequently, the logic of similarity that Said approximates is quite distinct from my own. His hopeful desire for literature’s ability to elicit sympathies and resolve identity-based crises implicitly signals his hope for a marked, identifiable end to the sort of vulnerability necessary to produce a continual, dynamic queering of life and nation. For more on my distrust of sympathy as an ethical hermeneutic strategy, see my essay “Reading Emerson in Other Times: On a Politics of Solitude and an Ethics of Risk.”

2. See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Empire and Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire.

3. On the persistence of the state in cosmopolitical paradigms, see also Bonnie Honig, “Another Cosmopolitanism? Law and Politics in the New Europe.”


5. I make this large claim knowing full well that “experience” itself has historically been a slippery and multivalent term (see Martin Jay, Songs of Experience). Recuperating different manifestations and representations of vulnerability, though, may go far in defining an ethical and ontological reimagining of experience befitting our contemporary moment.

6. “Whoever demands recognition has already arrived at his destination, is already where he still has to get to; he does not require the recognition he demands. His polemical presumptuousness consists in the fact that he, the one who wishes to be recognized, transforms the others, the ones who are meant to recognize him, into those who have to be recognized. Thus the roles, functions, and positions become involved in an uninterrupted and uncontrollable exchange. Ultimately one cannot decide who it is that is supposed to be recognized here and now, and who it is that is recognizing the other here and now” (García Düttmann, Between Cultures: Tensions in the Struggle for Recognition, 111). Ethical work does not necessarily proceed if one speaks from an identifiable point of difference. When a confrontational speech act such as ACT UP’s famous slogan (We’re here, we’re queer, so get used to it) enters a general public, its queer difference is immediately domesticated and nullified because its meaning is readily interpretable. When the general public hears the slogan, it recognizes the enunciator as representing an identifiable entity—“the queer.” This identification dulls the rhetorical force of what García Düttmann calls the slogan’s “caesura loaded with tension,” its ethical suspension of social logics (ibid., 114).